

Language and Communication Research Group Book Presentation

Thursday 4 December 2025

16:00-18:00, College Building, room CG10, Middlesex University London

Violence and unhappy endings

Maaïke Engelen

When we explore art, stories, film and myths we often encounter violence: physical and emotional as much as psychological violence. Some sort of war or fight is usually part of the creation, and it is usually seen as a fight between good and bad. In the end we hope that the good survives, but in some stories it does not; there is no happy ending.

In the classic fairy tales of the Grimm brothers, some of the original tales did not have a happy ending. For instance, Little Red Riding Hood was swallowed by the wolf. And in the fairy tale of Hans Christian Andersen, the Little Mermaid dies.

What do these unhappy endings have to tell us? What does the violence have to tell us? This presentation will explore this theme, giving meaning to the function of this way of telling stories and exploring why it might not be helpful to change an unhappy ending into a happy one, as happened with Little Red Riding Hood and the Little Mermaid.

Maaïke Engelen will read from: *A Kaleidoscope of New Fairy Tales* (2023) and *Moham and the Snails* (2024). Both books do not shy away from unhappy endings. The reading will be followed by a Q&A and drinks.

Maaïke Engelen is a child and adolescent psychotherapist in private practice. She writes Zen poetry, and she is an author of free-associative writings about therapy. Her experiences with unconscious processes inspired her to write these books. They invite readers to explore their own internal world; the stories are as enchanting for young persons as they are for adults. The world of the fairy tale brings us closer to our conflicts and desires and puts us in touch with what is possible for our futures.

