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Meseterápia: Mesék a gyógyításban és a mindennapokban
by Ildikó Boldizsár, and: *Mesepszichológia: Az érzelmi
intelligencia fejlesztése gyermekkorban* by Annamária
Kádár (review)

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an ironic moralist. Indeed, these pages are the most extensive yet in Perrault criticism on the narrative structure and function of the versed morals, giving particular attention to the use of irony. Also revealing is the analysis of meta-enunciation in Perrault's tales, the reference to their own enunciation. Through an engaging analysis of the use of the pronoun *on*, Adam shows how the boundary between narrator, characters, and readers is dissolved, creating a common point of reference marked by irony toward the worlds of the fairy tale. At its best, then, this second part of the book refines and fleshes out conclusions made by other scholars, albeit from the standpoint of genetic and discursive analysis.

In their joint conclusion Adam and Heidmann point to the need for the study of other fairy-tale collections with the comparative philological, genetic, and textual linguistic analysis used in this book. The pair have already published studies of Andersen, the Grimms, and Angela Carter, and they promise future work in this vein. In North America and perhaps elsewhere, the methodology endorsed by the authors is not widespread, to say the least. And yet their book demonstrates that scholars of fairy tales have much to learn from this approach, even if they do not adopt it for themselves. We should all greet future work by Adam and Heidmann with great interest and hope that they will dialogue more directly with other methodological approaches.

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Meseterápia: Mesék a gyógyításban és a mindennapokban. By Ildikó Boldizsár. Budapest: Magvető Könykiadó, 2010. 368 pp.

Mesepszichológia: Az érzelmi intelligencia fejlesztése gyermekkorban. By Annamária Kádár. Budapest: Kulcslyuk Kiadó, 2012. 376 pp.

Leading Hungarian folklore scholar Ildikó Boldizsár is nationally renowned as the editor of best-selling fairy-tale anthologies about men for women and about women for men (2007); about mothers and about fathers (2008); and about life, death, and rebirth (2009). In her 2010 publication, *Meseterápia: Mesék a gyógyításban és a mindennapokban* (Fairy-Tale Therapy: Tales to Help Cure and Everyday), she claims to have developed a bibliotherapeutic method, called metamorphosis fairy-tale therapy (*metamorfózis meseterápiás módszer*, abbreviated MMM), by relying on ancient folk wisdom encapsulated in the enduring form of the fairy tale, a genre that has not only served entertainment and informational purposes but also primarily provided a ritualistic means for intergenerationally passing down a complex body of mundane and metaphysical knowledge about the fundamental psychic needs and conflict resolution capacities of the “enworlded” human being.

In Boldizsár's view the major leitmotifs and plotlines of folktales and fairy tales fictionalize real-life existential dilemmas by tackling questions such as how to find one's true bride, how to fight the seven-headed dragon, where to locate the Water of Life, and what is beyond the Glass Mountains. They help us to appease struggles, settle imbalances, and "mend the time-out-of-joint," not so much by promising to correct the malfunctioning of the world but rather by revealing potential tactics to harmonically relate to and make the most of the limited possibilities granted by our internal and external realities. The *táltos* magical winged horse—the mythical helping figure in Hungarian folktales that, once adequately ridden, "flies as swift as *thought*" and that traditionally serves a shamanistic means of meditation—spectacularly emblemizes the tales' invitation to self-reflectivity both on the cognitive and the spiritual level.

Although Boldizsár's fairy-tale therapy is allegedly based on empirical evidence gained from healing storytelling sessions she gave at children's hospitals, her interdisciplinary method—combining folklore, philosophy, psychology, history, aesthetics, literary theory, and religious studies—is applicable to all age groups for psychotherapeutic, regenerative, and preventive purposes alike. However, MMM is most widely used in Hungary today as training in self-awareness and crisis management, helping people in their 20s through their 50s resolve anxieties and deal with an impasse temporarily surfacing or chronically prevailing in their lives as a result of common depressing or traumatic experiences: loss, mourning, solitude, communicational difficulties, problems in intimate interpersonal relationships (separation anxiety, divorce, unrequited love, abandonment, emotional addiction, rivalry), or any other form of distress constitutive of our contemporary cultural malaise.

First, the patient chooses the tale that she believes to bear the most resemblance to her own current life stage and self-image. Second, through a detailed and collaborative analysis of the tale, the patient is encouraged to take part in active fantasy work and explore how the story symbolically stages her own troubles and thoughts. The ritualistic, affectively charged identification with the heroic protagonist enables the patient to revitalize fossilized, suppressed sense perceptions and emotional channels, to reestablish lost contacts with inner and outer realms. Eventually, in the third stage of the therapy, the patient retells the tale changing some of its motifs to model her own road to (self-) healing. The new version, with personalized solutions of her own, will regenerate her life and allow for satisfactory access to "the totality of being." Fairy tales tailored to individual needs are endowed with the capacity to provide consolation and encouragement, to ease psychic and physical pains, and to enable us to understand and rebalance our lives by letting us come to terms with our own desires, constraints, possibilities, and the spiritual roots that provide the ground for our shared system of universal human values.

The first Fairy-Tale Therapy Center, founded in a little Hungarian village called Paloznak in 2010, the year the book on MMM was published, adopts a line from Goethe for its credo: “There are two things children can get from their parents: roots and wings.” However, the point is that the stable value system and the self-fulfillment symbolized by roots and wings should be rendered available to everyone, regardless of origin, education, quality of life, or family background, simply by virtue of the gift of fairy tales.

The most recently published Hungarian scholarly work on the therapeutic value of tales, *Mesepszichológia: Az érzelmi intelligencia fejlesztése gyermekkorban* (Fairy-Tale Psychology: Developing Children’s Emotional Intelligence) (2012) by Annamária Kádár, pays homage to MMM by quoting Boldizsár’s argument concerning how the relation to wonder fundamentally determines the quality of human existence: the question is not that of belief or disbelief but rather of a capacity to make use of enchantment to better one’s life. The book also recycles the earlier-mentioned metaphorical imagery of roots and wings, regarding them as symbolic tokens of children’s development of an inner sense of emotional security, psychic integrity, imaginative willingness, and an inalienable primary trust in the goodness of being, which makes the effort to reach one’s goals seem worthwhile, the failures seem more bearable, and happiness seem more accessible. Kádár claims that this is the main message of fairy tales, fabulously encapsulated in Hungarian children’s poet Sándor Weöres’s line “The earth is beneath us, the sky is above, but the ladder is always within” and suggesting that every child should be offered the chance to gain empowerment through identifying with the little swineherd who climbed atop the tree reaching up into the sky and beyond, pointing toward limitless possibilities.

Kádár’s work is indebted to MMM—along with a number of other theoretical takes on fairy-tale therapy from Carl Jung, Bruno Bettelheim, and Jean Piaget to Verena Kast, Marie Louise Von Franz, and Laura Simms—which she intriguingly yet accessibly refers to in her study. But because Kádár is primarily a child psychologist, an expert in kindergarten and elementary school pedagogy, and a trainer in emotional intelligence developmental programs, her perspective on the beneficial, curative potentials of tales is slightly different. Whereas most of Boldizsár’s case studies report how tales can function by means of a retrospectively compensatory cure for frustrated or traumatized adults embarking on a self-help project, Kádár concentrates on calling parents’ and teachers’ attention to how storytelling can help the early development of emotional intelligence and serve as long-lasting spiritual support, preventing the emergence of future psychiatric disorders.

Quite pragmatically, Kádár suggests that any successful life career depends just as much on cognitive capacities and reasonable decisions (IQ) as on an intelligent use of emotions (EQ), both of which help to reach a harmoniously

satisfying self-esteem, to connect and cooperate with others in autonomous yet empathic ways, and to resolve conflicts, reach compromises, and define and realize desires. The special cozy atmosphere of the bedtime storytelling ritual allows children to reach a nearly trancelike relaxed state whereby daytime tensions can be released, frustratingly nonverbalized aggression can be projected on negative characters, instinctive and rational impulses can be harmonized, fear can be reinterpreted as an emotion concomitant with the activation of inner powers, and the painful loss of the comfort zone is disclosed as a prerequisite for further development.

Kádár excitingly argues that “living in a fairy-tale world” and “believing in miracles” for a person with a highly developed emotional intelligence signifies neither some sort of loony escapism nor a resenting, phlegmatically passive awaiting for the grilled dove to fly into one’s mouth already roasted, as the Hungarian proverb says. Neither does it require an uncompromising pursuit of the ready-made quest prescribed by fairy-tale plotlines. It does signify, on the contrary, the embracing of an optimistic life philosophy grounded in the solid value system of fairy tales, which show us that respect, solidarity, love, endurance, honesty, and a healthy combination of sane realism and creative fantasy can help us surmount obstacles, exploit emerging possibilities, and reach our goals. Fairy tales teach us never to back down and never to give up, to fight fears relentlessly, and, most important, to live serendipitously, making pleasantly surprising, happily accidental, fortunate discoveries of agreeable and valuable things that have not been particularly sought after.

After the careful examination of more than a thousand tales written by Hungarian schoolchildren, Kádár singles out the most frequent infantile narrative patterns of fictionalized conflict resolution and embarks on writing ten therapeutic tales of her own, published in the appendix of her book. The protagonist of Kádár’s therapeutic tales for children (4- to 9-year-olds) is a little girl called Lilla, who has an imaginary friend, FairyBerry (sort of an animated problem doll), who helps her to negotiate, express, and accept her emotions but never instructs or disciplines her. FairyBerry never asks Lilla not to cry and never mocks, doubts, or discredits her feelings. This fairylike tutelary companion is just simply present, “always there for her” to share joys and sorrows, and yet FairyBerry is prepared to let go once the little girl seems to be able to manage on her own. Thus FairyBerry symbolizes unconditional acceptance and the art of “loving with open arms,” thus serving as a model for “good-enough” parenting, in psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott’s sense.

Boldizsár’s and Kádár’s works are theoretically informed scholarly books, characterized by an erudite yet enjoyable style that is accessible to nonprofessional audiences as well. They fit nicely into the traditional lineage of

Hungarian endeavors exploring the therapeutic values of fairy tales, from thanatologist child psychiatrist Elaine Polcz's pioneering play diagnosis introduced in the 1960s to today's clown doctors, puppet cure, and collaborative fantasy works performed on new media platforms.

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Stranger Magic: Charmed States and the Arabian Nights. By Marina Warner. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012. 560 pp.

In addition to two dozen color plates and numerous illustrations and ornaments throughout the text, *Stranger Magic* includes a glossary, a list of abbreviations, a list of stories and their various sources, fifty pages of notes, a brief bibliography, and an index.

Marina Warner's beautiful new book explores the effect the *Arabian Nights* has had on Western thought. It aims ambitiously to "present a different perspective on the interaction of imagination and reason, on the history of intellectual inquiry and scientific invention in Europe," and thus to "move toward the reassessment of the exchanges" between East and West (20). The arrival of the *Nights*, in its first translation by Antoine Galland (1704–1717), is fraught with contradiction: it was established as a masterpiece of imagination in the Europe of rationality and Enlightenment, was received with rapt enthusiasm, and yet was also dismissed for its irrationality, and the magic that permeates its stories was both infantilized and exoticized—relegated to the nursery or to primitive cultures—in a process that coincided with the West's rejection of its own tradition of magical thought.

Stranger Magic is organized into five parts, each taking up a facet of magical thought. Fifteen individual tales, clustered around the five themes and summarized in lively detail, provide points of departure from which Warner's commentary sallies forth in multiple directions, weaving together in suggestive patterns the Oriental plots and "ideas of enchantment in the book's afterglow" (29), in both Eastern and Western cultures, ancient and modern.

Part 1, "Solomon the Wise King," opens, aptly, with the story "The Fisherman and the Genie," which brings up the question of the jinni characters so important in the *Nights*. Warner discusses the role of the jinni both in relation to the plot (they "introduce a dynamic of pure chance which runs alongside the larger designs of fate," adding "the energy of unpredictability to the plots" [43]) and in terms of their preferred mode of transportation (flying). The flying carpet, an image that epitomizes the *Nights* for our Western imagination, appears in Galland's story of "Prince Ahmed and the Fairy Peri Banu"; although we have some reason to suspect