

REVIEW

By Prof. Dr. Milena Georgieva, Institute of Art Studies, BAS

On the habilitation paper "*From Text to Image. Cultural and Artistic Aspects of Four Fairy Tales by Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century*" presented for participation in the competition for acquiring the academic position ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

Acc. to 8.1 Theory of Arts, announced by the Institute of Art Studies, BAS,
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with candidate Senior Assistant Katerina Zdravkova Gadzheva PhD

Dr. Katerina Gadzheva graduated in Art Studies at the NBU (2004) and received her PhD at the National Academy of Fine Arts (2009). Since 2012 she has been working at the Institute of Art Studies - BAS as a senior assistant. She lectures as a guest lecturer at NBU, related to her interests in photography and Bulgarian art from the second half of the 20th century. She has taught special courses at Sofia University and the National Academy of Fine Arts. Currently she is a scientific editor and one of the organizers of the international conference "Art Studies Readings" at the Institute of Art Studies. She also participates in the long-term project of the Institute "Bulgarian Artists for Children". I know the candidate as a very serious scholar and a thorough researcher in the New Bulgarian Art research group of the Institute of Art Studies with critical thinking and cultural studies background.

For the competition for associate professor senior ass. K. Gadzheva has submitted a list with 27 scientific articles, of which 6 articles and reports have been published in scientific journals with reference positions and indexing in world databases, and 4 articles and reports have been published in specialized art journals. Some of them have been published in Paris, Cologne, Budapest, Bratislava, Torun, others in scientific periodicals of SWU, IAS, etc. In terms of content, they cover scientific fields that are key for the candidate - anthropology of the photographic image, Bulgarian art of the socialist era, feminist studies, the art of illustration. The competition documents present 22 citations of her scientific works, of which 3 are in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world-renowned databases. The candidate leads 3 serious scientific and curatorial projects and is a participant in three others. She has also led 2 workshops for children. Katerina Gadzheva meets the requirements of Article 53 of the LDASRB, as well as the additional requirements of the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedure for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and for the Occupation of Academic Positions at the Institute of Art Studies - BAS. With these and her habilitation thesis she exceeds the national minimum requirements for the academic position of *Associate Professor*. I would like to single out her works on Bulgarian photography, examining it from a historical-cultural, anthropological, iconological and perception point of view, showing her sustained interests in this art, still little subjected by researchers to such deep analytical studies.

This is the contribution of this volume of studies and articles, always in line with the attitudes of the time and the perceptions of it - past and present. In other words, K. Gadzheva on photography and its temporal and social context are never self-directed or descriptive but are based on a task or a sought-after problem that interferes with others, far from being limited to the circle of art studies. Such are *Between Tradition and Modernization. Representations of Women in Photographic Illustrations in Bulgarian and Soviet Popular Magazines (1948-1956)*; *The Street in Bulgarian Photography of the 1960s. The Socialist City in a European Context*; *The Role of Photography in the Process of the Formation of the Rational Socialist Consumer in Bulgaria in the 1960s*; and articles that move on to the issues of children's story and illustration, the doll motif in children's books during socialism, etc. In all of them, the cultural studies approach is the leading one, despite the demonstrated knowledge and skills in various humanities disciplines, in particular art studies.

The habilitation thesis *"From Text to Image. Cultural and Artistic Aspects of Four Fairy Tales by Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century"*, 167 pp., IAS (under print) is a thoroughly contributory work that combines two important and interrelated aspects in the study of the selected illustrative material - the cultural ideas and messages contained in the fairy tales and their artistic interpretations over the centuries. The study summarizes the work not only of Bulgarian artists in the twentieth century, but also of international interpreters of famous fairy tales. In this sense, it is original theoretical research in an underdeveloped field in Bulgaria, such as illustration. The monograph consists of 5 chapters, introduction, conclusion, bibliography, and illustrative material. From the very beginning the text very eruditely leads us to the "magic tools", the extraordinary techniques, the search for the "codes" to the messages of the fairy tales, to their different layers, stated as a goal already in the first introductory chapter.

The text can also be safely described as a methodological model in the field of modern iconology. The author is mainly concerned with the study of fairy tales as seen through the prism of their centuries of existence, from oral folklore, through their early recordings by writers and folklorists, to their contemporary variants, even with examples in animation and cinema. Gadzheva is particularly interested in the technology of their transformations due to various reasons - psychological, social, literary - using the modern achievements of folkloristics, philosophy, history, literary studies, psychoanalysis, gender studies, pedagogy for their analysis. This complex methodology is rigorously applied to the most popular fairy tales of Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm to reveal the functioning of the fairy tale in different historical periods and their respective social settings. The use of research study on the phenomenon of "fairy tales", mainly by Western researchers such as Karen Rowe, Maria Tatar, Andrea Dworkin, Kay Stone, Ruth Bottigheimer, Mireille Piarotta, Jack Zipes, and Sigolène Le Mans, shows that the author knows, cites, and applies them very well. Moreover, the habilitation work traces in depth various storylines (variants) and interesting motifs (e.g., Cinderella's slipper) whose deep analysis highlights unsuspected aspects of the tale's semantics and pragmatics. The seemingly simple "content" of the monograph, moving from fairy tale to fairy tale, is in fact

composed according to a complex system of subchapters, which at a theoretical level first explore the historical roots of a given fairy tale, its first editions, the peculiarities of its variants according to Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm, its first illustrators and their interpretations in terms of meaning and plot, the specific motifs, the fairy tale characters, and then moves on to their Bulgarian translations, retellings, approaches and illustrators. The author's desire is to unite the art studies focus on illustrations with their key functions in the texts. The text-image relations extend to the author, historical period, reading audience, etc. However, prevailing concerns are with the historical-literary and cultural analysis of the fairy tale text, with comparisons permeating all levels. The role of selected illustrated fairy tales - fundamental to European civilization - is seen as shaping early adolescents' conceptions. The importance of fairy tales in society and its values is emphasized, with an awareness of their transferability as a collective memory of experience and wisdom to succeeding generations. The messages of fairy tales are also important in preparing the generations for their social roles as future men and women, and feminist studies of women in society and in fairy tales, respectively, have a large presence in this analysis. All this makes the habilitation thesis extremely interesting, innovative, and readable!

The method chosen by Katerina Gadzheva is quite correct, because before we understand the illustrations, we need to clarify the role of the fairy tale text - its nature, functions, stylistics, and possibilities for interpretation, as well as its reception horizon. The opinions of scholars here are often conflicting, but the author correctly lays them out and offers her vision in favor of the existence of illustration in the text, especially when it is by a talented interpreter. It is the image that unlocks the imagination, the fantasy of the child reader, and therein lies its strength. The roles of the fairy tale characters themselves, their gender conditioning in terms of responsibilities, rights and duties in a patriarchal society and their undoubted development over the centuries in relation to new needs, ideas and ideals are not without significance. This knowledge enriches the different receptions of fairy tales in social, historical, generational, and professional terms - those of children, those of adults, but most of all those of the illustrators themselves who, albeit on an intuitive level, faithfully dissect or emphasize one or another aspect of fairy tales for the sake of the hard-to-achieve "balance between the universal and the individual" (p. 83). It is also about enduring archetypes stuck in collective and individual memory and, more generally, about the psychology and behavior of the recipient from a given civilizational range. Gadzheva often refers to researchers of the collective unconscious (C.G. Jung and followers), as fairy tales are "the purest and simplest expression (of it)". She is particularly interested in the question of "what fairy tales hide" because they hide more than they show and therein lies their coded meaning and corresponding fascination. In this sense, verbal metaphors, proverbs, and enlightening verses have come down to us through fairy tales as the explorer's help, his magic keys. As the author herself writes: *What we like, what we dream of, what we fear, what we consider forbidden and what we consider permitted... Our choices are undoubtedly influenced by the times and the culture to which we belong* (p. 68).

Gadzheva asks another essential question that runs throughout her study - what makes fairy tales so flexibly adaptable to different geographical and temporal contexts? More important questions follow: how is the universal narrative interpreted, does it acquire local meaning and how does this happen, do the visual images correspond to the imagined ones, do the illustrations tell stories other than the recorded ones, which is remembered more, the text or the illustration? The whole study provides erudite answers to these questions, and the relevant chapters, which analyze each tale individually, make a very good attempt to answer them on a broad scale, with evidence adduced from a variety of scholarly disciplines, different regions, and historical times.

If the texts of fairy tales have been well studied by scholars in other humanities, this is not the case with their visual interpretations, their illustrations. K. Gadzheva repeatedly emphasizes this fact, referring it especially to the Bulgarian material. The selection of the four fairy tales "Little Red Riding Hood", "Sleeping Beauty", "(Mara) Cinderella", "The Blue Beard" is due not only to their classic fame, their thematic-plot proximity, but also to the opportunity to revisit their lessons in relation to the gender roles of children in society and male domination in it in the past, as well as the corresponding stereotypical gender upbringing they receive from a young age largely from fairy tales. Controversy about the educational role of fairy tales and, consequently, their illustrations, still exists today, especially regarding fairy tales in which women are usually the main characters.

I consider the chapter on Little Red Riding Hood and its critics, interpreters, and illustrators - from Gustave Doré to Kiro Mavrov - a particular achievement. The contrast and similarity between the two versions of Perrault and Grimm (the latter adapted for children and therefore adhering to Christian ethics and moral requirements) is a serious scholarly problem in general and runs through the other chapters as a guiding thread of comparative analysis, even accompanied by corresponding comparative plot tables. The visual interpretation of these tales over the centuries, discussed in detail in the text, is continued by Bulgarian artists at a much later time, among whom are famous names such as G. Bogdanov, St. Venev, St. Iliev, Iv. Kiosev, R. Skorchev, B. Stoev, P. Chuklev, K. Mavrov, etc. The author's conclusion is rather pessimistic - there is almost no illustrated version of the fairy tales that would be unconditionally accepted and remembered by the children's audience in our country, especially in comparison with their Italian and French illustrators. This is because *in most cases the artists do not make their own reading of the stories, and the images remain flat, without any psychological depth* (p.141). That is to say, the weaknesses in the illustration of these tales by Bulgarian artists, as seen from the perception of a particular audience, are not spared. Of course, there are deeper reasons than the "inability" of illustrators to get into the artwork, which during the time of late socialism rested primarily on the imposition of a personal artistic style and in a teamwork type of work such as illustration - a dominant trend for this period in our country, and not at all only in the art of illustration. All this challenges the knowledgeable reader to consider the dissonances between the artist and the child recipient in the name of subjectivity and the freedom to "break" the narrator through

the interpreter's style by removing historical veracity. The Balkan version of Cinderella is analyzed with great skill in a separate chapter, where the characters' appearance (written and visual) and every important detail in it, against the background of the plot deviations and peculiarities of the mass culture of the time of the Bulgarian editions of this fairy tale, are considered, have led to an insightful result. The conclusion considers and predicts the future of fairy tales in the modern world, their inevitable digitization, animation, and the possibility for the viewer to command the plot of the already moving images, as well as what implications this play will have for children's minds. In general, I find the work extremely useful from the point of view of methodology in relation to children's illustration - a yet undeveloped white field in Bulgarian art studies, awaiting its multidirectional analysis.

Senior assistant Katerina Gadzheva is the author of another monograph *Between the Desired and the Real. Photographic Illustrations in Bulgarian Periodicals 1948-1956*. (A bilingual publication in Bulgarian and English). S., 2012, based on her dissertation and that has established her as one of the best researchers in Bulgaria of Bulgarian socialist photography.

Conclusion: This complex interdisciplinary thesis, the innovative approach to it which quite exceeds the task as how universal tales through their illustrations are translated from global to local level gives me the right to suggest to the Academic Council of the institute of Art Studies to present its author Dr Katerina Gadzheva with the academic position of Associate Professor on Art Studies and Visual Arts, 8.1. Supporting this conclusion of mine are the contributions of the other articles and papers with their broad thematic and methodological repertoire. Therefore, I confidently vote "Yes" for her selection.

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