

UNEXPLAINED FEVERS

Poetry by Jeannine Hall Gailey

New Binary Press, 2013

ISBN-13: 978-0957466128

\$15.00; 72pp.

Reviewed by Alyse Bensel

Former *LAR* contributor Jeannine Hall Gailey reimagines classic fairy tales by personifying and empowering the voices of these oftentimes estranged and distant women. Sometimes modernized, sometimes kept within the confines of

their fairy tales, Snow White, Rapunzel, Sleeping Beauty, the Little Mermaid, and more speak directly to the reader, poignant and honest, while they try to navigate a world that has tried to confine and limit their roles. In "I Like the Quiet: Snow White," the princess addresses her onlookers from within her glass coffin: "But really, if you could get me out / of your-looking glass, you could see / the real me; the hermit crab, the snail inside its opaque shell." Always trying to subvert the reader's (and the rescuer's) expectations, the princess in "The Knight Wonders What, Exactly, He Rescued," has "hands full of brambles" and becomes "a creature with a beautiful song and sharp claws. / Nothing the way he'd pictured it." Never domesticated, these poems possess a sharp, biting attitude that succeeds in creating a nuanced portrait of these women who strive to fulfill their own desires. As the speaker in "Advice Left Between The Pages Of Grimms' Fairy Tales" notes, "forget enchantments and focus on the profit margin, / the hard line. Read the subtext."

APOLOGY: A NOVEL

Fiction by Jon Pineda

Milkweed Editions, 2013

ISBN-13: 978-1571311047

\$16.00; 208pp.

Reviewed by Ted Scheinman

A story of three fractured families across three generations, Jon Pineda's *Apology* is a first novel of deep sadness and substantial beauty. *Apology* begins with a small act of unthinking childhood cruelty—a young girl is rendered semi-vegetative by the momentary malice of her twin brother's play-friend Mario. When Mario's uncle takes the rap, the novel becomes a sort of blue-collar *Atonement* that unfolds from Norfolk, Virginia, to Taos, New Mexico, to the Philippines, told in short scenes that glimmer and then splinter like shards of light. Pineda already has two books of poetry, and a less indulgent editor would cut certain instances of needless signposting that distract from an otherwise disciplined work. ("[Mario] kept regarding the picture of a young girl, the clear line of sutures that resembled two continents coming together. *Plate tectonics.*") In the broad scheme, though, Pineda uses metaphor not for description but for narrative texture, and the fragmentary, elliptical structure comes into focus as an extension of Pineda's geometrical interrogation of morality. Guilt is a triangle; we are asked to consider the atomic weight of misery. How many wrongs, arranged in which ways, can create a right? Passages of Homeric vastness (one old man is named Nestor) share space with moments of tearful guilt, an emotion that Pineda doesn't manipulate,