

ANNALES

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Annali di Studi istriani e mediterranee
Annals for Istrian and Mediterranean Studies
Series Historia et Sociologia, 33, 2023, 4





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POROČILA IN OCENE
RELAZIONI E RECENSIONI
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OCENE
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Andrew Teversen (ed.):
THE FAIRY TALE WORLD.
London, Routledge, 2019
484 pp.

Andrew Teversen's volume *The Fairy Tale World* is a comprehensive work in the field of fairy tale studies and addresses various perspectives on fairy tales from around the world. The fairy tales are examined within their cultural, historical, and socio-political frameworks. In this way, it goes beyond the analysis of individual fairy tales and delves into the broader context of the genre.

First, this collection revisits the European canon, but with a view to making that canon strange: showing how that canon is forged from international influences, and exposing the hidden assumptions that have resulted in a local European form of an international genre becoming seen as the universal and transcendent embodiment of the form. (p. 10–11)

The very definition of the term and the debate that Teversen linked to Andrew Lang quickly led to the first of many conflicts in this area. Fairy tales are permeated with Eurocentric and Western connections, which threaten to obscure the specificity, diversity, and function of the genres of oral storytelling. Teversen attempts to overcome this by emphasizing the international influence of fairy tales, exploring how "Märchen" have evolved around the world, expanding the canon of fairy tales, and researching and incorporating marginalized parts to create a new basis for understanding. Thus, the aim of the book is to challenge the concept of a "Fairy Tale" that standardizes global wonder tales according to a Euro-American framework. However, it offers a possibility to redefine and de-centralize the term "mainstream", which is widely used among English-speaking communities (p. 12).

The book is divided into five sections, each part containing seven or eight chapters. The sections – *The Formation of the Canon, Africa and the Caribbean, The Americas, Asia and Australasia, and Europe* – provide an overview of both specific themes as well as the current state of research in these areas. However, intertwining threads, especially those related to colonialism, imperialism, and the origins of fairy tales, stretch throughout the entire anthology.

The introductory section of the book, titled *The Formation of the Canon*, sets a reflective tone with Donald Haase's chapter *Global or Local? Where*

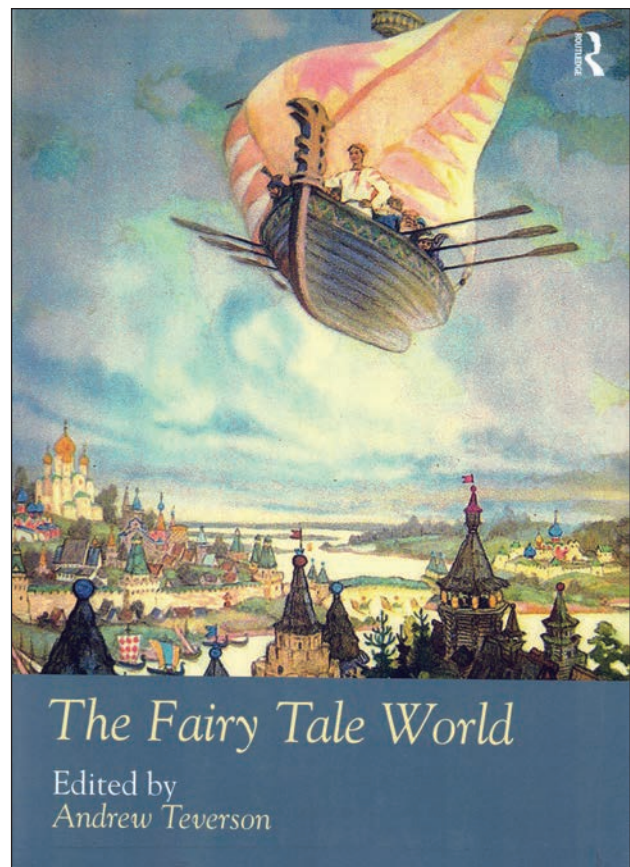
Do Fairy Tales Belong?, wherein he delves into the global and local dimensions of fairy tales, which encourages the reader to think and reflect beyond the confines of traditional assumptions. This idea is further expanded by Cristina Bacchilega in her chapter *Decolonizing the Canon: Critical challenges to Eurocentrism* with a discursive field advocating for inclusivity in the fairy tale canon beyond Eurocentric borders. The diverse array of perspectives, complicated histories, transformations of fairy tales, and analyses offer a multifaceted understanding of the fairy tale genre across different cultures and time periods. In the chapter *The Middle Eastern World's Contribution to Fairy-Tale History* Ulrich Marzolph challenges the conventional understanding of fairy tales as predominantly a Western genre while highlighting the influence of Middle Eastern traditions, especially Muslim culture, on their origin and dissemination around the world. At the same time, he points out that this part of the narrative heritage of the Middle East represents only a small fragment of its rich culture that still awaits in-depth research in all its thematic and motif diversity and as a potential source of inspiration for European fairy tales (p. 51). The section continues with questions of interpretation, issues of transcription, and the origins of fairy tales in Italy, Germany, and France. Nancy L. Canepa continues the theme and delves into the beginning of the literary fairy tale in early modern Italy, which marks the transition of fairy tales from oral folklore and other narrative forms into the written collections of authors such as G. F. Straparola and G. Basile (p. 58). Similar to Italian Fairy Tales, the French Fairy Tales captured the atmosphere of the court in their themes and terminology (p. 68), which Christine A. Jones uses well as selected texts in her chapter *Social Change and the Development of the Fairy Tale in France*.

The first part of the section lays the foundation for the development of the theme in the continuation. The rest of the volume is divided into geographical areas and in doing so it highlights how ideologies are essentially equivalent to understanding the response to colonial and neo-colonial cultural practices (p. 12). It broadens the knowledge of the global circulation of folktales across all countries and regions despite being bounded by strict national borders. But Teversen also points out that even in such a large volume of fairy tales it would be impossible to consider the diversity of cultural contexts globally (p. 13). Ruth Finnegan in her chapter *Fairy Tale in Africa: A Contrast of Centuries* points out the issue with the question "Are there fairy tales in Africa?" (p. 105). Problems and difficulties in classifying folk narratives are discussed in Emily Zobel Marshall's contribution *This is not a Fairy Tale: Anansi and*

the Web of Narrative Power. John Bierhorst addresses related issues in *Myths and Folktales in Latin America*, where he presents a sample of Spanish folk narratives and focuses mainly on myths, fables, and folk tales and their derivatives, which do not follow the traditional model of fairy tales (p. 199).

Throughout the volume *The Fairy Tale World*, it can be discerned that the effects of colonialism and imperialism are closely intertwined with the difficulties in recording and translating stories into different languages, while also highlighting Western and Eurocentric bias. As Pamela Lothspeich emphasized in her chapter *Lovely Fairies and Crafty Ghosts in Indian Tales*, there are many ways to categorize literary works in India, but it is noticeable that English categories for stories – fairy tales, myths, legends, fables, romances – are inadequate to describe them. India has its own system of categorizing stories, its own lexicon of symbols, motifs, and themes, in various languages and regions, among different ethnic communities (p. 309). On the other hand, with her methodological approach in the chapter *The Politics and Poetics of Märchen in Hawaiian-Language Newspapers*, Marie Alohalani Brown contributes to the removal of bias in the representation of indigenous stories. Her solution/methodology was the search for genre markers, including those used in the Märchen narratives she encountered over the last decade. Taking a step further in recognizing embedded bias and the precedence of European dominance with their contributions are Rebecca-Anne Do Rozario in the chapter *Fairies in a Strange Land: Colonization, migration, and the Invention of the Australian Fairy Tale* and Danielle Wood in the chapter *Renegotiating Once upon a time: Fairy tales in contemporary Australian writing*. Do Rozario explores how an Australian fairy tale tradition is developed with little dependence on European tales and instead by emphasizing nationalistic tales with the exclusion of native storytelling (p. 375). In further reading into the section *Asia and Australasia*, we can see that each author discusses the influence of the Western fairy tale tradition on their own culture and their acceptance or rejection of the indigenous narration modes. In this context, Mayako Murai in *The Fairy Tale in Contemporary Japanese Literature and Art* discusses fairy tale adaptations in Japanese society penetrating different media while considering those that deal with social and environmental problems. On the other hand, Sung Ae Lee in *Memory, Trauma, and History: Fairy-tale Film in Korea* considers Korean fairy tale films as well as dramas that have historical, memory, and trauma components that adapt folklore legends in order to respond to social problems (p. 356).

The Americas section depicts the big-picture approach taken by contributing authors while analyzing fairy tales of modern societies and how fairy tales reflect and construct understandings of gender, sexuality, and identity. Pauline Greenhill in the chapter *Sexes, sexualities, and Gender in Cinematic North and South American Fairy Tales: Transforming Cinderellas* expands her premise about the heteronormative reputation of fairy tales that exclusively portray heterosexual romantic relationships. They emerge in fairy tales both in every version and variant on TV shows, films, pop songs, computer games, and so forth regardless of a particular nation, culture, or language. Fairy tale movies are just representations of many retellings that can have a subtle or blunt influence on typical notions of what makes up an identity as well as relations between people (p. 248). Moreover, the texts show that fairy tales and adaptations commonly question or undermine conventional gender constructs and heterosexuality. Representation of sex, gender, and sexuality in fairy tales varies across cultures and types of media. Jeana Jorgensen in the chapter *Gender, sexuality, and the Fairy Tale in Contemporary American Literature* and Greenhill examine, among other issues, how modern writers and directors are reinventing fairy



tales by redefining gender and sexuality. Likewise, Brittany Warman in *Fairy Tales and Digital Culture* points out that fairy tales thrive in digital culture alluding to emerging modes of involvement and narration. Because of the broad scope of the subject, it is impossible to include every retelling of a fairy tale in contemporary American literature, let alone all possible theoretical approaches (p. 270). Fairy tales are no longer the same as the typical or “Disneyfied” stories but rather incorporate varying and more complex characters and themes and as Warman pointed out, a complete understanding of fairy tales and digital culture would require far more research or even a work devoted entirely to fairy tales on the Internet and it would necessitate assessments of everything from digital humanities initiatives to web archives (p. 274).

The last section *Europe* holds an interesting chapter *Eco-Critical Perspectives: Nature and the Supernatural in the Cinderella Cycle* written by Nicole A. Thesz. With an ecocritical approach, she depicts that in fairy tales flora and fauna assist humankind. As she suggests, some adaptations introduce the concept of Cinderella’s curfew, which serves as a warning that nature and the supernatural may desert humanity if they are exploited. This serves as an unequivocal alert about the intrinsic benevolence of the natural world (p. 436). Sarah Bonner’s chapter *Tales Retold: Fairy Tales in Contemporary European Visual Art* shifts the focus to a controversial reassessment of gender portrayal in fairy tales. She explores how female artists have reinvented their images and narrated alternative stories through the lens of non-traditional fairy tale visuals. In the chapter *New Materialism and Contemporary Fairy Tale Fiction*, Amy Greenhough looks at the active agency of nature and matter in a revision of fairy tales. This marks a movement away from static or deterministic viewpoints toward recognizing a lively interdependent world (p. 460). Kimberly J. Lau’s *Of Genres and Geopolitics: The European Fairy Tale and the Global Novel* explores temporal tangles of genres, drawing a link between the fairy tale and the world novel and uncovering their geopolitics. As she claims in her chapter, the global novel alienates the European fairy tale and exposes the illusion of its seeming universality and instead, highlights the geopolitical circumstances surrounding its creation and dissemination (p. 471). When taken together, these chapters are not simply concerned with retellings, but with repositioning fairy tales within current issues such as ecologism, feminist politics, post-materialist agency, and global narrative.

All chapters in Andrew Teversen’s edited book give an impactful insight into diverse perceptions of fairy tales and encourage readers to experience

them through different lenses. A similar approach to giving a comprehensive overview of fairy tales can be found in Jack Zipes’s *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* but Teversen takes it a step further. The methodology throughout the book *The Fairy Tale World* is both historical and comparative and delves into the cultural and political context. As such it gives a scholarly yet accessible viewpoint to fairy tales and is a praiseworthy effort to explain the complexities behind fairy tales and their lasting impression on cultural heritage.

Jasmina Rejec

Cristina Bacchilega & Jennifer Orme (eds.):
INVITING INTERRUPTIONS: WONDER TALES IN THE
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY. Series in Fairy-Tale Studies.
Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 2021,
254 pp.

Inviting Interruptions: Wonder Tales in the Twenty-First Century is an anthology of 21st-century fairy tales that reminds readers that fairy tales are not just for children. Besides conventional modern adaptations, it features numerous magical and enchanting narratives that defy traditional storytelling conventions and challenge social norms. The collected authors, whose stories have been curated by editors Cristina Bacchilega and Jennifer Orme, reimagine well-known fairy tales to create a new imaginative world. In this world, marginalized groups have a voice, and readers experience the events from their perspectives. These tales use the fairy tale format as a tool to provide an alternative view of the world, countering dominant media representation and highlighting the challenging experiences of women, homosexuals, disabled individuals, Jews, children displaced from war zones, and more. The collection comprises stories that for the most part aim to create a new, more understanding, and fair world. They allow the marginalized not only to speak but also to create their own magical worlds to claim the space they deserve.

The anthology encompasses a selection of fairy tales and visual masterpieces, such as photographs of sculptures and paintings related to the realm of fairy tales. These are not typically found in the mainstream commercial market, as they transform the genre according to their needs and goals, with the intention of conveying their subversive message. These fairy tales have a common thread of “inviting interruptions”, challenging the known patterns of fairy tales as a genre and the perspectives of storytelling. Traditionally, fairy tales are often seen as intended for children or as light entertainment for the whole family, but rarely as something to be taken seriously. This anthology

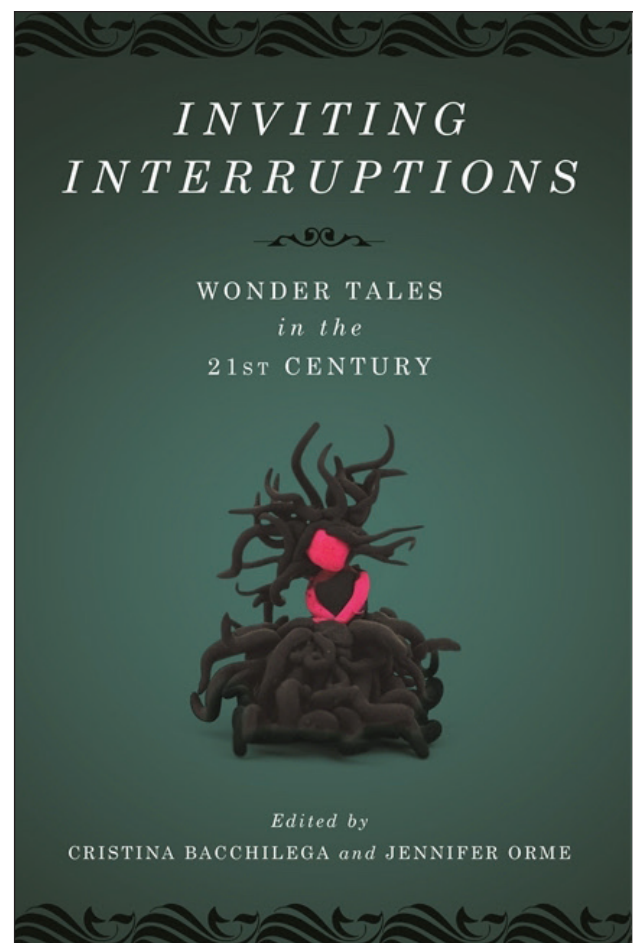
aims to prove the opposite: the social power of fairy tale messages, the impact of their narratives, and their relevance to adults, if not primarily so. Fairy tales are taken as a form in which selected ideologies are clearly reflected, and they have the ability to spread ideologies that oppose the prevailing ones. What unites these works is their disruption of the normative ideologies typically found in popular fairy tales and their replacement with new perspectives, inviting the reader to exchange familiar tracks for new, more challenging paths that shake up our perception of reality. They subvert traditional narratives by drawing the reader into empathizing with unexpected protagonists, thereby compelling them to contemplate alternative perspectives, a topic that has gained more attention in the 21st century. Some of the tales take more well-known older fairy tales as a starting point, transforming them into contemporary narratives with a modern message: they embed their own desires, needs, concerns, and understanding of the world into the heart of the story.

The collection is divided into two parts: the title itself consists of the words “invitation” and “interruption”. The word “invitation” acts as a friendly inclusion into an activity, and the first half of the anthology, titled *Inviting Interruptions*, truly guides the reader through fairy tales that broaden horizons, introduces unique magical characters, and showcases new perspectives. For example, it presents a tale where a girl with a developmental disorder narrates a story reminiscent of Hansel and Gretel (*The Tale of the Cottage* by Emma Donoghue); introduces a short story in the form of a graphic novel about a lesbian mermaid (*How to be a Mermaid* by Maya Kern); confronts us with a narrative about an animal kingdom addressing the greed of consumerism and ecological catastrophe (*A Tale of a King* by Shaun Tan); and even includes a link to a special version of the film adaptation of Little Red Riding Hood (*Little Red Riding Hood* by David Kaplan). The collected fairy tales cordially invite us to enter into a presentation of a different worldview and take the time to listen to voices we might not want to hear.

The second half of the book is titled *Interrupting Invitations*, where “interruptions in invitations” means that these stories are more forceful, rougher, and deliver a stronger message. They don’t ask for our sympathy or attention but demand it. They use their strong character development and well-crafted narrative arcs to draw readers in, and their darkness leaves a lasting impression. Sometimes more disruptive interruptions are necessary to implement real change and make us consider alternative paths. These stories create interruptions to make us pause and think about new solutions because friendly invitations may no longer work. For instance, we

encounter a story about a boy who left his homeland due to war, facing a challenging new reality (*Fairytales for Lost Children* by Diriye Osman), a story of a young Jewish girl who seeks revenge for her father’s death (*Among the Thorns* by Veronica Schanoes), and the inner struggles of a woman who doesn’t fit the promoted image of the supermom (*The Good Mother* by Danielle Wood), among other stories that break down the walls of the known.

The last part of the book’s title suggests that it consists of stories and visuals that originated in the United Kingdom in the 21st century, positioned in a modern world dealing with contemporary issues. However, the editors acknowledge that the 21st century didn’t start exactly when the clock struck midnight on January 1, 2000. Therefore, they included three works that originated in the late 20th century, seeing them as “seeds” that were planted in the 20th century and sprouted in the 21st century, containing concepts, language, and cultural contexts relevant to this century. One such example is the story *El cuento evenenado* by Rosario Ferr, originally published in 1985, and its English translation *A Poisoned Tale* in 1991, which highlights the power and danger of



slander and spreading false information, especially during times of political upheaval. A similar example is *The Tale of the Cottage*, published by the author Emma Donoghue in the collection *Kissing the Witch* in 1997. However, more notable is the short film by David Kaplan from 1997, which transformed the fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood* into his own interpretation featuring a seductive girl playing with a transbiological wolf – a ballet dancer.

The disruptions present in these fairy tales are both substantive and structural in nature. Substantively, the reader confronts various environmental and social issues addressing race, gender, sexuality, social class, and disability. Additionally, political issues such as educational opportunities, religious conflicts, abuse of power, and internalized self-hatred due to learned external influences are explored. These disruptions compel us to see the everyday world in a different light, employing magical elements and Disney characters, among other things. Structurally, the tales astonish with unique narrative techniques that surpass conventional methods, eluding traditional genre characteristics, thereby enhancing the magic and tragedy of each individual story. *“But I was allowed to dream. And in my dreams Ivar became my prince, hacking at the thorns that hemmed me in. He slew dragons, fought fire with a shield and sword, all to a Tchaikovsky score. The boy was Michael Jackson bad. And he would kiss me to break the spell. He would kiss me but all that’d break would be my heart. He could never be mine”* (p. 86). This heart-wrenching story tells of a young boy, Xirisi, in *Fairytales for Lost Children*, who loses himself in his imagination, living out his dreams. On the other hand, the tale demonstrates how we can internally regulate external events and promote change within ourselves and others. Xirisi leans on Disney fairy tales, but what do these tales actually teach children? The story acts as a disruption in familiar Disney fairy tales, where silenced voices speak out and the familiar meets the unknown: the story of a child facing discrimination, abuse, and war.

Each fairy tale is followed by notes from the authors which are provided as additional information necessary to understand and interpret the story, along with questions that invite further reflection. However, the editors and authors never offer their interpretations to explain the meaning; on the contrary, they strongly encourage the reader to create their own interpretation and understanding of what they have read. Instead of guiding towards a specific interpretation, the creators of the anthology have chosen to try to teach the reader how to rely on their own perceptions, where to find additional sources, and how to approach the content critically. The notes, therefore, contain hints and guidelines on how to take a fictional narrative and gain insight

into a world that would otherwise remain foreign and unknown, attempting to comprehend it.

This approach led us to another practice as editors who want to encourage thinking with tales of wonder. Our characters, tales, images, tellers, and artists offer no apologies for their difference. The invitations and interruptions they have produced come from, to one degree or another, the outside. Often outsiders are expected to explain themselves to the in-group; they are made to offer translations into the dominant language and culture. As compilers and editors, we too offer no explanations or translations to help readers along. (p. xviii)

Some people who consider themselves to be good book readers feel they don’t know how to look at art; they are unsure of what they are supposed to see or do. They wonder in anxious tones, “But what does it mean?!?”—as though an image should have a single, unambiguous meaning that you should be able to understand all in one gulp. As with a story or a film, reading visual art takes time. Allow yourself to savor the experience of looking. Then again, you don’t want to just sit there staring at a page feeling ㄟ(ㄟ)_/. So allow us to suggest some aspects of visual art to take into consideration when pondering these wondrous images. (p. xxi)

Editors clearly but gently invite the reader not to be intimidated by the texts and art in front of them. In the introduction, they offer guidance, a starting point from which to approach reading and viewing the collection of fairy tales and visual art, so that the reader can be prepared to dive into the depths of the selective fairy tales, without preaching about the correct interpretation or treating the texts as material for learning.

In addition to the fairy tales themselves, as mentioned earlier, the book also includes visual material consisting of photographs of sculptures, paintings, and mixed-media products that illustrate something magical. These excerpts also invite us to contemplate what we see and create a story that transcends our familiar perceptions of the world. These visual materials are not related to specific fairy tales, nor do they attempt to interpret, expand, or in any way influence them; instead, they are placed there as unique artworks contributing to the world of wonders. The authors also provide notes for them, but this time, the notes are not placed beneath the displayed photograph; instead, we read them before even seeing the artwork. The notes offer some information about the background of the artwork and again invite us with questions to contemplate its placement in space and time. Each photograph represents a unique contribution to the magical world, whether it be due to its form, distinctive style, or

content. Among the featured artists, we find eleven-year-old artist Rosalind Hyatt Orme, who enjoys creating three-dimensional sculptures, fashion design, and knitting. Her work is strongly influenced by her enthusiasm for animation. *"I don't think about it. I just do it"* she said about her art (p. 219).

The collection allows for the expansion and bridging of boundaries, breaking its own rules, while the editors are also aware of the limitations inherent in such work that cannot be avoided. The self-imposed limitation chosen by the editors is the selection of texts; specifically, the collected works are limited to prose and comic strips and the anthology does not include, for example, poetry or dramatic texts. The limitations imposed by the format itself involve adjustments for written text and print. Visual artworks can only be included in the collection in the form of photographs, which, due to the chosen format, are resized versions of the original and transformed into a fixed 2D form. A video is included as a link that

leads the reader to a freely accessible short film online, but various performances and cultural products that cannot fit within the pages of a book are entirely excluded. Lastly, limitations are also evident in the number of pages, as an excessive amount of collected stories, artworks, video links, and other fairy-tale delights would mean an extensive work requiring rights for publication, some needing translation, all of which also create a financial burden, considering the budget constraints the editors had for the book release.

The collection of complex, multidimensional, and layered fairy tales, where different narrative styles, innovative structures, and metanarrative comments blend, represents an important anthology of fairy tales that encourage understanding of different worlds and a departure from capitalism. It invites the creation of a world where values such as justice, connectedness, and solidarity take center stage.

Patricija Fašalek

**POROČILA
RELAZIONI
REPORTS**

Mednarodna konferenca
POLITICAL FUNCTIONS OF FOLKTALES AND FAIRY
TALES. Dutovlje & online, Inštitut IRRIS za raziskave,
razvoj in strategije družbe, kulture in okolja,
15. junij 2023

Programski odbor: Polona Tratnik (predsedujoča), Tati-
ana Bužeková, Claudio Povoio, Darko Darovec.

Kako ljudske pripovedke in pravljice odražajo družbo določenega časa in okolja; kako nagovarja-
jo posameznika in ga s tem usmerjajo v določeno
vedenje; kako prispevajo k oblikovanju družbenih
vlog in reda ter kakšna je njihova vloga pri gradnji
skupnosti, so bila zgolj nekatera izmed vprašanj, s
katerimi so se ukvarjale udeleženke in udeleženci
mednarodne konference *Political Functions of Folk-
tales and Fairy Tales* (slov. *Politične funkcije ljudskih
pripovedk in pravljič*).

Enodnevna konferenca, ki jo je organiziral Inštitut
IRRIS za raziskave, razvoj in strategije družbe, kul-
ture in okolja, je potekala 15. junija 2023 na Bunčevi
domačiji (Dutovlje). Natančneje se je dogodek odvi-
jal na t. i. hibridni način, s čimer je bilo s pomočjo
sodobne tehnologije omogočeno sodelovanje posa-
meznicam in posameznikom iz programske skupine,
ki se dogodka žal niso mogli udeležiti osebno.

V uvodnem nagovoru je prisotne pozdravila
dr. Polona Tratnik, vodja raziskovalnega projekta
N6-0268 *Politične funkcije ljudskih pravljič*, (so)
financiranega s strani Javne agencije za znanstve-
noraziskovalno in inovacijsko dejavnost Republike
Slovenije (ARIS), v sklopu katerega je bila konfe-
renca organizirana. V nadaljevanju so se zvrstili 4-je
sklopi predavanj (*panels*), na katerih je bilo s strani
12 predavateljic in/ali predavateljev predstavljenih
11 referatov.

Prvo predavanje je imela nosilka raziskovalnega
projekta, že omenjena dr. Polona Tratnik (Inštitut
IRRIS in Filozofska fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani).
V svojem referatu z naslovom *The Role of Folktales
and Fairy Tales in Culture Building* (*Vloga ljudskih
pripovedk in pravljič pri gradnji kulture*) je referentka
izpostavila pomembno vlogo ljudskih pripovedk in
pravljič pri socializaciji posameznika ter obravna-
vala problematiko in izzive pri njihovem preučevanju.
Poudarila je pomen družbenih interesov pri obliko-
vanju pravljič.

Naslednje predavanje je imela dr. Tatiana
Bužeková (Filozofska fakulteta Univerze Komen-
skega v Bratislavi), ki je v svojem prispevku *Magic
in Traditional Folk Tales and Alternative Spirituality*
(*Magija v tradicionalnih ljudskih pripovedkah in al-*

ternativni duhovnosti) problematizirala interpretaci-
je čarovništva in magije v slovaških tradicionalnih
pravljicah in njihovo transformacijo v kontekstu al-
ternativnih duhovnih tokov. Pri tem je podala tezo,
da se je magija povezovala z vrednotami sodobne
demokracije, okoljevarstvom, svobodo izbire, ena-
kostjo spolov in strpnostjo.

Sledilo je predavanje dr. Anje Mlakar (Fakulteta
za turizem Univerze v Mariboru in Inštitut IRRIS)
z naslovom *Paganism and Related Concepts in the
Nineteenth Century Slovenian Press* (*Poganstvo
in sorodni pojmi v slovenskem tisku 19. stoletja*).
Opozorila je, da je folklor predstavljal pomem-
ben gradnik pri vzpostavljanju nove slovenske
identitete v 19. stol., pri čemer so na postopek zbi-
ranja in interpretacijo ljudskega izročila močno
vplivale ideološke predpostavke tistega časa. Zlas-
ti navezujoč se na zaznane ostanke poganskih in
predkrščanskih prepričanj. V prispevku je na pod-
lagi člankov, objavljenih v časopisu *Kmetijske in
rokodelske novice*, preučila, kakšne pomene so zbi-
ratelji ljudskega slovstva pripisali zaznanim pogan-
skim elementom.

Drugi del dopoldanskega sklopa predavanj je ot-
vorila Suzana Miceva. V svojem referatu z naslovom
*The "Other" in Macedonian Folklore and the Attempt
to Change the Narrative in the Contemporary Context*
(»*Drugi*« v makedonski folklori in poskus spremembe
pripovedi v sodobnem kontekstu) je problematizira-
la odnos prebivalcev Balkana do »drugega«. Mdr.
zaznavnem tudi v makedonskem ljudskem slov-
stvu, ki liku tujca pripisuje stereotipne značilnosti. V
prispevku je izpostavila pesmi in zgodbe v katerih
je izražena stigmatizacija do tujcev, natančneje Ro-
mov, in kako bi s pomočjo drugačne naracije te ste-
reotipe lahko (uspešno) prešli.

V naslednjem predavanju z naslovom *Transgener-
ational Transmission of Memory Through Fairy Tales:
A Case Study of an Italian World War II Prisoner of
War in Yugoslavia* (*Transgeneracijski prenos spomina
skozi pravljice: študija primera italijanskega vojnega
ujetnika iz druge svetovne vojne v Jugoslaviji*) se je
dr. Urška Lampe (Univerza Ca' Foscari v Benetkah in
Inštitut IRRIS) s pomočjo študije primera poglobila v
proces pripovedovanja kot (1) sredstva za soočanje s
preteklostjo; (2) načina posredovanja svojih spomi-
nov in travmatične izkušnje naslednjim generacijam
in (3) orodja za izobraževanje otrok.

Drugi, popoldanski del konference je odprl dr.
Darko Darovec (Inštitut IRRIS in Filozofska fakulteta
Univerze v Mariboru). V svojem referatu z naslo-
vom *Social Functions of Tales About King Matjaž*
(*Družbena funkcija pripovedi o kralju Matjažu*)
je obravnaval izvor, nastanek in vlogo lika kralja
Matjaža na območju današnje Slovenije, navezujoč
se na Hobsbawnov opis t. i. fenomena domišljjskega
oz. idealnega vladarja.

Sledilo je predavanje dr. Ksenije Vidmar Horvat (Filozofska fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani), ki je v svojem referatu z naslovom *Fairy Tales, Sexuality and Slovene National Identity: A Comparative Case Study of Peter Klepec and Moj dežnik je lahko balon* (Pravljice, spolnost in slovenska nacionalna identiteta: primerjalna študija Petra Klepeca in Moj dežnik je lahko balon), preučila odnos med pravljicami, spolnostjo in nacionalno identiteto, izhajajoč iz teze, da pravljice igrajo vlogo pri spolnem oblikovanju otroka. Pri tem je na primeru dveh pravljic ponovno obravnavala tezo Slavoj Žižka – da je slovenski nacionalni značaj uokvirjen z zatirano in posesivno izmišljeno materjo.

Naslednje predavanje je imela dr. Ana Vitanova-Ringačeva (Univerza Goce Delčev v Štipu), ki je v svojem referatu z naslovom *The Rebellion of the Individual Against the Collective – a Universal Paradigm of Existence in a Macedonian Fairy Tale* (Upor posameznika proti kolektivu – univerzalna paradigma eksistence v makedonski pravljici), s pomočjo makedonske pravljice Siljan Štrk obravnavala sodobne teme o iskanju posameznikove identitete izven njegove skupnosti, podobo tujine kot popolnega ideala in podobo človeka kot samotarja.

Dr. Jan Babnik (Membrana) je v svojem referatu z naslovom *The Miners, Mythologization and Visual Representation. Slovenian Photoreportage of Miners in the 20th Century* (Rudarji, mitologizacija in likovna upodobitev. Slovenska fotoreportaža rudarjev v 20. stol.) trdil, da so bile glavne značilnosti vizualizacije rudarjev v 20. stol. interpretirane na podlagi družbenih in političnih naracij ter na globoko zakoreninjeni predindustrijski podobi dela v rudnikih. Mdr. vidno v presenetljivi enotnosti novinarskih podob, ki izvirajo iz klasične figure rudarja.

Sledilo je predavanje dr. Marijana Premovića in dr. Diane Vuković (Filozofska fakulteta Univerze v Črni gori), z naslovom *Deconstructing the Meaning of Traditional Folk Fairy Tales – Teaching for Critical Thinking* (Dekonstrukcija pomena tradicionalnih ljudskih pravljic – poučevanje za kritično razmišljanje). Predavatelja sta opozorila na pomen kritičnega branja tradicionalnih pravljic in predstavila model tega, razvit s pomočjo študije primera srbske pravljice Baš Čelik.

Zadnje predavanje dneva je imel dr. Marjan Horvat (Inštitut IRRIS). V svojem referatu z naslovom *From Proto-Political to Political/Ideological Functions of Folktales* (Od protopolitičnih do politično-ideoloških funkcij ljudskih pravljic) se je ukvarjal s političnimi funkcijami ljudskih pravljic v nezdgovinski perspektivi. V ta namen je povzel sociološko teorijo pravljic (J. Zipes) s teorijo protipolitičnega (E. Hobsbawm, F. Jameson in E. Bloch), zlasti navezujočo se na razumevanje vloge ljudskih pripovedk pri prenosu kolektivnih

izkušenj (W. Benjamin). Teoretski model je postavil v kontekst socioloških teorij družbenih sprememb, in ga predstavil z analizo nekaterih tipičnih primerov ideološkega prisvajanja ljudskih pravljic v 20. stol.

Ob zaključku konference je predsednica programskega odbora dr. Tratnik opozorila na kompleksno problematiko funkcije ljudskih pripovedk in pravljic, mdr. vidno skozi vsebino referatov predstavljenih v sklopu konference. Sklicujoč se na večplastnost tematike, je podala trditev, da si ta v prihodnosti vsekakor zasluži dodatne poglobitve. Na koncu je sledila zahvala referentkam in referentom kot tudi ostalim udeleženkam in udeležencem konference. Do povzetka in programa konference ter zbornika konferenčnih povzetkov je moč dostopati na spletnem naslovu: <https://www.iris.eu/wp-content/uploads/Political-Functions-of-Folktales-Fairytales-conference-PROGRAM-BOOK-OF-ABSTRACTS-15-6-2023-3.pdf>. Programski odbor in organizator pa si zaslužita pohvalo za izbor zanimivih predavanj kot tudi za dobro organizacijo.

Veronika Kos

International workshop
SOCIAL MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY IN CENTRAL
AND EASTERN EUROPE. SoMe4Dem and Jean Monnet
Centre of Excellence, University of Leipzig,
Geisteswissenschaftliches Zentrum Leipzig,
5–6 October 2023

Workshop programme committee: Prof Pawel Karolewski

The workshop encompassed three main thematic themes: firstly, the role of social media as tools of political influence; secondly, the issues of disinformation, polarisation, and politicisation; and thirdly, the impact of social media on the fundamental tenets of liberal democracy. Against this theoretical background the workshop participants aimed to address, in particular, the predicaments European nations confront in countering democratic backsliding due to increasing right-wing extremism, predominantly within the sphere of social and online news media. The workshop is a part of the Horizon Europe project *Social media for democracy – understanding the causal mechanisms of digital citizenship* (SoMe4Dem) and organised in collaboration with the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence *The European Union and its Rural Periphery in East Central Europe* at the University of Leipzig, which also hosted the event.

For the first thematic field, which scrutinised the role of social media as a tool for political influence, Polona Tratnik of the IRRIS Institute in Slo-

venia provided an insightful analysis informed by critical and cultural theories, that centred on the role of social media and AI-driven algorithms in shaping our online experiences. Referencing Althusser, she defines social media as normative tools and apparatuses that both convey and propagate ideology. She emphasised that in actuality these apparatuses are using us and not the other way around, prompting the pressing question of how to empower individuals to shape their own subjectivities in this algorithm-driven landscape. Marc Tuters and Boris Noordenbos of the University of Amsterdam examined in their presentation how the emergence of online social media has facilitated individual participation in propaganda production by dismantling the traditional top-down models of indoctrination. They argue that propaganda isn't a specific, well-structured narrative but rather a performative response, an "atonement" to the ideological environment shaped by personalised algorithms. In her presentation, Elena Pilipets of the University of Siegen, through an analysis of various memes on "Wartok", advances this idea by arguing that propaganda spreads through the virality of bodily mimesis, transforming the human body into a medium for communication. This mode of dissemination does not rely on explicit messages but instead strategically employs various memetic elements to covertly integrate propagandistic content into the masses.

A concrete example of how social media is being misused as a tool for political manipulation was delivered by Gábor Polyák, of Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, which illuminated the emergence of a dual media system within Hungary. On one side is a state-sponsored media apparatus firmly under the control of Orbán's regime, while on the other is an independent, grassroots-sponsored online alternative. As the speaker explained, this transformation has brought about a significant reconfiguration of the media landscape, resulting in a shift towards alternative online information sources. The Hungarian populist government, in response to these evolving challenges, has adapted by shifting its propaganda machinery to the online sphere. Olha Snopok and Anastasiia Romaniuk of the Civil Network OPO-RA, Kyiv, presented a similar story, in which social media initially represented a tool for advancing democracy, but was soon exploited by Ukrainian political parties for discrediting their opposition and promoting misinformation – a pattern that swiftly prevailed. As the invasion of Ukraine commenced, Russian forces in the occupied territories initiated efforts to disrupt and control Ukrainian information fields and co-opted Ukrainian information channels on Telegram.

A more optimistic view of social media was given by Vasil Naumov of the Institute of Social Movements at Ruhr University-Bochum and Olga Matveieva of the Dnipro University of Technology in their presentation, *Telegram Revolution*, and by the presentation of Delia Dumitrica of Erasmus University in Rotterdam, entitled *Digital and Analogue Entanglements in Social Movements*. Both presentations discussed how social media play a pivotal role in the upspring of an online civil society, which over time transcends its virtual existence and expands into the real world, facilitating the creation of public spaces for deliberation and the emergence of various watchdog committees. Both case studies underscored the potential of social media as a positive force, illustrating its capacity to mobilise civil society by bridging the virtual realm with the everyday practices of the real world.

The next set of presentations dealt with disinformation, various populist discourses and polarisation within the realm of social media. Michaela Ružičková of the ADAPT Institute in Košice examined the impact of disinformation during Slovakia's recent election cycle, in which fake news and the misuse of emerging AI technologies played a significant role. The presentation highlighted various anti-liberal and fictitious narratives of election interference that emerged during the election cycle. In his presentation, Stijn Peeters of the University of Amsterdam, through content analysis, uncovered four similar and overlapping narratives between Dutch and Flemish far-right groups on Telegram: a racist narrative, an anti-mainstream narrative, an anti-progressive narrative, and an anti-government narrative. Similar trends can also be found in Poland. Damian Guzek of the Silesian University of Katowice, talked about the growing mistrust of everything perceived as mainstream and the growing use of "dog whistles" and "mock language" within online news articles, which, as he argued, leads to diminishing news quality. In her presentation, Lenka Vochocová of Charles University, Prague took a theoretical approach drawing from media and communication studies within the framework of critical theory to study various right-wing discourses. In her quest to understand why certain individuals subscribe to these anti-discourses, the author presented her theory of social media performativity. She contends that these anti-discourses function as a social 'glue', constituting a highly emotional metalanguage that amalgamates all the various fears and anxieties of modern societies into a collective identity.

Jonáš Syrovátka of Masaryk University, Brno, described in his presentation two state-sponsored

initiatives designed to combat these kinds of online false narratives, and how they ultimately failed to achieve their goal, thus forcing the Czech government to pivot toward alternative, less censorious strategies to combat disinformation such as promoting media literacy and strategic communication.

The third series of presentations, featuring various scholars from the *SoMe4Dem* project, focused on the ramifications of social media on the core tenets of liberal democracy. Eckehard Olbrich of the Max Planck Institute for Mathematics and Sciences in Leipzig offered an introductory overview of the project. Its primary objective is to understand the impact of social media on the public sphere and to upgrade theory with empirical validation, especially with the help of computational models, all with the intent of promoting digital citizenship and digital literacy. One of the important questions driving the project asks what the differences are between central, eastern and western European countries regarding value structures fueling polarisation, different patterns of social media use and the challenges presented by their struggles towards a more democratic system. Stephan Lewandowsky of the University of Bristol presented a co-authored article in which the authors attempt to reverse-engineer various microtargeting strategies. The objective was to pave the way for a forthcoming plug-in designed to alert users when they become targets of such microtargeting. In the ongoing

battle against online misinformation, he advocated for the development of algorithms designed to foster democracy with the leveraging of collaborative filtering for the evaluation of the quality of news sites based on contextual factors. Marjan Horvat of the IRRIS Institute in Slovenia gave a theoretical account of how deliberative democracy can be used to reshape the public sphere, with the aim of harnessing collective cultural memories as a progressive force by integrating them with a liberal vision of the future. More precisely, he introduced his idea of deliberative democracy as a methodological framework to measure deliberative quality and deliberative practices, both online and offline, with the help of computational models, to better understand how to integrate new deliberative practices with existing, culturally and socio-historically conditioned ones.

The conference shed light on the burgeoning challenges encountered by nations in the contemporary online landscape, offering specific case studies from different European contexts and connecting them with insights derived from diverse theoretical paradigms. It proved to be a productive endeavour, enhancing our comprehension of strategies for addressing these challenges and illustrating instances in which social media emerged as a constructive force.

Jure Koražija