

REVIEWS

Hiryak, Mikhal. *“In the Seventy-Seventh Kingdom”*: *Carpatho-Rusyn Folktales*, transl. Patricia A. Krafcik. New York: Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, 2015. Additional features: Illustrated by Anna Gajová. 153 pp. \$34.00 (hardcover). ISBN: 0-917-242-076.

Carpatho-Rusyns are an ethnic group originally living in the Transcarpathian mountainous territory bordering Ukraine, Poland, and Slovakia. Populations of Rusyns also are located in Hungary, Romania, the Czech Republic, and the former Yugoslavia. A significantly large group of Rusyns lives in the United States. This widespread diaspora of people speaks an East Slavic language and uses the Cyrillic alphabet. Despite forced boundary changes after the two World Wars, they have struggled to maintain their identity as a people separate from Ukrainians. Although they have attempted over the years to establish their own identity and government, they have never enjoyed that status on a permanent basis. In 2004, however, Russia recognized the Rusyns as an ethnic group. Religion represents an important element in their lives, as reflected in their folklore. Most Rusyns are either Eastern Catholic or Eastern Orthodox.

“In the Seventy-Seventh Kingdom”: *Carpatho-Rusyn Folktales* is a representative collection of ten Carpatho-Rusyn tales. The article at the end of the book gives the background and history of this unique work. Patricia A. Krafcik’s English renditions of the folktales, which are based on Volumes 1, 3, and 4 of Mikhailo Hyriak’s 1965-1979 collection entitled *Ukrayins’ki narodni kazky skhidnoyi Slovačchyny* [Ukrainian Folktales of Eastern Slovakia], is given in bilingual format. Prior to the fall of the Soviet Union, Carpatho-Rusyns were considered to be Ukrainian. Their printed language was censored, so that Hiryak’s language was ukrainianized, but the texts given in this book have been modernized into present day Rusyn by Shtefan Sukhÿi, the poet. Patricia A. Krafcik has used the more recent Rusyn language renditions of the stories for her translations, to which she has added descriptions and explanations where necessary for cultural understanding.

“The Fox and the Wolf” is a cumulative tale that demonstrates the cleverness of Fox, who guilts his victims into exchanging an inferior item for a better one until the thorn she asked a peasant to remove from her paw becomes a horse, for which she steals a sleigh. It is then that she encounters Wolf, Fox’s traditional victim. Wolf pays for devouring the horse by being dragged behind another horse and by being forced to carry Fox to her den. Although this tale includes Type 4: *“Bityi nebitogo vezet”*: *lisa edet na volke* [The beaten carries the unbeaten: Fox rides on Wolf] and Type 5: *Volk khvataet lisu za lapu* [Wolf grabs Fox by the paw] of N. P. Andreev’s 1929 *Index*, this version has scatological overtones.

“How Dear Old Grandfather Went to School” is Andreev Type 1665: *Dedushka-shkol’nik*...[Granddad, the School Boy], in which an unwanted old man is sent to school as a means of getting rid of him. On the way to school, the old man finds a bag of money dropped by the postman, who suspects the old man

found and kept the money and takes him to court. The old man admits he found the money on the second day of school. The infuriated judge dismisses the case because the postman waited so many years to report the loss.

“Ash Boy” is a version of Andreev 530A: Sivko-Burko, in which lazy Ash Boy, so named for spending his days by the hearth, manages to stay awake long enough to capture a magic helper in the form of a horse, who jumps up to the princess’s window so that Ash Boy can remove her ring and claim her as his bride. Displeased with his daughter’s choice, the king banishes the couple to a home in a hen house. Later, after Ash Boy saves the kingdom from foreign invasion, the king learns that Ash Boy lives in HenHouseVille. He visits the henhouse, which is gilded in gold, learns the truth, and relinquishes the rule of his kingdom to Ash Boy.

“Lord Debriansky” is Type 545B: *Zamok koshki*... [Cat’s castle]. The tale is similar to “Puss in Boots,” except that a dragon takes the place of a giant as the villain. The formulaic ending is not one common to other Slavic folktales. “And I, the narrator, was there behind a sack of water, and the sack burst, and I jumped onto a little table” (p. 59). Endings in other stories, including “Now if you were the storyteller, how would you like this story to end?” (p. 77) and “Since then devils have refused to compete with humans, who have sharper wits” (p. 91) are indicative of a modern retelling.

“How the World Thanks You for Doing Good” is Andreev Type 155: *Staraiia khleb-sol’ zabyvaetsia*... [Old hospitality is forgotten]. Ivan rescues Snake from the weight of a rock, and the ungrateful creature threatens to strangle him. Ivan and Snake search for a judge to determine whether or not Snake is being fair to Ivan. A maligned and abused horse and dog side with Snake, but clever Fox tricks Snake into going under the rock again in exchange for a chicken. Ivan’s wife, however, sics their dog on Fox, so that Ivan becomes guilty of ingratitude, proving Snake’s point. This story has much in common with Afanasev’s “Old Favors Are Soon Forgotten.”

In “The Peasant and the Devil,” a poor man on the verge of suicide meets a devil and tells him that he intends to smoke the demons from Hell and build a monastery there. The devil gives the man a sack of gold for refraining from his plan. Other devils decide to win the gold back, but they are unsuccessful in a race with a “lad” who turns out to be a hare (Andreev Type 1072: *Beg v peregonki: mladshii brat-zaiats* [The race: the younger brother-hare]) and a fight in which the “old guy” opponent is a strong man. A proposal to carry a horse seven times around the barnyard is foiled when Ivan decides to carry the horse between his legs (Type 1082: *Kto ponaset loshad’: chelovek saditsia verkhom* [Who will carry a horse: a person mounts and rides horseback]), as is a contest with a metal ball. The poor man outwits the devils and keeps the gold.

In “The Seven Raven Brothers and Their Sister,” a mother’s wish turns her sons into ravens. Wind carries the boys to Paradise. Little Raven, their sister, finds them with the help of Moon, Sun, and Wind, and stays with them until an ugly, old woman sells her beads that choke and a poison apple. Here the story has parallels with “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.” A prince comes along, cuts

down Raven's casket, which is hanging from a tree, and in the process the apple gets dislodged so that Little Raven awakes. The prince marries Little Raven, but his evil stepmother demands that he kill her and bring back the heart, eyes, and arms. The prince removes only his wife's arms, which regenerate in a magic well. Little Raven gives birth to twins who resemble Moon and Sun. When the prince becomes king, he searches for his wife and is reunited. Although Andreev 451: *Brat'ia-vorony...* [The Raven Brothers] has elements that coincide with "The Seven Raven Brothers and Their Sister," at least two other Tale Types are found within the story—Andreev 709: *Mertvaia tsarevna...* [The dead tsarevna] and Andreev 706: *Bezruchka* [The armless woman].

The eighth story, "The Legend of the Brigand Madei," is a rendition of Andreev 756B: *Kumova krovat'* [Razboinik Madei...], combined with a beginning reminiscent of "Rumpelstiltskin," in which a father inadvertently promises the devil what is awaiting him at home, his newborn son. The boy becomes a priest in this version and searches for the devil, with whom his father made the tragic pact, in order to break the contract. On the way he meets the cutthroat Madei, who asks the priest to find out from the devil how he will die. An old man acts as helper and guides the priest to hell, where the devils refuse to rescind the contract. They relent as they begin to burn when sprinkled with incense and holy water. They show the priest the bed prepared for Madei and tell him how Madei can avoid Hell's burning bed. The priest then accepts Madei's confession and gives him communion. Madei's soul rises to heaven in the form of a dove.

"The Laborer" is utterly unique and is riddled with anachronisms, such as trips to America and train travel. A poor peasant travels to America, where he works for nine years to earn money to build a new house. He falls asleep on the train while traveling back to his village, and his money is stolen. The thief dies of a heart attack, and his decomposed body is identified as the peasant's. However, the peasant had returned to America to earn more money. His wife buries the thief, thinking it is her husband, and remarries. When the peasant returns home, he attends his daughter's wedding and reveals his identity. His wife's new husband comes after him with an ax, but the peasant pays off his rival, who finds a new wife.

"The Miraculous Machine" is another uncommon tale involving a machine invented by a craftsman and used by the priest to record his voice so that he can conduct the service while in bed. The machine is taken to the printer to be "prettied up" before being taken to the tsar, who also wants to use it to speak instead of himself in person. When the tsar refuses to pay the printer for his work, the printer records a speech revealing the tsar's stinginess and saying that God would strike down the tsar. The embarrassed ruler decides that thereafter the priest should get out of bed and perform the service in person. One is not obligated to buy an invention.

"*In the Seventy-Seventh Kingdom*": *Carpatho-Rusyn Folktales* presents a good representation of stories, including animal tales, magic tales, religious legends, stories about clever people and not so clever devils, about workers, miraculous helpers, miraculous spouses, and robbers, among others. The

illustrations by Anna Gajová are beautifully done. They have colorful, European-style geometric borders, and the story characters are depicted with humor. The tale types for the most part are not specific to Rusyn culture but may be found in other cultures as well. The renditions, however, are unique.

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