

VIOLETTA WRÓBLEWSKA (Ed.)
(2018)

SŁOWNIK POLSKIEJ BAJKI LUDOWEJ

[Polish Folk Tale Dictionary]

Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK
Vols. 1 – 3

online version: Słownik polskiej bajki ludowej
(<http://bajka.umk.pl>)

A folk tale is an essential part of spiritual and cultural heritage as it reflects the knowledge and aspects of the faith of our ancestors; it popularizes universal life experiences and archetypal schemes. This genre of literary folklore has been at the centre of attention of collectors, scholars, writers, and artists, who all consider it a rich source of inspiration. The peer-reviewed *Słownik polskiej bajki ludowej* [Polish Folk Tale Dictionary], compiled by a fifteen-member team led by Violetta Wróblewska, has highlighted the importance of the folk tale in the genre spectrum of the storytelling tradition and particularly its nature. The goal of these endeavours was to present the most relevant information about the Polish folk tale in terms of its tradition in the folk environment, its format, the most common topics and motifs, and the important researchers and collectors in the field. Up to now, there have been no synthetic compilation endeavours in Polish folklore focusing specifically on folk-tale genres. *Słownik folkloru polskiego* [A Dictionary of Polish Folklore] by Julian Krzyżanowski (1963) and *Słownik symboli i stereotypów ludowych* [A Dictionary of Folk Symbols and Stereotypes] (Volume 1, published in 1996), which was compiled under the guidance of Jerzy Bartmiński and Stanisława Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, are often used in folklore and ethnolinguistic research in the Polish academic environment.

The dictionary does not manage to cover all the issues related to the oral tradition; however, its analysis of cross-sectional topics allows for a relatively comprehensive picture of Polish folk tales that points out their characteristics and regional differences, and indeed the influence of folk tales on culture and literature within the context of their historical evolution. It is for this reason that each entry, in addition to the initial characterization of the source material (mostly dating to the 19th and 20th centuries) and its interpretation, also contains references to regional differences if they are relevant in terms of the nature of the sources. At the end of each entry, the reader finds information about the use of the motif or syuzhet beyond the boundaries of folklore, such as in literature, films, and theatre plays.

The dictionary contains 276 entries arranged alphabetically and divided into four parts: researchers and collectors of Polish folk tales; theoretical matters – poetics and anthropology; common syuzhets and motifs; and the relationship of folk tales to other cultural phenomena. The selection of entries was based on several factors, and the frequency of individual motifs in the Polish storytelling tradition played an important role. In the dictionary, readers will find entries about the most famous European fairy-tale motifs, such as Sleeping Beauty and Little Red Riding Hood; they will also have the opportunity to get acquainted with the specifics of their own region. To supplement the theoretical premises, the authors added original quotes from folk tales from various Polish regions and border areas to the individual entries. In terms of the academic use of the dictionary, it is particularly important that there is a bibliography of sources and secondary literature at the end of each entry so that the reader can verify the information presented and expand their knowledge. The quotes from folk tales are presented in their original form, the only exception being the texts written down by ethnographers whose phonetic versions were simplified in order to comply with current readership standards. The online version of this peer-reviewed publication includes a search engine for words and terms contained in the names and content of the individual entries, and this is of invaluable benefit for readers.

In terms of the methodology and approach to its compilation, it should be noted that Krzyżanowski's *Polska bajka ludowa w układzie systematycznym* formed the basis of the dictionary. The authors adhered to the international classification of fairy-tale syuzhets and provided the number and a description of the syuzhet type (for example: T 333 Little Red Riding Hood; AT 333 in Western catalogues, ATU 333 in the latest version). The dictionary also includes syuzhets that were published after 1960 which could not have been included in Krzyżanowski's catalogue, which was published in 1962 and 1963. The authors of the individual entries also accessed unpublished sources stored in archives and museums in Poland (including in Kolbuszowa, Kraków, Rzeszów, Toruń, and Warsaw) as well as the archives of the Polskie Towarzystwo Ludoznawcze in Wrocław and materials stored in the archives of the Zakładzie

Folklorystyki i Literatry Popularnej Katedry Kulturoznawstwa at Nicolaus Copernicus University (now known as the Department of Cultural Studies at the Institute of Cultural Studies in Toruń). Online sources from ongoing field research have also been taken into account. The collection of authors followed the concept of the genre demarcation of folk tales, which was first introduced by Krzyżanowski in his catalogue. In accordance with this concept, folk tales can be perceived in a broad sense as a recurring tradition of folk narration that is structured, schematic, variable, and anonymous. Folk tales are an umbrella term for numerous folk literary genres, including magical fairy tales and animal fairy tales; novella-style, aetiological, humorous, anecdotal, and legendary (religious) fairy tales; and legends in superstitious, local, and historical formats. Philological and anthropological approaches in particular were used in the analysis and description of specific syuzhets. The combination of both methods thus opened up an optimal opportunity for the authors to present the composition and poetics of folk tales, highlighting the cultural significance of the story for traditional communities. In the case of certain syuzhets, conclusions based on other approaches were also presented. These highlighted the broad possibilities of the interpretation of traditional folklore communication as well as its topicality. The fact that folk-tale syuzhets and motifs have been popular and widespread in culture to this day is also evidenced by the history of their extensive and multi-faceted research in the past as well as in the present.

This three-volume dictionary provides researchers and others with the most important (although not entirely comprehensive) information about Polish folk tales in one place. Due to its trans-regional and intercultural nature, Polish folk tales are not perceived as being limited. As a result of its complexity and synthetic nature, the dictionary will be of use to folklorists, ethnologists, and museologists, and it will also enrich the research paradigm of literary science and other related academic disciplines. It can be a useful guide in the educational activities of Polish language teachers (in Poland as well as abroad), the employees of regional museums, and activity organizers. It can also be used as a foundation for therapists who use folk tales as a means of healing as well as for cultural studies scholars looking for references to folk tales in theatre plays and in films. The dictionary becomes all the more important once it is taken into account that folk tales – an important part of cultural heritage – seldom appear in the repertoire of respondents during field research. The concept of the dictionary elaborated in this way aims to present Polish folk tales and their components as a complex cultural phenomenon in both the national and international contexts.

Katarína Žeňuchová