

***Blackouts to Bright Lights: Canadian War Bride Stories.* By Barbara Ladouceur and Phyllis Spence, editors. (Vancouver, B.C.: Ronsdale Press, 1995. Pp. xiii + 299, \$16.95, ISBN 0-921870-33-7 pbk.)**

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studies on women *Märchen* narrators and their narrative strategies (cf. Dégh). Nor are the works Bacchilega cites indicative of any vernacular literary or media experiences. As feminist literary theory, *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies* is, I am sure, a fine work, but neither what I expected, or wanted to read. That is not Bacchilega's fault. The dodgy folkloristics, however, is.

## References

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*Blackouts To Bright Lights* is a timely book, in that it was published on the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II. Writings concerning the Second World War brides in the United States form an extensive bibliography, but unfortunately, the same is not true for their counterparts in Canada. The major exceptions include Joyce Hibbert's *The War Brides* (1978), Ben Wick's *Promise You'll Take Care of My Daughter* (1992), and the film *War Brides In Canada* (1984). These, with the scant local and provincial publications, including recollections and memories, plus provincial histories, supplemented by occasional newspaper articles and a few academic studies, notably, Melinda Jarratt's "The War Brides of New Brunswick" (M.A. Thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1995) form the basis of the Canadian bibliography. *Blackouts To Bright Lights* fills a void of information and the popularity of the book is indicated by its third printing in January, 1996.

In keeping with the postmodernist tradition, this work includes thirty-six personal narratives from World War II brides and covers a variety of topics. Childhood memories, becoming an adult in wartime Britain, the significant roles and contributions of women to the war effort, the blackouts, rations, shortages and general terrors of the war, form their early recollections. Courtships, romances and the first meeting of a future husband, marriage, and then departure, a ten to fourteen day sea voyage, followed for some by the week long train journey from Halifax to Vancouver, are also recounted. Their first impressions and adjustments to their adopted homeland and its new lifestyles, as well as the memories of a half century of living and raising families in Canada, provide a focus for each account. An early photograph of the contributor, usually in a military uniform or wedding attire, with a few sentences indicating the place of birth and noting the family background, introduces each story. Another two dozen black and white photographs including a collage of eight shots opposite the title page, add to the interest and attractiveness of the book. The contributors, “a pot-pourri of Britain’s daughters” (291-292), had diverse social and cultural backgrounds, and had settled originally in various regions of Canada but all had retired and were part of the war bride network on Vancouver Island. These women wanted the public to know their struggles, as well as their courage, triumphs, achievements, joys, anxieties, loneliness and tragedies or their “elation and heartbreak” (290).

The thirty-six reminiscences are divided into two components. The Oral Histories include the first thirty-one accounts (or 87% of the book) which were obtained by interviews. The five Personal Narratives “written by the war brides themselves” are noted to “have a distinct literary quality” (259). These British war brides recall when they “were young and in love and ready to conquer all” (267), as well as describe the present where they “enjoy the company of fellow war brides who all shared similar experiences” (141).

In many ways these thirty-six war brides are representative of the close to 50,000 young women who married Canadians serving overseas during the Second World War. They were some of the women who stayed in Canada and who grew to love the place and now consider it home. It is not unexpected then, that their positive experiences are emphasized.

The major strength of this interesting collection is the exposition of the immigrant experience of those who came in the mid 1940s to every region of “far-off, snowy Canada” (289) to start a new life. While the journalistic scripts are self explanatory, the chief weakness from an academic viewpoint is that the

book lacks both context for each account, and elaboration on the methods used in collecting the oral reminiscences. It is important to know if a questionnaire or specific themes were used for the interviews and the criteria for the selection, editing and arrangement of the entries. An index would add to the usefulness of the book.

*Blackouts To Bright Lights* is an interesting look at captivating war stories, which show the strength, courage, hardships, adaptability, and humour of these women. Those whose ancestors were war brides, and others interested in this topic should be fascinated by this collection.

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***Folktales of Newfoundland: The Resilience of the Oral Tradition.*** By Herbert Halpert and J. D. A. Widdowson, editors, with the assistance of Martin J. Lovelace and Eileen Collins; music transcription and commentary by Julia C. Bishop (New York: Garland, World Folktale Library vol. 3, Garland Reference Library vol. 1856, 1996. 2 vols. Pp. xcv + 1175, Indices, ISBN 0-8153-1736-0 cloth.) [Distributed in Canada through Breakwater, \$250.00, ISBN 1-55081-029-4].

This two-volume work marks the culmination of three decades of research into Newfoundland narrative conducted by two of the pioneers of modern academic folklore in that province, Herbert Halpert and John D. A. Widdowson. But it marks a greater culmination as well: the third part of a trilogy of collaborative work growing out of the early years of the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA). Together with *Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland: Essays in Anthropology, Folklore, and History* (edited by Halpert and G. M. Story, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969) and *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* (edited by G. M. Story, W. J. Kirwin, and Widdowson, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982, rev. 1990), the present work completes the plans of Halpert, Widdowson, the late George Story, William J. Kirwin and other scholars associated with MUNFLA in the 1960s to explore and document the linguistic and folkloristic