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Frédéric Calas, ed., *Peau d'âne et peaux de bêtes. Variations et reconfigurations d'un motif dans les mythes, les fables et les contes*. Clermont-Ferrand: Presses universitaires Blaise-Pascal, 2021. 375 pp. General bibliography and index. €23.00 (pb). ISBN 9782845169791; €16.00 (pdf). ISBN 9782845169807.

Review by Anne E. Duggan, Wayne State University.

The essays collected in this volume emerged from a 2019 conference held by a research group, GRIMM, whose members explore tales and their rewritings, and which includes scholars from Nantes, Rennes, Bordeaux, Montpellier, and Lausanne, as Frédéric Calas explains in his introduction. *Peau d'âne et peaux de bêtes* explores the multiple narrative and symbolic meanings and functions of the animal skin in, as the subtitle indicates, myths, fables, and tales. Authors primarily draw from narratological, semiotic, structuralist, linguistic, anthropological, and psychoanalytic approaches to examine the symbolism and function of animal skins in relation to initiation and socialization, taboos, trauma, transformation, trials, social marginalization, and even empowerment. Explaining his use of “variation,” Calas suggests that the concept allows for the exploration of new forms that remain connected to older versions of animal skin narratives. Drawing from the work of Ute Heidemann, he uses the term “reconfiguration” to emphasize the idea that the essays contained in the volume explore not simply rewritings of tales but more specifically their intermedial adaptations in new, generic sites of enunciation (p. 9).

The volume groups the essays into three sections. The first, “Reconfiguration trans-générique” focuses on animal skins in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Jean de La Fontaine’s *Fables*, Charles Perrault’s fairy tale about incest, *Peau d'âne*, and a twenty-first century literary adaptation of Perrault’s classic tale. Hélène Vial opens with a piece on Ovid in which metamorphosis reveals the underlying “truth” of a character: a character displaying wolfish “savage” tendencies is transformed accordingly. Vial remarks that in such a context the animal proves to be “une variante dégradée, abîmée d’humains” (p. 30). Metamorphosis thus both exposes an underlying truth and serves as punishment for problematic behavior. In her study of La Fontaine’s *Fables*, Pascale Pradal-Morand follows non-human animal characters who seek to wear the skin of another animal—human and non-human—and points out that “personne . . . n'est satisfait de son état” but without providing further context for such an observation (p. 43). Drawing from the work of, for instance, Louis Marin, who situates the fables in their courtly context in *Le Portrait du roi* would have allowed for a deeper exploration for why this is the case, and how La Fontaine’s fables indeed work much like Molière’s comedies, in which characters similarly attempt—unsuccessfully—to make disguise (another skin) stick for personal gain.[1] The last essay in the section by Dominique Peyrache-Leborgne looks at the animal skin from Perrault’s tale in terms

of a social fall or symbolic death and considers a twenty-first century “reconfiguration” of the tale in which incest is not named and the skin becomes a sign of the heroine’s trauma.

The second section of the book, “Reconfigurations transtextuelles et transmédiales de ‘Peau d’âne,’” looks at different adaptations of Perrault’s tale and of the Grimms’ related “All-Kinds-of-Fur” to poetry, art, video, photography, and picture books. Focusing on the editorial history of “Peau d’âne,” Cyrille François discusses the 1781 apocryphal prose version, arguing that it slowly supplanted Perrault’s verse tale, evident in his citation of Gustave Flaubert’s account of the tale. I would add that this was also the version Jacques Demy drew from for his film, *Peau d’âne* (1970). François examines how the prose version eliminates, on the one hand, the parts of the tale that deal with sexuality, making the heroine more innocent than in Perrault’s verse tale; and on the other, the parts that ground it within the society of Louis XIV, resituating the tale within an eighteenth-century society in which the notion of family was becoming more prominent. In his essay on Perrault and the Grimms, Calas looks at the animal skin as a means to “un-name” the princess, concealing her identity to protect her, as well as being the vehicle of her own transformation from the (more empowered) infanta, heir to her father’s throne, to the (somewhat disempowered) wife of a prince. For Pascale Auraix-Jonchière, Perrault’s tale is about regulating desire and (concealing) abjection; in her reading the killing of the donkey is a symbolic castration of the father/king and embodies the deregulation of “appropriate” desire. Auraix-Jonchière contrasts Perrault’s heroine, who is sullied by the sins of the father, to the Grimms’ “All-Kinds-of-Fur,” a heroine unambiguously opposed to her father’s criminal desire and thus treated less abjectly in the tale, an innocence Auraix-Jonchière sees as being even more explicit in Philippe Beck’s poetic adaptation of the two tales in “Suie” (2007).

The next essays in this section investigate skins in visual culture. Christiane Connan-Pintado explores the intermedial adaptations of Perrault’s tale by French artist Katia Bourdarel, who plays with realistic representations of skins, how the skin makes the heroine a hybrid creature, and how it conceals but also reveals (in a video we see a pregnant young woman covered in a skin, suggesting the incest was consummated). While Corona Schmiele provides a linguistic and literary history of the Grimms’ “All-Kinds-of-Fur,” she also examines visual adaptations, most notably in the works of GDR (German Democratic Republic) artists such as photographer Sibylle Bergemann, writer and poet Sarah Kirsch, and writer and poet Hans Magnus Enzensberger, who use “All-Kinds-of-Fur” allegorically to address a disunified Germany. The skin becomes a symbol of revolt and resistance to an oppressive regime and an attempt to create a poetic unity, echoing the situation of the Grimms seeking unification of German states at a time of French occupation. Catherine Tauveron’s study of two picture books, *La Bergère qui mangeait ses moutons* (2014) and *The Beast of Monsieur Racine* (1971), explores the carnivalesque aspects of exchanging bodies and wearing animal skins, while Hermeline Pernoud looks at questions of disguise and eroticism in the domain of Épinal prints and illustration in the hands of Bulgarian painter Jules Pascin and Irish artist Harry Clarke. The section concludes with a piece by Pierre-Emmanuel Moog comparing Perrault’s “Peau d’âne” to the Biblical tale of Jacob donning an animal skin to obtain his father’s benediction.

The third and final section groups essays around the theme “Reconfigurations et variations diachroniques, diatopiques et géographiques,” moving from Antiquity to the Middle Ages and from Europe to Asia and Africa. The first essay by Christine Kossaifi examines the failed use of an animal skin by Dorcan in Longus’s *Daphnis and Chloe*: disguising himself as a wolf to try to abduct Chloe, he instead is attacked by her dogs. Kossaifi argues that putting on the wolf skin

symbolizes Dorcan's animal desire for the heroine; as such, he renounces his "human nature" and becomes a predator (p. 198). Through three medieval European texts, Ronny Frédéric Schulz studies the sometimes-porous categories of the human versus non-human animal and the vulnerability of skins. While Schulz draws from animal studies, paying attention to how the human/non-human animal dichotomy can legitimate human sovereignty, Natacha Rimasson-Fertin considers two Grimm tales from the perspective of disability studies and "enfreakment," drawing from the important work of Ann Schmiesing.[2] In her study of a medieval Georgian tale about a knight in a tiger skin, Maïa Varsimashvili-Raphael explores the allegorical and metonymical symbolism of the skin, which represents the hero's lost beloved, and which paves the way to his salvation. The next essay focuses on Japanese tales about marvelous marriages between humans and non-human animals like serpents, toads, and frogs. Anne-Marie Monluçon reads these tales in line with European animal bridegroom tales, foregrounding the different class context of the Japanese tales in which the heroines are typically not noble and are valorized not only for their beauty but also for their association with reading.

The last two essays in the section take a transnational view of skin tales. Bochra Charnay explores thirty versions of louse-flea-bedbug tales from Europe, Asia, and Africa, in which the insect in question grows to an extraordinary size and is made into a skin for a princess, whose future spouse must guess from which animal the skin originates. Thierry Charnay lays out two branches of tales about extraordinary births: the first branch concerns the monstrous son who must undergo and succeed in tests given by the father of the woman he wishes to marry; the second branch concerns the monstrous groom who kills his first two spouses (who do not conceal their distaste for him) and successfully marries a third, who displays sympathy towards him, much in the tradition of Giovanni Francesco Straparola's "The Pig Prince" and Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy's "The Boar Prince." Charnay argues that the resolution of the tale works to align the hero's being (*être*) with his appearance (*paraître*).

This collection of conference proceedings makes a valuable contribution by bringing together animal/animal skin tales from so many different periods, locations, and artistic mediums (although film is a notable absence). Films such as Jean Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête* (1946), Jacques Demy's *Peau d'âne* (1970), and Guillermo Del Toro's *The Shape of Water* (2017), among others, could have rounded out the coverage of different artistic mediums about skins. Together, the essays foreground connections between global traditions of animal skin tales that often blur the lines between the human and non-human animal at the same time that they are constitutive of such a dichotomy.

In his conclusion, Calas mentions concepts such as the collective unconscious, archetypal structures, and the allegorical potential of these types of tales. However, from my perspective, the most interesting insight of this collection is how animal skin tales can be adapted to different sociohistorical contexts to tell new stories for new audiences, sometimes teasing out what is implicit in the source tales, and sometimes generating new meanings. For instance, Perrault's classic verse tale is modified in important ways to suit late eighteenth-century mores in the 1781 prose adaptation; Katia Bourdarel deploys the tale to talk about real trauma; and GDR artists rethink "All-Kinds-of-Fur" within a new context of a divided Germany.

A shortcoming of the volume, however, is the near absence of references to animal studies, with few exceptions, which would have been useful in problematizing the human/non-human animal dichotomy that many of these narratives uphold, however tentatively.[3] In Vial's discussion of

Ovid, for instance, I wanted to see the argument carried farther, to look not only at becoming animal thematically but also at how, for instance, Ovid constructs what is animal in order to support the construction of what we take to be human, and how that might relate to philosophies of the period. In thinking about Kossai's analysis of the animal skin in *Daphnis and Chloe*, an animal studies perspective allows us to problematize the construction of improper desire in terms of animality; there are many wonderful examples of writers like Madeleine de Scudéry, whose early modern works challenge such constructions of the non-human animal and foreground the constructedness of associations between what is "beastly" and what is "human." [4] An animal studies approach would allow for a "meta" view of things, for theorizing more extensively what is happening with animal skins in these texts and what is at stake from a broader, epistemological perspective.

The critical apparatus of the collection relies extensively on structuralism, narratology, and more formalist types of readings with little attention to gender and queer theory, colonial and postcolonial studies, race, animal and disability studies, and ecocriticism. Scholarship on animal/animal bridegroom tales and queer sexuality is rich, but this scholarship is not referenced. [5] A moment when race and colonial theories seem especially relevant occurs in Pernoud's discussion about how the "La blancheur de la peau est un véritable topos érotique dans ces illustrations produites au tournant du siècle" with ugly women "souvent représentées comme étant noires." (p. 169). This observation certainly merits further commentary and exploration. These works of art were being produced at the height of French imperialism: the aesthetic focus and valorization of whiteness and denigration of Blackness cannot be separated from the legitimation of European colonial enterprises. [6] While formalist approaches are absolutely important and necessary, integrating other theoretical approaches can push readings further and better ground texts in their social, political, philosophical, and historical contexts. That is, they can better ground the texts within their specific sites of production and problematize the constructions of the human/non-human animal dichotomy.

Peau d'âne et peaux de bêtes proves nevertheless a welcome addition to scholarship on fairy tales, taking an intriguing *point de départ*--the animal skin--to explore the relation between human and non-human animals and the ambivalent, ambiguous, and porous relations that this often-vulnerable skin represents. Although not framed in terms of animal studies per se, the collection of essays succeeds in shedding new light on the different uses, functions, and understandings of the animal skin in different historical periods and geographical locations. The breadth of coverage alone is an exciting aspect of the collection and will make important contributions to courses and scholarship on the fairy tale.

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NOTES

[1] See the chapter "Les tactiques du renard." Louis Marin, *Le Portrait du roi* (Paris: Minuit, 1981).

[2] Ann Schmiesing, *Disability, Deformity, and Disease in The Grimms' Fairy Tales* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2014).

[3] Among the many studies on queerness, animals, and beasts in fairy tales, see Kay Turner and Pauline Greenhill, *Transgressive Tales: Queering the Grimms* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2012), especially essays by Margaret R. Yocom on "Allerleirauh"; Pauline Greenhill, Anita Best, and Emilie Anderson-Grégoire on "Peg Bearskin" and "La Poiluse"; and Joy Brooke Fairfield on "Princess Mouseskin." See also Anne E. Duggan, *Queer Enchantments: The Fairy-Tale Cinema of Jacques Demy* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013), especially chapter two on his film *Peau d'âne*; Pauline Greenhill, "Wanting (To Be) Animal: Fairy-Tale Transbiology in The StoryTeller" *feral feminisms 2* (Summer 2014): 29-45; and Jennifer Orme, "A Wolf's Queer Invitation: David Kaplan's *Little Red Riding Hood* and Queer Possibility," *Marvels & Tales* 29.1 (2015): 87-109. With respect to queer readings of "Beauty and the Beast" see Irène Eynat-Confino, *On the Uses of the Fantastic in Modern Theatre: Cocteau, Oedipus, and the Monster* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 93-97 (on Cocteau's Beauty and the Beast); Daniel Fischlin, "Queer Margins: Cocteau, *La Belle et la bête*, and the Jewish Differend" *Textual Practice* 12.1 (1998): 69-88.

[4] Lewis Seifert, "Animal-Human Hybridity in d'Aulnoy's 'Babiole' and 'Prince Wild Boar,'" *Marvels & Tales* 25.2 (2011): 244-60. This essay is a nice example of a study that brings together the French fairy-tale tradition and animal studies. For other examples of studies related to fairy tales and animal studies in different traditions, see also Pauline Greenhill and Leah Claire Allen, "Animal Studies," *The Routledge Companion to Media and Fairy-Tale Cultures* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 225-234; Matthew Senior, ed., *A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Enlightenment* (Oxford: Berg, 2007); and Mayako Murai, *From Dog Bridegroom to Wolf Girl: Contemporary Japanese Fairy-Tale Adaptations in Conversation with the West* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2015).

[5] On more supple understandings of the animal in the early modern period, see Peter Sahlins, *1668: The Year of the Animal in France* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2017), and Anne E. Duggan, "Madeleine de Scudéry's Animal Sublime, or Of Chameleons," *Ecozon@* 7.1 (2016): 28-41.

[6] On notions of racial alterity and colonization in the European fairy tale, see Kimberly Lau's "Imperial Marvels: Race and the Colonial Imagination in the Fairy Tales of Madame d'Aulnoy," *Narrative Culture* 3.2 (2016): 141-79, and Anne E. Duggan, "From Genie to Efrete: Fantastic Apparitions in the Tales of the *Arabian Nights*," *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 26.1 (2015): 113-35.

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