

RECENSÕES / REVIEWS

Marina Warner, *No Go The Bogeyman. Scaring, Lulling and Making Mock*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1998. 435 pages.

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As we have come to expect from a study by Marina Warner, this is a very complete and complex work, comprising a preface, prologue, introduction, sixteen chapters distributed through Parts One, Two and Three, an epilogue, 387 end-notes and a useful index. Thirty-three colour plates and abundant black and white illustrations might lead the unwary reader to expect a coffee-table sort of book, agreeable but undemanding. This is manifestly not the case. The author's range of vocabulary does full justice to her range of ideas, so it is a good idea to keep a dictionary to hand, at least for words such as 'talion', 'chthonic', 'crypsis', 'aposemic'. Punctuated with snatches of verses and highly apposite epigraphs, *No Go The Bogeyman* reveals breadth of reading and depth of comprehension. Above all, it bears the quintessential hallmark of a Warner volume, namely the ability to make connections and discern patterns. A true cultural historian, the author sees "the themes that slip through time".

No Go The Bogeyman, Warner tells us, is about fear. Or rather, how people cope with things that go bump in the night. Noting how readers resist and reject improved or politically correct re-workings of fairytales such as Little Red Riding Hood, preferring instead the original version in which *Little Red Riding Hood* is gobbled up by the wolf triumphant, she explores the "state of pleasurable fear", drawing on literature, folklore, the visual arts, and the most contemporary of films: "the siren, harpy and gorgon still prowl, inwardly monstrous even if outwardly lovely, through many successful movies like *Fatal Attraction* (1987) and *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* (1991)". Part One, then, deals with monsters, especially those who feed on other beings, focusing on consumption as metaphor. The first chapter demonstrates that scary matter is far commoner and more enduring than we might imagine. Previously found in such diverse sources as fairy tales (*Sleeping Beauty*), ballads (Goethe's *Erlking*) and Goya's etchings (*Los Caprichos*), the stuff of nightmares now dwells in the horror movies and video games of the late twentieth century. In Chapters II and III, Warner does not flinch from discussing the darker side of human experience, including incestuous cannibalism. In the fourth chapter, secular festival such as Halloween and Guy Fawkes are reinterpreted as a modern psychomachia, and we are also granted a detailed, lavishly illustrated account of the Feast of Corpus Christi, or *Patum*,

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in Berga, Catalonia, set alongside Goya's *Burial of the Sardine*. Interestingly, Warner describes guisers in devil masks, a term that recalls my own Scottish childhood when children went out 'guising' on Halloween night and the American phrase 'trick or treat' was unknown. The *Patum* may contain reminiscences of the medieval carnival of devils, but it is, she concludes, an essentially modern celebration, designed to forge a distinct Catalan identity. Bloodsucking, bodysnatching and dissection receive attention in Chapter V, *Hoc est Corpus*, which would provide invaluable background to anyone reading the Argentinian author Alejandra Pizarnik's *The Bloody Countess*. Hunger in fairy tales, baby-eating games and lullabies are explored in depth in Chapter VI, where Warner cites a Creole lullaby as well as one from South Africa. She might also have mentioned *Duerme, duerme negrito* at this stage as well as in chapter VII because of the mother's promise to bring quail and fruit for her child. Warner suggests that this song derives from the Canary Islands, following information supplied by her informant Pepa Christian, but it is more usually attributed to Atahualpa Yupanqui, who adapted it from a Caribbean version, and perhaps best known in the version sung by Mercedes Sosa. Chapter VI offers useful starting points for interpreting any number of other works, one of which might well be "Los ladrones", a short story by the Uruguayan Mario Arregui, whose solitary baker moulds himself a dough woman every night in order to satisfy his sexual cravings. The chapter closes with some unflatteringly accurate observations about the changing shape of modern society, both literal and figurative, and how it reflects a "generalized cult of childishness", a "let's pretend infantilism". The following chapter discusses the use of the enemy Other to frighten children, and also contains an interesting disquisition on bugs and insects.

Part Two, Lulling, is prefaced by a Reflection, a sensitive, perceptive reading of Caravaggio's *The Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, the biblical event that Warner has elsewhere compared to a Grimm fairytale, "though not as magical or sinister" (*Alone of all her Sex. The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*). This painting is itself a visualisation of lulling. Part Two contemplates the "performative force of words", notably the content and function of lullabies, many of which are still in existence and in use. With her usual comprehensive range of references, Warner moves from Renaissance art to Lorca's *Nanas infantiles* to Gerschwin's *Summertime* in tracing the lullaby down the ages. Chapter IX focuses on Herod, arch-slaughterer of innocents. While this study is not exclusively about women, it is notable that most of the males under consideration have either murdered children – their own offspring or other people's – or have gorged on them. Like most people who have worked on fairy tales, Warner rightly perceives their presence and influence in virtually everything she reads. Thus Herod "has absorbed characteristics of the flesh-eating ogres, of mythical Cyclops and fairy-tale giants of the 'Fee fi fo fum' variety", and may be even be compared to Bluebeard. The entomological discussion of Chapter VII is followed by Warner's section on

birdlore, a necessary adjunct for her analysis of nightingale legends and Keats in Chapter X. And then there is her dry little aside on the French inability to pronounce the English *th*.

Part Three, Making Mock, begins with a Reflection on the Chimera and proceeds to examine “the richly tangled tradition of comic defiance”. Chapter XI focuses on the late, or millennial grotesque. Chapters XII and XIII, perhaps the least lively in the book, deal with Circe and her swine, the multiple significances of the pig and La Fontaine’s fables, among other questions. Chapter XIV is largely concerned with fairy tales, those of Mme. d’Aulnoy, Basile, Perrault, Straparola and even Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*. It is clear that certain authors have an uncontested place in Marina Warner’s personal canon, and foremost among these, I suspect, are Lewis Carroll and Angela Carter. Chapter XV is largely concerned with comedy as a mechanism of defence. The final Reflection concerns the *Brazilian Portraits* of Albert Eckhout, and the final chapter with its singularly appropriate title, ‘Going Bananas’, deals with the social history as registered in chronicles and works of art, the *commedia dell’arte*, banana-skin humour, sexual humour, phallic symbolism, Josephine Baker and Carmen Miranda.

The Epilogue ends on a serious note, drawing our attention to the latter-day monsters, bogeymen and terrors, on a lighter note, Dolly the Sheep as a new kind of *doppelgänger*, but more seriously, the evils of anti-Semitism, serial murderers like Frederick West, and child abusers. “Paedophiles”, Warner points out, “are our late millennial ogres, and they bring the bogeyman very much closer to home than aliens or medieval devils”.

No Go The Bogeyman is an exuberant romp through cultural history. High art and popular art jostle for pre-eminence in Warner’s mind and on her pages: Ovid is mentioned in the same paragraph as contemporary video games. This breathtakingly eclectic study is – to adopt a food simile – like an unusually rich fruit cake, packed to bursting; not with currents, raisins, sultanas and cherries, but with allusions to myth, literature, music, painting and film. And yet the overall effect is not one of dispersion. The work is given coherence by certain recurring themes and motifs, many of which have already been explored, but by no means exhausted in previous works by the author (*Cinema and the Realms of Enchantment*, 1993; *From the Beast to the Blonde. On Fairy Tales and their Tellers*, 1994; *Managing Monsters: Six Myths of our Time: the 1994 Reith Lectures*). Not so much constructing an argument as weaving the threads of a very large tapestry, Warner maps the existence and interrelationships of myths and fairy tales, carnival and the carnivalesque, cannibalism, incest, fear and catharsis. Her study is founded on painstaking research supported by carefully chosen secondary sources, the solid, empirical scholarship of Iona and Peter Opie, for example, or the most vaunted critical theorists, among them Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari, Hélène Cixous.

Warner’s commentaries and analyses stand perfectly well on their own, frequently

incorporating – brief but helpful etymologies and glossaries so that we fully grasp the respective meanings and connotations. But they also send us hurtling off in new, intertextual directions, suggesting fresh readings of other, unnamed works which suddenly demand different interpretations.

On a purely selfish note, I should have welcomed some discussion of Dali's *El canibalismo del otoño* (1936), representing the artist's view of civil war, which fed by sons of the same blood, or his *Auto retrato blando con loncha de bacón asado* (1941); bacon was chosen because the pig is said to be the softest and most edible of animals. At the same time, the less well known Uruguayan artist Luis Solari (1918-1993) cries out for the Warner treatment, especially his *Musical Angels*, with its bestial musicians and shadowy apocalyptic figure in the background. But these are mere quibbles. There is abundant material to entertain and instruct the most exigent reader. Marina Warner's very evident delight in reading – perhaps not unrelated to the fact that her father kept a bookshop, as she confides to us in an unmistakably personal note – is more than matched by her joy in writing. To Warner's abiding credit, these personal pleasures by no means obscure her vision of the very real monsters that haunt our contemporary societies, nor prevent her from expressing sincerely held ethical views. *No Go The Bogeyman* is an intellectual tour-de-force that avoids the self-indulgent ludicity of much postmodern writing and succeeds in conveying a subtle but potent moral message about the way we treat our children.

Marvels & Tales. Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies. Special issue: Angela Carter and the Literary Märchen, vol.12, n°1, 1998, 252 pp.

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One of the aspects of *Marvels and Tales* editorial policies is to present studies on fairytales from a multidisciplinary perspective, as fairytales do indeed cross cultural and subject borders. Recent research in this area points to new approaches and theories. Well, Angela Carter's writings offer themselves to a wide fan of such perspectives.

In this issue devoted to Angela Carter, editor Donald Haase notes precisely the wide variety of approaches that Angela Carter's tales inspire, now mirrored in the diversity of the articles included.

In the preface to this special issue, guest co-editors Christina Bacchilega and Danielle M. Roemer recall how, when preparing it, they were surprised to

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