

Haney, Jack V. *An Anthology of Russian Folktales*. Armonk, N.Y: M. E. Sharpe, 2009. Map, glossary, bibliographies, index of tale types and motifs. xxxvi+340. \$84.95 (hardcover). ISBN 978-0-7656-2305-8.

It would be difficult to find a scholar today working in the field of Slavic folklore who is unfamiliar with the name Jack V. Haney. His compendium, *The Complete Russian Folktale*, represents one of the loftiest goals ever undertaken in this field – a collection of folktales containing at least one of every tale type in the Aarne Thompson (AT) classification system. *An Anthology of Russian Folktales* is a smaller edition which seeks to give a more casual overview of the material by drawing a small sample of texts, which Haney has selected, from each of the books in the collection. The anthology is comprised of nine sections – a 34 page introduction, six chapters which each reflect one of the books in the Complete series, a chapter of anecdotes (which Haney has not yet compiled for the Complete series), and a final chapter of newly edited *долгие сказки* [long poems], which Haney has titled *Serial Tales from the Far North*. The book also contains a useful map of the Russian Provinces ca. 1900, a glossary of foreign terms, and an index outlining all the AT tale types contained in the book and the stories in which they occur.

Nicely bound in an appealing textbook style format, the book would be well-suited to a first or second year university classroom setting, possibly a companion piece to Haney's *An Introduction to the Russian Folktale*, or equally fitting for private libraries and for casual readers who do not wish to own all seven books of the larger set. This accessibility does not mean, however, that the book would not appeal to scholars. The introduction to this book is one of the few I know which competently bridges the gap between the lay reader's and the scholar's interests. The collection, classification, genres and common motifs of the Russian folktale are all covered, as well as a discussion of the narrators and the art of tale telling, yet none of this material is explored in enough depth to dissuade the common reader, only to enlighten and enrich the reading of the tales. Each tale in the volume is prefaced with a short introduction, outlining where the story is from, who the narrator was, what significant tale types are employed and any other small facts that Haney has deemed important about the tale. These preambles are new to the anthology and do not appear in the original collection.

The selection within the book is competent and erudite. There are enough of the 'old standards' which make their way into every Russian

collection – *The Soldier and Death*, *Ivan Tsarevich*, *The Gray Wolf*, and *Elena the Most Beautiful* or *The Fox as Confessor* – to ensure that new readers are accommodated, but there are also a number of interesting, rare and unique tales – *The Mushrooms*, *Baba Yaga and the Nimble Youth* and *The Forest Spirit* come to mind – for those who are well read in the Russian corpus and revel in the rarer and more unusual material. There are a few odd omissions (a collection of this scope should include *The Cat Who Became Head Forester* and the variant of *Vasilisa Prekrasnaya* where she is sent to obtain fire from *Baba Yaga*), though the exclusion of these tales is hardly a detriment to the book. Altogether, the number of tales selected provides a surprising breadth of motifs and the amount of content continuity ensures that the average reader, upon completion, should be familiar with the regular cast of characters and able to solve any riddle a Russian storyteller could pose. The distribution is also well judged, with the weight placed upon the *Tales of Heroes and Villains* and *Tales of Love and Life* chapters (18 and 28 tales respectively), while the *Animal Tales*, *Tales of Magic*, *Legends*, *Tales of Clever Fools* and *Anecdotes* chapters receive slightly less attention (approximately 13 tales in each); the *Serial Tales* only number three due to their length.

The inclusion of the *Serial Tales from the Far North* is a unique pleasure and deserves special attention. These longer tales, which are a product of the working conditions of the Northern narrators (274) and intended to be told over a series of nights (xxvii), combine numerous motifs and exhibit traces of literary influence due to their historically late recording. These stories have beautiful length, richness and ornamentation that make them exceptionally entertaining and a treat to read. They are a lovely addition to the book and one can only hope that Haney will publish a larger collection of these tales in the near future.

There is, however, one minor problem with the anthology, and that is the footnotes and annotations. Because the majority of the tales in the collection have been taken directly from the books in the *Complete Russian Folktale*, the footnotes have not been amended and pose numerous anachronisms and confusions. Tale number 38 in the Anthology (which is tale number 305 in the original collection) uses the diminutives *Vania*, *Mitia* and *Kolia* (110) without explaining to the reader that these names reflect *Ivan*, *Dmitrii* and *Nikolai*. Later when the narrative shifts to calling the protagonist *Ivan*, the average reader could be easily confounded. Conversely, both tale 48 and tale 83 (each from different books in the Complete collection) contain introductions that

repetitively explain that the Aspen tree is connected to Judas' suicide in Russian folk-culture. These oversights are understandable given the nature of the book, but a careful edit could have proved immensely beneficial in perfecting the book and aiding the target audience.

That being said, this book is a welcome addition to the assortment of Russian Folktale anthologies that have been printed in English. Although the author's discretion has framed the selection of the tales, the vast scope of the source material and the competent framework through which Haney has approached the subject matter has produced perhaps the broadest and most representative anthology available to the English language reader. For those who cannot or do not wish to own the *Complete Russian Folktale*, this book is an affordable alternative that provides a broad array of criterion pieces as well as a fine selection of rare, new and exciting tales.

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