

*Contes en réseaux: L'émergence du conte sur la scène littéraire européenne.* Patricia Eichel-Lojkine.

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In this ambitious and wide-ranging study, Patricia Eichel-Lojkine provides the most complete account to date of the emergence of the literary fairy tale in Italy and France. Throughout, Eichel-Lojkine demonstrates that the genre, variously known as *fiabe* and *cunto* in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy, and *conte de fées* in late seventeenth-century France, must be understood as a transcultural phenomenon, the product of borrowings and rewritings not only among European cultures, but also by those cultures of narrative traditions from the Middle East and Asia. Although these insights are not new — especially for folklorists — literary scholarship has been slow to acknowledge the transcultural dimension of the fairy tale. The historical and contextual specificity Eichel-Lojkine provides fills in many gaps of the history of the genre, while nuancing more reductive narratives that have appeared recently.

In an illuminating introduction, Eichel-Lojkine turns to Foucault as a way of accounting for both the constancy and the variability of fairy-tale narratives across time and space. The notion of the “network” (*réseau*) allows her to move beyond a dichotomy between diachrony and synchrony and instead to foreground the relations among discursive formations that gave rise to a new literary genre in mid-sixteenth-century Italy with Giovan Straparola’s *Le Piacevoli Notti* (1550–53). Through the notion of the

network, Eichel-Lojkine also seeks to avoid the teleology that results from a search for origins or an emphasis on the trace and memory of a narrative tradition. Instead, in Foucauldian fashion, she sets out to privilege the conditions that make it possible for discontinuous discourses to aggregate in and as a genre appearing as a series. Accordingly, Eichel-Lojkine's approach is twofold: genealogical (or diachronic) — emphasizing discursive constraints across time resulting in a new genre — and synchronic — linking specific fairy tales with ambient discourses and texts. The first of the book's three parts concentrates on the broader genealogical question, and the second and third parts on a two-pronged diachronic and synchronic analysis of selected tales.

Part 1 investigates definitions of the fairy tale (chapter 1), the genealogy of the genre (chapter 2), and its transformations from Straparola to Perrault (chapter 3). Working from the characteristics identified by Max Lüthi and Andre Jolles, Eichel-Lojkine argues, convincingly, that the fairy tale is by definition “evolving and migrant” (43) even as it is consistently characterized by such traits as continuity between ordinary and marvelous worlds, depthlessness, narrative abstraction, temporal recursivity, and poetic justice. She then reconstructs the genealogy of the genre, which she traces to medieval fables, exempla, courtly romances, and their antecedents in Persian and Indian collections, as well as later Italian novellas. Particularly illuminating in this respect is Eichel-Lojkine's account of the discursive connections and distinctions between the fairy tale and the novella, specifically the “adventure novella” (*nouvelle aventure*). In retracing the development of the genre in Italy and then in France, the author synthesizes much recent scholarship to provide what is perhaps the strongest evidence to date of the French fairy-tales writers' familiarity with Straparola and Basile. But Eichel-Lojkine is less concerned with the question of intertextuality per se and more with how the genre's symbolic system is reconstructed in mid-sixteenth-century Venice (Straparola), early seventeenth-century Naples (Basile), and late seventeenth-century France (Perrault and d'Aulnoy).

Parts 2 and 3 focus, respectively, on Italian and French versions of specific tales. In part 2, Eichel-Lojkine examines how Basile's “Cagliuso” (2.4) and Perrault's “Le Chat botté” rewrite Straparola's “Constantino Fortunato” (11.1) while simultaneously responding to the discourses of their own time and place. Although Straparola and Basile emphasize the exchange of gift and counter-gift, Perrault concentrates instead on the conditions for social mobility. Eichel-Lojkine then analyzes “Le Chat botté” from the perspective of its narrative structure, its network of images, and its symbolism. The greater part of her reading is devoted to specific objects and moments in the tale, particularly the *manchon de peau* and the scene of undressing, “which enclose a potential danger for the laws of decorum” (242). Ultimately, the vision of the world promoted by “Le Chat botté,” Eichel-Lojkine argues, is one in which virtue is not exclusive of ruse and where the human is not distinct from the animal.

Part 3 juxtaposes analyses of Straparola's “Livoretto” (3.2), a story from a Yiddish collection of pious tales, and d'Aulnoy's “La Belle aux cheveux d'or,” all three of which contain elements of a similar storyline. Alongside discussion of the contextual

significance of Straparola's tale and its adaptation by d'Aulnoy, Eichel-Lojkine shows in some detail how the same story recounted by Straparola is reconfigured for a Yiddish-speaking audience, suggesting points of contact between early modern Christian and Jewish societies. The final chapter of this section considers the motif of the grateful animal, which is central to this group of tales and which allows Eichel-Lojkine to draw broader conclusions about animal-human relations in the fairy tale.

*Contes en réseau* is an important study that should be required reading for all scholars of early modern prose fiction. Specialists of folktales and fairy tales will find yet further confirmation that those genres are intercultural phenomena, in spite of the mythologies of national origin inherited from the nineteenth century. Also significant, given recent scholarly debates, is Eichel-Lojkine's measured and thoughtful approach to the question of the literary fairy tale's relation to oral tradition. But this book also speaks to nonspecialists, who will gain a better understanding of what is at stake — aesthetically and ethically — in a genre too often marginalized by scholars.

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