

'Gossip from the Forest', Sara Maitland

In this book Maitland argues that forests and fairytales are intimately connected and she intersperses descriptions of ancient woodland with her own re-working of some of these well-known tales. Most of us liked the book (though there was some concern about repetitiveness) and some of us have resolved to learn more about trees, and visit the forests she describes. We were interested in her theme that the Northern European fairytale tradition, like Northern European mythology, is connected to the obscure and complex perspective of the forest, in contrast to the open landscapes that gave rise to the Abrahamic religions. We also had a lively discussion about how fairytales are changed - not sometimes for the better? - in the retelling or in commitment to print or film.