Jim Henson's 'The Storyteller'
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Fairy-Tale Adaptation in Jim Henson's 'The Storyteller'

John Pazdziora

> I am a teller of stories. A weaver of dreams. I can dance, sing and in the right weather stand on my head. … I am not domestic. I am a luxury, and in that sense, necessary.[1]

Jim Henson's 'The Storyteller' was a television series of nine episodes; Jack Zipes has called them 'tiny masterpieces' of fairy-tale film.[2] It was first broadcast in 1987-8, winning an Emmy and several BAFTAs. Henson's daughter Lisa, while she was taking an undergraduate course on folktales, had the idea:

> that it would be great fun to do a show using the Creature Shop to tell these folktales the way they were written. Not violent, necessarily, but not sugar-coated, not glamorized, and not just handsome princes and beautiful princesses. A little darker than people are used to.[3]

Although best known as the genius behind The Muppets and 'Sesame Street', Jim Henson held a lifelong fascination with fairy tales and folk literature, so Lisa's idea intrigued him. The decision to produce the idea as a television series is, perhaps, the least remarkable thing about it; Henson, after all, was a television producer. Yet, the artistic challenge of developing the tales within a constrained space, shot for the small screen and structured around a commercial break, may have appealed to Henson as an auteur. A series would also allow him to retell more than one story and retell them individually, unlike his previous fantasy films 'The Dark Crystal' (1982) and 'Labyrinth' (1986). 'The Storyteller' would be something new yet again. As Duncan Kenworthy, the series producer, explained:

> Nobody had ever really done anything like that before, … taking a fairy story and bringing it to television while staying true to the oral tradition. Usually fairy stories are dramatized, but this would be totally different. It would be a matter of hearing the story and creating images to match it – making metaphors real. That was the challenge.[4]

This position informs the visual concretism of the series, but there is an irony to Kenworthy's claim: a metaphor is no more real on the screen than it is on the page.

But what I think both Lisa Henson and Kenworthy are trying to convey is the *unheimlich* nature of the folktale and the task of conveying the aesthetic effect of oral storytelling to a television audience. Henson's achievement lies not in making this effect real, but translating it into a new medium.[5] Anthony Minghella, the screenwriter for all nine episodes, said that 'The Storyteller' works by 'persuading people to listen when so often with television they are only asked to look'.[6] Yet there is an immediate tension between this statement and Kenworthy's. They imply a disparity between the primary medium of storytelling: is 'The Storyteller' 'creating images' that are 'making metaphors real', or is it 'persuading people to listen' rather than just look? It presents the viewer with a palpably different experience from simply watching a film with a voiceover: the Storyteller is a forceful presence, arguing and opposing the characters in the tales, often directly addressing the viewer, sometimes appearing in his own stories. Yet many of the climactic moments in the tales are performed silently, divulging the narrative through music, camera angle, and the actors' facial expressions.

This combination of visual and verbal narration is, perhaps, integral to the aesthetic and project of the series. It is interesting to contrast the experience of watching the films with that of reading the companion book, which was adapted by Minghella. Despite – and perhaps because of – the exquisite power of Minghella's prose and its remarkable fidelity to his screenplays, the title of 'Jim Henson's "The Storyteller"' seems a misnomer: images and scenes which Henson portrayed visually are given written descriptions, and the narrative voice is distinctly Minghella's own. In fact, 'Jim Henson's "The Storyteller"' technically consists of two distinct texts: Minghella's adaptations, and Henson's filmic interpretations of those adaptations. The texts share a symbiotic relationship, and were created in response to each other. Henson, of course, built his films around Minghella's screenplays. And Minghella consciously wrote his adaptations to accompany Henson's aesthetic world, later recalling, 'I rewrote in the cutting room. We were finding the series as we went along'.[7] The distinction is important, and, while this discussion concentrates primarily on Henson's films, both texts are deserving of careful study.

In the television series, Henson employed the tension and synthesis of the verbal and visual narratives to create within each episode a distinct, self-contained world in which the audience could participate; this double nature as a text is reflected in the frame of each narrative. The violation of the rules of *ergon* (narrative) and *parergon* (frame) are shown in the cross-pollinating nature of Minghella's text and its immediate adaptation into Henson's visual work.[8]

This seems to be indicated in the frame for each narrative. The central conceit of each episode is the same: a rag-and-tattered old Storyteller (played by John Hurt) sits in 'the best place by the fire' and tells stories to his talking dog (performed by Brian Henson). The dog is far from a placid listener, challenging the Storyteller's account of events, commentating on the characters' behaviour, remaining at once sceptical of and entranced by the tale.[9] The dog is thus a stand-in for the

audience, or at least the audience Henson seemed to desire: talking back to the tale instead of sitting passively in front of the screen, learning it, relating it to his own life, and retelling it in his own way. Perhaps significantly, however, the dog is an elaborate puppet. In other words, the puppeteer is controlling the audience's reactions. The Storyteller himself is, in some ways, also an elaborate puppet, as the heavy, almost creaturely prosthetics on John Hurt suggest. By taking the auteur's credit of 'Jim Henson's *The Storyteller*', Henson cast himself as the teller of the Storyteller's stories.

'Who listens to a frog?'

It would be wrong to assume, however, that 'The Storyteller' existed as a creative anomaly in Henson's oeuvre. Situating it in relation to his earlier fairy-tale films helps sharpen an appreciation for his achievement in the series. Here 'Sapsorrow', the seventh episode in the series and an adaptation of Cinderella variant ATU 510B, provides a helpful case study. 'Sapsorrow' was not Henson's first retelling of a Cinderella story, as he had previously adapted the tale for television in 'Hey Cinderella!' (1969). The timbre of the earlier work is markedly different, though no less entertaining in its own fashion, lovingly burlesquing the tale. The movie begins as the Fairy Godmother – flamboyantly performed by Joyce Gordon as a dreadfully camp drag queen – attempts to change a pumpkin into a coach; she succeeds in making the pumpkin stand vanish and the pumpkin explodes across the stage. Then the title card appears as the scene changes to reveal a lavish fairy-tale book sitting on a desk. The image is a conscious invocation of classic Disney fairy-tale films, but the book and the desk are coated with dust and grime. Nor does an elegant hand emerge to turn the pages; as a choir sings 'Once upon a time, once upon a time', a feather duster appears to smear the dust around a bit. The movie promptly continues with the book unopened.

Now, the source tale seems to be the usual combination of 'Aschenputtel' (KHM 21, ATU 510A) and Perrault's *Cendrillon*; many of the visual details – Cinderella's gown, the prince's evening dress, the pumpkin coach, cute animal companions – seem intended to recall the Disney film. But 'Hey Cinderella!' makes a farce of these well-known versions of the tale as it presents a flippant, comic romp through the usual tropes. The wicked stepmother can hardly be called wicked; she's little more than a thoughtless eccentric. The Fairy Godmother appears in Cinderella's house by accident while fleeing from the disgruntled audience. Cinderella's requisite animal companions include not only the faithful and untidy sheepdog Rufus, but a giant blue monster named Splurge, and Kermit the Frog.

The driving impetus of the story is mistaken identity. When Cinderella meets the prince, he pretends to be the gardener for the novelty of being with a girl who doesn't know who he is. And when Cinderella, disguised as a mysterious princess, dances with the prince at the royal masquerade ball, the prince utterly fails to recognise the servant girl he's fallen in love with. Cinderella then refuses to marry the prince so she can marry the supposed gardener, and the prince refuses to marry the mysterious and beautiful stranger since he wants to marry the servant girl. The crisis only resolves happily when Arthur is forced to admit that he is the prince, and the

Fairy Godmother remembers how to recreate the mysterious princess effect she'd used before. And yet, for all this, the film goes so far as to satirise and undercut its own use of the mistaken identity trope. At the masquerade, the Fairy Godmother, dancing with the gigantic blue furry monster, abruptly exclaims, 'Oh, Splurge! I'm sorry, I didn't recognise you with your mask on!'

'Hey Cinderella!' takes fairy-tale film lightly and is a prolonged joke. The structure of the story remains largely unaltered, though the motivations of the individual characters may change. The familiarity is reinforced with the set design: bright and colourful painted backgrounds make the characters appear to inhabit a children's book illustration. Yet even this effect is promptly undermined by the very real smoke billowing off King Goshposh's cigar. 'Hey Cinderella!' is, simply, a Muppet fairy tale, riotous and unstable, gleeful in its self-contradictions; the Cinderella narrative appears mostly to be a convenient place to hang a string of comic escapades.

So it is hardly surprising that political and societal tension is largely absent from 'Hey Cinderella!'. The cigar-chomping King Goshposh is more interested in keeping frogs away from royal functions than in governance, benevolent or otherwise. The prince is an enthusiastic but inept gardener. Even the efficient Featherstone, King Goshposh's clerk, manages to effect very little. A quiet anarchy pervades the story; the characters rollick from one gag to the next with little apparent interest in the tale itself. Kermit makes occasional attempts at narration, showing meta-fictional shrewdness in recognising the tale type, but is largely ignored. As the prince and Cinderella waltz into their happy ending, Kermit complains, 'I could have solved this whole thing months ago, but who listens to a frog?' The figure of the storyteller, so prominent in the later series, is here a ludicrous and ineffectual figure.

What is most curious about this retelling is the change of genre it effects: 'Hey Cinderella!' changes a wonder tale into a comic tale. For instance, the magical transformations wrought by the Fairy Godmother are played entirely for humour, with the creation of the pumpkin coach being a careless accident. There could not be a sharper contrast with 'Sapsorrow', which, according to Jack Zipes, is one of only a few fairy-tale films to deal forthrightly with incest.[10]

The passage of twenty years may be in itself enough to count for the shift. Henson's fairy-tale films of the '80s seem to belong to a different stage of his work than the fairy-tale films of the late '60s and early '70s. 'Hey Cinderella!', with 'The Frog Prince' (1971) and 'The Muppet Musicians of Bremen' (1972), are distinctly Muppet films, with the usual emphasis on wackiness and humour, whereas 'The Storyteller' was made with the Creature Shop. From this perspective, 'The Storyteller' can be seen to form part of a later, more nuanced, branch of Henson's oeuvre, together with his fairy-tale films 'The Dark Crystal' (1982) and 'Labyrinth' (1986). All this may be useful for a chronological chart of Henson's filmography, but how does Henson retell fairy tales in 'The Storyteller'?

'Without the burden of scholarship'

As films like 'Hey Cinderella!' and 'The Frog Prince' suggest, Henson had no compunctions about fracturing fairy tales, making fun of viewers' expectations of the tale, or playing with incongruities in the form. Nor did he exhibit any embarrassment for his obvious enjoyment of the tales. This

makes the shift in tone all the more curious: it appears that Henson consciously departed from his earlier, slapstick retellings when he began work on 'The Storyteller'.

One possible reason for this different approach to fairy-tale film may be the mythological theories of Joseph Campbell. In the 1970s and '80s, when Henson's best fairy-tale work was undertaken, Campbell's theories were still in their ascendency – if not in academic thought, then certainly in the public imagination. Although, to my knowledge, there is at present no hard evidence that Henson knew Campbell or read *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), he collaborated with George Lucas, a personal friend and the foremost artistic disciple of Campbell, and with others who worked on Lucas's films; so it seems unlikely that Lucas's own devotion to Campbell's theories had no effect on Henson. Especially given the easily identifiable influence on 'Labyrinth' and 'The Dark Crystal', it seems likely that Campbell's underlying hypothesis of 'the one, shape-shifting yet marvellously constant story'[11] may have informed Henson's approach to traditional fairy-tale material in 'The Storyteller'. With a characteristic poetical flourish, Campbell declares:

> It would not be too much to say that myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation. Religions, philosophies, arts, the social forms of primitive and historic man, prime discoveries in science and technology, the very dreams that blister sleep, boil up from the basic, magic ring of myth.
> The wonder is that the characteristic efficacy to touch and inspire deep creative centers dwells in the smallest nursery fairy tale—as the flavor of the ocean is contained in a droplet or the whole mystery of life within the egg of a flea.[12]

Campbell's conviction of the high seriousness of fairy tales, and his conflating them with mythology, seems to have informed the series' inception. It is surely not coincidence that Henson followed the first series of 'The Storyteller' with adaptations of Greek myths in 1990, using the same frame of a storyteller and his dog; there appears to have been parity between fairy tale and mythology in his understanding.

This shift can also be partly attributed to Anthony Minghella's writing; 'The Storyteller' was his first collaboration with Henson. In adapting fairy tales for his screenplays, Minghella – who would go on to make 'The English Patient' (1996) and other films – took as his dictum the Tuscan proverb cited by Italo Calvino: 'The tale is not beautiful if nothing is added to it'.[13] Curiously, when he began work on 'The Storyteller' – 'without the burden of scholarship to restrain me' – Minghella thought that he 'had never read the Brothers Grimm' but quickly discovered he had. And he changed them: 'In The Storyteller project I have felt like a man who hears a good joke and tells it to his friends. I have taken liberties, invented what I have forgotten, and changed what I have remembered'.[14] By reworking the tales to suit his idea of a how a storyteller should sound, he comes remarkably close to the Grimms' stylistic editing, and consciously places the films into the literary fairy-tale tradition.

Max Lüthi voices critical consensus when he writes that 'the Grimm brothers did not retell the fairy tales exactly as they heard them. On the contrary, they carefully edited them, simplifying or embellishing them according to their poetic inclinations and pedagogical intentions.'[15] Similarly, Jack Zipes asserts that 'their major accomplishment' in the various editions of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* 'was to *create* an ideal type for the literary fairy tale, one that sought to be as close to the oral tradition as possible, while incorporating stylistic, formal, and substantial thematic changes to appeal to a growing middle-class audience'.[16] The Grimms' work of creating an ideal fairy-tale type may be similar to Henson's project in 'The Storyteller'. He appears to be editing Minghella's adaptations 'to create an ideal type' of fairy-tale film. Intriguingly, the originals he adapts do include revisions of the Grimm's tales; in 'Sapsorrow', for instance, a variant of ATU 510B, the eponymous heroine has a coat of 'fur and feathers'; according to Christine Goldberg, this coat of mixed skins is a distinct feature of the Grimms' variant of the tale type.

Here credit must be given to Steven Barron, who helped design the series' striking visual style and directed both 'Sapsorrow' and 'Hans My Hedgehog'. The complicated symbolic structure Barron helped create for 'Sapsorrow' is given a bold initial statement in the opening credits: a ring rolling down a staircase. Henson had already used a staircase in a fairy-tale setting when he recreated M.C. Escher's 'Relativity' (1953) to represent the ultimate trial in 'Labyrinth'. In 'Sapsorrow', Henson and Barron use staircases to create a visual implied metaphor for the reversal of Sapsorrow's fortunes and the rigid hierarchical society she overcomes.

'Where cats lay eggs and hens chase mice'

The story of 'Sapsorrow' begins like KHM 65: a king wishes to remarry after the death of his wife. Unlike the king in the Grimms' version, however, he does not lust for his daughter but is simply obligated to marry whoever fits a curious, hereditary ring. The ring is placed on a dais, and would-be queens climb a few stairs to try it on. When the bad sisters decide to try the ring on themselves out of mean-spirited curiosity, Sapsorrow, the good sister, follows them up the stairs and inadvertently puts the ring on. Again unlike KHM 65, the king is horrified by the impending marriage; it is as much to save him as herself that Sapsorrow makes the coat of fur, disguising herself as 'a strange thing of fur and feathers', and flees the kingdom. She is shown downstairs, outside the palace, rejecting her identity as Sapsorrow and becoming Straggletag: 'A Princess of Slops, oh yes. A Princess of Peelings, perhaps. A Princess of the Kitchen Floor, certainly.' The camera reveals her scrubbing the floor, at the foot of a staircase. Down the stairs comes an arrogant prince. He is bemused by the sharp-tongued Straggletag but confident in the social structure; he descends the staircase to give her orders. But then there is a royal ball; on the first night, Sapsorrow appears above stairs in her own guise, capturing the prince's heart. The prince falls in love with the mysterious princess, but grows discomfited when Straggletag comes up the stairs to perform her duties: a Straggletag above stairs goes against the natural order of things. So he tells her: 'Look – cats catch mice, hens lay eggs … some things have to do with

other things, and I have nothing to do with you,' and tells her to 'keep below stairs'. But on the second night, when Princess Sapsorrow runs away, the prince calls after her, 'Where do you live, that I might find you?' She replies: 'I live where hens catch mice and cats lay eggs.' Sapsorrow, as Straggletag, identifies herself with the land at the bottom of the staircase, where the natural order of things has flipped. The next day the prince and Straggletag are able to meet and converse, if not as friends then as neighbours, on the middle of the stairs. After the third night of the ball ends, in a deeply moving scene performed without dialogue, the prince and Sapsorrow meet and dance again in the middle of the staircase. Then follows the business of the golden slipper – Sapsorrow runs away down the stairs, and the prince retrieves the shoe from the bottom of the staircase.

It is here that 'Sapsorrow' diverges most strikingly from the source tale. In KHM 65, the princess remains largely at the mercy of the two kings in the story: her incestuous father, and the king of the forest where she tries to hide herself. Although, once safe from her father and in the service of the king of the forest, she shows some tenacity in attracting the king's attention, it is ultimately the king's cleverness that sees through the disguise and unmasks her identity. Consider the Grimm's version of 'All Fur':

> Then [the king] seized her hand and held it tight, and when she tried to free herself and run away, the fur cloak opened a bit, and the dress of bright stars was unveiled. The king grabbed the cloak and tore it off her. Suddenly her golden hair toppled down, and she stood there in all her splendour unable to conceal herself any longer.[17]

While the force the king uses in this passage does not necessarily imply rape, at the very least the passage presents the violence without comment; the king's forcible disrobing of All Fur is apparently accepted as a suitable way of claiming her as his 'dear bride', despite taking away both her garment and her chosen identity – All Fur – against her will.[18]

In 'Sapsorrow', when the prince and Straggletag meet again, the stairs are gone entirely, and they are shown opposite each other on a level floor. Straggletag demands her right to try on the golden slipper. When it fits, she makes the prince promise to marry her before revealing her true identity; the prince is honourable enough to pledge his hand to Straggletag without recognising her as Sapsorrow. Minghella is of course incorporating the 'Loathly Lady' motif (D732), which subtly but powerfully shifts the emphasis in the story from the cunning of the prince and princess to their personal integrity and mutual respect. The episode ends when Sapsorrow tells her story to the prince, and in the telling they are able to relive it together: 'they wept for her dear father, smiled for poor Straggletag, forgave the bad sisters, and danced for a day without going away'; notice the progression from bereavement, to empathy, to reconciliation, to joy. The entire story thus recurs in the moment of the ending.

‘What a lucky girl, you might think’

The genius of Henson’s adaptation is perhaps seen more forcefully in comparison with other fairy-tale television of the time. For instance, Shelley Duvall’s ‘Faerie Tale Theatre’ produced an adaptation of Cinderella in 1985. As an adaptation, it is largely unremarkable, wavering uneasily between glamorous and garish, with a screenplay that does little to challenge the viewer’s expectations of the most familiar version of the tale type. This makes it enlightening to contrast Duvall’s opening sequence with Henson’s. ‘Cinderella’ begins with a picturesque fireplace, tidily decorated with gleaming pottery and a well-placed broom. A reverberated voiceover begins: ‘Hello, I’m Shelley Duvall. Welcome to Faerie Tale Theatre.’ There is a gentle boom and a flash of sparks; Shelley Duvall appears perched on the fireplace, dressed in what seem to be tasteful green rags. She continues:

> It’s nice to have some help from a fairy godmother once in a while. But this lucky girl rises from the ashes to discover she only needs to be herself to find true happiness – and a prince.

Duvall vanishes with another flash and intones, ‘Cinderella’. The device of Shelley Duvall vanishing in and out of the frame is merely playful, insinuating the magical effects of the story, whereas her appearance in her own guise parallels Cinderella’s declared need of ‘being herself’. The introduction tells the viewers what to expect: this will be a fairy tale with a typical happy ending in marriage. And, more importantly, it tells child viewers what they should learn: don’t get too caught up in imagination, be true to yourself to be successful and attractive. The polyvalence of the tale type is casually reduced to a few tidy platitudes. The episode is thus reassuring for children and parents alike; there will be no deviance from the established story for the children, and the educational value is clearly pre-packaged for the parents.

By contrast, the introduction to ‘Sapsorrow’ is neither easy nor readily accessible; there is no forthright educational narrative, and the retelling is daring and innovative, parting widely from the more pervasive variants. The episode opens with a tilted close-up of the Storyteller’s face. He says:

> Beginning as I do at the beginning, and starting as I must at the start, let me show you fate through the round of this ring. The girl whose finger fits this ring, she must be queen, the law decrees it. What a lucky girl, you might think. Hm? Oh, no.

As he speaks, the camera pulls back from the close-up to reveal the ring he has been holding; as the camera move continues, the ring dwindles, first encompassing the whole scene, then just the Storyteller’s face, then finally the Storyteller’s eye. The Storyteller toys with it for a minute, then lets it drop. The dog watches it mistrustfully as it bounces down a staircase, and – now

grown to the size of a wheel – rolls into the palace and nearly knocks over a bust of the king. The relative difference in artistry between the works is readily apparent.

There is a corresponding contrast of depth and complexity in the stories themselves. When, for instance, Cinderella's father dies, her display of emotion – for which she is praised by the narrator – consists solely of two seconds of crying by the fireplace, and the ridiculous remark, 'It was so sad. I can't believe my father's really gone.' But when Sapsorrow discovers that the ring fits her, she sits devastated in her room, her internal horror and struggle made visible as an argument with the Storyteller, as the camera cuts back and forth from one to the other: 'I cannot shame the king.' 'But you cannot marry your father!' 'But the ring—' 'Is the ring, is the ring.' In 'Cinderella', the scene appears to be little more than mere necessity, quickly passed over; in 'Sapsorrow' it is a visceral and daring artistic climax to the first part of the narrative.

Put simply, Duvall's 'Faerie Tale Theatre' does little more than offer some light entertainment and a few platitudes; Henson's 'The Storyteller' is subtle and masterful filmmaking with complex visual styling, acting, and writing. Henson, in other words, was taking the task of fairy-tale retelling seriously.

'Ridiculous optimism'

A comparison of 'The Storyteller' episodes with the tale types they draw from reveals, firstly, a striking fidelity to traditional structural patterns. Henson has not distorted or deconstructed the tales themselves; nor does he subsume the tales in any particular *Zeitgeist* philosophy, political or otherwise. Nor, again, does he create a new fairy tale, as Terry Jones did in his short stories and in the screenplay for 'Labyrinth'. Here the assertion that Henson is adapting Minghella's adaptations seems particularly important. As noted above, Minghella said that in writing 'The Storyteller' he 'felt like a man who hears a good joke and tells it to his friends'.[19] So, secondly, Minghella approached the fairy tales as though they were a living tradition. In this important particular, Henson's tales differ radically from the Grimms'. The Grimms wanted their ideal type of fairy tale to be folk literature, posturing as though of and by the people; Henson created an ideal type of fairy-tale film that was firmly his own work, his own retelling.

> I believe that life is basically a process of growth – that we go through many lives, choosing those situations and problems that we learn through. I believe that we form our own lives, that we create our own reality, and that everything works out for the best. I know I drive some people crazy with what seems to be ridiculous optimism, but it has always worked out for me.[20]

This 'ridiculous optimism' appears throughout Henson's work, and it offers a possible interpretative approach to his fairy-tale adaptations in 'The Storyteller'. The storyteller, the puppeteer, could create 'many lives', trying them on and letting his audience try them on as

well. Henson, as auteur, storyteller, and puppet master, is able to create his own reality within the film. This is the idea he creates, as the Grimms did: an ideal type of the fairy-tale film in which 'ridiculous optimism' ultimately triumphs. The point, then, of his method of fairy-tale retelling was not, for instance, that all subsequent fairy-tale films should have tilted camera angles and an aesthetic influenced by surrealism; rather, the point was that fairy tales should be treated as a vital, living tradition of filmic narrative, which any filmmaker or storyteller could approach to create their own telling of the tales.

Thus the opening credits for each episode show a montage of puppets and creatures from the series, while John Hurt declaims in voiceover: 'When people told themselves their past with stories, explained their present with stories, foretold the future with stories, the best place by the fire was kept for ... *The Storyteller*.' The subsequent scene, revealing the Storyteller and his dog sitting in 'the best place by the fire', leaves no doubt in the mind of the viewer that these are the stories referred to. The viewers become a part of the Storyteller's shadow play; to paraphrase Minghella's words, rather than looking on passively, watching an enjoyable if insignificant *divertissement*, they are being invited to listen and respond to the story as though it were being told directly to them.

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2. Jack Zipes, *Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales, Children, and the Culture Industry* (London: Routledge, 1997), 100.
3. Lisa Henson in Christopher Finch, *Jim Henson: The Works, the Art, the Magic, the Imagination* (New York: Random House, 1993), 191.
4. *Op. cit*., 192.
5. B. Grantham Aldred, 'Henson, Jim (1936-1990)', in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales*, vol. 2, ed. Donald P. Haase (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 450-1: '*The Storyteller* is interesting as a series of folktale adaptations especially because of Henson's use of techniques of oral storytelling in the series. For instance, in 'A Story Short', the storyteller character from the series framework serves as a main character, a technique common in oral performance but rare in theatrical adaptation.'
6. Minghella, *op. cit*., 4.
7. Timothy Bricknell (ed.), *Minghella on Minghella* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 10.
8. I am indebted to Dr Joshua Richards for this observation.
9. Jack Zipes, *The Enchanted Screen: The Unknown History of Fairy-Tale Films* (London: Routledge, 2011), 221.
10. *Ibid*.

11. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, 1949 (London: Fontana Press, 1993), 3.
12. *Ibid*.
13. Minghella, *op. cit*., 4. Perhaps for this reason, 'The Three Ravens' seems to me the least convincing episode; it feels like a standard telling, not in my opinion up to the standard of the rest and feeble in comparison with, say, Padraic Colum's treatment of the tale type in *The King of Ireland's Son* (1916).
14. *Ibid*.
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