

squeeze their national histories of literature in this meagre space! However, to be fair, I must admit that some important influences from abroad, like Hans Christian Andersen, are cautiously mentioned in the book. On the other hand, a statement like "Enid Blyton, the world's most popular children's author" (216), causes a strong reaction on my part: "Hey, there is a world outside Britain!"

But taking the volume for what it is, a history of *British and American* children's literature, the impression is totally positive. The basic concept of this volume — letting various scholars write a chapter each, thus utilising their special knowledge and insight — is more fruitful than many previous endeavours, including such distinguished works as John Rowe Townsend's *Written for Children*. Children's literature is thus set in a variety of contexts: historical, social, educational, aesthetic, in accordance with the modern view of literary history mentioned above. The chapter on early American literature makes a point of the specific conditions of the New World, causing the specific traits of American children's literature. It feels slightly odd — although understandable — that the last two chapters, dealing with the periods 1945-1970 and 1970-present, treat British and American literature together, not even trying to pinpoint the differences, which, at least for American writers who are denied entry into the British market, are obvious. Incidentally, where does this neat chronology come from? 1945 marks of course the end of World War II, but what happened in 1970 to draw a boundary there? A dilemma which no historian of literature can circumvent.

Often, histories of literature tend to lapse into an enumeration of names and titles, making them at best a useful reference. In this case, each chapter presents an enjoyable reading. It is also tempting to allow more space for "touchstones," and I am pleased to note that the contributors (or possibly the general editor) have refrained from this simple solution; after all, writers such as Lewis Carroll, Louisa May Alcott, Kipling or Milne have all been subjects for a number of special studies. Possibly the genre categories in some chapters (e.g. "The Emergence of Form") are too conventional; I prefer more overview treatment of texts, allowing comparison and cross-reference beyond the restrictive genre patterns, like in chapter 7, "Transitions." This difference doubtlessly reflects the attitude of individual contributors.

A history of literature is inevitably subjective, not to say personal. In the case of this volume, I see this as a merit, not a drawback.

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The Storyteller Preserves: Alice Kane's Wonder Tales Transcribed

The Dreamer Awakes. Alice Kane. Broadview Press, 1995. 185 pp. \$24.95 paper. ISBN 1-55111-047-4.

Alice Kane has told stories for sixty years, but only now has she published a book of her tales. These tales were recorded in live performances and transcribed; in

fact, Kane had never before seen her tales in print. To her surprise, she had strayed from her original sources. The result is a special collection of stories, edited by Sean Kane, who captures his aunt's distinctively lyrical style of oral performance.

Kane retells seventeen wonder tales, her specialty, in this collection. She describes wonder tales as "longish fairy tales that have elements in them sometimes of myth, at other times of simple folktale, and always of enchantment" (169). The stories she selects tend to feature strong women. Kane includes four stories from Ireland, where she spent her childhood. The other tales are from around the world, including places rarely represented, such as Albania.

This collection is deep as well as broad in scope, for the tales often feature unusual versions of familiar motifs. In "The Girl Who Took a Snake," the witch departs from the motif of the "witch turned helper." Although the princess has passed her tests and should be given safe passage, the witch attacks her, whispering: "I didn't mean to. I didn't mean to eat her. But I'm hungry! And I will" (159). In this story, unlike most tales using the "search for the lost husband" motif, the husband disappears and it is *not* the woman's fault.

These stories read beautifully. Kane uses the oral techniques of holding the story together by repeating structures and phrases. As a result, her style is at once simple and musical. For example, the mute queen eats a magic egg: "And when she had eaten a little bit she crowed like a cock. When she had eaten another little bit she clucked like a hen. But when she had eaten the whole egg, she spoke in her own sweet voice" (161). In "Childe Roland," she keeps the old *cante-fable* form, which uses poetry as a structuring device. Kane's images are, true to fairy tale style, simple, clear and striking. In the Underworld, "[t]he grass is red; the skies are dark" (156). Kane's sense of humour adds an earthy tone to her lyricism.

In her epilogue, Kane discusses the tales as tools of psychic survival in a world of danger. She argues for the need to preserve the stories of one's heritage, and seems — I think erroneously — to believe that multiculturalism leads us away from this task. Her passionate belief that stories are cultural anchors, however, cannot be debated.

My only real quibble with this book is the introduction by Robert Bringhurst, which features the vague mysticism that plagues nearly every introduction to fairy tales: "stories find the tellers they need. They nest in us as saw-whet owls and wood ducks nest in trees" (12). He also claims that Perrault was the first to use the fairy tale satirically, which overstates the case.

This book is marketed towards adults rather than children. They notes are comprehensive, and the sources are painstakingly acknowledged. Every storyteller should own and learn from this collection because the tales are chosen and told with such a love of language, story and history.

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