

Who Will Do the Rescuing?: *Hamster Princess: Harriet the Invincible* and a Look at the Fluidity of Gender Roles in the Fairy Tale Genre

Readers of fairy tales are most likely familiar with Sleeping Beauty heroines like Basile's despoiled Talia, Perrault's sheltered *Little Briar-Rose*, Disney's lithe *Sleeping Beauty*, and the spunky and invincible Harriet, the hamster princess.

Harriet?

At first blush, Ursula Vernon's *Hamster Princess: Harriet the Invincible* (2015) is just another version of the traditional *Sleeping Beauty* tale. It features a princess cursed at birth by meddling fairies, an enchanted spinning wheel, an "innocent persecuted heroine" (Bacchilega 38), a prince with a magical kiss, and a happily ever after ending. But investigating this text beyond its structure, and specifically examining autonomy and what Preston calls the "symbolic inversion" of gender roles (196), reveals a deeper narratological purpose: one that attempts to slip like water outside the established levees of the fairy tale genre and destabilize the dominant paradigms of the *Sleeping Beauty* tale.

My proposed paper for ChLA 2018 asks, how far must the author or text sail away from the traditional route? Do these inverted, or subverted, tales shore up new interpretations, or are they simply eroded versions of the old? How is the "ever adaptable" fairy tale "harnessed into service" (Tatar 8) to respond to social and cultural changes? By comparing *Hamster Princess* with Perrault's *Sleeping Beauty in the Woods* and Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*, I will measure how successful Harriet is in her voyage, whether she still requires a life preserver from a prince, or makes waves to create her own story.

Works Cited

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