Many-Coloured Fish in the Sea of Story

—Celia Catlett

Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de. *Tales of Don Quixote, Book II*. Retold by Barbara Nichol. Toronto: Tundra, 2006. 224 pp. $24.99 hc. ISBN 0-88776-744-3.

Clever Katarina: A Tale in Six Parts. Retold by Ken Setterington. Illus. Nelly Hofer and Ernst Hofer. Toronto: Tundra, 2006. 40 pp. $22.99 hc. ISBN 0-8776-764-8.

Pinsker, Marlee. *In the Days of Sand and Stars*. Illus. François Thisdale. Toronto: Tundra, 2006. 87 pp. US$26.99 hc. ISBN 0-88776-724-9.

Thornhill, Jan, auth. and illus. *Folktails: Animal Legends from Around the World*. Toronto: Maple Tree, 2006. Rpt. of *Crow & Fox*. 1993. 32 pp. $17.95 hc. ISBN 1-897066-75-9.

Weaver, Janice. *The Quilt of Belonging: Stitching Together the Stories of a Nation*. Toronto: Maple Tree, 2006. 64 pp. $16.95 pb. ISBN 1-897066-50-3.

Zipes, Jack. *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre*. New York: Routledge, 2006. 332 pp. US$26.95 pb. ISBN 0-415-97781-9.

Ask yourself what stories are bred in the bone for you and have influenced your attitudes and behaviour. What stories would you hope will influence children you parent or teach or reach indirectly through your scholarship? For myself, as I dug deep in memory, I found two early influences. When I was very young, my mother told me the classic story of Ulysses' escape from the cave of the Cyclops (sans names), and in her telling conveyed how cleverness and intelligence can overcome strength that has limited vision. Of all the Greek legends, this is the only one encysted in my psyche. A partner story that I demanded of my father at bedtime was his rendition of Brer Rabbit's encounter

with the Tar Baby. These tales may have influenced my later fascination with trickster tales. My early partiality for them certainly promoted behaviour that has helped me through times when I felt powerless but somehow found a way out. It may also partially explain why so large a portion of the books I choose for my grandchildren and children's literature courses are related to folklore traditions.

As Jack Zipes argues in *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre*, folk and fairy tales can be powerful influences on individuals and societies, and, although the other texts under review here range from *Don Quixote* to quilts, the theories Zipes presents and develops in his intriguing study wove the net that let me gather these various fish in the sea of story and relate them to one another. Reading Zipes, I realized that these books do share one common element—they cover examples of what he refers to as memes. Following Richard Dawkins, Zipes defines a meme as "a unit of cultural transmission" (4), a kind of intellectual gene. Zipes also uses the term "to indicate a public representation or cultural replicator" (6). The successful meme is copied and recopied: "[I]t must be shaped or formed in such a way that many copies can be made; and it must be able to survive a long time so that many copies will be disseminated" (Zipes 5). The designs included in *The Quilt of Belonging*, and the retellings of animal legends, of a clever daughter tale, of the exploits of the famous Spanish knight errant, and of Bible stories all deal with art or story that has had enduring fame and influence. All qualify as successful memes.

Anyone interested in folklore and its effect on the young should read *Why Fairy Tales Stick*. In it, Zipes thoughtfully explores the psychological, cultural, and historical reasons why certain pieces of folklore become embedded in human consciousness and survive through time and space. Citing numerous scholars, among them, Luigi Cavalli-Sforza, Richard Dawkins, and Susan Blackmore, Zipes builds on the theory of memetics to explain the popularity and longevity of fairy tales that have been canonized in a given culture or around the world, and how they sometimes evolve in order to survive.

As Zipes explains it, the geneticist Cavalli-Sforza is interested in how ideas are transmitted and mutated and how ideas or customs can be either lost or recreated as they move from brain to brain and group to group (xiii). Dawkins suggests that we are wired to receive and then replicate those memes reinforced by our cultural environment, and Blackmore, following Dawkins, investigates how memes are disseminated through "'imitation'" and "'competition'" (qtd. in Zipes xiii) and affect the behaviour of individuals and

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groups. Tying memetics to folklore, Zipes asserts that "The fairy tale often takes the form of a meme in our brains as the input of a public representation, or replicator, and we process it in a module and transmit it in sociocultural contexts" (xiii-iv). He describes the fairy tale as "a polygenetic cultural artifact that has spread throughout the world through human contact" (xiv). Expanding on this, he says, " . . . the specific form of the oral wonder tale and the literary fairy tale . . . [was like] a process of contamination and contagion—the motifs and plots of stories spread like viruses that eventually formed a clearly identifiable genre, species or virus that we generally call the fairy tale" (3).

After establishing memetics as a useful theoretical basis, Zipes raises the questions that he will spend the book considering. First, what elements create a successful fairy-tale meme, and, secondly, following Dan Sperber's "epidemiological approach to culture" (Zipes 3), is the replication of fairy-tale memes for good or for harm? Zipes argues that some old tales can outlive their usefulness if a new context does not cause us to rethink their meaning. He also argues (as he has frequently about the increasingly bourgeois versions of the Grimms' fairy tales) that even retellings can be problematic and retrogressive, rather than progressive, in their influence. As Zipes states in the conclusion of *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, "great writers and storytellers [and, by extension, artists] . . . demand that the past and tradition justify themselves in the present" (241).

Janice Weaver's *The Quilt of Belonging* is a fine example of a justified use of old forms. It is not a collection of tales, but rather a very skillfully done catalogue of a Canadian exhibit of quilt blocks representing all the countries of the world.

This needlework was gathered to celebrate the origins of Canada's citizens. Though not story, it is folk craft. In fact, Zipes tells us that "the theory of memetics generally maintains that a meme is an informational pattern contained in a human brain (or in artifacts such as books or pictures)" (4). "Informational artifact" is an apt description of *The Quilt of Belonging*.

The project was conceived by artist Esther Bryan when she "read that there was at least one person in Canada from every other country in the world and . . . . to celebrate this remarkable diversity, she dreamed of making a massive quilt, with hundreds of blocks, each one designed to symbolize one country and made by a person originally from that place" ("Online Catalog"). The quilt, which was six years and hundreds of hands in the making, was installed at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in 2005, and will be exhibited around Canada over four years. Each block is a visual meme that encapsulates something important about the culture that inspired it. For example, the block for the Dominican Republic features its Duarte Peak "topped with a . . . statue that commemorates a nineteenth-century revolt known as the Restoration of the Republic" (Weaver 33) or, for another example, both Syria and the United Arab Emirates feature a coffee pot representing "warmth and hospitality" (Weaver 42–3). Stitched together in the massive exhibit—"36 metres (120 feet) long and 3.5 metres (10 feet) high" (Weaver 8)—the blocks reveal a human love of emblem, pattern, colour, and texture that transcends individual cultures.

Would that nations, religions, and races could be bound together as peacefully as these symbolic quilt pieces, because one issue that the quilt brings before us is the difference between physical and artistic transmigrations. The movement of peoples to a new environment, even when for freely chosen reasons, can be traumatizing for the migrant or for the old or new culture. The travel of story or music or a method of weaving, carving, or painting tends to enrich a new audience without depleting the giver or receiver. I am speaking, not of conquest-imposed influences, but of one artist influencing another, of jokes, stories, music, and art crossing borders and finding a new landscape in which to grow and evolve. As Zipes puts it, "[T]he storyteller must reveal that he or she is engaged in the preservation of tradition while standing outside it and transforming it from a personal and ideological viewpoint. The storyteller is never the tradition, never represents authentic tradition. The storyteller is an actor, an agent, a translator, an animator, . . . a thief who robs treasures to give something substantive to the poor" (242).

The quilt exhibit is intended to reveal the omni-national quality of Canada, and it achieves this even with the needlecraft of cultures formed within its boundaries. Weaver explains about the blocks by Native Peoples that "Every major First Nations, Métis, and Inuit group in Canada is represented in the quilt. Their seventy blocks make up the foundation row and wrap the quilt on the two sides, a sign of respect for our founding nations" (24). For example, the beadwork in the block representing the Plains Cree of Alberta and Saskatchewan is dramatic, containing "a rainbow, a starburst, and an eagle's head and feather. . . . [and] built around the four aboriginal colours of man—black, white, red, and yellow" (17). The block for the Eastern Cree of Northern Quebec "uses white-tanned moosehide to create a snowy backdrop for a mythical star-chasing bear," who tosses beads "in the air to fill the soft blue night sky with stars" (24). One other sombre-hued block pays tribute to the extinct Beothuk people of Newfoundland (25).

One block that represents all of Canada—all the First Peoples—is "a traditional medicine wheel, an ancient symbol for the circle of life" (44). Another block for all of Canada is a beaded maple leaf set on red velvet. Weaver says of it: "The leaf those beads create—its eleven points representing each of Canada's ten provinces and its northern territories—is sometimes clear and distinct and sometimes harder to make out. It suggests wide-open spaces, freedom, and a story that is still unfolding. . . . Like most Canadians, it is understated and modest (54).

The basis for the quilt project, reflected in the subtitle *Stitching Together the Stories of a Nation*, reminds us of how ancient traditions need not be only conservative and ethnocentric, but can also move us forward beyond factions and toward unity. Over the last century, the diaspora of many cultures has quickened and increased. It is becoming an overwhelming question, how to save what has strengthened the spirit and art of a given people without creating conflict with the host culture. There is no simple solution, but a quilt as metaphor pleases me much more than that of the United States's "melting pot," which conjures up an image of humanity being boiled down into porridge. Although the inspiration for the project was to celebrate the presence of immigrants in Canada, the result is Janus-faced, looking back to something cherished and special to the birthplace, looking forward to fitting that uniqueness into a larger picture.

There is also a global theme in Jan Thornhill's collection of tales, *Folktails: Animal Legends from Around the World* (a reprint of a 1993 edition entitled *Crow & Fox*). Thornhill is both reteller and

illustrator, and she selected well and illustrated the tales effectively. The full-page pictures for each tale are consistent in style but culturally specific in the features of landscape, flora and fauna, and their border patterns. Both the pun in the title and the unifying gimmick are clever. The tales are linked because one of the animals from each story moves on to the next story and country. The illustrations frequently include the animal that will figure in the next tale, producing the type of look-and-find game that children love.

The stories are global in two ways: they are gathered from hither and yon, and they have counterparts in many cultures. We start in India, with Rabbit fooling Elephant with a moon reflection trick (a popular trickster ploy), and then travel on to West Africa, where Rabbit encounters Tortoise, not for a race as in Aesop, but as a prisoner stuck to Tortoise's honey-coated shell. (I wonder if this is the ur-tale for Brer Rabbit and the Tar Baby or simply a variant of Joel Chandler Harris's version, also imported from Africa.) Tortoise then travels to China and has his shell cracked because he can't keep his mouth shut while being carried by Cranes, a pourquoi tale found in many cultures. Crane in Australia is unable to keep impatient Crow from blackening its white feathers by snatching a fish from the fire. The story of how Crow turned black has many versions among the Native peoples of the western hemisphere.

The next story, of Crow and Fox, is a Middle Eastern variation on the Aesopian fable about the Stork and the Fox. Here, instead of soup in a flat dish or narrow-necked jug, the hosts serve porridge on a flat rock, difficult for Crow to peck up, and dates tossed down to catch on a thorn bush that Fox cannot penetrate. The European tale is the classic one about Bear losing his tail by fishing through an ice hole on Fox's advice. Crossing the ocean, Fox mutates to Coyote. In Western Canada, Coyote and Bear compete in crying "Day, day, day" and "Night, night, night," and the resulting tie is why "we have both day and night" (20). This battle between light and dark is naturally relevant for peoples living in the far North, where the sun's seasonal shift is more dramatic than elsewhere. In "Coyote and Mouse," set in the dry American Southwest, Coyote, that arch trickster, is teased by Mouse into laughing and spilling water intended for its young, until Mouse finally relents in pity. The moral, if any, seems to be about the tediousness and unkindness of practical jokes. The final story takes us to South America, where Mouse discovers that Tapir is thriving because of a secret food tree. The animals gather and gnaw it down, an action that is not the environmental disaster it might seem, but the beginning of the dispersal of

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nourishment for all: "Fruits and vegetables that had never grown anywhere but on the Food Tree were suddenly growing everywhere" (30).

On the last page is an outline map of the world, with the site of each tale marked, and an explanation of the ethnic source of the patterns in the illustration borders. Although the versions Thornhill selected are specific to particular groups and areas, they, like subspecies of birds, have variant cousins found far away. As she says in her introduction, "many of the same stories are shared by people all over the world. . . . [S]ometimes the characters change, or the endings—but the basic stories remain the same" (3). Another author, Gail Haley, speaking of why she has chosen to retell and illustrate stories from so many cultures, also defends the practice of crossing borders for material: "[T]he stories told to the children of any society belong to children the world over. So I attempt, through my books . . . to enable today's child to sit at the knee of Everyman, and hear the stories from every land" (9).

Like the quilt patches, Thornhill's stories simultaneously reveal the diversity and community of the human imagination. Thornhill has created a very satisfying book that well deserves its reissuing under a more inclusive title. No one tale is remarkable, but they combine to make an excellent introduction to worldwide animal tales. From childhood on, a reader will encounter such anthropomorphic characters and their lessons in many variations. Fables are among the most prolific memes in folklore.

Clever Katarina, Ken Setterington's retelling of the Grimms' "The Clever Farmer's Daughter" (#94 in Jack Zipes' translation) is an example of a single-story edition that makes a lovely gift for a child or a good buy for a book collector interested in quality illustrations. Nelly and Ernst Hofer employed the Germanic folk art technique of *scherenschnitt* (paper cutting) to create intricate and charming illustrations that reinforce the

storyline and increase in complexity as Katarina journeys to the king, and then recede to a simpler, more open design for the conclusion.

Katarina, a peasant's daughter, is an interesting combination of heroines like Mollie Whuppie, Patient Griselda, and King Thrushbeard's bride. Setterington's retelling, however, does not add much new to the folktale tradition of clever women. He expands the story with details, such as introducing characters who help Katarina with the goods she needs to solve the King's riddle, save her father, and become queen, but the tale is basically unchanged in events or meaning. The king is still quick-tempered, irrational, and unjust. The Katarina character is still basically a sly but accommodating servant in spite of her queenship.

The coda that Setterington appends does acknowledge the latent feminist element in the earlier version—that Katarina is the moving force in the king's household: "From that time on, whenever the king had a difficult problem to solve, he would always turn to Katarina for advice. Together they ruled wisely and were known as the king and Katarina, the peasant's clever daughter. They had one child, a girl who is now the queen. I have heard that she is scouring the kingdom for a clever husband" (36). The retelling does not, however, deal with a core feminist issue, which is why Katarina wants to stay with such a man. He imprisoned her father out of unfounded suspicion that the peasant was withholding a pestle to go with a golden mortar. Later, the king imprisons a farmer to force him to tattle on Katarina, who has secretly advised the man of how to get around an adverse judgment given by the king. Finally, this foolish monarch, enraged at the woman he claims to love, dismisses her as his wife and sends her back to her hut. Why on earth does she drug and take him with her as the promised farewell gift of "that which was best and dearest" to her (36)?

My question is similar to that Zipes asks on why Hansel and Gretel's father, after not defending his children, is rewarded at the end of the story (196). I would like to see Katarina give her ungrateful husband the what-for; or to retell the tale even more radically in the manner of humorous Internet or children's versions, or of the "Fairytales for Feminists" books by Dublin's Attic Press. I would have her take over the kingdom and give the king a taste of an arbitrary prison sentence. The meme of the subservient woman (however virtuous and clever) has proved hard to eradicate and is still strong in many cultures. It is relevant, unfortunately, where women still need to please (or trick) a male master in order to survive. I see no compelling reason, however, to encourage its replication. "Retelling" "The Clever Farmer's Daughter" simply by decorating it with more

detail does not give a reader any encouragement to question the underlying social dynamics. In the chapters on "Blue Beard" and "Hansel and Gretel" in *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, Zipes addresses a similar problem of recasting fairy tales without evolving them to meet the needs of a different culture or an audience with an expanded consciousness. In fact, he holds that the very success of a tale as meme may depend on its ability to mutate: "Like the selfish gene, a fairy tale as meme is concerned with its own perpetuation and will adapt to changes and conflicts in the environment" (15).

Barbara Nichol's retelling of Miguel de Cervantes's *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote de la Mancha (1605 and 1615)* as *Tales of Don Quixote, Book I* and *Book II* employs an opposite method of revising an old classic, that of condensing rather than expanding. I have twice read the original with delight, but found myself impatiently hurrying through this concise version of *Book II*. Nichol, who carefully researched Cervantes's books for a documentary on CBC Radio's "Ideas" series, has usually selected well and keeps Cervantes's irreverent and reflexive mode, but I wanted either less or more. Nichol's choice to leave out many side tales and anecdotes, while perhaps a practical necessity for condensing the book, weakens the characterization. For example, when his friends tell Quixote a warning tale of a seemingly sane madman who ruins his chance of release by claiming at the last minute to be Neptune, our Man of la Mancha refuses to see any connection between this and the revival of his knight errant ambitions: "'[W]hat did you mean by saying that it [the story] was made for the present occasion? . . . I am not Neptune, . . . god of the waters" (Cervantes 417). This blind reaction signals Quixote's revived madness more strongly than exclaiming, "*Oh Dear! He thinks he is a knight*" (Nichol 4). Nichol relies too much on editorial comments in italics—on telling rather than the fictional strategy of showing. Some of her omissions misrepresent a character more seriously, as when Sancho claims it is his wife's fault that he demanded pay as a squire (Nichol 11). In Cervantes's fifth chapter (which Nichol omits), Sancho Panza's wife Teresa does briefly mention the importance of money, but the gist of her advice to her husband is that his ambition to gain the governorship Quixote promises is foolish, and that pretending to be above one's station is even more so. She announces, "'[T]he name I have is good enough for me without their putting a "Doña" on top of it and making it so heavy I can't carry it" (Cervantes 541). She also questions who made Quixote a Don, as his family was not titled. What a shame to have the vigorous and practical Teresa reduced to a mere money grubber. Leaving out the

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bypaths also diminishes the picaresque quality so central to the original. Part of Cervantes's genius is his ability to keep us entranced through a series of "shaggy dog" stories. Humour depends a great deal on pace, and a joke too quickly told loses its effect, which may explain why I found Nichol's version unsatisfying. The cumulative weight of Cervantes' zaniness and irony is gone. I admit to a bias against the *CliffsNotes/Readers' Digest* approach to retelling, so perhaps I am being too hard on the book.

In retellings for children, I prefer either a very simplified text enhanced by interpretative illustration (for example, something like Selina Hastings's *Reynard the Fox*, which conveys the characters and main stories of this animal epic in a lively 76 pages, well illustrated by Graham Percy) or the teaser approach (a careful selection of the sections most likely to entice a youthful audience). A third possibility is a complete transformation of a character like Quixote, such as I have always thought Mark Twain gave us in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, with Tom's somewhat addlepated living-by-the-book in the games of Sherwood or piracy that he directs for his friends.

But Nichol's condensation of this second volume—and previously of *Tales of Don Quixote, Book I*—may have its uses as an introduction of a complex classic to young people. The Sancho Panza passages should have appeal for young adults, who often relish body humour and can also appreciate the humbly born Sancho's ability to rise above his aristocratic mockers and deliver wise decisions when he is set up as a judge. (Like the clever Katarina, the Sancho of Book II reveals a talent for getting people out of fixes.) Nichol did leave me with a desire to reread Cervantes, to learn more about her radio documentary *Don Quixote: Four Hundred Years on the Road*, and to read her other books for children. Nichol's work may inspire some young people to read Cervantes's books when they are older, but I don't think it would have done this for me.

The flyleaf on Nichol's book informs us that

Cervantes's *Quixote* was "voted by the Nobel Institute as the most important novel of all time." This honour is a peculiar fate for a subversive work of fiction that examines the damage certain forms of literature can do. The romantic behaviour of knights errant had become a meme in the mind of the Man of La Mancha and induced a delusional madness, a case of a meme as a virus that harms the person infected. Ironically, the Knight and his Squire have themselves become memetic figures well beyond the borders of their Spanish origins. Tourist-trap stores filled with both cheap and expensive statues of the two, the Broadway musical version of their adventures, and the frequent caricatures of Quixote in political cartoons all attest to the fact that Don Quixote and Sancho Panza are embedded in the Western consciousness. Mercifully, the books, though canonized, are not sacred texts with cults built around the Knight of the Pale Countenance.

Exegesis of the Bible and of other books considered holy in various cultures is an ancestor of secular literary criticism, and it is precisely the existence of sacred texts that underlies memetic theory applied to story. In his chapter on the survival of traditional storytelling, Zipes asks,

> Why should we respect and maintain traditional storytelling and classical fairy tales as memes if traditions based on different religions and nationalisms are responsible for much of the misunderstandings and conflicts in our world today? Why should we be concerned whether traditional storytelling and fairy tales can survive or whether we are using the appropriate means to transmit customs, mores, and language when they may be anachronistic and deadly for our children and ourselves? Aren't the religious narratives of every living religion today intended to be taken as the gospel truth, somewhat responsible in their literal and fundamental interpretations for crimes against children and humanity? How do we find truth in untruthful tales and believe traditional storytellers—priests, ministers, rabbis, tribal leaders, shamen [sic], imams, gurus, teachers, politicians, actors, and so on—who often blur our view of the world to rationalize their own power? (226)

Zipes answers his own questions at length, arguing that although a blinkered acceptance of any tradition is problematic, we can build on traditional stories to increase our understanding of the evolving human condition.

Marlee Pinsker, the author of *In the Days of Sand and Stars*, is trying to do something like this in her interpretations of stories about women in

the Old Testament. Explaining that she is following "the tradition of *midrash*, which means [to] explore the Biblical text to find new insights for our times. . . . giving voices to the people we want to understand" ("Foreword"), Pinsker imagines these historical women as questioning their roles in a modern manner. Most of the stories end, however, with the women's reaffirmation of their role in the God of Israel's plan. Hers is a curious book that combines cynicism and lyricism in its speculations. Some of the women are strengthened, others softened from the original account. Take, as example of the latter, the story of Rebecca, in which Pinsker gives Rebecca "a love of harmony" (53). Rebecca with a love of harmony? Rebecca who, like the wicked stepmothers in fairy tales, favours one child over another and cheats her elder son, Esau, out of his father's blessing by fooling the blind old man with the disguise she provides for her favoured son, Jacob (Gen. 27)?

There is also a tension between the inspirational and the feminist at some points in the book, as when Sarai, grabbed by a drunken, abusive brother who shoves her dust cloth in her mouth, "giggles" (26) after she escapes. The laugh is apparently intended to show Sarai's resilience, but it and her mother's explanation that "'He's your brother, Sarai. You must show him respect. He didn't like the way you were treating our family god'" (27) seem to trivialize the indignity Sarai has just suffered.

This invented tale of the young Sarai and Avram continues as Sarai steals the seeds put as tribute into the paws of a "cat-headed god in front of the store" that Avram keeps for his father (27). Sarai's confession that she gives them to a blind beggar inspires Avram to destroy the idols in his father's shop. And the rest is biblical history: "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country [Ur], and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee" (*Holy Bible*, Gen. 12.1), the land being Canaan, of course. I did not initially identify the basis for this imagined story, "Sarai: Something Wonderful," but Pinsker's mention at its beginning that Sarai lived in "Ur of the Chaldees" at least allowed me to track down some passages (II Kings 22.14–20 and 24–25) set in this area, which had a complicated history of alternating idolatry and obedience to the mandates of the God of Israel. Abraham's and Sarah's origins in Ur (Gen. 11.27–30) may have suggested to Pinsker a way of compressing events and creating backgrounds and motivations for these biblical characters. The young girl Sarai is the very famous biblical woman, Abraham's wife Sarah, who has the recorded story of her miraculous pregnancy at age ninety (Gen. 17.15–21 and 18.9–15). In "Sarah at the Well,"

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Pinsker covers this in a manner fairly close to the Old Testament version.

Zipes has quite a different take on the Abraham story. After hearing an NPR discussion on Bruce Feiler's *Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths*, Zipes comments, "How, I asked myself, did a man, who subscribed to infanticide [his willingness to murder his son Isaac in order to stay in God's favour] . . . become an exemplary if not the exemplary figure in three world religions?" (233).

Who is the intended audience for these fictional stories about historical women? The format of the book, with its gilt-edged pages and yellow satin ribbon for bookmark suggests marketing for religious groups. Pinsker seems to be reaching out to young-Judeo-Christian-female believers who are troubled by the harsh paternalism found in the Old Testament and hope, instead, to find feminine role models there. For instance, Pinsker pictures Eve as quite bold in her questioning of God after the fall:

> She asked when could she have a name of her own. She wanted a name. She asked if they would really get a chance to go beyond the boundaries of Eden. Newly imbued with the concepts of good and evil, she asked whether there had to be good to have evil, and whether there had to be evil in order to have good. God stepped back. (14)

Namelessness is indeed a problem for the women mentioned in the Old Testament. Pinsker has to choose a name (Naamah) for Noah's wife, because this important second Eve, mother of all of Noah's descendants who survived the flood, has no name recorded in Genesis 6-9. (I had to check the book and chapter for this and the other stories. Pinsker does not reference her biblical sources.) In *All the Women in the Bible* (a more comprehensive set of stories intended for an older audience), M. L. del Mastro lists two Naamahs (neither of them Noah's wife) and says, "no mention is made of her [Noah' wife's] origin or parents" (95). In her story, Pinsker extrapolates on the second Eve idea, giving

her Naamah the ability to talk with animals and claiming that she brought order to the messy ark by freeing the animals to walk about and by planting seeds to create a floating, "second, brief Garden of Eden" (23).

But for all the feminist bent that Pinsker gives most of her retellings, as with the examples of Eve and Noah's wife, and in making Dina, who was raped, a strong woman, other samples of her *midrash* have a touch of feminine stereotyping. Leah and Rachel are depicted as rivals over Jacob, even though, in Genesis 29, the substitution of Leah for the younger Rachel on the wedding day is solely their father Laban's doing. Pinsker turns the reference to Leah as "tender eyed" (Gen. 29.17) into "the red eyes of jealously" (55).

The digitally enhanced paintings by François Thisdale heighten the duality of purpose and meaning I find in the book. Thisdale's illustrations are misty and romantic, whereas Pinsker's insights on Biblical women are sometimes hard-edged. Thisdale's illustrations do occasionally combine authenticity with creativity, for example, the picture of Joseph in the many-coloured coat woven by Dina (68). Rather than the gaudy stripes I recall from most depictions of this coat, Thisdale has chosen to use the idea of the multi-coloured wool from the sheep that Joseph bred on Rachel's advice that "there is an old folk tale that says the sheep will reproduce dark or light, spotted or speckled, according to what they see when they breed" (Pinsker 64). The full-page illustration shows Joseph with a rich-textured, speckled coat that any shepherd longing to keep warm might desire. I find less successful, however, the close-up of the light-eyed, long-lashed, half-veiled woman on page 54, who, after much puzzling, I determined is Rachel, even though Leah is the main character in the story that follows. Yes, Rachel is supposed to be beautiful, but somehow I have never envisioned her looking like an eye-makeup model in a filtered photo. Whether the difference in tone between picture and text arises from a publisher-enforced disjunction of author and illustrator or for some other reason, the stories and their illustrations are not always a good match.

Pinsker's book would be stronger for its purposes of inspiring young people to build on Bible stories if Pinsker had included an index of the biblical references that underlie her stories. I often had to check back and forth between her tales and the "Dictionary Concordance" in my edition of the Bible in order to reach some understanding of the point she was making. She could also have strengthened any feminist message by giving her version of the stories of some of the acknowledged strong women of the Bible, like Deborah and Judith. Perhaps religious meditation,

rather than a critique of patriarchal structures, is the core of her book. I found her intentions hard to judge. Pinsker attempts to give a feminist edge to the stories she imagines, but piety seems to keep her on a short tether. The study of women in the Bible is a growing field. No expert in this field, I can only record a wish that the investigations proceed from a variety of perspectives. Given the worldwide and massive dispersal of Bible stories, the women portrayed in it are arch-memes.

In his peroration on the need to use the traditional to rethink the possibilities for future generations, Zipes says that the story of Abraham

> . . . demonstrated vividly how tradition represses (or inadvertently reveals) how we bake and eat our children, or if we keep them alive, how we beat stories into them that will make them willing subjects of forces to whom they grant control over their destinies. No matter how one interprets the story, there are some fundamental threads that hold it together, and they are all tied to patriarchal notions: that there is a male God, that believers in this God are bound to obey his every word, and that they must be ready to kill their own sons and daughters in his name. Over the centuries, these notions have been used in myriad ways, somewhat like memes, to rationalize thousands of wars, and all the murders and deaths that have resulted from these conflicts stem from people's belief in these traditional stories that have no verifiable foundation. Such is the power of storytelling, or rather such is the power of traditional storytelling. (233–34)

Zipes is arguing for a questioning of sacred and canonical texts. As he acknowledges he has done himself, one can translate famous tales as literally as possible, and by so doing, help preserve a historical artifact. Zipes holds, however, that when we retell, we must also rethink. An example of rethinking a biblical story that comes to my mind is Daniel Quinn's reinterpretation of the Cain and Abel story in his Turner Award-winning novel, *Ishmael*. Quinn connects the brothers' relations with God and each other to the agricultural revolution, which clashed with the flock-keeping culture of the Israelites. (Cain the farmer is a "Taker" of land for crops, and Abel is a dismayed "Leaver," a nomadic shepherd who claims no one piece of land). This thought-provoking interpretation is more to my taste as an exercise in *midrash*.

We also need to cross cultural borders as we teach our children canonical or sacred tales. Another of my favourite retellings of an Old Testament story is "Noah Hunts a Woolly

Mammoth," Inuit elder Mark Nuqac's version, as recorded by Howard Norman in *The Girl Who Dreamed only Geese, and Other Tales of the Far North*. Nuqac pictures Noah drifting into Hudson Bay and giving little reciprocal generosity to the villagers who help the ark's passengers with food. Noah accidentally and clumsily slays a woolly mammoth, but refuses to share. The story is a clever microcosm of what happened to Native Peoples following the intrusion of Europeans.

Zipes acknowledges that "Not all traditional storytellers are holy people who call for blind faith in the putative truths of their tales" (226), but because memetic tales affect "the way we view the world" (227), he suggests that we "ask these questions about traditional tales and their survival: What are the traditional tales that reoccur . . . and why? . . . How is it possible to tell a tale from another culture through traditional storytelling? Is it worth the effort to use storytelling to bring about greater intercultural understanding?" (227). These questions are pertinent to the texts reviewed here and informed my thinking, but I found no definitive answers. Neither does Zipes claim to have settled the issues he raises. As usual, he wants the reader to join him in grappling with ideas. A continuing investigation can be more valuable than settling for a facile answer.

Psychotherapist Eric Berne, a developer of the transactional analysis so popular in the 1960s and 1970s, posited that people's favourite fairy tales can reveal the "scripts" by which they live. "A script," he says, "is an ongoing program, developed in early childhood under parental influence, which directs the individual's behavior in the most important aspects of his life" (418). He views the process as usually negative: "Scripts are artificial systems which limit spontaneous and creative human aspirations" (213). Because therapists deal mainly with pathological behaviours, they tend to judge as harmful factors that may be neutral. Scripts and memes can be either beneficial or inhibiting. I began this essay with an account of stories that influenced me positively in early childhood, stories of surviving by using intelligence. Delving into memories of my fairy-tale reading choices in adolescence, I realized that those connected with the Cupid and Psyche plot, like "Beauty and the Beast" and "East of the Sun and West of the Moon," had a great hold on me. One such tale, Andrew Lang's "The Enchanted Pig," has a heroine whose task it is to wear out three pairs of iron shoes in order to reclaim her husband. When I was a teenager, I regarded this as a wonderful love story. Undoubtedly reinforced by the movies and women's magazines of the 1950s, I and countless other women of that generation ingested the meme that a "true bride" should be

> Undoubtedly reinforced by the movies and women's magazines of the 1950s, I and countless other women of that generation ingested the meme that a "true bride" should be willing to persist in redeeming a husband, even if he might be a monster, or have absented himself for some false bride.

willing to persist in redeeming a husband, even if he might be a monster, or have absented himself for some false bride. The Psyche story, while it has its beauty as a metaphor for the endurance of spirit, is ambivalent as a guide for romance. Some women did strap on their iron shoes, trudge over years of rocky marriage, and prevail (or not prevail); others rejected that script and learned to climb their own mountains. We need to recognize and analyze our own scripts.

What Zipes is arguing in *Why Fairy Tales Stick* is that we must transcend our traditions. We cannot deny the existence of parental and cultural templates, but we can question and recast them. Retelling folklore and encouraging the young to rethink and retell the old tales is not just a literary game; it is serious life business. Salman Rushdie, exiled from family by the *fatwa* imposed on him for questioning his culture's memes, conveys this in his novel, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. The Water Genie Iff caries a wand of sorts "somehow more fluid than solid . . . made of thousands of little veins flowing with differently coloured liquids, all held together by some unbelievable invisible force" (Rushdie 56). When Haroun claims that "even if you do turn off your Story Water, my father will still be able to tell stories," he learns that "the best storytellers" need these living waters, not those of the stagnant Dull Lake (58). The young hero restores the "Ocean of the Streams of Stories" (200) and is rewarded by a return to an open and free life. Storytellers, scholars, and teachers should encourage the free flow of the sea of stories and its ever-changing colours.

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