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Review of "The Owl, the Raven, and the Dove: The Religious Meaning of the Grimms' Magic Fairy Tales,' by G. Ronald Murphy, S.J."

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Despite the emphasis on historical continuity, some of the most interesting pieces here look at how women have adapted traditions to fit modern life. Cantú describes the recently created *cincuentañera*, a new rite of passage created by fifty-year-old women using elements of the traditional *quinceañera*, a fifteen-year-old girls’ coming-of-age party. Helen R. Lucero surveys the work of female artists who create *retablos* (painted wood panels) and *santos* (saints), both of which are typically produced by men. Domino Renee Pérez offers traditional and contemporary versions of *La Llorona*, asserting that modern-day Chicanas are reinterpreting the story to make her a representation of female resistance within a wholly oppressive environment and to “address [the] new struggles” women face in contemporary urban life (p. 110).

Part 2, “Practicing Traditions,” consists of intimate portraits of three extraordinary women and their individual expressions of Chicana folklore. Yolanda Broyles-González’s account of her Yaqui grandmother’s philosophy and practice of an “Indianized” Catholicism is singularly moving. Cynthia L. Vidaurri’s look at the women of the *Fidencistas*, a folk religious movement based on the life and work of “El Niño Fidencio” (a *curandero* in early twentieth-century Nuevo León), examines ways in which Chicana healers have challenged male authority in non-radical, “culturally appropriate” ways (p. 141). Leonor Xóchitl Pérez provides a very personal account of the trials faced by women who wish to be mariachis and the empowering possibilities offered by participation in this traditionally masculine musical genre.

The final section of the book, “Transforming Traditions,” is devoted to analyses of ways in which women have altered and transcended traditional Mexicano/Chicano culture, often inventing new forms of expression along the way. Broyles-González contributes a piece on Lydia Mendoza’s *ranchera* songs, examining her unique contributions to the genre and to the Chicano community as a whole as she “determinatorialized ‘Mexicaness’” (p. 198) and created a diasporic community through the “powerful mythic space” of *el rancho* (p. 188). This author so excels at describing the nonverbal that one hopes she will someday tackle other long-neglected genres such as dance. An informative study by Nájera-Ramírez on the newly created women’s equestrian tradition, *la escaramuza charra*, provides a fascinating discussion of how some women have succeeded, with difficulty, in overcoming gender-prescribed boundaries by using the “cultural logic” (p. 220) of the tradition against itself. Deborah Vargas examines the politics of musical crossover through the career of Tejana singer Selena, convincingly arguing that the very concept of “crossover,” which implies a linear progression toward North American “success,” is problematic for the description of Selena’s “crossover” into the Latin American market from her regional Tejano base. The collection concludes with Tey Marianna Nunn’s description of the work of Albuquerque artist Goldie Garcia and her use of *rasquache*, a flashy and uniquely Chicana/o aesthetic based on pastiche.

Although a few of the essays here would have benefited from greater attention to specific performers and performances, and others try too hard to find feminist meaning in the most tenuous places, most were effective in offering new perspectives on Chicana folklore. The most successful pieces were those that examined the specifics of particular works, communities, or individuals. *Chicana Traditions* provides an informative look at women’s contributions to well-known but traditionally masculine genres such as mariachi music and santos carving, and it is a useful introduction to less familiar traditions that have for too long been ignored or overlooked. Through it, the editors have accomplished their goal of making this scholarship available to a wider audience and will certainly inspire other researchers to follow in their footsteps.


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Once upon a cocktail party in Rochester, New York, I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Stephen Knight of the University of Wales. Because it
was shortly after the publication of his study on
the legend of Robin Hood, our conversation
naturally turned in that direction. He told me
that the subtitle of his text, *A Complete Study of
the English Outlaw*, was chosen by the publisher
and that he was somewhat mortified that such
a claim should have been made in his name.
Perhaps the same may be said of G. Ronald
Murphy’s *The Owl, the Raven, and the Dove:
The Religious Meaning of the Grimm’s Magic
Fairy Tales*, because the text’s subtitle is both
misleading and limiting. Murphy’s scholarship
is all embracing and rigorous. His examination
includes the insights of fairy tale scholars and
does not disprove alternate readings of the
Grimms’ work in order to support his own
claims; nor is his study directed only at religious
symbolism and sentiment in the fairy tales of
the Brothers Grimm. Rather, Murphy uses con-
tributions to fairy tale studies as a support for
his comprehensive, well-argued, and painstak-
ingly researched analysis.

Murphy’s descriptions of Wilhelm and Jacob
Grimms’ biographies, their familiarity with the
stories of classical antiquity, their appreciation
for Germainic tales as cultural archives, and
their profound Christian beliefs, strengthen his
ultimate claim: the Grimms, Wilhelm in par-
ticular, reworked the fairy tales throughout
their lives in order to do them literary, cultural,
and Christian moral justice. In chapter 1, “The
Roots of Spiritual Stories,” Murphy outlines the
lives and life works of Jacob and Wilhelm
Grimm and argues convincingly that they did
not just record their tales, but that they lovingly
refashioned them in order to highlight and cel-
ebrate their literary, cultural, and Christian el-
ements. Thus, the Grimms were retellers, shap-
ing fairy tales as they saw fit, with great acumen,
admirable talent, and according to their aca-
demic and personal interests—an approach
often celebrated in the works of contemporary
retellers such as Anita Diamant, C. S. Lewis, and
Gregory Maguire.

Chapter 2, ”Scholars and the Religious Spirit
of the Tales,” provides an overview of significant contributions to fairy tale studies
and to Murphy’s analysis in particular; he pays
special attention to Bruno Bettelheim, Heinz
Rölke, and Ruth Bottigheimer (but does not
mention Jack Zipes, Maria Tatar, or Marie-
Louise Von Franz). In chapter 3, “The Spiritu-
ality of Wilhelm Grimm,” Murphy describes his
research into the Grimms’ original and re-
worked manuscripts and illustrates the particu-
lar abilities and approaches of Wilhelm Grimm,
the chief reteller.

In the remainder of the book, Murphy notes
Wilhelm Grimm’s repeated use of symbols—
the owl (describing his attention to the threads
of classical antiquity), the raven (demonstrat-
ing his attention to the threads of German
*Märchen*), and the dove (exemplifying his faith-
ful Christian morality). Murphy examines these
symbols in five of the Grimms’ best-known and
much-loved fairy tales: “Hansel and Gretel,”
“Little Red Riding Hood,” “Cinderella,” “Snow
White,” and “Sleeping Beauty.” Throughout, he
is careful and respectful in his discussion of al-
ternate versions of the tales, especially those
written by Charles Perrault and Giambattista
Basile, which, he asserts, informed the work of
the Brothers Grimm.

Though rare, there are moments of analysis
in this book that require a leap of faith (for ex-
ample, the prophetic frog in “Sleeping Beauty”
is actually the prince who awakens the sleeping
damsel). But here the reader is both assured and
reassured; we are assured that Wilhelm Grimm
himself took a leap of faith when reworking the
tales and highlighting their particular literary,
cultural, and Christian elements, and we are
reassured by Murphy’s outstanding scholarship.
His text is lively, careful, insightful, thoughtful,
and provocative—a significant contribution to
fairy tale studies.

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**Gesture, Gender, Nation: Dance and Social Change in Uzbekistan.** By Mary Masayo Doi.
(Westport, Conn.: Bergin & Garvey, 2002. Pp. xii + 151, bibliography, photographs, index.)

**Sydney Hutchinson**

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In *Gesture, Gender, Nation*, Mary Masayo Doi
draws from classic anthropological literature,
dance scholarship, and practice theory to ex-
plain the role of dance in the formation of a
national identity in Uzbekistan from the early
Soviet period through the present. She argues
that Soviets used dance as a tool of social
change, unifying the republic’s diverse ethnic