REVIEWS

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Graham Anderson of the University of Kent has voyaged into darkest fairyland to snag the Little Red Riding Hood, the Snow White and the Bluebeard. This intrepid reader of obscure classical texts and explorer in the wider world of oral tales from lands far away and times long ago, wherever the Finnish comparative geographical-historical method has cast its wide net, has brought us back a provocative study. Each case must be judged on its merits and there are fifteen or so to weigh. Some arguments are fuller and more persuasive than others. Anderson’s thesis is that many ancient narratives and so-called ‘modern’ (that is, post-medieval) ‘fairytale’ spring from the same Aarne and Thompson tale-type. Anderson might have wisely curried readers’ favour by explaining at some length the problems, methods and results achieved by the Finn Antti Aarne (1867-1925) and his continuator, the American student of both European and native American tales, Stith Thompson (1885-1976). Classicists can benefit, as rather few unfortunately have, by close study of traditional tales from within the Indo-European community, from Sanskrit India to Spain and Norway. The Grimm brothers, trained in Greek and Latin, were more alive to the connections than most contemporaries today. Anderson hopes to lead more classicists back to this common ocean of story, tearing away seven or more veils that make it hard to see Chione as a version of Snow White despite her name. For this he is to be commended.

Supernatural tiny people play little role in the elite literature of the classical ages. They might have been more active around the farmer’s fireside and perhaps there was an ancient Greek ‘tooth fairy’ (apparently, America’s indigenous contribution). Anderson, however, has employed the term that the public unselﬁshly uses despite the fact that most such tales have no fairies. Fairylore seems to be ceding place in popular cinematic (Disneyfied) culture to wizened or green creatures from outer space or inner earth. Since Anderson’s learned study of the traditional tale in antiquity more often analyses large monsters, slandered ‘ordinary’ (if ultra-attractive) girls and other Indo-European tale-types, the problem is not simply a small semantic one. Only students of oral and written literature grounded in the formidable indexes will be able to read comfortably this distillation of much labour or control its speculative motif and hunting of tale-types. Anderson pairs ancient folktales (often elaborated in epic poetry, Attic dramatic structures and the ancient

1 A. Aarne and S. Thompson, The Motif-Index of Folk Literature 1-6 (Bloomington 1955-58); The Types of the Folktale (Bloomington 1961) (hereafter ‘AT’).
novels) with the ethnic European collections of Basile, Perrault, Grimm and Afanas’ev. He seeks his fortune far beyond those in time and space with non-European traditions, for instance, the nearly prehistoric myths of Mesopotamian Inanna and the twelve medieval prose legends of the Turkish Dede Korkut, an insufficiently known Turkoman Iliad. Neophytes can easily become lost in the woods while tracking down a type, as I was, for instance when examining ‘the grateful dead’ (Motif E341-79, AT Types 505-08). I was grateful to have William F. Hansen assure me that even more serious folktale scholars have trouble navigating their waters.\(^2\)

Anderson believes that some stories have travelled widely with a continuous existence, despite the passage of centuries, kept alive on a sub-literate or (better) oral level. One can follow this reasonably clearly, for instance, in the transmission of Teutonic and Scottish tales to the ‘white’ USA Appalachian ‘Jack Tales’, through what is probably a combination of printed versions (the Grimms’ first edition appeared in 1812) and oral Hicks-Harmon family traditions in the vicinity of Beech Mountain, North Carolina. The Grimms’ tales (nos 71, 134) of ‘The Six Servants’ and ‘Six who Made their Way through the World’ have striking similarities with the parochial ‘olkotype’, ‘Hardy Hard Ass’.\(^4\) It seems less likely that Native American tales are related to Old World and Samosatian Lucianic plots (pp. 190f.).

The introduction usefully collects ancient quotations, passages usually dismissive, in which narrators refer to children’s tales, assuming that there were children in Socrates’ Attica and Trimalchio’s Capua. Ancient condescension, when not condemnation, largely explains the obscurity of these narratives in our already lacunose record of ancient narrative. The repertoire of denigrated story-tellers often features old women, weavers whiling time away (Ov. Met. 4.39), cooks and nurses, such as we meet telling and framing Apuleius’ inset ‘Cupid and Psyche’. Their scorned tales are to be noticed in texts of Aristophanes, Plato, Sotades (the Maronean?), Quintilian, Persius, Lucian, Tertullian, Lactantius and John Chrysostom. This last figure, a Christian educator, advises parents about how to inspire enthusiasm for Bible stories rather than for frivolous pagan fare. The harvest may be meagre, but that does not justify the profession’s ignoring useful, if porous, tale categories such as myth, legend and wondertale (further divided into household tale, animal fable, jocular anecdote, tall-tale and so on).

The verbal slapstick of WaspS 1174-196 certainly points to something that we would have suspected in any case: floating sub-literary anecdotes and short narratives. This reader comes to worry that for Anderson every ancient plot grew out of folktale.

\(^2\) See, e.g., D. Felton, Haunted Greece and Rome (Austin 1999) 77-88; A. Stramaglia, Res Inaudita: Storie di fantasmi nel mondo greco-latino (Bari 1999). Anderson’s ninth chapter, ‘Between Living and Dead’ (pp. 112-22), hustles too quickly through a variety of relevant tales of ghosts, separated lovers and Alcestis.

\(^3\) William F. Hansen is the author of the invaluable ancient folktale resource Ariadne’s Thread (Ithaca 2002), which unfortunately was not yet available to Anderson.

While Anderson never claims so boldly and while the sea of folklore is truly capacious, one waits impatiently for any razor sharpened by some principle of falsification. ‘When is a parallel not a parallel?’ (p. 17) is a good question. Anderson asserts that the genuine folklore ‘will maintain most of its structure, intrinsic logic and basic identity’ (p. 19) in various instantiations. The concept is a rational touchstone, but the criteria are too slippery to be reassuring. Anderson ingeniously and seriously (but self-destructively) proposes that we see Diotima in Plato’s Symposium as a purveyor of (inspired) old wives’ tales, claiming that she and her Eros provide parallels to the anula (‘little old woman’) and her outcast child in Apuleius’ long inset (p. 11).

Anderson correctly laments contemporary classicists’ ignorance of folklore scholarship (p. 12), although I do not agree that still they think folklore ‘a kind of degenerate mythology’. The names of Basile (1634-36), Perrault (1697) and Mme d’Aulnoy (1698) are nearly unknown or unmentioned, although this ignorance is not so general for the more academic and simultaneously more popular Gebrüder Grimm. Enthusiasm for issues of gender, race and class has outrun the more tedious comparative task of unearth ing disguised parallels and ‘deformed’ variants. Anderson, building on the work of the Germanist Jack Zipes and others such as Maria Tatar,\(^5\) nicely shows how modern academic categories can dovetail with interest in ancient narrative. Detlev Fehling’s discouraging, if logically possible, idea\(^6\) that even apparent folktales may be only pseudo-folktales (faketales?—if we coin a word following Richard Dorson’s ‘fakelore’) and, in fact, only precious Romantic literary invention of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, which has then entered the popular repertoire, has retarded classical research. The most extensive ancient example is Apuleius’ inset tale (if the term can be stretched so far), a version of the Monster-Bridegroom (AT 425a; cf. 425c: ‘Beauty and the Beast’) known best to classicists as ‘Cupid and Psyche’.

Anderson treats Cinderella (Herodotus’ Rhodopis, Hebrew Asenath, Sumerian Inanna), Snow White (Chione, Pygmalion’s ivory statue, Xenophon’s Anthia), Little Red Riding Hood, Bluebeard (Minos, Apuleius’ Charite) and the ‘obstacle flight’ in various chapters. He examines for this last tale early and late analogues to the ‘vulgate’ of the Argonaut voyage, stories featuring the heroes’ special helpers and magic objects. The persecuted and only intermittently competent protagonist (only by courtesy to be called a ‘hero’) needs helpers. Inanna and Enki in earlier Sumerian myth and the Islamic, tenth-century medieval Dede Korkut in medieval Oghuz Turkish preserve many motifs in the same order, a basic requirement for finding a tale-type. Anderson sees rather human Medea anticipated in Inanna, a fertility goddess. True, there are no hero’s tasks (or hero) in the former, and true, there is no magic ship in the latter but, like the Scottish (recorded 1954) ‘Green Man o’ Knowledge’, a good-for-nothing wins all the prizes by wit and unearned miracles. ‘Six Go through

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the World' (AT 513A) is the Grimms’ version of this tale-type in which a league of underdogs need and utilise special expertise—magic as the great equalizer. Hardy Hard-Ass, formerly known to a more squeamish publishing industry and public as ‘Hardy Hard-Head’, has one more and different helpers. Here a voice-commanded ‘land and air ship’ replaces the Argo, a ‘land and water ship’ (AT 513B), and a charmingly obscene hard set of buttocks replaces a man who can frost any fire (Grimm’s no. 71). Anderson notes a neat (if common before eyeglasses) analogue between Apollonius’ Lyceus and Hicks’ ‘See Well’, also the Grimms’ hawkeyed Huntsman.

‘The Ogre Blinded’ motif (AT type 1137)—here chapter 10, ‘Two Homeric Tales’ (pp. 123-32)—starts with Polyphemus but is extended to recent times with stories as far away as Finland. Anderson notes that any concatenated voyage could easily accommodate a monster-blinding and a wily hero with a trick-name. When Anderson lists eight or so parallels between Gilgamesh’s struggle with Humbaba and Odysseus’ Cyclopian spelunking (p. 127), one might expect a systematic attempt to trace the later (detailed) narrative to the earlier tale, but his breathless method moves on immediately to another ball of wax, Bellerophon’s magical horse. For Ares and Aphrodite’s escapade he finds an Egyptian tale at least eight centuries older, but a genetic connection is only hinted, not asserted or argued. Anderson conceives one Hittite Telepinus tale with a character named Zukki to be a lineal ancestor, in sound of name as well as function, for the Apuleian Psyche (p. 64). Are the meanings then of Psyche’s ‘meaningful’ name entirely fortuitous? Not all will be persuaded.

Chapter 12, ‘Fairytales into Romance’ (pp. 146-57), contends that popular ‘fairytale’ became Greek romance. Longus and Heliodorus’ heroines are patterned after Aschenputtel, a.k.a. Cinderella. Chloe’s recognitions of Longus are ‘part of a Cinderella mechanism’ (p. 146) and Calasiris ‘plays the part of the fairy god-person’. I am not sure that Anderson draws any line between suggestive parallels in narrative devices and claims for strict genetic connection. Xenophon, Achilles Tatius and the author of Apollonius of Tyre then provide examples of ‘a part Snow White’ (AT 709). Given the parallel predicaments of nearly all ancient (and many modern) novel heroines, Anderson seems to carry his reductionism too far when he argues for the ancient novels’ origins coming always from the embellishment of traditional tales.

Chapter 13, ‘Folktale and Sorcery: Some Reflections on Ancient Evidence’ (pp. 158-66), examines the nature of such folkplots’ popularity, exploring psychologism, especially the view that they exist to cushion the crises and problems of vulnerable adolescent girls. Bruno Bettelheim 7 is chastised for ‘ultra-speculative methods’ on the basis of Jack Zipes’ more sociological and historically based analysis. Anderson regards the application of Freudianism to fairytales as no more useful than applying Christian allegory to Ovidian metamorphoses, a view I endorse without his having yet argued it.

Anderson opens by cogently arguing that brittle sequences of motifs are likely to be borrowed (diffusion), not separately reinvented (polygenesis). We are unlikely

ever to have ‘the original [Ur-]version’ (itself a contested concept in folklore) but, more often than others think, Anderson argues that our classical texts gave rise to or share a common—more ancient—source with the surviving tales of early modern Europe, an ‘increasingly incestuous fairytale community’ (p. 170). Thus he argues that some common (Anatolian?) plot is the source of both Ovid’s Baucis and Philemon ‘myth’ and a Yorkshire wondertale (pp. 16f.)—genre variants. ‘If a story is a genuine folktales or fairytale it will maintain most of its structure, intrinsic logic and basic identity for centuries or millennia on end’ (p. 19). He acknowledges that some of his reconstructions require him ‘awkwardly [to] unscramble’ (p. 142) the texts that we have. Yet ‘much of the standard modern canon of fairytales existed in antiquity’ (p. 169). In sum, I think Anderson will achieve more when he aims his mind at less.

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Jon Mikalson has written on Greek religion in other contexts.  

1. The present book addresses Herodotus’ account of the Persian Wars from the Ionian Revolt to the battle of Plataea. The aims are to present Greek religious practices in a historical context for better understanding of the importance of the interplay of religion and history and to argue against those who play down the role of religious explanation in history. Unfortunately, as Mikalson explains in his first note (p. 197), Thomas Harrison’s book on Herodotus’ religion came out just as Mikalson was on the point of submitting his and Harrison also argues against the sceptics—from those who see religious reference as mere entertainment for the audience to those who see it as characteristic of Herodotus as the traditional story-teller rather than the historian. This overlap meant that Mikalson had to jettison large questions including, as he explains, ‘the relationship of religion to the study of ancient history, the nature of the “miraculous” and the “divine” and whether Herodotus “believed” in what he described’ (p. 197).

Mikalson’s first chapter of almost 100 pages presents religious incidents from the Persian Wars in chronological order. Extensive translations from Herodotus are

8 The notes are copious (sometimes fifteen on a page) and helpful, although the publisher unhelpfully places them, despite the wonders of technology, at the back. There is a good index of subjects and of tale-types and a bibliography that one can spend a lifetime absorbing. The proofreading has faltered in chapter eleven where words have been run together and an ancient critic named ‘Dio of Halicarnassus’ makes his unwelcome debut.

1 J. D. Mikalson, Religion in Hellenistic Athens (Berkeley 1998); Honor Thy Gods: Popular Religion in Greek Tragedy (Chapel Hill 1991); Athenian Popular Religion (Chapel Hill 1983).

2 T. Harrison, Divinity and History: The Religion of Herodotus (Oxford 2000).