



New Approaches to Teaching Folk and Fairy Tales

Andrew Teverson

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and 179). Of course, given some of the ‘studies’ of the past two centuries, a sober approach is only to be welcomed.

The work is occasionally repetitive, possibly as a result of its combining material that has appeared in article form with fresh material. On the other hand, there are points made in passing—such as his footnote on page 144 to the effect that Baxtin underestimates the role of the ‘clerks’ in carnival misrule—that it would have been interesting to develop beyond the length of a single sentence. His range of authorities is somewhat different from those usual in folklore studies. One is struck by his drawing on the Biblical scholar George Caird to assist with his definition of ‘myth’, rather than on any of the usual suspects.

All in all, *Simple Forms* is a book Gray was particularly well placed to write. Despite its title, it is a work in which the folklore genres have a supporting role to the real star: literature. However, to say something about the book that was written rather than the book one might wish had been written, he has given us a sober, learned, wide-ranging work which this reader followed with interest, and which has encouraged him to seek out more late medieval literature.

Jonathan Roper, University of Tartu, Estonia
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New Approaches to Teaching Folk and Fairy Tales. Edited by Christa C. Jones and Claudia Schwabe. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2016. 252 pp. Illus. £21.00 (pbk). ISBN 978-1-60732-480-5

Teachers of folktale and fairy tale courses in higher education will immediately recognize the value of this collection of essays. Despite several decades of expansion in the teaching of folktales and fairy tales at tertiary level worldwide, and despite the fact that fairy tales are now taught in a broad range of disciplinary contexts—including in courses on folklore, literature, anthropology, creative writing, film, sociology, and languages—there has, to date, been no sustained endeavour to articulate a set of common pedagogical methodologies for the teaching of this distinctive form of fiction; neither has there been any extended effort to share the good pedagogical practice that has been developed locally by individuals or by institutional teams. *New Approaches to Teaching Folk and Fairy Tales* seeks to address these omissions by describing the teaching practices that have been employed by lecturers in a variety of fairy tale courses delivered in North America and Europe, and by revealing that, beyond the walls of the individual seminar room and lecture hall, there exists a community of practitioners, perhaps even a nascent network of scholars, ready to share ideas, disseminate good pedagogical practice, and champion the teaching of their discipline.

The collection is divided into four sections, each of which seeks to address a different thematic focus. Part I aims to ground ‘the teaching of fairy tales in the academic discipline of folkloristics’ (7). This section comprises three essays: Christina Phillips Mattson and Maria Tatar offer a detailed weekly anatomy of the comparative methods they use in their course on ‘Fairy Tales, Myth and Fantasy’ at Harvard University; Lisa Gabbert shows how she trains students to approach fairy tales using the disciplinary methods of folkloristics; and Juliette Wood describes her use of the cross-cultural topos of the ‘otherworld’ to induct students into the study of folk narrative at Cardiff University. Part II of this collection explores the teaching of the social, political, and cultural dimensions of folktales and fairy tales, and includes a description of a programme structured around ecocritical approaches to fairy tales by Doris McGonagill, an account by Christa C. Jones of strategies and methods for helping students understand the linguistic and cultural contexts of Perrault’s tales, an examination of how the significance of political and historical context may be conveyed to students using East German film by Claudia Schwabe, and an essay by Anissa Talahite-Moodley on critical approaches to the *One Thousand and One Nights* that encourage students to

explore the history of relations between East and West and to recognize that ‘cultural meanings are created and re-created in a dialogical way’ (111). Part III, ‘Decoding Fairy Tale Semantics’, incorporates essays on the use of folktales and fairy tales to teach translation and adaptation by Christine A. Jones, Armando Maggi, and Cyrille François; and a meticulous explanation by Francisco Vaz da Silva of his introduction of the concepts of tale, variant, symbol, and allomotif in the first two weeks of his social anthropology course on fairy tales. Finally, Part IV concentrates on teaching strategies that have been informed by research ‘in the areas of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), gender, and women’s studies’ (7). This section includes a cogent account of queer theory and its applications to the study of French fairy tale films by Anne E. Duggan (any student wanting an introduction to applications of queer theory would do well to start here); an informative and illuminating description by Jeana Jorgensen of her use of creative group exercises; and Pauline Greenhill and Jennifer Orme’s valuable assessment of their experience of teaching a course on gender in fairy-tale film at the University of Winnipeg, first in a ‘live’ format and then remotely using virtual learning platforms.

In all of the contributions to this volume there is a wealth of useful advice offered to the practitioner, including reading list suggestions, advice about specific editions of texts, illustrations of successful classroom practice, critical materials that give students effective access to theoretical frameworks, and weekly schedules. Some of these teaching strategies will be familiar to experienced teachers, who will approach them as old friends and enjoy seeing them articulated in print; other strategies will be new and inspiring, as, for me, was Lisa Gabbert’s practice of asking students to invent their own stories using Axel Olrik’s laws of folk narrative or Alessandro Falassi’s ten structural rites.

Inevitably, one wants more than it is possible for a single volume to deliver: it would have been instructive and revealing to hear more about the teaching of popular narrative tradition outside of Europe and North America. There is, for instance, no mention of the radical efforts to challenge and reformulate the Eurocentric and neo-imperial canon of tradition in African universities, and the reader is left wondering whether there are significant differences in the ways in which folk narratives are taught in Asia or South America. The volume also concentrates overwhelmingly on the teaching of literary texts and film at the expense of the fine arts, digital media, theatre, and so on. One collection cannot do everything, however, and the important thing about this book is that, after the renaissance in the critical study of folktales and fairy tales that has taken place over the last forty years, it represents something different in the field: it has shifted focus from the traditions and their tellers to the teachers of the traditions. Hopefully, this shift of focus will mark the inception of a wider literature devoted to the challenge of describing and disseminating applied folktale and fairy tale pedagogies—for as Donald Haase observes in his eloquent and reflective foreword to the volume, ‘It’s about time . . . for scholars of folktales and fairy tales to acknowledge the role that teaching plays in their work’ (vii).

Andrew Teverson, Kingston University, London, UK
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History should not be a dry and lifeless subject. The days of ‘crusty old professors’ in dusty offices are, in the main, long gone. There is so much about our social history and folklore to excite and enthral that we should be able, if we treat it correctly, to examine local events on a micro level and interest an audience on a global level with the content. To do this successfully we need the