

Some Caps and Riding Hoods

Sandra L. Beckett. 2014. *Revisioning Red Riding Hood Around the World: An Anthology of International Retellings*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. 401 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0-8143-3479-9

The story of Cinderella, which, according to some interpretations, is widespread all over the world (from Asia to the Americas) and across history (from the oral traditions of Herodotus' time, to the film, electronic and printed interpretations of our age), has long enjoyed the status of undisputed global literary inspiration and a favourite text for analysis. Today, however, it shares this status with several fairy tales and stories, including "Little Red Riding Hood", or "Little Red Cap", which, as early as the 1980s, was in the spotlight of a few monographic studies and selections considered seminal today. First, in 1982, Jack Zipes published a book in German on "Little Red Cap", which in the following year appeared in an extended edition in English. Besides thirty or so variants of the Red Riding Hood story, coming from different literary traditions and periods, Zipes' book also contains a comprehensive and detailed introductory study, which has also proved to be very influential. In 1987, Danish folklorist Bengt Holbek published an exceptional monograph on fairy tales, though it remained mainly unknown outside a narrow circle of folklorists. In this book, mythological reconstructions, ritualistic aspects, archetypal and psychoanalytic criticism, the morphological, structuralist and other relevant approaches to the fairy tales of the 19th and 20th centuries are postulated through different passages and summaries of studies on "Red Riding Hood". Finally, at the very end of the decade, in 1989, a casebook edited by American folklorist Alan Dundes was published, bringing a snapshot and a selection of analytical texts on "Red Riding Hood".

Meanwhile, numerous studies on "Red Riding Hood" have been written, approaches have been expanded by feminist, iconographic and other readings, and a number of authors have devoted several studies or even books to "Red Riding Hood", or, better to say, "Red Riding Hoods". These inevitably include the name of Sandra L. Beckett, professor at Brock University in Canada, who published not one, but two books on "Red Riding Hoods" in the first decade of the 21st century. In her book *Recycling Red Riding Hood* (2002), Beckett investigates contemporary literary interpretations of the title heroine, whereas in her book *Red Riding Hood for All Ages: A Fairy-Tale Icon in Cross-Cultural Contexts* (2008) she deals with the articulation of "Red Riding Hood" in different cultural and literary traditions.

Part of the literary texts analysed by Beckett in the latter work represent the basis for her most recent book, *Revisioning Red Riding Hood Around the World: An Anthology of International Retellings*, published in 2014 in the propulsive *Series of Fairy-Tale Studies* by Wayne State University Press. For this occasion, those texts, along with the added ones, were translated into English for the first time from as many as fifteen languages. Many of the translations are her own, a significant number of texts were translated by the contributors and some of them by the authors themselves. As can be seen from the introductory acknowledgments, notes and the list of originals, numerous collaborators, scholars, literary authors, writers and illustrators from all over the world contributed to the

making of the anthology. Thus, the introductory reviews of individual texts, including some of Beckett's translating solutions, are the result of cooperation with authors, translators and others with specialist knowledge of the context in which the texts were originally published.

The anthology *Revisioning Red Riding Hood Around the World* contains fifty or so texts of different genres, ranging from fairy tales, through poems, to novels, and almost a hundred illustrations. The originals come from different parts of the world, from almost every continent, precisely from twenty-four countries, including Croatia, which is represented by the writers Zoran Pongračić and Damir Miloš and by the illustrators Ivana Guljašević, Radovan Devlić and Krešimir Skozret. In the anthology, Pongračić is represented by "Little Red Cap Another Way", and Ivana Guljašević by her illustration of his tale (*Zašto (ne) volim bajke* [Why I (Don't) Like Fairy Tales], 2010), whereas Miloš, Devlić and Skozret are portrayed with "Two Stories about the Little Red Cap" from *Snježni kralj* [The Snow King] (1986). In sum, the volume comprises texts published in a time span between the beginning of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, with an emphasis, as the author's choice of the "Red Caps" stories from Croatian literature suggests, on texts published at the turn of the 21st century.

Most authors are represented in the anthology by one text, or, in the case of a longer one, by a passage from a text. However, the number of authors exceeds the number of texts, as multi-authored genres, such as picturebooks, rightfully include illustrators. Since the majority of the represented authors are, with just a few exceptions, such as Vladimir Mayakovsky or Janosch, unfortunately not known to Croatian readers, and, since the list of contents of the book is easily available on the internet, I will not, due to limited space, and in the name of information flow, enumerate their certainly relevant names. Starting from the assumption that a short text such as a book review cannot present in detail the imposing number of authors and texts included in the anthology *Revisioning Red Riding Hood Around the World: An Anthology of International Retellings*, I will hereafter focus on the structure of the book and the features of the selection.

The anthology opens with an introductory text in which Beckett describes the genesis and structure of the book, as well as the key relationships and differences among the chosen literary texts. This is followed by the literary texts, grouped into seven thematic and stylistic sections, all but the third and fourth sections corresponding to those introduced by Beckett in her study *Red Riding Hood for All Ages*. Every literary text is preceded by an interpretative introduction, frequently longer than the text itself, which presents and contextualises the author of the text, the characteristics of the original and its translation, their differences, as well as the connections with other "Red Riding Hoods" included in the anthology.

Since the book, according to its subtitle, defines itself as an anthology of *international* literary adaptations of "Red Riding Hood", it is important to point out that in the context of this anthology the term "international" is used in a narrower sense than the one we are, thanks to Jella Lepman and other "internationalists", accustomed to in the field of children's literature which also comprises a large number of the "Red Riding Hoods" that appear in the book. Although international by vocation, this anthology does not contain any text initially written in English, so its international dimension is recognised primarily from the Anglophone perspective. Readers can, indeed, depending on which part of the

world they belong to, quite easily complement the selection presented in the anthology with an insight from anthology selections of “Little Red Riding Hood” originally appearing in English. On the other hand, this volume’s international dimension would have been more complete had the “Red Riding Hoods” of, say, Roald Dahl, Angela Carter, Anne Sexton or Anthony Browne been included along with the translated ones. The mentioned texts and similar ones are even more missed, as this anthology goes beyond the modes of exotisation of otherness at other levels, and does not group the selected texts according to language, country or chronology but according to their literary features, themes, procedures and mutual relationships.

Despite its thus not fully extended international range, *Revisoning Red Riding Hood Around the World* offers, through its selection, variety and way of presenting literary texts, an impressive insight into the complexities and scope of the recent literary production of “Little Red Riding Hoods”. In a nutshell, it brings texts that, according to the demands of high literature, tell their story with awareness and care, addressing sometimes directly only children, at another time exclusively adolescents, sometimes only adults, and at another time all of them, with or without distinction.

On the other hand, not at all less relevant for further consideration, all the included texts rely, at least remotely, on either of two single sources, namely Perrault’s and/or the Grimms’ variants of “Red Riding Hood”. Those variants established themselves from as early as the 19th century as global urtexts of “Red Riding Hood” in the context of a growing mass, popular culture, and have thus become the dominant starting point for different interpretations, including literary ones. These interpretations which, as demonstrated in the texts selected for this volume, successfully follow and question not only the originals but also the literary traditions, tendencies and movements, other “Red Riding Hoods”, such as Angela Carter’s, as well as political and social imperatives, including interpretations of fairy tales, among which Bruno Bettelheim’s simplified and controversial, yet obviously popular interpretations, hold a significant position.

On the whole, the texts included in this anthology redefine all the levels of “Red Riding Hood”: from the age and types of the protagonists to the motivational links and functions of the story itself. The Red Riding Hoods of this anthology are not always girls, but sometimes boys, too, and sometimes almost grandmothers. They sometimes take cakes to grandmas, another time it is pizza or KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) meals. Their caps or hoodies are not necessarily red, but can be yellow, grey, black or green. Sometimes their stories are politically hypercorrect, another time exactly the opposite. They sometimes speak the language of political satire, another time the language of moral tales. They may be an amalgam of several fairy tales, but may also have no common points with fairy tales. Some of them investigate sexuality, others do not notice the wolf at all. In some stories, mum is to blame for everything, in others, no one is to blame.

As suggested by a whole series of recent titles, the most prominent among them being Vanessa Joosen’s *Critical and Creative Perspectives on Fairy Tales: An Intertextual Dialogue between Fairy Tale Scholarship and Postmodern Retellings* (2009) and the collection *Fairy Tales Reimagined: Essays on New Retellings* edited by Susan Redington Bobby (2009), literary interpretations of fairy tales and stories have become a major topic

of fairy-tale studies this century. Anthologies such as *Revisioning Red Riding Hood Around the World* best show by the number, innovativeness and the thought-provoking qualities of the literary texts themselves why this is the case.

Marijana Hameršak (translated by Marija Andraka)

A Possibility of Children's Fiction

David Rudd. 2013. *Reading the Child in Children's Literature: An Heretical Approach*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. x+238 pp. ISBN 978-1-137-32234-0

This is the most recent publication of David Rudd, Professor of Children's Literature at the University of Bolton, UK. He has published numerous articles, mainly in the field of children's literature, but also on other subjects, including education, information science, media and film. His earlier works include *A Communication Studies Approach to Children's Literature* (1992) and *Enid Blyton and the Mystery of Children's Literature* (2000). He is also the editor of *The Routledge Companion to Children's Literature* (2010).

In this book, Rudd examines and discusses some key ideas of several scholars in the field of children's literature, including Jacqueline Rose, Bruno Bettelheim, Jack Zipes, Perry Nodelman and Maria Nikolajeva. He also offers close readings of a few classic works of children's literature, *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Where the Wild Things Are*, among others.

In the introduction, Rudd makes an interesting point by claiming that "we sometimes seem to be trying too hard, that we have become too ponderous in our deliberations about children's books (we murder to dissect) such that we lose the actual excitement of reading" (1). He further suggests our analysis should be based more on 'energetics', and less on 'mechanics', and argues for more openness in the field of children's literature.

The rest of the book is organised in four parts, centred on key notions of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, who claimed that we as human beings exist within three overlapping orders: the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary. These terms are additionally explained in the book's glossary.

The first part of the book (the first two chapters) is concerned with the Imaginary. In Chapter 1, Rudd examines the influential 1984 book by Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan, or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*. Although he agrees with many of Rose's ideas, he rejects her conclusion that children's fiction is impossible, opposing it with a more interactive model of Mikhail Bakhtin, in which "children's fiction is always and forever possible, though its effectivity can never be fully gauged" (23). Chapter 2 offers a close reading of *Peter Pan* in the light of several Lacanian concepts. While the protagonist of Barrie's novel, an idealised image of eternal youth and innocence, "seems to incarnate the Imaginary, Captain Hook epitomises the Symbolic" (42). Rudd's detailed analysis shows deeper layers under the seemingly perfect surface of Neverland, and reinforces many of the disturbing issues from the book by examining Geraldine McCaughrean's 2007 official sequel to *Peter Pan*, i.e. *Peter Pan in Scarlet*. This section, among other ideas, draws a