

Panel Title:

Dumb Animals and Innocent Heroines: Encouraging Empathy with Folk and Fairytales

Description:

These papers look at the way that imaginative tales told in the 17th through 19th centuries evolved from narratives that condemned deviation to tales that empower society's "underdogs." This panel discusses how these narratives empower female children struggling to grow up in a hostile patriarchal environment and give voice to a variety of "dumb animals," including two feral dogs roaming 19th century San Francisco.

Paper #1

#MeToo and Little Red Riding Hood: Rape, Victim Blaming, and Recovery in Nineteenth Century Versions of Little Red Riding Hood

As critics such as Jack Zipes have explored, Little Red Riding Hood tales are embedded in rape culture. While some critics point to Charles Perrault as the initiator of this subtext, I argue that the subtext of sexual assault is inherent in all versions of the Little Red Riding Hood tale. Instead, the most significant change made in Perrault's version and the fairy tale chapbooks that emulate his work is the removal of hope for recovery and retribution after the violence and the violation occur.

In my presentation, I will examine versions of the Little Red Riding Hood tale printed by William Weeks in 1834, and the McLoughlin Brothers in 1853. Unlike the Perrault version, the Weeks edition focuses more on Little Red Riding Hood's death, and the ending becomes a revenge fantasy for those left behind in the wake of the child's death. The McLoughlin Brothers edition of the tale deviates from earlier versions of the tale by changing Little Red Riding Hood's fate. The characteristics she was condemned for in earlier versions become her salvation. While these texts might seem to show a linear progression of America's handling of rape and rape culture, I instead argue that while they show us how far we have come, they also show how far we still have to go.

Paper #2

Female Adolescence in Four Fairy Tales

The stories of Cinderella, Snow White, Rapunzel, Sleeping Beauty, and a few others are all part of a specific group of fairy tales identified by Steven Swann Jones and other folklorists as the Innocent Persecuted Heroine Genre. This group of tale types offers a spectrum of specifically female initiation stories, focusing on the development and maturation process of the heroine as she goes through childhood, adolescence and courtship, and (often, but not always) marriage and motherhood. Unlike male initiation fairy tales, in which the hero typically enters upon a journey or quest to prove himself and/or to show maturity through accomplishing various impossible tasks, female initiation stories focus on home and family relationships and conflicts which the girl must deal with as she moves from her childhood home and her ties to the family in that home, to a home of her own and ties to her husband and the family she establishes or joins in marriage. Thus, these stories, each in its own way, reflect female anxieties about girls growing up and fulfilling the roles society expects women to fill. Despite the modern Disney spin to these stories, the narrative focus is not on romance and "true love," but rather on survival of a dysfunctional family situation, and above all, on the act of moving beyond an imposed childhood identity and towards an adult one crafted by the girl herself. This presentation will explore briefly how this is so

for the four most well known of the Innocent Persecuted Heroines in the stories told by Perrault and the Brothers Grimm.

Paper #3

Fanny's Menagerie vs. Bummer and Lazarus: Cultivating Empathy for Animals

Lydia Maria Child (1802-1880) began her writing career during the 1820s, and was well established as an activist by the 1860s. This presentation will focus on Child's contribution of didactic literature related to the movement to start animal protection societies in the United States, with "Fanny's Menagerie," published in *Rainbows for Children* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1847) and "Animal Affection" published in an SPCA publication called *Our Dumb Animals* in October 1870. The presentation will compare and contrast Child's work to Western journalistic mythmaking that centered on two feral dogs named Bummer and Lazarus during the early 1860s. Journalists (including Mark Twain) wrote newspaper articles about the dogs' exploits in very humanistic terms, endowing Bummer and his sidekick Lazarus's adventures with romance and drama. The Press in San Francisco projected the apparent bond between the dogs to illustrate how these two strays might actually be useful to society and created folk metaphor for conflicted behavior in human beings unfolding during the Civil War appearing in the national headlines. News stories published in various outlets created a buzz that opened the community to a sensibility of humane treatment for animals. This presentation will contextualize how these gendered approaches to animal treatment were necessary to teach children how to treat animals (and as well as human beings) with empathy and to garner support to establish pioneering SPCAs in the United States.