

CALL FOR PAPERS - CONFERENCE 2025

Beyond the Magic Mirror: Imagination, Politics, and Media

16/10/2025

Conference venue: To be announced (hybrid format)

Description

Storytelling has become a crucial tool for constructing, manipulating, and redefining reality, blurring the boundary between imagination and politics. Fairy tales, myths, and fables are not mere stories from the past but powerful cultural devices capable of shaping values, ideologies, and power structures. The transmission and reinterpretation of these narratives have always played a key role in establishing political and social legitimacy, providing instruments for consolidating power or subverting it.

Fairy tales have served as educational and propaganda tools, contributing to national identity formation (Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 1983) to their exploitation under totalitarian regimes (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, 1983). At the same time, myths and fairy tales have served as vehicles of cultural resistance, offering symbolic models for social and political movements challenging the established order (Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism*, 2013). In today's context, with the increasing digitization of political communication, we witness the emergence of new mythologies stemming from the synergy between imagination and technology. From the myths of Silicon Valley that redefine narratives of progress and innovation to disinformation phenomena exploiting archetypal narratives to generate consensus and social division, a central question arises: How do these evolving narratives shape and influence contemporary political and media dynamics?

The conference *Beyond the Magic Mirror* aims to explore the role of mythical and fairy-tale narratives in shaping collective identity, forming ideologies, and defining power dynamics. Drawing from the works of Roland Barthes (*Mythologies*, 1957), Marina Warner (*From the Beast to the Blonde*, 1994), Walter Benjamin (*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, 1935), bell hooks (*Reel to Real*, 1996), and Seyla Benhabib (*Situating the Self*, 1992), the conference will analyze how fairy tales and myths have been instrumentalized to legitimize power structures and convey political messages across all forms of media grammar and through every evolution in communication.

Among the central themes is the intersection between storytelling and media: from the cinematic adaptation of fairy tales for the construction of globalized cultural models (Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 1989) to the use of mythical archetypes in political propaganda, up to the new forms of digital myth-making emerging in social media and populist movements (Eco, *Costruire il nemico*, 2011). The conference will also examine how mythical narratives are transformed with the advent of artificial

intelligence and algorithms, redefining the production and dissemination of collective narratives (Striphas, *Algorithmic Culture before the Internet*, 2015).

We also welcome contributions on related topics that further explore the role of fairy tales and myths in political, social, and media processes with an interdisciplinary approach.

Themes and Perspectives

The conference aims to:

- Explore how myths and fairy tales have shaped socio-political structures and power models throughout history.
- Investigate the role of symbolic narratives in reinforcing or subverting cultural hierarchies.
- Analyze the evolution of myths and fairy tales through modern and digital media, examining their social and political implications.
- Promote interdisciplinary reflection by engaging sociologists, anthropologists, historians, literary scholars, media theorists, and philosophers.

The conference sessions will be structured around four main axes:

1. **Fairy Tales and Ideologies: The Power of Political Narration**
 - The relationship between fairy tales, utopias, and political thought formation.
 - Archetypes and narrative structures in ideological discourse.
 - Mythical narratives in propaganda and social movements.
2. **Myths, Morality, and the Psychology of Storytelling**
 - The influence of mythical narratives on contemporary ethical and social norms.
 - Fairy tales as educational tools and regulators of public morality.
 - The psychological function of myths in shaping personal and collective identity.
3. **Power and Conflict: Fairy Tales Between Resistance and Domination**
 - The role of fairy tales in the dialectic between the individual and society.
 - Fairy tales and power: kings, queens, and rebels in traditional and contemporary narratives.
 - Fairy tales and disobedience: subversion and rewriting of authority models.
4. **Media, Technology, and New Digital Mythologies**
 - The role of technology in transforming and disseminating fairy tales.
 - From literary classics to social media: the metamorphosis of mythical narratives.
 - Algorithms, AI, and the creation of new narrative archetypes.

Outcomes and Goals

This conference provides a platform for rigorous, unbiased scholarship, aiming at bringing together scholars from diverse fields to explore the political, social, and cultural dimensions of myths and fairy tales. Expected outcomes include the development of new interdisciplinary connections, insightful discussions, and the potential for publishing selected papers in academic journals. Participants will have the opportunity to network, share research, and contribute to a deeper understanding of how these narratives shape and influence contemporary political and media landscapes. In a time of contested truths, let us return to the stories we tell—and ask who they serve, how they evolve, and what futures they imagine.

Submission Guidelines

We welcome contributions from scholars in sociology, anthropology, philosophy, literary studies, media studies, and other disciplines to submit proposals for presentations. Submissions should be in the form of a single Microsoft Word or similar document and must include the following:

- Speaker information (Full name, affiliation, country, email address)
- Title of presentation
- 5 keywords
- Abstract up to 500 words

Submit and questions: info@europeanfairytalesroute.eu ; edmondo.grassi@uniroma5.it

Language: English and French

Length of the presentation at the conference: 15 minutes.

Website: <https://www.europeanfairytalesroute.eu/>

Deadlines:

- Abstracts submission: 30 June 2025
- Notification of acceptance: 15 July 2025

For the Scientific Committee

Edmondo Grassi (San Raffaele University of Rome)

Varduhi Baloyan (Hovhannes Toumanian Museum)

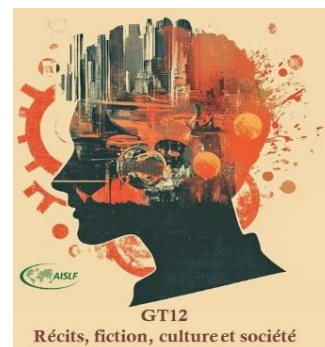


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