Multi-Cultural Fairy Tales: Portals onto World Humanities

Teachers Institute of Philadelphia Seminar
Spring 2010

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Tuesday 4:30-6:30 Fisher-Bennett Hall (34th and Walnut) Rm 16

Over the past five centuries a classic canon of fairy tales has been institutionalized as children’s literature. Including such standards as Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel, Beauty and the Beast, Sleeping Beauty, and Snow White, this canon represents a tiny sampling of the world’s offerings. Few people know, for example, that the earliest known version of Cinderella appeared in print in China in the ninth century, and that versions of all of the classic European folk and fairy tales have been collected all over the world.

This seminar will explore folk and fairy tales and their international variants as portals to the humanities in multicultural classrooms. One of the earliest purposes for print fairy tales was to instill in children the social values of an emerging European middle-class. What might variants of these tales teach us about alternative ways of growing up in world social and historical contexts, and related ideas about engaging with the more-than-human world?

Working with five of the most widely known “classic” fairy tales, the seminar will familiarize teachers with critical concepts, research tools, and educational resources needed to teach any of the classic fairy tales using versions gathered from countries and cultures represented among West Philadelphia students. While fairy tales open onto universally shared aspects of human experience, variations from different traditions offer a framework for recognizing and appreciating cultural difference in the classroom. Fairy tales provide ample material for lessons in geography, history; language arts, speech genres and narrative performance; family and community life; and age-, class-, and gender- related social roles.

Readings: The following required and recommended text books are available at Penn Book Center, at 34th and Sansom, unless otherwise indicated:

Required: Maria Tatar ed., The Classic Fairy Tales
William McCarthy, Cinderella in America: A Book of Folk and Fairy Tales;
Mary Hufford ed., From West Africa to West Philadelphia: Storytelling Traditions of Philadelphia’s Liberian Elders (distributed in class)

Recommended: Jack Zipes, Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion
Roger Abrahams ed., African American Folktales
Roger Abrahams, ed. African Folktales
Dundes, Alan, ed. The Cinderella Casebook
Jan Ziolkowski, *Fairy Tales from Before Fairy Tales*
Jack Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution of a Genre*
Jack Zipes, *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*

All other required readings, along with some recommended readings, will be posted to the course blackboard site, and are marked as (BB) on the schedule. In addition, I will place films and key resources for research papers on reserve in the Rosengarten Reading Room of Van Pelt Library. These are included in the course bibliography, as are reference materials and electronic links.

**Work for the Seminar**

- Over the course of 14 weeks, this seminar covers five classic fairy tale types, along with animal and trickster tales. In addition to doing the assigned readings in preparation for class discussion, you are asked to fill out a comparative spread sheet (posted to the course blackboard) and to reflect on the differences and similarities among variants of each particular tale type along vectors that interest you (i.e. gender or social status and function within the tale, foodways, environmental factors, etc). Please bring in your spreadsheet, and be prepared to share your reflections during the first meeting devoted to each tale type. Due dates for spreadsheets are given below.

- In addition to the variants that everyone will read for the class, you are asked to identify through your own research one or more additional variants relevant to the ages and demographics of your school and the subject matter of your curriculum unit, and to post one variant to the course blackboard for discussion by Saturday evening before the second meeting devoted to each tale type. Please provide contextual information about your selected variant (when collected, by whom, from whom, where, when, and details about the tradition), and comment on, and/or raise questions about, the text’s differences from and similarities to examples of the tale type in our readings. Due dates are indicated in the schedule below.

- For the last unit, on Tricksters and Animal Tales, there will be no spreadsheet to complete or variants to identify. Instead, for the class on May 4, please locate one variant of any of the ten animal tales in *From West Africa To West Philadelphia*, and post it to the blackboard on May 1, and be prepared to present your selection.

- For the final class, on May 11, please identify cultural information in any of the versions of stories you’ve read all semester that is new for you: a concept, a word, a practice, a foodway, an artifact, etc. What references in the stories can lead you to artifacts of places from which stories and students have come to West Philadelphia? These artifacts or ideas can serve as “touchstones” to shared histories and ways of being, bridging to the worlds of both stories and students. In consultation with your students, search for touchstones in shops, restaurants, markets, and other public
places in West Philadelphia. Purchase, photograph, or otherwise document your touchstones. Bring one or more of them in on the last day of class and be prepared to share what you’ve learned, and to comment on its potential for classroom use.

**Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments**

**January 19: Overview**

**January 26: Orientation to Library Resources**

**February 2: Histories, Meanings, Concepts, and Resources**
- Arne and Thompson, “The Types of the Folktale,” in Tatar, pp. 373-378;
  - Olrik, “The Epic Laws of Folk Narrative,” (BB)
  - Darnton, “The Meaning of Mother Goose,” in Tatar, pp. 280-91;
  - Abrahams, “Introduction,” *African American Folktales*

**February 9: Hansel and Gretel (ATU 327-328)**
- Tatar, from *TCFT*, “Hansel and Gretel,” pp. 179-190; “The Juniper Tree,”
- McCarthy, from *CIA*, (Choose four) “The Children and the Ogress,” pp. 90-92;

**Criticism (Recommended):**
- Zipes, “The Rationalization of Abandonment and Abuse in Fairy Tales: The Case of Hansel and Gretel.” (BB)

**Bring comparative notes; be prepared to discuss.**
**Screening of:** “Hansel and Gretel: An Appalachian Version”

**February 16: Ecologies of Hunger and Abandonment**

**Your variants: please post by Saturday evening, Feb. 27, plus:**
- Carter, “Penetrating to the Heart of the Forest” from *Burning Your Boats* (BB)
- Chamoiseau, “Madame Keleman,” (BB)

**Criticism (Recommended):**
- Hyde, “Some Food that We Could Not Eat,” from *The Gift* (BB)

**Films:** “Gingerbread,” from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* TV series
- Fairy Tale Theater “Hansel and Gretel” DVD on reserve.
February 23: Little Red Riding Hood (ATU 333)

Greenwood Encyclopedia entry, “Little Red Riding Hood.” (BB)

Criticism (Recommended):
Windling, “The Path of Needles, the Path of Pins,” (BB)

Bring comparative notes; be prepared to discuss.

March 2: Storytelling and Rites of Initiation
Your variants: please post by Saturday evening, March 20, plus:
Chamoiseau, “Nanni-Rosette, the Belly Slave,” (BB)
Greenwood Encyclopedia Entry, “Initiation,” (BB)

Theory (Recommended):
Lancy, from *Playing on the Mother-Ground*, “Cultural Routines for Childrens’ Development,” (BB)

Also of interest: Tales of the Supernatural: http://www.folkstreams.net/film,106

March 9: No Class: Penn Spring Break

March 16: Beauty and the Beast (ATU 425)
Greenwood Encyclopedia entry, “Beauty and the Beast,” (BB)

Criticism and Social History (Recommended):
Films: Fairy Tale Theater “Frog Prince” and “Beauty and the Beast” on reserve; Bring comparative notes; be prepared to discuss.

March 23: Economies of Desire
Your variants: please post by Saturday evening, Feb. 13, plus:
Carter, “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon,” (BB)

Criticism (Recommended):
Warner, From the Beast to the Blonde, “Go! Be A Beast,” pp. 298-318. (BB)

Film: Cocteau, La Belle et Le Bete (DVD on reserve; in French, with English subtitles)
Sayles, The Secret of Roan Inish (DVD on reserve)

March 30: No Class: Philadelphia Schools Spring Break

April 6: Cinderella (ATU 510)
Greenwood Encyclopedia Entry, “Cinderella,” (BB)
Bascom, “Cinderella in Africa,” (BB)

Criticism and Social History (Recommended):
Warner, “Absent Mothers,” (BB)
Warner, “The Silence of the Fathers,” (BB)
Bring completed spreadsheet; be prepared to discuss.
Screening of Ashpet following regular class time for those who can stay.

April 13: Why Fairy Tales?: Workshop on Rationale and Justification
You will break into groups with fellows who teach students of the same age group. Be prepared to discuss the rationale you are developing for using fairy tales in the classroom, based on your reading of Edith Cobb, posted to the blackboard, and any two of the other readings on how fairy tales and literature of the fantastic function in child development, on reserve at Van Pelt:

Required: Cobb, posted selections from The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood

Choose two (you may divide these up with others in your group if you wish):
Tatar, from Off With Their Heads: Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood:
“Epilogue: Reinvention through Intervention,” pp. 229-238;


**April 20: Riddles and Threshold Rites**

*Your variants: please post by Saturday evening, April 10.*

- DVD, Tom Davenport, *Ashpet,* (on reserve)
- Carter, “The Mother’s Ghost.” (BB)
- Chamoiseau, “The Most Beautiful One is Under the Tub,” (BB)

**Criticism and Ethnography (Recommended):**

- Abrahams, “Wake Amusements and the Structure of Nonsense on St. Vincents,” (BB)
- Abrahams, “Between the Living and the Dead: Riddles that Tell Stories.” (on reserve)

**April 27: Snow White (ATU 709)**

- Greenwood Encyclopedia Entry, “Snow White,” (BB)

**Bring comparative notes, be prepared to discuss.**

**May 4: Frame Stories and the Magic Mirror**

- Greenwood Encyclopedia: “Frame Narrative,” and “Mirror” entries (BB)

**Criticism (Recommended):**

- Baccilega, “Cracking the Mirror: Three Re-visions of Snow White.” (BB)
- Warner, “Wicked Stepmothers” (BB)
May 11: Tricksters, Paradox, and Fairy Tale Pedagogy

Greenwood Encyclopedia Entries, “Tricksters,” (BB)

Criticism and Theory (Recommended)

Knappert, “Introduction to African Fables.” (BB)
Lancy, from Playing on the Mother Ground, “The Kwii Way,” (BB)
Abrahams, from African Folktales, “Tales of Tricksters and Other Ridiculous Creatures,” (on reserve)

May 20: Workshop II: Teaching Strategies

Be prepared to share teaching strategies with fellows who teach your age group, with special attention to how your strategies relate to 1) meeting the standards, and 2) theories discussed in the previous workshop about how fairy tales function in child development.

Bring in your found touchstones to folk and fairy tales to present in class.

June 1: TIP reception

June 18: Curriculum Units Due

July 9: Evaluations of Seminar and Leaders Due
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**Readings and Resources**

* = Placed on reserve in Van Pelt Library’s Rosengarten Reading room.

** = In reference collection at Van Pelt Library


Boggs, Ralph. 1930. *Index of Spanish Folktales.* Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.*


Flowers, Helen L. 1980. *Classification of the Folktale of the West Indies by Type and Motif*. 


http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/faculty/mhufford/TreeSmells.pdf


MacDonald, Margaret Read, and Brian Sturm. 2001. *The Storytellers Sourcebook: A Subject, Title, and Motif Index to Folklore Collections for Children, 1983-1999.* Detroit: Gale Group.**


Mieder, Wolfgang. *Disenchantments: An Anthology of Modern Fairy Tale Poetry.* University of Vermont. *


Reference Tools in Van Pelt Library


There are quite a few other resources in the reference stacks on the first floor and in the GR1 section on the fifth floor of Van Pelt, east side.

Journals:

The following journals are available online, and also appear in the company of many other folklore journals on the fifth floor of Van Pelt, east side: GR1 etc. Well worth a visit to the stacks for browsing.

Folklore GR1.F64
Journal of American Folklore GR1.J81
Journal of Folklore Research GR1.I5
Western Folklore GR1.C26
Folklore Fellows Communications GR 1. F55

Online Resources:

SurLaLune Fairy Tales.com: http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/index.html (contains many texts, annotations, resources, and links)


**Fairy Tales on DVD:**


