

Feminism and Fairy Tales

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Outline

- Area Studies Certificate Program
  - Vera Dorosh Sebulsky
- Introduction to Feminism
- Feminist Readings
  - Marcia Lieberman
  - Ruth Bottigheimer

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Area Studies Certificate

- Russian and East European Studies (REES)
- Vera Dorosh Sebulsky
  - Undergraduate Student Advisor
  - Program Manager
  - 4415 Posvar Hall
  - 412-648-7418
  - ved5@pitt.edu

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Feminine and Masculine

### Feminine

Passive  
Submissive  
Sweet  
Emotional  
Intuitive  
Damsel in Distress

### Masculine

Active  
Dominant  
Courageous  
Rational  
Logical  
Knight in Shining Armor

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Feminism: Terminology

- Sex vs gender
- Female (vs male)
- Feminine (vs masculine)
- Patriarchy
- Essentialism
- Sexism
- Feminism
- (See definitions on course web site)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Feminism: Definition

- Political stance
- Challenge the essentialist equation of female with feminine and the social consequences of that equation
- Uncover and debunk patriarchal prejudices and social imbalances
- Expose the ways in which males appropriate high-status roles for themselves
- Reveal the bias in supposedly neutral or objective observations

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Readings

- Marcia K. Lieberman. "Some Day My Prince Will Come': Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale." (1972)
- Ruth B. Bottigheimer. "Silenced Women in the Grimms' Tales: The 'Fit' Between Fairy Tales and Society in Their Historical Context." (1986)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Lieberman (General)

- "Some Day My Prince Will Come"
- Historical/cultural approach
- Children read stories because they are interesting
- Children learn to predict outcomes and consequences of specific acts (interest in *endings*)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Lieberman Outline

- Life as a Beauty Contest
- The Glamour of Suffering
- Powerful Women (Good and Bad)
- Marriage in Fairy Tales

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Life as a Beauty Contest

- Beautiful = meek, good-tempered
- Ugly = ill-tempered, ambitious, conniving
- There are no plain but good-tempered girls
- Being beautiful = Being chosen = Getting rich
- Beauty is rewarded, at least eventually, without having to do anything
  - Beautiful girls are never ignored
- There can be only one winner because there is only one prize
- What's the effect on beautiful girls? On plain girls?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### The Glamour of Suffering

- Heroines are not merely passive; they are also victims and martyrs
- Martyrdom and suffering are glamorous
- "Women in distress are interesting"
- "... the thrill of persecution, bordering at once on self-pity and self-righteousness"
- Passivity leads to being saved and, ultimately, chosen
- What lesson do girls learn from such examples?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Powerful Good Women

- Not human
- Remote
- Brief appearance
- Fate is irrelevant
- Old
- Asexual
- What sort of role model is the fairy godmother for a girl?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Powerful Evil Women

- Ugly (wicked witch) or jealous (wicked stepmother)
- Moral value of activity is sex-linked
  - Witches and villainesses are bad and active
  - Heroines are good and passive
  - Fairy godmothers are good, but not human, remote, and reactive
  - Heroes are good and active
- “The counterpart of the energetic, aspiring boy is the scheming, ambitious woman.”
- “Being powerful is associated with being unwomanly.”

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Marriage

- Marriage = wealth and social status
- Tales are preoccupied with marriage, but rarely portray it
- Desire for eternal courtship, since marriage is the end of the story

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Bottigheimer Outline

- Philological approach
- Social context
- Types of silence in fairy tales
- Verbs of speaking
- Germany, 1770–1830

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Philology

- The study of languages and literatures
- The study of written and oral texts and the nontextual features needed to understand them
- The study of a culture or civilization through its written and oral texts

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Social Context

- German society of the Grimms' time expected "silent women"
  - Evidence outside fairy tales
- "Men could be silent, but women were silenced."
- Women's speech is chattering or nagging
- Women's silence is feminine
- Men's silence is well-earned repose

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Types of Silence in Fairy Tales

- Muteness (as a curse or punishment)
- Distribution of speaking parts in the narrative
  - First- and third-person representations of speech
  - Quiet vs talkative characters
- Verbs of speaking
  - Speak (sprechen)
  - Say (sagen)
  - Ask (fragen)
  - Answer (antworten)
  - Cry out (rufen)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Verbs of Speaking

- Choice of verb that introduces direct speech
- Choice of verb indicates authority
- “Speaking” in seven Grimm tales
  - Mother (3)
  - Girl (7)
  - Witch (19)
  - Father/King (11)
  - Boy/Prince (16)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## So What?

- Is the distribution of verbs of speaking significant?
- Can it provide credible insights into the society of the time?
- Why does Bottigheimer emphasize that her research applies only to the Grimm corpus?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Feminism and Male Characters

- How about male characters and boys?
- Are women complicit in perpetuating patriarchal models?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---