

Reviews

Cinderella in America: A Book of Folk and Fairy Tales. Compiled and edited by William Bernard McCarthy. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007. xiv + 514 pp., appendix, bibliography, 4 indexes, 18 photographs.

Cinderella in America: A Book of Folk and Fairy Tales is a highly readable and unique addition to the project of documenting the development of European *märchen* as transplanted to American soil. While *Cinderella in America* represents the widest range of American folk tales available in one volume, William Bernard McCarthy limits his scope solely to tales of European origin, choosing to exclude American tales with origins in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, or Native American cultures. However, he includes European tales retold in African American and Native American communities. He further restricts this collection to include only wonder tales/*märchen* rather than the joke narratives and tall tales popular among American narrators. These limitations are necessarily somewhat arbitrary, but they also inform the specific polemical function of this volume: to prove that, far from withering in the New World, the European wonder tale has had a vibrant and persistent life of its own in the United States.

The collection is separated into five parts organized by both historical period and ethnic group, then sub-divided into seventeen chapters on specific regions. A sixth part and eighteenth chapter offer a case study of not simply a tale, but the tale-teller herself, including personal background and photos of her in performance as a final illustration of the pro-

cess by which European *märchen* were adapted as an integral part of an American repertoire. An introduction prefaces each section, providing cultural and historical background on the group. It also describes the material available and provides a narrative of the collection process for each region.

The explanatory notes at the end of each tale are informative and often appealing in their own right. Details included are that of tale-type classification, transcription and translation information, and description of story elements, in addition to anecdotal descriptions of collector and performer. McCarthy also uses the endnotes as an opportunity to point out unusual features of the tale that mark it as distinctly “American” in its retelling. The endnotes often reference other works with slightly different transcriptions of similar tales, in addition to offering parallels to other tales within the volume itself. This results in a degree of comprehensiveness; while obviously unable to include more than a sampling of the rich variety of tales that are available, the endnotes provide a sense of the holistic panorama of American tale telling and collecting. These background notes legitimize the collection as a production for the serious scholar, while moving this information out of the main body of the text allows McCarthy to retain the interest of a more casual reader.

Despite the interesting and informative editorial notes, the tales themselves are what make this volume worth reading. Drawing from archives, regional collections, unpublished notes of fellow folklorists, and his personal work, McCarthy presents a range of tales that represents

a wide swath of the Euro-American tale telling experience. Thus many of the tale texts are either unique to this volume or found only rarely in other publications. McCarthy has taken care to ensure as much accuracy in the reproduction of the original voice of the performer as possible (while eschewing “eye-spelling” or dialect exaggeration) by returning to the original recording or transcription when available and personally re-transcribing the material. This results in an easily readable yet powerful presentation of these expressive tales in their rich variety of contexts and idioms.

The engaging style in which both tales and background are presented suggests that McCarthy writes with a popular audience in mind. However, he also offers an unobtrusive but thorough academic background for his work through the editorial notes described above, an extensive list of references and credits, and multiple indexes including tale types, motifs, collectors, and storytellers. As one of the few scholarly collections of American *märchen*, *Cinderella in America* would serve as a convenient and reliable initial reference point for those interested in pursuing research on Euro-American folk tales.

McCarthy sets out to prove that, contrary to conventional assumptions, the Old World tradition of tale telling did indeed travel with European immigrants to the United States, becoming as much a part of American social fabric as the people who retold them. This large and varied collection of evocative wonder tales serves not only as a valuable resource and a pleasant read, but as an array of highly persuasive evidence for this argument.

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Everyday Life in Central Asia: Past and Present. Edited by Jeff Sahadeo and Russell Zanca. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007. Pp. ix + 401, introduction, selected bibliography, index.

One cannot read much of the scholarly literature on modern Central Asia (the countries of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan) without encountering scholars’ perennial laments about the relative lack of substantive, non-politicized analyses of life in the post-Soviet era. Indeed, rarely do academic treatments of the region come down from the macro level to consider how Central Asians live their everyday lives. Jeff Sahadeo and Russell Zanca’s edited volume admirably fills this lacuna in present scholarship and will likely become a standard text for Humanities courses on the region.

The book is comprised of contributions from a mixture of well-known and newer voices in the field of Central Asian studies, spanning the disciplines of anthropology, political science, sociology, history, and religious studies. After an introduction and a short opening essay that historically positions the two major ethno-linguistic groups of the region, the editors divide the remaining chapters among categories such as “communities,” “gender,” “performance and encounters,” “nation, state, and society in the everyday,” and “religion.”

Scott Levi’s concise but conceptually broad introductory essay rightly problematizes essentialist scholarship which has often perpetuated the idea of the bifurcated nature of Central Asian ethnicity. In a crude distinction, some scholars continue to maintain that a static histori-

cal dichotomy exists between the nomadic and settled population of the region, one which manifests itself even in present conflict as exemplified by the violent events in Kyrgyzstan during 2010. In contrast, while recognizing the historical importance of this division, Levi paints a more complex picture of symbiosis, adaptation, and syncretism.

Under the heading of “communities,” the second section of the volume is perhaps the most temporally and geographically diverse of the entire book. Indeed, it is only here that the book’s contributors stray outside the bounds of the post-Soviet Central Asian republics. Contributions include Adrienne Edgar’s chapter on nomadic life among the Turkmens in the pre-Soviet period, Robert Canfield’s analysis of a wedding narrative highlighting the uncertainties of rural life and the “hidden transcripts” of Central Asian subalterns in the context of a village conflict in Afghanistan, and Morgan Liu’s discussion of contrasting visions of post-Soviet modernity in both the Uzbek neighborhoods and the Soviet-constructed environs of the Kyrgyz city of Osh.

In part three of the volume, under the heading of “gender,” Douglas Northrop questions the pre-war efficacy of the Soviet *hujum* or attack on female veiling in Uzbekistan and argues that the ultimate legacy of such Soviet campaigns during the 1920s and 1930s was to mark female dress as emblematic of political and national identity. During the 1930s, most Uzbek women embraced the de-veiling campaigns only when expedient and when beyond the purview of Soviet authorities largely remained behind their horsehair *chachvon*. Marianne Kamp also details how the women who comprised

the early ranks of Soviet cadres in Central Asia negotiated Soviet and pre-Soviet ideals, creating novel wedding and marriage traditions that were held up as models for the new Uzbek-Soviet woman. Elizabeth Constantine argues that during the Soviet period gender roles were significantly transformed as women internalized Soviet notions of gender. Complimenting Constantine’s case that the ideas of gender changed during the Soviet period, Greta Uehling illustrates how they remain in flux after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The editors classify the chapters concerning facets of cultural life such as foodways, festival, and music under the heading “performance and encounters.” It is here that Central Asian “tradition” comes to the fore in an examination of the everyday practices associated with globalized Kazakh music performance, a chapter on how the Uzbek predilection for fatty foods reflects and indexes conceptions of Uzbek identity and present economic reality, a cogent examination of the dialectic between private and public meanings associated with Uzbek holidays and celebrations, several reflexive ethnographic vignettes on the meanings of Kazakh hospitality practices, and a piece discussing the nature of post-Soviet gender relations in rural Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan that highlights the adaptive nature of the everyday and the social disruptiveness of the Soviet period.

To this point, the majority of the volume focuses on the quotidian as a lens with which to view Central Asia’s post-Soviet reality, but institutions also play a part in the construction of the Central Asian “everyday” . Perhaps one of the most invasive ways that Central Asians

have experienced the imposition of state structures (and strictures) was in the arbitrary mapping of the republics' borders and the difficulties these presented for travel in places like the historically-interdependent Ferghana valley. Similarly, many Central Asians continue to suffer the ill effects of the collapse of the Soviet economic system. In that vein, Kelly McMann shows how nostalgia for the command economy remains strong even as many Central Asians now enjoy liberties denied under the Soviet regime. The efficiency of the education system in many Central Asian states also lags behind that of the USSR. In another essay Shoshana Keller illustrates how Uzbeks work to negotiate the endemic corruption miring down Uzbek schools.

Generally, whenever scholarly literature has considered religious life in Central Asia, the discussion is framed in terms of broader struggles against "political" Islam. As the editors note, their purpose is to interrogate such simplistic renderings of the alleged renewal of religious fervor in Central Asia. Secondly, the contributions all, to some extent, weigh in on the success or failure of Soviet militant atheism and its rhetorical foil, "underground" Islam. To those ends, the contributors discuss issues such as the relationship of local congregations to state directives in Uzbekistan, shrine visitation practices and the nature of Islamic authority, varied conceptions of proper Islamic behavior, and the challenges faced by Christian minorities in the religious landscape of post-Soviet Central Asia.

The various chapters in this volume all work to deconstruct the dominant and almost hegemonic force of policy-

centered work in the region by arguing that Central Asians are not inextricably tied to a static "tradition" which survived intact after decades of Soviet control, nor are they are inherently susceptible to "fundamentalist" ideologies. Rather, Central Asian modernity is multifarious, shifting, and ever ready to adapt to political, economic, and social circumstances. As folklorists have long known, the "everyday" is, as shown in this volume, a site of ongoing negotiation and active social construction. In light of its accessible prose and ground-level analysis of life in the republics of Central Asia, engaged general readers and undergraduate students will find this work a helpful introduction to the region.

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Imperial Masochism: British Fiction, Fantasy, and Social Class. By John Kucich. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007. Pp.

In this study of colonial fiction, John Kucich moves away from psychoanalytic theories of masochism anchored in oedipal drama. Generally speaking, such theories feature either a male masochist who valiantly flouts the oedipal rulebook or one of a less noble variety who takes the part of the charlatan and, by some sleight of hand, converts his suffering into moral clout. Recent relational psychoanalysis, however, supplies what Kucich is convinced is a more useful grammar of preoedipal masochism: masochism that is chiefly of a narcissistic rather than sexual character and thus linked to fantasies of omnipotence. Kucich's appeal to relational psychoanalysis as a principal but not exclusive or intractable interpretive method bears fruit. Moreover, his findings are a welcome alternative to the now-conventional discovery that writers such as Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad were casualties of ambivalence, authors whose approbation of imperial tactics is at least as demonstrable as their frustration with it. Rather than hedging his bets, the literary critic might discover a method to colonial fiction's mixed messages in structures of preoedipal masochism. In *Imperial Masochism*, Kucich contends that these structures provided a "psycho-social language" that fashioned imperial and class subjectivities both abroad and domestically (2).

In the introduction to his book, Kucich scrupulously delineates non-identical but often overlapping varieties

of preoedipal masochistic fantasy. For instance, "fantasies of total control over others" might take the form of "magical reinterpretation of events", or bestowing upon oneself the power to "lie, cheat, or use guile" with impunity, while exaggerated suffering that props up the parental figure is aligned with "fantasies that maintain the omnipotence of others" (23-24). Schlepping through this painstaking (but far from tedious) catalog is essential. The trouble with late-Victorian masochistic fantasy, Kucich explains, is that it "exploits a disarticulated middle-class social consciousness" and gives it new form; it is not a fixed expression of social relations so much as equipment designed to generate social discourse (84). Consequently, masochistic fantasy as a literary device is available to the champions of British Imperialism, among them Kipling and Conrad, as well as its critics, such as Robert Louis Stevenson and Olive Schreiner. In identifying the shifting configurations of masochistic fantasy in the work of each of these authors and by sifting through race and gender ideologies to distinguish the class values embedded in these fantasies, Kucich offers new and sometimes startlingly fresh evaluations of their work.

The "logic of masochistic fantasy" is slippery stuff, and Kucich proceeds with caution. Chapter 1, "Melancholy Magic: Robert Louis Stevenson's Evangelical Anti-Imperialism" is an impressive, thorough piece of criticism, and the highlight of the book. In this chapter, Kucich traces Stevenson's literary masochism to an increasingly fragmented evangelical psychological ideology that symbolized the decline of the middle

class. Whereas Stevenson's early Scottish novels mobilize masochistic splitting to capture irreconcilable bohemian and bourgeois impulses, Kucich explains that, in his late nineteenth-century South Sea tales of imperial entrepreneurialism Stevenson finally invents middle-class characters whose patterns of "masochistic self-invention appear to constitute a grammar of moral legitimacy", and censure "interlopers" of the upper and lower classes (72).

In the next chapter, however, Kucich's insistence that Olive Schreiner "submerged oedipal within preoedipal masochism" leaves the reader in much murkier territory (92). His intricate readings of the interplay between "Freudian" and relational paradigms in the South African author's work are difficult to follow, though Kucich intriguingly speculates that the evolving play of oedipal and preoedipal masochisms in her writing enabled Schreiner to move beyond the chauvinisms of early texts like *The Story of an African Farm* and toward solidarity with Boer and African women by the early twentieth century (134). By comparison, Kucich's last two chapters on pro-imperialist discourses in the novels of Kipling and Conrad are relatively straightforward. In Chapter 3, "Sadomasochism and the Magical Group: Kipling's Middle-Class Imperialism", Kucich argues that Kipling skillfully merged evangelicalism and professionalism to formulate a middle-class ideology, while Chapter 4 contends that Conrad integrated chivalric and professional discourses to harmonize "gentrified imperial detachment" with "middle-class ethics" (29).

Chapter 3 is Kucich's most lucid chapter, possibly because he discovers sado-

masochism in its most familiar form, from the irresolute browbeating typical of Kipling's "magical groups", from early works like *Stulky & Co.* to that jewel and sometime *bête noire* of colonial fiction, *Kim*. Kucich's claim that Kipling repeatedly employs "a narcissistically omnipotent bullying group that recognizes itself both as the legitimately despotic center of social order and as its permanently alienated victim" is not entirely novel (156). Even here, though, Kucich has something new to offer. He proposes that, given our fixation on representations of imperialism and race in Kipling's texts, we have yet to sufficiently acknowledge the "remarkably unilateral class politics" the author asserted, primarily through a discourse of professional expertise, which, when infused with self-denying and even messianic evangelical values, generated a vigorous middle-class ideology (138).

Kucich has his hands full, juggling race and gender matters while maintaining sharp focus on class issues, and he is, at least for the moment, swimming against a current crude vogue of literary psychoanalysis. Nevertheless, he compels us to acknowledge that masochistic fantasies play a role "at the intersections of imperial and class discourse", and that they have "social and political instrumentality" (27, 30). Kucich argues the parameters posed by relational masochism make one "an enemy of simplicity", and encourage the critic to "resist interpretive pluralism" (250). This seems true of *Imperial Masochism*, and yet his constructive use of psychoanalytic theory would not seem quite so constructive were it not bolstered by meticulous close readings of British

colonial fiction and a deft historicism. By the same token, his laborious but rewarding study of colonial fiction is equally valuable as an experiment about how one might formulate psychoanalytic literary criticism capacious enough to accommodate historical nuance. This is an intelligent book, and well worth our attention.

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