

NEMANJA RADULOVIĆ & SMILJANA ĐORĐEVIĆ BELIĆ (Eds.)
(2022)

**DISENCHANTMENT, RE-ENCHANTMENT
AND FOLKLORE GENRES**

Belgrade: Institut za književnost i umetnost, 286 pp.

The volume entitled *Disenchantment, re-enchantment and folklore genres*, edited by Prof. Nemanja Radulović and Prof. Smiljana Đorđević Belić, brings twelve papers, written mostly by already established folklorists. As is obvious from the book's title, the authors of the contributions in the volume in this or another way touch upon the concept of *(dis-/re-)enchantment*. The term was coined by Max Weber and comes from his famous lecture, and his later works, in which he explained the expression as referring "to a process through which people no longer explain the world and their cosmos with the help of magical forces, but instead rely on science and rational forms of thinking" (Radulović & Belić, 2022, p. 7). This process is positioned and conditioned historically, in the modern age with its bureaucratization, science, and consequent rationalization; however, it is geographically more or less limited to the Western societies. As Weber's concept is rather complex and has not been further elaborated and precisely defined by the author himself, it has been since subjected to various interpretations of what exactly Weber meant by it. Most authors connect the disenchantment – or else oppose its connection – with the processes, such as secularization, rationalization, modernization, (decline of) magic and religion, etc. In addition, the term has also faced many critiques. Indeed, as it has become clear by now, that modern era is far from a one-way process of disenchantment. To account for the many various forms of (New-Age) spirituality, beliefs, practices, and indeed cultures of the everyday life in the contemporary Western societies, the new term *re-enchantment* emerged, encompassing both dichotomous tendencies present in the modern, and post-modern West.

The editors decided to organise the variety and diversity of the papers in this volume by structuring them into three parts, mainly placed along the line

enchantment-disenchantment-re-enchantment, thus implying some sort of historical proceeding from the (enchanted) past, through disenchantment and transformations of the “enchanted worlds”, to the emergence of re-enchantment in the contemporaneity. The first part of the book, entitled „The enchanted world and its twilight”, thus comprises four papers which mainly focus on the „enchanted” past and its reflection in the tales; the papers in the next chapter, called “Enchantment in the modern world”, refer to the continuous presence and transformation of the enchanted world in the modern life of the genres; whereas the five papers in the last chapter “Facing the disenchantment. The emergence of re-enchantment” examine how folklore genres have faced, and transformed in the disenchantment, as well as the re-enchantment processes.

This volume clearly reflects the potential of the term *disenchantment*, as well as related *enchantment* and *re-enchantment*, to attract various interpretations and understandings. The variety of their understandings becomes even more obvious given that the volume focuses on folklore, as the notion of (dis-/re-)enchantment may not only refer to the processes going on in a society, but also to the specifics of particular genres, and particular (types of) narratives. Thus, while some authors in this volume (mostly) focused on the specifics of the “enchanted world” and the transitions between enchantment and disenchantment as characteristic of particular genres, or particular types of tales, others discussed the emerging interest in folklore, folklore genres, and the birth of the discipline of folkloristics within the national frames, closely intertwined with the processes of disenchantment taking place within a society; others still combined both. The studies on re-enchantment in the third part of the book, on the other hand, mainly focus on newly emerging genres, especially in the new digital framework and popular entertainment industry, or transformation of the “old” genres in the next context.

Despite its diversity – or perhaps precisely because of it – this volume is insightful in many respects. Not only it illuminates the genres and tale-types from the new perspective of “(dis-/re-)enchantment”, and not only it relates the emerging interests in folklore in particular countries with the simultaneous social processes related to “disenchantment”, but at the same time shows that the Weberian concept has triggered, and continues to trigger, a variety of understandings among folklorists and thus craves discussion on how to understand it within the discipline of folkloristics. This book aims precisely to accomplish this – offering a starting point for the discussions on its understanding. Through their editorial job, the editors soundly united the insights of the contributors into a coherent whole while at the same time provided us with an insightful overview of the topic of the volume in all its renditions: the history of the concept and its various interpretations and implications, placed within the historical, social and political context of Western societies.

Being a first book in folkloristics, to my knowledge at least, that takes the Weberian concept as the framework for discussions that in this or another way touch upon (dis)enchantment, the book is an innovative and important contribution to the discipline. Moreover, each and every paper in the volume is valuable and insightful in itself. Finally – even if this was not the intention of the editors – reading the book may ultimately lead the reader to question the value and usefulness of the concept of (de-, re-)enchantment when it comes to adequately accounting for the processes that have taken place in our society.

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Funded by the European Research Council grant agreement № 101095729 (DEAGENCY) and Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency ARIS (Research core funding № P6-0187).