

Le fiabe sono vere... Storia popolare italiana

Fairy Tales Are True... Italian Folk History

In Depth (summaries)

3. WHERE FAIRY TALES BEGIN: FORESTS AND FARAWAY SHORES

Indigenous Art: A Call from the Heart of the Forest

Let us listen to the voices of Indigenous artists from around the world, such as Jaider Esbell. Their art is not just about beauty—it is a testament to harmony between humans and nature and a denunciation of the historical injustices suffered by both. Works like *Letter to the Old World* challenge our certainties, urging us to see the world from a different perspective, one that does not separate art from life, or spirituality from nature. In this worldview, the word *Hori* ('spiritual vision') signifies a profound connection with the essence of the universe.

Eco-anthropology: The Wisdom of Ancient Ways

Eco-anthropology teaches us to respect the practices of traditional societies, which have long lived in harmony with their environment. It warns against human arrogance, which has often led to the destruction of ecosystems. The principle of collective self-determination reminds us that each community must find its own way to protect the environment it inhabits, for its very survival depends on it.

Fairy tales

Time weaves itself like the threads of a spinning wheel, and stories emerge from the fabric of everyday life. In 1956, Italo Calvino studied Italian folktales, whose echoes can be found in the objects preserved at the Museum of Arts and Popular Traditions—cauldrons, basins, axes, silent witnesses to stories once told around the hearth. These tales were not born from books but from distant voices and the rhythms of manual labour—from wise grandmothers who dictated them to scholars, from shepherds, farmers, sailors, and artisans whose words blurred the boundary between reality and magic. Calvino reveals that fairy tales hold the key to understanding life itself. They are a catalogue of destinies, a journey through the trials and transformations of existence. They tell of a world divided between kings and paupers, oppression and redemption, lost and rekindled love, enchantment and the struggle for freedom. *Fairy tales are true* because they capture the essence of our being, offering us a map to navigate life.

Tree Rituals: An Embrace between Worlds

Consider the tree rituals of Basilicata—traditions that express love and reverence for nature. Men and women, with strength and devotion, carry tree trunks from the forest to their villages. These trees are not just wood; they embody the raw power of nature, brought into the heart of the

community to be honoured. The grafting of two different trees is a symbolic embrace between the human and the natural world, a promise of coexistence and mutual growth.

The *Rumî*: A Mask of Leaves and Mystery

Then there is the *rumî*—a silent figure, wrapped in ivy, wandering the streets of Satriano during Carnival. This vegetal being is a mask that embodies the spirit of nature. With a holly staff in hand, the *rumî* knocks on doors, both asking and offering, enacting a ritual of exchange that reminds us of our ongoing dialogue with the world around us. Today, this tradition—revitalised by its community of origin—has even found its way online, proving that ancient customs can continue to inspire new generations.

Between Awe and Remorse: Animism, Feeling with the Soul of the World

Let us set aside our sense of superiority and immerse ourselves in a vision that recognises a living essence in every being—animism. Feel the warmth of the sun, the whisper of the wind, the pulse of the earth beneath your feet. Every sensation is a connection to the world, a truth that resonates in the depths of our consciousness. To a certain level, we are all animists, capable of sensing the heartbeat of life everywhere.

Human and Non-human: When Animals Reflect Our Shadows

Bears and wolves have long inhabited our folklore, wild creatures reflecting both our anxieties and aspirations, reminding us that humans are not separate from nature but deeply intertwined with it. Could it be that our struggle against animality is, in truth, a struggle against our own shadow? In this journey between the human and the wild, we may uncover the deeper essence of life and our place within it. We are not the sole protagonists in this story but part of a vast and intricate web in which every being has a role. If we listen to the voice of the wild, we may not only rediscover our roots but also find a path towards a more harmonious future of coexistence.