

mention that the “motif of taking away a transforming garment, of bird or beast, in order to restore human form is not uncommon in folk-tale” (286), Dronke otherwise seems oblivious to the relevance of Germanic and Celtic folk narrative, with the exception of Old English, to understanding *Völundarkvida*—while making comparisons to Hindemuth’s opera *Cardillac*, Lappish shamanism, and Sanskrit mythology. The result is an interpretation that makes some interesting comparative points but ultimately seems rather more a flight of fancy rather than a well-grounded scholarly study.

As should be clear from the foregoing, many of Dronke’s interpretations of the poems rest on speculations. Meaning is teased from texts through comparison with other mythologies, etymologies of the names of the gods and other characters, and what little information can be gleaned from later Icelandic literature. But, given the lack of evidence for Norse mythology outside of the few manuscripts of the Eddic poems and the *Prose Edda*, this is predictable and of no significance as long as the reader realizes that much of her, or anyone else’s, interpretation of Norse mythology must be speculative. Though I have focused on the flaws of Dronke’s commentary here, it is a suggestive work that poses a number of interesting questions and directions for the study of Norse mythology.

Harold Scheub. *Story*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998. Pp. xi + 351, notes, bibliography, index. \$65.00 cloth, \$27.95 paper.

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Stories of all sorts are a part of life of all cultures. The media varies from place to place, and yet certain characteristics remain the same, medium aside. Harold Scheub’s work is found across the oral-written divide, although it need not be relegated there. *Story* is in many ways a formalistic analysis of the performance and essence of tales, traditional or otherwise. Furthermore, he localizes the individual and unique within the collective and cultural. Although these may seem to be self-evident truths at this point in scholarship, Scheub’s contribution is to illuminate the particulars of relations.

Somewhat surprisingly for a book published so recently, well into the age of post-modernism, Scheub relies heavily on structuralist and formalist theory. He demonstrates their continued potential applicability, finding intertextual ties without resorting to intertextual jargon. The features that he identifies tend to fall into bipartite divisions, yet he does not make categorical statements of being

in their essential contrasts (such as fantasy and reality in image, or line and pattern in organization). While he has not sacrificed complexity, Scheub has made some generalizations in laying the foundations of his argument. For example, mimesis as the representation of reality becomes something of a catch-all term. It is not substantial enough to support the weight of his words, and it is in such reliance that Scheub's thesis is weakest.

In general, however, the broad strokes of the book read strongly and well. He identifies the image as the fundamental unit of stories and the organization of images as providing the necessary rhythm. Image and organization in turn channel emotion, necessary if the teller is truly to reach the audience. In addition, individual experience assures that each story told and heard is something of a blank slate, a new—if related—experience of its own. Scheub employs the burdensome word “palimpsest” to describe this effect. He is not jargon-free in his own writing, but jargon-specific. On another note, he ignores intellectual connections to stories, such as those advocated by Bertolt Brecht. His stance is not incorrect, but incomplete.

Scheub employs both oral and written stories to make his case. As such, he creates an argument that is broader in scope than many made by folklorists. By explicitly using literary criticism and comparing oral stories with literary ones, he implicitly but directly aligns the oral and written works. Unfortunately, since the source data derives entirely from South Africa, this book will likely be used solely by Africanists. His results are too intriguing to let lie; the book and thesis would have been better served by a comparative study that reached across continents, and not simply across media. Aside from appealing to a broader audience, this would also have strengthened and illuminated his arguments further. Scheub's analysis is an insightful study and a straightforward read. Its surface clarity should not hide the depths of its meaning.

**Kathleen Stokker. *Folklore Fights the Nazis: Humor in Occupied Norway, 1940–1945*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995. Pp. 273, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$17.95 paper.**

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Folklore often reflects the views of the groups from which it emerges, and folklorists are well aware of the Nazis' use of folklore to further their genocidal campaign. Kathleen Stokker's *Folklore Fights the Nazis* is an important reminder of how people in Norway used folklore to resist the Nazis, despite a 1942 law that meted out death for ridiculing Nazis. She argues that this wartime humor