

lore that is often central to the progress of the saga. Surprisingly, Miller's treatment is the first English language book to examine this material in depth. It is fortunate that the first book is a very good one.

For the beginner Miller provides a sound introduction to Icelandic society in his first chapter, but for the specialist the book really begins with the second chapter "Making Sense of the Sources." It is here that Miller provides a detailed argument for his use of the limited sources on the social history of medieval Iceland. Miller's use of the intricate legal codes should not be controversial, though it is likely his use of the sagas will be. The sagas have often been excluded as historical evidence since they are fictional narratives, often purporting to represent the society of the early settlers of Iceland. Miller contends that the sagas, in fact, mirror the conditions of the later Commonwealth (twelfth and thirteenth centuries). Through his use of the law Miller is able to demonstrate that legal disputes and principles encountered in the sagas adhere closely to the legal standards of the later Commonwealth period, and do not represent Settlement Age (tenth century) standards.

After his closely argued chapter on the sources, Miller proceeds to analyze in detail the legal and social relationships in the sagas. His use of anthropological and sociological research in his analysis is sound and consistently sheds light on the often murky problems of early Icelandic history. The reading is often difficult, though the problem is not Miller's writing -- the book is very well written -- but rather the nature of the material discussed. Although early Iceland is often imagined as a libertarian's paradise (few laws and no police), it was in reality one of the most regulated societies ever. Every aspect of social and economic relations was covered by the law, and it is easy for the non-specialist to become lost in the seemingly endless legal lore. But it is important to realize that the law was a living part of the social system that every adult Icelander was expected to know. There were no professional lawyers.

Miller's book is not only an important contribution to the study of medieval Icelandic history and legal history more generally, but also to historical and legal anthropology. It is exemplary in its use of both fiction and law to recreate the social life of a past people. Both the folklorist and anthropologist have much to learn from the book.

Steven Swann Jones. *The New Comparative Method: Structural and Symbolic Analysis of the Allomitts of "Snow White."* FFC 247. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemia, 1990. Pp. 134, appendices, bibliography.

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Although Steven Swann Jones calls his study "The New Comparative Method," there is in fact little new about it. At its core the book is a fairly conservative historic-geographic study of the versions of Snow White. The new

part of the method seems to be the addition of structuralist and psychological analytical approaches.

Jones is at his best when he implements the historic-geographic method. The distribution of folktales across time and space remains a valid concern for folklorists, and Jones assembles an interesting set of versions to consider. The grafting of structuralist interpretation to his historic-geographic analysis adds a valuable dimension to his analysis.

The least happy part of the analysis is his attempt at psychological and symbolic interpretation. Drawing heavily on Freud, Dundes, and Bettelheim he presents an interpretation of individual elements in the tale and of the tale as a whole that is at once universalist and reductionist. To be fair to Jones, he does make it clear that he has a single interpretation for the meaning of the tale. Still, one may question the utility of such analyses. Do folktales really have an essential meaning that transcends historical and cultural contexts? Ultimately it seems more important to know the meanings given folktales by the people who tell them and listen to them. Otherwise we run the risk of putting our thoughts into the minds of the people we study.

Jones closes his study with a short chapter entitled, "Conclusion: A Theory of Oral Transmission." In this chapter he mostly elaborates on Walter Anderson's "Law of Self Correction" and offers little that is original.

Betsy Hearne. *Beauty and the Beast: Visions and Revisions of an Old Tale*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. Pp. xv + 247, illustrations, bibliography, index, appendices. \$19.95 paper.

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In *Beauty and the Beast* Betsy Hearne provides an articulate and intelligent guide to the literary transformations of the Beauty and the Beast story since de Beaumont's French version of 1756.

After a short introduction, Hearne presents four chapters of careful description and analysis of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century (in two chapters, 1900-1950 and 1950-1985) versions of the tale. Her attention to the role of illustrators in the many interpretations of the tale is an especially welcome feature of her discussion.

Her sixth chapter, "The Enduring Elements," is her most folkloric chapter. In it she discusses such issues as narrative style, shared features, and the reasons for the story's continued appeal. Her last chapter, "Into the Future," is both a review of previous work on children's fairy tales and a plea for more serious attention to be given children's literature. Because children's literature is one of the last bastions of the folktale it is a plea folklorists should heed.

At least since the rise of widespread literacy in the sixteenth century oral and written versions of folktales have interacted, yet folklorists still too often focus only on "oral" versions of tales. Hearne's book is a delightfully written