Cristina Bacchilega and Jennifer Orme, eds., *Inviting Interruptions. Wonder Tales in the 21ˢᵗ Century* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2021), 254 pp., ISBN: 978-0-8143-4700-3

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In 2017, in her lecture at the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts (ICFA), Cristina Bacchilega asked herself and her audience: "Where Can Wonder Take Us?" While, on that occasion, she answered that 'wonder' could take us "everywhere and nowhere", in the past decades, her scholarly works clearly proved that 'wonder' took her on several intriguing 'journeys'. More recently, 'wonder' has taken her and Jennifer Orme at the 'rediscovery' of contemporary tales from several parts of the world – tales eventually collected in the anthology *Inviting Interruptions: Wonder Tales in the 21ˢᵗ Century*.

Published in February 2021 by Wayne State University Press (Detroit), *Inviting Interruptions* consists of twenty-four 'wonder tales' of the new millennium (or shortly before). Specifically, the collection is divided into two parts and brings together what Bacchilega and Orme call 'interruptions' and 'invitations', namely textual and visual 'wonders' – either introduced or followed by a thought-provoking editors' note – created by twenty talented writers and artists between 1990 and 2020. Enriched with a detailed introduction and sections about the authors and editors, sources and credits, as well as works consulted and further readings, the book stands out for at least two reasons: 'multimodality' and 'intersectionality'. Meaningfully, this innovative anthology gathers works of several genres created through different media (from short stories to films, from comics to sculptures and paintings) – narratives and artworks capable of speaking to people with various backgrounds and desires while addressing current topics. Although each tale would deserve mention, for space constraints, I will name just a few in order to highlight the book's peculiar 'heterogeneity'.

In the first part, "Inviting Interruptions", the editors gather eleven "engaging disturbances that ask us to stop and rethink in new ways" (xii). The first one is "Once Upon a Time": an evocative book sculpture by English artist Su Blackwell aimed at reflecting on both "the wonders and fears of childhood" – for its content – and "the precariousness of the world we inhabit and the fragility of our life, dreams and ambitions" (2) – for the medium employed. This opening 'wonder' is followed by other works that, by depicting 'unconventional' characters and events, "seem to suggest new ways of thinking" (xvi). Among the others, we find three adaptations of stories that are much steeped into our culture – using the terminology proposed by Gérard Genette in *Palimpsestes: La lítterature au second degré* (1982), 'hypertexts' dealing with their 'hypotexts' in different ways. The first one is Emma Donoghue's "The Tale of the Cottage", a retelling of the "Hansel and Gretel" tale (ATU 327A), originally included in the collection *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*, published by the Irish-Canadian writer in 1997. This 'inclusive' tale stands out because it "invites us into the mind of an unnamed girl with cognitive difference" (7), who tells the story not only from her point of view – as usually happens in Donoghue's fairy-tale retellings and feminist adaptations in general – but also in her own language from the very beginning: "I once had brother that mother say we were pair of hands one fast one slow. I once had father he got lost in woods. I once had mother" (4). Similarly, Maya Kern and David Kaplan include 'unusual' fairy-tale characters in their reimagined tales. For example, in "How to Be a Mermaid" (2012), a comics adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid", Kern focuses on female desires. Moving away from Disney's representation, she tells the story of Princess Abigail, a human being, and Yaya, a "sharp-toothed mermaid" (44), which concludes with an unhappy ending – highlighted by the dark shades of the ending page that oppose to the bright colours of the opening one. In the film adaptation of

"Little Red Riding Hood" (ATU 333), directed by Kaplan in 1997 and based primarily on the French tale "The Story of Grandmother", we find a protagonist – interpreted by a young Christina Ricci – who has "more agency over her own sexuality in a modern context" and is involved in what Pauline Greenhill, author of "Wanting (To Be) Animal: Fairy-Tale Transbiology in *The Storyteller*" (2014), would call a 'transbiological relationship' with a dancing wolf.

The second part, "Interrupting Invitations", contains thirteen works that unsettle "mainstream fairy-tale expectations" (xii). In other words, they are "images and texts that appear to us to be a little more explicit in their use of wonder to intervene in the assumed 'innocence' of fairy tales" (xvi). The section opens with Rosalind Hyatt Orme's "Medusa", a figurine made by Orme's niece, whose image has been used for the front cover of the whole book. With her hot-pink skin and black 'living' tentacles, this faceless character appears polite and disquieting, thus giving contrasting feelings despite the lack of eyes and mouth. This artwork is followed by "Fairytales for Lost Children" (2013), a tale written by British Somali author Diriye Osman, in which it is possible to identify a harsh critique of the hegemonic fairy-tale model created by Walt Disney. Like other stories in the book, this tale – one of the longest – is characterised by what Genette calls 'transtextuality' since it explicitly refers to well-known fairy tales, such as "Sleeping Beauty". Besides, it perfectly represents the 'intersectionality' that distinguishes the anthology. Indeed, the protagonist, Xirsi, is a ten-year-old refugee who moves from Somalia to Kenya and tells his "fragmented experience" (95) by using a mixed language made up of Kiswahili, Italian, Somali, and English. Meaningfully, he falls in love with another boy, but, in the end, he understands that "none of the fairytales [he] had read had prepared [him]" (93) for an unhappy ending. Following this story that, like many others, tries to break what Jack Zipes calls 'Disney spell' since 1999, another 'wonder' that stands out in this second part is without a doubt "Bare Bones" (2002) by Joellyn Rock. As a matter of fact, this retelling of the Russian tale of Vasilisa and Baba Yaga is an example of hypertextual 'digital' storytelling. Available at *www.rockingchair.org* since 2001 and printed in the following year in the journal *Marvels and Tales*, this interactive work allows one to explore different possible versions of the same tale – in this case, a visual prose poem that "builds a bridge for the fairy-tale audience between traditional media and new media" (198).

Among other 'wonders', this anthology includes "Still Rather Fond of Red" by Jamaican Canadian writer Nalo Hopkinson – a collage portraying a black woman challenging "the white male colonial gaze" (160), also used by Bacchilega for the cover of her book *Fairy Tale Transformed? Twenty-First-Century Adaptations and the Politics of Wonder* (2013) – and works aimed at reflecting on environmental issues. It is the case of Shaun Tan's "Birth of Commerce", a pastel and charcoal artwork showing strange creatures that the editors define as "the least recognizable beings we encountered in this anthology" (46). Indeed, except for some organic beings that one can barely notice, the Australian artist illustrates entirely (or almost entirely) mechanical 'living' beings trading tiny objects like buttons and marbles in a dystopian scenario where pollution is overflowing. As pointed out in the questions at the end of the editors' note, these beings could be cyborgs, aliens or even a possible evolution of human beings if they do not understand that they have to respect the world they inhabit.

As can be seen, while gathering a small sampling of 'wonder tales' "that put pressure on and reanimate the genre from perspectives that are not accounted for in its mainstream interactions" (ix), Bacchilega and Orme adopt an intersectional approach instead of focusing only on gender. Indeed, to quote the title of Cathy Lynn Preston's chapter book in *Fairy Tale and Feminism: New Approaches* (2004) by Donald Haase, the anthology does not just include tales 'disrupting the boundaries of genre and gender'. Through the depiction of characters with 'different' identities, backgrounds, stories, desires, traumas and concerns, these 'new' tales "directly address contemporary issues in nuanced and intersectional ways" (xi), focusing on debated topics such as environmental concerns, disability, and abuse of power.

In conclusion, it can be said that it is not surprising that this well-finished and well-organised book has been praised by renewed scholars in the field of fairy-tale studies – to name but one among others, Marina Warner. Due to its characteristics, it really represents a significant contribution for both scholars in the field of fairy-tale studies and 'readers' ready to be 'interrupted' or 'invited'. As Zipes points out in his praise, these narratives and artworks "reflect the troublesome times in which we live", and, as Greenhill observes, they contrast with the mainstream "fairy-tale world wherein the best prevail". In other words, these 'wonders' "invite us to imagine the world ... differently" and "to see ourselves differently, interrupt complacency, and imagine Otherness" (xiii). Eventually, while highlighting the transformative power of fairy tales, they offer alternatives, new models, and different possibilities; and, to use an expression coined by Bacchilega, they enrich what she defines as the "fairy-tale web".