

Abstract

The History of Fairy Tales: Perspectives on Literary, Folk, and Scholarly Traditions (Ihmesatujen historia. Näkökulmia kirjailijoiden, kansankertojien ja tutkijoiden traditioihin)

Classical fairytales – such as Cinderella or Snow White – are known the world over. Screenwriters for film and television are perpetually generating new versions of them. Old folktales have also captured the scholarly imaginations of literary researchers and folklorists. The focal point of both popular entertainment and academic research has been the so-called princess tales, narratives describing the fates of female protagonists.

The present study covers the history of five feminine tales; chronologically, they are Cupid and Psyche (ATU 425B), Cinderella (ATU 510), Sleeping Beauty (ATU 410), Beauty and the Beast (ATU 425C), not to mention Snow White (ATU 709). Drawing upon these narratives, I paint a picture of the development of the entire fairy-tale genre (*tale of magic, fairy tale, Zaubermärchen, conte merveilleux*), starting with Ancient Rome and ending with the recordings of folktales by Archangel Karelian narrators in the 1960s.

In my analysis, I follow two traditions, namely, the literary and the oral forms of the folktale. For the former, I have sought editions published in the original languages. I present the orally-transmitted folktales using Finnish, Karelian and Finland-Swedish recorded items. The Archives of the Finnish Literature Society and the Swedish Literature Society house hundreds of manuscript versions of folktales; and these have been used to create edited scientific anthologies and indices.

I analyse the selected folktales using a method of dual contextualization. The first framework is made from each folktale's own history; the narrative's different temporal versions constitute a series, whose parts can subsequently be mapped by comparing both variations and continuities. When I seek to grasp, for example, the differences among

the Cinderella narratives by Charles Perrault, the Grimm Brothers and Finnish-Karelian narrators, I also take the cultural and historical framework into consideration. In my analysis of the folktale about Snow White, I investigate more carefully the narrative devices that those retelling or rewriting the tale have used to make their version conform with their own cultural milieu and verbal artistry.

The final section of my study deals with the history of folktale research. Imaginative notions and bizarre interpretations have flourished in many scholarly texts, from the work of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm all the way to that of Jack Zipes. The most significant and enduring debate has concerned the relationship between the oral narratives and the literary tradition. According to the most popular theory, the classic fairy tales had their origins in folk narratives; writers therefore have made use of folklore for centuries. Yet there are scholars, for example, Ruth B. Bottigheimer, who refuse to accept this claim. In 2010, this dispute culminated in a vivid and comprehensible debate, the forum of which was the *Journal of American Folklore*.