

BOOK REVIEWS

GENERAL

UTHER, HANS-JÖRG. *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography, Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*. Part I: Animal Tales, Tales of Magic, Religious Tales, and Realistic Tales, with an Introduction. FFC 284. 619 pages. ISSN 0014-5815; ISBN 951-41-0956-2. Part II: Tales of the Stupid Ogre, Anecdotes and Jokes, and Formula Tales. FFC 285. 536 pages. ISSN 014-5815; ISBN 951-41-0962-7. Part III: Appendices. FFC 286. 285 pages. ISSN 0014-5815; ISBN 951-41-0964-3. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2004. Paper; n. p.

Hans Jörg Uther's tale type index is without doubt a welcome and much needed edition to the existing indexes. The two revisions of the original Antti Aarne tale type index (1910) were completed by Stith Thompson in 1928 and 1961 respectively. Since then folklore scholars used AaTh type numbers, but from now they can use ATU numbers. The present addition by Uther is intended as an improvement on its predecessor.

Uther tells us that the revision was undertaken in response to the criticisms that were available on the Thompson index, such as the secondary status given to literary sources, the Euro-centric nature of the information on tales, overlapping contents of tales and their numerical categories, and outdated information on scholarly literature. Uther's catalog is divided into three volumes. The first contains "Animal Tales, Tales of Magic, Religious Tales, and Realistic Tales;" the second has "Tales of the Stupid Ogre, Anecdotes and Jokes, and Formula Tales." The third volume is dedicated to "Appendices."

In Uther's revision of the Aarne-Thompson tale type index, the type numbers remain unchanged (1, page 11), but the "titles of the tale types have been partly revised, and the descriptions of the plots have been completely rewritten and expanded" (1, page 12). The plots of the tale are said to be more explanatory of the tales than before and therefore give a better idea of the narratives under discussion. In addition the descriptions are followed by "Combinations" and "Remarks" wherever possible. "Combinations" link the tale type to others and "Remarks" give additional information about tales or their status if available. One cannot disagree with the decision to keep the numbers unchanged as that would have only confused the matter. While the titles have been changed in some cases, many have remained the same. The descriptions too are not always very different from the Aarne-Thompson index and at times they are not substantial. A more consistent approach on these counts would have better fulfilled the hopes raised in the Introduction to the catalog.

The section which marks the biggest difference from the Aarne-Thompson index is "Literature/Variants." Publications right up to 2004 are listed in this section concerning each tale type. The index is therefore a very up-to-date bibliographical source for folklore scholars. As Uther says, this is based on the vast resources of the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* and its journal *Fabula*. However, other equally important folklore publications

and journals, such as *Asian Folklore Studies*, *Folklore*, *American Folkloristics*, and others remain untapped. The “Literature” section is undoubtedly rich and exhaustive with regards to European publications over the last few years.

Another area where Uther’s index is an advance on Thompson’s is that theoretical shifts in the discipline of folkloristics are taken well into consideration. It takes into account the importance now given to written sources and to major literary works. It also admits the influence of gender theories and analyses in writing the description of the tale types. This type-index is also an advance regionally as it brings into the fold many new areas previously not mentioned, notably north European regions.

Uther’s index is updated in various respects. It is also more accessible—both in text and printing. It lives up to its claims on some fronts. If it suffers from any quarter, however, this is related to the widespread lacunae in the field of folkloristics. Almost no index has taken into consideration the vast archives of folktales from different continents created in the colonial contexts. The large number of publications of folklore in English, German, French, and other European languages remains outside the scope of this index. These collections, being in European languages, are accessible for index makers, but are for some reason left aside. If these were scanned the list of “Literature” for many tale types would increase substantially, and would reflect many more Asian, African, Latin American, and even Aboriginal Australian tale types and variations. A significant expanse in the regions covered by any tale type index would have to be based on a thorough scanning of the colonial archives of published materials. Had Hans-Jörg Uther and his team undertaken to do this, their contribution would have truly challenged the current Euro-centric approach of the tale type index. Folklore scholars will have to wait for a post-colonial tale type index.

For the time being Uther’s index fulfills many needs realized since the publication of Thompson’s index. With the publication of the present volumes a major reference work has been updated and made available and meaningful to folklore scholars. Both the author and the publishers deserve to be congratulated and thanked.

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