

The Fairy Tale and Its Postmodern Revisions
BMA-AMED-400.34

“If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales.
If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales.”
Albert Einstein

Description

One of the oldest and most popular of all narrative forms, the fairy tale is going through a revival through its many retellings, transformations, and adaptations, leaving its indelible mark on our thinking. This course is an introduction to the history of the fairy tale (together with its move from children’s literature to the canon of grown-ups), its old and revised memes, topoi, characters, plots, and motifs, as well as the scholarship that has grown out of a desire to understand the never-ceasing cultural impact of the genre.

Topics to be covered: fairy tale as myth, magic, and the fantastic; history of the genre; memetics; fairy tale and gender scripts; fairy tale and patriarchy; fairy tale and performativity

Course requirements

Students are expected to

- (1) read the assigned texts, understand them, have a grasp of their narrative or argumentative structure, and be able to give interpretations of the main theses and arguments when called upon; **ALWAYS BRING THE ASSIGNED TEXTS TO CLASS;**
- (2) give one presentation (choosing from the presentation topics offered for each class session);
- (3) do the final oral exam that will cover all the assignments and presentations.

TEXTS. All readings have been uploaded on moodle.elte.hu under this course. As you know, readings are listed by week on moodle, but don’t be misled by that: you need to follow the schedule detailed in this syllabus.

Important: students who choose visual or filmic topics are expected to have the slides or films, bring their own laptops, as well as set up and operate the projector.

Schedule of classes and assignments

February 14 **Orientation, presentation topics distributed**
Introductory lecture

February 21 **Studying the fairy tale/I**

Assignment for all:

Maria Tatar, Introduction (*The Classic Fairy Tales*, ix-xviii) (pdf)

from Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment* (pdf)

“Introduction—Struggle for Meaning” (12-)

“Life Divined from the Inside” (30-)

“Fairy Tale versus Myth” (44-)

February 28 **Studying the fairy tale/II**

Assignment for all:

from Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment* (pdf)

“The Child’s Need for Magic” (55-)

“Vicarious Satisfaction versus Conscious Recognition” (62-)

“The Importance of Externalization” (69-)

“Transformations” (74-)

“Bringing Order into Chaos” (81-)

Presentation:

Marcia R. Lieberman, “‘Some Day My Prince Will Come’: Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale” (pdf)

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March 7 **Studying the fairy tale/III**

Assignment for all:

Jack Zipes, “Fairy-Tale Discourse: Toward a Social History of the Genre” (*Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, 1-12) (pdf)

Jack Zipes, “The Liberating Potential of the Fantastic in Contemporary Fairy Tales for Children” (*Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, 169-192) (pdf)

Vladimir Propp, excerpts (in Maria Tatar, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, 378-388) (pdf)

Presentation:

Maria Tatar, “Heroes,” “Villains” (*The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, 85-) (pdf)

Jack Zipes: “What Makes a Repulsive Frog So Appealing: Memetics and Fairy Tales” (pdf)

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March 14 **Fairy tales: history**

Assignment for all:

Jack Zipes, “Spells of Enchantment—An Overview of the History of Fairy Tales (*When Dreams Came True*, 1-32)

Ruth B. Bottingheimer, “A New History” (*Fairy Tales—A New History*, 103-116) (pdf)

Presentation:

Ruth B. Bottingheimer, “Why a New History of Fairy Tales” (*Fairy Tales—A New History*, 1-26) (pdf)

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March 21 Fairy tale theory, fairy tale revisions

Assignment for all:

Jack Zipes, “Toward a Theory of the Fairy Tale as Literary Genre” (*Why Fairy Tales Stick*, 1-40)

“Imagine Otherwise: Modern Revisions of Classic Fairy Tales” (on Rapunzel, Beauty and the Beast, Chestnut Brown and the Seven Dwarfs, Cinderello, Little Red Riding Hood) (pdf)

Presentation:

Maria Tatar, “Why Fairy Tales Matter: The Performative and the Transformative” (pdf)
Emma Donague, *Kissing the Witch* (pdf)

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March 28 “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Beauty and the Beast,” “Bluebeard”

Assignment for all:

Maria Tatar, “Little Red Riding Hood” (*The Classic Fairy Tales*, 3-24)

Maria Tatar, “Beauty and the Beast” (*The Classic Fairy Tales*, 25-73)

Maria Tatar, “Bluebeard” (*The Classic Fairy Tales*, 138-156)

Angela Carter, “The Werewolf,” “The Company of Wolves,” “Wolf-Alice” (*The Bloody Chamber*) (find text)

Presentation:

Jack Zipes, “The Male Key to Bluebeard’s Secret” (*Why Fairy Tales Stick*, 155-194)
Béla Balázs and Béla Bartók, *The Bluebeard’s Castle*

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April 4 “Snow White”

Assignment for all:

Maria Tatar, “Snow White” (*The Classic Fairy Tales*, 74-100)

Angela Carter, “The Snow Child” (*The Bloody Chamber*) (find text)

Robert Coover, “The Dead Queen” (pdf)

Donald Barthelme, *Snow White* (find text)

Presentation:

Gilbert & Gubar, “Snow White and her Wicked Step Mother” (*The Classic Fairy Tales* 280-290)

film: *Mirror, Mirror*

Snow White and the Huntsman

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April 11 "Hansel and Gretel," "The Sleeping Beauty"

Assignment for all:

Maria Tatar, "Hansel and Gretel" (*The Classic Fairy Tales*, 179-211)

Grimm brothers, "The Sleeping Beauty" (Maria Tatar, *The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales*, 95-104)

Robert Coover, *Briar Rose* (find text)

Presentation:

Jack Zipes, "Hansel and Gretel—On Translating Abandonment, Fear, and Hunger" (*Why Fairy Tales Stick*, 195-222)

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April 18 No class (spring break)

April 25 "Cinderella"

Assignment for all:

Maria Tatar, "Cinderella" (*The Classic Fairy Tales*, 101-137)

Joyce Carol Oates, *Black Water* (find text)

Presentation:

Christy Williams, "The Shoe Still Fits: *Ever After* and the Pursuit of a Feminist Cinderella" (Greenhill-Matrix, *Fairy Tale Films—Visions of Ambiguity*, 99-115); student will also show selected scenes from the movie *Ever After* (Tennant, 1998)

feature film *Sex and the City* (1)

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May 2 Fairy tale films/I

Assignment for all:

Jack Zipes, "Walt Disney's Civilizing Mission: From Revolution to Restoration" (*Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, 193-212)

Jack Zipes "Breaking the Disney Spell" (*The Classic Fairy Tales*, 332-352)

Joint presentation of two students:

Naarah Sawers, "Building the Perfect product—The Commodification of Childhood in Contemporary Fairy Tale Films" (Greenhill-Matrix, *Fairy Tale Films—Visions of Ambiguity*, 42-59); students will discuss the movies *Pinocchio* (Collodi, 1940), *AI: Artificial Intelligence* (Spielberg, 2001), *Robots* (Wedge-Saldanha, 2005)

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May 9 Fairy tale films/II

Assignment for all:

Jack Zipes, “The Great Cultural Tsunami of Fairy-Tale Films” (Jack Zipes, Pauline Greenhill, and Kendra Magnus-Johnston, ed., *Fairy-Tale Films—Beyond Disney*, 1-)

Jack Zipes, “Beyond Disney in the Twenty-First Century: Changing Aspects of Fairy-Tale Films in the American Film Industry” (Jack Zipes, Pauline Greenhill, and Kendra Magnus-Johnston, ed., *Fairy-Tale Films —Beyond Disney*, 278-)

Presentation:

Linda Pershing and Lisa Gablehouse, “Disney’s *Enchanted*: Patriarchal Backlash and Nostalgia in Fairy Tale Film” (Greenhill-Matrix, *Fairy Tale Films—Visions of Ambiguity*, 137-156); student will discuss the movie *Enchanted* (Kevin Lima, 2007)

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May 16 Final oral exam

You can find the assigned texts in the following volumes:

1. Maria Tatar, ed., *The Classic Fairy Tales*
2. Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*
3. Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*
4. Maria Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*
5. Jack Zipes, *When Dreams Came True*
6. Ruth B. Bottingheimer, *Fairy Tales—A New History*
7. Jack Zipes, “*Why Fairy Tales Stick*”
8. “*Imagine Otherwise: Modern Revisions of Classic Fairy Tales*”
9. Robert Coover, “*The Dead Queen*”
10. Maria Tatar, *The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales*
11. Jack Zipes, Pauline Greenhill, and Kendra Magnus-Johnston, ed., *Fairy-Tale Films—Beyond Disney*

Presentation texts (others than those found in the volumes above):

1. Marcia R. Lieberman, “‘Some Day My Prince Will Come’: Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale”
2. Jack Zipes: “What Makes a Repulsive Frog So Appealing: Memetics and Fairy Tales”
3. Maria Tatar, “Why Fairy Tales Matter: The Performative and the Transformative”
4. Emma Donague, *Kissing the Witch*
5. Christy Williams, “The Shoe Still Fits: *Ever After* and the Pursuit of a Feminist Cinderella” (Greenhill-Matrix, *Fairy Tale Films—Visions of Ambiguity*)
6. Naarah Sawers, “Building the Perfect product—The Commodification of Childhood in Contemporary Fairy Tale Films”
7. Linda Pershing and Lisa Gablehouse, “Disney’s *Enchanted*: Patriarchal Backlash and Nostalgia in Fairy Tale Film”