

***Folk and Fairy Tales.* By Martin Hallett and Barbara Karasek, eds. (Peterborough, Broadview Press, 2002. xxv + 454 p., preface, introduction, index, selected bibliography, list of sources, colour and black/white photographs, \$24.95 CDN, \$18.95 US, ISBN 1-55111-495-X)**

Anne Lafferty

Volume 24, numéro 2, 2002

Musées
Museums

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/006655ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/006655ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore

ISSN

1481-5974 (imprimé)

1708-0401 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Lafferty, A. (2002). Compte rendu de [*Folk and Fairy Tales.* By Martin Hallett and Barbara Karasek, eds. (Peterborough, Broadview Press, 2002. xxv + 454 p., preface, introduction, index, selected bibliography, list of sources, colour and black/white photographs, \$24.95 CDN, \$18.95 US, ISBN 1-55111-495-X)]. *Ethnologies*, 24(2), 261–264. <https://doi.org/10.7202/006655ar>

such as journals, newspaper items, and travel guides. Art historians will find her use of illustrations, advertising texts, and landscapes insightful. There are also sources here that will be of interest to the literary scholar. For example, Dubinsky cites Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde, H.G. Wells, and Jane Urquhart, to name a few. The author's references to the formation of legends, the material culture associated with the region's tourism, the occupational folklore of hackmen and cab drivers, as well as the traditions surrounding honeymoons and marriage provide a great deal to arouse the interest of folklorists.

Cultural anthropologists will find the insights into the lives of the area's disenfranchised and the references made to queer culture especially notable. But while the presence of the "other" at Niagara Falls — "importuning hackmen, exotic Indians, and fearsome guides" (80) — is a fascinating thread it is one that Dubinsky ultimately leaves dangling. As a counterpoint to the development of Niagara's heterosexual text, the author does not take her analysis of this presence far enough.

The book's interdisciplinary approach makes *The Second Greatest Disappointment*, an ambitious project, more palatable to those generally interested in pop culture, and to a lesser degree, in queer studies. The work mainly suggests how the tourism industry at Niagara Falls has commodified the ideals and dreams which attend romance. Like many cultural practices, marriage — or why, when, and how two individuals legally commit themselves to one another — is not only learned, but is ever evolving. The book also serves as a timely warning to those who would promote the development of tourism without regard to its economic impact on resident populations and regional economies.

Pamela Coristine
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Folk and Fairy Tales. By Martin Hallett and Barbara Karasek, eds. (Peterborough, Broadview Press, 2002. xxv + 454 p., preface, introduction, index, selected bibliography, list of sources, colour and black/white photographs, \$24.95 CDN, \$18.95 US, ISBN 1-55111-495-X)

This book is an anthology of folk tales, mostly Märchen. The stories are grouped into related sets, each with its own introduction. Some sets, such as the section on "Cinderella," consist of different versions of the same story. Other sets are thematically linked. The section on Damsels

in Distress, for example, includes “Snow White,” “Rapunzel,” and “The Goose Girl”. The anthology also includes literary fairy tales written in the nineteenth century by Hans Christian Andersen and Oscar Wilde, modern rewrites (both prose and poetry) of traditional fairy tales, critical essays about fairy stories, and a few plates of visual art based on traditional fairy tales.

My initial reaction to this anthology was that the critical material was sparse and the introductory sections light. I found it unsatisfactory, until I thought about the intended audience. Hallett and Karasek state in their preface that the anthology is meant for students who were exposed to fairy tales in childhood (xi), but have never had occasion to think seriously about them (xii). The book is probably appropriate for students at this level. Although the editor’s commentary is not particularly in-depth, they do address differences between the folk tale and the literary tale (xv-xix), the different biases of different compilers (see, for instance, xvii-xviii, 2-4 and 18-20) and gender issues (see 57-59, 77-78 and 97-98). Only five critical essays are included, but they are philosophically varied and interdisciplinary.

Although the text is suitable for introductory students, some of the questions included in the *Instructors’ Companion* are not. My sister, classicist Maura Lafferty, pointed out that different sets of questions in this booklet appear to have been written by different authors and that these sets vary in their overall usefulness. Some sets of questions could profitably be discussed by undergraduates working directly from the text itself; other questions require knowledge that undergraduates might not have. For instance, a question about “East of the Sun and West of the Moon” reads: “What is the psychological interpretation of the girl’s journey?” Students may not know enough about psychology to even begin to address this question. Another question from this set is even more problematic: “How do you account for the elements of Christianity in this story?” Students are very unlikely to know enough about the social context of the story and the personal history of its narrator to even make plausible guesses and the commentary does not provide much help. Presumably, however, most instructors, if they choose to use the *Instructors’ Companion* at all, will pick out the material that seems useful and ignore the rest.

Some care has obviously been taken to make sure that the different parts of the book interrelate with each other. Bruno Bettelheim’s essay,

“The Struggle for Meaning” (376-391) appears to build, to some extent, on Max Lüthi’s essay “The Fairy-Tale Hero: The Image of Man in the Fairy Tale” (365-376). Bettelheim’s essay and Kay Stone’s essay, “The Misuses of Enchantment: Controversies on the Significance of Fairy Tales” (391-415) both include some discussion, from very different perspectives, of the significance of marriage in fairy tales. Many of the stories referred to in these essays also appear in the book, allowing for easy reference. This is true not only of the more common stories, but, to a lesser degree, of less known stories, such as “The Goose Girl,” referred to by Lüthi (367-68), and “Molly Whuppie,” referred to in an informant quote in Stone’s essay (398). Stone quotes from Anne Sexton’s “Cinderella” (405-406), which appears in its entirety in the poetry section (325-328). Marina Warner’s essay, “Go! Be a Beast: Beauty and the Beast,” (415-427) includes discussion of Angela Carter’s essay “The Company of Wolves,” which is included in the section of twentieth century revisions of fairy tales (280-289). Similarly, most of the poetry and visual art refer directly back to stories included in the volume.

The stated goals and benefits of this particular text are not interrelated well. On the one hand, the editors state in the preface that they have relied heavily on fairy tale classics because they perceive that students will be most familiar with these stories. They acknowledge, however, that the classics are not representative of the international body of fairy tales. On the other hand, the editors also talk about multiculturalism and the importance of common ground among students whose life experiences vary enormously. They argue that all students will have had some exposure to fairy tales (xii). While it is probably true that students who spent their childhoods in North America will be familiar with the classics, students who have arrived fairly recently from a different country may be familiar with a different set of fairy tales.

The use of different versions of both well and lesser known stories does give the volume something of a multicultural cast. Nevertheless, almost all the fairy tales come from Western Europe and the editors drew heavily (but certainly not exclusively) on a few collectors from this area, specifically Perrault, the Grimm brothers, and Joseph Jacob. The tension between multiculturalism and perceived accessibility has resolved itself almost entirely on the side of accessibility.

Overall, my sense is that this anthology is probably adequate for beginning folklore classes. The inclusion of modern literary fairy tales

and poetry, as well as the general slant of the questions in the Instructors' Companion, would also make it useful in an English literature course which included some folklore. The book could conceivably also be used as a text for advanced folklore students, if the instructor supplemented it with more in-depth readings on folklore theory and critical analysis.

Anne Lafferty
Memorial University

The Medium of the Video Game. By Mark J. P. Wolf, ed. Foreword by Ralph H. Baer. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001. xx + 203 p., ISBN 0-292-79150-X)

This book will, in some respects, be looked back on as a pivotal moment in the history of video game studies. Mark J. P. Wolf has presented an argument that not only understands the video game as a separate medium but looks at the medium itself, on its own terms and not as an economic or sociological phenomenon. That said, this book suffers from some serious flaws, most of which seem to be attributable to Wolf in his additional role as editor.

Of the eleven articles in the book (nine chapters, an Introduction, and a Foreword) six are by Wolf. Of the remaining, the Foreword by Ralph Baer, inventor of the *Odyssey*, the first home video gaming console, nicely contextualises the book by establishing that the video game phenomenon, in potency if not in form or act, stretches back to the early sixties when the first game, *Spacewar!*, was created at MIT in 1962 by (who else?) bored graduate students with access to a computer. Video games coincide with the coupling of a computer to a video display, a seemingly self-evident observation which is nevertheless critical to a discussion of medium.

Chapter Two, "Super Mario Nation" is a reprint of an article from *American Heritage* by Steven L. Kent on the history of the video game which, although informative, is five years out of date. It does not account for the most recent generation of home gaming consoles B PlayStation 2, X-Box, GameCube B or advances in home computing. Considering that one of Kent's main arguments is the speed at which video games evolve, the inclusion of his article here is ironic.