

## SUMMARY

### **Fairy Tales Transformed** The Metamorphosis of Fairy Tales in Polish Literature after 1989

Since the 1970s, there has been a revival of the fairy tale in Western Europe and the USA. New volumes have been written providing an interpretation of the various aspects of fairy tales. New literary versions of fairy tales have surfaced that won acclaim for their authors and there is an abundance of multi-media versions of well-known traditional fairy-tale characters. What can be identified within contemporary Polish culture may not deserve the term 'revival' yet, but there is definitely a more significant presence of the fairy tale. The aim of this book is to describe this phenomenon in an area that is not originally linked to the fairy tale and is at the same time more symptomatic of literary works addressed to the adult reader. Children's and fantasy literature, and pop culture in its broadest sense (also foreign) all comprise the important background for this piece of research, but only in the form of a context that makes it possible to identify the unique as well as the universal features of certain tendencies.

The reception of the Western fairy tale revival since the 1990s has brought about visible change in the perception of this genre in Polish culture. Previously, it was mainly used as a vehicle of philosophical or political reflection, thanks to such prominent Polish writers as Stanisław Lem, Sławomir Mrożek and Leszek Kołakowski. Its contemporary scope is more in the form of a continuum, with autotelism at one extreme (embracing both entertainment and meta-literary functions) and reification at the other, i.e. in cases where it only serves as a guise for ideology. In between these two extremes there are various tendencies that use the fairy tale as a vehicle of psychological, social, historical and cultural reflection. References to fairy tales can also appear incidentally in some writers' works, whereas for others it is their main form of communication with the reader.

The literary works of Mariusz Sieniewicz, Anna Nasiłowska, Izabela Filipiak, Jacek Dukaj, Ignacy Karłowicz, Bohdan Sławiński, Hanna Krall, Olga Tokarczuk, Krystyna Kofta, Eliza Kącka and Bohdan Butenko serve as evidence that a fairy tale form, together with its typical motifs, can be interpreted in extraordinarily diverse ways. A fairy tale is not merely a catalogue of ghastliness, as interpreted by Kamila Kowalczyk in her discussion on pop culture. Nor is it only the object of an intertextual game, as argued by Weronika Kostecka in her monograph. A fairy tale can be perceived as a field for experiments on various forms of fantasy, but also as an expression of oppression or a cognitive matrix, for both individual and collective experience.

Fairy tales in contemporary Polish literature are mainly the domain of transformation, i.e. changes of context, function, reformulation of motifs and, finally, reinterpretation. The author of

this publication intends to present all this by focusing on three aspects that are covered in the three parts of this book. Part One, i.e. *The Stolen Language of Fairy Tales*, presents the functionality of the typical fairy tale style as applied in contemporary literature. As it transpires, it can exhibit significantly diverse features, i.e. apart from its typical formulaic style, it can indicate both poetic manner and simplification of language. The stylistic analysis here leads to a discussion on genre classification, i.e. on differences between such types as the fairy tale, wonder tale, folktales, fable or nursery tale. Part Two, *Re-writing the Plots*, is devoted to the way in which traditional motifs are transformed in contemporary literature. It is where folktales happen to be set in a particular historical period, often the protagonists' gender may be changed, as can their motivations; various plots can also be brought together in one tale; the storyline, narration and style can also be altered and the whole piece might be accompanied by a meta-literary commentary. In this part of the book, the author enters into a theoretical discussion of such terms as literary transformation, retelling, re-narration or re-writing. The final part of the book, *Characters' Metamorphosis*, focuses on the changes that the two most significant fairy tale characters, i.e. the princess and the witch, have undergone in contemporary literature. These transformations are presented against the background of the evolution of feminist discourse, social and cultural changes in Poland.

The present publication is an attempt to complement the description of fairy tales in Polish literature that has already been developed by previous researchers. In contrast to Ryszard Waksmund, whose approach was to describe the fairy tale with the use of the category of fairy-tale-sphere, the present author goes beyond the mere setting and therefore analyses references to fairy tales also in formal categories. The book is, in a way, a continuation of Jolanta Ługowska's and Violetta Wróblewska's works, who describe transformations in the fairy tale in Polish literature before 1989.

*Translated by Rob Pagett*