

Alice Jedličková
Czech Academy of Sciences
jedlickova@ucl.cas.cz
ORCID: 0000-0003-1993-6506

POZNAŃSKIE STUDIA SLAWISTYCZNE
NR 23 (2022)
DOI: 10.14746/pss.2022.23.8

Data przesłania tekstu do redakcji: 24.01.2022
Data przyjęcia tekstu do druku: 5.05.2022

Matěj Kos
Czech Academy of Sciences
kos@ucl.cas.cz
ORCID: 0000-0001-6300-7152

Ballads and Legends: Media Transformations of Canonical Narratives in Polish and Czech Culture

ABSTRACT: Jedličková Alice, Kos Matěj, *Ballads and Legends: Media Transformations of Canonical Narratives in Polish and Czech Culture*, "Poznańskie Studia Slawistyczne" 23. Poznań 2022. Wydawnictwo "Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne," Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, pp. 167–192. ISSN 2084-3011.

The paper presents a comparative interpretation of recent Czech and Polish transmediations of canonical literary texts and architexts: ballads by K. J. Erben and Polish legends and folk tales, which are generally regarded as representations of both timeless and historical national values. The theoretical framework is built upon the theory of intermediality introduced by W. Wolf and I. O. Rajewsky, the concept of media modalities developed by L. Elleström, and current multimodal research represented by J. Bruhn and others. The transmediations (a film, a crowdfunded comic book, a series of short films employed as online advertisements) are not only subject to analysis of media-specific strategies involved in the artistic transformations; the authors' motivations, the economic conditions under which the examined media products were made, and the modes of their distribution and participation in cultural communication are taken into account as well. The results of the analysis illuminate the strong influence of the multimedia environment, of the generic frames of individual media and the strategies that authors of the transmediations use to attain success with audiences.

KEYWORDS: canonical narratives; popular culture; intermediality; transmediation; media modality

The intermedial approach

In some research cultures, such as those of Scandinavia or Brazil, intermedia studies have become a central part of broader cultural studies and institutions have been founded to explore intermediality. Elsewhere, such as in the German-speaking countries, intermediality is a firmly established field as well. In Poland and the Czech Republic, however, intermedia studies have yet to reach this level of acceptance. Thus, the intermedial analysis we present in this paper should be viewed as a pilot study in applying it as a comparative intercultural approach.

We will elaborate on two transmediations of Karel Jaromír Erben's 1853 collection of ballads *Kytice* (*The Posy*)¹, a work resonating both with folklore and literature of the time: a 2000 film version (dir. František Brabec) and a 2016 comic book presented by several writers and artists. A whole series of short films *Legendy polskie* (*Polish Legends*) (2015–2016) by the Polish director Tomasz Bagiński² is not based on particular pretexts: their pretexts may be referred to rather as architexts in Gérard Genette's terms (Genette, 1992), or, as Julia Kristeva would put it, as the text of culture (Kristeva, 1970): a multitude of stories in the Polish tradition. In general, the diachronic approach to such transmediations appears more helpful in the inquiry since it provides information not only on the individual artistic understanding of the canonical work, but makes it possible to compare also the social influences³; here, we shall pay attention to the possible impact of the economic conditions. We will demonstrate intertextual, intergeneric and intermedial relations of the transmediations to other works,

1 The collection of ballads was translated by Susan H. Reynolds, and published as K. J. Erben: *Kytice: Česko-anglické vydání. Czech and English Edition*. 2014, London: Jantar Publishing Ltd. The title of eponymous ballad "Kytice" was translated as "The Posy". In the following references to the individual ballads, we shall introduce quotations from this edition and prioritize the English titles except for the Czech titles of further artistic transmediations of the work.

2 We would like to thank our colleague, Anna Got from the Institute for Czech Literature of the CAS, Prague, for her comments and suggestions.

3 A diachronic perspective on transmediations of Erben's ballads has been applied in Jedličková, 2021.

the symptoms of national self-articulation and cultural schemes, and their particular modes of adapting timeless stories.

Perhaps a philologist reading this paper will find it acceptable when we refer to narrative models as pretexts and the results of transposing them into other media as media post-products. Here, we do not mean to say that a text is not a media product and literature a medium. In fact, quite the opposite is true: literature is “qualified media,”⁴ and inter-media analysis assumes the integration of “old” and “new” media. The term pretext has remained firmly in place for the simple reason that it is understandable. We can project the general questions posed by inter-mediality theory into the specific material we wish to study: Which qualities of media guarantee that a primary material can be transferred to another medium?⁵ How is a pretext reinterpreted in a post-text? On the one hand, canonical texts are relatively untouchable repositories of cultural memory. On the other, thanks to this continuity, they always call for period-specific artistic reworkings. What effect do the techniques and genre rules of the receiving medium have on the pretext? Given that comic books are essentially a medium of popular culture, the effects are significant. In his films, Bagiński regularly uses models and motifs taken from popular cinematic genres, such as action and fantasy. Thus, we can infer that the media preferences of the target audience will have an impact on transmediation. When classic and popular culture engage in intense interaction, a situation, or rather a process that Henry Jenkins has conceptualized as “convergence culture” emerges (Jenkins, 2006). When we observe this process, two fundamental questions arise: What can the classics, as a source of contemporary media transpositions, offer pop culture? And vice versa, what can pop culture, through these transformations, do for the classics? Due to the global

4 Qualified media types are defined by their history, conventions, social context, and institutionalization; they provide a cognitive frame for the recipients to understand the products of these media, and vice versa: recipients can distinguish qualified media due to their experience of many individual media products (cf. Bruhn, Schirmmacher, 2021, 4).

5 As Lars Elleström puts it: “intermediality must be understood as a bridge between media differences that is founded on media similarities” (Elleström, 2021, 5).

nature of such an exchange, intermedia studies are, out of necessity, an intercultural discipline.

There are two approaches to intermedia analysis: The older literature-centred approach (Rajewsky, 2002; Wolf, 2002) is based on the idea that a piece of oral literature is the first step in the chain of transmediation and therefore works with the literary concepts of the pretext and post-text. This approach is especially suitable for studying genetic relationships. The newer literature-oriented (Rajewsky, 2019) approach begins with the examination of the communicative frameworks of the media post-product and occasionally refers to the literary pretext. In this paper, we combine both approaches. If a media product is more open to the contemporary cultural context, we apply the literature-oriented approach. When the characteristics of a work lead us to reflecting on aspects of its pretext, we prefer the literature-centred approach.

***Kytice* in film: story vs. media foregrounding**

Nearly all transmediations of *Kytice* have one thing in common: they attempt to find unifying elements and strategies in the different ballads, ones that just do not copy or substitute the semantic and composition strategies used in Erben's collection, which relies on splitting the storyworld that determines the order of life into two worlds: that of people and demons ("The Noonday Witch," "The Water-Goblin"), of the living and the dead ("The Wedding Shirts"), and of autonomous creatures and those that are connected to nature through a life-giving thread ("The Willow," "The Lily").⁶ In the story, these worlds intersect and in the sphere in which they overlap conflicts emerge. Love, whether it be maternal (most frequently), romantic, or marital, becomes a force that both unifies and destroys. These balladic stories, however, can also work independently; see, e.g., the animated version of the ballad "The Wedding Shirts" (*Svatební košile*, 1978, dir. Josef Kábrt). Nevertheless, the

6 Original Czech titles of the ballads in the order of appearance: "Polednice," "Vodník," "Svatební košile," "Vrba," "Lilie".

reasons for which the authors of transmediations search for unifying strategies obviously lie both in- and outside of the pretext: the authors find such strategies to imitate its original unity as well as to foreground their own individual artistic gesture.

This may be observed in the 2000 star-studded filmic version of *Kytice* (2000, dir. František Brabec) that relied heavily on visual stylization: every ballad has its own particular “genre” and colour scheme—a nostalgic misty dream mainly in mauve and grey, an underwater fairy tale with symbolic accents of red, a horror mimicking the techniques of expressionist cinema and suggesting the blueish tone of a moonlit night, decadent erotica featuring sensuous orange, terracotta and marsala tones, or a murder ballad sketched almost exclusively in black and white. There are several visual elements that run throughout the whole work, connecting it together: all the stories feature a boy holding a whistle walking through a scene but uninvolved in the story, who is perhaps an incarnation of the folk song or tale. The ballads are unnecessarily framed by two such elements: after each vignette, we also see a shot of seven candles, each representing one of the ballads, that are extinguished one by one as the stories are told.

The transition between individual stories is signalled by transformations of a set of images: the sky displays the changing times of day and weather; the seasons are indicated by scenes from folklife (carrying a maypole, religious pilgrimage, carnival parade). The folk culture depicted is usually unrelated to the stories and alternates between the feasts of the liturgical calendar and pagan rituals. The set and costume design oscillate between universal folklore and historicism; the outward eclecticism of the ceremonies depicted is confusing in some places: men in strange robes carry the body of a dead mother of three children not in a coffin but directly on a bier, and she is not buried at a cemetery in consecrated ground⁷ but at the place she died. We see her in her grave as a beautiful young woman, her hair let down and white flowers sprinkled around her head. Once we see the entire film, no longer

7 In the unfilmed ballad “The Wild Dove” (“Holoubek”), being buried in unconsecrated ground without a funeral is, following Christian logic, punishment for a woman whose conscience drives her to suicide after she kills her husband.

do we have to think whether this shot was just one of many visual effects⁸ or whether it had allegorical meaning. In the eponymous introductory poem, “The Posy” (“Kytice”), the film works with only the first two narrative stanzas; left out are the verses identifying the dead mother with her homeland, whose ancient tales live on and which, bound into an imaginary bouquet, the lyrical narrator wants to send out to related (i.e., Slavic⁹) countries. A metaphor has literally become a sad story.

Why do we tend to agree that this is just the first demonstration “from the catalogue of the cinematic arts,” as one critic labelled Brabec’s approach (Spáčilová, 2000)? The repetition of what we, in inter-medial studies, call media foregrounding, has one pitfall: the systematic use of a unifying theme (such as the colour palette used in the stories) or a unique effect (the visual suggestion of an “air” and “water” world in the ballad “The Water-Goblin”) can easily slide into autotelism. This is what happens in the transmediation of the fairy-tale story of “The Golden Spinning-Wheel” (“Zlatý kolovrat”). In the film, part of the story is, as a great exception, told by the character of a magical old man to his young apprentice, who is none other than the boy with the whistle. The story itself though falls apart: through the factual inconsistencies between what we see on the screen and what the old man tells, as well as through visually and sonically overbearing scenes full of colourful whirlwinds of autumn leaves or water splash with sensual shots of a nude female figure, colourful tangles of precious fabrics, spilling wine, and so forth. The sound effects overlap; the music tinges the sounds of nature as well as the affected giggling and shouting of the characters. This story—about an act of deception that is eventually found out and punished as a capital offence—is reduced to a series of expressive images, often with erotic tension. Audio-visual effects blur the essence and meaning of the characters’ actions, or to put it more radically: the cinematic *medium is so manifest* that it overshadows the story it is telling, and as a result the reason why it was being told escapes us.

8 For the connoisseur of art, the stylization of the scene will call to mind John Everett Millais’s *Ophelia* (1851–1852, Tate Gallery, London).

9 “To the far-flung lands a pathway I will find you / Where people of your kin abound” (Erben, 2014, 3).

From the perspective of intermedia studies, it seems that the director chose Erben's book of ballads as an attractive piece of material on which he could demonstrate his skills in using the representational potential of film as means of individual artistic expression. The emphasis on the visual aspect of the work and the vagueness of the conceptual understandings of the stories are confirmed in the director's own comments. Most recently, Brabec has professed himself to be an adherent of the experimental films of the 1960s Czech "new wave" (Kordík, 2017). We leave it up to film scholars to judge to what extent Brabec's *Kytice* is really a continuation of this tradition, or whether he used the reference merely as a confirmation of quality. But we will add that such imaginative poetics are not conducive to the clearly outlined plots of the ballads that the director proclaimed in earlier comments: "Erben is a typical Hollywood author. It was he who wrote the screenplay to our film" (Spáčilová, 2000). The director would later reassess his appreciation of the pretext, attributing a shocking claim to a former collaborator, Miloš Macourek, an experienced screenwriter of wacky comedies with fantasy elements: "That Erben wasn't good at all. It's a lot of ballast" (Kordík, 2017). But what we consider shocking is not his rejection of the generally acknowledged value of Erben's work, but the claim that there is "ballast" present in his texts. One would expect an experienced screenwriter would recognize Erben's minimalist presentation of storylines concentrated on the essence of the conflict being portrayed. The ballads themselves were written over the course of two decades, from the 1830s to the early 1850s, and therefore, the form that we know them in is the fruit of years of work focusing on artistically unifying them. The intermedial method, however, allows us to take a conciliatory approach to this radical claim and not label it as mere "media ballast" but to understand it as shorthand for the fact that the medium of film can free itself of narrative and descriptive passages—simply by "showing" them. Take, for instance, the longing of the eponymous character in the ballad "The Water-Goblin," who cherishes the girl's lost scarf, longingly watching her in secret, while she herself seems to be afflicted by an unknown and unspecified yearning. The viewer can "see" that here an asymmetrical erotic relationship is being born.

Reducing the narrative pretext during transmediation follows the logic of cinema as a medium, e. g. its media specific traits, but it is also an artistically justifiable part of reinterpretation. This works well, for instance, in the tense atmosphere of the ballad “The Noonday Witch,” a psychologically motivated adaptation. Although the noonday witch, upon whom a frazzled, clumsy mother calls to scare her crying son, is an exceptional, frightening character, in reality she is perhaps just a harmless beggar woman, who, moments earlier, was harassed by rambunctious children throwing clumps of dirt at her. The spectator can see that the mother, instead of encountering a demon, might have been exposed to the demons of her tormented mind. Thus, the particular effect of this cinematic transmediation lies in interpreting the story as an ambiguous one. In contrast, in the ballad “Christmas Eve” (“Štědrý den”), the speech is ripped apart from the plot, which centres around divination: on this holiday evening two girls set out in the dark to cut a hole in the ice to see a reflexion of the future. The first girl is delighted to view her betrothed; the second is horrified to see a funeral. This Christmas Eve prophecy is fulfilled. The first girl gets happily married; the second dies. The conclusion of the poem prefers the uncertain anticipation of what is to come over divination.¹⁰ In Brabec’s version the girls’ speech does not appear performative, it sounds as if “voiced over” by themselves. Moreover, the point of the story is lost: death comes for a minor character, a quiet old woman, while she is praying in church. It is a foreseeable death, one that is even “good” in the Christian sense: an old woman departs this world reconciled with God. It is as if the director wanted to illogically soften the tragic tone of the story. The potential of the receiving media, thus, remains unexploited: the disruption of the narrative structure as well as the mode of acting reduces the speech of characters to the mere recital of verses.

The film does not renounce visual expressiveness (e.g. it uses it to great effect to materialize the water goblin’s fury when his wife’s house is flooded), but it avoids explicit depictions of cruelty. Like in “Christmas

¹⁰ “Better to dream on in hope mistaken, / Darkness before us, with nothing to see, / Than discover the future, / and to awaken / Knowing its terrible certainty!” (Erben, 2014, 129).

Eve” here we must again ask why the repercussions of the story in “The Water-Goblin” were softened: the handsome water goblin, who had been gentle with his human wife and patiently taught their child to swim, kills the sweet baby when his wife is late to get back to him. However, his despair over his actions (we watch him crying bitterly) is not convincing. A monster stripped of its monstrosity and given the human capacity for love and a conscience is not believable. In other words, the film ballad is an attempt at reinterpretation that does not transform the fictional world of the original but clashes with its rules. The film critics have not addressed this topic; the students of an intermedial class proposed understanding transformation as an attempt at paving the way for grasping otherness. We could argue that this modern theme is much more clearly implied in the ballads “The Willow” and “The Lily,” in which duplicitous female creatures connected to the world of humans but bound to the realm of nature through magic are destroyed by their loved ones due to this “otherness.” In the film version, the temporary “overcoming of the demon’s otherness” was mainly an opportunity to increase its appeal, which was guaranteed by the attractive protagonists and the cute baby which can swim underwater “as if it were at home”: these are all outer features of the film guaranteeing its acceptance by mainstream audiences.

One ballad that excels in its media- and genre-specific stylization and at the same time manages to tell the original story without taking away any of its meaning or flattening it, is “The Wedding Shirts,” a tale of a groom who returns from the grave. The tone of the film is practically monochromatic and reminds the viewer of the blue filter applied to the camera to depict a moonlit night. The exaggerated makeup of the actors, the almost marionette-like stylization of their movements (the film does not shy away from using “easy to read” traditional techniques and tricks), the grotesque exaggeration of the groom’s speech and facial expressions, his transformation from a pale young man into a corpse, the escalation of terror at the end: all these methods and techniques engage with the entire history of the horror genre, especially the vampire subgenre. In places, it is reminiscent of the earliest Dracula films; the puppet-like movement of the characters, alternating between horror and ridiculousness, evoke the poetics of Czech surrealist filmmaker

Jan Švankmajer or the related poetics of Tim Burton, always balancing between horror and the grotesque. The Christian line of the story (the theme of blasphemy and repentance) is preserved, and its motifs are balanced with horror elements: the introductory image of religious pilgrimage; dirt on the grave (a popular motif in zombie films) begins to move after the girl commits blasphemy; the symbols of faith that the dead man takes away from the girl one by one are highlighted through audio-visual means, and the girl's act of repentance becomes a true peak of the story. The result is a coherent narrative whole that is realized on the framework of a ballad, but in a horror mode. To sum up: the analysis of the transmediation reveals whether its approach complies with the storyworld it creates, may it be it transformed in any possible way differing from the original.

A comic book of ballads: generic transformation

An analysis of the comics adaptation of *Kytice* reveals a fundamental feature of the current cultural communication, namely, that the audiences get an idea about new works through the media discussing the making of these works prior to their release: the casting in the case of films, the style of the works that have not entered the public space yet. The comic book *Kytice* was published in 2016 under the Český Grimm (Czech Grimm) brand, which was established *ad hoc* for this purpose. The publishers subscribe to the European fairy-tale tradition in renaming and thus “branding” Karel Jaromír Erben as the “Czech Grimm.” But why? Erben is one of the most prominent and popular exponents of retelling Czech folk fairy tales. In the renaming process, the authors were clearly working with several different associations. First, Czech and German retellings of folk fairy tales have different tones, a fact which even the most superficial readers are aware of. Czech fairy tales more regularly feature conciliatory or humorous motifs, whereas some of the Brothers Grimm tales, with their terrifying motifs, approximate the horror genre. It is this popular genre that is used to attract people to reading Erben's ballads. Simply put, Grimm is a brand that can be “franchised,” as Jenkins would say. This name also has connotations with contemporary

popular culture, evoking, for example, the *Grimm* television series (which ran from 2011 to 2017, dir. Stephen Carpenter et al.), a mash-up of the police procedural and fantasy genres set in the modern world.

This version of the collection of ballads came into being thanks to a successful crowdfunding campaign on the Czech platform Hithit. Marketing paratexts compared this comic book adaptation with other versions and addressed potential contributors with informal superlatives (“Do you know the film version of *Kytice*? That was a romance. But now a horror is coming! We reached out to 12 top comics artists and put together a massacre in poetry for you!”; *Komiksová Kytice...*, 2016). The project overview on Hithit described making a donation as a chance to help resurrect this literary gem in a modern form. Such a claim implies that this work, in its traditional form, is “dead.” Offering the book as an exclusive gift (“If you have to give a gift, make it a classic!”; *Komiksová Kytice...*, 2016) has the complete opposite effect: it reminds potential supporters that the literary pretext is worthy of appreciation. This fluctuation in values exemplifies the ambivalence of the relationship the creators and the recipients have toward classic literature: on the one hand, there is a consensus that *Kytice* is part of the Czech literary canon, practically a “national treasure,” which is required reading in schools. But at the same time, the marketing also addresses the reluctance of the Czech audience to read this praised work in any depth. This may be evidenced by the chat of the crowdfunding supporters¹¹: some mistakenly expect this book will make the difficult pretext more accessible to young readers, largely thanks to the enduring underappreciation of this medium as a mere “illustrated digest.” This faulty perspective, that comics are a more accessible medium, is mentioned by some reviewers as well (e.g. Stejskal, 2016 or Matyášová, 2017). In general though, transmediations attempting to bring classic literary works closer to contemporary audiences put greater emphasis on visuality and action (e.g., theatre and film adaptations) or on interactivity (games and social media apps).¹²

11 E.g., <https://tinyurl.com/yc29r3rp> (27.10.2022).

12 See, e.g., the Sparknotes account on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/SparkNotes>), which uses memes to present motifs contained in classic works of world literature using allusions and reconfiguring meanings.

The editors of the comic book *Kytice*, Jorik Jakubisko and Kateřina Štursová, reached out to several Czech artists,¹³ asking them to retell a selected ballad in their own way. By creating a set of unique treatments of each ballad, they wanted to elaborate on the idea that the collection was a “bouquet of folktales” (Jakubisko and Štursová, 2016, 7). The reconceptualization of the volume also involved a change in composition which the editors of the volume explained by their own reinterpretation of mythology they had detected in Erben’s work (Jakubisko and Štursová, 2016, 7; for the scheme of the new concept of the volume see *Český Grimm: Svět českého...*, 2016). In the spirit of this remythologization, they therefore included in place of “Lily” the unfinished ballad “Saint John’s Eve” (“Svatojanská noc”),¹⁴ which they felt better fit with the whole; the fragmentary nature of the pretext, however, was not overcome in the comics adaptation. Thus, in the comic book we find treatments of eleven ballads by different authors. The introductory ballad “The Posy” and the concluding “The Prophetess” (“Věštkyň”) are both only single full-page illustrations containing the original text. We can pose the question of whether presenting the pretexts is meant as information for the reader who has not yet encountered these ballads, and thus a means for limiting misunderstandings, or whether it is meant to remind audiences of the well-known pretext to help readers fully appreciate the transmediation. The editors explain that one of the general principles behind the volume was to use only the direct speech from the pretext, whereas the other narrative and descriptive text was to be visualized, depicted through the media-specific means of the comic book. The artists were supposed to pay special attention to symbols; as in the film adaptation, here too we find motifs connecting all the ballads (a bouquet, Erben’s portrait).

We have selected the ballads we interpret here based on how well they can help us answer the questions raised at the beginning of this paper:

13 Tomáš Motal, Marco Turini, Vladimír Strejček, Jan Gruml, Marek Rubec, Petr Holman, Dominik Miklušák, Longyi, Vojtěch Velický, Karel Cettl, and Kateřina Bažantová contributed to the graphic novel. Bažantová also illustrated the cover.

14 For a reconstructed edition of the text, see Zíbrt, 1913.

How can a comic book adaptation treat the ballad genre and themes that might seem outdated from today's perspective? Does this project reinterpret the original "from within" or does it recontextualize it? Does this comic book version rely solely on media-specific means of expression, or does it draw from other intermedia relationships?

The ballad "The Daughter's Curse" ("Dceřina kletba") presents optimal material for the type of treatment proposed by the editors of the comic book because it is based on a dialogue between a mother and daughter. But the roles here are not what we would think. They are reversed. The mother does not reprimand the daughter; it is the other way around. Despairing, the daughter confesses to her mother that she has killed her child, born out of a love affair. In the end, she curses her mother for not preventing her from behaving so foolishly. The greatest part of the guilt is not attributed to the young murderess but to her mother, who has neglected her role as an authority figure and a bearer of morality.

Kateřina Bařantova, the author of the comic book adaptation, has transferred the story to today's Prague, as we can discern the well-known modern and contemporary buildings (the Church of the Most Sacred Heart of Our Lord and the Žiřkov Television Tower) located on the border between Vinohrady, a wealthy neighbourhood, and the "poorer" Žiřkov, a place that has many connotations that can help the audience understand the story. A particular feature of the presentation of the story is that—though it is based on the original dialogue—the mother and daughter are never depicted in the same panel. Both speakers seem to look beyond the borders of their panels as if at the reader, rather than at one another. Only once do we see the mother's hands resting on the daughter's shoulder in a calming gesture, which seems rather to disturb than to appease her. This mode of presentation gives us the idea that there is hardly any understanding, hardly any emotional connection between the two women, they just speak but do not communicate with each other.

Here Bařantova uses several visual motifs that establish a bleak atmosphere; many of them, however, are more than just props and become narrative information about the background and prehistory of the story. The dry, leafless flowers in a vase, the vodka and the box of

wine on the mother's table, the hypodermic needle and other drug paraphernalia on the daughter's table, the raven above the bloodstained sack thrown out by the rubbish bins, the daughter tracing a noose in coffee spilled on the table. These motifs provide clues to a complex shift of the story: from a ballad about moral failing to a socially and psychologically grounded drama. The comic book transmediation respects the original story but substantially develops the motivations of both characters, and thus offers the reader a strong, darkly tinged narrative: the daughter clearly grew up in an environment without any positive stimuli, with a mother who drinks cheap alcohol, and she has become a drug addict herself. The reader learns nothing about her relationship with the man, except when the daughter retrospectively condemns him in a few verses.¹⁵ The reader can only imagine that it might have been a superficial or casual relationship, and that the killing of the child was more the result of anxiety about what the future would hold—rather than an attempt to conceal having a child out of wedlock, which was considered a sin when the pretext was created. This transmediation neither highlights nor covers up the ethical problem. But it brings to the forefront the lack of love and values in the daughter's life. What was once an appeal to Christian morality has changed here into a topical social message.

As Karel Jaromír Erben himself noted in the epilogue to *Kytice*, the ballad “The Wedding Shirts” has many folk and literary pretexts, and it has been adapted the most. It tells the story of a girl, who waiting in vain for her groom, for whom she prepared wedding shirts years ago, commits blasphemy, asking the Virgin Mary to “Bring back my sweetheart from abroad, / Or cut my life and suffering short” (Erben, 2014, 53). Her betrothed returns the very next moment, and through the darkness of the night urges the girl to marry him. He has returned, however, as a vampire or an undead being. The girl is saved from his power only thanks to sincere repentance.

This ballad was rendered in a comic book form by Marco Turini, an Italian artist who has twenty years' experience with Czech culture but whose

15 “To him a blessing I will send, / Mother mine! / To him a blessing I will send – / A worm in his soul till his life's end, / For all his words of faithlessness!” (Erben, 2014, 235).

view of Erben's work has not been predetermined by aspects of educational tradition. His visual style here is based on photorealistic drawings coloured in dark, reddish hues, and he uses all media-specific techniques. The choice of motifs itself reveals a shift toward the horror genre. The glowing red eyes of the groom, howling wolves, skulls, a scene in which a man resembling a skeleton drags the girl, dressed in white, to the cemetery, where the undead are rising from their graves: this all evokes—sometimes with grotesque exaggeration—horror films produced in Hollywood. Like in Brabec's cinematic adaptation, the young man returns in a tattered military uniform, this time, one from the twentieth century. Turini devotes particular attention to depicting the cemetery and the church, which are not described in any detail in the pretext. In the comics adaptation, bare tree trunks studded with broken branches, a barbed-wire fence, and a half-sunken cannon are added to the crumbling cemetery walls. People going to morning mass walk through a barren landscape, dressed in unidentifiable dark clothing; they seem to be impoverished. The horror atmosphere is rivalled by the image of a landscape devastated by war, suggesting that the young man, like many others, fell in it.

Here, too, Christian motifs are visually emphasized through close-ups; as in the pretext, the girl is praised for repenting. The story though, true to horror, has been expanded to include a trope typical of that genre: the undead groom is killed using a stake. The stake through the heart is a motif found both in the history of vampirism (see, e.g., Maiello, 2005) and in popular horror stories (films), particularly the various versions of the Dracula tale.¹⁶ The extended ending and the use of several visual props thus transform a ballad into a horror and in the process push aside the newly introduced theme of the consequences of war.

"The Water-Goblin" is another ballad in which the protagonist is a mortal woman and the antagonist a male creature from the world of magic. This character has deep roots in Czech culture and has appeared in various forms and genres (see Šidák, 2018). The ballad tells the story of a girl who cannot resist her inexplicable attraction to water and, despite

¹⁶ Beginning with the classic 1931 film (dir. Tod Browning), through Joss Whedon's television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2002), to the 2020 *Dracula* series (dir. Jonny Campbell et al., distributed by Netflix).

her mother's warnings, goes to a lake, where she falls prey to a water goblin, who forces her to be his bride. After some time, once she has already given birth to the water goblin's child, she manages to persuade her husband to allow her to visit her mother. But the mother does not wish to let her already once-lost daughter go back. When the girl worries about her child, her mother explains that she has the same maternal concern for her because she has been in the power of a monster. The water goblin breaks the bond between the human and supernatural worlds: he punishes his wife's disobedience by killing the child. The depiction of the scene literally follows the pretext; in general, the comic book does not avoid explicitness which suggests it is not aimed at mainstream audience as the film version.

Vojtěch Velický, who adapted the ballad in the comic book form, preserved the story's main features while using the techniques specific to his medium. Whereas the mother's premonitory dream, like in the pretext, is described in direct speech (here in speech bubbles), how the girl ends in the watery depths when a footbridge crumbles under her feet is expressed through purely visual means. The characters are formulaic: the girl is a blonde with snow-white skin, and the anthropomorphic water goblin stands out with his repulsive, wrinkled face. His underwater world is depicted as a flooded farm.

The most space is devoted to the final tense scene in which the water goblin tries to get the girl back. Whereas in the original, the murder is revealed with the discovery of the child's body, the comic book suggests how the act was committed. This is not done to enhance understanding of the story, but rather to expand the meanings associated with the demon character: readers can easily associate the dark silhouette of the water goblin holding an axe with a stock character from horror films: the homicidal maniac.

Whereas in the pretext we first encounter the water goblin, in the comic book, as in the 2000 film, we first see the white figure of the girl by a lake throwing a garland into the water. In the following panel, we see that the water goblin has taken it. This motif does not appear in the pretext. In Brabec's cinematic adaptation of the ballad, we encounter other flower-related motifs: the girl is lying in an orchard among laundry ready to be bleached, sprinkled with cherry blossoms. In both cases,

the flowers and the garland are conventional symbols of the girl's innocence; in contrast, the red scarf the girl plays with in Brabec's film represents sexual desire and knowledge.

As in "The Wedding Shirts" the transmediation of the ballad "The Water-Goblin" adds elements not contained in the pretext. The final whole-page panel depicts the water goblin standing in front of a giant construction site where a dam that will fundamentally change the landscape is being built. The reader realizes again that the water goblin's underwater farm could be a reference to the fact that in many cases entire villages were sacrificed when reservoirs were built in Czechia. It is a question whether this message about environmental devastation is the idea of the comic book author or whether it is an intermedial allusion to Miloš Urban's novel *Hastrman. Zelený román* (Water-Goblin. A Green Novel) (2001), which was also inspired by Erben's "The Water-Goblin." The protagonist of the story set in the first half of the nineteenth century is Baron Johanes Salmon, a nobleman and secret water goblin, who settles under Vlhošť Hill, surrounded by a system of fishponds he wants to revitalize and improve. Many of the local inhabitants' customs are associated with this hill, and they are reminiscent more of pagan rituals than Christian ones. The water goblin strikes up a relationship—that he eventually destroys—with Katynka, the peculiar daughter of the mayor, whose wild nature attracts him. Even though in the novel, the relationship between the water goblin and the woman is permeated with seduction and playfulness and the girl is at first attracted to him, his relation to her is clearly a possessive one as in Erben's ballad. In the second part of the novel, the immortal water goblin returns to the current times to get revenge for mining activities on the magical hill.

The final explicitly environmental panel of the comic book version, along with the previous references to flooding villages, suggests that Velický, analogously to Urban, has added a contemporary context to the story told in the ballad.¹⁷ This hypothesis is confirmed by the motif

17 In 2018, a cinematic adaptation of the first part of the novel was made (dir. Ondřej Havelka). It concentrates on the relationship between the water goblin (once again a demon longing for love and suffering from his monstrosity) and the alluring Katynka. But the story here is more akin to horror than in the novel: the water

of a straw doll, which the water goblin has created. This figure hangs on the handle of the mother's door when her daughter visits her: it could therefore be a symbol of the water goblin's control over the girl, who has momentarily been set free from his power by maternal love. In the novel *Hastrman*, an enigmatic wooden idol shaped like a sleeping child appears in the protagonist's dream. Perhaps it is through this motif that Velický entered into intermedial communication with Urban's novel. However, it is not easy to find the logic behind connecting the story of a water goblin and an earthly woman with an environmental theme in the comics version. As in the cinematic adaptation, the transmediation runs into the pitfalls of blending traditional stories built upon order (be it natural, Christian, or magical order) with the uncertainties and ethical appeals of the contemporary globalized world.

***Smok wawelski* of the digital age**

The *Legendy polskie* (*Polish legends*) film series was created by director Tomasz Bagiński¹⁸ in 2015–2016, not based on any kind of public demand but on a commercial basis: it was commissioned by the e-commerce platform Allegro.pl. It was long ago that advertisements transformed from something presenting goods to something presenting a lifestyle. But the “Legends” series goes even further: it offers the audience, that is, potential customers, their shared culture. The stories are built around characters from Polish legends, Slavic mythology, and fairy tales, such as Twardowski,¹⁹ the devil Boruta, the god Perun, the witch Baba Jaga, and a dragon. We have chosen two of them to explore.

goblin succumbs to his dark side, and he kills the girl, who rejects him in his true form, imprisoning her in ice. The ecocriticism of the novel is eliminated, save for in the last shot, where we see an abandoned village and a strip mine.

18 The director of animated films focusing on fantasy and historical themes, including *Animowana historia Polski* (*Animated History of Poland*) (2010, dir. Tomasz Bagiński), which was used to promote the Polish exhibition at the Expo 2010 in Shanghai.

19 The Faustian story of Twardowski is particularly suitable for intermedial study, especially because it can be encountered in many intertexts (e.g., poems

In the film *Jaga* named after the protagonist (2016, dir. Tomasz Bagiński), the devil Boruta strikes a fragile balance with heaven when he imprisons pagan gods and magical creatures in hell. The only one to escape is the witch Jaga, who is now peacefully relaxing as a beautiful fairy in an open-air museum in the Masovian Voivodeship. When Boruta sends a modern tactical police unit to get her, Jaga fends off the attackers using Asian martial arts and the kind of powers used by Neo, the protagonist of the film series *The Matrix* (1999, dir. Lilly Wachowski and Lana Wachowski). Nevertheless, Boruta suggests that she should. Boruta's diabolicalness does not lie in his cruelty but in his cynicism: he laughs at the witch because, as he says, people cannot respect sacred trees if they no longer believe in him. The furious Jaga sends devastating natural catastrophes upon destructive modern civilization, which results in human conflict. The power-hungry Boruta is overjoyed because he thinks he will rule the chaos; but in the meantime, the disorder has awoken the power of Perun, a dangerous rival, who was among the imprisoned. This synopsis clearly indicates that the director chose a setting and a cast of characters which depict the shady dealings of political actors as a "deal with the devil," and he introduced a plot that made it possible to address environmental issues at the same time. Portrayals of physical conflict are clearly influenced by popular thrillers. Hence, the most receptive audience to this short film might not be environmental activists but rather fans of this popular genre. The story reveals that power achieved through oppression remains unstable.

The Polish title of the film *Smok* (*Dragon*, dir. Tomasz Bagiński, 2015a) is a play on words, a reference to smog. The fairy-tale plot gives the story a firm outline: A city is besieged by a dragon that is destroying the surrounding area and abducting young girls, that is, until an at-first-unassuming hero shows up and kills the beast to then be rewarded with the king's daughter's hand in marriage. The film takes place in the historical

by Adam Mickiewicz, Leopold Staff, Jan Lechoń, etc.) and in various forms of media (e.g., films from 1921, dir. Wiktor Biegański; 1936, dir. Henryk Szaro; 1996, dir. Krzysztof Gradowski). A separate study would be required, however. Thus far, we have been able to find only one academic study on Bagiński's version (Baranowska, 2018).

settings of technologically advanced but smog-choked Cracow. The society of the storyworld is seemingly democratic, but is run by alibistic and corrupt politicians. The storyworld is constructed by means of various media and their hypermediation: the cinematic narrative is interspersed with footage from political talk shows, interviews about police corruption, and social media feeds.

The main characters' appearances and abilities are references to famous sci-fi films and thrillers, and indicate who the target audience is. The dragon, as it turns out, is a militant gangster named Adolf Kamchatkov aka Smok, and his technological monster is a helicopter that seems to be based on a design from the film *Avatar* (2009, dir. James Cameron), with which he kidnaps girls. His foe is Janek, a teenage nerd, a typical antihero—instead of having fun with his peers, he builds cute zoomorphic robots. When Janek witnesses Kamchatkov kidnap his friend Ola, he breaks down. Racked by guilt, he is thinking how he can help. While looking at a poster for the famous anime film *Ghost in the Shell* (1995, dir. Mamoru Oshii), it occurs to him that only a monster can defeat a monster. And thus the antihero creates a superhero: a sexy female android, a decoy programmed to eliminate the Dragon. Here, Bagiński uses a humorous technological parallel with a traditional fairy tale, in which the clever tailor Dratewka frees the town from a dragon by slipping him a sheepskin stuffed with sulphur; the thirsty dragon then drinks so much water from the Vistula River that it bursts. Janek's female android causes the helicopter to explode and crash into the river.

In this reinterpretation of a traditional fairy tale with clear-cut values, we find several symptoms of contemporary culture, including the relativization of values: a corrupt politician suggests negotiating with the Dragon, whereas his opponent emphatically argues that you cannot negotiate with a gangster. On a social media platform (a fictional one invented for the film) some people express their fears about the Dragon's power, whereas others like his song about the high vitamin content of Polish girls; an infantile influencer boasts that she is not afraid of him and claims that she finds the muscular brute in battledress attractive. Here we encounter a common trend in popular culture—the humanization of non-human creatures, which, whether they are robots or monsters from a magical world, provide us a sense

of relief when we realize that the human world is good after all. In the film *Smok* this phenomenon is represented by Janek's anthropomorphic and zoomorphic robotic creations, which intently watch his suffering.

The dragon, however, is presented in a much different light than has been the norm in popular films over the last two decades. We can observe that these monsters have been fully tamed if not humanized in visual popular culture, particularly in fantasies classified as family film.²⁰ Bagiński, however, restores the dragon's function as a wielder of brute force that cannot be reasoned with. Smog, too, is something hard to fight because it is everywhere and those that produce it are powerful. A caricatured monster such as Kamchatkov, however, is acceptable: a caricature gives people the strength to fight it. Preserving the antagonist's monstrosity also legitimates Janek's ignoring of the rules to fight the monster.

The film *Smok* is action-packed, borrowing heavily from cinematic and other storyworlds, using plot schemes, characters, and props. In such an audio-visual whirlwind the meaning of the story might get lost. But its message is clear and grave: using hyperbole, the film shows that in a society such as ours, one based upon laws and unwritten rules but at the same time a society that is broken due to people not respecting such rules and due to internal power struggles, a society enamoured with media self-presentation to such an extent that it loses the capability to engage in self-reflexion—such a society is defenceless against a brute force that knows no rules. The film exposes democracy's weaknesses, many of which stem from its own regulations: in extreme conflicts, the rules can fundamentally prevent an effective defence of democracy. The crucial reinterpretation of the pretext occurs where two forces meet: that of the traditional, "safe," known story and that of the rules or lack of rules in the eclectic storyworld. This modern fairy tale functions as a multifaceted mirror of the contemporary world.

20 Fantasy, either with ethical or environmental bias: *Dragonheart*, dir. Rob Cohen (1996); *George and the Dragon*, dir. Tom Reeve (2004). Stop motion films (mostly about courage and friendship): *How to Train Your Dragon*, dir. Chris Sanders, Dean DeBlois (2010, plus 2012 series); *Raya and the Last Dragon*, dir. Paul Briggs, Don Hall (2021).

These two legends are connected with themes of persistent resistance and unwillingness to give up. Thus, they might be viewed as delivering messages that are flattering or encouraging to Polish audiences. From the YouTube comment sections under these films, it is clear that what viewers appreciate most about these films is their entertainment value, which may also be observed in the rendition of the Twardowski tale (Bagiński, 2015b). The film's story begins where the traditional tale ends: on the Moon, where Twardowski, a successful businessman and philanthropist, has fled, to escape not only the devil but also a world in which he has already gained everything. Whereas in the legend, the wily Twardowski outwits the devil by adding a clause to the contract between them stating that the devil can take his soul only in Rome, his modern double makes an argument based on the relativity of cosmic time: although his time has run out on Earth, in space he still has time, and thus he escapes the devil once again, "relatively." The most important aspect of this story is the protagonist's ability to outwit a stronger foe. Even though Bagiński's project remained unfinished (perhaps due to a lack of funding), its success among contemporary audiences has been confirmed by its media offshoots.²¹

Conclusion

In our comparative study we made a paradoxical finding: the eclectic pop culture transmediations of Polish legends in which the story-worlds are substantially reinterpreted and social messages are added (about environmentalism, corruption, democracy, and personal freedom) paradoxically preserve the original meaning of the fairy tales and legends they are based on better than Brabec's version of *Kytice*, which is prone to changing media foregrounding into filmic self-referentiality. Though we may find even a replacement of morality of the original with a social message in the comic book, it is above all evidence that the

21 Such as the music video "Jaskółka uwięziona" ("A Trapped Swallow") and an ebook with contributions by Polish authors such as Radek Rak, the winner of the Nike Literary Award in 2019 (Rak et al., 2015).

popular media is capable of remastering classical tales—and a visual treat for horror lovers and fans of “pop esotericism.”²²

Both the Czech artists and the Polish director use alternative sources of funding for their projects. Brabec, however, needed much more for the investments made in the film to be returned, which meant he needed to ensure high box office revenues. The Czech Grimm project needed to detect and create a certain audience for itself. The ordering party of Bagiński’s project, the e-commerce platform Allegro.pl might have counted on a sales increase by presenting their clients with entertaining stories of their culture. The fact that Brabec’s film is a mainstream media product is therefore understandable, but due to his creative self-centredness his film often loses contact with the pretext without creating a new text so to say; what it offers is an Erben-based “spectacle.” Although Bagiński’s project is a manifestation of his multimedia poetics as a director and, to a certain extent, panders to the fan of pop culture, it can also mine from the outline of the architext (especially in the fairy tale *Smok*) and at the same time more directly address the viewer through current topics.

At the beginning, we mentioned that this paper was an initial exploration, a pilot study; more systematic comparative research would certainly produce more relevant data. Nonetheless, we feel we can conclude with a generalization: the optics of intermediality certainly sharpen how we perceive cultural models and schemata. But above all they allow us to examine not only the relationships between different media but also the changing standing of national literary traditions and the associated change of values in global multimedia culture.

22 The Český Grimm website contains a quiz titled “Get to know your inner demon” (*Jaký démon z Erbenovy Kytice...*, 2016).

References

- Bagiński, T., dir. (2015a). *Legendy Polskie. Film SMOK. Allegro* [video]. Youtube. <https://tinyurl.com/2apjcydx> (28.10.2022).
- Bagiński, T., dir. (2015b). *Legendy Polskie. Film TWARDOWSKY. Allegro* [video]. Youtube. <https://tinyurl.com/u7bmf5c7> (28.10.2022).
- Bagiński, T., dir. (2016). *Legendy Polskie. Film JAGA. Allegro* [video]. Youtube. <https://tinyurl.com/bx8ujfjd> (28.10.2022).
- Baranowska, E. (2018). *Storytelling w reklamach Twardowsky i Twardowsky 2.0* [Bachelor's thesis, University of Warsaw]. "CEON Repozytorium." <https://depot.ceon.pl/handle/123456789/16754> (27.10.2022).
- Brabec, F. A., dir. (2000). *Kytice* [film]. J&J Jakubisko Film.
- Bruhn, J., Schirrmacher, B. (Eds.) (2021). *Intermedial Studies. An Introduction to Meaning Across Media*. London: Routledge. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003174288>
- Český Grimm: úvodní stránka (2016). <https://www.ceskygrimm.cz/> (27.10.2022).
- Český Grimm: Svět českého Grimma (2016). <https://www.ceskygrimm.cz/svet-ceskeho-grimma> (27.10.2022).
- Elleström, L. (2010). *The Modalities of Media: A Model for Understanding Intermedial Relations*. In: *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality*. Ed. L. Elleström. New York: Springer, pp. 11–48. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230275201_2
- Elleström, L. (2021). *The Modalities of Media II: An Expanded Model for Understanding Intermedial Relations*. In: *Beyond Media Borders. Vol. 1. Intermedial Relations among Multimodal Media*. Ed. L. Elleström. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 3–91. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-49679-1_1
- Erben, K. J. (2014). *Kytice: Česko-anglické vydání. Czech and English Edition*. Trans. S.H. Reynolds. London: Jantar Publishing Ltd.
- Erben, K.J. (2016). *Komiksová Kytice*. (Eds.) Delarock, J. Jakubisko, K. Štursová, T. Motal, M. Turini, V. Strejček, J. Gruml, M. Rubec, P. Holman, D. Miklušák, Longyi, V. Velický, K. Cettl, K. Bažantová. Praha: Transmedialist. Český Grimm.
- Genette, G. (1992). *The Architext: An Introduction*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Jakubisko, J. & Štursová, K. (2016). *Úvod*. In: *Komiksová Kytice*. Praha: Transmedialist. Český Grimm, pp. 6–7.
- Jaký démon z Erbenovy Kytice se v tobě skrývá?* (2016). <https://tinyurl.com/3u2h95sw> (27.10.2022).
- Jedličková, A. (2021). "There and Back Again": *From Media Culture to Literature, from Literature to Media Culture*. "Letras & Letras," v. 37, no. 1, pp. 31–55. <https://doi.org/10.14393/LL63-v37n1-2021-03> (27.10.2022).
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.
- Komiksová Kytice od Českého Grimma* (2016). Praha: Hithit. <https://tinyurl.com/2p88vcvv> (27.10.2022).

- Kordík, T. (2017). *Rozhovor: F.A. Brabec*. "FDb.cz." <https://tinyurl.com/2p99sjhu> (27.10.2022).
- Kristeva, J. (1970). *Le texte du roman: approche sémiologique d'une structure discursive transformationnelle*. The Hague: Mouton Publishers.
- Maiello, G. (2005). *Vampyrismus v kulturních dějinách Evropy*. Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny.
- Matyášová, J. (2017). *Co by na to řekl Erben? Komiksové nohy naší Dory a někdy děšivá Kytice*. "Lidovky.cz." Praha: MAFRA. <https://tinyurl.com/5n8ry2jw> (27.10.2022).
- Rajewsky, I. (2002). *Intermedialität*. Stuttgart: UTB.
- Rajewsky, I. (2019). *Literaturbezogene Intermedialität*. In: *Intermedialität: Formen—Diskurse—Didaktik*. Ed. Klaus Maiwald. Baltmannsweiler: Hohengehren, pp. 49–75.
- Rak, R., Kosik, R., Wegner, R.M., Małecki, J., Cherezińska, E., Orbitowski, Ł. (2015). *Legends polskie*. Warszawa: Allegro. <https://tinyurl.com/5n7vef49> (27.10.2022).
- Spáčilová, M. (2000). *Kytice po sto letech v nové formě*. "iDNES.cz." Praha: MAFRA. https://www.idnes.cz/kultura/film-televize/kytice-po-sto-letech-v-nove-forme.A001204_170248_filmvideo_cfa (27.10.2022).
- Stejskal, T. (2016). *Hrej si! Tu máš Erbena! Kytice vychází jako komiks, horor tu strídá gangsterku*. "Hospodářské noviny." Praha: Economia. <https://tinyurl.com/474y6ve3> (27.10.2022).
- Šidák, P. (2018). *Mokře chodí v suše: Vodník v české literatuře*. Praha: Nakladatelství Academia.
- Urban, M. (2018). *Hastrman. Zelený román*. Praha: Argo.
- Wolf, W. (2002). *Intermedialität: ein weites Feld und eine Herausforderung für die Literaturwissenschaft*. In: *Literaturwissenschaft: intermedial—interdisziplinär*. Eds. H. Folz, Ch. Leitgeb. Wien: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, pp. 163–192.
- Zíbrt, Č. (1913). *Neznámá veršovaná básnička K. J. Erbena o noci svatojanské*. "Český lid: Sborník věnovaný studiu lidu českého v Čechách, na Moravě, ve Slezsku a na Slovensku." Praha: F. Šimáček, roč. xxii, pp. 185–190.

- **ALICE JEDLIČKOVÁ**—senior researcher at the Institute of Czech literature, Czech Academy of Sciences, (CAS), Prague. Research interests: theory and history of intermediality; diachronic and intermedial poetics of narrative. Intermedial monographs: *Zkušenost prostoru* (The Experience of Space, 2010); *Viditelné popisy* (Visible Descriptions, 2016, with S. Fedrová); interdisciplinary volume *On Description* (2014, ed.); a chapter on the evolution of intermediality, with S. Fedrová, in R. Müller et al.: *Za obrysy média* (The Emerging Contours of Media, 2020); collective monograph: *Narativní způsoby v české próze 19. století* (Narrative modes in Czech 19th-century fiction, 2022, Jedličková et al.).

Associate professor of Czech Literature at Masaryk University, (MU) Brno: classes in intermedia studies—see the paper “There and Back Again: From Media Culture to Literature, from Literature to Media Culture” (2021), and a commented volume of students’ analytic papers on transmediations of Shakespeare’s sonnets *Já z hvězd svou moudrost nevyčít...* (Not From The Stars Do I My Judgment Pluck, ed., 2021).

- **MATĚJ KOS**—PhD student of Czech literature in a joint doctoral program of Masaryk University (MU), Brno, and of the Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS), Prague. He graduated in Czech and Russian philology at the MU, and in teaching both languages. His interest includes contemporary Czech literature, comics and intermediality. His thesis focusing on the possibility of employing comics in teaching literature was presented at the annual conference of *Czech Comics Studies* (2021). He contributed to the student’s 2021 volume *Já z hvězd svou moudrost nevyčít...* (Not From The Stars Do I My Judgment Pluck...) with an analysis of ekphrastic mode in Gogol’s fiction. His doctoral thesis continues the exploration of intermediality as an alternative in teaching.