Powers, Heather, editor. *Fairy Tales in the College Classroom: Essays to Spark Lesson Plan Ideas Across the Curriculum*. McFarland, 2024.

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Aisik Maiti

As a curation of finely crafted essays on "the closest thing we have to a universal antidote" (8), Heather Powers's *Fairy Tales in the College Classroom: Essays to Spark Lesson Plan Ideas Across the Curriculum* provides important resources to locate the pedagogical impact of fairy tales. Revisiting narratives that most readers are fairly well acquainted with, the essays span across the discursive terrains of linguistics, critical race studies, gender studies, visual studies, and adaptation studies. Exploring the potential of fairy tales as educational tools across various disciplines, the collection offers important perspectives on how these narratives can resourcefully enrich college-level teaching. Along with its rigorous academic approach, a reader's familiarity with the background makes it an insightful read. This combination of academic rigor and familiar reading experiences makes the work an intriguing exploration of the several approaches the study of fairy tales invites: social, historical, anthropological, philological, and literary.

Powers's introduction effectively attends to recent scholarly directions that the subsequent sections of the book also show. The neat progression of essays that follows not only highlights its inherent conversational tenor, but also its organic conceptual development. Classified into five sections involving the craft of writing fairy tales, the notion of the visual, decolonial perspectives, gender, and adaptation, the cluster of essays suggests a pattern that essentially arrives from a pedagogical involvement in the classroom. Rather than trying to fit in preconceived theoretical models of teaching into the curriculum of fairy tales, the sharply written essays in the volume

develop on possible and demonstrated ways of teaching stories to arrive at a commentary on pedagogy.

One of the key notions that underwrites almost all the essays is how an academic engagement with fairy tales can corroborate the processes of both critical and creative writing. What becomes central to this is the question of the transition from orality to the written—a socio-historical and culturally facilitated transition that can have parallels within the very space of creative and academic transaction that a college classroom provides. One can find a substantial exploration of this idea in the first set of essays by Michael Jones, Theodora Goss and Amy Bennett-Zendzian, and Catalina Millán-Scheiding.

Jones, in ""Fires that blaze brightly': The Language of the Tale," sharply discusses how a "pedagogical focus" on the language of fairy tales can "aid students' writing development" (26). The essay provides an important framework that not only explores the potential of fairy tales in shaping the creative expression of learners but also delves into how one can reconcile the abstraction of these "tales" and the technical demands of modern literary writing found in, for instance, a novel. What comes as an important concern in the essay is how the practice of teaching these tales can be accommodated into the models of contemporary prose.

Goss and Bennett-Zendzian's essay discussing the pedagogic potential of "Little Red Riding Hood" adds another perspective on the students' familiarity with the topic through both their "experiences" and the strong, ubiquitous presence of fairy tales across several forms of media (33). Their argument, developing on the conceptual tools of psychoanalytic reading, traces the allegorical parallels between the narrative of the tale (decoding the symbolic "Grandma's house," the "dark forest," the "path of needles," and the defeat of the wolf) and the very act of navigating through critical thinking and writing. The essay spans across interrelated topics like the role of oral

storytelling in classroom pedagogy, the exercise of writing while thinking through the patterns of fairy tale, and the correlation between comprehending the symbolism encoded in narratives and the structural paradigms of academic writing.

Furthermore, Millán-Scheiding, in "The Use of Fairy Tales in Second Language Learning: From Grammar Acquisition to Intercultural Competence," advances the idea of the "capitalist rewriting of folk tales" when it comes to the very nomenclature of "fairy tales" for a "bourgeois" readership (49). Developing concepts from linguistic studies and thinking through classroom workshops on the processes of translation and creative writing (or storytelling/narratology at large), the essay makes some key interventions in unpacking the grammatical potential of fairy tales. As Millán-Scheiding suggests, fairy tales assist readers "to be very much alive in the words, structures and knowledge of improving L2 [second language] speakers" (59).

The next set of essays by Gabrielle Stecher, and Daniel J. Weinstein and Nathan Heuer brings in the notion of the visual while mapping the narrative element in fairy tales. Stecher's "Picture This: The Pedagogical Value of Picture Books" substantiates the relationship between words and visuality through the practice of using picture books in classroom workshops, showing "how text and image come together to retell a particular fairy tale" (78). By further bringing in the concept of "multimodality"—the conflation of the "linguistic, the visual, and the spatial" (67), Stecher argues how picture books illustrate the potential of the juxtaposed image-text format renders these narratives accessible and diverse. Weinstein and Heuer in "Tales for Today: A Fairy-Tale Collaboration Between English and Art" further address the notion of collaborative work and desired educational outcomes in a project specific to writing, editing, and illustrating collections of flash fairy tales—an activity that can add "a touch of novelty" to the classroom pedagogy on fairy tales and give learners "opportunities to enhance their flexibility as writers" (80).

Highlighting the importance of "fostering interdisciplinary collaboration" (80) among students, the essay moves through pedagogic instances of group writing, group editing, draft sketching, and "writing under pressure" (93). These essays not only provide ways to rethink the relevance of *visuality* in contemporary classroom teaching on fairy tales, but also frameworks to theorize the strong and resourceful intermedial connections between the literary and the visual across textual traditions of the fantastic.

"The Value of the African Dilemma Tales as a Pedagogical Resource" by Ayub Sheik, Martha Khosa, Nicholus Nyika, and Bheki Mthembu attends to the question of *decolonizing* the curriculum of fairy tales. The essay discusses the relationships between the "African dilemma" and fairy tales, on how classrooms function as oral spaces of "improvisation, spontaneity, and adaptation" (104), and further how this can be "a productive resource for participatory learning" among students, providing opportunities for "peer-to-peer intellectual exchanges" (111). The essay defines the African dilemma as "tales [that] celebrate African conundrums, African angsts and briefly peers into the private joys and wonder of tales long regaled by our African ancestors across the continent" (99). The focus on developing skills of open-mindedness, active listening, and decision-making skills through a decolonial, learner-centric framework of fairy tale pedagogy becomes central to the essay's concern of "making moral decisions . . . at the heart of educational practice" (112). The essay not only directs one to the "recognition" of the African dilemma tale in nurturing the creative and critical thinking of learners but also rethinks the importance of a "positive, entertaining and thoughtful" pedagogic apparatus for "multicultural heritage" (111).

Sarah Victor's contribution on "Empowerment Through Language" takes an interesting turn by discussing the potential of a multilingual text like Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990), a "seemingly simple children's fairy tale," to invoke debates on the role of "home

languages" to immigrant and refugee populations. Victor's argument traces the questions of decolonial pedagogy and the immigrant identity through an understanding of linguistic "code-switching" in the text, advancing an important perspective: "it introduces and normalizes the mixture of languages and stories that occur when people from different cultures come together" (123). Through detailed examples of reading and discussion exercises centering on the text, the essay thus not only focuses on fiction and translingualism but also extends to the cognate fields of linguistics and cultural politics (116).

The next set of essays by Dillon Craig, Tanya Heflin, and Ka Yan Lam address fairy tales through developments in gender studies. Placing the well-known narrative of "Little Red Riding Hood" as a text that has potential to be "analyzed from a feminist and gendered perspective" (130), Craig's essay further attends to the question of teaching a gendered discourse through textual choices that "inform, educate, and engage students" (136) in a way that shapes their "perception of the world without bias" (136). Heflin's "Mystery, Magic, and Enchantment: The Uses of Fairy Tale in Teaching Women's Literature" further discusses categories like course design and setting, adding case studies of how learners across the academic spectrum respond to the teaching of women's literature. Heflin discusses the potential of teaching these stories in shaping "patience to help students recognize their narrative power, their psychological depth, and their profound seriousness of purpose" and further adds that once the students do so, "the rewards of fairy tales in the university classroom are multifold" (144). The conclusion of the essay sharply captures the essence of the praxis of teaching fairy tales, an observation that connects the essence of several of the pieces in the volume: "Far from being the 'most fleeting of pleasures,' *curiosity in the literature classroom* opens the forbidden door to bring to light what's *long been hidden in the shadows*" (160, emphasis added). Thinking along the same lines of pedagogy, Ka Yan Lam's "Disenchanting

the Romantic Ideal: Workshop Activities for Feminist Fairy-Tale Restorying" provides important tools to initiate class activities for "feminist fairy tale re-storying," assessing techniques of textual analysis through close reading that can potentially shape the critical skills of learners. Arguing for a revisionist framework that "interrogate[s] the presumptions in traditional tales" (165) in class-workshops, the essay substantiates how a pedagogic reimagination can provide a kind of agency to a learner's own creative and critical responses to the hierarchies of power that underwrite most fairy tales.

The final section, featuring essays by Melodie Roschman and Susanne Even, addresses the field of fairy tales and adaptation studies. Roschman explores the relevance of "adaptation criticism" in the study of fairy tales, assessing how an acquaintance with fairy tale narratives through familiar cultural forms "enables us to immediately discuss the difference between a text and its cultural permutations" (183). The essay advances a strong departure from the predominant Disney-influenced imagination of fairy tales and locates student projects in this spectrum of adaptation criticism, thus making a fine balance between the "knowledge of their source material" and their own critical perspectives (193). Even's essay, "Old and New Magic: The Grimm Brothers and Cornelia Funke's *Mirrorworld*," further examines the question of adaptation by addressing areas like intertextuality and archetypes in fairy tales. Even's argument also traces the "deliberate and purposeful" (200) historical markers in Funke's "tapestry of intertextuality" (198) through the presence of Austrian, British, and French history in the adapted characterization. By looking at an example from the pedagogical design of an undergraduate course, Even discusses how teaching Grimms' fairy tales in conjunction with Cornelia Funke's first book of the *Reckless* series (2010-present) can reflect "the potential of an approach that combines traditional fairy tales with a modern novel" (196). This directs the reader to rethink fairy tales not as stories residing in a

mythical or magical past, but as potential narratives that can have historical implications and contemporary appeal.

In almost all the essays, the prose is sharp, and ideas are well-facilitated with case studies that complement theoretical toolkits with practical models. Powers's collection is thus not only a careful anthology of cultural criticism on fairy tales, but also a testament to the interdisciplinary turn in fairy tale studies. While reflecting recent theoretical developments within the intersecting terrains of fairy tales and education, the volume attends to the larger question of literature as praxis—within and, consequently, beyond the college classroom.

Aisik Maiti has recently graduated with an MA by Research from the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay. His areas of interest include Victorian Studies, Modernisms, intellectual history, and visual cultures.