

FAIRY TALE REVIEW

The White Issue



ANNOTATED TABLE OF CONTENTS

KATE BERNHEIMER

Editor's Note · 13

“All great novels are great fairy tales,” wrote Vladimir Nabokov many years ago, and FAIRY TALE REVIEW continues to believe that all great literary works owe everything to fairy tales.

IVY ALVAREZ

Auto/biography, or so I was tolde · 15

she pickes mye foote up by the heele
dragges hir fingre padde
along myn arche

& seith unto me
thow hath a noblewoman's foote
(tho I was but a chylde)

PHILIP BEIDLER
America's Fairy Tale · 19

A character tries to escape civilization by journeying into nature, where he falls asleep in the past and wakes up in the future. For that character, history becomes an unbounded present where all things are possible.

MARGO BERDESHEVSKY
Window · 31

She hated Saint Valentine's day. A woman in a garter belt.
And a moth who feeds on spice.

ANN FISHER-WIRTH
Variations on the Robber Bridegroom · 32

What use, mother, the sunlight and new milk,
the lambs with bobbing tails, even these violets,
blue as sleep, without his body?

TONY FRIEDHOFF
Three Poems · 38

A man becomes tied to the ground. Other than the growing of grass,
there's nothing much, but I never realized how rhythmically
this can happen, and all the wild animals teaching him to dance
in the movements of one who is tied to the ground,
in the movements of one who is being eaten. Who is being kind here?

ARIELLE GREENBERG

Four Poems · 42

This is the folk tale version in which you ride out to sea on the back of a turtle and it feels like moss on the backs of your teeth. You hang a clock in the sun.

You are the folk-tale virgin.

EVAN HARRIS

The Future of Despair · 46

The future is a low stone wall obscured by mist. It runs the far end of an untended meadow that grows in weak scrubby patches, pale cover, and high tannish grass. Above the wall, mist gathers white gray, softly opaque. The stones of the wall mass, edges meeting and missing according to shape, order of placement, angle of balance. Gaps form buffers between unmatched solidities.

MC HYLAND

"Bird, how beautifully you sing!" · 67

O makes a hole in the firmament & we treble through.

Under cover of high notes, the skin slips under covers. The wolf hiding.

LESLEY JENIKE
Three Enter the Dark Wood · 68

It's the one about the bears and their blonde:
In their many beds I left many cells,
called my multiple personalities down,
their faces to the sky
a slide show of cheap reference, chanteuses

orphaned by a wave of bear.
Life should have piano accompaniment—

KAMILA LIS
Two Poems · 69

That first time I saw myself miraculous, we baked swan-fat
into bread when Satan whispered, "I can't think of anything
that can make me smile like you can and although you are perfect
you have come too early and are here where something laughing
will be shaped deliberately, ball of a palm pressed into moist clay."

ASHLEY MCWATERS
Seven Poems · 71

I weave a train its nameless tracks,
late and claimless, scumbled thimble
for blessing. No owl or bright bride,
I weave myself to lace, to let in air.

BARBARA JANE REYES

The Duyong Series · 79

At midnight, the old men gather with oil lanterns aboard their fishing boats. With rosaries in hand, they stab the water with machetes. Their sons say, “Do not be foolish. There are no more mermaids here. It is the crocodiles who are stealing our young ones.”

TIMOTHY SCHAFFERT

The Young Widow of Barcelona · 84

Suicide note? the minister asked, and Eve thought of music, remembering, listening for wilting notes of suicide in snippets of her late husband’s voice.

KURT SCHWITTERS

Translated by Jack Zipes

The Swineherd and the Great, Illustrious Writer · 95

A swineherd was tending his pigs and playing his flute at the same time: “Tweet, tweet, tweet, tweet, tweet, tweet, tweet.”

KELLIE WELLS

Rabbit Catcher of Kingdom Come · 100

One sudden spring, when trees and flowers, bamboozled by warmth, began budding in January, the prematurely honied air flatly refusing to chill again until late December, the town of Kingdom Come, Kansas, was beset by a plague of black-tailed jack rabbits that were not only many but jumbo, bigger than great danes they were, gargantuan rabbits, suspiciously well-fed, slavering over the zoysia, plump middles heaving, back feet long and brawny as a sailor’s forearm and ears you could fan a fainting princess with.

DARA WIER
The Wizard · 124

At dawn and at dusk I leave the house to graze in the meadow beyond the river. There's a trail I've covered with straw to follow and a convenient string of boulders I can use to make my way across the water. I sleep all through the day and work through the night.

IMANTS ZIEDONIS
Translated by Bitite Vinklers
Two Tales · 126

The sun, like a bright golden egg, gleamed in the sky. There was life within the sun: baby chicks, all light yellow, descended to earth along the sun's rays. Later on the chicks will strut about in other colors, but they all arrive a sunny yellow.

Contributor Notes · 132

Acknowledgments · 140

Announcements · 141

EDITOR'S NOTE
Form Is Fairy Tale, Fairy Tale Is Form



“All great novels are great fairy tales,” wrote Vladimir Nabokov many years ago, and FAIRY TALE REVIEW continues to believe that all great literary works owe everything to fairy tales. In this issue, as with all previous issues, you will find work represented that draws from the spectacular, old tradition of fairy tales in brilliant new ways. Fairy tales. When I use this phrase, I imagine, you sense in the term a unique form we still recognize and name “fairy tale” even after many centuries of manipulation to its discrete techniques. The form survives these mutations—in stories, novels, poems, essays, music, and art. It is also adaptable to a diverse range of stylistic narrative modes, as evidenced in the wide array of work in this very issue. Fairy tales magnetize writers who identify themselves as realists as much as Surrealists and Dadaists and modernists and fabulists and existentialists, not to mention romance novelists and greeting card authors and tabloid headline writers. Yet in writerly conversations an appreciation of their very classical form is often sublimated to an appreciation of their obvious wild and strange moments. That many writers do celebrate the dark-fantastic cosmos of fairy tales is wonderful, but I would also like to see an increased appreciation for the artistic dexterity and diversity at hand over the centuries. I believe, along with Nabokov and others, that fairy tales work on all of us as authors and readers; they’re so ubiquitous. Yet a critical under-appreciation of the precise art of fairy tales sometimes leads to the misinterpretation of these beautifully deliberate gestures as dream-like, somnolent moments; and (like so much writing associated with women, which fairy tales undeniably are) to fairy-tale writing being considered gem-like and of small importance, unless it reaches a mass-market reader. Instead of looking at how they’ve been disparaged, however, I want to take this tiniest moment to briefly celebrate their form, which resides beautifully in flatness, abstraction, intuitive logic, and normalized magic.¹ An increased understanding of these precise and incredible fairy-tale techniques, so wonderfully elucidated by one of my heroes, the scholar Max Luthi, but expanded, in the aesthetic of FAIRY TALE

REVIEW, to contemporary literature across the styles and genres, may help resolve the unfortunate schisms that sometimes arise between so-called mainstream and avant garde writers and critics. In this issue, as with every issue of FAIRY TALE REVIEW, you will find work across so many such borders; some of the writing refers to specific fairy tales, but much of it simply feels like a fairy tale; and how it feels like a fairy tale is through language, through form. With me please spread the word that fairy tales are the newest and oldest aesthetic; and they give our lives fearful, beautiful shape. Form is fairy tale, fairy tale is form. Here, I seek to give them a magical home.

Kate Bernheimer
Tuscaloosa, AL

1. A vastly expanded version of this Editor's Note, with the same title, will appear in The Writer's Notebook (Tin House Books, 2009).