

To: Steve Lane, Dean of Arts and Humanities
Graham Pike, Dean of International Education
Audrey Hansen, Study Abroad Manager

From: Terri Doughty, English Department

Date: May 22, 2009

Re: Report on Travel to “The Fairy Tale After Angela Carter,” an International Conference at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK, April 22-25.

This conference brought together major international fairy-tale scholars not only to reflect upon the impact of Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* but also to assess new directions in fairy-tale studies. There were eight parallel sessions, with 56 presentations, and four plenary sessions.

On the first day, I attended a plenary discussion by Donald Hasse, editor of the journal *Marvels and Tales*, entitled “Decolonizing Fairy-Tale Studies.” He argued that fairy-tale scholarship must move beyond the use of scientific methodologies which categorize universal tale types that erase profound cultural differences and which usually place European variants at the centre of discussion. The opening of the conference concluded with readings by English authors Michèle Roberts and Sara Maitland.

The second day of the conference featured a wealth of sessions on mixed media, issues of translation (another key topic to emerge from the conference), fairy-tale intertexts, and young adult literature. As there were sessions on materials I teach at VIU, on graphic novels and young adult fiction, I focused on these sessions, as well as on a session on myth and metamorphosis. The plenary speaker on this evening was Jack Zipes, one of the most influential scholars of fairy tales and folklore. His paper was a revisiting and updating of his classic *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*. He invited scholars to look to experimentation with fairy tales in film and digital media.

On the third day, I presented my paper, “‘Live like a story’: The Fairy Tales of Angela Carter and Francesca Lia Block.” It was very well received. I was asked by scholars from Ireland and the US to send them copies of my paper, and I was encouraged by others who felt I am moving in the right direction in my readings of Block. I also attended sessions on Japanese and Spanish uses of fairy tales and on the political uses of fairy tales. The plenary speaker, Cristina Bacchilega, from the University of Hawai’i, spoke on “Relocating the Fairy Tale: Questions of Genre.” The main thrust of her argument, echoing a dominant theme at the conference, was on decentring the European fairy tale. We finished the day’s work by attending a performance by Figurina, a Hungarian puppet troupe, entitled “Grim/m/aces,” at the Norwich Puppet Theatre.

On the final day, I attended a session on meanings of the monstrous in fairy tales. The last plenary speaker was the English scholar Marina Warner, who spoke on “Light Fantastic: The Flying Trapeze and the Shaman’s Drum.” She was tracing European use of indigenous shamanic traditions from the 1950s to the present.

My attendance at the conference was extremely productive for my research and teaching. I have been encouraged to pursue my line of thinking with respect to contemporary young adult fairy tales, and I have also had a very stimulating overview of new directions in fairy-tale studies that I can share with my students. In particular, I expect to be able to share insights into alternatives to the European tradition of fairy tales and the role of fairy tales in new media with my English 435 students in spring 2010. I also benefited from meeting and talking with scholars from Ireland, England, Switzerland, Egypt, Taiwan, the US, and Finland. I will enjoy sharing material from conference papers and discussions with my colleagues.

Finally, I was able while in England to take a number of photographs of Norman, Gothic, and neo-Gothic architecture for a course I will be teaching this fall on political uses of medievalism in the nineteenth-century, Engl. 384.

I am very grateful to the Travel and Study Abroad Grant Committee for its support. Travel and study abroad are enormously expensive, especially in the current economic climate, yet the rewards of doing so are immeasurable, as not only are faculty nourished by contact with scholars from other countries, but their students also benefit from the knowledge and experiences that subsequently inform faculty members’ teaching.