



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

POLITICAL FUNCTIONS OF FOLKTALES AND FAIRY TALES

15 June 2023, Bunčetova domačija, Dutovlje & online (Zoom)



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

POLITICAL FUNCTIONS OF FOLKTALES AND FAIRY TALES

15 June 2023, Bunčetova domačija, Dutovlje 65 & online (Zoom)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84710325268>

PROGRAMME AND BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



for Research, Development and Strategies
of Society, Culture and Environment

Inštitut IRRIS za raziskave, razvoj in strategije, družbe, kulture in okolja
Institute IRRIS for Research, Development and Strategies of Society, Culture and
Environment



arrs

SLOVENIAN RESEARCH AGENCY

The conference is part of the research project N6-0268 Political Functions of Folktales and program P6-0435 The Practices of Conflict Resolution between Customary and Statutory Law in the Area of Today's Slovenia and Neighboring Countries, supported by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS), funded by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS).

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
POLITICAL FUNCTIONS OF FOLKTALES AND FAIRY TALES

15 June 2023, Bunčetoča domačija, Dutovlje 65 & online (Zoom)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84710325268>

PROGRAMME AND BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Folktales and fairy tales could be considered as a sort of matrices that organize motifs, characters and other elements into folktales and fairy tales as functional devices that fulfill particular functions in specific cultural contexts. They adjust to the cultural circumstances. Folktales and fairy tales are fulfilling fundamental double functionality: 1. They reflect society or they can be understood as texts that show how society understands itself. 2. They address social subjects and thus direct them to certain behavior, they are a didactic tool. This double functionality enables one to analyze how society understands itself through the study of folktales and enable one to analyze the conative function of folktales and fairy tales. The aim of the conference is to address the question, how folktales and fairy tales direct people's lives, how they contribute to the organization of society, to the formation of social roles and order, what is their role in community building, how they communicate certain ideologies and how they support culture building. In certain historical periods, fairy tales were important means to consolidate dominant ideologies, however, sometimes they also convey messages that represent oppositional or resisting ideas to the dominant ones.

Conference Program Committee: Polona Tratnik (chair), Tatiana Bužeková, Claudio Povoło, Darko Darovec

Organiser: Institute IRRIS for Research, Development and Strategies of Society, Culture and the Environment

Editor: Polona Tratnik

Published by: Institute IRRIS for Research, Development and Strategies of Society, Culture and the Environment



Cover picture: Alojz Krevh, cover illustration of Rudi Mlinar: *Leške pravljice in bajke, Sedem koroških zgodb* Celovec: Mohorjeva družba, 2020.



The conference is part of the research project N6-0268 Political Functions of Folktales and program P6-0435 The Practices of Conflict Resolution between Customary and Statutory Law in the Area of Today's Slovenia and Neighboring Countries, supported by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS), funded by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS).

Project website: <https://www.iris.eu/en/research-project-political-functions-of-folktales/>

Program website: <http://www.iris.eu/en/practices-of-conflict-resolution-between-customary-and-statutory-law-in-the-area-of-todaysslovenia-and-its-neighbouring-lands/>

POLITICAL FUNCTIONS OF FOLKTALES AND FAIRY TALES

15 June 2023, Bunčetova domačija, Dutovlje 65 & online (Zoom)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84710325268>



CONFERENCE PROGRAM

09:45–10:00 WELCOME by program committee chair: Polona Tratnik

10:00–11:30 Panel *Culture-Building, Traditions and Ideologies*. Moderator: Urška Lampe

10:00–10:30 Polona Tratnik (IRRIS & University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts): The Role of Folktales and Fairy Tales in Culture Building

10:30–11:00 Tatiana Bužeková (Comenius University Bratislava, Faculty of Arts): Magic in Traditional Folk Tales and Alternative Spirituality

11:00–11:30 Anja Mlakar (University of Maribor, Faculty of Tourism & IRRIS): Paganism and Related Concepts in the Nineteenth Century Slovenian Press

11:30–12:00 BREAK

12:00–13:00 Panel *Cultural Representations and Memory*. Moderator: Jan Babnik

12:00–12:30 Suzana Miceva: The “Other” in Macedonian Folklore and the Attempt to Change the Narrative in the Contemporary Context

12:30–13:00 Urška Lampe (Ca’ Foscari University of Venice & IRRIS): Transgenerational Transmission of Memory Through Fairy Tales: A Case Study of an Italian World War II Prisoner of War in Yugoslavia

13:00–14:30 LUNCH BREAK

14:30–16:00 Panel *Nation-Building, Heroes and Rebels*. Moderator: Polona Tratnik

14:30–15:00 Dr. Darko Darovec (IRRIS & University of Maribor, Faculty of Arts): Social Functions of Tales About King Matjaž

15:00–15:30 Prof. Dr. Ksenija Vidmar Horvat (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts): Fairy Tales, Sexuality and Slovene National Identity: A Comparative Case Study of *Peter Klepec* and *Moj dežnik je lahko balon*

15:30–16:00 Ana Vitanova-Ringačeva (“Goce Delcev” University – Shtip, Faculty of Philology): The Rebellion of the Individual Against the Collective – a Universal Paradigm of Existence in a Macedonian Fairy Tale

16:00–16:30 BREAK

16:30–17:30 Panel *Political Functions of Folktales*. Moderator: Ksenija Vidmar Horvat

16:30–17:00 Jan Babnik (Membrana): The Miners, Mythologization and Visual Representation. Slovenian Photoreportage of Miners in the 20th Century

17:00–17:30 Marjan Horvat (IRRIS): From Proto-Political to Political/Ideological Functions of Folktales

17:30–17:45 CLOSING

18:00 dinner

Polona Tratnik (Institute IRRIS & University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts)

The Role of Folktales and Fairy Tales in Culture Building

Folktales and fairy tales have a very important role in the socialization of individuals, since they build values as the fundament of culture and are thus distinctly socially cohesive. Before the domination of mass media, the practice of oral distribution and reception of folktales was the dominant means for conveying ideas that speak of the proper social order and thus build communities. The existent studies have often neglected the role folktales and fairy tales have in culture building. The socio-political circumstances condition the production of folktales and fairy tales. The politics of distribution are composed of *a priori* laws which condition what is possible to produce, and delimits forms of inclusion and exclusion in a community, as well as they define the ideological inclinations and erasures. In addition, the writer's and the publisher's motives, as well the anticipated addressee are relevant factors for the production of particular edition of a fairy tale, although one could draw diachronic and synchronic connections with other versions of the tale or similar tales. In the presentation, the author will discuss the issues and challenges for examining similar folktales and fairy tales produced in different cultural contexts.

Dr. Polona Tratnik is senior researcher at Institute IRRIS and full professor at University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, a leader of the research project *Political Functions of Folktales*. Among other projects she led project *Social Functions of Fairy Tales* and research program *Research of Cultural Formations*. She was she was Fulbright Scholar at UC Santa Cruz and guest professor in the USA, China, Finland and Mexico. She authors 12 monographs, among others *Art as capital: the intersection of science, technology and the arts* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), *Through the Scope of Life. Art and (Bio)Technologies Philosophically Revisited* (co-author, Springer, 2023) and *Conquest of Body. Biopower with Biotechnology* (Springer, 2017).

Tatiana Bužeková

Magic in Traditional Folk Tales and Alternative Spirituality

Magic belongs to the most frequent themes of folk tales in any cultural tradition. Magical acts are characterized by ambivalence of intentions; but the stories about witchcraft as harmful magic have been especially important in communal life, as they have often been used in identification of internal enemies. In the contemporary globalized world, the darker side of magic can still be part of blaming adversaries; but since the mid-twentieth century folk tales about magical influence have also been reinterpreted positively. The change of political situation after the Second World War led to reconsideration of western values and revival of romantic perspective on western and non-western traditions. As a result, newly emerging religious movements and alternative spiritual beliefs challenged the idea that magic was supposed to gradually disappear from modern societies due to the development of science. Folk tales have become an important source for shaping new spiritual worldviews. In my paper, I consider interpretations of witchcraft and magic in Slovak traditional tales and their transformation in the context of alternative spiritual currents. I argue that in this, magic has become associated with such values of contemporary democracy as environmentalism, freedom of choice, gender equality, and tolerance.

Dr. Tatiana Bužeková is an associate professor and Head of the Department of Ethnology, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava. She conducted long-term ethnographic research on folk tales explaining misfortune and examined witchcraft-related beliefs from the perspective of cognitive anthropology. Her recent research interests include alternative spirituality, collective memory, and moral emotions.

tatiana.buzekova@uniba.sk

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9038-6298>

Anja Mlakar (University of Maribor, Faculty of Tourism & Institute IRRIS)

Paganism and Related Concepts in the Nineteenth Century Slovenian Press

The 19th century was a time of nation-building all around Europe, including in the territory that is now Slovenia. One of the building blocks of establishing a new Slovenian identity was folklore, or rather certain parts of folklore that were perceived to contain “remnants” and memories of an idyllic, noble Slovenian past. The first ever systematic process of collecting Slovenian folklore was under way. In this process, the “pagan remnants” were seen as the most valuable parts of folklore. The collection process and consequent interpretation of folklore were, however, heavily influenced by the ideological assumptions of the time. Consequently, folklore was injected with meanings that reflected values of the collectors, rather than of bearers of folklore (peasants). This is especially true for the perceived remnants of pagan, pre-Christian beliefs, and practices. In this contribution, I will examine what kind of meanings the collectors ascribed to these pagan elements and what was perceived to be “pagan” based on articles that were published in the Slovenian newspaper *Kmetijske in rokodelske novice*.

Assist. Prof. Dr. Anja Mlakar holds a bachelor's degree in history, library science and archeology and a doctorate in ethnology and cultural anthropology (PhD 2016). She is a researcher at the Institute IRRIS and at the Faculty of Tourism (University of Maribor, Slovenia). Her research interests include folklore, vernacular religiosity, identity, cultural heritage, and tourism. She dealt with the issue of otherness in Slovene narrative tradition (*Mysterious Stranger and Demonic Enemy: “the Other” and Otherness in Slovene Folk Narratives*, 2019), the role of religion in legends about Turkish attacks and discourse analysis of Slovenian 19th century folklore in the context of Slovenian nationalism.

Suzana Miceva

The “Other” in Macedonian Folklore and the Attempt to Change the Narrative in the Contemporary Context

Building collective cultural representations of a certain phenomenon or group of people does not happen all at once. It takes years, decades and even centuries for that achievement. Also, changing the adopted narrative is a complex and long-term process. The oral folk tradition in its archives preserves the individual experience of mankind which, over time, grows into the collective experience of a nation. Stories, songs, legends, beliefs are images of individual memory, but they are not petrified artifacts, on the contrary, their dynamism and variability made them tough and durable during the process of transmission through time (Vitanova - Ringacheva, 2021).

The attitude that the people of the Balkans had towards the "other" is particularly striking. That is, to the newcomer, the stranger, the passer-by. The Balkan model of the world is brought into relation with the constant recognized in the relations towards the other, especially the foreigners, towards the newcomers, the Varavrians (Kulavkova, 2006). The building of the image of the other is also observed in the Macedonian folk literature. Thus, the characters of newcomers to the community are always observed as intruders, bullies. Some stereotypical characteristics are attached to them, against which modern society is fighting. For example, the thief or liar in the stories is always Roma, the bully is Arab, etc. Although in modern society this narrative is not accepted and efforts are made not to stigmatize this group of people, there are still remnants of the centuries-old "culture" of non-acceptance of the different that is reflected even today. In this paper work, we will try to single out poems and stories in which the stigmatizing attitude towards foreigners-Roma is expressed and how today it serves as a road map of how the situation should change.

Suzana Miceva, writer, poet, screenwriter, journalist, critic and communicator. She has 18 years of experience in traditional and new media. She works on documentaries, reports, investigative stories. Her particular field of interest is literature and folklore, and she often applies interdisciplinary approaches to researching topics in these areas, including her research and communication skills.

Urška Lampe (Ca' Foscari University of Venice & Institute IRRIS)

Transgenerational Transmission of Memory Through Fairy Tales: A Case Study of an Italian World War II Prisoner of War in Yugoslavia

This contribution explores the story of an Italian World War II veteran who, after experiencing war and escaping captivity in Yugoslavia, finally reached Trieste in 1945, where he met his future wife. Being highly affected by the war-time experience, it took him nearly 15 years to heal from trauma. In 2021, while collecting oral testimonies, I interviewed his son, who told me that his father used to spend his evenings telling him fairy tales inspired by his war experiences. This contribution thus delves into the process through which the veteran invented fairy tales, drawing inspiration from his war-torn past. By recounting his war experiences in a metaphorical and child-friendly manner, these tales were not only imaginative and captivating for the child, but also served a profound purpose: (1) they were a means to cope with his experiences and past; (2) a way to communicate his memories and traumatic experience to the next generations; (3) a tool to educate his son, teaching him important values and life lessons.

Dr. Urška Lampe is a MSC-IF fellow at Ca' Foscari University of Venice and researcher at the Institute IRRIS. Her current research focuses on the social consequences of the Second World War, with an emphasis on the memories and oral testimonies by relatives of Italian prisoners of war in Yugoslavia, and on collective memory and oblivion in post-war Yugoslavia and the Italo-Slovenian borderland region. She is also professor at University of Maribor, Faculty of Arts and editor of high-impact scientific journals *Acta Histriae* and *Annales, Series Historia et Sociologia*.

Darko Darovec (Institute IRRIS)

Social Functions of Tales About King Matjaž

The emergence of the character of King Matjaž in the area of what is today Slovenia was in part the consequence of the fact that Slovenians never had their own ruler, neither territorial nor ethnic. It was therefore necessary for the community to create its own imaginary ruler. The common characteristics of the tradition related to King Matjaž are to show respect for the king, to glorify his kindness and justice, and to create an idealized image of a feudal ruler who is even willing to punish the lords in order to protect the serfs. Until the 16th century, King Matjaž was the most important character in the Slovenian folk tradition. His character is used in many fairy tales, stories, ballads, and songs, some of them with fairly specific structure and motifs when compared to the traditions of other nations. Hobsbawn describes the phenomena of imaginary rulers as “the norm of human life dream of a world” that is “a world of equality, brotherhood, and freedom, a totally new world without evil. Rarely is this more than a dream. Rarely is it more than an apocalyptic expectation, though in many societies the millennial dream persists, the Just Emperor will one day appear ... and all will be changed and perfect.” (Hobsbawn, *Bandits*, 27-28). In this respect, it is very interesting to study the character of King Matjaž also in light of the contention of Slovenian historians and ethnographers who believe that he is the Hungarian King Matija Korvin. But would people choose a real king for their immortal hero, especially when that real king had vandalized their properties during his numerous military marches in a number of feuds and imposed 85% taxes on his serfs to finance his luxurious life? It seems unlikely. In any case, the roots of the legend about King Matjaž are much older than those of the real King Matthias Korvinus.

Prof. dr. Darko Darovec, a historian, an author of 16 scientific monographs, more than 100 original scientific articles and book chapters, he has more than 480 scientific bibliographic units. He has lead and participated in several national and international research and development projects and programs, a scholarship holder, including INTERREG, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at Ca'Foscari University in Venice. He is the director of the IRRIS Institute and was the director of the Science and Research Center of Koper, University of Primorska. He has mentored several doctoral students, including young researchers (ARRS scheme). He is the founder and editor of the journals *Annales* and *Acta Histriae*, indexed in the AHCI and Scopus databases. He researched the work of Frane Miklošič and analyzed the function of storytelling for the process of nation-building on the example of Martin Krpan by Fran Levstik.

Ksenija Vidmar Horvat (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts)

Fairy Tales, Sexuality and Slovene National Identity: A Comparative Case Study of *Peter Klepec* and *Moj dežnik je lahko balon*

This paper examines the relationship between fairy tales, sexuality and national identity. Theoretically, it builds on the canonical work by Bruno Bettelheim, *The uses of Enchantment* in which he argues that fairy tales play a role in child's sexual formation. Bettelheim's argument is approached through the feminist psychoanalytical lens which complicates the assumption of the smooth Freudian transition towards the sexual formation of boys and girls. The main objective of the analysis, however, is to interrogate the Freudian sexual script in relation to national identity formation. In particular, Slavoj Žižek argues that Slovene national character is framed by oppressive and possessive fictional mother, the subject of iconic literary figure of Ivan Cankar. In this paper, I revisit Žižek's thesis through the reading of two fairy tales, *Peter Klepec* and *Moj dežnik je lahko balon*.

Keywords: sexuality, Freud, national identity, fairy tales

Dr. Ksenija Vidmar Horvat is professor of sociology of culture at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. She coordinates interdisciplinary research program Social contract in the 21st century, focusing on questions of identity, memory, postsocialism and gender. Her books include *Imagined Motherhood: Gender and nationalism in the 20th century* (2013, 2014, 2017); *Peripheral Europe: On Transitology and Post-Crisis Discourses in Southeast Europe* (2018, 2020, 2023); *Revisions of Gender: studies of women in postnational society* (2021). She has contributed chapter "Cosmopolitan patriotism" in the Handbook of Patriotism (2017) and several articles on migration, gender and citizenship. At the moment, she is as vice-rector at the University of Ljubljana.

Ana Vitanova-Ringačeva ("Goce Delcev" Shtip, Faculty of Philology)

The rebellion of the individual against the collective – a universal paradigm of existence in a Macedonian fairy tale

It is in the nature of man to want to rise above the community, in an attempt to confirm his place in it. That attempt becomes a rebellion against the set value system of the community. The Macedonian fairy tale "Siljan the stork" contains the parable of the prodigal son, who rebels against the traditional values of the environment in which he lives and wishes to leave the community and outgrow it. This story contains the philosophy of life of the modern man, an imagological archetype for the man who becomes a man and is not born as a man. Disagreeing with the community, the hero in the story opposes on them, mocks them, only to leave them one day, convinced that true happiness is far away from them. Faced with the unknown world, Siljan from the stork family becomes a lonely individual, who in the search for a new life loses his identity. Lost in the land of storks, he is actually lost in the labyrinths of his soul, looking for the way out. But that search for a way out fills him with fear, uncertainty, regret, pain and a strong desire to return home. The individual who wants to separate from the community, actually throws himself into a foreign and unreal world, his escape is a kind of rebellion against the traditional values of the patriarchal model. Siljan is the symbol of man, who, searching for happiness outside the home, eventually becomes a symbol of suffering, separations and broken ideals, that somewhere is better than home, patterns that we recognize in the life of modern man in the Balkans. This paper will cover the contemporary themes of the search for individual identity, the image of foreign countries as perfect systems, and the image of man as a loner.

Key words: fairy tale, rebellion, identity, escape

Dr. Ana Vitanova-Ringacheva is a university professor, researcher, writer, essayist and critic. She is a doctor of philological sciences in the field of folk literature. Her primary interest is in folklore and the research that results from it. He teaches subjects in the field of folk literature and mythology. Participates in the organization of literary events, scientific conferences and tribunes. He is the author of 3 books, co-author of 2. He has published over 100 professional and scientific papers in domestic and international journals and proceedings.

ana.ringaceva@ugd.edu.mk

Jan Babnik (Membrana)

The Miners, Mythologization and Visual Representation. Slovenian Photoreportage of Miners in the 20th Century

This presentation argues that the main features of the visualization of miners in 20th century Slovenian photojournalism can best be understood on the basis of social and political narratives, as well as the mythological status associated with mining, miners, and coal. There is a striking uniformity in the representations of miners throughout the country's history in the various social and political systems. Each time the camera lens turned to the miners, it saw them as mythological, strong and powerful "knaps" which had to be portrayed with soot-smearred faces, a helmet on their heads and preferably in stark, high-contrast black and white esthetics to emphasize their figure engulfed by deep and dark mine shafts. The striking uniformity (even poverty) of the press images can best be understood from the logic of the figure of the miner, as being "trapped" in two systems of representation – one visual and one discursive, both of which over- and under-determine the miners' social significance. The social typologization of miners has deeper roots – being linked to the mythological status of the Slovenian miner and its characteristic traits found in folk tales and miners' stories, such as perseverance, persistence, modesty, resourcefulness and, last but not least, stoicism in the face of insurmountable odds. The deeply rooted pre-industrial mythology of mine labor has lent itself well to the transference of the prevailing social and political imaginary to a particular working class in a developed industrial society (organized work) – but with a twist – both as a metonymic concentration of the social in the image of miners and as a metaphorical extension of that meaning.

Keywords: miners, photography, mythology, Slovenian press, photoreportage

Dr. Jan Babnik (1977) currently works as an editor, curator, lecturer and writer. He is editor in chief of *Membrana* and *Fotografija* (www.membrana.org), Slovenian based journals on photography, and director of Membrana Institute – which publishes the journals, runs educational modules on photography theory and criticism and organises exhibitions. He is engaged primarily with photographic theory – specifically documentary photography, discourse on photography and the philosophy of visual culture. He holds a MPhil in phenomenology and history of philosophy from University of Ljubljana and PhD in Philosophy of visual culture from the University of Primorska.

Marjan Horvat (Institute IRRIS)

From Proto-Political to Political/Ideological Functions of Folktales

In the presentation, I deal with the political functions of folktales in a transhistorical perspective. For this purpose, I connect the sociological theory of fairy tales (J. Zipes) with the theories of proto-political / pre-political (E. Hobsbawm, F. Jameson, E. Bloch), and especially with a specific understanding of the role of folktales in a transmission of collective experiences (W. Benjamin). I place the theoretical model in the context of sociological theories of social change, and present it by analyzing some typical examples of ideological appropriation of folktales in the 20th century (Weimar Republic, Nazism, Soviet regime, Yugoslav self-governing socialism). I connect the findings from the perspective of the influence of past practices of deliberation, tradition and collective experiences on contemporary public sphere and (unexploited) potentials in the process of stabilizing the socio-integrative structure in a given society. In the conclusion, I suggest some possible ways for a holistic conceptualization of the impact of embedded collective experiences on culturally and cognitively conditioned perceptions of contemporary challenges and crises.

Dr. Marjan Horvat is a sociologist who studies a wide range of topics in the field of democracy, European integration, nationalism, collective memories, media and communication. Recently, he has been focusing on research in the field of deliberative democracy in a historical perspective. He is the author of several scientific articles and the monograph *European identity in the processes of globalization*. In his doctoral dissertation, he dealt with the democratic deficit in post-national Europe. He is a research associate at the Institute IRRIS.