



# ACTA HISTRIAE

30, 2022, 3



UDK/UDC 94(05)

ISSN 1318-0185  
e-ISSN 2591-1767



Zgodovinsko društvo za južno Primorsko - Koper  
Società storica del Litorale - Capodistria

# **ACTA HISTRIAE**

## **30, 2022, 3**

KOPER 2022

ISSN 1318-0185  
e-ISSN 2591-1767

UDK/UDC 94(05)

Letnik 30, leto 2022, številka 3

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Zgodovinsko društvo za južno Primorsko - Koper / Società storica del Litorale - Capodistria® / Institut IRRIS za raziskave, razvoj in strategije družbe, kulture in okolja / Institute IRRIS for Research, Development and Strategies of Society, Culture and Environment / Istituto IRRIS di ricerca, sviluppo e strategie della società, cultura e ambiente®

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**Tisk/Stampa/Print:**

Založništvo PADRE d.o.o.

**Naklada/Tiratura/Copies:**

300 izvodov/copie/copies

**Finančna podpora/  
Supporto finanziario/  
Financially supported by:**

Javna agencija za raziskovalno dejavnost Republike Slovenije / Slovenian Research Agency, Mestna občina Koper

**Slika na naslovnici/  
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Picture on the cover:**

*Ilustracija Zvonka Čoha k pravljici Ad lintverna, izrez / Illustration by Zvonko Čoh for the fairy tale Ad lintverna [About the Dragon], cutout / Illustrazione di Zvonko Čoh per la fiaba Ad lintverna [Del drago], ritaglio. Tratar, Lojze (2007): Tista od lintverna: slovenska ljudska pravljica. Zapisal Matičetov, Milko, priredila Štefan, Anja. Ciciban, 8, 6–7.*

Redakcija te številke je bila zaključena 30. septembra 2022.

Revija Acta Histriae je vključena v naslednje podatkovne baze / Gli articoli pubblicati in questa rivista sono inclusi nei seguenti indici di citazione / Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in: CLARIVATE ANALYTICS (USA): Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), Social Scisearch, Arts and Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI), Journal Citation Reports / Social Sciences Edition (USA); IBZ, Internationale Bibliographie der Zeitschriftenliteratur (GER); International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS) (UK); Referativnyi Zhurnal Viniti (RUS); European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences (ERIH PLUS); Elsevier B. V.: SCOPUS (NL); DOAJ.

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JAVNA AGENCIJA ZA RAZISKOVALNO DEJAVNOST  
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Članki, objavljeni v tej številki Acta Histriae, so nastali v okviru raziskovalnega projekta *Družbene funkcije pravljic*. Raziskavo je finančno podprla Javna agencija za raziskovalno dejavnost Republike Slovenije (ARRS, J6-1807).



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SLOVENIAN RESEARCH AGENCY

The articles published in this issue of Acta Histriae were arised from the research project: *Social functions of fairy tales*. This research was supported by Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS, J6-1807).

## FORMATION OF THE FAIRY TALE MATRIX OF A DRAGON SLAYER

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### ABSTRACT

*In the article the author examines how the matrix of the dragon killer appeared in different social contexts and its formation as a fairy tale matrix. She traces the genealogy of the dragon slayer matrix back to ancient mythologies, paying regard to Babylonian, Greek, Celtic, and Slavic mythologies, as well as to the Christian codes and appearances in (particularly Slovenian) folklore, and discusses the variations that occur with different uses of the matrix, in different historical moments and epistemes. Special attention is devoted to studying the social and political functions the tales about the dragon killer had in the contexts in which they appeared.*

*Keywords: fairy tale, folktale, dragon, myth, mythology, Slavic mythology, Saint George, Zeleni Jurij, Kresnik, tihe*

## FORMAZIONE DELLA MATRICE FIABESCA DELL'UCCISORE DI DRAGHI

### SINTESI

*Il contributo esamina la comparsa della matrice dell'uccisore di draghi in diversi contesti sociali e il suo sviluppo in una matrice fiabesca, facendone risalire la genealogia alle mitologie antiche. Nel percorso si sofferma sulle mitologie babilonese, greca, celtica e slava, nonché su codici cristiani e le manifestazioni della matrice dell'uccisore di draghi nel folclore (in particolare quello sloveno), indagando le variazioni che nascono dai suoi vari usi, nei diversi momenti della storia ed epistemi. Particolare attenzione è rivolta allo studio delle funzioni sociali e politiche che le varianti rivestivano nei diversi contesti in cui si manifestavano.*

*Parole chiave: fiaba, racconto popolare, drago, mito, mitologia, mitologia slava, San Giorgio, Zeleni Jurij, Kresnik, decima*

The genealogy of the dragon slayer matrix leads to the ancient Indo-European mythologies. Mythological imagination was complex and did not picture the dragon slayer and the dragon in a black and white fashion. However, a matrix gradually developed in which the dragon begins to represent the absolute otherness of man and the good, thus becoming what must be eliminated in order to establish proper order in society.

## GENEOLOGY AND ONTOLOGY OF THE DRAGON<sup>1</sup>

The etymological origin of the term dragon and its synonyms in the European tradition show that the dragon already existed as a kind of monster in early social imagination. It is reminiscent of or related to a snake; it may be similar to a worm or insect and is sometimes capable of flying. Dragon (Heb. tannin is a snake, sea monster, crocodile; Greek *drákon*, Latin *draco*) in a broader sense denotes a supernatural being with elements of the snake, lizard, crocodile, bird and sometimes the lion. In Europe, Southwest and Western Asia, the dragon symbolizes evil and is the enemy of deities and people (Bellinger, 1997, 502–503). Etymologically, the term dragon comes from the Latin word *draco*, which was the genus of the dragon. The Latin term *draconem* (nominative *draco*), which meant a “huge serpent, dragon,” originated from the Greek term *drákon* (genitive *drakontos*) meaning a “serpent, giant seafish” (Harper, 2020–2021). Middle High German synonyms of Lat. *draco* are the terms *trache*, *tracke* and *drache*, *dracke* (Lexer, 1961, 229). The Old Nordic *dreki*, Old High German *traccho*, Old English *draca* appear from the eighth century onwards (Jontes, 2000, 140). Middle High German also used the term *lint*, which meant a snake (Lexer, 1961, 128), and *wurm* meaning worm or an insect and a snake (Lexer, 1961, 329). The German term *Lindwurm* originates from these two words. From this term (*Lindwurm*) emerged similar terms that were used in Slovenia.<sup>2</sup> In the Middle Ages, *lintrache* and *lintwurm* meant a fairy animal that was half dragon, half snake (Lexer, 1961, 128).

The dragon's habitat is water or a swamp. This monster is a kind of animal, but it is more than that, and it changes its features to some extent. In some ancient mythological and later fairy tale versions it may have several heads. The minimum criteria for defining a dragon as a monster can be defined as follows: it is a monster that is a species of aquatic animal, but not fully included in the systematization of animal species because it has certain attributes that go beyond the definition of a mere animal. These

- 1 The visual material is used with kind permissions of National Gallery of Slovenia, Slovene Ethnographic Museum and Mladinska knjiga. The author thanks to these institutions. This paper is the result of research carried out in the research project "Social Functions of Fairy Tales" (ARRS J6-1807), in the research project "Political Functions of Folktales" (ARRS N6-0268) and in the research program "The Practices of Conflict Resolution between Customary and Statutory Law in the Area of Today's Slovenia and Neighboring Countries" (ARRS, P6-0435), funded by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS).
- 2 Such as "lentuorn (Grafenauer, 1956, 316), lintuorn (Svetokriški, 1691b, 112; Svetokriški, 1707, 91); lintvar (Pajek, 1884, 91); lintver (Pajek, 1884, 90; Pleteršnik, 1894, 519); lintvern (Pleteršnik, 1894, 519; Štrekelj, 1895–1898, 589); lintvert (Pajek, 1884, 89-91); lintvor (Dalmatin, 1584, 5. neoštevilčena stran; Megiser, 1603, 77); lintvoren (Stabej, 1997, 165); lintvorn (Svetokriški, 1691a, 62); lintvrn (Pleteršnik, 1894, 519); lintvrt (Pleteršnik, 1894, 519)" (Makarovič, 2001, 28).





*Fig. 1: Zvonko Čoh, illustration of the fight of the hero with the dragon accompanying the tale Ad Lintverna (Tratar, 2007).*

attributes are aimed primarily at the quality of this animal, which is that it is absolutely dangerous to humans, meaning that it is more dangerous than any existing animal or living creature. Given this quality, its attributes change in different social circumstances and the monster either breathes fire, is incredibly fast, extremely strong, gigantic, has multiple heads symbolizing multiple lives, and so on. Furthermore, this monster lives in an environment that is inaccessible to humans as a habitat. Thus, 1.) with these properties the dragon primarily represents the ultimate danger to man, which the human community living in the same area cannot remove; 2.) the monster's habitat is inaccessible to man. This reinforces its dangerous power and makes human confrontation and domination over it an impossible task. It has an extraordinary power beyond human power, and one which renders man incapable of an equal encounter or the ability to eventually prevail over it, this monster is man's adversary. It belongs to another world than man and represents man's opposite, his absolute otherness. This is expressed in characteristics that are the opposite of those desired for humans – it is ugly, disgusting, and horrifying to humans. The interests and actions of this monster are contrary to the will of the society. What's more, its actions affect society. It is an enemy of society. It represents the forces that are an existential threat to society. The goal is to overcome these forces and destroy the power of the monster.

According to the ontology of the dragon, a hero who defeats the dragon must have two necessary attributes: 1.) he must have abilities that exceed those of an ordinary person. It is characteristic of this hero that he exceeds the capacities of human action. This can make him divine or a demigod or a being with divine qualities. 2.) His activities are essentially not aimed at the realization of private, individual and particular aims. This hero is a representative of higher interests. This characteristic clearly shows in the context of national revival.

The sketched ontology of the dragon that lives in a world inaccessible to man, completely foreign to humans, and which is the other of humans, which endangers humanity and represents the ultimate danger that must be eliminated, establishes a matrix in which a hero defeats the dragon. It has gradually formed over time, yet, the genealogy of the dragon leads to the ancient mythologies that speak of a number of dragon-like monsters. The Babylonian myth of the genesis of the world from about the third millennium BC speaks of the monster Tiamat (sea), the dragon of the chaos of antiquity, the personification of sea water and the ancestor of the universe and deities. The hero Marduk, the Babylonian god of agriculture and the spring sun, exterminates Tiamat and thus becomes the state god of Babylonia (Guirand, 1986, 49, 51, 53, 54; Bellinger, 1997, 284, 447). In the Hebrew song of creation, Tiamat is called the depth (Bellinger, 1997, 447). The myth of defeating the dragon played an important role in the religions of the Hittites and the Canaanites. The Hittites ritually recited the myth of the battle between the storm god and the dragon (*illuyankas* meant the dragon or a serpent), on the occasion of the New Year festival, *purulli*. In this myth the storm god, vanquished a first time, ends by triumphing not by virtue of his own heroism, but with the help of a human being (Eliade, 139–144). Different species of serpent dragons appear in ancient Greek myths. Python is a dragon who pursued the pregnant goddess Leto because he knew that one day her son Apollo would kill him. Python was killed by the god Apollo (Bellinger, 1997, 366). Typhon (Greek Typhón means smoking, Latin Typhon, Greek Typhoeús) is 1.) a giant monster from the underworld of Hades which has serpentine legs and a hundred dragon heads; is the embodiment of the destructive forces of nature, e.g. volcanic eruptions; is 2.) a terrifying monster with snakes for legs and wings that covered the sun. Hydra (Hýdra is a water snake) is a nine-headed sea monster from Lerna in ancient Greece which destroys everything with its poisonous breath. Each time her head is cut off, two new ones grow in its place, until Heracles burns off her cervical vertebrae with the help of his nephew. Ladon (Gr. Ládon) is 1.) a demonic snake-dragon with a hundred heads that guards the tree with golden apples until Heracles kills it. 2.) He is a river god in Arcadia and the personification of the river of the same name. Cetus (Greek Kéto, Ceto or Latin Cētō) is a sea monster in ancient Greece. The Greek hero Perseus cut off Medusa's head and rescued Andromeda from the monster Cetus and took her as his wife. Kadem (Greek Kádmos, Latin Cadmus) was a Phoenician king who killed a dragon in Boeotia and planted its teeth in the ground, from which grew soldiers who helped him build the city of Thebes. A serpentine dragon in Colchis under the Caucasus guards the Golden Fleece, which Jason steals to take the usurped throne from his uncle. Then he kills a dragon in the swamp in what is today

the city of Ljubljana. In reference to this legend, the city of Ljubljana has the dragon in its heraldic arms. In Judaism, the dragon is a monster from ancient times, the embodiment of chaotic forces and the anti-god power that must be eliminated. It is sometimes equated with the giant snake Leviathan. In the Bible, God punishes “with his sword, his fierce, great and powerful sword, Leviathan the gliding serpent, Leviathan the coiling serpent” (Isaiah 27: 1). He slays the sea monster. This concept of a dangerous dragon-like monster that is slayed by God is inherited by Christianity. In the legends of the Middle Ages however the dragon slayer is a saint. In Christian eschatology, the dragon is a snake-like monster that appears in the biblical book of Revelation (written by John). He sweeps away the stars from the sky with his tail and throws them to earth. Like the ancient Greek Python, the dragon in scripture pursues a pregnant woman and wants to swallow her child when it is born. God rescues the woman by having the earth swallow up a river of water spewed out by the dragon. The woman’s offspring contends with him (Bellinger, 1997, 503).

#### THE DRAGON SLAYER IN THE CHRISTIAN CODEX AND MYTHOPOETIC HERITAGE

Jacques Le Goff interprets the Romanesque as a world of battle between virtue and vice, between good and evil, the righteous and the corrupt. In the Carolingian Renaissance (eighth to ninth century), the sublime warrior Saint Michael fought the dragon. He attacked the beast in the new Christian mythology of salvation, and then the knights, the military aristocracy in its social ascent joined the clergy in fighting the monster with bishops occupying a special place, thus emphasizing their symbolic power (Le Goff, 1980, 175). The well-known legend of Saint George appeared only in the twelfth century (Nebeški zavetniki, 1996, 238) or in the eleventh century according to Le Goff (Le Goff, 1980, 175). In the thirteenth century, Jacobus de Voragine included it in the famous collection of hagiographies *Legenda aurea*. The “iconic” image and scene of Saint George on horseback as a warrior and fighting the dragon was uncommon prior to the thirteenth century, although it does appear in the twelfth century in the tympanum of the Cathedral of Ferrara, and on a capital at Vézelay (Maddocks, 1989, 29).

George is said to be a Christian, Roman knight who was born in the fourth century in Cappadocia. One day, in a swamp near the town of Sylene in the Libyan province, he defeated the dragon which had been poisoning the locals with its breath. They gave the dragon sheep to keep it from coming near the people, and when they ran out of sheep, they began to sacrifice humans. When it was the turn of the king’s daughter, George came to rescue her. He stabbed the dragon and brought it to the city using the princess’s belt. Citizens had to convert to Christianity in exchange for George killing the monster (Nebeški zavetniki, 1996, 238). George rescued the girl, as well as the kingdom, that is, the political formation and the system. In this legend George represents feudal society as self-imagined, that is in the hierarchical order, analyzed by George Duby, viewed from the top down as follows: the Clergy, Nobility, and the Third Estate. As highlighted





*Fig. 2: Anonymous (Gorizia workshop), Saint George Slaying the Dragon, around 1410–1420, Breg near Preddvor, succursal Church of St Leonard. Tempera, canvas, 175 x 174 cm (NG S 1497, National Gallery of Slovenia, Ljubljana).*

by Duby, this feudal order was restored in the twelfth century (Duby, 1985). The function of the legend of Saint George, which appears exactly at this time, is a good fit with the goal of promotion of this order and the highest status being assigned to the Christian Church, which is also the one that legitimizes secular authority. The legend of Saint George therefore served religious propaganda and the consolidation of the political role of the Church as an institution.

The ontological status of hagiography as such is significant, as it refers to a biography of an allegedly real person, a martyr or a saint, who serves as a model for believers. André Jolles, defining the “simple”, in his explanation non-artistic verbal forms, also



Fig. 3: Saint George. Original: Friderich von Villach, workshop, c. 1430, fresco, Church of St Cantianus, Selo pri Žirovnici. Copy of the fresco, 1957 (Vladimir Makuc), tempera, canvas, 197 x 121 cm (NG S 1456, National Gallery of Slovenia, Ljubljana).

analysed the form of a legend. He resorts to the Latin word *imitation*, commonly used in the Middle Ages, in order to denote the specific way in which a *vita* of a saint must be *imitabile*. Accordingly, the life of the saint as represented by the legend must look different from the way it would look in a “historical” biography. The form of a legend thus *makes* the saint (Jolles, 2017, 28–32). Jolles chose the case of Saint George as an example to present how the saint stands before us, worthy of imitation, inimitable – as



*Fig. 4: Saint George slaying the dragon, beginning of the fifteenth century, Church of Saint Štefan in Zaniograd. Fresco (Wikimedia Commons).*

a figure who corresponds perfectly with the need to imitate. According to Jolles, Saint George, “about whose historical existence nothing is known,” made its way from antiquity into the West. The Roman Emperor Constantine the Great first built him a church, later his relics were carried from the Orient to Paris, and at the end of the millennium and the beginning of the new one, his shape changes: “Saint George is no longer a martyr; he becomes a dragon killer and the rescuer of the virgin” (Jolles, 2017, 37–38). If we believe modern hagiography or Le Goff, a long time of at least seven centuries elapsed between the death of George and hagiography about him. Jolles himself noticed that as a rule some fifty years must elapse between the death of the candidate for sainthood and the opening of the proceedings. The process of sanctification that has been followed since the papacy of Urban VII takes place in the form of a court trial (Jolles, 2017, 21). The large distance between the time when a hagiography was written and the life of the person it was written about is significant because evidence and witnesses fade away or disappear with temporal distance. In the case of Saint George, this period spans centuries. Beside the “classical” legend about Saint George, modern hagiography notes that George was more likely a martyr who was put to death at Diospolis in Palestine before the time of Constantine (Nebeški zavetniki, 1996, 238). Such a remark impugns the first statement about the life of George, yet its basic effect is not that it produces doubt about the existence of George as a real person, but on the contrary, it strengthens





*Fig. 5: Hans Georg Geiger von Geigerfeld, Saint George Slaying the Dragon, c. 1641, oil, canvas, 265 x 151,5 cm (NG S 1946, National Gallery of Slovenia, Ljubljana).*



Fig. 6: *Anonymous, Saint George Against the Dragon, 1923. Painted panjska končnica, wood (Photo: Marko Habič. Slovenian Ethnographic Museum, inv. Nr. EM7220).*

the statement that he was a real person, only the facts about his life differ somewhat from the legend. However, the presence of the dragon in any case partly converts the report on a real life into a fictional discourse or at least shifts biography to a metaphorical level. In the Christian code, miracle in the legend testifies to God's presence and intervention, because, as Thomas Aquinas defined it: "Things which are done by God, beyond causes known to us, are called miracles" (Jolles, 2017, 22). A miracle related to a saint in a legend therefore functions to strengthen the narrative and not the other way around. In the case of Saint George, the miracle in defeating the dragon, strengthens the hero and relates his act to God's intervention.

In the legacy of Karel Štrekelj there are four poems about Saint George (no. 626, no. 627, no. 628 and no. 629 in Štrekelj, 1898, 589–592) slaying a dragon to be found from 1841<sup>3</sup>, 1845<sup>4</sup>, 1838<sup>5</sup> and 1887<sup>6</sup>. In three versions from Carniola, the

3 Anonymus. Sveta Marjeta, sveti Jurij in zmaj, 1841 (Carniola no. 626. Štrekelj, 1898, 589).

4 Written by Matevž Ravnikar-Požencan in 1845 (Carniola no. 627. Štrekelj, 1898, 589–590).

5 Written by Matevž Ravnikar-Požencan in 1838 (Carniola no. 628. Štrekelj, 1898, 590–591).

6 Written by Ivan Šašel in 1887 (told by Marija Skuba from Adlešiči, White Carniola, no. 629. Štrekelj, 1898, 591–592).

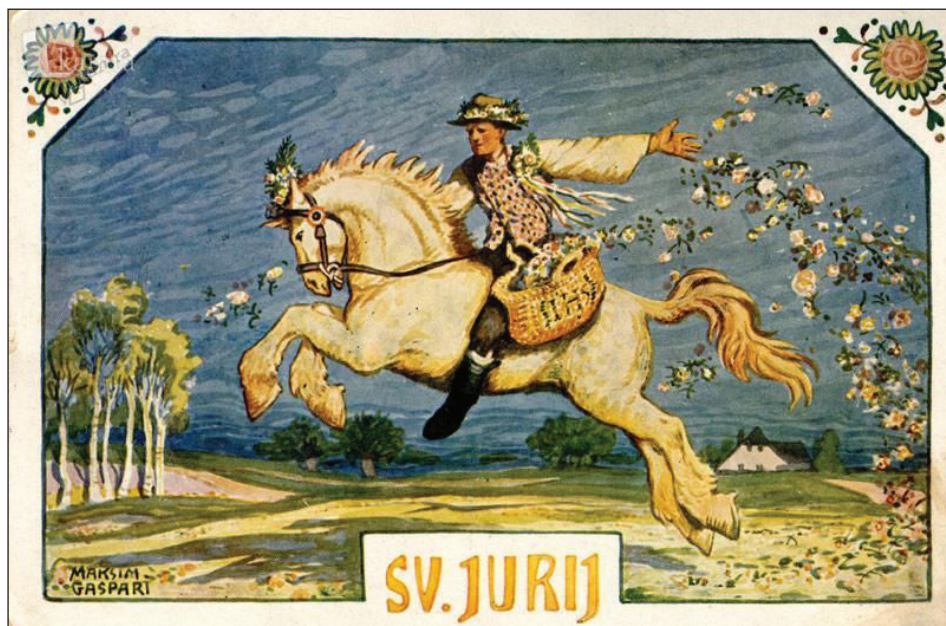


Fig. 7: Maksim Gaspari, *Sveti Jurij*, postcard, *Družba svetega Cirila in Metoda*, 1912. Depicted is a custom of *jurjevo* horse riding from *Adlešiči* in *Bela krajina* with *Zeleni Jurij* and the typical birch tree in the background (Gaspari, 2000, 137).

scene is a white castle above the lake, inhabited by a dragon<sup>7</sup> that demands human sacrifice. It is the turn of the family that inhabits the castle to offer up one of their own and the stepmother suggests that Marjetica be sacrificed to the dragon. In the title of a poem from 1841 by an anonymous poet she is called Saint Marjeta. The girl meets a juvenile (“pobič mlad”) (no. 626) or George the gendarme (“Juri orožnik”) (no. 627) or sacred George himself (no. 628), who helps her. Marjeta (no. 626 and no. 628) or Jurij (George) (no. 627) makes a daisy cross across the dragon, and then the girl throws a belt (“pasica”) around the dragon’s neck and the dragon completely obeys. In two versions (no. 626 and no. 627), the castle then collapses or sinks (no. 627). In two songs (no. 626 and no. 628), Marjeta is called a witch (copernica or copernca). Jurij or George rescues Marjetica, the daughter of the lord of the castle, but does not take her as his wife and accepts the kingdom offered by the king. His mission is to convert the population to Christianity. In the version from White Carniola, the start of spring which George

7 The dragon is called “the strange beast” (“čudna zvir”), “the evil serpent” (“hudi zmij”) (no. 626), “the evil worm, a dangerous lintvern” (“neguden červ, lintvern hud”) (no. 627), the lintvern (no. 628), the dragon (no. 629).





Fig. 8: Maksim Gaspari, *Jurjevo*, watercolor, gouache, 1924 (Slovene Ethnographic Museum collection).

brings is emphasized (silent dew, dark green, snows breaking in the mountains, and roses blooming on the rosehips “tihe rose, dubrave zelene, u planinah snegi prekopnijo, i po šipku rožice procviču”). In this version, the king has no male offspring, only a daughter who he must sacrifice. George meets her and promises her salvation if she accepts the Christian faith. The king offers him the kingdom and his daughter for his wife. George refuses the offer and only asks to gather “enough priests to celebrate masses for all souls” (“dosta duhovnikov, da mašuju maše za vse duše”, Štrekelj, 1898, 592).

The poem called *Saint George Kills the Dragon and Rescues the King's Daughter* from White Carniola (Štrekelj, 1898, 591–592, no. 629) speaks of the hero from the Slovene or Slavic pantheon, Zeleni Jurij (the Green George or the Green Yuri). Zeleni Jurij is a mythological character, a rider on a green or white horse heralding the arrival of spring. “Jurjevanje” is a holiday that is celebrated on “Jurjevo” (Saint George's Day), i.e. north of the Drava River on April 23, and south of the Drava on April 24. If on “jurjevo” the snow has already melted, Zeleni Jurij arrives on the green horse, while in case the snow still remains, he rides on a white horse. In folk rituals, Zeleni Jurij is personified by a young man dressed in green or wrapped in ivy.



Fig. 9: Maksim Gasper, postcard with a motive of Zeleni Jurij (Maksim Gaspari collection, Slovene Ethnographic Museum).

On the meadow, he fights with the raboly, a young man dressed in straw who personifies winter. Zeleni Jurij is the patron saint of cattle and horses, who protects against snakes, brings fertility and defeats the enemy in a duel. Zeleni Jurij represents the power of the sun, which wakes up the earth and vegetation in spring (Kropej, 2007b). Monika Kropej established that both Zeleni Jurij and Marjetica were marked as the tenth children and such child is to be a deity, a demonic creature, or a witch/wizard. Zeleni Jurij is a deity who brings renewal and fertility in spring, while his sister Marjetica is dedicated to the female counterpart of this deity (Kropej, 2000, 75). The poem (Štrekelj, 1898, 591–592, no. 629) indicates that Zeleni Jurij, heralding the arrival of spring, comes on horse from afar, from the land of eternal spring and the land of the dead, that is, from the Veles' land called Vyrej, across the bloody sea, through a mountain to a flat field (Hrženjak, 1999, 99). In the poem the dragon is called the water god, indicating the Proto-Slavic god of the dead, Veles, who lives beyond the sea and is sometimes presented as "The Angry Beast" ("ljut zvijer") (Hrženjak after R. Katičič, 1999, 100). In addition, Zeleni Jurij can have a brother or a half-brother who aims to kill him and who finally treacherously shoots him. This creature is called Jarnik. The name originates from "jar", which means "angry" when used as an adjective ("ljut"), wrathful, the "Jara" snake, to rage ("razjariti") (Kelemina, 1930b, 13). On Jurjevo when the most beautiful juvenile is chosen to be decorated with flowers so completely that they cover his clothes to personify Zeleni Jurij or Vesnik, he is accompanied by Rabolj, who is wrapped in straw or sometimes fur. They fight and Zeleni Jurij wins (Kelemina, 1930a, 51).



Zeleni Jurij is also connected to the mythological character of Kresnik, which is much present in the mythopoetic heritage. Zmago Šmitek explored the topology of the Slovenian tradition about Kresnik (Šmitek, 2009). Šmitek raised the issue of Kresnik's connection with the Old Slavic pantheon, his identification with the thunder god, as assumed by N. Mikhailov. In doing so, he draws attention to the fact that in the early stages of the myth of the fight with the snake demon, the hero and the god of war appear as two separate persons, while in the later stages, individual characteristics merge (Šmitek, 1998, 133). In the Slovenian folk tales Kresnik rescues his sister, who has been trapped in a cave, from the dragon who is Kresnik's adversary. After the rescue, Kresnik marries his own sister (Kropej, 2007a). Šmitek finds the difference between Jurij and Kresnik, such as the fact that Jurij has a close connection with water (Šmitek after Ivanov and Toporov, as well as Kelemina, 1998, 130–131), while Kresnik is a solar hero who performs a series of important acts for humanity during his life, among which, as with Herakles, who is also a solar hero, twelve are especially important (Kelemina, 1930b, 9). However, in Kresnik's "mythological" cycle, the components of the basic Indo-European myth about the hero's fight with the snake demon and the myth about the annual return and wedding of the deity of vegetation and fertility (Zeleni Jurij) are intertwined. Jurij, whose name is etymologically connected with swamp and water, became contaminated with irej, vyrej, which meant the paradise that lies beyond the water. Kresnik is connected to Zeleni Jurij through the mention of the "bloody sea", Kresnik's incestuous marriage. Three poems about Saint George from Carniola recorded by Štrekelj take place in the white castle above the lake, like those which appear in narrations about Kresnik at the castle of Deva. Deva, a Slavic deity, also called "devica", virgin, is the king's daughter, who was kidnapped by Trdoglav, who locks her in the castle. The princess's name is Marjetica. Her brother is determined to rescue her and the two wish to marry, so she jumps out of the castle window. This jump is called "Devin skok" (Maiden's jump or German Jungfernsprung). Still, Trdoglav does not want to give her up. The narration says that the villain turned around and destroyed half of the castle with its tail ("hudoba se je zasuknila, je z repom pol gradu pobila") (Kelemina, 1930a, 53), indicating that Trdoglav is a dragon. "Devin skok" has, Šmitek claims, mythological semantics and is related to the trinity of deities: Perun – Veles – Mokoš (Šmitek, 2002). Such a white castle above the lake as pictured in the Carniolan poems on Saint George can actually be found in Bled, Carniola.

#### THE DRAGON IN SLAVIC MYTHOLOGY. THE DUEL BETWEEN PERUN AND VELES

In Slavic mythology, Perun had a primary place among the gods. He was that mythological person who pointed in the direction of the monotheistic development of the religious system, because he was clearly perceived as the main god, as a privileged god who was connected with all the functional-social layers – with magical-legal, military and natural-production. Only Perun was the hero-winner in the plot

of the main myth in the Slavic mythopoetic tradition. During the Christianization of the Russians, the idol of Perun was erased, as he represented the threat of being equated with the Christian God, claims a prominent scholar of Slavic mythology Vladimir N. Toporov (Toporov, 2002, 29). In the archaic structure of the mythical epic Perun the thunderer (because he personifies thunder-lightning) is presented as the one who strikes-kills someone, presumably his opponent. This myth shows Perun as warlike, terrible, and armed. Perun's opponent is a representative of the forces of chaos – the devil, the evil one, Satan in the Christian code and the dragon in the “pagan” code. Perun's opponent in the duel is associated with the earth, mother-earth, in various Indo-European mythopoetic traditions, his name is determined by words derived from the Indo-European roots uel, uol, ual, which all meant below. Perun's opponent was Veles/Volos, whose name derives from the same root (Toporov, 2002, 36–38). The fundamental function of Veles was the patronage of livestock, but also other areas of economic and productive activity with the representation of fertility and wealth. Goods such as fields, bread, and the home were the purview of Veles/Volos, so people associated with him a special, inner feeling: he was “ours” (Toporov, 2002, 40). Vel-persons have the nature of a snake (in the development of the Vedic mythological tradition, Varuna in the image of the world ocean embraces the earth as a kind of dragon/serpent, the snakes of Vela have a similar meaning), which connects Veles with the sea (Saint Nicholas as the Christianized successor of Veles, is the patron saint of sailors) (Toporov, 2002, 43).

This mythological context brings the tale of Saint George closer to other tales of dragons in Slovene and Slavic mythology, as well as to the Mesopotamian myth of the genesis of the world in which the god Marduk kills the monster Tiamat – the primordial goddess who personifies the sea. Veles and his transformations are associated with water. The characteristic motif of the closure of water, expressed in the Vedic tradition, Vela's, or in the reconstruction, also Veles' control of water does not bring anything good, as the potential of water remains unrevealed. The goal of the antagonist, which is Perun in the highest instance, is the liberation of the waters and their use for the benefit of plants, animals and people. The motif of holding back, closing the waters, which is essential for Veles and other Vel-persons, is connected by the analogy with the motif of holding back, penning up herds. After Perun's victory, they were confiscated and passed to a new owner (Toporov, 2002, 44).

In Slovenian tales of dragons, the death of a dragon living in a lake or in a mountain next to it, killed by a mythical dragon slayer, often causes the lake to overflow, which means the release of water. A dragon living in a lake or a mountain can cause flooding. Perun confronts the serpent god, the dragon Veles, because he came from his world, the land of the dead that lies beyond the water, where he accompanies the souls of the dead into Perun's sphere and closes the waters (Hrovatin summarizes Ivanov after Toporov, 2007, 110). In a variant of the Great Flood, the water that floods the previously happy valley seems to be God's punishment for human corruption, as in the Bible (Genesis 6:13, 6:17). In another variant, the dragon that lives in the lake destroys the dam; the water rushes out, the lake dries out and

the dragon dies, allowing people to settle. The legend about the flowing lake speaks of the settlement of space, represents a version of the cosmic flood and the renewal of the world, and in versions with a dragon, also represents the cosmogonic myth of the creation of the world, the beginning of life and human settlement (Hrovatin, 2007, 111). The function of water seems to be a boundary between those spaces where man can and cannot live (Hrovatin, 2007, 109).

In the matrix of the duel between Perun and Veles, Perun pursues his opponent and threatens to kill him. Veles hides from him, but Perun drives him out of his temporary refuge each time – until the villain finds his ancient place – the underground (chthonic) waters. Toporov recognizes the theme of this matrix in the choice between life and death (Toporov, 2002, 34–35). Perun stands on the side of life, while Veles is the embodiment of death itself and its kingdom, where death is transformed into “new” life, life force, fertility, livestock, offspring, wealth. The fecundity of snakes and the connection of the snake with gold, money, gifts of nature, wealth, with self-rebirth and eternal life suggests that Veles was also characterized by similar qualities. In the conception of the afterlife, Veles plays the role of a shepherd in a pasture where the souls of the dead graze, similar to herds of domestic animals, and has a similar function to a snake that controls, grazes and protects the herd. Toporov observes that in this myth the herd (livestock) sometimes belongs to Perun the Thunderer, and sometimes to Veles, and therefore the herd appears as a kind of exchange object. The subject of the dispute is the deficit that needs to be supplemented. Supplementation is the conceptual basis of this myth, the core around which everything revolves (Toporov, 2002, 46). In this point, Toporov’s definition of the matrix of the main myth is in accordance with Vladimir Propp’s definition of the function of the dramatic trigger related to the functions of dramatic personae, which is the lack of something – because one family member lacks or desires something, he or she acquires that (Propp, 2009, 35). In the fairy tales which are the transformation of the main myth, Toporov claims, the protagonist (the third brother, the younger brother, Ivan, etc.) and his antagonist (dragon/snake, dragon, monster, etc.) appear, as well as the kidnapped, hidden, imprisoned underground, well-guarded emperor’s daughter, who is finally rescued and freed after a duel, and who becomes the hero’s wife, as well as bringing the empire as a dowry. According to Toporov’s interpretation, the emperor’s daughter appears in the function of the herd, lost and gained after a duel (Toporov, 2002, 46–47). In the transformations of the main myth, motifs are expressed in late Slavic traditions, as well as earlier, in which characters are often gathered in new variants of triads. Toporov mentions three examples of heroes from the Russian tradition who represent such triadic schemes – Ilya Muromets, Dobrynya Nikitich and Alyosha Popovich. All of them are victorious over the dragon (Toporov, 2002, 52–55).

The motif of a hero defeating a dragon appears in literary fiction also in the Old English epic poem *Beowulf*, which refers to a sixth-century Scandinavian pagan setting.

## FAIRY-TALES: A JUVENILE THAT RESCUES THE PRINCESS AND BECOMES A KING

In the poem from White Carniola discussed before (Štrekelj, 1898, 591–592, no. 629), Saint George is connected with the motif of the tithe. The king must “give his daughter to the dragon for a tenth, a tithe” (“dat’ zmaju za deseto”, Štrekelj, 1898, 591). In Slovenian folklore the motif of the tenth daughter is much more common than the motif of the tenth son. The tenth daughter was called either “desetnica” or “rojenica” in the Carniola region, while the tenth son was named “desetnik” or “rojenik” in the Carniola region and “kresnik” in the Primorska region. In the Slovenian folk tradition one of the main characteristics of the rojenice and desetniki is prophecy or fatal destiny (Kropej, 2000, 79, 84, 81). Štrekelj collected the poems on the tenth daughter under the numbers 310–315 (Štrekelj, 1989, 352–360). Monika Kropej summarized the characteristics related to the tenth child in the folk tradition after Josip Pajek (Pajek, 1884, 17): 1. The tenth child represents the tithe and has to leave home; 2. The tenth child is connected with the sacred; 3. The tenth child is clairvoyant; 4. The tenth child is compelled to roam the world; 5. One must warmly welcome such a person, or they are committing a mortal sin and will be punished by thunder, lightening, or death (Kropej, 2000, 76). First Niko Kuret in 1956 when the German translation of Irish fairy-tales was published and then later Dušan Ludvik in 1960 paid attention to the Irish heritage about the tenth child: it denotes a tithe which should be sacrificed to Deachma. Dušan Ludvik ascertained that originally the tithe, which was a kind of sacrifice, was part of a religious ritual. Ludvik found Greek sources confirming that the tenth part of the booty or harvest was sacrificed to the gods, while the Slovenian and Irish traditions, familiar with human tithes, have a historical basis (Ludvik, 1960, 84). The etymological origin leads to the Irish term deachma (tithe), deachmadh, which meant “roaming the world” or exile in the ultimate meaning of the tithe, for deachmadh is an ordinal number (tenth) derived from the Old Irish deich. The Irish term Deachma has the same meaning as the German term deheme (Ludvik, 1960, 82–83). The poem recorded by Josip Pajek on Margetica (Pajek, 1884, 17–18, also no. 314 in Štrekelj, 1898, 359) shows that the tenth daughter represents death.<sup>8</sup> Radoslav Katičič and Vitomir Belaj established that the character of the tenth brother was not imported from Ireland. Slavic traditions, Baltic and Irish parallels, as well as the broader European tradition, all testify to an Indo-European origin. The tenth brother who leaves home to roam the world, returns to his father’s (Perun’s) home, and marries his sister. The tenth brother, Jurij, is thus the son of Perun. The same story is only shortened and simplified in folk heritage (Kropej 2000, 84–85). As Toporov also mentions sacrifice to the Veles-Volos god (Toporov, 2002, 45), there are several aspects that establish connections between the versions of the matrix of the dragon slayer appearing in different contexts.

8 Cf. also Milko Matičetov’s cognition that the tenth sister is no ordinary victim of death, but she helps “the white lady” (Kropej, 2000, 80).



In the Irish fairy tale *Liam Donn* there is a wild duck that hatched twelve ducklings and kicked one duckling away. Among the twelve hatched ducklings “none was left for the Deahma,” says the wiseman in the tale, therefore, the old duck sacrificed the banished duck to Deahma. The twelfth child has to be left to faith, similarly as in the Slovenian folk tales the tenth child is destined to wander the world without peace and rest (Širok, 1961, 23). In analogy to the scene with the ducklings, Liam Donn, the son of the King of Ireland, as one of twelve sons had to be sacrificed by his parents to Deahma, which in the context of the fairy tale means to go from home out into the world. The motif of human sacrifice to the deity is explicitly presented here as banishment, exile. Liam Donn sets out to rescue the Greek king’s daughter, Deahmina Una, who, like him, was dedicated to Deahma by her father, who had twelve daughters. After a difficult journey, the young man reaches the place where Deahmina Una is chained to a rock, waiting to be devoured by a monster from the sea. Liam Donn fights the monster three times and defeats it. Finally, when the princess finds the hero through a shoe (Cinderella motif), she marries him. In the case of this story, the motif of the tithe and the hero who defeats the monster that lives in the water and saves the king’s daughter who has been given in sacrifice are connected, as they are in the White Carniolan poem about Saint George. The matrix of this fairy tale and the story of Saint George is the same. Liam Donn saves the land of Greece from a monster that no one else can defeat. The essential difference is in the outcome, which in this case does not speak about Christianization like the legend of Saint George. Instead, it leads to a marriage between an Irish prince and a Greek princess, which symbolically rounds off the whole of the European Christian world, as it politically connects the south-east and north-west of Europe, or rather connects Greek and Celtic mythology.

*The Tale of the Giants*, which is similar in matrix to the story of Liam Donn, is not about a tithe, but about a poor boy, the only son, who sets out to make his way in the world. He finds employment as a shepherd with a farmer. The boy violates the ban on entering the land of the giants, killing them (by cutting off the head from the body, which is connected with the belief that the head can be reattached to the body and come to life) and thereby obtains magical objects: “fiery a sword, a magic wand and a sparkling black horse to catch the spring wind” (Širok, 1961, 6) and a castle with great wealth. When defining the morphology of the fairy tale, Vladimir Propp established the magical agent that helps the hero to victory to be a typical element of the fairy tale (Propp, 2009, 43). In the Slovenian translation the hero is called Janez. As Janez is the most common Slovenian name which has even sometimes been used as a nickname for a typical Slovene man, the name Janez obviously suggests the hero is a Slovene. Janez departs to the “Eastern Land” to rescue the king’s daughter, who was intended as a sacrifice to a terrible monster that lives in the sea. The young man defeats the monster, and then someone else reaps the victory, until the boy is found through a lost shoe. The young man refuses the king’s offer of half the kingdom and half his property. His only desire is to marry the king’s daughter. The young man takes the princess to his country, to Ireland, where the young couple settle independently in a castle with the great wealth



*Fig. 10: Gvido Birolla, illustration for the fairy tale Liam Donn (Širok, 1961, 31).*



*Fig. 11: Illustration of the fight between the hero and the dragon accompanying the tale Of a Juvenile Who Defeated the Dragon adapted by Anja Štefan (Illustration by Zvonko Čoh. Štefan, 2019, 186–187).*

the boy acquired from the giant. This fairy tale, which is also a version of the matrix about the hero who defeats the dragon and rescues the king's daughter, is interesting for the consideration of Slovenian versions because of the motif of a poor, simple boy who leaves home due to existential hardship. The boy is "small, insignificant" (Širok, 1961, 13). This motif brings this version closer to the well known Slovenian fairy tale about Peter Klepec, who is also a small and initially weak boy, but who is empowered with the help of magical objects.

In Slovenian folklore, we also find a fairy tale about a young man who defeats the dragon and rescues the king's daughter (Resnik Dremelj, 2010a in 2010b), which was recently adapted for children (Štefan, 2019).

This fairy tale features a poor shepherd who lives with his mother, but then leaves home due to existential hardship. The hermit tells the boy about a princess who is destined for a lintvern, a dragon, who lives in a lake and has such power that if he swings his tail, he can flood the whole city. The dragon from the Bible sweeps away the stars and Trdoglav, Marjetica's husband, destroys the castle with his tail, the dragon in the Slavic mythology is related to flooding. In the fairy tale the hermit also tells the shepherd that a reward has been offered for anyone who can rescue her; he will have the hand of the princess in marriage and rule the kingdom. The hermit introduces the boy to a magical



element, salt, which he should throw at the dragon so that he can cut off the main head, the middle one of the nine heads, and thus kill it. The shepherd slays the dragon and cuts off half of each tongue, collecting them and eventually using them as proof that he has killed the dragon, for a villain had stolen the heads of the dragon in order to obtain the prize. The young man and the princess are happy to marry each other and take over the royal court. The obvious motif to be found here is a poor country boy who ascends from the lowest to the highest social-economic class. The message conveyed could be summarized as follows: any individual (in this case we have a male), even a poor one without any privilege at birth or in the social environment he originates from, can succeed at any task if he is clever and cautious, as well as if he listens to those who know. The magical objects could be understood as a means to an end which is needed to achieve a goal. In this case, success means that the situation at the end is diametrically opposed to the situation the character faces at the start of the tale. At the end of the tale, the protagonist will have a carefree life expressed in the form of great wealth, a spouse from the highest social strata, whose function is to affiliate the individual to this class, and finally, the acquisition of political power. No particular details about these points, such as who was the king or where exactly did it take place, are needed in order to understand the message. The story functions in the realm of fiction with no particular references to the real world, but it also functions in the realm of everyday reality.

Finally, the motif of a shepherd might seem culturally self-understood in a folktale from this region, because poverty was significant and having animals grazing in a pasture was common. The country children often worked as shepherds. Yet, one might as well keep in mind the fact that mythological characters were also shepherds. Kresnik was a shepherd, Veles was a shepherd, and the herd was the reason for the clash between Perun and Veles, Jesus is the Good shepherd (Gospel of John 10:11 and 10:14). If the fairy tale matrix of the dragon slayer is related to the mythopoetic versions of this matrix, this motif gains a deeper meaning. The Christian codex, in which “The Lord is my shepherd” (A Psalm of David, Psalm 23:1), speaks of the people as a herd and God or Jesus as the people’s guardian and guide. In the mythopoetic versions of the dragon slayer matrix, the princess has come to symbolize the herd as she is the king’s daughter meaning the successor of political power over the population, i.e. the “herd.” From this perspective, the shepherd, as our fairy tale hero initially is, is set as a guardian of the herd, indicating that the protagonist is the future king, that is, a political sovereign.

## CONCLUSION: FROM MYTHS TO FAIRY TALES

Jakob Kelemina ascertained that modern fairy tales have their genealogical origins in mythologies. He differentiated between fairy tales and myths. The narrator comprehends fairy tales as a fictional discourse, while people believed in myths (mythos) and legends (German Sagen). Strictly speaking, Kelemina wrote, myths are tales that deal with the content of pagan religions, in which only higher beings appear. We know very few such “pure” myths in Slovenia. Legend has evolved from myth, with higher beings given human characteristics, while at the same time the mythical core has been veiled





Fig. 12: Anonymous, A Hero Fighting a Dragon. Painted *panjska končnica*, wood (Photo: Blaž Verbič. Slovenian Ethnographic Museum).

(Kelemina, 1930, 5). The mythical core is even more veiled in fairy tales. It is worth examining Kelemina's definition of fairy tales in order to discuss their ontological status. Kelemina's differentiation of these narratives (myths, legends, and fairy tales) is not grounded in defining the status of the narrative in relation to reality. One could pose the question of whether a story could be considered as "true" in relation to reality. Considering this issue, the fact that the category of "truthfulness" or objectivness in reporting on real events has been efficiently disputed (see for instance John Fiske's discussion on "transparency fallacy", addressed in reference to another sort of discourse, but still useful as a critique of the referential function of texts in general; Fiske, 1987) may not be disregarded. This question could be reformulated as follows: is the text's main function a referential one (using Roman Jakobson's differentiation of linguistic functions, Jakobson, 1981)? This problem is quickly solved with the recognition of the illuctionary dimension of a literary discourse, following John L. Austin's acknowledgment that each speech act does not necessarily have a locutionary dimension, but has an illocutionary dimension (Austin, 1962), and the subsequent acknowledgement that writing or literature also consists of performing speech acts, which are actually illocutionary acts (Searle, 1975). The proper question is therefore not if fairy tales are fictional or "true" narratives in relation to reality, external to the text, but what is the effect of fairy tales, what do they *do* to people, how do they function in society.

As previously mentioned, Kelemina did not refer only to the issue addressed above, but he defined fairy tales as a fictional discourse and considered the relevance of *belief*

in regard to different sorts of narratives that can use the same matrices. The question of whether people believe in a certain narration might be linked to the question of genuineness of the text in relation to the external reality addressed above. Yet this is a twentieth century question, it is a question of the ontological status of the media. Kelemina's issue has to do with the semantics of the narrations in relation to the world view of the people who circulated them. In order to address this issue properly, one needs to understand the status of the myth in the context of mythical thought. Myth, as ascertained by Ernst Cassirer, "sees real identity. The 'image' does not represent the 'thing'; it *is* the thing; it does not merely stand for the object, but has the same actuality, so that it replaces the thing's immediate presence" (Cassirer, 1955, 38). Or, in the words of Henri Frankfort: "The imagery of myth is therefore by no means allegory." It is a cloak for abstract thought. "Myth, then, is to be taken seriously, because it reveals a significant, if unverifiable truth—we might say a metaphysical truth" (Frankfort, 1946, 7). The symbol is coalescent with what it signifies (Frankfort, 1946, 12). For the mythical consciousness, the world "is not merely contemplated or understood but is experienced emotionally in a dynamic reciprocal relationship" (Frankfort, 1946, 5). Accordingly, the mythical consciousness does not know an inanimate world. For mythical thought, the distinction between subjective and objective knowledge is meaningless. Also meaningless is the distinction between reality and appearance. "Whatever is capable of affecting mind, feeling, or will has thereby established its undoubted reality" (Frankfort, 1946, 11). The principle of mythical causality is established based on spatial and temporal proximity. Mythical thought does not know the impersonal, mechanical, and lawlike functioning of causality. It looks for the "who" and not for the "how." Mythical thought "looks for a purposeful will committing the act. [...] When the river does not rise, it has *refused* to rise" (Frankfort, 1946, 15). The river or gods intend to do something to people, therefore people give them gifts to establish a good relationship with them. Kelemina did not address the difference between "genres" of a myth, a legend and a fairy tale, but in fact noticed the effects of an epistemological shift that took place in Western society, which was a shift away from mythical thought and to a disenchanted cognition. From Kelemina's perspective, ancient myths occupy a "privileged" position, as people believed in them. They explained the world and its internal laws. A legend comprises some fictional elements, which are likely to be understood as fictional, or better said, understood in a metaphorical sense. A fairy tale comprises magical elements by rule, however they are not meant to be *believed*. A fairy tale is an abstraction. It abstracts characters, situations, meanings, leaving room for the receiver to fill in the missing gaps by him- or herself. A fairy tale is, contrary to a myth, open to individual projections. The genre of fairy tales as we know it today is attractive for children in particular because of this quality. The receiver can take these abstracted versions of the matrixes, which might have already appeared in other contexts and have proven to effectively convey certain messages, and apply them to one's own perspective of the world in order to better understand it.

## OBLIKOVANJE PRAVLJIČNE MATRIKE UBIJALCA ZMAJA

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### POVZETEK

*Genealogija matrike ubijalca zmajev vodi do starodavnih indoevropskih mitologij. V prispevku avtorica preiskuje zgodnje predstave o zmaju in junaku, ki ga premaga, ter oba lika obravnava ontološko. Mitološka domišljija je bila zapletena in teh dveh likov ni predstavljala črno-belo. Postopoma pa se je razvila matrika, v kateri je zmaj začel predstavljati absolutno drugost človeka in dobrega ter tako postal tisto, kar je treba odpraviti, da se v družbi vzpostavi pravi red. Matrika se je razširila s krščanskim kodeksom v visokem srednjem veku, zlasti z legendo o svetem Juriju. Avtorica se posebej posveča primerom iz mitopoetskega izročila iz slovenskega prostora, kjer se lik sv. Jurija prepleta z Zelenim Jurijem, Kresnikom in slovanskim bogom Perunom. V pravljicah se matrika pojavi v svoji najbolj abstraktni obliki. Avtorica razpravlja o variacijah, ki se pojavljajo pri različnih uporabah matrike, v različnih epistemih in njihovih družbenih funkcijah.*

*Ključne besede: pravljica, ljudska pravljica, zmaj, mit, mitologija, slovanska mitologija, sveti Jurij, Zeleni Jurij, Kresnik, desetina*

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## THE ZLATOROG TALE AND SLOVENIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

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## ABSTRACT

*The discussion begins with a working-definition of fairy-tales. Then, in the main body of the paper, Karel Dežman's story of the Zlatorog is considered on the basis of this definition, and a philosophical matrix is proposed for the story's interpretation using embodiment as its major analytic term. Specifically, it is contended that embodiment opens up a space of latent meaning, which is given content by the interplay between the tale's generally intelligible aspects and its different historical circumstances of encounter. An ecological interpretation of the story from a contemporary Slovenian perspective is offered subsequently, and is then followed by a discussion of the various senses in which the tale can also be interpreted in relation to the nineteenth-century formation of Slovenian national identity. In particular, it is shown how Dežman might have considered the tale as a potential critique of the conservative Old Slovenes, and, at the same time, a critique also of the recklessness of the Young Slovenes. It is further shown, how Dežman's much criticized Germanophile tendency might have been of strategic importance in establishing the Zlatorog as a key element in both Slovenian national folklore and, even more so, as an international phenomenon.*

*Keywords: Zlatorog, Dežman, fairy-tale, ecology, Slovenian national identity, nineteenth-century*

IL RACCONTO DELLO ZLATOROG E L'IDENTITÀ  
NAZIONALE SLOVENA

## SINTESI

*Il contributo apre con una definizione operativa della fiaba. Dopodiché, nel corpo principale dell'articolo, l'autore considera il racconto popolare dello Zlatorog, come riportato da Karel Dežman, nell'ambito di questa definizione e propone una matrice filosofica per la sua interpretazione utilizzando l'incarnazione come suo principale termine analitico. Infatti, si sostiene che l'incarnazione apra uno spazio di significato latente che si concretizza nell'interazione tra gli aspetti universalmente intelligibili del racconto e le diverse circostanze storiche nelle quali questo si ripropone. Successivamente, viene offerta un'interpretazione ecologica del racconto in una prospettiva slovena contempo-*

*reana, seguita poi da una discussione sui vari significati che il racconto può assumere in relazione alla formazione dell'identità nazionale slovena nell'Ottocento. In particolare, viene mostrato come Dežman abbia potuto cogliere nel racconto una potenziale critica del conservatorismo dei cosiddetti Vecchi sloveni (staroslovenci) e, allo stesso tempo, del libertinismo dei cosiddetti Giovani sloveni (mladoslovenci). Viene inoltre rilevato come la tanto criticata tendenza germanofila di Dežman possa essere stata di importanza strategica nello stabilire lo Zlatorog come un elemento chiave sia nel folklore nazionale sloveno sia, ancor di più, come fenomeno internazionale.*

*Parole chiave: Zlatorog, Dežman, fiaba, ecologia, identità nazionale slovena, XIX secolo*

## I.

A fairy-tale is, in the broadest terms, a story concerning deeds that are affected in one way or another by the exercise of magic or by the implications of belief in such an exercise; and (just as importantly) is a tale that carries a moral content for the audience.<sup>1</sup> *The Legend of Zlatorog* published by Karel Dežman in the *Laibacher Zeitung* in February 1868 is an example of the fairy-tale genre which I will now explore.<sup>2</sup>

Dežman found the story in the Bovec area, and before his act of documentation, it had never been written down before. He offers, however, not a mere transcription of the folk legend, but tells it *as a story* (a fact that will be shown to be of some significance towards the end of this paper). The following is a summary of the salient points of the tale. The Valley of Triglav lakes and Komna plateau were once inhabited by the 'White women', good fairies who maintained the health of the landscape and gave assistance to humans – such as helping women in childbirth. A child delivered by them has protection from the White Ladies for the rest of their lives. The Triglav lakes valley was also the domain of a herd of goats led by the Zlatorog. His horns were of solid gold, and were supposed to carry the secret of a great treasure hidden on Bogatin mountain which was protected by a multi-headed snake-dragon.

The only person allowed access to the higher reaches of the Lake Valley, was the Trenta Hunter. He was the son of a beautiful widow, and his birth had been assisted by the White Women bringing him all the benefits, accordingly, of their good favours. These benefits were not to last. The Trenta Hunter had a girlfriend who was the daughter of an innkeeper. One day, she attracted the attentions of a rich Venetian merchant who gave her much expensive jewellery and promised her a life of luxury if she married him. As a result, the girl shunned the attentions of the Trenta Hunter, leading him to rashly declare that he knew how to find a treasure on Mt. Bogatin that would dwarf anything on offer from the Italian.

The Trenta hunter left the tavern but on his way out, met the so called Green Hunter who had a reputation in the Valley for bringing death to reputable young men. The Green hunter

1 This paper is the result of research carried out in the research project "Social Functions of Fairy Tales" (ARRS J6-1807), funded by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS).

2 Kropelj (2011) gives invaluable cultural and anthropological context for the 'goldenhorn' myth.

encouraged him with more stories of the Mountain's treasures, and the two of them set out to stalk the Zlatorog so as to take the creature's golden horns and locate the hidden treasure.

That very night, they began their slow ascent of the mountain and, as the sun rose they laid eyes upon the Zlatorog. The Trenta Hunter fired at the creature and hit it, causing its blood to spill upon the ground, but this had a surprising effect. The Zlatorog's blood melted the snow and from it bloomed a magical Triglav rose<sup>3</sup>. The creature ate a few petals and was instantly healed, whereon it leaped away – leading further and further to higher ground. Whenever he touched the ground, it melted the snow and Triglav roses would spring up magically from beneath his hooves, leaving a trail that lured the Trenta Hunter to follow on. Eventually, the Zlatorog turned and leapt towards them. With his next leap, he had attained an advantageous position whereby the sun reflected from his golden horns with a brilliance that dazzled the Hunter, who lost his footing and plunged to his doom at the foot of a gorge.

The hitherto amiable Zlatorog was so angry at having being used in this way, that he devastated the Triglav Lakes Valley with his horns, to leave it in the desolate state that we find it in today. Thereupon, he – and the rest of the goats, and the White Ladies departed the area, apparently never to return. The girl regretted what she had done almost immediately, and when the Spring came, was left to mourn over the body of the Trenta Hunter – when it was washed to the lower reaches of the valley by the melted snow.

Let us now interpret the tale in relation to the theory summarized at the beginning. The magical content is comprised, in the first instance, by the presence of the White Ladies – good fairies (or nymphs), who, as well as maintaining the health of the Triglav Lakes Valley, have the gift of prophesy.<sup>4</sup> The main burden of magical content falls, however, on the Zlatorog himself. Horn as an organic material is manifestly incompatible with being made of gold but as a magical creature he is entitled to such ontological transformation of a qualitative kind. A further qualitative transformation is found through the magical effect of his blood turning to Triglav roses on contact with the snow. And, of course, the tale ends with yet another ontological transformation, this time of a mainly quantitative kind when the power of the Zlatorog's horns to gore is massively amplified into a landscape-devastating power that degrades the hitherto fertile nature of the Lakes Valleys.

The moral content of the story has a certain subtlety. The Trenta hunter makes a decision that betrays the trust of the White Ladies – whose good-will made it possible to have the privilege of hunting in the higher Lakes Valley in the first place, with only the Zlatorog being a forbidden target. His very act of hunting the magical creature is, in other words, already an infringement of a taboo. That the hunter should not only hunt the Zlatorog, but actually wound him, therefore, is especially heinous, the more so since the wound in every other case would be mortal, but is overcome by the magic of the Triglav rose.

3 The botanical name for the Triglav rose is *potentilla nitida*. For a discussion of its symbolism in relation to the Zlatorog tale cf. Dobravec, 2018.

4 In a related Slovene tale, the White Lady who guides the Trenta Hunter's birth, prophesises that he will kill the Zlatorog, and, as a result, is turned to stone by the other Ladies. Her face is visible in a rock formation at the north face of Mount Prisojnik.





*Maksim Gaspari, Hunter from Trenta Shoots Zlatorog, 1964, Gorenjska turistična zveza, Kranj (Kropej, 2005, 42).*

And so the hunter is punished by having the hunt reversed on him – in the form of a lure created by the trail of Triglav roses emanating from the Zlatorog. He is eventually destroyed – not by being gored by the creature’s horns (as one might expect), but through receiving a dazzling sensory overload from them, reflected to brilliance by the dawn’s sudden light. That he falls to his death, means that he is killed as the outcome of natural effects and the Zlatorog’s strategy – rather than through the creature’s efficient causality. He is punished but in a form that has an intricate poetic justice – befitting the fact that he has carried out his ill-advised deeds not from greed *per se* but through his moral sense being temporarily blinded by a desire to impress the girl and outdo the Venetian, and through the additional treacherous exhortations of the Green Hunter. Even so, in wreaking devastation at the end of the tale and withdrawing the magical powers from the entire region, the Zlatorog, in effect, punishes the other human inhabitants as well as the Hunter.

## II.

First, an observation concerning the aesthetic status of Dežman’s Zlatorog. We are generally so familiar with material presented in the format of tales and novels, that, it is all too easy to take most of them for granted. They will generate associational meanings only when they stand out in some way - in contrast with works that are routine and commonplace. Central to this standing-out is the question of *style*. If a writer’s way of telling a story

is original or, at least idiosyncratic in a pleasing way, then we are more likely to think about his or her way of addressing the subject-matter and its broader implications. The Zlatorog is a case in point. Dežman's tale has a vividness of narrative unfolding which makes it much more than a documentation of folk-legend. It engages us at a quasi-perceptual – that is to say, imaginative level in terms of both its pattern of development and such things as its choice of images and metaphors. (I shall return to this question further on in this discussion.)

As a preparation for understanding the implications of this, we must note the existence of a universal in human existence – constituted by the sheer fact of embodiment.<sup>5</sup> Despite its different shapes and forms, embodiment creates a shared consistency in how things are recognized and responded to, and this ranges beyond the circumstances of initial encounter. This is why it is possible to find meaning of relevance to one's own time and place in stories from vastly different geographical locales and historical periods.

Now we have seen, the ostensible meaning of the Zlatorog lies in its status as a fairy-tale, and whilst this is, indeed, constitutive of how the story is read, it is consistent, also, with various other interpretations by virtue of the fact that any literary object (indeed, any state of affairs that is present to the senses or to the imagination), is necessarily diverse in its meaning by virtue of being *aspectual*. It cannot be pinned-down through a global description that aspires to take account of its every aspect. We will encounter it under an initial description (or set of descriptions) which, in the present case, take the form of Dežman's complete textual narrative, but we can then characterize it further, and generate associated meanings that do not conflict with the narrative, but rather expand its scope.

Of course, it may seem that this is nothing more than 'reading-in' meanings to the literary object in question, but it is important to distinguish between mere projections of associated meaning upon such a work – which is indeed a case of reading meaning into it, and an associational orientation which strives for consistency with the generally intelligible aspects of the text in question, and with what these features enable. If our interpretation is grounded on the latter, it can be defended on a rational basis and is thence far more than a mere reading-in.

Suppose, for example, we interpret the Zlatorog in the light of our own bad experiences of tourists and staff at a restaurant in the Trenta region, and the surprising untrustworthiness of local guides. Seeing the tale as a metaphor for these personal troubles, is a case of reading meaning into the story and nothing more. If, however, we focus on the story's generally significant aspects, a space of latent meaning is opened up, and *this space is given content by different historical circumstances under which the tale is encountered. Such interpretations are a genuine elaboration of the original.*

As a first example, we might consider an ecological approach with contemporary national implications.<sup>6</sup> The Trenta hunter disturbs an equilibrium through seeking to destroy a natural wonder in the hope of gaining worldly riches. But whilst nature can be temporarily

5 In what follows, I offer a parallel to Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics in my notions of *embodiment* and the *latent meaning* of a text – the latter corresponding (in large part) with the concept of truth, as set out in Gadamer (1975).

6 For another interpretation of the ecological dimension of the Zlatorog, cf. Dobravec, 2018.

defeated, it will turn into something negative that will bring about the usurper's destruction, and have dire consequences far beyond this. This is unlikely to have been intended as a meaning in the tale's first formulations, which raises the decisive question of whether this is simply a case of the audience reading into the tale issues that have become pressing with the growth of modern society and environmental crises, or is there something about the story that sustains such a reading *objectively*?

The answer is the latter. Whilst ecology *as such* might not have been explicitly recognized, say, by an eighteenth or nineteenth-century audience it would have at least been consistent with their experience as embodied subjects. They would know that nature was liable to deliver punishments when farmers or hunters, say, over-exploited the means of their subsistence, and, on being presented with the ecological interpretation of the Zlatorog proposed above, they might be expected to respond with something like 'Yes, you could say the story has those implications – a case of doing violence to nature because of the lure of wealth, and then being punished by nature accordingly.' The ecological reading, in other words, would be generally intelligible to an eighteenth or nineteenth-century audience, yet without them having an explicit concept of ecology.

But let us now dwell on the contemporary ecological meaning of the Zlatorog – not just at a global level, but at one which is constitutive of a Slovene ecological identity, where, for example, we might see the wrath of the Zlatorog and the consequences of this wrath it as a metaphorical warning which can be related to local environmental issues, such as the dangers of polluting the water supply with an overabundance of pesticide – as happened, for example, with the water table around Ljubljana; or the dire consequences such an abundance presents to the insect population, especially Slovenia's national treasure, its honey bees. We can be told of such dangers, but arriving at them through association as a result of the stark message of the Zlatorog, gives them an extra impact.

The point is, then, that the story can be developed associationally in way that fills in its space of latent meaning in the direction of national ecology, without any deviation from the given narrative. Having therefore raised the question of national consciousness at an environmental level. I turn now, to the Zlatorog's latent implications, for Slovenian nationhood and national identity in a more political sense.

### III

As a story, it has a number of uniquely Slovenian signifiers.<sup>7</sup> The setting in the Triglav Valley Lakes make it highly localised in terms of an area that is, in itself, a potent symbol of Slovenia – if only because of Mt. Triglav. By taking place in this locale, the story not only situates us in Slovenia, but does so by emphasizing a feature of the landscape which has become an emblem of the Slovenian lands themselves, towering over them in at least symbolic terms. It is noteworthy, however, that the narrative unfolds in, as it were, *the shadow of the Triglav* – in the form of the valley of the Triglav lakes, and the of the wonderful 'rose' (*potentilla nitida*)

7 Kropej (2011) offers a detailed discussion of the Zlatorog in Slovenian culture and some similar narratives from elsewhere.

that grows in the area and takes its name from the mountain. The Triglav is never far away, but does not feature directly in the story itself. The tale thus internalizes nature of Slovene national identity prior to 1991. It is something real and altogether powerful – its effects are felt, but it is not yet something fully realized. It is, fundamentally, *a power in the making*...

This relation to national identity can, indeed, be taken much further – first through a general and fairly complex theory, and then through a particular and hypothetical interpretation.

First, the general theory. One of the themes in the tale concerns Italian merchants traveling through the area – including the one who attracts the innkeeper's daughter. (Indeed, Dežman's tale recounts how one Italian gold-seeker actually found the secret treasure of Mt. Bogatin and was able to secretly draw from it over the years without ever having full access.) The Trenta Hunter undertakes his task so as not to be outdone by the Venetian merchant in the quest to impress his girlfriend. And at the moment he falls to his death, the Green Hunter shouts, ironically, 'Have a nice trip to Italy!' This suggests the Zlatorog can be interpreted to hold that whilst Italian merchants might cross the Slovenian lands in lucrative trade pursuits, the spirit of Slovenia – personified in the Zlatorog and the treasure that he guards, can never be entirely conquered by commercial activities and is, in essence, beyond such considerations – as the Trenta Hunter learns to his cost. There is a purity of spirit involved – a personification of the spirit of Slovene nationhood in the Zlatorog and his Alpine realm, that is not to be bought by economic means.

This national significance can be further developed. We will recall that the magical fulcrum of the story involves the fact that, when wounded, the creature's blood joins with the snow and earth to become a Triglav rose, and, more than this, by eating a few petals of this miraculous flower, the Zlatorog achieves a magical rejuvenation and the restoration of his powers. Given that the tale is quintessentially Slovene – and has no exact equivalent in other folklores, one might see this as an emblem of ever-renewed national consciousness. The Slovenes metaphorically find their guardian in a magical creature that is native to their particular region. If wounded, it bleeds but in a way that involves a transformation of the earth itself into a rejuvenating power, insofar as the petal springs from where the Zlatorog's blood mingles with the soil. This means that it is dependent only on the earth of Slovenia. The fact that the story ends with the Zlatorog and White Ladies leaving the Triglav Lakes Valley forever, is not necessarily the end, since they will relocate to verdant pastures new, and, through this relocation, the tale may begin again.

This, we would propose, is a case of unpacking latent meaning in the sense discussed a little earlier. The tale has *always* had this potential wherever there are Slovenes, but it is with the nineteenth-century that conditions become ripe for it to be made overt, and for the Zlatorog to assume the capacity of a national guardian.

And thus we are led to the possibility of a second, more specific national meaning. To understand its ramifications, we must consider the programme for a United Slovenia launched in the revolutionary year of 1848, and then the life and times of Karel Dežman, the Zlatorog story's first documenter.<sup>8</sup>

8 There is a short discussion of Dežman's controversial political decisions of 1861 in Luthar, 2008, 302–303, and also in Štih, Simoniti & Vodopivec, 2008, 296.



The programme of a United Slovenia was first proposed by the priest and political activist Matija Majar, and was published on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1848 in the weekly newspaper *Kmetijske in rokodelske novice* edited by Janez Bleiweis. It was further refined and published as a public manifesto by Viennese Slovenes the following month in the *Novice* based in Klagenfurt. In substance, it called for the unification of Slovene-inhabited areas in a single kingdom under the Habsburg Empire, the equal right of Slovenian in public discourse, and resistance to the proposed integration of the Austrian monarchy within the German Confederation.

Karel Dežman initially supported the goals of the United Slovenia movement and was, in fact, one of the eighteen signatories to the manifesto published in the Klagenfurt *Novice*. He was born in Idrija on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1821 and later moved to Ljubljana and studied law in Vienna, his financial security guaranteed by his uncle Mikhail, a wealthy merchant who bequeathed a healthy fortune to his family. Dežman qualified as a lawyer, and was also a practising poet, and a writer and journalist in addition, assisting Janez Bleiweis to edit the *Novice* both before and after the tumultuous events of 1848.

During the next decade or so, became more and more involved in this national cause, and In 1861 he was elected as a deputy to the Carniolan Provincial Assembly, which, in turn, sent him to the Vienna Provincial Assembly. But Dežman soon came into conflict with other Slovene deputies who advocated the introduction of Slovene at higher levels. He had changed his mind on these issues, and now proposed an advocacy of the German language and culture as vehicles for the advancement of the Slovenian cause. This was because, on the one hand, he was alienated by the conservatism of Bleiweis and Toman of the Old Slovene faction, and was equally deterred by a tendency towards “pan-Slavicism” in the Young Slovenes such as Fran Levstik – believing, in particular, that alliances with the Czechs and Croats would lead to an even greater loss of Slovene identity amongst the many varieties of Slavic people. He allied himself, accordingly, with the Bohemian Federalists, and was eventually very successful as the voice of German liberalism in Carniola – even Germanizing his name to Karl Deschmann and serving as Mayor of Ljubljana from 1871 to 1874. Suffice it to say, that Dežman became a major Judas figure for other Slovenian nationalists – a ‘nemscutari’, who was pilloried far and wide, and constantly reminded of his own final programmatic contribution to the nationalist cause – his poem ‘The damned rake’ of 1855.

Scholars such as Janez Cvirn have drawn attention to his antipathy to both conservatism and pan-slavicism as the basis of his transformation into Deschmann, and with these in mind, we can now consider the particular meanings which Dežman might have assigned to the story (cf. Cvirn, 2007). First, as a believer in Slovene cultural identity, he would clearly have an interest in *curating* the story of the Zlatorog as an emblem of that identity – with the desired treasure beneath Mt. Bogatin perhaps seen as a metaphor for a United Slovenia. However, he may also have felt a special attraction to the tale because it reinforced his own politics of how Slovenian identity could be best preserved.

On the one hand, Dežman might have felt that the tale contained a potential metaphorical critique of the conservative Old Slovenes. The Zlatorog’s horns are the key that will unlock the golden treasure of Slovenian autonomy. Symbolically, the horns

are the power of the Slovenian language; master this power – employ it in all walks of life, and the desired autonomy will be attained, one needs nothing else. But this is a blinding power that functions only when in place upon the Zlatorog. Pursue it in itself, it dazzles and bewitches, and leads ultimately to ruin. To cash out the metaphor; the conservatives see language as the key, and fail to assign a rightful importance to the liberal, and non-clerical aspirations which – mainly through German culture – carry and sustain the well-being of Slovenia.

The tale can also be interpreted metaphorically, as a critique of the Young Slovenians and how their extra-parliamentary pursuits and pan-Slavicism might well bring about an outcome very different to that which they had hoped for. In this respect, one must emphasize the impetuous role played by the Trenta Hunter, who tries to obtain too much too soon (for whatever reason) and then falls to his doom through being dazzled by the Zlatorog's horns. The result of this thwarted ambition, is to drive away the very creatures who are the key to its access. Symbolized by the Hunter, the Young Slovenes try to possess 'in a hurry' what should only be striven for by more indirect means, and, in so doing, destroy the very circumstances whereby the national treasure could, at last, be attained.

Dežman might have responded intuitively to one or both of these readings. They are each a viable example of the Zlatorog's space of latent meaning, in these cases arising from the relating of the tale's moral content to the historical circumstances of the late nineteenth-century. The story can always be read generally (as shown at the end of part I) as a general parable of a young man who defies taboos by acting impetuously and thence incurs dire consequences both for himself and the community as a whole. But, the above interpretations arise because, in the second half of the nineteenth-century, the latent space of meaning is filled out by the politics of emergent Slovene identity.

Several objections might be raised. First, what evidence is there that Dežman actually subscribed to either interpretation? The answer is *none* – as far as we know. But it must be emphasized that Dežman did not merely transcribe the story – he also found a form for it, as a single *unified* tale. Even if his motive for such compositional activity was purely literary, his intuitive choices and emphases in the narrative need some explanation, if only speculative. The interpretations I have proposed go some way towards providing this. They find meanings in the Zlatorog which are wholly consistent with Dežman's worldview. Indeed, the climactic moment of his account, is when the Trenta Hunter is dazzled and loses his footing through the sunlight reflecting from the golden horns. This element of the narrative, as far as is known, is one of the features which do not figure in other Slovenian accounts of the Zlatorog, or related mythologies of the magical ibex or chamois. This suggests that he invented it for poetic effect, and if that is so, he very likely chose it for a specific reason, which either or both of the proposed symbolic readings would explain.

Against this, another objection might be raised. Given that Dežman's Germanization was well-advanced by 1868, the year of the tale's publication, why would he have any regard for the story at all, other than as an ethnographic curiosity? Surely, if he had been genuinely concerned with its contemporary Slovene implications, he would have published it in the Slovenian language, instead of in the *Laibacher Zeitung*.

This claim can be refuted on the basis of Dežman's breadth of culture and intellectual leadership. He was financially independent, but served nevertheless as director of the Carniolan Provincial Museum from 1851 until his death - despite the various political appointments he held concurrently with this. Significantly, he was accomplished in different scientific fields, for example, botany, astronomy, and geology, and did work of great importance as an archaeologist, conservator, and ethnographer, and was an expert, also, in agricultural production. As Nada Prapotonik observes,

*In his life, Dežman was highly versatile, and as he was a leading personality in several spheres, it is difficult to present him in full. With his scientific criticalness had a strong and favourable effect on [the] domestic professional public and contributed a great deal primarily to the academic development of the Museum (Praprotnik, 2006, 169).*

This breadth and depth of Dežman's academic involvement would be conducted mainly in German, and this would mean that by presenting the Zlatorog in that language he would believe himself to be doing justice to its importance. Not only was German already established as a leading language of academic practice, but in the Slovene lands a significant proportion of the intelligentsia was bilingual. Dežman could be assured that publishing the tale in the *Laibacher Zeitung* would engage a *cultured* Slovenian audience (rather than one consisting of farmers and artisans!) and also a sympathetic body of liberal-minded Germans who would be, in fact, the more influential readers. Indeed, by publishing the story in German its intrinsic worth as a creative work of folklore and its contemporary allegorical resonances could be expected to be transmitted both across the Empire and internationally, whereas expression in Slovenian would make it a tale of purely local interest. Indeed, the German context of publication had demonstrable international repercussions within ten years of the story's first appearance (cf. Kropelj, 2011, 38–39).

The Trieste schoolmaster Viljem Urbas read Dežman's Zlatorog and passed it to the poet Rudolf Baumbach, who eventually published a deeply epic version of the story in 1877, which established itself as a best seller in the Austrian Empire, giving rise, thereafter to many related Zlatorog-related, poetic and musical works (cf. Kropelj, 2011, 55).

Whatever the case, and even irrespective of Dežman's actual intentions in giving form to the legend, his expression of it has proven rich enough to sustain the various interpretations offered in this paper, and by so doing, it continues to ask enduring questions about the search for Slovenian national identity. And, of course, as the conditions of that identity undergo new historical transformation, so Dežman's Zlatorog may have the space of its latent meaning populated by further ideas. In this respect, it may be that debates about Slovenia's identity within the European context come increasingly to the fore, with different routes to the consolidation of national identity being proposed. On the one hand, the dazzling possibility of further European integration might be seen as a power which will destroy the identity of a small country such as Slovenia; on the other hand, and in the opposite direction, it may be that Euro-scepticism and 'going it alone' is the dazzling allure, but one which will lead ultimately to disaster. These possibilities will one day have to be considered – the horns of a continuing symbolic Zlatorog dilemma...

## PRIPOVEDKA O ZLATOROGU IN SLOVENSKA NACIONALNA IDENTITETA

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### POVZETEK

*Avtor uvede prispevek z delovno definicijo pravljice. V osrednjem delu prispevka nato v okviru definicije obravnava ljudsko pripovedko o Zlatorogu, kakor jo je zapisal Karel Dežman, in poda filozofsko podlago za njeno interpretacijo, pri čemer kot glavni analitični pojem uporabi utelešenje. Predstavi stališče, da utelešenje odpira prostor latentnega pomena, ki ga z vsebino napolnjuje preplet med obče razumljivimi vidiki pripovedke in različnimi zgodovinskimi okoliščinami srečevanja z njo. V nadaljevanju avtor poda ekološko interpretacijo Zlatoroga iz sodobne slovenske perspektive in razpravlja o različnih načinih, na katere ga je mogoče interpretirati v luči oblikovanja slovenske nacionalne identitete v 19. stoletju. Posebej je prikazano, kako bi Dežman s pripovedko lahko potencialno podajal kritiko konservativnih staroslovencev in obenem kritiko svobodomiselnosti mladoslovencev ter kako bi Dežmanova močno kritizirana germanofilskost utegnila biti strateškega pomena za uveljavitev Zlatoroga kot ključnega elementa v slovenski narodni folklori, še zlasti pa kot mednarodnega fenomena.*

*Ključne besede: Zlatorog, Dežman, pravljica, ekologija, slovenska nacionalna identiteta, 19. stoletje*



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# COGNITIVE MATRICES IN FOLKTALES AND CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES OF DELIBERATION: FROM THE UTILITARIAN MINDSET OF MOJCA POKRAJČULJA TO THE INCOMPREHENSIBLE LAUGHTER OF THE BEAN

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## ABSTRACT

*The aim of the paper is to illuminate how folktales, with their specific conceptualization of universal dilemmas, reflect culture-bound patterns of decision-making in relation to the contemporary socio-political discourse in a given society. In this respect, I perceive folktales firstly as a reflection of embedded cognitive/cultural matrices that determine »cognitive-instrumental rationality«, linked to traditions and cultural norms (Jürgen Habermas). I explore these matrices using a new methodological approach which connects the sociological theory of fairy tales, deliberative democracy and cognitive history. This approach is then applied to the analysis of the conceptualization of dilemmas in three Slovenian folktales (Mojca Pokrajculja, The Ant and the Lazy Cricket, The Bean, the Straw, and the Coal). The analysis asserts correlations between traditionally and culturally conditioned forms of decision-making, and contemporary practices of decision-making / deliberation, thus shedding light on the specifics of national epistemology from a comparative and historicist perspective.*

*Keywords: folktales, cultural perception, decision-making, deliberative democracy, cognitive history, case studies*

## LE MATRICI COGNITIVE NEI RACCONTI POPOLARI E NELLE PRATICHE CONTEMPORANEE DI DELIBERAZIONE: DALLA LOGICA DELLA RAGIONE UTILITARISTICA DI MOJCA POKRAJČULJA AL RISO INCOMPRENSIBILE DEL FAGIOLO

## SINTESI

*L'articolo si propone di fare luce su come il racconto popolare, con la sua particolare concettualizzazione di dilemmi universali, rifletta i motivi culturalmente caratterizzati del processo decisionale in relazione al discorso sociopolitico contemporaneo in una*

*data società. In tal senso i racconti popolari possono essere percepiti innanzitutto come rispecchiamento delle matrici cognitive/culturali impresse che determinano la «razionalità cognitivo-strumentale», legate alle tradizioni e alle norme culturali (Jürgen Habermas). Queste matrici vengono esplorate attraverso un approccio metodologico nuovo che collega la teoria sociologica delle fiabe con la democrazia deliberativa e la storia cognitiva. Questo approccio viene quindi applicato all'analisi della concettualizzazione di dilemmi in tre racconti popolari sloveni (Mojca Pokrajculja; La formica e il grillo ozioso; Il fagiolo, il carbone e la pagliuzza). L'analisi ha rilevato correlazioni tra le forme di processo decisionale condizionate dalla tradizione e dalla cultura, da una parte, e le prassi del processo decisionale/deliberazione contemporanee dall'altra, lumeggiando così le specificità dell'epistemologia nazionale in una prospettiva comparativa e storicistica.*

*Parole chiave: racconti popolari, percezione culturale, processo decisionale, democrazia deliberativa, storia cognitiva, casi studio*

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of the paper<sup>1</sup> is to explore the social function of folktales in relation to culture-bound decision-making patterns and in relation to contemporary socio-political discourse. In this respect I consider folktales, which over the course of history have been subjected to a process of continuous transformation<sup>2</sup>, as a reflection of specific cultural/cognitive matrices that regulate traditional patterns of decision-making in a given community.<sup>3</sup> In this sense I am interested in folktales as

- 1 This paper is the result of research carried out in the research project "Social Functions of Fairy Tales" (ARRS J6-1807), in the research project "Political Functions of Folktales" (ARRS N6-0268) and in the research program "The Practices of Conflict Resolution between Customary and Statutory Law in the Area of Today's Slovenia and Neighboring Countries" (ARRS, P6-0435), funded by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS).
- 2 Until their linguistic representation, i.e. by writing down these narratives either in the context of the Italian and French court cultures of the 16th and 17th centuries (Zipes, 2006; 2011; 2012; Bottigheimer, 2010) or in the context of the national awakening movements of the 19th century. The boundaries between oral tradition and literary fairy tales are difficult to define, as the motifs circulated and were also transmitted from written material to oral tradition, in particular in medieval times (cf. Ziolkowski, 2010). However, the very invention of the fairy tale as a literary genre marked a change in the social function of fairy tales, as they became part of a mediated public space, first of the aristocratic salon, then of the bourgeois public, which by default is embedded in ideological and political matrices.
- 3 This view is supported by folklore scholar Sara Graça da Silva who emphasized that most of »the motifs present in fairytales are timeless and fairly universal, comprising dichotomies such as good and evil; right and wrong, punishment and reward, moral and immoral, male and female... Ultimately, despite being often disregarded as fictitious, and even as a lesser form of narrative, folk tales are excellent case studies for cross-cultural comparisons and studies on human behavior, including cooperation, decision making, [and so on].« The Guardian, 20. 1. 2016: *Fairytales Much Older than Previously Thought, Say Researchers*. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jan/20/fairytales-much-older-than-previously-thought-say-researchers> (last access: 2022-05-06).

an expression of »cognitive-instrumental rationality«, linked to teleological decision-making, conditioned by tradition and culture (Habermas, 1984, 10). My thesis is that these »embedded« matrices underlie the development and characteristics of social-integrative discourse in the field which I have termed proto-political. The formation, contents and the specifics of the proto-political, as they are manifested in folktales and in contemporary political discourse, are the research topics of this paper.

By the term proto-political, I refer to specific traditional patterns of decision-making, conflict resolution and perceptions of a good society, which were inscribed into a specific national political culture in the era of industrialization, and especially within the evolution of the nation-state. In this sense, historically, proto-political applies to Hobsbawm's notion of »pre-political people who have not yet found, or only begun to find, a specific language in which to express their aspirations about the world« (Hobsbawm, 1965, 2), but also to his analysis of proto-nationalisms. The historian namely observes that different understandings of »national feeling« had an important role in establishing specifics of political culture within new-born modern nation-states, defining perceptions of democracy and notions of political community in a given society (Hobsbawm, 1990, 46–79; Hobsbawm, 1979). Hobsbawm thus offers a birds-eye-view of translating the proto-political into the realm of the nation-state politics. In this respect he focuses on the outcomes of nation-building, but he does not scrutinize the transition of micro-patterns of past forms of decision-making within these processes. A completely different approach to the proto-political was developed by cultural critic Fredric Jameson in his influential study *The Political Unconscious*. Also taking into consideration Propp's structuralistic approach to folktale analysis, Jameson devised a complex, three-part hermeneutic scheme for the interpretation of past literary narratives in relation to Marxist dialectics. Given that his particular interest was how social conflicts are manifested in these narratives, his aim was to detect »ideologemes ... the smallest intelligible unit of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes« (Jameson, 2002, 61).

In comparison to the mentioned approaches in an analysis of the proto-political in a historicist prism, which either offer a broader picture in patterns of transition or unfold the inherent mechanisms of class struggle, my interest lies in studying the proto-political in relation to the development of socio-political discourse in a given community. For this purpose, I use proto-political firstly as an operational term, which encompasses a transhistorical set of norms or referential code within a community, i.e. culture-bound patterns of dilemma conceptualization / resolving. These were developed in the period before the »invention« of the national political community, but had a strong impact on the development specifics of political culture within the nation-state.

The content of this referential code will be explored in this paper. This will be implemented by projecting the principles of deliberative democracy, i.e. inclusion, mutual respect, argumentation and notions of the common good (cf. e.g. Habermas, 1975; Cohen, 1986; Dryzek, 2009; Mansbridge et al., 2010) into the context of the narrative tradition. Structurally, this approach is similar to Habermas' tour de force endeavor in his *Theory of Communicative Action*. In this study he devised the tools of



deliberation in order to validate the norms of teleological rationality, including those which stem from »cognitive-instrumental rationality«. Compared to Habermas (1984), my approach, which connects narrative folklore with the discourse of social integration through the principles of deliberative democracy, is more open and contingent in relation to traditional norms, while the embedded patterns of decision-making will be studied in the epistemic logic of narrative folklore. This logic, as was most precisely defined by Walter Benjamin in his essay *The Storyteller*, is initially marked by unintentionality, tied to the primordial community-building role and transmission of experience, which is accessible only by intuitive »reasoning« (Benjamin, 2019, 48–76).<sup>4</sup> Studying the patterns of embedded decision-making is also advocated by recent research in the field of deliberative democracy, while acknowledging that social and cultural contexts play a pivotal role in the perceptions of dilemmas, thus impacting our notions of what is beneficial for society as a whole (Parthasarathy & Rao, 2018; Min, 2009; Schneiderhan & Khan, 2018; Boswell & Corbett, 2021; Horvat, 2021).

The starting points presented above follow Jack Zipes' approach to understanding the evolution of fairy tales within the theory of memetics (Zipes, 2006; 2012).<sup>5</sup> At the core of his theory is the understanding of the transhistorical and cultural transmission of fairy tale motifs as memes, easy-to-remember basic narrative elements, which adapt – in accordance with the »classical« theory of evolution – divergently to the new cultural environment. Since the number of fairy tale motifs is limited, it can thus be analyzed how they changed and adapted to the cultural context by studying versions of the same motif in different cultural and socio-historical environments.<sup>6</sup> Henceforth I thus supplement Zipes' theory of fairy tales

4 More space would be needed to fully elaborate Benjamin's views on the role of narrative tradition and fairy tales. His essay *The Storyteller*, written in 1936, is namely essential in the understanding of the relationship between oral tradition and literary fairy tales, while Benjamin saw the decline of oral storytelling vis-a-vis literature as an epistemic change in the transmission of knowledge and experience (Benjamin, 2019).

5 It must be emphasized that Zipes's notion of the evolution of fairy tales applies also – or even predominantly – to folktales. Compared to some other fairy tale theorists (especially Bottigheimer, 2010), he namely stresses the origins of classic fairy tales in older sources, especially in oral tradition (cf. Zipes, 2012, 157–174).

6 The first researchers of fairy tales, the founders of the Finnish school of fairy tales, knew that the number of fairy tale motifs is limited. The mentioned thesis, well established in the sociological theory of fairy tales (Zipes, 2012), is supported also by the phylogenetic analysis of 275 fairy tales, carried out by folklorist Sara Graça da Silva and anthropologist Jamie Tehrani. The results of their study prove that most canonized fairy tales have an Indo-European origin, which in some cases goes back to the Bronze Age (da Silva & Tehrani, 2016). For instance, already at the end of the 19th century Marian Roalfe Cox (1893) annotated and published 345 variants of Cinderella (ATU 510A), noting medieval analogues, while today's folklorists list at least 1500 variants of this motif. Different versions of this fairy tale vividly show how fairy tales adapt to a new environment, sometimes also in the form of a collage of different stories, which creates completely new meanings. In the Slovenian version (cf. Unuk, 2002, 290–296), for instance, a male protagonist, Pepelko, appears, which is similar to the Irish fairy tale Liam Donn (cf. Brenk, 2017, 238–250). In the latter story, which is reminiscent of Scandinavian sagas, the main character, Prince Liam Donn, sets out across Europe to rescue a Greek princess, who was sent away from home by her father to protect the house from curses. Donn, who defeats three giants on the way to the Peloponnese and fights a sea monster for three days on his arrival in Greece, the last day in front of an audience, tries then to retreat into anonymity, but the princess slips his shoe off. The rest of the story is similar to the classic Cinderella, with the difference that in Irish version Greek men cut off their heels and toes to put prince's shoe on.

by shifting its research focus. In the dialectic between universal contents and their particular adaptations, within which fairy tales developed, and following Slavoj Žižek's conception of the »concrete universal« (cf. Kisner, 2014, 44–50), I will focus on how the universal forms were particularized, i.e. as embedded in specifics of the sociocultural community. Rather than the process of the adaptation of the particular fairy tale narrative matrix in different environments, I am interested in what the results of this process tells us about the cultural / cognitive matrices of the community in which adaptation took place. I will illustrate this approach with an example of the fairy tale motif from »The House of the Flies«, which will be discussed in greater detail further on. There are several versions of this motif in which the (animal) protagonist offers shelter to animals in distress. However, there are also significant differences between versions. In the first part of the Slovenian fairy tale *Mojca Pokrajculja*, the protagonist gives shelter to animals provided they have certain skills, while in the Ukrainian fairy tale *The Glove*, the protagonist accepts all the animals unconditionally. It is thus evident that in both communities different coordinates of seeing and resolving problem were established; in the case of this particular fairy tale motivated by the binaries of selfishness / solidarity on the one hand and utilitarianism / altruism on the other. One could argue that the different dilemma settings in the mentioned folktales are not necessarily causal in relation to decision-making patterns in the contemporary communities in which they have evolved. Nevertheless, it is evident, especially from the many new reinterpretations of this narrative in Slovenia, that folktales reflect the spectrum of dilemmas of the Slovenian social-political discourse, which society as a whole has not yet been able to resolve. The key challenge is thus to understand how folktale narratives, with their specific conceptualization of universal dilemmas, reflect culture-bound patterns of decision-making in relation to modern social and political discourse.

I will tackle this challenge in two steps. In the first I will unfold, in relation to the specifics of folktale narratives, the spectrum of methodological approaches that enable the analysis of the proto-political, i.e. cognitively and culturally conditioned decision-making matrices in a given society. I will then apply relevant methods to a comparative analysis of three fairy tales, which in the Slovenian environment form an important part of the narrative canon (*Mojca Pokrajculja*, *The Ant and the Lazy Cricket*, *The Bean, the Straw, and the Coal*). In the conclusion I will reflect upon the findings in relation to today's political discourse and suggest possible paths for further research of the narrative tradition in this prism.

## FOLKTALES AND COGNITIVE MATRICES OF COMMUNITY

The relationship between fairy tales / folktales and the sphere of politics and ideology has been widely studied for at least half a century (Snyder, 1951; Zipes, 1975, 116). Mari Ness (2018) is namely quite right in stating that all classic fairy tales are »inherently political«. According to her, the only difference is that some are »expressly political«, others »subversively political«, and

still others are »accidentally political«.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, it can be noted, along with contemporary folklorists, that with the development of a scientific approach to collecting and analyzing the folktales in the form as they are known today, folktales were not subjected to political instrumentalization.<sup>8</sup> In this respect it can be concluded that folk tales, although they have been adapted into a more reader-friendly form, are presented as they were passed from generation to generation, from one cultural community to another. In this sense, one can detect in folktales – although culturally and socio-historically bound – »effort on the part of both women and men to develop maps for coping with personal anxieties, family conflicts, social frictions, and the myriad frustrations of everyday life« (Tatar, 1999, xi). All fairy tales namely »begin with conflict because we all begin our lives with conflict. We are all misfit for the world, and somehow we must fit in, fit in with other people, and thus we must invent or find the means through communication to satisfy as well as resolve conflicting desires and instincts« (Zipes, 2012, 2). According to Zipes, fairy tales embody worlds of naïve morality and reveal universal dilemmas characteristic of all human societies throughout history. Over the centuries, fairy-tale motifs were adapted to new cultures; however, they were not subjected to the requirement to look French, German, Spanish, Slovenian, and so on, while they were spontaneously installed in corpora of pre-existing conflicts and dilemmas specific to the »host« community. In this respect, the patterns of transformation can be illustrated by the reflections of Jewish writer Isaac Bashevis Singer on writing within his native culture: »When I sit down to write a story, I am not saying to myself I am going to write a Jewish story. Just like when a Frenchman builds a house in France. He doesn't say he's going to build a French house. He is going to build a house for his wife and children, a convenient house. Since it's built in France, it comes out French« (Singer, 1992, 156).

When defining the transhistorical character of folktales in relation to (national) culture, one must rely on the sociology of nationalism. It is evident that narrative folklore cannot be captured within essentialist attributes of the nation (Smith, 1991), while it is the result of the pre-dated practices of communica-

7 The author mentions canonized fairy tales, which were scrutinized from the perspective of the "civilizing" process by Zipes (2021). In the socio-political context in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries this primarily meant the legitimization of (new) social relations and the affirmation of certain patterns of appropriate behavior (Tratnik, 2020), and especially the disciplining of the role of children and women in society (Tratnik, 2022). But most (if not all) modern fairy tales are »political« in this sense, especially those in which the authors used the form of fairy tales to express subversive criticism, for example in the Weimar Republic (Zipes, 1997), in the Soviet system (Balina et al., 2005), or tried to induce a specific view of society, especially by using national folklore to affirm national pride / cultural nationalism, as the Grimms did (Norberg, 2022).

8 In Slovenia, for instance, the first collectors of folktales worked under the influence of nation-building ideas, however the desire for a mythological interpretation of the Slovenian oral tradition was already stopped towards the end of the 19th century by a younger, critical generation of philologists (Kropej Telban, 2021).

tion and deliberation (Anderson, 2007), which have been transformed over the centuries, i.e. already in the period before the invention of the cultural nation in the 19th century. This process of »inventing« the cultural substance, which was to become »national culture«, was always subjected to the dialectic between the particular and the universal, whereby culture, especially the specifics of language – as emphasized by cognitive linguists (Ungerer & Schmidt, 2013) – was an important »vehicle« on which universal dilemmas were concretized within the specifics of cultural community. It is also important to note that this process of building a referential code of past experiences, embodied in narrative folklore, took place spontaneously and before the creation of national public spheres (Habermas, 1989), although the results of this process were later transposed into the specifics of the (national) public sphere. Folk tales contain traces of the formation of this code, while in every version of the fairy tale »it is possible to find a trace of its context, i.e. the time and environment and other conditions in which it was created« (Kropej Telban, 2021, 12). On this basis, for instance, Robert Darnton (2009) reconstructed social relations in pre-revolutionary France by analyzing fairy tales. However, an analysis of narrative folklore in the Slovenian environment, for instance, shows significant discrepancies between the world embodied in fairy tales and factual socio-historical circumstances (cf. e.g. Kropej, 1995). It is also necessary to stress the role of the storyteller in the process of the historical transmission of oral tradition. Anja Štefan, who is herself an excellent storyteller, points out that storytellers differ in their talents, in the ways in which they tell stories, and above all in their ability to weave everyday events into an already existing narrative and innovate it by adapting it to the external context. The narrator's personal creativity is thus manifested »both in the creation of the narrative and in the interpretation of this narrative, whereby the narrator not only follows his internal impulses, but also actively responds to external influences, the context« (Štefan, 1999, 28). The result of such a process in the historical transmission of the narrative tradition is various degrees of match or mismatch between the world of folktales and the socio-historical context in which they take their current form. In this current, always transitional form, folktales can act as meta-commentaries on social or moral conditions in a given community. They can, however, only exercise this role when they preserve their original non-intentionality, bound to the transmission of experiences and the community-building role that arises from the act of storytelling. Only in this way can folktales remain a trans-historical medium of expressing universal human dilemmas. If, on the other hand, they adapt too close to the concrete cultural and socio-historical specifics of the environment, they lose their universal appeal. From this point of view the difference between folktales, created through oral tradition, and literary fairy tales can be best expressed. The literary fairy tale, including classic and modern renditions of folk motifs, namely suspends the original function of folktales, tied to the specific transmission of knowledge through an intuitive understanding of reality. The



literary fairy tale inevitably binds the folk narrative in the specifics of the public sphere, which by default is a place of intentional reasoning. It is precisely this change, the suspension of the initial function of folktales that enables later political appropriation of the oral tradition.

The aforementioned studies suggest a more nuanced approach to the analysis of culture-bound decision-making and community cognitive matrices in the prism of its narrative tradition. An approach that is empirically necessarily based on folkloristic, ethnological and anthropological insights into the process of the transmission of fairy tales, but at the same time considers the primordial epistemic function of folk tales in the transmission of experiences (Benjamin, 2019). On the other hand, the important role of cultural matrices in the formation of today's decision-making patterns is confirmed by research in the field of cultural cognition and cultural perception (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1983; Harre, 1984; Gastil et al., 2008; Hammack, 2008; Manosevitch & Friedman, 2021), although Yates & De Oliveira (2016) stress that most research is focused on comparisons between decision-making in (Eastern) collectivist cultures and (Western) individualistic ones, which according to them, is not sufficient to explain the nuances of decision-making in a particular culture.

It is telling that in his analysis of »cognitive-instrumental rationality«, Jürgen Habermas (1984) relied on the findings of Jean Piaget, one of the pioneers of cognitive sciences. Cognitive sciences namely understand human development as cultural and biological co-evolution. They are based on the premise that consciousness is not separated from the body, brain and interactions (embedded cognition), while human cognitive process also runs outside the brain (extended mind), it thus needs an environment that it adapts to and at the same time changes, while this environment includes interactions with other people as well as with cultural formations and nature (situated cognition). A new discipline in this field, cognitive history (cf. Dunér & Ahlberger, 2019), addresses the question of how cognitive patterns were formed within a specific cultural environment and how cognition regulates interpersonal relationships. It must be stressed, however, that proponents of this line of research point out that one should not see cognitive history as a deterministic discipline. It can illuminate certain aspects of behavior and decision-making from a new perspective, but it is necessary to take into consideration other factors that form individual cognition and cognitive matrices, i.e. cultural development and socio-historical changes. They also stress that the essentialization of cognitive matrices can lead to a new form of – scientifically supported – exclusivism. In this respect they point to the research which confirms that the basic cognitive patterns are common to all, but there are variations as the result of the community's adaptation to the environment (Dunér, 2019, 6).

A comparative analysis of folktales based on the concepts of cognitive history can offer insight into the cognitive matrices of a community. Following the cognitive historians, it is necessary to include an analysis of perception in such research. The latter namely assumes that the brain looks for patterns and

interprets them through previous patterns specific to a certain culture. At the same time, research also confirms that interpretations of the environment are not limited only to sensory perceptions, but arise from cognitive capacities and the specifics of memorization and categorization. All previous knowledge and experience are preserved in stories, folktales, myths, religious beliefs and shape the meaning of everything that people face, which requires the search for answers as to why only some parts of its tradition have been preserved in a certain cultural community. Cognitive historians also stress that the categorization of concepts is culturally conditioned, and its analysis is essential for understanding the separation of people into ethnic communities, classes, attitudes towards the Other, and so on, while the analysis of the literature can explain the level of intersubjectivity, for instance the role of empathy within the community and towards members of other cultures (Dunér, 2019, 10–22).

The research being proposed here would be an enormous undertaking and would demand the creation of a new methodology, heavily anchored in interdisciplinarity, in order to rethink specific patterns of the narrative tradition in relation to other traditions on the one hand and to universality on the other. Nevertheless, it is possible on the basis of the presented concepts, applied in comparative analysis of folktales, to discern certain images that arise from the collective cognitive matrices, in the case of the following analysis – the Slovenian matrix.

## EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF SLOVENIAN FOLK TALES

Slovenian narrative folklore was influenced by a variety of different currents. In it, traces of antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and the ideational heritage of the national awakening movements of the 19th century were identified (Kropej Telban, 2021). In its narrative canon there are tales dealing with the »rise« (Bottigheimer, 2010), that is the tales in which images of castles, princesses, princes and immeasurable wealth alternate with images of extreme poverty, outsiders, while depicting the world in which cunning and resourceful heroes thrive best. There are also tales which warn against greed (e.g. *Money does not bring happiness*, *About the lucky man's shirt*, *The water man*), and fairy tales that can be analyzed (or used) from the perspective of establishing a romantic canon of national/ literary heroes (*Ajdi*, *Kurent*, *King Matjaž*, *Peter Klepec*). But for our analysis, three folktales are particularly interesting, while all of them, each in their own way, thematize decision-making in relation to the principles of deliberative democracy (inclusion, mutual respect, argumentation, the common good). The latter applies to *Mojca Pokrajculja*, *The Ant and the Lazy Cricket*, *The Bean, the Straw, and the Coal*, folktales included in Slovenian anthologies (Brenk, 2021; Unuk, 2002). Our selection is therefore not arbitrary. They all deal with embedded decision-making patterns and reflect dilemmas of the Slovenian social-integrative discourse on the proto-political level.

*Mojca Pokrajculja*, one of the most famous, reprinted and analyzed Slovenian folktales (Blažić, 2021, 267–275; Kropelj Telban, 2015, 411–417)<sup>9</sup>, tells the story of a girl named Mojca who bought a cooking pot for a coin. In this pot she receives animals, asking her for shelter, but always with the question: »If you know how to work and will help me in the pot, I will let you in.« The protagonist offers entry to animals on the condition that they have certain skills and are able to work. For example, the fox is a seamstress, the wolf is a butcher, and the bear is a shoemaker, and they must prove their skills the next morning. Kropelj Telban (2015) explains that this fairy-tale type (ATU 283B\*) is widespread in the Baltic, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. These versions tell a story about animals that settle in a »house«, which can also be represented by a glove or even a skull, and the last to arrive is the bear, too big to enter, so he sits on the »house« and squashes everybody. A story is usually interpreted by the message »No good deed goes unpunished« (Dobrota je sirota), which also applies to Slovenian counterparts *The Girl and the Pot* (\*ATU \*283C\*) However, the Slovenian folktale *Mojca Pokrajculja* is also different in this respect, which is why folklorists assigned it a different number (\*ATU \*283C\* + 15A). In addition to the different treatment of the initial motif, the Slovenian version has a continuation, an etiological story about why the rabbit has a short tail.

An explanation for this is given in the second part of *Mojca Pokrajculja* with the role of the fox, which licks the honey collected by the bear, and puts the blame on the rabbit, who then breaks his front legs while running away from the animals, while Mojca ends up alone.

Folklorists are thus able to explain the origin and development of this folktale, also that it is a combination of two narratives, »The House of the Flies« and the etiological story. In this respect two complex corpuses of meanings collide, which creates the impression of elusiveness regarding the »message«. However, compared to the related Ukrainian version of the tale entitled *The Glove* (*Rokavička*, 2021), where the mouse accepts all the animals unconditionally, *Mojca Pokrajculja* calls for a re-assessment of the protagonist's behavior. For instance, Slovenian writer Vinko Möderndorfer, grandson of the collector who wrote down *Mojca Pokrajculja*<sup>10</sup>, interprets the tale from the perspective of the myth concerning the value of hard work. According to him, *Mojca Pokrajculja* »demystifies the greatest myth of the twentieth century, the myth of work, honesty and truth, and at the same time, the Slovenian tale, ironizes the myth of a working nation on the shadow and sunny side of the Alps ... In its demythification of the moral imperatives of humanity, it is relentless, cruel and true« (Möderndorfer, 2002, 99).

9 It is also necessary to mention diploma theses in this field. Nadja Belič (2016) researched, under the mentorship of Milena Mileva Blažić, preschool children's reactions to the fairy tales, including *Mojca Pokrajculja*. Under the mentorship of Tomo Virk, Ines Metličar (2019) researched the perceptions of the characters in *Mojca Pokrajculja* in a group of preschool children and adults / their parents.

10 *Mojca Pokrajculja* was written down by Vinko Möderndorfer (1894–1958) and was first published in 1924 in *Narodne pripovedke iz Mežiške doline* (Folktales from Mežica Valley).



Fig. 1: Characteristic of most contemporary illustrations of the fairy tale *Mojca Pokrajculja* is the visual characterization of the protagonists. This also applies to Marjan Manček's illustrations, while the artist emphasized the role of the protagonists and, in particular, the unfortunate fate of the rabbit, through their facial expressions (*Mojca Pokrajculja*, 2022, cover page).

On the other hand, the most renowned Slovenian fairy tale writers, such as Svetlana Makarovič and Anja Štefan, tried to soften the folktale by bringing it closer to the Ukrainian version, which is also popular in Slovenia. The key questions of these adaptations concern patterns of inclusion and the topic of contributing to the common good. The first issue refers to the role of the fox in this tale. The fox, presented as a personification of hypocrisy, lies and deception in the Slovenian narrative canon is also the most common character in Slovenian animal fairy tales (Kropej Telban, 2015, 35). In the fairy tale *Under the Bear's Umbrella* (*Pod medvedovim dežnikom*), Makarovič (2019) turns the story around in such a way that the kind-hearted bear who takes the animals under his umbrella in the rain is rewarded, while the fox, who denied the animals shelter, is left all alone in the end. Štefan (2015) approached the same fairy tale motif in a different way. In her *Bobek and the Boat* (*Bobek and Barčica*) the main protagonist Bobek, this time in the role of a sailor, also offers entry to





*Fig. 2: More than the role of the protagonists, the Ukrainian version of this fairy tale pushes forward the humanistic idea of unconditional inclusivity. The idea of a possible world where everyone who seeks refuge is welcome is supported by illustrator Hana Stupica with dreamy, melancholic images in the background (Rokavička, 2021).*

the animals on the condition they have skills and can work. He also welcomes the bear on board, which, heavy as it is, sinks the boat. But in this version, it is the fox, which – in addition to her negative characteristics – is also clever and comes up with the idea to build a bigger boat together. With the message that everybody deserves a chance and everybody can contribute to solving problems / the common good, Štefan somehow »resolves« the question of the fox and the bear; i.e. everyone stays as they are, everybody can help in solving common problems, and no one is left alone.

The fairy tale *The Ant and the Lazy Cricket* (ATU 280A) deals even more directly with the issue of the common good, merit and work. At the core of this story is the relationship between the hardworking ants, who gather food in the summer in preparation of the winter months, while the cricket (in the more widespread versions, the grasshopper) sings and makes music during this period. When the winter comes, he seeks refuge with the ants in vain. The tale is a variation of Aesop's fable, which ends with a moral lesson about the importance of work and careful preparation for an uncertain future. The fable was re-interpreted by the French writer Jean de la Fontaine in the 17th century. He kept the original message but he placed the theme of compassion and almsgiving into the story. In addition, in his version, the ants righteously accept the grasshopper, but the tale concludes with an



Fig. 3 and fig. 4: *The tale The Ant and the Lazy Cricket / Grasshopper, based on Aesop's fable, was depicted by prominent French painters and illustrators from the 18th and 19th centuries. While the illustration (wood engravings), created by J. J. Grandville for the edition of Fables de La Fontaine 1838–1840, with its anthropomorphized images of the ant and the grasshopper, still maintains links with the animal protagonists of the fable (picture 3, left), an illustration created by Gustave Doré around 1880 reflects the transfer of the motif to a social context (picture 4, right) (Wikimedia Commons).*

ambiguous ending regarding the value of the artist/ grasshopper in modern society: »You sang, didn't you? Nice. Now dance«. From the 18th century the fable has undergone a series of adaptations, whereby the role of the grasshopper / cricket was increasingly depicted in relation to the position of the artist in modern society, while the writers used this story to expose the pitfalls of a utilitarian mind-set.<sup>11</sup>

The motif also resonated in the Slovenian environment. Almost fifteen different versions of this motif have survived. The 19<sup>th</sup> century adaptation of Slovenian bishop Anton Martin Slomšek (*Kropej Telban*, 2015, 404–408) stands out, while in it, already during summer the cricket receives a long and strict moral lesson about the importance of work in preparation for difficult times. In most Slovenian interpretations, Aesop's original message about the value of hard work is preserved. The only

11 The motif has been used in literature – inter alia – by Jean Anouilh, W. Somerset Maugham, James Joyce, John Updike, while the Italian communist writer Gianni Rodari, in his poem, dismissed all the debates about compassion and alms, initiated by La Fontaine's rendition, with the point that the ant just gives half of its food to the grasshopper.



*Fig. 5 and fig. 6: The illustrations of the tale The Bean, the Straw, and the Coal created by Walter Crane in 1882 for the English translation of Grimm's fairy tales highlight the mischievous laughter of the Bean and the role of the Tailor who – while turning his back to the viewer – sews up the Bean's torn belly (Wikimedia Commons).*

exception is the fairy tale from Rezija, which was recorded in 1969 by the collector Milko Matičetov. In this version the ants agree to shelter the grasshopper in the winter to »sing«, as they »do not know how to do that« (cf. Štefan, 2019, 35–36). Other Slovenian versions also reflect the role of artists and their contribution to the common good. In this respect Maja Kastelic's comic / picture book (2020) stands out, while in her interpretation the ants eventually fall in love with cricket's music.

Fairy tales and folk tales that thematize patterns of inclusion and exclusion, common good, tolerance and empathy are otherwise rare in the narrative tradition. Compared to today's fairy tales, in which these themes are one of the most common in this genre now intended for children, most folktales arise from the feudal world, characterized by a strict tripartite social structure (the clergy, nobility and peasants) and the motto »might is right«. On the other hand, some

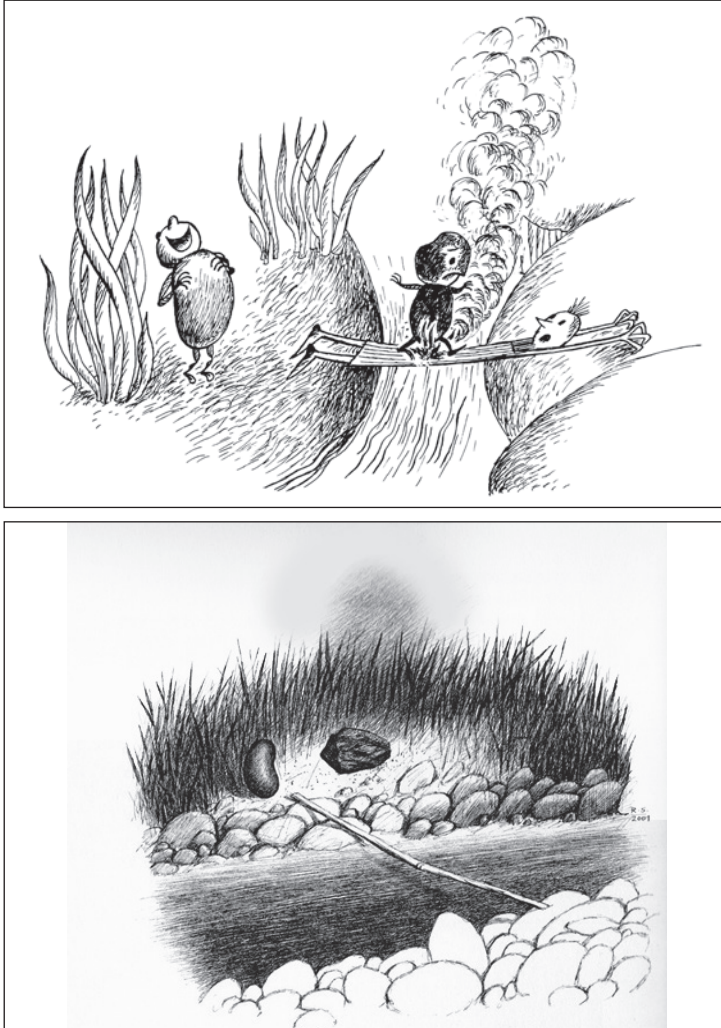


fairy tales that emerged from medieval poetry metaphorically problematize who is entitled to what and how to deal with moral and social dilemmas (Ziolkowski, 2010). Among such narratives, *The Bean, the Straw, and the Coal* (ATU\* 295) stands out. In its most basic form, it tells the story how the Bean, the Straw and the Coal crossed the stream. The Straw offers itself as a footbridge, and when the Coal tries to cross the stream on it, it breaks, and they both fell into the water, while the Bean laughs so hard at their misfortune that it bursts. The evolution of the motif has already been studied in detail (Matičeto, 1959; Grafenauer, 1960; Kropelj Telban, 2015, 427–430).

The fairy tale entitled *The Journey of the Straw, the Coal, and the Bean* (*Strohalm, Kohle und Bohne auf der Reise*) was published in 1812 in the brothers Grimms' first collection *Children's and Household Fairy Tales* (*Kinder- und Hausmärchen*). Later, in 1837, the Grimms published a new version of the tale, which is longer and has a prologue. Analyses show that they drew from two sources. While in the first edition they cite as a source only Dorothee Catharine Wild, the wife of an apothecary in Kassel, in the second edition they mention a humorous hexagram published in 1648 in *Nugae Venales* and a Latin poem from the manuscript entitled *Burkard Waldis*, dated 1542. The latter mentions only a mouse and a coal on a pilgrimage to church, whereby the coal falls into the water, while the mouse does not laugh but responds with penance (cf. Loo, 2014; Grafenauer, 1960).

Different sources cited by the Grimms have led folklorists to different interpretations of the evolution of this motif. It is evident that – in accordance with their approach to processing the material, in this case, oral, and then also archival – the Grimms cleansed the story of all religious content and flattened its initial social layers to push forward the point they were trying to make (Ziolkowski, 2010). If in the 1812 version, two alternative scenarios are mentioned – including the version in which the Bean falls into the stream and his stomach bursts because he drank too much water – in the 1837 collection only the version in which his stomach bursts due to laughing is kept. At the same time, the 1837 version includes direct speech and a prequel, in which it is explained that an elderly woman stokes the fire with straw in order to cook the beans faster. The latter version has all the features of Grimm's fairy tales. Set in a rural setting, it appeals to the lower / middle classes, which is consistent with the Grimms' efforts to consolidate the German folkloric tradition (Norberg, 2022). At the same time, in this version, all the protagonists are psychologically characterized. The role of the Straw who laments the loss of »sixty friends« is pushed to the fore. The Straw, also presented as a problem-solver, selflessly offers itself as a footbridge over the stream. The Bean is presented as an active, reckless character that encourages retreat to »foreign places«, while the Coal is depicted – just like in Aesop's fable about the scorpion and the frog – as a victim of its impulsive »hot-blooded« character (»hitziger Natur«). Through their intervention in the material, the Grimms thus unraveled the possible dilemmas opened up by the





*Fig. 7 and fig. 8: The illustrations of the fairy tale The Bean, the Straw, and the Coal clearly reflect the development and meanings of this motif over the last two centuries. Ančka Gošnik Godec (picture 7, above) visually interpreted the motif in the collection Babica pripoveduje (Brenk, 2021, 124) more kindly, but similarly to Walter Crane's illustrations. The illustration by Rudi Skočir, which he created for Slovenske pravljice (Unuk, 2002, 112), stands out, while the illustration itself reflects the initial dilemma in the fairy tale almost like a mathematical problem (picture 8, below). It should also be noted that the Russian version of this fairy tale, The Bubble, the Straw and the Blast Shoe, also has many visual interpretations. In 1959 the popular cartoon Three Woodsmen, directed by Leonid Amalrik, was created based on this fairy tale motif.*

older narratives, but in such a way that the message can only be determined subjectively, or – as Benjamin suggested – intuitively. Following Matičetov (1959) who noted the important role of The Straw in the story, we could conclude that the Grimm brothers – while taking into account their preference for benevolent but righteousness king (Norberg, 2022) – warned that solidarity, »comradeship« between the oppressed classes is always doomed to failure. Such an ideological reading is, of course, speculative. In this case it can also be misleading because in the end the Grimms focus their attention on the fate of the Bean, whose belly the tailor sews up, but using a black thread. So the message of the tale, which takes the form of an etiological story, remains ambivalent, given the fact that the Grimms surely knew that beans with a black seam do not exist. However, as they insisted on this end to the story, even in 1837 and in later editions, it can be concluded that they intentionally marked the malicious laughter of the Bean with a deep scar.

Milko Matičetov (1959) discovered four versions of this motif in the Slovenian narrative tradition. The oldest, in its most basic form, was written in 1874 by Fran Levstik for the edition of *Vrtec (Kindergarten)*. A new version was published in the same publication in 1892 by Fran Saleški Finžgar, who then reworked the story, entitled *Bobkova zaplata*, for the 1949 edition of school textbooks. Matičetov also cites the versions of the storytellers Lojze Tratar and Ana Kostanjevec, which he recorded himself in the 1960s. But Finžgar's treatments of the motif from 1892 and 1949 stand out, as in both of them – similar to the Grimms – he brought forward the unfortunate fate of the Straw. His versions differ in that the first contains the moralistic thought of a »punishing God«, while the second ends with an etiological point. However, these kinds of renditions were typical of Socialist systems.

It is interesting that in comparison with Ivan Grafenauer's study (1960), Matičetov does not explore this motif within the Swiss versions of the fairy tale, where the Mouse tries to »heal« its torn belly; the latter is presented in the form of cumulative tales, known in the Slovenian environment as the motif of the Mouse that crawled over the fence (ATU 295+2030). Matičetov, on the other hand, points to the Lusatian-Serbian fairy tale *The Three Good Friends*, where one of the protagonists is a Bubble. This version was evidently transmitted from Russian version *The Bubble, the Straw and the Blast Shoe*, in which all the protagonists end up dead. Characteristic of this version is that the Straw has no say in the decision-making. Namely, the Shoe suggests to the Bubble that they should swim across the stream, but in the end the Bubble's suggestion that the Straw should make a bridge is accepted. When the Straw breaks, both of them drown and the Bubble bursts with laughter (Afanas'ev, 1998, 28–29). The message of the Russian fairy tale is most often associated with a necessity for careful planning. What is highlighted is the need to include different aspects in solving the problem. Namely, the Straw has no say in decision-making, even though it »knows« that it will break if a shoe steps on it.

The version that is canonized in the Slovenian environment is younger than those cited by Matičetov and Grafenauer. It was written in dialect by Tine Logar and was adapted by Kristina Brenk for the anthology of Slovenian folk tales *Babica pripoveduje* (2021) and equipped with the explanation that it is a Venetian fairy tale from Saržento at Čedad. This version stands out with three changes in relation to previous versions. Firstly, instead of an opening about an old woman cooking lunch, it opens with a conflict. In the very first sentence it is revealed that the wife is a chatterbox who neglects her household duties, and she hastily made a fire with a straw so that her husband would not get angry again when half-cooked beans are placed on the table. Secondly, the characterization of the protagonists is also different. The Straw, the Coal and the Bean decided together to run away from the kitchen and the Straw also offers itself as a footbridge over the stream. However, in the forefront is the role of the Bean, which, compared to Grimms's and also Finžgar's tales, is allowed to cross the bridge, although he also end up with a burst belly. Finally, in the Slovenian version the Tailor sews up his belly, not with black, but with white thread. In this respect it seems that the story pushes forward etiological explanation. However, with this intervention, the resolution of the initial conflict is being transferred from the involved protagonists to the mediator, to the »third party« (Ury, 2002), i.e. from the Straw to the Tailor. In the inability of the protagonists to act »reasonably«, a third party gains a prominent role, i.e. someone who is able to »sew up« the conflict, but does not know or care about its initial cause.

## CONCLUSION

Folktales, of course, do not offer lessons, and less so moral guidance. They indicate how the space of past experiences, within which the community traditionally seeks solutions to conflicts, is being structured. Because they address dilemmas on an existential, pre-discursive level, from the Life-World, because they are perceived as the last links with the unidentified past of the community, they are effective in exercising this social role even today. In this respect they invoke underlying cognitive matrices through which the political community traditionally thinks itself. Hence attempts to »fix« fairy tales by modern fairy tales writers, knowing that past dilemmas are being transposed into the contemporary socio-political discourse.

In this respect *Mojca Pokrajculja* and *The Ant and the Lazy Cricket* highlight the pitfalls of a utilitarian mind-set in relation to social cohesion, especially with the topical question of who contributes to the common good, thus addressing the notions and role of the Other in Slovenian society (Roma, immigrants from the former Yugoslavia, migrants from the Maghreb and the Middle East, indirectly also the meaning and role of various professions, not only artists, in contributing to the common good and general well-being). All the folktales analyzed, especially *The Bean, the Straw, and the Coal*, thematize the power and powerlessness of deliberation in resolving conflicts, while hinting intuitively at the initial origins of these conflicts.

The present analysis asserts, however, that all readings, interpretations and renditions of the narrative tradition are not only socio-historically conditioned, but inevitably subjective. It should also be emphasized once more that it is not possible to identify specific cognitive or moral matrices that characterize decision-making in a certain community based on particular cases of folktales. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the categorization of collective cognition, it can be stressed that these particular of folktales versions entered into the Slovenian collective subconscious. Retrospectively, it can be concluded – although the selection of today's canonized fairy tales was not random – that they somehow performatively resonate with the cognitive matrices of community and its dilemmas on the intersubjective level (Life-World) and within the System (Habermas, 1984). Finally, the key question is how to deal with tradition in this respect. Habermas claimed the full legitimacy of the principles of the Enlightenment to analyze the pitfalls of teleological »cognitive-instrumental reasoning«. However, acknowledging the tenacity of culturally and traditionally embedded rationality, in particular with a view on their role in community-building, one argues for a more nuanced approach in studying the role of tradition, which ultimately rests on Benjamin's understanding of the value of »past experiences« for today's deliberation.

## KOGNITIVNE MATRICE V SLOVENSKIH LJUDSKIH PRAVLJICAH IN SODOBNE PRAKSE DELIBERACIJE: OD UTILITARISTIČNE MISLI MOJCE POKRAJČULJE DO NEDOUMLJIVEGA FIŽOLČKOVEGA SMEHA

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### POVZETEK

*Namen prispevka je osvetliti, kako ljudske pravljice s specifičnim konceptualiziranjem univerzalnih dilem odražajo kulturno pogojene vzorce odločanja v razmerju do sodobnega družbenopolitičnega diskurza. Ljudske pravljice zato obravnavam najprej kot izraz kognitivno / kulturno pogojenih matric, ki v polju proto-političnega določajo »kognitivno-instrumentalno racionalnost«, vezano na tradicije in kulturne norme (Jürgen Habermas). Te matrice raziskujem z novim pristopom, v katerem povežem sociološko teorijo pravljič, ki upošteva kulturne, komunikacijske in kognitivne vidike v transhistorični in medkulturni transmisiji ljudskih pravljič (Jack Zipes), novejšo teorijo deliberativne demokracije, ki poudarja vpliv družbenozgodovinskih in kulturnih vzorcev na današnje prakse odločanja, ter raziskovalna orodja kognitivne zgodovine. Obenem vpliv kulture in tradicije na današnje vzorce odločanja proučujem v epistemski logiki pripovednega izročila, kjer je v ospredju neintencionalnost, ki zadeva le njegovo skupnost-tvorno vlogo in prenos kolektivnih izkušenj (Walter Benjamin). Empirični del zajema analizo treh slovenskih pravljič: Mojca Pokrajculja, Muren (kobilica) in mravlje in Fižolček, ogelček in slamica. Kognitivne / kulturne matrice slovenske epistemologije osvetlim v transhistorični in primerjalni perspektivi, torej z vidika razvoja tega motiva v slovenskem in v tujih okoljih. V sklepu sugeriram izhodišča za nove raziskave razmerij med kognitivnimi / kulturnimi matricami in sodobnim vzorci odločanja z vidika neizkoriščenih možnosti, ki zadeva vpliv kolektivnih izkušenj v stabilizaciji družbeno-integrativnega diskurza.*

*Ključne besede: ljudske pravljice, kulturna percepcija, vzorci odločanja, deliberativna demokracija, kognitivna zgodovina, študiji primerov*



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## TALES IN SOCIAL PRACTICES OF NATURE WORSHIPPERS OF WESTERN SLOVENIA

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### ABSTRACT

*In this scientific article, the historical counterculture of Nature Worshippers in Western Slovenia is explained with emphasis on social functions of their oral tradition i.e. tales. The latter, recorded and published primarily by Pavel Medvešček – Klančar, were an important part of Nature Worshippers' educational concept. Cosmogonic myths, etiological explanations, animal tales and anecdotes introduced young children to the ethical norms and spiritual life of the community and played an important role in preserving the identity of Nature Worshippers. Detailed contextual and sociological analysis of Nature Worshippers' tales focuses on Pavel Medvešček's 1991 collection *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows* and his 2015 book *From the Invisible Side of the Sky. Revealed Secrets of the Old Belief*.*

**Keywords:** *Nature Worship, Western Slovenia, tales, education, Pavel Medvešček – Klančar*

## I RACCONTI NELLE PRATICHE SOCIALI DEI NATURALISTI RELIGIOSI DELLA SLOVENIA OCCIDENTALE

### SINTESI

*In questo articolo scientifico si analizza la controcultura storica dei naturalisti religiosi nella Slovenia occidentale, approfondendo specialmente le pratiche sociali legate alla narrativa di tradizione orale come riportata e pubblicata soprattutto da Pavel Medvešček – Klančar. I racconti, in dialetto pravce (sost. fem.), costituivano una parte importante del concetto educativo dei naturalisti religiosi. I miti cosmogonici, le interpretazioni etnologiche, i racconti di animali e gli aneddoti introducevano i bambini già da piccoli alle norme etiche e alla vita spirituale della comunità, contribuendo così a conservarne in modo significativo l'identità naturalistica religiosa. Una dettagliata analisi contestuale e sociologica delle pravce (naturalistico-religiose) è incentrata su due lavori di Pavel Medvešček: la collezione di racconti popolari *Na rdečem oblaku vinograd rase* [Su una nuvola rossa cresce un vigneto] pubblicata nel 1991 e il libro *Iz nevidne strani neba. Razkrite skrivnosti staroverstva* [Dal punto cardinale invisibile. I segreti dell'antica fede svelati] del 2015.*

**Parole chiave:** *naturalismo religioso, Slovenia occidentale, pravce, educazione, Pavel Medvešček – Klančar*



## A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO NATURE WORSHIP IN WESTERN SLOVENIA<sup>1</sup>

In late 2015, the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Arts and Sciences (ZRC SAZU) published a book entitled *From the Invisible Side of the Sky. Revealed Secrets of the Old Belief* (*Iz nevidne strani neba. Razkrite skrivnosti staroverstva*) by Slovenian ethnographer and collector Pavel Medvešček – Klančar<sup>2</sup>. The book immediately resounded with the public, while the scientific community has not yet paid it attention in proportion to its importance. Instead, Medvešček's ethnography rose doubts with some ethnologists on authenticity of published data that I consider having been dispersed by now on convincing grounds (Hrobat Virloget, 2022, 16–21; Toplak, 2022, 48–52).

On almost 600 pages, Pavel Medvešček revealed exclusive and well documented ethnographic records, mainly composed of interviews conducted with residents of remote hilly areas of Western Slovenia in the period from 1950 to 1978. The contents of these interviews could not be revealed earlier due to the oath of secrecy required of Pavel Medvešček by his interviewees after they had confided in him and partially co-opted him into their secret community.

The now widely spread use of the term Old Believers for this historical counterculture<sup>3</sup> is a problematic exonym for several reasons. I will therefore be referring to its members in this text as Nature Worshipers, which is one of their endonyms and a choice I have thoroughly explained in another recent publication (Toplak, 2022, 53–4).

When discovered by Pavel Medvešček in mid-20th century, the Nature Worshipers' community had been reduced to a few dozen elderly single male members, called *uncles*. According to their oral tradition, however, prior to the First World War at least several hundred people all together may still have been part of it in the Soča River valley. The existence of the community was concealed due to constant persecution perpetrated by the clergy and intolerant members of the Catholic majority. It was this utmost secrecy and geographic isolation in very remote subalpine and Dinaric areas of Western Slovenia as well as efficient leadership and organised defence against outer threats that decisively contributed to the survival of the community which, again according to their tradition, lasted centuries.

Nature Worshipers' was a religious way of life thoroughly aligned with awe-inspiring nature or, in words of Pavel Medvešček's principal informer Janez

1 This paper is the result of research carried out in the research project "Social Functions of Fairy Tales" (J6-1807) founded by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS).

2 Klančar was the name of the homestead where Pavel Medvešček was born (»At Klančar's«). He may have wished to emphasize his roots and attachment to his home region by using Klančar as second surname at times. In official documents, he was Pavel Medvešček.

3 Term 'counterculture' applies to subcultures that are not only different from the mainstream culture, but in many aspects of their practices and values opposite to the mainstream culture (Yinger, 1960, 626).

Strgar, “Religion is finite. Our ancient belief, however, is fundamental and eternal like nature which constantly renews itself and changes and therefore survives” (Medvešček, 2015, 275). Nature Worshipers’ value system was based on radical biocentrism,<sup>4</sup> loyalty to ancestral land (rather than abstract and alienated state), tradition, honesty, reciprocity, modesty, tolerance, generosity, solidarity, and dignity.

Nature Worship ideology centred on primeval Creatrix, Nikrmana,<sup>5</sup> who was referred to as “she” but appeared to individual community members as clouds, lightnings, rainbows, various animals etc. A purportedly older Great Mother (Nature) cult was also remembered at places; however, only one member of the community equalled the Great Mother to Nikrmana (Medvešček, 2015, 114). Sun, the giver of light and warmth needed by all living beings, was also worshipped, particularly at solstices, which were the Nature Worshipers’ most important holidays. The moon was, however, even more venerated celestial body by them for its obvious power over nature and above all, over water. Protective and fertilizing power of concrete or abstract triads called *tročans*<sup>6</sup> was managed via ritually empowered stones with embedded eyes called *snake heads*, and sacred megaliths called *matjars*<sup>7</sup>. Spatial *tročans* consisting of areas between sacred hilltops, riverbeds and underground caves were connected into a network once reportedly covering the entire “Nature Worshipers’ land” and turning the latter into a Foucauldian heterotopia with respect to Nature Worshipers’ non-suspecting Christian neighbours.<sup>8</sup>

Nature Worship included elements rather typical of nature religion belief-systems such as animism, totemism, worship of omnipresent ancestors, veneration of sacred riverbeds, mountains, and subterranean caves, as well as of sacred trees and sacred animals. Taboos and ritual use of hallucinogens were also part of it. Nature Worshipers believed in transmigration of the “soul” (*zduhec*)<sup>9</sup> after death into a new body of individual choice. They rejected Christian religious features, such as anthropomorphising deities, sin, guilt, atonement, hell and heaven, idolatry, priestly mediation between man and God, and mass rites, or fundamentally transformed them such as prayer or pilgrimage.<sup>10</sup> Still, numerous elements of Nature Worship

4 Biocentrism is an ideology opposite to anthropocentrism; from biocentric perspective humans are but one species in the ecosystem within which every species and every individual possesses inherent value and has the right to pursue their interests (Taylor, 1986).

5 The word Nikrmana (also pronounced Nekrmana or Nejkrmana by some) lends itself to many possible translations and interpretations. Pleterski (2015, 23) claimed that it may have been invented by the Nature Worshipers for security purposes. I would argue at this time in my ongoing research of Nature Worship that Nikrmana could possibly stem from Lat. Necromantia (‘speaking to the dead’) and, like Old Belief, may be an exonym rather than endonym.

6 Pl. of *tročan*. From *trojica*, *trojka* – a group of three units.

7 Pl. of *matjar*. The etymology of this word is currently unclear.

8 Literally “other space”, a heterotopia is a territory where a nonhegemonic social paradigm is enacted; it is “a space in relation to all other spaces, but in a way that suspends, neutralizes or distorts the whole of the relations that space creates, reflects, and thinks” (Foucault, 1967, 3).

9 From dim. for *duh* – spirit or from arch. *vzduh*, air.

10 On prayers cf. Medvešček, 2015, 70, 136. On pilgrimage cf. Medvešček, 2015, 50.

appear reflections of corresponding Christian beliefs and practices (or vice versa) which poses interpretative challenges as to the historical and ideational origin of Nature Worship. I argue that coexistence with intolerant Catholics prompted Nature Worshipers to practice deliberate and intentional “dual faith” (*dvoeverie*<sup>11</sup>) as an infra-political strategy, which must have contributed to significant modifications of original Nature Worship over time despite Nature Worshipers’ strong cultural defence reflex.

Nature Worshipers’ community was mostly biological although individuals born in Catholic families were sometimes co-opted, especially those with seer abilities. The members of the secret community sought no converts and let their members convert to Catholicism if they so desired. The Catholic majority’s attitude towards Nature Worshipers was mostly one of persecution, desecration, and violence inciting (dis)simulation, survival compromises, mimicry, boycott, infra politics<sup>12</sup> and active resistance on the side of the threatened minority. Outmost secrecy maintained by oaths was one of important Nature Worshipers’ defences; it included use of pseudonyms in communication among community members as well as denial of any knowledge on community leaders and their assistants to their surroundings.

Nature Worshipers’ community had a secret territorial administration running parallel to official administrative structures. Every autonomous administrative unit, called *hosta*,<sup>13</sup> had a religious and political leader, *dehnar*.<sup>14</sup> The latter was selected by the ruling *dehnar* according to meritocratic principles and after a prolonged training. The *dehnar* ruled autonomously over a *hosta* with the assistance of three *sworn-in* [men].<sup>15</sup> The *dehnars* pursued communal economic policies (barter, seed banks, mutual loans, distribution of food stocks) and enforced survival strategies in the interest of all community members. They coordinated an efficient healthcare network for people, animals, and plants, maintained by itinerant healers of both genders. They judged by principles of reciprocity andlottocracy, and headed a repressive apparatus, called the Black Watch (*Črna*

11 Dvoeverie is a polemical concept in Slavic studies denoting among other things co-existence of two different belief-systems and a form of resistance to Christianity (Vukelič, 2012, 343–7).

12 Scott (1990) identified the infra-political as the cultural and structural substratum of those more visible forms of action which attract scholarly attention. It allows political actors to retain, uphold or perpetuate their capacity for agency when political context precludes any serious chance of making tangible political gains (Chvasta, 2006, 5–6). Deprived of access to legitimate channels for expression, people cannot and will not articulate their claims via the conventional political channels but will resort to action ‘below the radar’ to reclaim their dignity, be it individually or collectively.

13 Vern. for forest. Hosta may also represent a primordial social form, predating, parallel and/or incorporated in the historical basic social organisational unit of Ancient Slavs, the *župa* (Toplak, 2019, 31–2).

14 Possibly from Dechant, Old High German term for a minor official in charge of ten households or settlements.

15 Two of the *sworn men* came second best to the *dehnar* in the long training for leadership, while the third was appointed by the members of the *hosta* (Medvešček, 2015, 66).

*vahta*),<sup>16</sup> for security purposes. The extremely secretive Black Watch, composed of three unmarried men, performed tasks of investigators, intelligence service, persecutors, and executors on those threatening community members and on offenders within the community. The *dehnars* regularly met at the regional level and possibly coordinated their actions.

During the 20th century, the Nature Worshippers' community gradually disintegrated due to environmental destruction and human loss, especially that of their leaders *dehnars*, caused by both World Wars. Modernisation processes (infrastructure construction, industrialisation, and urbanisation) severed the inter-generational ties and depopulated remote rural areas.

### NATURE WORSHIPPERS (RE)PRODUCTION OF TRADITION

Nature Worshippers' was a patriarchal, but also "tender" culture (Hofstede, 2001, 297) focused as its members were on interpersonal relations and communal wellbeing.<sup>17</sup> The nucleus of Nature Worshippers' society was the family symbolised by the "blood *tročan*" of father, mother, and child, and considered vital to the survival of the community (Medvešček, 2015, 455).

The Nature Worshippers' community maintained a non-institutionalized and non-dogmatic life-long knowledge (re)production and education system. While the *dehnars* took on secular as well as spiritual leadership and offered advice and instruction to any member in need, seers (*vidoni*)<sup>18</sup> and the learned (*veduni*)<sup>19</sup> of both genders focused on the production of knowledge by observations and experiments. In absence of writings,<sup>20</sup> Nature Worshippers transferred knowledge by oral tradition and placed great value in their word, especially in promises and oaths.

Nature Worshippers did not maintain schools of the kind introduced by local authorities from the 19th century onwards, and the children of Nature Worshippers also had to attend public schools after elementary education had been made mandatory. Since the educational content in public schools was heavily influenced by Catholicism and often contrary to what the Nature Worshippers themselves taught their children, the latter were protected from harmful confusion thus produced by a special amulet, called *krint*, which every Nature Worshippers' child secretly wore on them to school.<sup>21</sup> Children were warned that they might hear strange teachings from the "non ours" and were told to "think as you feel and believe not as you are being preached

16 Vern. for guard (from Ger. Wacht).

17 For details on Nature Worshippers' social structure and organisation cf. Toplak, 2022, 47–70.

18 From *videti* – to see.

19 From *vedeti* – to know.

20 Rare written sources were reportedly produced primarily by the *dehnars* but none has been identified yet.

21 The *krint* was a small flat pebble with the surface divided into four partitions, or four triangles, by natural lines in the stone that had a common centre point. "Krint radiated great power and thus repelled what was imposed on [the children]" (Medvešček, 2015, 93).

to” (Medvešček, 2015, 93). Nature Worshipers taught their children tolerance that was not reciprocated by their Catholic school mates (Medvešček, 2015, 493) and was well resumed in words of one of my informers: “Help the Other or leave them alone!”. Another traumatic difference between the Catholic school environment and Nature Worshipers’ counterculture was corporal punishment commonly practised in schools, while Nature Worshipers opposed violence against children (Medvešček, 2015, 463) and took example in upbringing from wild animals that do not punish or abuse their offspring.<sup>22</sup> Also, children born out of wedlock, stigmatised by Catholics, were for Nature Worshipers rather a consequence of reckless and immature behaviour (Medvešček, 2015, 92). Another difference that must have been difficult to comprehend for children was Nature Worshipers’ much more tolerant attitude toward the body and bodily functions embodied in the semantics: while Catholics called genitals ‘shame’,<sup>23</sup> for Nature Worshipers genitals were simply *natura*.

Natural Worship schooling began with tales that introduced small children to the spiritual life of the community without coercion and dogmatism and gradually instilled in them the community’s ethical norms. Most tales invited children to relate to nature, especially to Nature Worshipers’ sacred animals and plants. The children’s tales did not directly teach Nature Worship, yet they contained its elements, which thus early became familiar to the children. Nature Worshiper Janez Strgar explained the use of tales in children’s upbringing quite aligned with Walter Benjamin claim that fairy tale was “the first tutor of children” (Benjamin, 1936, 11):

*You will probably be disappointed. But there were no lessons, as in other religions. Everything happened at home and very slowly. We explained things to the children in such a way that they understood. Only when they were old enough to help in the house and on the farm, a particular issue was brought up and explained to them as thoroughly as possible. During breaks and in the evenings, they were treated to special explanations related to many stories about ghosts, Babja Cave, Jazbenk,<sup>24</sup> snake heads and more. This initiation was carried out in the same way as it is done with the cultivation of trees. In the end, to our delight, the fruits ripened (Medvešček, 2015, 70).*

Medvešček also learned from his interlocutors that tales were told primarily in winter in kitchens when shortage of light and work also kept adults inside

22 The Call That Won’t Go Out is a poignant tale that Pavel Medvešček recorded in Grudnica on the Banjška plateau and renders a particularly good insight in Nature Worshipers’ attitude towards children: “The calls that travel the longest and deepest are those connected with love or fear. Then come the calls by children, although many of these calls remain in their chests, because they are unable to speak out in the world of adults to get help. If this is the case, the adults are to blame because they bully them instead of loving them” (Medvešček & Skrt, 2016, 129).

23 Slov. *sram*. Cf. Medvešček, 2015, 532, 202.

24 The Babja Cave was the most important Nature Worshipers’ sacred site on the left bank of the Soča River. Jazbenk was a sacred chasm on the Banjška Plateau nearby.



(Medvešček, 2015, 131). The custom of telling and listening to stories died out with the introduction of radio and television. In words of another important Pavel Medvešček's informer Tone Kopoviščar, the Nature Worshippers "used to spend evenings and workfree days talking. We listened to what some among us knew or had lived through. At present however, when I walk past houses in daytime or at night, I hear echoes of the same voices everywhere" (Medvešček, 2015, 109).

When children got older, the initiation to Nature Worship continued with *bratinja*<sup>25</sup>, an up to one-week intensive instructive gathering conducted by the *dehnar*. Most Nature Worshippers attended at least three *bratinjas* in their lifetime. According to Pavel Medvešček, the *bratinjas* "represented a kind of preparation for life for Nature Worshippers' youth", where they learned community rules on how "to live and behave towards fellow human beings and nature" (Medvešček, 2015, 561). During the *bratinjas*, the *dehnar* was able to assess the abilities of young individuals to eventually select his successor. Adults seeking advice also often came to *bratinjas* held by the *dehnar*.<sup>26</sup>

As practically all Nature Worshippers, the *dehnar* was primarily a farmer, but in the "distant past" he was also the only literate (Medvešček, 2015, 75). For example, the *dehnar* in the remote area of Volčanski Ruti near Tolmin read books on history, fruit growing, poetry, the national emancipation struggle and alcohol addiction; he must have mastered at least German language in addition to Slovenian (Medvešček & Skrt, 2016, 13–18). With all his extended knowledge, the *dehnar* did not teach or learn *per se*; rather, he transmitted information and wisdom through conversation and example. He himself constantly received knowledge from his inner teacher *zduhec* and the ancestors and transferred it on to those who were receptive to it. There was no absolute authority in this way of (re)producing knowledge; the teacher did not have to be always right. Learning lasted indefinitely and was not judges by grades. It took place gradually and was adapted to the circumstances in a safe home environment, without dividing students by age, assessment, comparison, and competition. The social framework of this education system was not a group of foreigners of the same generation as in public schools, but was rather inter-generational within the extended family, and community.

Since according to Nature Worshippers' ideology, everything in the world was interlinked and interdependent, connections between pieces of information were freely established and learning could not be strictly divided onto distinct areas of content. The goal of education was not the promotion of the individual, but the survival and well-being of the community.

25 From *bratenje* – friendly gathering (*brat* – brother).

26 Janez Strgar probably also had the *bratinjas* in mind when he warned Pavel Medvešček about his deficient Nature Worship education upon Medvešček's co-optation into the community: "It is as if someone does not go to school and therefore remains illiterate. True, you can learn later, but this is not real schooling, which at the same time gives you much more" (Medvešček, 2015, 63).

The tradition remained important throughout Nature Worshipers' lives:

*If you wanted to learn important life rules and duties, you had to, were you lucky enough, learn all this at home, from the old tree trunk consisting of grandfathers and grandmothers, along with uncles, aunts, and parents. It was the only way of living and surviving in this "rocky paradise". Your [Christian] neighbour, often dwelling far away from you, could not be a reliable support or adviser, let alone teacher (Medvešček, 2015, 154).*

Tales were thus a self-evident and continuous element of Nature Worshipers' lives from early age when they were their recipients, to adult and old age when many also became their transmitters. Nature Worshipers mainly referred to them as *pravce*,<sup>27</sup> *štorje*,<sup>28</sup> or tales without distinguishing among these terms as to their content. Besides the *dehnars* and older relatives, tales were also told by the *čelebrins*<sup>29</sup> (Medvešček, 2015, 205) who seemed to be (itinerant) storytellers and who took on to entertain children and adults in exchange of food and accommodation (Medvešček, 2015, 343). Tales for adults were also told by afore mentioned *uncles* who, out of boredom and often under the influence of alcohol, in wintertime when there was not much else to do than sit around the fire, enjoyed simultaneous invention of tales. Such a tale was called *izmišljija* or *zmišljica*<sup>30</sup> and was made up by passing the word from one eager storyteller to another (Medvešček, 2015, 281–3). Unfortunately, the admission of this custom also threw initial doubts of authenticity over the entire Medvešček's ethnography pertaining to Nature Worship (Pleterski, 2015, 23).

## (CON)TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF NATURE WORSHIPPERS' TALES

For the contextual and sociological analysis of Nature Worshipers' tales two sources above all will be referred to: *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows – Tales and Stories from the Matajur to the Korada* (Medvešček, 1991) and *From the Invisible Side of the Sky. Revealed Secrets of the Old Belief* (Medvešček, 2015).

*On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows* is a transcript of 117 tales told to Pavel Medvešček in the period 1950–1957 by the inhabitants of the Idrija River valley and the immediate surroundings. The Idrija River has been the historical border between Slovenia and Italy with a significant Slovenian dialect speaking minority living also on the Italian side of the border in the region Veneto-Friuli and adhering to the same local culture.

27 Vern. for *pravljica* – fairy tale.

28 From It. *storia* – story.

29 Perhaps from It. *celebrare* – to perform.

30 From *izmišljati* – to invent, to make up.

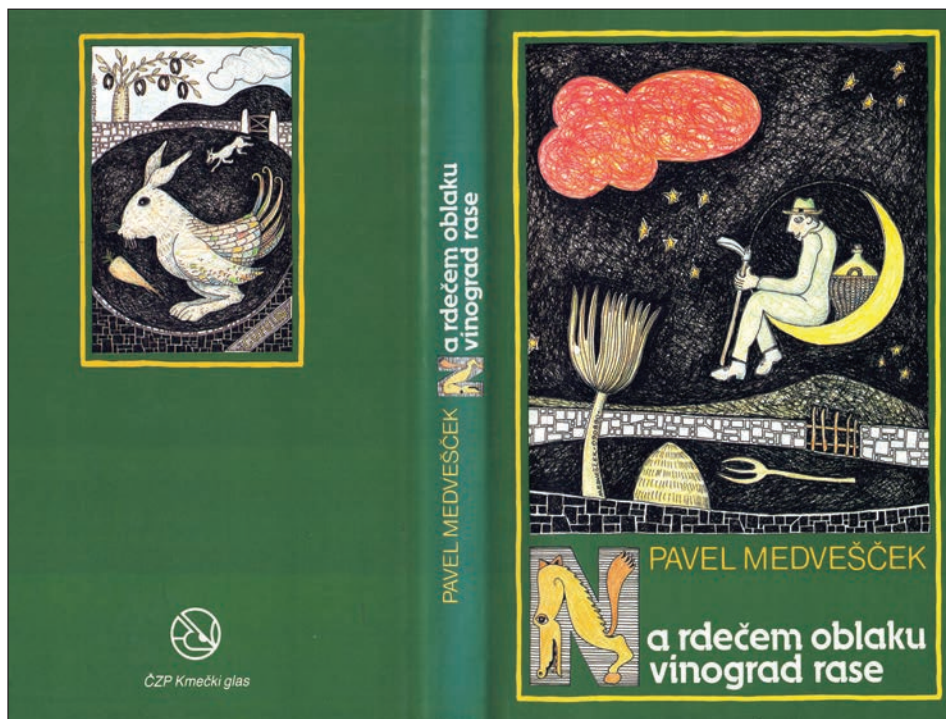


Fig. 1: Book cover of *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows*, collected, written and illustrated by Pavel Medvešček (Medvešček, 1991).

By publishing *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows* in 1991, decades after having recorded the tales, Pavel Medvešček possibly tried to draw attention of the public to the forgotten underdeveloped and depopulated border region of the Idrija River valley. In his foreword, he described how he had got acquainted with the region as a child and how he later covered all its territory on foot. He detailed regional economic, political, and social history, depicting its close historical ties with the immediate vicinity on the Italian side of the border. He argued the peak of prosperity in the region to have been in the 19<sup>th</sup> century judging by the highest ever number of inhabitants back then and by the quality of architectural heritage from that era.<sup>31</sup> Medvešček emphasised how inhabitants of the Idrija valley suffered under Italian mid-War occupation and how devotedly they supported anti-Fascist Resistance during Second World War despite their poverty. Their ultimate vindication came only in 1947 when the Idrija River valley was made part of Slovenian/Yugoslav territory.

31 At the time of visiting in the early 1950s Pavel Medvešček was studying graphic design and in 1961 he started working for the regional authority on cultural heritage conservation.

However, the Idrija River valley people felt let down by the Socialist regime that put a lot of economic and propaganda pressure on them. The disappointed, Medvešček assumed, probably developed “a sort of defence mechanism that others advantageously interpreted as a betrayal of homeland” (Medvešček, 1991, 7). Subsequently, many young locals emigrated abroad. The “wartime preachers” on prospects of the brave new Socialist world never returned and the Idrija River valley had slowly been dying ever since. In Cold War circumstances, researching and even only circulating along the border separating two global ideological paradigms was very difficult, Medvešček remembered. Amidst all hardship, especially elderly people were all the keener to reminisce of old times with nostalgia and continued to cling to their ancient traditions. When almost four decades later, Medvešček returned to the Idrija River valley prior to the publication of *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows*, he witnessed depopulation, subsequent reforestation and rewilding, and ancient traditions having sunk into oblivion. Without any revival initiative from state or local authorities, Medvešček finally accused, “this holy Slovenian soil, soaked in sweat and blood of our grandfathers and grand grandfathers is condemned to shame and isolation at the extreme margin of our homeland” (Medvešček, 1991, 7).



Fig. 2: Pavel Medvešček's map of the Idrija region (Medvešček, 1990, inside cover).





*Fig. 3: Pavel Medvešček – Klančar (Photo: Jože Suhadolnik).*

It may have been a set of personal and other circumstances (financial obstacles, work overload, oath of secrecy to the Nature Worshippers) that led to the publication of the collection *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows* in 1991. Yet, it was also precisely the time when Slovenia was undergoing the process of secession from Socialist Yugoslavia and acquiring independence; thus it may also have been that Pavel Medvešček decided that national political situation was appropriate to remind of the forgotten and stigmatised Idrija River valley. The foreword to the collection is charged with implicit current political content and explicit local patriotism, while hardly any attention is paid to collection itself. More, Pavel Medvešček is critical toward his own recording effort, calling it “very amateur”, inconsistent and reckless (Medvešček, 1991, 10). And still, he decided to publish it at the historical moment that would have



turned *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows* into a vehicle to reinforce the idea of integrity of Slovenian ethnic territory and political entity. Unfortunately, the exact reason why the collection only came out in 1991 cannot be known since Pavel Medvešček – Klančar passed away in 2020, an irreparable loss for Slovenian culture.

*On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows* was divided by Pavel Medvešček into six chapters each introduced by a folk poem. According to Stanonik, “most of the tales [in the collection] are not pure examples of a certain genre; this is rather an intertwining of mythical and fairy tale elements [...], however, the composition does not appear eclectic, rather, it creates a page-turning tension” (Stanonik, 1991). The classification of tales by Pavel Medvešček appears broadly founded on fairy tales, magical creatures, and superstition; tales on plants; tales on animals; “philosophical” tales; historical tales and myths of origin; and anecdotes. It may be assumed that it was, rather than methodical and analytical, a result of author’s intuition and viewpoints which is often the case with fairy tale collections (Lévi Strauss, 2005, 223).

Indeed, Pavel Medvešček confirmed that to some extent by the following description of his working methods when recording the tales:

*I was visiting villages and settlements at random and without any planned program. Back then I had no intention either to systematically edit or process what I collected from people and was of interest. For that, I had no prior training or instructions whatsoever, [I therefore] recorded only those tales that I found interesting, or I had not heard before. That is why many tales remained unrecorded and probably lost (Medvešček, 1991, 10).*

Albeit they should not be applied rigidly (Kropej Telban, 2021, 39), classifications do provide a useful analytical foundation. Tales in general may be historical, heroic, etiological, mythical, legendary, funny, and scary tales (Kropej Telban, 2021, 44).<sup>32</sup> In accordance with the basic classification of folk tale genres (Kropej Telban, 2021, 31–47), *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows* includes a little bit of everything: myths (of origin), legends (on lives of saints), fairy tales, animal tales, horror stories, funny stories, anecdotes, and personal memories (*memorata*). However, there are hardly any fairy tales *per se*. According to Kropej Telban’s classification criteria, the most fairy tale-like are *Utana*, *How the Princess Married the Stone Mason* and *The Goshawk with a Golden Beak* (Medvešček, 1991, 44, 59, 103). The rest of items in the collection are folk tales or stories that depict an unusual, supernatural, or historic event presented as a true story (Kropej Telban, 2021, 42).

32 This and other available definitions/classifications designed by folklore theorists such as Max Luthi, Annti Arne and Stith Thompson were taken up by Slovenian folklorists such as Ivan Grafenauer, Milko Matičetov, Marija Stanonik, and most recently Monika Kropej Telban (2021).

An important number of tales in the collection refer to magical creatures, such as *lintuar*, *ludro*, *mrkucin*, *vedolja*, *kozlink*, *duja baba*, *dobrinika*, *vodovnica*, *mavra*. *Štrija*, appearing in four tales, was a witch with magical powers, quite like *duja baba* or wild woman.<sup>33</sup> While *dobrinika* and *vodovnica* were good fairies, *tantaua* or temptation comes across as a version of the devil. *Kozlink* was half man-half goat. These imaginary beings are often described in contexts that let transpire how real they were to the teller: the reader gets an impression that these beings are a fact of local community's everyday existence. In some tales, concrete instructions are explained how to deal with these creatures when one ventures upon them. That is why they may be considered tales rather than fairy tales. Some of the tales on spirits and magical creatures could also be considered cautionary scary tales or *strašnice*<sup>34</sup>.

Over 30 items out of 117 in the collection are etiological “how and/or why” stories, i.e. they provide a simple and easily memorable explanation for some natural or cultural phenomenon and could certainly be made of use in children upbringing to satisfy their curiosity and to warn them of life's challenges and dangers.

Animal tales predictably include animals from local natural environment such as horse, crow, goshawk, pig, lizard, silkworm, wolf. Out of these, only cats had been given a negative connotation (when possessed by the magical creature *lintuar*). Imaginary animals also abound such as *kvaternik*, *kačon*, *cufulin*, *duja riba*, three-headed bear and golden goat. The Golden Goat (Medvešček, 1991, 135) tells a variation of a common Slovenian folk tradition on mythical Attila's treasure buried somewhere in Slovenian soil. Attila's army that crossed current Slovenian territory in the 5<sup>th</sup> century from east to west to invade the Friuli plain had been memorised in folklore well despite the time distance which made ethnologists hypothesize that Attila may have been confused with later invading armies such as the Ottomans (Šmitek, 2011, 271–2). Similar tales on the golden goat also appear in other tale collections, even an eponymous one (Stress et al, 2008) but they are not connected with the iconic item of all-Slovenian folklore, the legend of Zlatorog (The Chamois with Golden Horns).

Beside the golden goat, there are very few motives in *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows* that remotely refer to what has been selected by ethnographers and ethnologists from the recorded oral tradition as “Slovenian folk tales”: Wild Woman (*Duja baba*) vaguely reminds of St. Nicholas's doings, Tamurgasti recalls carnival customs, while King Matevž is a version of another iconic Slovenian folk tale, King Matjaž. Among magical creatures, some like *lintuar* have been made part of all-Slovenian folk tale repertoire (Dapit & Kropelj, 2004, 8–9), while the elusive *ludro* for example seems an exclusively local tradition.

33 Wild (wo)man or *ajd* (from Ger. *Heide*, pagan) was in folk tradition a common reference to mythical remaining pagan population in remote areas.

34 From *strašiti* – to scare.

Of the few tales in the collection referring to Slovenian folklore in any way, King Matevž is the closest to the all-Slovenian folk tradition. On the other hand, the tale of Desetinica, the Tenth Daughter, which is also a very popular Slovenian fairy tale, is an entirely different story in *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows*.<sup>35</sup>

Considering parallels and synchronicities between *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows* and what is nowadays deemed Slovenian folk tale tradition, let me reiterate that Pavel Medvešček composed the content of the collection arbitrarily, according to availability of tellers, his own interest and what ethnographic material he had been able to preserve in more than four decades between recording and publication. Also, what we now consider Slovenian folk tale tradition has been a product of constant selections: by those who chose or not to transmit oral tradition, by those who decided or not to record a particular tale and finally by those who decided to popularize or omit a particular tale in collections that contributed to keeping folk tale tradition alive and spreading tales among Slovenian-reading public until certain local tales have been accepted as “Slovenian”. This process, aptly described by D. B. Rotar as “picking from the past” in his eponymous critique of Slovenian historiography (Rotar, 2007) is typical of not only creation of national folk tradition opus, but also of national history as such, especially within processes of national political emancipation in which historiography played an important role of an ethnic community’s cohesion-inducing narrative. Thus, tales now considered Slovenian folk tales had all been recorded as local tales and have been “upgraded” to a national status by arbitrary selection or even conscious political agenda of their recorders. Despite being a living treasure of communities’ pasts, “national” folklore as it has been passed down to the present is therefore also “invented tradition” that nationalist ideology relies on (Hobsbawm, 1983).

Another common category of tales that is barely present in *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows* are tales of origin. The few tales in question do not provide explicit explanation on creation proper, as do numerous Nature Worshipers’ tales included in *From the Invisible Side of the Sky* (Medvešček, 2015, 116, 128, 273, 363 sq.). Rather, they explain settlement of the Idrija region such as The Blonds, the Black-haired and the Brown-haired (Medvešček, 1991, 52) that recounts cultural contact and interaction in the regional past dominated as it was by the Soča river. The other tale of origin, Idra and Kamber, introduces a

35 Unlike the conventional Desetnica, who was born in a well-off family and was randomly chosen to leave home, Desetinica is the tenth child in a very poor family and was sold away to work as a small child. The tale then describes her as doomed to also give birth to ten children and is, rather than a fairy tale populated by magical creatures like the conventional Desetnica, a story about inescapability of faith and the strength of women facing life’s challenges, perhaps meant for adults as well as children. In theory, Deset(i)nica also stands for a cautionary tale on the deceptiveness of homonyms in comparative cultural analysis brought forward by contemporary subaltern studies (De Castro, 2009, 39–40).



Fig. 4: Pavel Medvešček's illustration of the tale *The Blonds, the Black-Haired and the Brown-Haired* (Medvešček, 1990, 53).



giant fish Idra as a metaphor for river and a giant eagle Kamber as a metaphor for the Kambreško hill range (Medvešček, 1991, 171). Historic tales in the collection include common Slovenian motives such as Ottoman invasions, wars, migrations, and epidemics.

Finally, Pavel Medvešček included in the collection several anecdotes on groups of people and memorable individuals. Some of these individuals truly stand out and, along with some of the etiological narratives in the collection, invite the research question that titles the next chapter.

### IS ON A RED CLOUD A VINEYARD GROWS A RECORD OF NATURE WORSHIP TALE TRADITION?

Considering Pavel Medvešček's ethnographic opus on Nature Worship in Western Slovenia, a pertinent analytical challenge regarding *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows* is whether could this collection be considered a source on Nature Worshipers' folk tale tradition. In general, especially historic tales in the collection were recognized as "so connected with concrete life that can be considered an important source, even a document of the past" (Stanonik, 1991). Reviewing the collection soon after publication, Kogej also argues that *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows* could be used as historical source (Kogej, 1992, 441). In 1992, there was no public knowledge on the existence of Nature Worshipers. Did Pavel Medvešček include some hints in *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows* to alleviate the burden of secrecy he was to carry on for the following 17 years the same way he did in his 1992 ethnographic collection *The Secret and Sacredness of Stone (Skrivnost in svetost kamna)* and the 2006 *Flight into the Shadow of the Moon (Let v lunino senco)*? Present but also absent elements to be discussed below indeed point in that direction.

Only 6 items out of 117 tales in the collection refer to not God, but Creator.<sup>36</sup> The Slovenian countryside having been pious and devoted to the Catholic Church, especially since Counter-Reformation era, the absence of Catholic markers and Christian legends in general is noticeable. While phrases like "God forbid" or "God have mercy" do appear a few times, only one tale undoubtedly refers to the Catholic God (Medvešček, 1991, 125) and three tales explicitly to the devil (Medvešček, 1991, 56, 68, 169), also mentioned casually elsewhere. Angels only appear in three tales.<sup>37</sup> There is only one legend, referring to deeds of locally popular St. Anton (Medvešček, 1991, 88), and a general absence of miracles in tales' contents. Nature Worshipers did not believe in miracles as their lifeworld, in Habermasian sense of the term, was a making of natural processes, not of some miraculous divine will.

36 Tales 20, 94, 21, 28, 38, 47. It should be noted that Nature Worshipers' creator Nikrmana was referred to as "she" yet was described as multi-form and was thus possibly a multi-gender or non-gender deity (Pleterski, 2022, 135).

37 Tales 32, 43, 105. References to angels could also allude to Nature Worshipers' *zduhec*.



The silence over typical Catholic content is interestingly consistent with a particular impact of Nature Worship on Western Slovenia that can also be identified by what is missing and not only by what is present space-wise; the telling “absence of presence” of Christian roadside crosses, columns, and chapels in the territory historically acculturated by Nature Worshippers I addressed in detail in another text (Toplak, 2022, 81–2). However, the absence of Catholic content in tales may also be Medvešček’s (un)conscious choice and thus cannot weigh importantly in this inquiry.

Another notable absence that would make sense, if tales were part of Nature Worship tradition, is that of tales of origin. The latter abound in *From the Invisible Side of the Sky* but their content is very different or opposite to the rich all-Slovenian tradition in that genre due to the counter-Christian religious foundation of Nature Worship.<sup>38</sup> Even if Pavel Medvešček recorded more explicit such tales in the Idrija region in the 1950s, he probably would have abstained to include them in the collection in 1991 when he was still under oath of secrecy on Nature Worship.

The geographical area covered by the collection corresponds to the Nature Worshippers’ dwelling territory, as was later revealed in further Medvešček’s publications. Dispersed throughout tales are references to settlements and farmsteads that feature in *From the Invisible Side of the Sky* as Nature Worship strongholds: Vogrinski, Kuščarji, Lukač, Kopovišče etc. The Matajur and the Korada mentioned in the title of the collection feature prominently in Nature Worship tradition as sacred sites. Matajur, especially, was the most important hilltop to Nature Worshippers on the right bank of the Soča, and was sometimes referred to as the Great Mother.

Tale collecting in the Idrija valley and the immediate surroundings took place in the early years of Medvešček’s ethnographic efforts. He may or may have not yet been aware then of the existence of Nature Worshippers’ community, although, judging by the information on recording time of interviews in *From the Invisible Side of the Sky*, he could have recorded tales published in *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows* at the same time as pertinent information on Nature Worship later published in *From the Invisible Side of the Sky*, at least in case of informers Antonija Faletič, Štefan Krajnik and Martin Klemenčič (Medvešček, 2015, 543–8). Altogether, out of 40 storytellers recorded with names and addresses in *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows*, 12 also appear as informers on Nature Worshippers’ secret community in *From the Invisible Side of the Sky*. Tales told to Pavel Medvešček by these 12 informers include contents of Nature Worship, but these same informers also contributed tales on superstition, historical tales, anecdotes, and funny tales. Funny tales on differences between the valley dwellers and the hill dwellers provided exclusively by cross-referenced informers, do remind of the attitude of the Nature Worshippers, mainly inhabit-

38 Cf. for example Medvešček, 2015, 116, 128, 173, 189, 236, 273 sq.

ing remote hilly areas, towards the *dolinci*, or valley people, which may even hint at the historical migration dynamics in this part of Slovenia (Medvešček, 1991, 165–8). However, no clear distinction between both geographic categories that would correspond to religious affiliation was ever made, and this argument thus cannot be deemed conclusive.

In the collection, we also find tales on Nature Worshipers' most sacred plants such as cornel, pomegranate, box tree, and laburnum, but they are based on a different, sometimes even opposite aetiology than the relevant Nature Worship tradition in *From the Invisible Side of the Sky*. Again, some of these tales were provided by the cross-referenced informers and others were not. To sum up, there is no straight corroboration between the 12 informers in the know of Nature Worship and the contents provided by them in *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows*. Possibly, some Medvešček's informers for *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows* were indisposed or had passed away when Medvešček was collecting material for *From the Invisible Side of the Sky*. Also, some may have deemed Medvešček untrustworthy then and did not want to share sensible contents but did so later for *From the Invisible Side of the Sky*.

It appears clear by now that *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows* cannot be considered an exclusive record of folk tale tradition produced by Nature Worshipers alone. However, that does not mean that quite explicit Nature Worship contents cannot be detected in the tales comprised in the collection if one knows what to look for. And to strengthen my argument, a comparative analysis of tales collected in the same Idrija region, but from Veneto Slovenians on the other side of the border, include no such references and topical elements as the ones I am about to present below (Tomasetig, 1981).

The tales in the collection that contain most explicit references to Nature Worship tradition are Why Ančilo Cut Down a Linden Tree, Zakreman, and How the Stake in the Haystack Grew Green. Let us take a closer look at them.

In Why Ančilo Cut Down a Linden Tree Gunj planted a linden tree in front of his house and his wife Varda as well as his son Vogrin and daughter Očna took very good care of it, per father's instructions. The dying Gunj promised to ensure the tree spirit's protection for his descendants if the linden tree prospered. Vogrin and Očna obeyed their father's last wishes and even put seven stones around the tree for village elders to deliberate there. Vogrin charged his son Artov and daughter Zaršča to continue caring for the linden tree. Zaršča ended up marrying the middleman Ančilo who cut down the tree in Artov's absence. Upon return home, Artov mourned the tree and then beheaded his brother-in-law. Artov buried the body in the forest so that it would be soaked into tree roots, while the tree grown out of the burial mound he contemptuously named "on manure" (*nagnoj*, Laburnum).

Gunj is a vernacular expression for horse blanket,<sup>39</sup> but ‘gun’ was also Nature Worshippers’ ritual drink (Medvešček, 2015, 138). Varda means ‘guard’ and could perhaps be a hint at Nature Worshippers’ “police” Black Vahta. Vogrin reminds of the actual settlement Vogrinki in Volčanski Ruti, a Nature Worshippers’ stronghold. Očna is another Nature Worshippers’ sacred hilltop where they used to worship sun. Artov may refer to Artovlja, a nearby hilltop where a sacred rock *matjar* used to stand (Medvešček, 2015, 571). Zaršča could be a reference to Zarščina, a settlement under the Korada also featuring in Medvešček’s ethnography on Nature Worshippers. Ančilo is a much lower hilltop some 30 km to the south of the mentioned locales. None of the first names in the tale is a common local first name. Linden tree is the symbol of Slovenianness, but also one of Nature Worshippers’ most sacred trees (Medvešček, 2015, 75, 291, 399). Medvešček (2015, 392) reports on the local tradition of elected village congregations in stone circles around linden trees that deliberated on local affairs, although the stones of a feudal *dvanajstija*<sup>40</sup> were twelve, not seven. Seven however, a common magic number in folk tale tradition, was also a sacred number in Nature Worshippers’ tradition, often related to healing practices. Tree spirit is absent from classical collections of Slovenian tales on spirits and ghosts such as Kelemina’s (1930) but features explicitly in Nature Worshippers’ tradition (e. g. Medvešček, 2015, 401). The middleman Ančilo may be, by the altitude and distance of the homonymous hilltop and as an itinerant professional, a symbol of foreigner, the disrespectful Other. Sacred trees were considered sentient beings and friends by Nature Worshippers and indeed Artov mourns the linden tree like a human being. By murdering the tree cutter, he ultimately equals tree’s existence to human life, which is also typical of Nature Worshippers’ attitude towards nature but much less typical of Christian anthropocentrism. Finally, laburnum was one of the most sacred Nature Worshippers’ plants and they used its seemingly indestructible wood in making of numerous ritual objects. Why Ančilo Cut Down the Linden Tree may thus well be an example of that above noted Nature Worshippers’ didactics via children’s tales: the children became familiar with localities and elements and terms related to Nature Worship without preaching. The tale also taught on the proper attitude towards (sacred) trees capable of absorbing human energy through the roots (Medvešček, 2015, 205) and introduced the mighty tree (forest) spirit (Medvešček, 2015, 550).

Zakreman is a tale of a strange man who did everything different or opposite than the rest of people. When others prayed to St. Vitus in church, he went to the entrance of the Dehna cave and said out loud everything that was weighing on him. He always came back relieved and happy, so others started to follow

39 For ‘gunj’ cf. the virtual dictionary of Slovenian language Fran.si. Pavel Medvešček recorded another meaning of ‘gun’ in local dialect – crossroads, as well as a toponym nearby the village of Šmihel that is not detectable on the maps (Medvešček, 1992, 91).

40 From *dvanajst* – twelve.

him and even said they were sorry they had not followed Zakreman earlier to the Dehna cave. Some people worried that more and more would follow him into the canyon from where long-ago similar weirdos had been chased by force. When Zakreman once visited the cave again he noticed that smoke and noise was coming out and soon stones started to fly out as well. One of them hit him and eventually made him bleed to death. When he passed away, people were fighting over where to bury him. Some wanted to just throw him in the Dehna cave. The last bad omen associated with the cave was blood red light that was visible in there one night and that changed into a rainbow. The following day the First World War began. After the war, the Dehna cave in Podpolica could no longer be found. People living nearby thought it may have been destroyed by grenades and shrapnel. Perhaps another Zakreman would find it one day.

Saint Vitus is a common saint in Slovenia associated with early Christianity and persecution of paganism. The original St. Vitus church in Dolenje Nekovo where the tale had been recorded stood on a hill outside the village which is suggestive of location on a pagan worship site; it had been built only in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Dehna cave's name is telling as *dehna* was the Nature Worshippers' leader. Zakreman went to the Dehna cave in what seems a possible variation of *kačnica*,<sup>41</sup> a sort of pilgrimage that Nature Worshippers performed alone to come to terms with their personal issues (Medvešček, 2015, 43). These "pilgrimages", as explained to Medvešček, were usually destined at hilltops where snake heads were placed yet snake heads could also be found in underground caves.

Nature Worship was obviously more attractive than Catholicism to many and Catholics understandably worried about possible converts, especially where paganism had once already been extirpated. Smoke, noise, and stones coming out of the cave is possibly a depiction of desecration by Catholics of a Nature Worshippers' sacred site; in *From the Invisible Side of the Sky* we find numerous examples of such deeds. Many Nature Worshippers also got harmed and killed because of persecution by Catholics and that may have happened to Zakreman. That there was a dilemma about him being buried in the cemetery is a strong argument that Zakreman may have been a Nature Worshipper for heretics and non-believers could not be buried in blessed soil. The last paragraph refers to the importance of First World War: it was a life-changing disaster for all people living close to the Isonzo front, but for the Nature Worshippers' community it also meant the beginning of the end of its existence as so many devout community members had perished, and many Nature Worshippers' sacred sites had been destroyed in the war. If the secret Dehna cave is ever to be found again, the tale ends, it will by another Zakreman, i.e. Nature Worshipper in the know of its location.

41 From *kača* – snake. It should be kept in mind that the Nature Worship tradition was inconsistent and varied in many respects due to the non-systematic recording of exclusively orally transmitted information, idiosyncrasy of isolated *hostas*, and Nature Worshippers' general tolerance of diversity.

Like Zakreman, Depictions of Rožalinka and Pekljač Samsuoj in eponymous tales also correspond to individuals that appear in *From the Invisible Side of the Sky* as Nature Worshippers, Rožalinka being a lone herbal healer and Pekljač Samsuoj, a handicapped homeless beggar and *celebrin* (Medvešček, 1991, 69, 181).

How the Stake in the Haystack Grew Green tells of a goat shepherd who made a haystack for his goats for winter. One spring the stake in the middle of the haystack, cut from a linden tree, started to grow green. The shepherd interpreted that as a good omen coming from the earth. He kept his goats close to the stake and they gave plenty of milk and had many more young ones than they usually did. The goats born there were different: they had white hair and a black line going from head to tail. Also, they had no horns. A jealous shepherd from a nearby hill cut down the linden tree, however. The tree took very long to dry and when it finally did, a water came out of it and formed a well, called Kozjak (Goat Well).

This tale is set in “times when people knew no hatred yet” and thus may refer to a past in which there was no conflict among Catholics and Nature Worshipers yet because there were no “Others”. The shepherd is referred to as ‘host-nar’. Hosta was the basic Nature Worshippers’ administrative unit and Nature Worshippers themselves were sometimes called *hostars*. The sacred linden tree directly increases fertility in this tale by enabling goats to have more milk and billy goats. Once fallen, it symbolises life by producing cries of the dying and turning finally into a fresh water well. Goats with white hair and black line along the back are described by Medvešček’s principal informer Janez Strgar in *From the Invisible Side of the Sky* as follows:

*For our ancestors, male goat was a sacred animal and was therefore owned by almost every homestead. It was white and had a black hair line from head to tail. Breeding male goats were selected by the dehmar and there were only three of them. Each had to have the characteristics of that breed. When the First World War ended, only two surviving goats were found in a canyon under the village of Srednje. Since there were no male goats left to breed, they were bred with other goats and consequently, the breed was forever lost (Medvešček, 2015, 66).*

In the collection, implicit references can also be detected pertaining to practices and values held by Nature Worshippers as we know of them from *From the Invisible Side of the Sky* that were not shared by their Catholic neighbours. For example, the importance of species conservation is at the centre of the tale Cufulin. The tale is set in “fair, merry and rich” past times when meat grew on trees and traditional pastries could be found in bushes, a reminder of a widely spread Slovenian mythical motive of Indija Koromandija (Šmitek, 2011, 248–51). All doors were without locks then and wide open. I am noting this because Pavel Medvešček told me that Nature Worshippers, atypically for countryside half a





Fig. 5: Pavel Medvešček's illustration of the tale *How the Stake in the Haystack Grew Green* (Medvešček, 1990, 83).

century ago, kept their doors locked in fear of disclosure of their secret practices behind the walls of their homesteads. Cufulin could thus refer to a remote past when Nature Worshipers were not yet hiding. Cufulins were half birds-half rabbits that people suddenly accused of bringing bad luck and misery. Despite abundance of food, people started chasing and killing cufulins for their tasty meat. Cufulins were fast, but predictable. Their loud singing betrayed them, and deafness made them vulnerable. Finally, people killed the last standing Cufulin king on top of the Korada. Consequently, the sky went dark for three days with a horrific storm. Lightnings started wildfires everywhere and all fields and villages were flooded. When the storm was over, magic trees dried up and carefree life was over. People had to start all anew. Slovenian classical fairy tales do not include references to biocentrism in this manner, while the Nature Worshipers were very concerned with the preservation and survival of animal and plant species important to them (Medvešček, 2015, 104).<sup>42</sup>

Nature Worshipers' appreciation of farm animals is expressed in the tale *The Cunning Piggy*. In *From the Invisible Side of the Sky*, we learn that farm animals were a sort of insurance for poor farmers in the community and butchering them was a last resort before starvation (Medvešček, 2015, 91). In original Slovenian folk fairy tales, pigs are largely absent and portrayed rather negatively; they are most certainly not candidates for special friends of people. The Type Index of Slovenian Folk Tales, Animal Tales and Fables includes only one such reference (Kropej Telban, 2015, 92) and no pig made it into the representative Slovenian fairy tale canon (Kropej et al, 2010) or into more local collections such as the one from the Goriška Brda region (Stres et al, 2008) immediately to the south of the territory covered by Pavel Medvešček in *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows*, or even a collection of fairy tales recorded in the exact same geographic area in the same period as Medvešček's (Tomasetig, 1980). In the one exception, *The Count Pig*, similarly to *The Frog Prince*, the pig stands for a metaphor of undesirability. Moreover, wild animals most often vilified in Slovenian fairy tales such as snakes or wolves are given here an explicit positive connotation, in accordance with Nature Worshipers' veneration of snakes and wolves, such as the *Tale About the Good Wolf* (Medvešček, 1991, 98).

To answer the question that generated this chapter: *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows* is by no means an exclusive collection of Nature Worship folktale tradition. However, it does include hints at and references to Nature Worship and informs on Nature Worship in a way that makes it plausible that Nature Worshipers were among the storytellers Pavel Medvešček came across. Detection of these specific contents in the collection would not have been possible without the later publication of *From the Invisible Side of the Sky*.

42 Conservation of species is also addressed in the tale on the he-snake Kačon (Medvešček, 1991, 26) that mentions ouroboros, the tail biting snake symbolizing eternity; this ancient symbol relates to early Christian Gnosticism with which Nature Worship shares certain features.

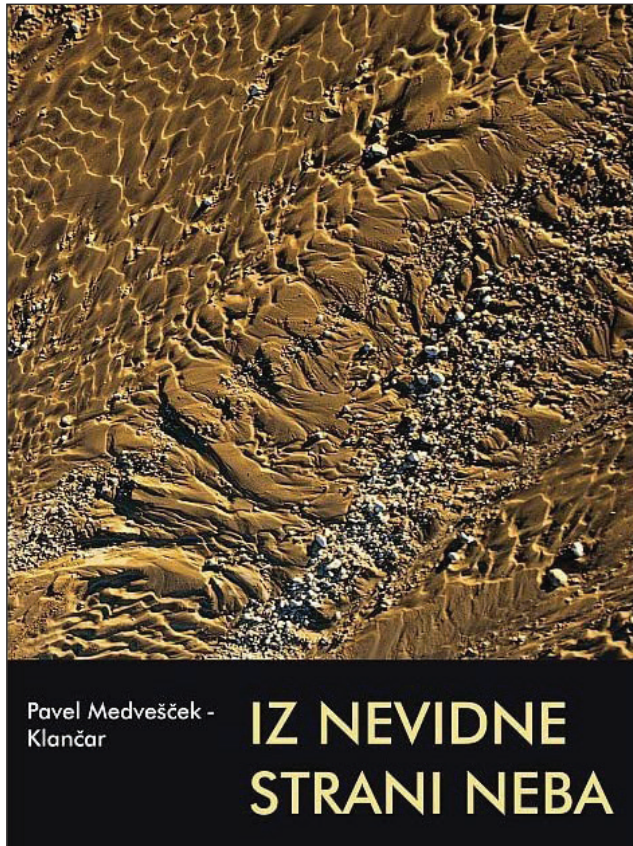


Fig. 6: Book cover of Pavel Medvešček's book *From the Invisible Side of the Sky* (Cover photo: A-media).

## CONCLUSION

The 2015 Medvešček's book *From the Invisible Side of the Sky* is arguably one of the most important publications in contemporary Slovenian social sciences. The revelation of existence of the complex counterculture of Nature Worship in western Slovenia, still alive in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, calls for hermeneutic reading of a number of publications: first and foremost, of Pavel Medvešček's opus of texts and artworks prior to 2015; of historiography pertaining to the west of Slovenia; of novels and poetry topically located in the geographic area populated by Nature Worshippers or written by authors from that area. It also calls for interpretation of several relevant historical processes such as the peasant rebellions or the TIGR organisation and accepted narratives on them. *From the Invisible Side of the Sky*



provides a code by which we can read chapters of Slovenian history anew and add to our common narrative what has not been picked from the past before. The unpicking or selective picking from the past makes Slovenian history and culture an ongoing and ever incomplete effort.

In this text I tried to elucidate a particular aspect of Nature Worship tradition, i.e. tales and their importance in Nature Worshippers' social practices. I hope to have argued convincingly that some of the content of the collection *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows* may be plausibly attributed to Nature Worship oral tradition. It is the numerous, varied, and beautiful tales included in the *From the Invisible Side of the Sky* that should be further analysed to identify and contextualize all aspects of tales' role in Nature Worshippers' society.

According to Propp and Lévi Strauss, folk tales cannot be differentiated from myths (Lévi Strauss in Propp, 2005, 235). The notably veridical collection *On a Red Cloud a Vineyard Grows* immediately drew attention in this respect (cf. Stanonik and Kogej above). What may be a fairy tale for one society, may be a myth for another. The same must be all the truer for a composite society of majority and minority cultures. Nature Worshippers' myths were fantasies for their Catholic neighbours while Nature Worshippers held no belief in formative biblical myths. Still, they did share some historical tales reminding of past societal milestones such as wars, invasions, hungers, and epidemics that turned everyone into a victim regardless of religious convictions and produced collective traumas that linger on in collective memory. For Slovenian society and its canonised oral folk tradition it would also be interesting to establish which tales we indisputably share with our neighbours and are therefore our common myths and which Slovenian myths are mere fairy tales to Others. Those tales precisely, also make us who we believe we are.

## »PRAVCE« V DRUŽBENIH PRAKSAH NARAVOVERCEV ZAHODNE SLOVENIJE

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### POVZETEK

*Avtorica znanstvenega članka uvodoma predstavi in opiše historično kontrakulturo naravovercev v zahodni Sloveniji. Jedro besedila je osredinjeno na naravoverske vzgojne in izobraževalne koncepte s poudarkom na družbenih funkcijah naravoverskih pravc oz. pripovednega izročila. Zgodbe in pripovedi, namenjene otrokom in odraslim, ki so jih posredovali različni člani skupnosti, so prispevale k ohranjanju naravoverske identitete in k razlikovanju od katoliške večine v lokalnem okolju. Sledi podrobna analiza (naravoverskih) pravc v zbirki Pavla Medveščka – Klančarja Na rdečem oblaku vinograd rase iz leta 1991 in knjigi istega avtorja Iz nevidne strani neba. Razkrite skrivnosti staroverstva iz leta 2015. Slednja šele omogoča odkrivanje značilnih vsebinskih elementov naravoverstva v Na rdečem oblaku vinograd rase. To zbirko, objavljeno leta 1991, je mogoče celovito interpretirati torej šele desetletja po izdaji, katere motiv je morda bil osamosvojitveni proces Slovenije. Vendar pa avtorica glede na razpoložljive vire in rezultate kontekstualne in sociološke analize ugotavlja, da je Na rdečem oblaku vinograd rase subjektivno sestavljena zbirka, ki daje uvid v lokalno kulturo odročnega mejnega območja reke Idrije in skoraj nedvomno zajema naravoversko izročilo, a slednje ni izključna vsebina zbirke.*

*Ključne besede: naravoverstvo, zahodna Slovenija, pravce, vzgoja, Pavel Medvešček – Klančar*



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## MEDICINE AND FAIRY TALES: POHORJE FAIRY TALES AS A SOURCE ABOUT DISEASES AND HEALTH

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### ABSTRACT

*Fairy tales are fascinating fantasies, but they also gave people a better understanding of serious issues such as illness, injury, and even death. The results of the analysis of a large corpus of a total of 1512 published fairy tales, legends, and other documentary prose about Pohorje, most of which date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and whose origins were in a time when diseases were ubiquitous and poorly understood, show that the theme of health and disease rarely appear in these sources, however, when they do mention it, they refer specifically to the living conditions of people in the Pohorje Mountains, epidemics, social diseases, mental illnesses, congenital deformities, and ideas about the relationship between disease, the human body, and supernatural forces. One of the reasons for such explanations is the widespread absence of doctors in this hilly area.*

*Keywords: Pohorje, Slovenia, fairy tale, disease, health, history of medicine, medical humanities, narrative medicine*

## LA MEDICINA E LE FIABE: LE FIABE DEL POHORJE COME FONTE DI DATI SULLE MALATTIE

### SINTESI

*Sebbene le fiabe possano essere niente più che affascinanti fantasie, il loro ruolo è stato anche quello di facilitare la comprensione di argomenti più seri come malattie, traumi e persino la morte. Nel contributo si è analizzato un corpus di 1512 favole, leggende e altre prose documentarie pubblicate relative alla zona del Pohorje e risalenti per lo più all'Ottocento e alla prima metà del Novecento, ovvero a un periodo nel quale le malattie erano una realtà onnipresente e le loro*

*cause, invece, ancora scarsamente comprese. Come si evince dai risultati, le fonti non affrontano spesso l'argomento della salute e malattia, e nelle rare occasioni in cui lo fanno parlano delle concrete condizioni di vita della gente del Pohorje, di epidemie, patologie sociali e psichiche, difetti congeniti, e della convinzione che esista un legame tra le malattie, il corpo umano e le forze soprannaturali. Una delle ragioni alla base di tale credenza fu la diffusa mancanza di medici in questa zona montuosa.*

*Parole chiave: Pohorje, Slovenia, fiaba, malattia, salute, storia della medicina*

## INTRODUCTION: ON FOLK MEDICINE AND ITS STUDY IN SLOVENIA

### On the notion of folk medicine

Folk medicine (in Slovene: *ljudska medicina*), also called ethno medicine (*etnomedicina*) or traditional medicine (*tradicionalna medicina*), encompasses a set of therapeutic practices, skills, experiences, knowledge, and beliefs of traditional healers used in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of humans and animals. Folk medicine knowledge about the causes and prevention of disease is not based on solid medical knowledge, but on proven, experience-based methods of physical treatment combined with beliefs to achieve greater effectiveness, or for diseases that cannot be explained or treated. It is usually based on orally transmitted empirical experience rather than written sources.

Folk medicine treats with: a) rational experiential procedures (e.g., phytotherapy or treatment with plants, zootherapy or treatment with animals, and treatment with preparations of mineral origin) and with b) “irrational”-magical procedures or symbolic healing (e.g., magic, charms, prayers, intercessions, belief in mythical beings, spells that are the opposite of charms) (Ramšak, 2017, 97).

The written transmission of folk medical knowledge took place with the help of “folk medicine books” (in Slovenian: *‘ljudskomedicinske bukve’*). These were tightly sewn manuscripts with advice and instructions for the treatment of humans and livestock, information about medicines, especially about medicinal plants. The first manuscript is attested for the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and a wider distribution can be assumed from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Most manuscripts from the Slovenian area do not originate from local folklore, but were copied by self-educated ordinary people, “*bukovniki*”, who collected medicinal herbs themselves, treated people and copied mainly German herbal books (in German: *Kräuterbücher*). There are two noticeable areas where folk medicine books were recorded, the older ones in Carinthia and the others in the area of Škofja Loka and Poljanska dolina. To date, more than 200 folk

medicine books are recorded (Dolenc, 1987, 31, 32). The most widespread booklet on magical treatment in Slovenia was “*Kolomonov žegen*”, which was probably printed between 1740 and 1800 and contained magical texts and instructions for the use of certain plants and as an amulet was supposed to protect people and livestock from diseases (Grafenauer, 1943).

With the establishment of professional, academic medicine and with regulated health and social care in the 1960s, the importance of folk medicine gradually declined. After 1980, the importance of folk medicine as an alternative form of treatment began to be emphasized again. After this period, many foreign practices, especially from the East, were added to the local folk medicine, which coincided with the emergence of new spiritual movements in Slovenia.

### On the study of folk medicine in Slovenia

Various names of folk medicine appear in Slovenian ethnological works, mostly understood as synonyms, and the first definitions of folk medicine date from the 1950s and 1960s (e.g., in studies, such as France Kotnik, *From Folk Medicine (Iz ljudske medicine)* (Kotnik, 1952); Vilko Novak, *Folk Medicine (Ljudsko zdravilstvo)* (Novak, 1960); Vinko Möderndorfer, *Folk Medicine at Slovenians (Ljudska medicina pri Slovencih)* (Möderndorfer, 1964)). They were mostly written by formally uneducated ethnologists who, in addition to their teaching activities, also collected folk medicine material in the field and searched for references in the literature (such as France Kotnik, Pavel Košir and Vinko Möderndorfer). In the mentioned works, the authors not only defined the key concepts of traditional medicine, but also compared the material collected in Slovenia, or, as for example Vinko Möderndorfer, compared it with data from other European countries.

The first ethnological diploma dealing in part with folk medicine was written by Marija Jagodic, married Makarovič, at the Department of Ethnology of the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana (*Folk Poetry and Storytelling, Folk Medicine in Podjuna Valley (Ljudsko pesništvo in pripovedništvo, ljudska medicina v Podjunski dolini)* (Jagodic, 1953)). Later, she dealt with folk medicine in most of her works, either in independent monographic works dedicated to one of the regions (*Image of the Health Culture of the Carinthian Slovenes in the Countyside from Zilja to Podjuna in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries (Podoba zdravstvene kulture koroških Slovencev v kmečkem okolju od Zilje do Podjune v 19. in 20. stoletju)* (Makarovič 2008)), in articles dealing with the entire Slovenian territory (*Health Culture of the Agrarian Population in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Zdravstvena kultura agrarnega prebivalstva v 19. stoletju)* (Makarovič, 1988)), or as extensive chapters in other local ethnological monographs on Sele (1994), Vogrče (1995), and Dobrla vas (1996) in Austrian Carinthia. In her work, she introduced new concepts such as folk healthcare (*ljudsko zdravstvo*), healthcare culture (*zdravstvena kultura*), and cure culture (*kultura zdravljenja*).



The first to deal systematically with folk medicine was the teacher Vinko Möderndorfer, who first published material and discussions on folk medicine together with his teacher colleague and folklore collector Pavel Košir (Košir, 1922, Košir & Möderndorfer, 1926a, Košir & Möderndorfer, 1926b, Košir & Möderndorfer, 1927), and then summarized his more than three decades of collecting activity in an encyclopaedic book *Folk Medicine at Slovenians (Ljudska medicina pri Slovencih)*, which was published after his death in 1964. His work *Folk Medicine in Slovenia* is the best post war account of folk medicine in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Later it was cited by ethnologists, cultural anthropologists, veterinarians and medical doctors whose studies dealt with folk treatment of humans and animals. Systematics and completeness were, among other things, also the guidelines for the work of the field teams of the (Slovenian) Ethnographic Museum, which existed between 1948–1984, and later efforts for a unified research of the entire Slovenian ethnic territory. A few years before the publication of the Möderndorfer's book, in 1961, when Boris Orel, the then director of the Ethnographic Museum, no longer led his field teams, folk medicine ceased to be a topic of group research for some time.

More recent authors of more significant ethnological and anthropological monographs in the field of folk medicine have either politely mentioned or criticized Möderndorfer's conception and systematics of folk medicine without taking into account the conditions under which the book was written – he wrote the book even when he was in political prison and seriously ill – (e.g. Uršula Lipovec Čebren, *The Crossroads of Health and Illness: Traditional and Complementary Medicines in Istria (Krožere zdravja in bolezni: Tradicionalna in komplementarne medicine v Istri)*, 2008) or tried to build on his findings (Irena Rožman, *The Stove Collapsed! Birth Culture in the Slovenian Countryside in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Peč se je podrila! Kultura rojstva na slovenskem podeželju v 20. stoletju)*, 2004).

In connection with magical healing, it is also necessary to mention the annotated collection of charms that the Slovenians used in the treatment of people and livestock when official medicine was not yet available. These charms were compiled by the veterinarian Dr. Milan Dolenc (1907–1993) from various manuscripts or Möderndorfer's and other folk medicine publications, but he was unable to complete them before his death. The editors Zvonka Zupanič Slavec and Marija Makarovič took over the completion and annotation of the collection and published it under the title *The Charms in Slovene Folk Medicine (Zagovori v slovenski ljudski medicini)* (1999). The importance of this annotated collection with illustrations by Hinko Smrekar is that they bring the function of charms as short sayings or prayers in folk medicine to a wider audience. For modern medicine, charms are important because they point to the power of words in healing.

## DISEASES AND HEALTH IN FAIRY TALES

With the above mentioned “classical” sources about Slovenian folk medicine (only the most important works, not all of them), the question arises to what extent it is possible to obtain data about folk medicine and diseases of the past from non-

documentary sources. This question came to my mind in connection with the folk literature referring to Pohorje mentioning among other the diseases and trauma, where there is a whole series of fairy tale books (cf. Ramšak, 2017).

The medical aspects of fairy tales have attracted the attention of folklorists, literary historians, and even physicians. Let us have a look at a few examples on the possibilities of using fairy tales in relation to medicine. For example, Livheh (1980), Schmiesing (2014) and Leduc (2020) addressed fairy tale heroes from the perspective of the predominantly disabled body. Livheh emphasized that in fairy tales, the stereotypical traits of evil are associated with disabled persons and old age, which are described with attributes such as excessive hairiness, wrinkled face, warts, animal-like skin, the animal resemblance in general, which is reminiscent of the possible common origin of humans with animals. All this fascinates and provokes disgust at the same time (Livheh, 1980, 281, 282). Loss of body parts (hands, feet, eyes, etc.), permanent disability and old age with all attendant illnesses symbolically mean death (death of mobility, death of vision) or its proximity, and this is important to know when observing society's reactions to disabled persons (Livheh, 1980, 281). Schmiesing (2014), who was particularly interested in disability, deformity, and disease in the Grimms' fairy tales, analysed various representations of disability, such as the physical and mental deterioration of the elderly, bodily integrity, mortality, social stigmatization, supernatural healing, and ephemeral and illusory corporeality. Leduc (2020), who has also studied the fairy tales of the Grimm Brothers and expanded them to Disney, demonstrates how they affect our behaviours and expectations by connecting them to the rights of people with disabilities and new forms of stories that embrace diversity.

The intersection between early medicine in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and fairy tales about the childbirth has also been a topic of research (cf. Tucker, 2003). Women used the fairy tale to rethink the biology of birth. With references to midwifery, infertility, sex selection, and embryological theories, fairy tale tellers experimented with alternative ways of understanding pregnancy. The queen and king's longing for children were not simply literary conventions in the fairy tales, but representations of real longings that had practical historical consequences (Tucker, 2003).

The appearance and behaviour of the fairy tale characters described is also of interest to physicians, as they can study them as if they had a living patient in front of them (cf. Massie, 2019). Fairy tale and literary authors have crafted characters with intriguing traits that we now recognize as diseases. Authors made acute observations about people in a pre-modern medical society and used them into their works frequently. What seems like a myth may actually have some truth to it and offer a logical explanation, as noted by Australian paediatrician John Massie (2019). He linked diseases buried in fairy tales and literature and found several fairy tales describing diseases. Here are a few examples. In *Jack and the Giant Bean Stalk* (old English fairy tale), the giant has a *pituitary tumour* that causes

gigantism (Massie, 2019, 1295). In *Sleeping Beauty* (Giambattista Basile, 1634), the girl suffers from an insect-borne parasitic disease that causes sleeping sickness in humans and other animals by the protozoa *Trypanosoma brucei* (Massie, 2019, 1295). Several fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm describe symptoms that were recognized as diseases. The Grimm brothers' poor health and their personal experiences with disability and illness affected their fairy tales, their metaphors of physicality and wholeness, revealing the many disability-related changes in the fairy tales (Schmiesing, 2014). Their fairy tales with recognized diseases are for example: *Rapunzel* (Brothers Grimm, 1812), in which the girl may suffer from *trichotillomania* and *gastric bezoar*, which is called '*Rapunzel*' syndrome after this fairy tale (Massie, 2019, 1295); *Little Red Riding Hood* (European Folktale, Italian Folktale, Brothers Grimm, 1812), in which both characters, Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother, had numerous illnesses. Little Red Riding Hood suffered from *nearsightedness (myopia)*, *astigmatism* (or both) because she did not notice that her grandmother looked like a wolf, while the grandmother may have suffered from late-stage *lupus erythematosus*, which can cause a lupine-like face (and was probably the reason the grandmother was in bed). Or grandmother had *hypertrichosis* and hid from society by living in the woods. Grandmother may also have suffered from a number of other conditions: "Grandmother, what big eyes you have" (*exophthalmos*), "what a deep voice you have" (*vocal cord nodules*), and "what big hands you have" (*pituitary tumour*). *Little Red Riding Hood syndrome* has recently been described in terms of excessive naiveté (she ventures into the woods alone) and cognitive dissonance (she does not recognize the wolf): she is trapped in her own self-deception. The term has been used in many ways, including in the sense of 'beware of strangers' and, more recently, in the context of the dangers of Internet dating (Massie, 2019, 1295). Another Grimm fairy tale that describes possible diseases is *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Brothers Grimm, 1812). In this fairy tale, there are a number of medical possibilities that can be found. Snow White's pallor could be an indication of *albinism*, and the dwarfs clearly had *achondroplasia*. Snow White could have eaten an apple 'poisoned' with *Listeria cytomogenes*, which can cause coma. Alternatively, a piece of apple got stuck in her airway (*foreign body*), and Snow White recovered immediately when she got rid of it (with a kiss of a prince). The wicked stepmother could be suffering from '*Dorian-Grey*' syndrome, a term from Oscar Wilde's novel of the same name, in which he describes a young man who is obsessed with his appearance and refuses to accept the ageing process. Dorian-Grey syndrome can be a form of narcissistic personality disorder (Massie, 2019, 1296). The witch in *Hansel and Gretel* (Brothers Grimm, 1812) – usually described in fairy tales as having warts and a hunchback – may be a reference to *neurofibromatosis*, the warts being skin fibromas and the hunchback being *scoliosis*, a common complication of neurofibromatosis. People with this disease may have been shunned by society and therefore lived alone in secluded places, contributing to a somewhat selfish and nasty personality (Massie, 2019, 1296). In *Goldilocks and the Three*

*Bears* (British, 1837), the girl suffers from *Kleine-Levine syndrome*, a disorder involving hyperphagia and hypersomnolence. Symptoms may occur in episodes that may last weeks or years. She broke the chair because she was overweight from overeating and lack of exercise. (Klein-Levine syndrome has also been used to explain Snow White and Sleeping Beauty falling asleep, but neither suffer from hyperphagia.) Another possibility is that Goldilocks suffered from *Prader-Willi syndrome*, which is associated with hyperphagia, obesity, low IQ (entering a bear's house), behavioural issues (breaking objects), and obstructive sleep apnea (excessive tiredness). *Hypothalamic tumours* can also cause a combination of hypersomnolence, temperature control, hyperphagia, and anger, which could also explain Goldilocks's behaviour (Massie, 2019, 1296). In *The Princess and the Pea* (Hans Christian Andersen, 1835), the princess notices the pea because she suffers from *fibromyalgia*. Fibromyalgia is associated with hypersensitive skin, pain points, and poor sleep. It can be aggravated by the conditions the princess suffers outside the castle, emotional stress, travel, and sudden changes in weather (Massie, 2019, 1296–1297).

In Slovenia, Monika Krojež wrote about the reflection of reality in folk storytelling in her book *Folk tale and Reality: The Reflection of Reality in Slovenian Folk Tales on Examples from Štrekelj's Legacy* (*Pravljica in stvarnost: Odsev stvarnosti v slovenskih ljudskih pravljicah in povedkah ob primerih iz Štrekljeve zapuščine*, 1995). She pointed out that the reflection of reality is easier to determine in the field of material culture, somewhat more difficult in the field of social culture, and most problematic in the field of spiritual culture. The reflections of spiritual culture in fairy tales are often vague and hidden, they intertwine indistinctly with older components or with imaginative elements, and therefore to a greater extent allow for different interpretations. Reality and fairy tales are compatible in folklore, because oral literature is such that it likes to mix historical facts with imaginary ones, reality with fantasy, and miraculous fairy tales with everyday life (Krojež, 1995, 20–24, 273). Monika Krojež, among other, also discussed the reflection of reality in the field of folk medicine and folk belief and came to the conclusion that the treatment, as mentioned in the one hundred selected fairy tales of Karel Štrekelj, which she discussed in the book, is mostly of magical nature, and the fairy doctors mostly treat with herbs, miraculous objects, miraculous beings, water and ointments, and it is necessary for them to go to the other world, from which a magical helper (mostly animals such as a fox, a bird, a bear) brings them. The fairy tale heroes also learn the miracle medicine from demonic beings (crows, witches) whose conversation they pick up in invisible places. She points out that such treatment was not uncommon in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as people preferred to turn to village healers such as the so-called “*bali*” and “*vrač*” rather than seek professional help (Krojež, 1995, 119). Together with old ways of treating diseases, folk tales also contain elements from medical and pharmaceutical practice, which was at the time they were recorded (second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century) already firmly entrenched and widespread (Krojež, 1995, 120–121,

276). The same author also dealt with European plague folklore and remedies for the disease (Kropej, 2022), describing the circumstances of the epidemic and measures to prevent and treat the contagion or folk tales about the plague and demonic beings that kill people and livestock.

Other Slovenian folk literature (fairy tales, fables) and art fairy tales are also worth mentioning in which the themes of illness, trauma and physical differences are prominent. Folk tales are dominated by tales with the motifs of miraculous healing objects, miraculous water springs, miraculous herbs, miraculous animals, longevity, blindness, congenital facial deformities, such as cleft lips, which emphasise the desire for healing, acceptance in the community and the need to live longer. Such fairy tales are, for example, the folk tale *The Healing Apple* (*Zdravilno jabolko*, Bolhar, 1972), the Tolmin fairy tale *Wonder Well* (*Čudežni studenec*, Zupanc et al., 1960) and *Pot of Marjoram* (*Lonec majarona*, Dolenc, 1989), the folk tale *The Deathly Ill King* (*Na smrt bolan kralj*, Bolhar, 1959), the folk tale *Of the Sleeping Queen and the Wonder Bird* (*O speči kraljični in čudodelnem ptiču*, Unuk, 2002), the folk fable *Why Do Rabbits Have Split Lips* (*Zakaj imajo zajčki preklano usnico*, Bolhar, 1975), the folk tale *The Blind Little Brother* (*Slepi bratec*, Rožnik, 1981) from Prekmurje. Some modern fairy tales deal with the theme of being different (dwarfism, infertility, cerebral palsy, sadness, stuttering, dementia), such as *The Son, the Dwarf* (*Sinček palček*, Zupanc, 1979), *The Heart for Nina* (*Srček za Nino*, Pogačnik, 1993), *Squirrel of a Special Kind* (*Veveriček posebne sorte*, Makarovič, 1994), *How Bibi and Gusti Chased Away Sadness*, (*Kako sta Bibi in Gusti pregnjala žalost*, Mlakar Črnič, 2004), *The Fairy Tale of the Princess who Stuttered*, (*Pravljica o princeski, ki je jecljala*, Akerman, 2009), *Why Grandma is Angry* (*Zakaj je babica jezna*, Njatin, 2011). Some fairy tale motifs related to health and illness were discussed in more detail or published in dialect, such as the fairy tale *The Tale of the Hunchback* in Tolmin's dialect (*Tolminska pravljica o grbcu*, Dolenc, 1984), in which the hunchbacked and poor third brother replaces his physical disfigurement with cleverness.

Milena Mileva Blažič (2011) wrote from the perspective of feminist literary theory and folklore about the fairy tale motifs of armless girls in connection with incestuous and/or treacherous fathers (Blažič, 2011). Apart from that, no Slovenian fairy tale was treated in a medical-humanistic way.

These examples show that a careful cultural and medically informed reading of fairy tale texts leads to descriptions of diseases and their treatment from the past and other contexts from the time of their origin. Such detailed cultural and medical analyses of fairy tale characters actually refute the assumption of entirely fictional settings and characters, which means that fairy tales can be a source for the study of history.

## POHORJE FAIRY TALES AS SOURCES FOR FOLK MEDICINE

Fairy tales are stories that are passed down from generation to generation until they are written down or they are completely made up. Although some of them



are not made up out of thin air and have a connection to real historical figures and events, using fairy tales as a source for interpreting the way of life in the past could be tricky. While it is tempting to make a connection between fairy tales and the real world, from a methodological and historical perspective this is a difficult task. If documentary sources must be read in context to meet the criteria of objectivity, representativeness, reliability, and historical value, we cannot fully consider these criteria in the case of fairy tales.

The optimal use of these sources goes hand in hand with the complementary use of other sources, such as various literary, historical, ethnological and other documentary sources. For the Pohorje Mountains, it has proven to be the best method to capture the spirit of economic and cultural self-sufficiency from the pre-industrial period, which in some cases lasted until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and had an impact on folk medicine and health care. These sources are found in large numbers in folk literature, which also depicts real everyday life, where we find many dense but also fragmentary descriptions of health, illness, injuries, attitudes towards the sick and the elderly, and methods of treatment. The list of possible sources for the Pohorje Mountains is as follows:

- 1512 fairy tales, legends, documentary prose about the Pohorje, collected and published by Janez Koprivnik<sup>1</sup> (Koprivnik, [1901]; Gričnik, 1997); Elza Lešnik<sup>2</sup> (Lešnik, 1925), Jakob Kelemina<sup>3</sup> (Kelemina, 1997 [1930]), Josip Brinar<sup>4</sup> (Brinar, 1933), Jože Tomažič<sup>5</sup> (Tomažič, 1990a [1942]; Tomažič, 1990b [1943]; Tomažič, 1990c [1944]; Tomažič, 2011), Paul

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- 1 Janez Koprivnik (1849, Gorenje pri Zrečah – 1912, Maribor), teacher, publicist and writer. He published popular scientific sketches, wrote several elementary school textbooks and wrote a monograph on the Pohorje, which was published only after his death (Gričnik, 1997).
  - 2 Elza Lešnik, teacher in Vitanje and storyteller. She has published a collection of historical novelettes, folk tales and short stories for young people *Roar, Roar Drava ...: Novelettes from the History of Maribor, Fairy Tales and Short Stories from the Vicinity of Maribor and Elsewhere* (1925, 1931, 1938).
  - 3 Jakob Kelemina (1882, Vinski Vrh, Ormož – 1957, Ljubljana), literary historian, Germanist and ethnographer. He published literary-historical and linguistic treatises. He studied the mythology of Slovenian folk tales and short stories, which he collected in newspapers and in some scientific collections. In 1930 he published *Fables and Tales of the Slovene People*, the first edited collection of fables and tales from all Slovene regions.
  - 4 Josip Brinar (1874, Studence, Hrastnik – 1959, Celje), teacher and writer. In addition to pedagogical articles, textbooks, linguistic works and literature, he also collected ethnographic material. In 1933 he published *Pohorje Fables and Tales* with 19 stories illustrated by Maksim and Oton Gaspari.
  - 5 Jože Tomažič (1906, Veliko Tinje – 1970, Jesenice) published books of fairy tales, legends and sagas during the Second World War in Slovenščeva knjižica, Ljudska knjigarna or self-published (*Pohorje fairy tales*, 1942, *Woodcutter Maria*, 1943, *Shepherd's Heavens*, 1943, *Pohorje Fairy Tales*, 1943, *Drava Flower*, 1943, *Charcoal Burner's Son*, 1944, *Pohorje Legends*, 1944, *Godmother Fairy*, 1944, *Witch's Daughter – Dead Heart*, 1944). Through reprints of the original editions in the Mohor Society in Celje and in the Atelier RO – Humar in Bilje between 1990 and 2011, his works were made accessible to a wider public.

- Schlosser<sup>6</sup> (Schlosser, 2015 [1956]), Oskar Hudales<sup>7</sup> (Hudales, 1968) and Anton Gričnik<sup>8</sup> (Gričnik, 1994));
- 230 published life stories and narratives by people born in or professionally associated with the Pohorje, with narrators mostly born in the first half of the 20th century – although some stories were also told by their 19<sup>th</sup> century ancestors (Makarovič & Sušek, 1996; Makarovič, 2001a; Makarovič, 2001b; Makarovič and Logar, 2001; Makarovič & Mravljak, 2006; Gričnik, 1997; Gričnik, 1989; Gričnik, 2000);
  - Unpublished field notes from the southern Pohorje from the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana, collected July 1–14, 1963;
  - Other field notes and recollection of stories from the past.

Due to the surprisingly large number of sources about Pohorje, most of which are scattered in printed publications and rarely available in digitized form, the first analytical step is extracting relevant parts of the texts and coding all fragments related to health and disease. Since health and illness occur indirectly in the Pohorje tales, the contexts of these mentions had to be written out. In other sources, such as the life stories, the mentions of health and illness, while still fragmentary, are more concrete and reality-based, which is understandable given the nature of the source.

Quantitatively, the motif of treatment and illness occurs most frequently in the older Pohorje fairy tale collections, while it decreases in the more recent collections. In a broader historical context, this could be explained by the greater availability of health services and the regulation of health insurance after the World War II, but this impression cannot be confirmed by anything, not even by the authors or fairy tales themselves.

6 Paul Schlosser (1876, Budapest – 1956, Graz) collected short stories until 1914, the manuscript was bought by the Historical Society of Maribor in 1930. Schlosser did not speak Slovenian and depended on people who spoke fluent German or had to work with an interpreter. He therefore treated the folk tradition of the Maribor area as a German cultural area. Because the manuscript was not of such a nature that the Historical Society preferred it to other materials, and because there were not enough funds, it was not printed. Since the German occupiers dissolved the Slovene societies and confiscated their property, Schlosser's manuscript was kept in the Study Library in Maribor, from which the occupiers brought most of his literary and scientific material to Graz in 1941. Schlosser's manuscript was not returned, and the collector restored it in 1941 (Schneidewind, 1957, 536–538; Baš, 1957, 89–92; Glazer, 1960, 219). In 1912 he published *Der Sagenkreis der Pošteta in Maribor, Ein Blick ins Bachernreich*.

7 Oskar Hudales (1905, Žaga near Bovec – 1968, Maribor), teacher, writer and translator. He wrote history, adventure and travel stories, historical novels, schoolbooks, juvenile works and translated from English and German. In 1968 he published a collection of 27 fairy tales and short stories *Golden Potato*.

8 Anton Gričnik (1947, Planina na Pohorju), an amateur literary-historical researcher of Pohorje, who collected and published valuable ethnographic material from Sveta Kunigunda on Pohorje in 1998, Sv. Marjeta on Kebelj in 1991 and 2013, from Zreče in 1995, 1997, 2000 and 2010.

*Table 1: Mentions of health and disease in collections of fairy tales related to Pohorje. Statistics based on excerpts from fairy tales prepared by Mojca Ramšak.*

Title	Number of mentions of health and disease
Josip Brinar, <i>Pohorske bajke in povesti</i> . Ljubljana: Učiteljska tiskarna, 1933	In 12 fairy tales (63.15%) out of 19
Jože Tomažič, <i>Pohorske pravljice</i> . Celje: Mohorjeva družba, 1990. (Reprint 29. zv. Slovenčeve knjižnice, 1942.)	In 13 fairy tales (39.4%) out of 33
Jože Tomažič, <i>Pohorske bajke</i> . V: <i>Pohorske pravljice</i> . Bilje: Studio RO – Humar, 2011. 3. Ponatis. (Original: Ljubljana: Konzorcij Slovenca, 1943 (v Ljubljani: Zadržna tiskarna)	In 3 fairy tales (13.04%) out of 23
SCHLOSSER, Paul: <i>Schlosserjeve Pohorske pripovedke</i> . Maribor: Zavod Gremo na Pohorje, 2015. (Original: <i>Bachern Sagen: Volksüberlieferungen aus der alten Untersteiermark</i> . Wien: Österreichisches Museum für Volkskunde, 1956)	In 3 fairy tales (2.9%) out of 101
Oskar Hudales, <i>Zlati krompir. Pohorske pripovedke in pravljice, kakor jih je povedal Oskar Hudales</i> . Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1968	In 2 fairy tales (7.4%) out of 27

## THE NARRATIVE OF POHORJE FAIRY TALES ABOUT HEALTH AND DISEASE

The combination of ethnological, anthropological, literary, historical, medical and health sources and field data is the best way to understand the cultural and medical heritage of the Pohorje Mountains in the pre-industrial period until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Published and written data in a variety of source types, such as life stories and folk literature, described visible signs of the sick and “otherness”, people who looked or behaved strangely. These descriptions were influenced by the ideas and opinions of people who did not know the exact causes of diseases, disabilities and mental disorders. Thus, they sometimes associated them with alcoholism or endogamy, but mainly with social neglect, physical domestic violence in youth, hunger, overwork, and the effects of war.

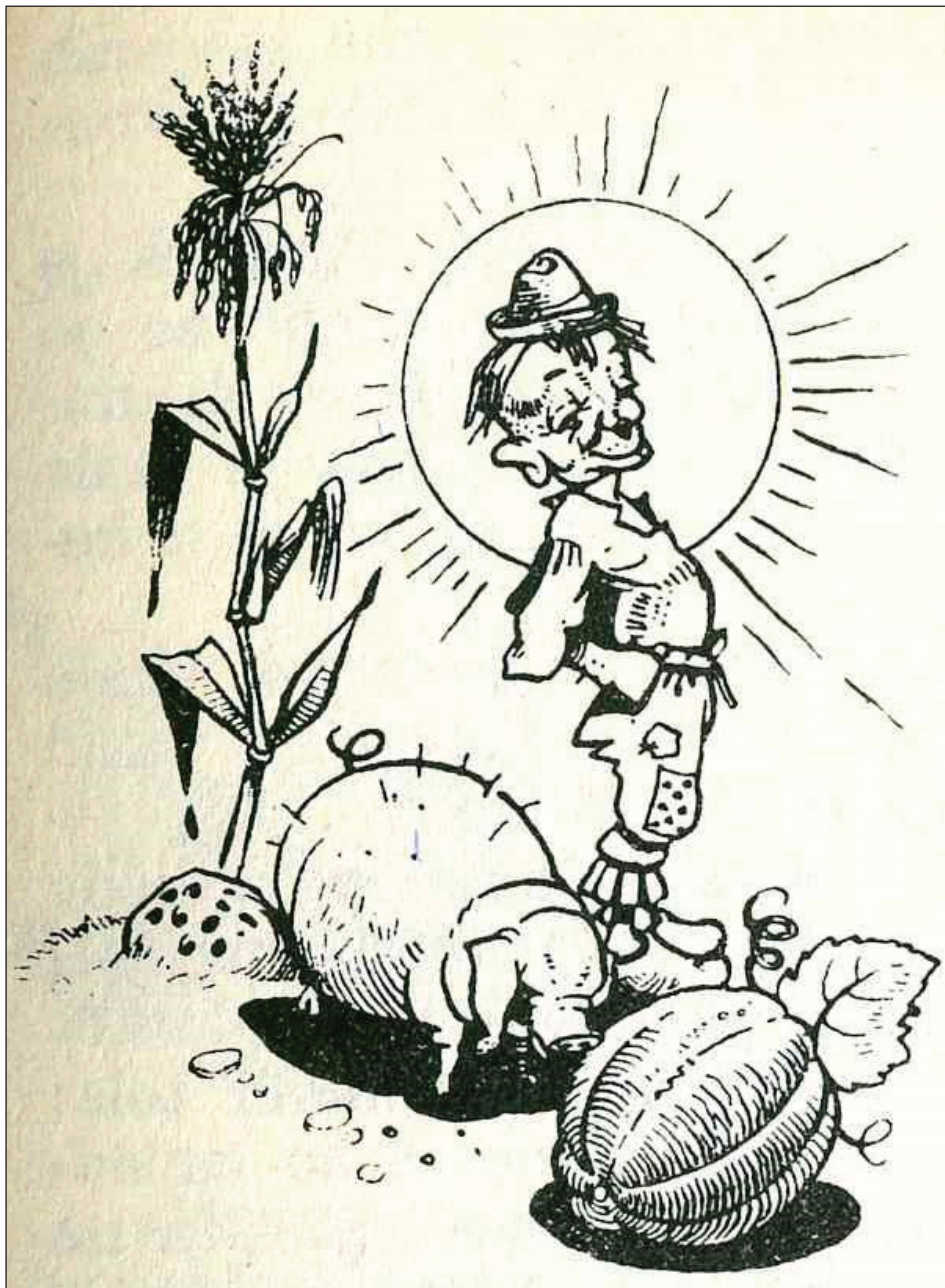
The ethno psychological characteristics of the Pohorje inhabitants are found in various sources of oral tradition, folklore, historical descriptions and ethnographic reports (such as Pajek, 1884, 157; Koprivnik, 1997b, 407, 428–429, 430;

Baš, 1965, 165–174, Baš, 1967, 224, Baš, 1990, 415–417). The descriptions of character were often interwoven with the physical-anthropological image, habits, dress, and eating and drinking culture. They were created on the basis of long-term observations of the authors and are not the result of measurements or psychological tests. Thus, descriptions of the same features or diseases can vary quite a bit depending on the environment observed by the author, with younger authors often summarizing older ones. However, both note some common characteristics, such as, the predominant isolation, distrust and rarity of contact of the Pohorje inhabitants with strangers, as they mostly lived on self-sufficient farms; the slow – phlegmatic or stoic emotional response; silent and serious behaviour; honesty, friendliness and diligence; stubbornness, especially towards masters; but also dipsomania or periodic bouts of alcoholism caused by pay days and drinking habits; sexual gaiety and sexual irresponsibility, resulting in a high number of illegitimate children. Some timber raftsmen of the Drava river, who had more opportunities to come into contact with the world due to the nature of their work, also brought venereal diseases, such as gonorrhea, to their homes.

There are also some fairy tales in which various types of mental disability are mentioned in connection with poor living conditions, such as *Little Parsley* (*Peteršiljček*; Schlosser 2015, The Narrative 101), *A Hard-headed Pauper* (*Siromaček trde glave*; Tomažič 1990a, 47–50), *Mad [People] and the Corn* (*Nori in turščica*; Tomažič 1990a, 167–168), *Mad Hind* (*Nori hlapec*; Tomažič 1990a, 169–170). The illustrations of Jože Beránek to some of these fairy tales also testify to great poverty, physical exhaustion, general neglect, toothlessness, and perhaps even alcoholism. From several illustrations, especially of older men, we can conclude that toothlessness with retraction of the jawbone was widespread. We learn about the bad condition of the teeth also from other descriptions, for example, in the tale *Treasure on Poštela* (*Zaklad na Pošteli*; Brinar, 1933, 27) a “toothless witch” (*škrbinasta coprница*) is mentioned. This coincides with Angelos Baš’s finding (Baš, 1990, 417) that the forest workers in the Pohorje Mountains never went to the dentist until the World War II, or with other testimonies about the fact that the inhabitants of Pohorje did not even know that there was a doctor who treated teeth until the 1960s.

In folk literature, health and disease are never described exclusively in descriptive-epidemiological terms, but rather implicitly, so that the sources had to be placed in a precise historical and cultural context. As a rule, detailed and accurate explanations of the symptoms or the way the disease manifests itself, as well as thorough recommendations for treatment, are incomplete; sometimes the implicit descriptions of the disease or physical conditions are supplemented by illustrations.

If we take, for example, the description of the plague from the fairy tale *The Merchant’s Son* (*Trgovčev sin*; Tomažič 1990a, 65–75) – that is close to us now, because we have just survived the two-year period of the global Covid-19 pandemic – we see that the description, which may have seemed to us to be greatly



*Fig. 1: The illustration from the fairy tale Mad [People] and the Corn, Ilustr. Jože Beránek (Tomažič, 1990a).*





*Fig. 2: The depiction of the consequences of the plague. Although the story is about a medieval plague epidemic, the illustrator has dressed both men in the clothes of the time in which the illustration was made (1942), Ilustr. Jože Beránek (Tomažič, 1990a).*

exaggerated before the pandemic, nevertheless has many similarities with the recent situation. In a heightened description, the fairy tale enumerates the consequences of the plague, such as a large number of deaths, misery and severe famine, leading to cannibalism, the consumption of human corpses in these abnormal conditions, suicide due to the horrible situation, contagion and the culture shock of an outside observer. In addition, the fairy tale also testifies to the phenomenon of sudden greying of the hair in an observer of the effects of the plague, which is a consequence of the anxiety-caused stress experienced. The sudden greying of the hair is emphasized three times, testifying to the degree of shock.

*They were walking in fear along the shore of a foreign kingdom, on the road past a hill that was itself made of human bones. Suddenly a human skull rolled down the hill at their feet, stopped, and stared at them with deep eye sockets. Standing next to the merchant's son, the captain of the sailing ship said:*

*"The dead welcome us!"*

*And the new hair of the merchant's son turned grey...*

*They reach the first house and enter through the open door. There are no living souls! Then they search house after house; no one anywhere, just a few traces here and there that people once lived here. In the twelfth house they find a girl on the floor. She was lying there unconscious, and a child was crying next to her, sucking blood from an open vein on her arm...*

*Then the merchant's son got grey hair again. /.../*

*Again, no one in the thirteenth house. But: an old man sat in the kitchen in front of stove cutting human flesh...*

*And the hair of the merchant's son is getting greyer.*

*"For God's sake, stop it!"*

*The old man pointed to the chimney where a man's body was hanging. The merchant's son immediately ordered to take it down and bury it in the garden. Bread and wine were placed on the table for the old man. The merchant's son gathered all his men; they buried the dead, treated the sick and infirm, until all his sailors and companions were sick and dead. He was left alone in a foreign land, with no sailboat and no oarsmen (Tomažič, 1990a, 66).*

That this fairy tale did not come from somewhere is proven by the information about the plague in the Pohorje Mountains, which occurred in Lovrenc in 1372 and 1680, when up to two thirds of the inhabitants died, in 1680 also in nearby Činžat and Ruše, in 1679 near Marenberg (today's Radlje ob Dravi). Today, the plague's horrors are commemorated by plague signs, which at that time had to be placed next to the mass graves of plague victims or in front of the entrances to settlements

to warn of the spread of the plague. For example, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, five stone plague pillars were erected along the old road from Puščava to Fala; in Ruše, a chapel of the Sorrowful Mother of God was added to the parish church in 1680 and a votive tablet with an intercession to God was placed in the church. In 1681, a statue of the Mother of God was erected on Main Square in Maribor, and the church of St. Barbara was built on the hill Kalvarija. New altars with patron saints were erected against the plague (e.g. in Lovrenc, where in the plague year 1680 up to 389 people died, mainly the poorest, 85 years after the epidemic in the newly built third parish church in 1765–1766 a side altar of St. Boštjan was erected, in the parish church the altar of St. Rok was erected, in Maribor in 1715 the chapel of St. Francis Xavier was built in the present cathedral church). Otherwise, altars dedicated to saints who had a protective and healing function against the plague were erected in many places on Pohorje and at its foot, e.g. Sv. Anton Padovanski (Sv. Anton na Pohorju, Brezen), Sv. Barbara (Ribnica, Legen, Malahorna) Sv. Blaž (Slovenska Bistrica), Sv. Frančišek Ksaverij (Vitanje, Slovenska Bistrica, Kot, Slovenske Konjice, Home), Sv. Ignacij Lojolski (Rdeči Breg), Sv. Jurij (Slovenske Konjice, Ritoznoj, Slovenska Bistrica, Legen, Hoče), Sv. Ožbalt (Zlakova, Ožbaltski vrh), Sv. Rok (Vitanje, Janževski Vrh, Kovača vas, Prihova), Sv. Sebastjan (Boštjan) (Puščava, Vitanje, Lovrenc na Pohorju, Slovenska Bistrica, Prihova, Golika, Lovrenc na Pohorju), Sv. trije kralji (Sveti trije kralji na Pohorju), Sv. Valentin (Gorenje pri Zrečah, Prihova) (Ramšak, 2017, 45–52; 104–106). Mortality from the plague is also briefly mentioned in Brinar's tale *Treasure on Poštela* (*Zaklad na Pošteli*; Brinar 1933, 26), which states that “whole families were swept away by the plague.” From this enumeration it is clear that the plague must have had a strong impact on people's consciousness, whereupon it found its way into fairy tales and other stories, as for example in a novelette about the plague in Maribor, written by Elza Lešnik (Lešnik, 1925, 11–12), which testifies to a baker's survival strategies and even knowledge of disinfection: “With a long-handled iron racquet she brought loaves of bread into the street, and the money was put into a jar of vinegar” (Lešnik, 1925, 11). This type of disinfection was common during plague epidemics; for example, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, disinfection stations made of stone or plague stones with carved depressions were placed on street corners, filled with vinegar, and used to wash hands and clean trade money. An example of such a plague stone is in the Abbey House Museum in Leeds (Europeana).

If the initial question of whether fairy tales can be a source for learning about the past can be answered in the affirmative way on the basis of the above explanations and examples, we can then ask how these diseases confirmed in the fairy tale can be most clearly and effectively represented. There are undoubtedly several answers to this question. We can refer, for example, to the approach of Vinko Möderdorfer (1964), which was also based on the domestic and foreign medical literature and was widely adopted by the majority of later Slovenian folk medicine researchers. However, advanced and modern medical classification systems can also be used for classification.



In order to process and classify the diseases mentioned in the fairy tales, it is perhaps more helpful to follow the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-11, 2022), a regularly updated manual, the global standard for diagnostic health information that has been used in medicine for more than a century for all general epidemiological and many health management purposes. Another helpful tool is the World Health Organization's definitions, such as the one on disability, which states that it is an umbrella term for impairments, activities, limitations, and participation restrictions. It refers to the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and the individual contextual factors (environmental and personal factors) (WHO, 2001, 228). With these tools, the ethnological material does not lose its value, since in both cases there is a consensus on the optimal classification of the disease. With their help, however, it is possible to present more clearly to the modern reader the folk-medical context from the past. Of course, other contexts must also be presented, the disease as such must never be torn out of them.

In the Pohorje sources, the proportion of statements about health and illness from youth to old age is relatively small. Sickness and death were perceived as a normal part of life. In case of illness, medical help was usually unavailable because doctors were hours away, many didn't speak Slovenian, or were too expensive, so people helped themselves with folk panaceas. Many times, the disease of humans and animals has been confused with evil spirits, which also indicates the absence of general health education. Pohorje folk literature originated at a time of high mortality, incurable diseases, frequent work or war injuries, hunger, absence or geographical and linguistic distance of doctors, and health and social insurance in general. All these circumstances were considered normal precisely because of their frequency, and so the medical part of life is completely ignored in the literature. Some diseases that lurked among the population, such as plague, cholera, dysentery, are today in the consciousness only metaphorically or proverbially and no longer pose a real threat. They have been eradicated through vaccination and better hygienic conditions. The memory of diseases is preserved only in the sources and literature, which, with careful reading and analysis, helps us to understand that era (Ramšak, 2017, 9–10).

### **The impairment and disability**

The contrast between the 'healthy' and the 'disabled' body is one of the most significant cultural categories that can be found. Anthropologists have pointed out that these distinctions vary widely among different social and cultural groups, as do the meanings they ascribe to these particular labels. The most important conceptual distinction between impairment and disability is the functional limitation of the body versus the socially imposed limitation of the disabled body.

Impairment is a loss or abnormality in body structure or physiological function (including mental functions). Abnormally here is used strictly to refer to a

significant variation from established statistical norms (i.e. as a deviation from a population mean within measured standard norms) and should be used only in this sense (WHO, 2001, 229).

In Pohorje fairy tales the impairment describes a body lacking part or all of a limb or having a defective limb or some other bodily mechanism. The disability refers to the many social and other disadvantages imposed by the society in which disability occurs. The concept of disability is socially constructed and it creates a large number of people who are dependant, marginal and supposedly unproductive economically. Society's narrow definitions of physical normality lead to ignore and marginalize those who do not fit within that definition. The distinction between impairment and disability shifts focus from individual to social pathology. In some ways, this perspective also socially labels psychiatric disorders. Disability is in some ways artificial category that encompasses congenital and acquired physical differences, mental illness and retardation, chronic and acute illnesses, fatal and progressive diseases, temporary and permanent injuries, and a wide range of bodily characteristics considered disfiguring, such as scars, birthmarks, unusual proportions, or obesity. The physical impairments that render someone "disabled" are almost never absolute or static; they are dynamic, contingent conditions affected by many external factors and usually fluctuating over time. Some conditions, like multiple sclerosis or arthritis, are progressive and chronic; others, such as epilepsy, can be acute. Even seemingly static disabilities like amputation affect activities differently, depending on the condition of the rest of the body.

Anthropologists have described that people with body types, sizes, and functions that differ from those of the majority are often subject to significant stigma, prejudice, and discrimination in many societies. Even though the disabled body is not necessarily a sick body, these people often encounter a variety of social disadvantages – especially in finding a marriage partner. The degree of stigma and the economic effect of physical impairment can depend on several factors. These include the type of impairment, the socioeconomic position of the person and their family vis-à-vis the wider society, the types of rehabilitation or treatment available, and the level of technology and social organisation of the society itself. However, the stigmatization of all physical impairment is not universal. In many cultures, different forms of impairment are seen in a positive light, and disabled people play a full role in community life. Certain types of physical impairment are highly valued and people believe that impaired people have special powers or abilities. Many of the supernatural explanations for the disabled body attach to congenital conditions rather than to those acquired later in life, where 'personhood has already been established'. Overall, the category of the disabled body is not fixed. It is a complex and variable one, and its definition depends on social, cultural, economic and historical context (Helman, 2007, 35–38; Garland Thomson, 1997, 13).



## Physical impairment and disability in Pohorje folk literature

People with permanent physical impairment were colloquially called cripples (in the Slovene language *kripelj*, *kripel*, *kripl*; in German *der Krüppel*). These were due to injury or illness in a condition that was not in line with the normal functioning of the organism. In some cases, the cripples were people with a moral disability, such as scoundrels and villains.

The word cripple derives from the Anglo-Saxon word to creep and was described in 1923 as “One who creeps, halts or limps, one who is partially or wholly deprived of the use of one or both limbs; a lame person.” The term cripple represented a broad category and referred to the person’s overall condition. In 1914, the term was neither used in the sense of a medical diagnosis nor perceived as pejorative. From the physician’s perspective, the diagnosis of cripple would never be made. The patient would be classified as suffering from Potts’ disease (hunchback), clubfoot, infantile paralysis or the like. Yet all these people were cripples. While the term cripple represented a broad category of impairments, there were underlying similarities that were indicative of impairment to the muscular-skeletal system. The crippled condition was used to embrace deformities both congenital and acquired by disease or trauma (accidents, including various amputations) causing malformation to the limb and stature. Concern for economic independence was an essential component of most cripple definitions. In 1930, there were three categories of cripples based on the ability to work. The first category of cripples included those who were able to complete training and who could potentially be employed in occupations open to all people regardless of the degree of physical disability. The second category included individuals who could not be employed in the open market because of the degree of their impairment, but were able to work in a sheltered environment. The third category included individuals who were confined to their homes and for whom there were no opportunities for employment or training. The social construction of people with disabilities, including children with orthopaedic disabilities, varied from one historical era to the next, and in many circumstances the social role of people with orthopaedic disabilities fluctuated between social acceptance and rejection. Before the involvement of physicians in the lives of people with disabilities, the care of people with disabilities was considered a socio-legal responsibility, and care was provided either by family members or in other ways closely related to the care of poor and dependent populations (Hanes, 2018, 435–436, 450).

Disability discrimination is not mere thoughtlessness or failure to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities. Much disability discrimination consists of overt physical and verbal abuse, the conscious effort to subordinate people who as a group hold less power and social standing than the majority. People observe a disability and assume that the person with that impairment fits a stereotype of someone who is lazy or deceitful. Stigma and stereotype combine to keep those who appear to be different in a position inferior to others (Weber, 2007, 1, 4, 6).

Folk literature from Pohorje implicitly express the attitude towards the different and disabled persons. For example, they portray physical disability (hunched back, blindness in one eye as a result of a war wound), otherness (resulting in solitary life), and social stigma, which is not beautified or is without the writer's excessive editorial interventions. These stories have very little magic elements. Moreover, these stories do not attempt to present the other personal virtues of the main character and they do not miraculously erase or replace the physical and mental disabilities with them. They rather describe the social and medical condition of old Pohorje foresters quite realistically. Non-involvement in social life and wrangling at the expense of the main character's physical differentness is, in fact, a projection of his true or imagined sins of the past to him. Decoded, these tales equal the physical and mental state of a person with his supposed past sins.

Physical abnormalities, mental retardation, disability, inborn deformities (hunched back, cleft lip, hydrocephalus), physical and mental decline are evil in the real and also in the fairy tale world, which is full of fears and prejudices for the disabled and the otherness. The reactions to them are verbal (pranks, insults), physical retreat (because of the possibility of "contamination") or their acts are conditioned by stigma (infanticide due to birthmark and/or incest).

The Pohorje fairy tales often use physical ability and beauty to emphasize the moral and other positive virtues of a character. Physical weakness symbolizes the wickedness and evil that must be driven away. In many fairy tales, bold, physically capable protagonists are set against the physically weak. In portraying disabled characters, their heroic acts are brought to the fore despite social stigma – a victory that is rewarded in a fairy tale by the magical erasure of their anomalies. It is not just whether the fairy tale character is physically and intellectually different, disabled, but also how the narrative shapes the difference between normality and otherness. In several cases, the tales refer to pejorative terms that refer to a different body, such as fat, thick-headed, developmentally and growth retarded, lame, "Shoulders" (in Slovenian '*Pleče*') as a term for hunchbacked.

Pohorje fairy tale heroes, such as Vodovnik, Jezernik, Hostnik, Vouvel, the Water Man, the Wild Hunt, dragon, devil, wild hunter, nocturnal hunter, a forest spirit, snake queen, horseshoe witch, and others, have plenty of these attributes of evil, either moral or sexual. For example, they have green scales and water moss on their bodies, a long green beard, green hair, golden-red hair, green and red glow in the eyes, fish or snake eyes, fins instead of legs, shovel legs like a boat on the Drava river, a snake tail, they bark like dogs, roar, or are accompanied by a dog. Their green colour is certainly a reflection of the Pohorje forests, a kind of mimicry, which, despite their imperfections, makes them look dangerous. Pohorje fairy tale characters depict people that are different. In any case, attitudes towards different, whether physically or mentally handicapped persons, testify that there was an expected "normal" phenotype, and, on the other hand, how they reacted to the deviations from normality with fears and prejudices (Ramšak, 2017, 153).

In some fairy tales of Pohorje and other stories, the fate of these people is also mentioned, for example, self-isolation or placement in special institutions. This is the case of the forest man ('*gozdni mož*', '*hostni mož*'), who was considered a mentally underdeveloped young man who could not speak and ran away from home, staying in the forest and eating cones, reeds and bark out of hunger (Gričnik, 1994, 404–405). The story of the forest man is not fictional. It was recorded by the priest Anton Slatinšek (1839–1908) at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the parish chronicle of St. Kunigunda. The forest man was the deaf-mute son of a maid who fed himself with bark and cones and walked barefoot in winter until the parish priest brought him to the orphanage in Graz (Gričnik, 2000, 31). Then, we find descriptions of people who were permanently deprived of their mental health by the war and occasionally behaved strangely, which is why they were placed in a home for the disabled in Slovenske Konjice, from where they often fled back to the Pohorje (such as in the Narrative No. 865, *Planina na Pohorju*, Gričnik, 1994, 405).

## CONCLUSION

The fairy tales from Pohorje thematises human mortality in all of its' physical and mental decline, with ageing and dying, disable, injured and defective bodies, social stigmatizing of disabled people, times without disability, pension or old-age insurance, dependence from the goodwill of the relatives or the community, hard work until the very end, mutual help, the social outcasts because of their physical or mental impairment and Christian values together with the patriarchal notions of gender roles. Stigma attached to disabled and impaired in the past, is a niche into the process of assigning or denying social values and managing identity. In the traces we also find descriptions of epidemics.

## MEDICINA IN PRAVLJICE: POHORSKE PRAVLJICE KOT VIR O BOLEZNIH IN ZDRAVJU

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### POVZETEK

*Kljub velikemu številu gradiva (pravljice, legende, življenjske zgodbe, dokumentarno gradivo), ki se nanaša na Pohorje za čas 19. stoletja, pa njegova fragmentarnost in subjektivnost kličeta k uporabi dodatnih virov, zlasti s področja zgodovine medicine. Razpršenost in nekonsistentnost gradiva sta razumljiva, saj gre za objave različnih avtorjev in žanrov. Čeprav je avtorica pregledala ok. 1500 enot tega gradiva in ob tem izpisala, klasificirala in interpretirala dele, ki se nanašajo na zdravje in bolezen na Pohorju, je bil za globlje razumevanje te tematike potreben poprejšnji uvid v zdravstveni sistem, geografsko ter jezikovno dostopnost zdravnikov in odsotnost zdravstvenega zavarovanja v obravnavanem času. Kljub vsem razlikam in razpršenosti gradiva pa lahko zaključimo, da gradivo poroča o boleznih in poškodbah redko, saj so bile te nekaj tako vsakdanjega in del življenja, da jim je bilo prav iz tega razloga namenjeno manj pozornosti. Kadar pa jih omenja, so to delovne poškodbe v gozdu, vojne poškodbe, socialne bolezni, kot so alkoholizem, nalezljive bolezni, endemske bolezni, duševne bolezni, prirojene bolezni. Zaradi težje dostopnosti zdravnikov so se Pohorci pretežno zanašali na svoje znanje in preizkušene veščine zdravljenja ter na magijo, s katero so pojasnjevali zdravstvena stanja in zdravili hkrati.*

*Ključne besede: Pohorje, Slovenija, pravljica, bolezen, zdravje, zgodovina medicine, medicinska humanistika, narativna medicina*

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## VALUABLE ANCIENT REMNANTS AND SUPERSTITIOUS FOOLISHNESS: RELIGIOSITY, NATIONALISM, AND ENCHANTMENT IN 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SLOVENIAN FOLKLORE

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### ABSTRACT

*Based on Slovenian folklore from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the paper addresses the unexplored topic of the intermixing of folklore with Catholicism and the role of this folklore in the process of Slovenian nation building. Based on an analysis of articles published in the newspaper Kmetijske in rokodelske novice, the author of the paper reveals an inconsistent discourse with regard to the vernacular Slovenian religiosity: everything associated with Christianity is praised, while non-Christian folklore elements are either praised ("Pagan remnants") or condemned ("superstition"). In the search for enchantment, which is seemingly disappearing due to modernisation, Slovenian intellectuals projected the wonderful into the past and the lower levels of society. Vernacular religiosity in 19<sup>th</sup> century Slovenian lands is distinctly multilayered and eludes moral evaluations and any attempts to control it. The original contribution of the article is an analysis of the use and reinterpretation of folklore with religious elements in the process of Slovenian nation building and the role of the concept of „enchantment“ in the perception of folklore at that time.*

*Keywords: religiosity, nationalism, enchantment, Slovenian folklore, 19<sup>th</sup> century*

## RESTI PREZIOSI DEL PASSATO E SCIOCCHESSE SUPERSTIZIOSE: RELIGIOSITÀ, NAZIONALISMO E INCANTO NEL FOLKLORE SLOVENO DELL'OTTOCENTO

### SINTESI

*Partendo da un esempio del folclore sloveno della seconda metà dell'Ottocento, il contributo affronta il tema ancora poco esplorato della mescolanza del folclore con il cattolicesimo e del ruolo di questo folclore nel processo della costruzione nazionale slovena. Basandosi su analisi di testi pubblicati dal periodico Kmetijske in rokodelske novice, l'autrice rileva l'esistenza di un discorso inconsistente nei confronti della*

*religiosità vernacolare slovena: tutti gli elementi cristiani venivano valutati in modo positivo, quelli non cristiani invece erano o molto stimati (come «resti pagani») oppure deprecati (come «superstizione»). Alla ricerca dell'incanto, che si presumeva in via di scomparsa per colpa della modernizzazione, gli intellettuali sloveni proiettavano lo stesso nel passato e negli strati più bassi della società. Nonostante i tentativi di assoggettarla alla valutazione morale o disciplinamento, la religiosità vernacolare ottocentesca nei territori sloveni si presenta straordinariamente pluralistica. Il contributo originale di questo articolo è l'analisi dell'uso e della reinterpretazione del folclore contenente elementi religiosi ai fini della nation-building slovena e il ruolo del concetto de «l'incanto» nella percezione del folclore di quell'epoca.*

*Parole chiave: religiosità, nazionalismo, incanto (ingl. enchantment), folclore sloveno, Ottocento*

## INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, whilst doing research about some of the earliest collections and publications of Slovenian folklore as presented in the Slovenian newspaper *Kmetijske in rokodelske novice* (=Novice), I came across a particularly puzzling phenomenon regarding the perception of different practices and beliefs that can be encompassed within the concept of religiosity.<sup>1</sup> The *Novice* newspaper was published primarily in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and played an important role in the Slovenian nation building process. Folklore (primarily Slovenian, but also of other nations) was frequently published in the newspaper (at least in its first decades of publication). This was because folklore was an important element in the construction of the nation's imagined past as a part of the nation building process. Amongst other things, folklore with religious content was published in *Novice* and the focus of this paper is precisely those examples of folklore which contained religious elements. While everything to do with Christianity was seen as correct, the attitude towards elements of Slovenian folklore that were seen as "remnants" of pre-Christian beliefs were ambiguous: if they did not clash with the moral code of the day they were praised as a relic of the more noble, glorious past of the nation; however, if they did not match up to the image of a "true Slovenian" they were despised and were thus encouraged to disappear. This was a characteristic of beliefs and practices often described with terms such as "superstitions".

1 This paper is the result of research carried out in the research project "Political Functions of Folktales" (ARRS N6-0268) and in the research program "The Practices of Conflict Resolution between Customary and Statutory Law in the Area of Today's Slovenia and Neighboring Countries" (ARRS, P6-0435), funded by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS).



At first glance, it seems quite straightforward: Christianity = good, not Christianity = still good if the content was not morally wrong / offensive; considered bad if the content was seen as morally wrong.

However, further research, as disclosed in this paper, reveals a much more complex story that cannot be sufficiently explained under such simplistic classifications of the religious beliefs and practices among the peasantry which were witnessed by the collectors of folklore. Namely, religious beliefs and practices are always a mixture of numerous elements containing religious orthodoxy (in this case Catholicism) and other practices that could be seen as, for example, magic, that have coexisted more or less peacefully for centuries among the population of the Slovenian lands (something similar can also be seen in Polish folklore, cf. Brzozowska-Krajka, 2006). We can imagine that the collectors of such beliefs and practices witnessed this peaceful coexistence of what at first glance were incompatible elements. Later, in the process of nation building they had to classify these beliefs and practices as “good” or “bad”. This contribution will attempt to explain such occurrences within the cultural and ideological backgrounds and the discourses about religiosity from that time.

Through the example of such confusing meanings of folklore, particularly folklore that could be considered “religious”, this contribution will, on one hand, explore the social and political context of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the territory of Slovenia regarding the perception of folklore and religiosity. On the other hand, this paper will also shed light on a topic of vernacular religiosity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the territory of Slovenia (especially connected to the concept of enchantment) that has not yet been of significant scholarly interest.

## THE CONTEXT OF FOLKLORE COLLECTING IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

The newspaper *Novice* edited by Janez Bleiweis was a typical representation of Slovenian publications in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Fikfak, 1999, 42). Influenced by nationalist ideology this newspaper presented a canvas for representing and creating specific discourses that formed the building blocks of the Slovenian nation. As was characteristic for other European nations of the time (Noyes, 2012, 21; cf. also Porter, 1999, 262), Slovenian intellectuals also saw folklore as a historical remnant that was only barely kept alive in the lower social strata – i.e., in the peasantry that in some way embodied the essence of the nation, however without themselves having any political or cultural capital. Folklore did not have value per se, rather it only had value through the lens of emerging nationalism. Additionally, it was not valued as a whole (cf. Mladenović Mitrović, 2021, 108), but was subjected to evaluation by Slovenian intellectuals who ascribed it with value based on its content – or rather: based on its “usefulness” to serve the agenda of nationalism. At this time, vernacular mythologies were being (re)discovered and (re)imagined and were utilised as a political tool in shaping Europe; in this process, vernacular mythologies were appropriated and actualised and, together with vernacular languages (especially in parts of Europe where the languages of the common people were marginalised in relation to the lan-

guage spoken by the elite class; McLeod, 2015, 9), became one of the building blocks for new national communities (Bønding, Kølle Martinsen & Stahl, 2021, 16, 20). The consequence of this ideologically selective approach was that certain forms of folklore were perceived to be highly valuable, praised, and romanticised, while other forms were despised and seen as a sign of backwardness (cf. Rogelj Škafar, 2011, 50). The peasants were seen as the carriers of a tradition that was destined to go extinct, therefore the preservation of folklore was seen as essential. This prompted the first ever systematic collection of Slovenian folklore<sup>2</sup>. However, due to being heavily burdened by a national ideology, the aim of which was to project a very specific image of the Slovenian nation, the existing folklore was not seen in its entirety but instead was viewed as a mass of different beliefs and practices which were taken out of that original, organic context and subjected to moral evaluation on a case-by-case basis. Nevertheless, despite the popular notion of folklore being on the verge of extinction, folklorists were met with a wide array of folkloric expressions, including some which contained Christian elements, as well as those that diverged from Christian teaching and were often labelled “Pagan remnants” or “superstitions”.

In the context of Western or rather European modernity and civilisation, the cultural otherness (the temporal prerequisite for the construction of the concept of modernity) of the non-modern was manifested in several ways: one of them was the past<sup>3</sup> (Anttonen, 2005, 28). Also, the relationship between the intellectual collecting the folklore and the carriers of this folklore (i.e., the peasants) presents another form of otherness: in the eyes of the collector, the peasant was “the Other”, an intimate stranger living within the border of the nation’s territory and in the emotional memory of modern man (Noyes, 2012, 16). In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in the manner of the concept of cultural evolution, the antiquarians perceived religious folk customs as survivals from the stage of savagery or barbarism – they believed they could understand the past by collecting such beliefs (Mullen, 2005, 3143). “The Other” is thus not only someone from a geographically distant place, but they can also be situated historically, as inhabiting the past. In the eyes of these early folklore collectors and folklorists, the peasants were both: “the Other” in space, living in rural areas as opposed to the urban settings of these intellectuals, and “the Other” in time, as

2 Early encouragements to collect Slovenian folklore were made during the Enlightenment era. Marko Pohlin, for example, emphasised folk poetry and following his encouragement the first collection of folksongs was completed by Jožef Zakotnik (this collection has not, however, been preserved) and similar was the case of the collection of proverbs written by Janez Mihelič. Other noteworthy collectors and folklore enthusiasts from these initial stages of folklore collecting include Anton Rudež, Valentin Vodnik, Emil Korytko, Matevž Ravnikar-Požencan, Janez Nepomuk Primic in Jernej Kopitar. Already at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Anton Janez Zupančič published a call for collecting folksongs and other ethnographic materials in the newspaper *Laibacher Wochenblatt* (Kropej Telban, 2021, 101).

3 According to Anttonen (2005, 28–29) in addition to the past, at least three more domains of knowledge have been projected to the cultural otherness of the non-modern in the context of European modernity: the non- or semi-Christian socio-cultural formations, beliefs, and practices; the non-Western societies and cultures outside of Christian Europe and in North America; and human childhood, making the mental and cultural development from childhood to adulthood seem like a process of modernisation.

they were perceived as carriers of traditions seen as “survivals” from ancient times, often erroneously and overly simplified as “Pagan” traditions and beliefs. What they were, in fact, observing were practices and beliefs that differed from those of the urban, educated elite who had been set as the default moral, religious and cultural representative. Even though these collectors and researchers of folklore were part of the same complex society as the folk whose religious practices and beliefs they were observing, there was a presupposition that they did not share the same traditions with them. While they mostly came from a Judeo-Christian religious background, their religiosity was inevitably more learned and literary than that of the peasants, which gave them a certain social distance as well as a bias that is very observable in their collection process (Magliocco, 2012, 136). However, even if the collectors themselves originated from the peasant social strata (and some did – as *Novice* actively encouraged those with a peasant background to take advantage of their origins when collecting folklore as it would narrow the social and educational distance between the peasants and the collector.

In the historical process of making a modern Europe, the cultures of selected marginalised groups that included material objects, rituals, and the “lore” of those who were called “the folk” received new meaning as an object of discovery. These objectified cultural practices and products that were deemed to belong to “the Other” thus played a part in the construction of the very category of “the modern”. Conceptualised as modernity’s otherness, the cultures of the people and pre-industrial societies in Europe had become the most important source for the discourse on difference (Anttonen, 2005, 32–33).

Therefore, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, along with emerging nationalism, different folklore practices and beliefs started to become associated with words such as “ancient”, “relic”, “Pagan”, to be followed with terms such as “authentic” and “tradition”. What was later gathered under the term “cultural heritage” became a political and ideological tool. During these processes, these practices and beliefs acquired new meanings and their interpretations reflected not only scholarly efforts to understand their origins and diversity, but also the wider processes in society in the search for identity and meaning. Nostalgia for “the good old days”, times of purity and longing for the untainted authenticity of life and belief so inevitably linked with the 19<sup>th</sup> century approach towards the past existed ever since the nationalistic sentiment began gaining greater meaning and more followers. For example, in Slovenian newspapers from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were frequent expressions of longing for the past, especially linked with the pre-industrial peasant way of life which was seen as unspoiled by progress and a loss of enchantment. This imaginary ideal past became a depository for purity and harmony that was lost in modern times. The folklorists themselves thus influenced the perception of folklore as in the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was the tendency to romanticise the folk and certain beliefs and practices associated with folk culture. They cultivated the image of these beliefs as representing a spiritual connection to nature that civilised people have lost and seeing the peasants as leading a more sacred life

than urbanised people. Confusingly enough, such romanticised images of folk beliefs existed simultaneously with the opposite academic construction of folk beliefs as pathological and wrong (Mullen, 2005, 3141–3142).

Needless to say, however, images of the purity and harmony of the past were simplifications and idealisations that did not reflect the reality of life in pre-modernity. These simplifications ranged from imagining idealised ways of life (being connected to the land), idealised relations between people, idealised morality, and also idealised beliefs systems. This was due to the processes of homogenisation and stereotyping that created an image of a unified and representative culture of the Slovenian nation (Pisk, 2013, 113; cf. Rogelj Škafar, 2011, 50).

While some types of folklore such as legends about local history and difficult, yet heroic parts of the community's past (such as the legends about Turkish raids) were common and more desirable, as they contained national traditions, myths, and values suitable for national consolidation (cf. Mladenović Mitrović, 2021, 107), others that might spoil the image of the nation were discouraged from being collected. As the analysis of the contributions in *Novice* has shown the collectors and researchers of folklore were especially fascinated by (what they considered to be) pre-Christian beliefs and practices that were highly valued, but on the other hand some non-Christian beliefs and practices such as magic and divination were harshly criticised and condemned as superstition and backwardness. One thing to keep in mind, however, is that terms such as "superstition" did not have a codified meaning and could mean different things. Therefore, even examples of "folk medicine" could be considered superstition. Even instances that from today's perspective do not seem to be religious (for example, how to handle snake bites<sup>4</sup>) were often described with this term – especially if they relied on folk interpretations of Christian elements and their usage (such as crosses or invocations to the saints<sup>5</sup> for help) as magical remedies.

- 4 As Janez Bleiweis wrote in *Novice* (15. 9. 1847, 147): "How many had died of a snake bite because of foolish superstitious beliefs that a quack pretending to have the ability to heal people and cattle can help them instead of actual remedies? Not long ago another accident occurred in Upper Carniola. A quack called Mataja pretended to heal a little girl from a snake bite, and she died the next day. The healing went like this: 'On a holy mountain there is a golden chair upon which a holy man sits, Saint Šempas. The Holy Mother came to him and brought the merciful Jesus with her. [...] Now breathe into the bread three times, make a cross upon this bread and then on yourself and the poison will leave you in the name of the Saint Šempas, of Saint Ulrich and through the three Holy Persons, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Then say: I believe in God the Father, I believe in God the Son, I believe in God the Holy Spirit. Then say the Lord's Prayer and Hail Mary's three times and Credo.' [...] What is a good Christian supposed to do with such superstitious things? Under the threat of capital sin, they should not advise the usage of such things, not to write about them and distribute the writing and by doing so sow weeds on the field of the Catholic Church. As it was determined by the holy bishops in Rome under the pope all such deceitful things should burn in fire and be destroyed, or else sin is committed. If one stubbornly holds on to such superstitions, they will be judged by God! [...]".
- 5 Under the influence of the archaic pre-Christian world view Christian saints in folklore underwent a process of mythologisation, they were separated from the higher divine sphere, relegated to the realm of "lower mythology" (together with ancestors and dead relatives) and were endowed with supernatural abilities that gave them power over natural phenomena (such as rain or hail) and human life (Tolstaya, 2021, 7).

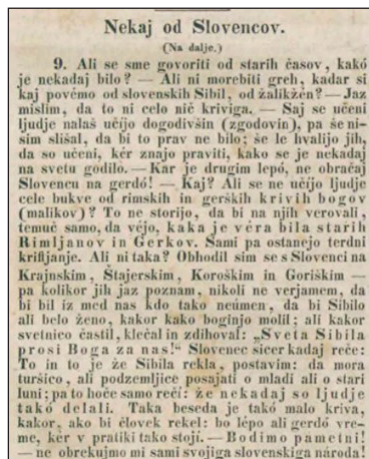


Fig. 1: Majer (1844, 172)<sup>6</sup>.

Similar tensions were experienced in British folklore studies of the time: what was considered “superstition” was seen as an obstacle to modernisation and in that sense the folklorists were actually working to demolish their own subject matter. On the other hand, folklorists tried to preserve local traditions vanishing due to modernisation (Josephson-Storm, 2017, 129). This multi-layered understanding of pre-Christian beliefs raging from foolishness to “noble remnants” can be witnessed in the following article by Matija Majer from *Novice*:<sup>6</sup>

In Slovenian public discourse, Christianity, or more precisely Catholicism, was still highly valued and was not seen as being in opposition to the renowned Pagan belief systems and mythologies, but rather as their upgrade. Even more: Slovenian national identity was (as was also the case in other nations; cf. Isnart, 2020, 40) closely associated with Christianity. Therefore, the discourse was rather inconsistent

6 Translation: Are we supposed to talk about the olden days, how it was back then? Is it a sin to talk about the Slovenian Sibyl and the “žalik žene” (i.e., fates or fairies – cf. Kroje, 2012, 106)? I think this cannot be considered bad. It is even the learned people who inquire about such stories that they haven’t heard before and no one says that is wrong. Quite the contrary: they are praised that they can tell others of how the world used to be! And what is good should not be blamed on Slovenians! Do people not learn about the Roman and Greek deities (idols)? They do not do it with the intention to believe in them, but rather to learn about the ancient religions of the Romans and the Greeks. Is that not so? And they stay good Christians. I have known Slovenian people in different lands, in Kranjska, Štajerska, Koroška and Goriška – and as far as I know, no one believes that someone could be foolish enough to worship Sibyl or the White Woman (a fairy – cf. Kroje, 2012, 146) as a goddess, to kneel and pray: “Saint Sibyl, pray for us!” Slovenian might sometimes say: “Sibyl would say this or that, she would say to sow crops, or she would talk about the young or old moon. What they mean to say with this is: “People have done so and so since forever.” There is little blame in such sayings such things, it would be similar to saying: “The weather is nice, or the weather is bad.” Let us be smart about it! Let us not talk bad about our own nation!



as it simultaneously mourned the noble Pagan past and praised Christian beliefs. The field of folklore studies was still developing and there was not yet much scholarly consensus regarding what constituted folklore. Consequently, there were serious debates among researchers about what aspects of folklore were “worthy” of being collected and researched and which beliefs and practices should be condemned and forgotten as they “spoil” the purity of the nation’s culture and heritage. However, this had an unintended consequence: folklore deemed unfit to be collected or even to exist is lost to modern scholars. The policy of collecting, however, does reveal a lot about the mindset of the collectors and the general discourses of the time, which is also valuable information in itself. Folklore was not seen as an organic whole coexisting with other parts of life and the texts that we do have from the 19<sup>th</sup> century do not reflect the reality of the manifestations of folklore in everyday life (cf. Pisk, 2013).

Additionally, the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a time when nostalgia blossomed in Europe. Sweeping societal changes, industrialisation, urbanisation, and the French Revolution introduced the notion of “history as decline” and the desire to recapture life as it once had been. This sense of temporal acceleration caused by unprecedented social and economic changes caused a sense of loss and distance from the past in the minds of European elites and prompted the need for patrimonialisation and musealisation of the past (Angé & Berliner, 2015, 2–3). Nostalgia<sup>7</sup> can be considered one of the modes of memory. Its significance with regard to research is in the fact that it can become a useful explanatory resource with which to understand the characteristics of mass consciousness and national identity (Romanovska, 2020, 127–128). Cultural memory plays an important role in the formation of collective identities and interpretations of cultural memory help a group to form a self-image and awareness of its own past (cf. Assmann, 2012), as sharing a common past is one of the building blocks of a shared identity. Folklore was a fertile ground for nostalgia as it offered almost limitless possibilities for the imagination.

## RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS IN FOLKLORE THROUGHOUT HISTORY IN THE TERRITORY OF SLOVENIA

As mentioned, this paper focuses on the religious elements in folklore. Religiosity has been a topic of interest for folklorists since the beginning of the discipline itself in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although in the early days folklorists often perceived different beliefs

7 Nostalgia is a form of rejection of or dissatisfaction with the current time and reflects a desire to return to an earlier time and to recapture a coherence unavailable in the present; the uncertainty and insecurity of the present thus creates a fertile ground for sentimental longing for the past, or rather, for selectively idealised features of the past (Pickering & Keightley, 2006, 922–923, 925). Nostalgia is primarily occupied with the sense of loss and over time the community, under the influence of different cultural and historical events, selects the most important events to construct its collective identity. Nostalgia is thus one of the ways of re-remembering (Pickering & Keightley, 2006, 923; Romanovska, 2020, 128–129). Central to experiencing nostalgia is a sense of spatiality and temporality of loss, a distance between then and now that cannot be bridged. Oscillating between the feelings of distance (irretrievability of the past) and proximity (the sensations felt in the present), nostalgia is a desire for something that is unreachable, momentarily present in fleeting fragments (Kitson & McHugh, 2015, 490).

and practices (that can be summed up by the term vernacular religion – more about that term further on) not as religion, but rather as “superstition”<sup>8</sup> or “magic” (Mullen, 2005, 3141). Other interests folklorists had included a broad array of topics, from saints’ day celebrations to non-mainstream spiritual beliefs (Magliocco, 2012, 136).

However, even before the scientific deliberations of vernacular religiosity in Slovenian lands, elements of it in the form of folktales with mythological content or pre-Christian ritual practices were noted in different historical sources. For example, a document from 1331 mentions Pagan worship of a sacred tree and spring in Kobarid and their eventual obliteration by the Church (Kropej, 2012, 84). During the Middle Ages different apocryphal legends about saints were known in Slovenian lands (Kropej Telban, 2021, 89). In later centuries various clergymen mentioned elements of vernacular religiosity in their writings. For example, in his collection of sermons *Sacrum Promptuarium* (1691–1707) Janez Svetokriški mentions legends about saints to whom people prayed when facing trouble and disease, especially the plague (Kropej Telban, 2021, 91–92). The famous 18<sup>th</sup> century polyhistor Janez Vajkard Valvasor also includes mentions of different beliefs in his writings. During the Enlightenment era Anton Tomaž Linhart, Carniolan playwright and historian, also wrote about pre-Christian Slavic beliefs, Slavic gods, and some lower mythological beings in his *Essay on the History of Carniola and other Lands of the Southern Austrian Slavs I* (1788) and *II* (1791) (Kropej Telban, 2021, 91–93, 96–97). Nevertheless, it was the time of Romanticism that saw a meteoric rise in the interest in folklore. The collection of fairy tales by the Grimm brothers in their *Children’s and Household Tales*, first published in 1812, inspired folklore collectors throughout Europe, including Slovenian linguist Jernej Kopitar who actively encouraged his compatriots to collect Slovenian folktales and folksongs. The rise in interest also manifested in the publication of Slovenian folklore in books and newspapers (Kropej Telban, 2021, 98, 103). At first, the emphasis was on Slovenian folksongs, however, in the era of Slovenian nation-building there was a rise in interest in other types of folklore, including fairy tales, legends, proverbs, riddles etc. Rich collections of folkloric texts started to appear in publications, including *Novice* (Kropej Telban, 2021, 103–104). These publications also frequently included folklore with religious content.

#### (SCHOLARLY) PERCEPTIONS OF RELIGIOSITY AND THEIR RELATION TO FOLKLORE

As far as the perception of religion throughout history is concerned, prior to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, according to Randall Styers (2004, 4), the term “religion” referred primarily to the dutiful performance of ritual obligations. The emergence

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8 The binary distinction between superstition and religion has also entered the academic field of religion studies. A consequence of defining religion in terms of monolithic essences, such as transcendence or the sacred, is a rejection of concepts not seen as “religion” and are therefore outside the field of research. What was labelled “superstition” was relegated to the fields of folklore or anthropology and the legacy of such distinctions lingers to this day (Josephson-Storm, 2017, 124).

of religion as an analytical category started in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when in several instances of describing non-Western social practices, a cross-cultural and potentially universal consideration of systems of ritual practice was starting to emerge (Styers, 2004, 4–5). However, as pointed out by van der Veer (2010, 608–609), some of the problems of universalist, ahistorical definitions of religion are that they ignore the genealogy of modern Western understanding of religion. The universalisation of the concept of religion is associated with emerging modernity in Europe. While the boundary between the religious and the secular has constantly been drawn in Christianity, a change occurred in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the Church lost its all-encompassing authority to enforce those boundaries. Thus “religion” became a universal and broad category. Every society could therefore have their own (“natural”) religion. Additionally, non-modern forms of religion, especially when they were not forms of Christianity, came to stand for irrationality (van der Veer, 2010, 609). Moreover, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, due to the changes sparked by the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, emphasis on what constitutes religion were placed from outward forms of religiosity (i.e., religious practices) to the inward state of belief or faith (Styers, 2004, 5). This emphasis on defining religion based on belief rather than practice became predominant in European intellectual circles and served as the basis for understanding other cultures, as well as the lower classes. However, for the non- or semi-literate peasants within Western cultures, the written and codified religious texts were inaccessible and much of the understanding of the world and cosmology was rooted in pre-Christian practices covered by a layer of Christianity (Magliocco, 2012, 138). These worldviews were intermixed and often produced new forms of folklore<sup>9</sup>.

What is very obvious about folklore in general, as seen in the collections of Slovenian folklore in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is the concept of “remnants” or “survivals”. This was not an isolated way of thinking. In Britain at that time, for example, it was believed that folktales, myths, and rituals were “antiques” and that they represented the remnants of prehistoric cultural systems (Josephson-Storm, 2017, 130). Aligned with the theory of cultural evolution that claims societies develop over time from simple to more complex ones, the anthropologist Edward B. Tylor proposed the “doctrine of survivals” in religion. According to him, all cultures start at the “primitive” stage of development characterised by an animistic belief and that animism is the childish, primitive, lower origin of all “higher” religions (Bailey, 2010, 68). The next stage of development is “barbarism”, which is characterised by polytheistic beliefs, while the culmination of religious beliefs was manifested in monotheistic religions. The elements of earlier belief systems evident in the higher stages of cultural evolution were characterised as “survivals” and thought to be on the verge of disappearance. These cultural leftovers fascinated early European scholars of religiosity and in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early

9 For example, hagiographies were sometimes based on oral legends, or, on the other hand, oral legends could be reinterpretations or re-embellishments of written texts (cf. Moroz, 2014, 222, 225).

20<sup>th</sup> century folklorists applied Tylor's approach to peasant (and also indigenous) religious practices and beliefs and interpreted them as survivals of ancient pagan beliefs (Magliocco, 2012, 139).

In a similar manner, Sir James Frazer developed an evolutionary scheme of religion with magic representing the earliest form of religious practice which aimed to make sense of and control the world around them (Magliocco, 2012, 139). According to the scholarly standard of the time, he too simultaneously romanticised and disparaged the rural European populations (Josephson-Storm, 2017, 132). Frazer posits that magic, religion, and science belong to three successive stages of human evolution, which go from the most primitive to the present, modern and enlightened stage. This was in contrast to Taylor's perception of magic who did not see it as an equal religious expression (Magliocco, 2012, 139). Frazer saw magic and religion as a precocious, but premature attempt at scientific reasoning (Porter, 1999, 265–266). The next developmental stage was religion as a more systematic attempt at understanding and functioning in the world through rituals and prayers to deities. However, the climax of this system was represented by Western science as the only valid means of understanding the natural laws. Another important aspect of Frazer's perception of religion was seeing all seasonal rites as an enactment of a pattern based upon the life cycle of a dying and reborn deity. This idea had a marked influence on generations of scholars (Josephson-Storm, 2017, 127) and until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and sometimes even today!) folklorists interpreted seasonal celebrations almost exclusively in the context of death and rebirth, the purpose of which was to stimulate fertility in the agricultural cycle. This idea still held an important place in the development of modern Pagan religions in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Magliocco, 2012, 139–140).

Sociologist Émile Durkheim also stayed within the bounds of evolutionary development of religion and Christian normativity. He claimed that totemism presents the earliest form of religion (Magliocco, 2012, 140). Durkheim made society the subject of science that can be understood in terms of laws and functions. The question for him was no longer if magic or the supernatural were true, but rather what functions they served within society (Porter, 1999, 264). While seeing religion as a unifying factor in society, he separated it from magic which he saw as anti-social and individualistic, ignoring the many magical traits within religions such as Christianity (Magliocco, 2012, 140).

Such sociological and anthropological theories proposed by scholars such as Taylor, Frazer and Durkheim were the product of the 19<sup>th</sup> century mindset. Their collective significance lies in the transformation of the critique and fight against the supernatural proposed by thinkers of the Enlightenment into academic orthodoxy. They established a naturalistic study of humankind and consequently, superstition, the supernatural and other (unwanted) expressions of religiosity were to be studied and understood within the categories of natural and social sciences (Porter, 1999, 266).

## INTERMIXING DIFFERENT BELIEF SYSTEMS AND HOW IT WAS PERCEIVED IN 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SLOVENIAN FOLKLORE

Nineteenth century folklorists defined their own subject of research (i.e., religiosity as expressed in folk life and folklore) in contrast to the dominant religion (Christianity). European scholars associated folk with uneducated peasants and differentiated “folk religion” from other forms of religion – they saw “folk religion” as simpler, contaminated with superstition and often at odds with official church dogma (Mullen, 2005, 3142). Additionally, most folklorists made the differentiation between religion and superstition, even though the evidence implied a close connection between beliefs and practices assigned to such categories (idem). Thus, witnessing the complexities of everyday human behaviour amongst the peasants (some of the collectors and researchers also originated from that social strata) the Slovenian collectors were very much aware of the difficulties of separating religion and magic as the people did not make such distinctions or simply saw practices or beliefs designated as “magic” as a part of religious expression<sup>10</sup>. Research (cf. Tolstaya, 2021) has shown that the relationship between official religion (in our case Christianity) and folk tradition is complex and bilateral and that a simple division between “orthodox” and “Pagan”/“non-Christian” are often impossible. The complexity of different types of beliefs in the form of what we now label as “vernacular religion” was also noticed by the famous historian of religions Mircea Eliade who observed that “the innumerable forms and variants of the pagan heritage have been articulated in the same outwardly Christianised mythico-ritual corpus» (Eliade, 1988, 221). As pointed out by Tolstaya (2021, 2) many areas of folk culture continued to preserve the traditional pre-Christian world view into the 19<sup>th</sup> century and even till today in the form of Christian ritual forms, images, motifs, characters, and concepts being subjected to mythological reinterpretations and adaptations in accordance with this world view. However, the influence went both ways and folk culture was also influenced by Christian tradition (idem). Mircea Eliade (1963, 171) even claimed (by looking through the prism of “survivals”) that the folklore of the rural populations at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century still contains surviving figures, myths, and rituals<sup>11</sup> from far back in the past.

However, folklorists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw this coexistence of non-Christian elements and Christianity as an expression of a lack of education, as is also attested in the article by Simon Šubic from *Novice*:

10 A typical example of that are palms and olive fonds blessed during the Palm Sunday church ceremonies that were believed to hold apotropaic qualities (Magliocco, 2012, 141).

11 For example, numerous dragon-slaying heroes became St. George, storm gods transformed into St. Elias and many fertility goddesses were assimilated with the Virgin Mary or female saints (Eliade, 1963, 171).



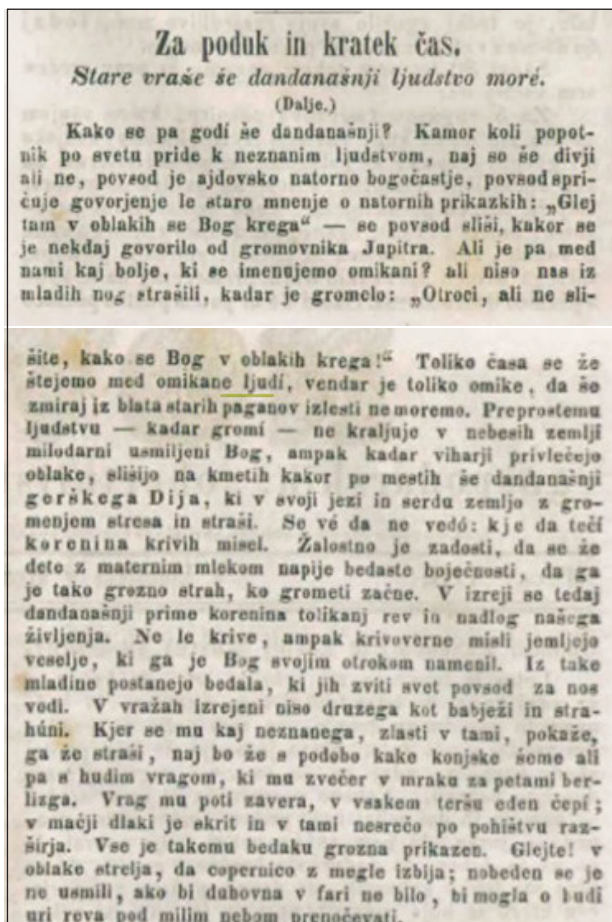


Figure 2: Šubic (1855, 138)<sup>12</sup>.

- 12 Translation: For education and entertainment: old superstitions still haunt today. What is happening even today in our world? Wherever a traveller comes to unknown peoples, be them wild or not any more, everywhere they encounter pagan worship and pagan beliefs: "Look, God is raging in the clouds!" And you hear everywhere that in the olden days people talked about the thunder god Jupiter. Are we not more learned? Did our parents not scare us with these words during thunderstorms when we were children: "Children, don't you hear God raging in the clouds?" No matter how long we have considered ourselves learned, we still can not seem to crawl out of the mud of paganism. For the simple people during thunderstorms the merciful God ceases to exist for them; instead they see a raging god that shakes and frightens with thunder. Of course they are not aware of the origins of such thoughts. It is sad to see even babies drinking such foolish beliefs with their mothers milk and being afraid of thunder from then on. [...] Such false beliefs are taking away the joy that God intended for his children. From such misled children fools grow up that can be taken advantage of by any crook. [...]"

It was thought that once science would be able to formulate laws governing Nature and society, magic and superstitious beliefs would cease to exist and that once the bearers of such traditions were better educated, the magical aspects of their religiosity would disappear (similar to other nations of the time; Porter, 1999, 264; Magliocco, 2012, 141).

There is, however, another point of view with which one might address such incompatibility of perceiving non-Christian beliefs and practices. It expresses a completely different way of thinking when compared to the scientific one. Frankfort (1977) describes the world of the mythical mode of cognition in ancient times as not being based on the distinction between objective and subjective as modern thought is, and myth not only being solely allegory. Man did not stand in opposition to nature and did not seek the “how”, but rather for “who” when looking for a cause (Frankfort, 1977, 3–15). When modern researchers tried to understand myth, they often valued it through their own lens of scientific thought and in a way saw it as naïve and of lower intellectual value. In so doing, they fundamentally misunderstood the mythical way of understanding and acting in the world. This is not to say that 19<sup>th</sup> century Slovenian peasants could, in this sense, be equated with adherents of ancient religions; however, they did seem to retain some traditions and beliefs that expressed an understanding of the universe and their place in it, which differed radically from the view of educated elites who valued scientific knowledge and progress.

There is another level of understanding the mixture of different beliefs and practices belonging to seemingly incompatible belief systems and plurality of beliefs, as shown to coexist in folklore. It can be summed up by a term proposed by Leonardo Primiano (1995) who coined the term “vernacular religion”. Vernacular religion is sometimes described with terms such as “folk religion”, “popular religion” or “unofficial religion”. Primiano (1995) expressed his criticism regarding these terms as he sees them as derogatory and challenged the assumption of the folk as inferior. He also problematises the opposite of these terms, i.e., “official religion” as religious beliefs and practices cannot be so clearly divided between this dualistic system – this dichotomy is a scholarly invention (with “official religion”<sup>13</sup> being a standard against which variations of religious expressions are measured). Instead, he proposes the term “vernacular religion” and defines it as religion as it is lived and as people understand, interpret, and practice it (Primiano, 1995, 44). This approach avoids the condescending attitude of the elite/folk dichotomy and attempts to treat religious beliefs and practices with respect by focusing on the experiential aspects of religion (Mullen, 2005, 3143). It is also worth considering that the characteristic of “vernacular” may be completely scholarly in nature and does not reflect the way practitioners or believers consider

13 Eliade (1988, 228) uses the term “popular theology” that contains reinterpreted and Christianised archaic traditions and emphasises that in the “total” history of Christianity it should deserve a treatment equal to the official Christian theology.

their beliefs and practices. This is not to say that they are never aware of the difference their beliefs and practices have from the official ones; they perhaps do not place them in such categories.

The Catholic Church had a very strong influence on the beliefs, identities and conduct in the Slovenian territory. Yet this did not mean that all the psychological needs of the community were met by the official Church teachings<sup>14</sup>. Among the lay people these teachings were adapted, transformed, new elements were added along with pre-Christian beliefs that received a Christian makeover.

In the minds of the carriers of this folklore, these elements were likely not considered to have deviated from Church teachings and the contradictory nature in regard to them might not be recognised. This is very typical for vernacular religion. Mircea Eliade, while writing within a different scholarly paradigm, also recognised this in “popular theology” that is, as he puts it, neither a new form of paganism, neither a pagan-Christian syncretism, but rather an original religious creation. Within such a mindset, for example, there is no contradiction between Christ’s image in the Gospels and the Christ found in folklore. He can remain the God of the Holy Scripture and come down to Earth to visit the peasants just as was done by a Supreme Being in pre-Christian belief systems (Eliade, 1963, 172–173).

Therefore, while in scholarly discourses a sharp divide between the “official religion”<sup>15</sup> and the “folk religion” was determined, this does not exist in everyday life. Many different vernacular beliefs and practices, although often highly criticised by the authorities or the Church, coexisted peacefully alongside official Church teachings<sup>16</sup>. In Slavic vernacular beliefs and practices, for example, several folk traditions did not disappear under the Christian culture. Many Christian concepts, symbols and texts

14 Newer scholarship on religiosity since the Medieval times has started questioning the meaning of the concept of successful “Christianisation” with some scholars claiming that despite this process among many European inhabitants (especially in the rural class) paganism (a troubled term in itself) never really disappeared and that the beliefs and practices defined under this term served to satisfy universal and transhistorical human needs not addressed by Christianity (Caldwell Ames, 2012, 337).

15 However, not even the importance that the Church had for the people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century could prevent it from being a subject of interesting folk beliefs. For example: in folklore, priests could play the role of the folk hero or a demonic figure. They were said to hold power to summon storms and direct winds (Porter, 1999, 261). Much like the priests, physicians could also be seen as healers or as sorcerers or as ministers of death (idem).

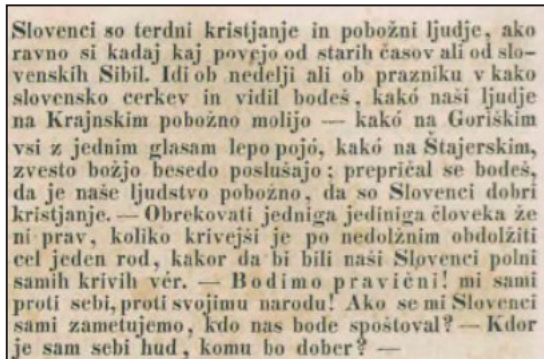
16 For example, in Biesnau in Burgundy a fountain was situated that was supposed to have miraculous qualities, such as curing every disease. In 1827, in the desire to put a stop to this “nonsense”, the authorities prosecuted a woman called Petrouille who made use of the fountain’s powers. However, the locals testifying of her behalf denounced against the notions of her guilt by testifying that she was a good Christian who lived her life according to the Christian faith (Porter, 1999, 259). As Tolstaya (2021, 9) also noticed in the case of Slavic folk traditions, certain aspects of vernacular religiosity, such as associated with life-cycle rites and everyday practical activities, were noticeably less influenced by Christianity. In these cases, Christian elements were primarily a way of sacralising ritual acts of a magical nature and rarely affected their mythological content. An example would be priests leading processions with icons around fields, saying prayers, sprinkling water to bring rain and assure a good harvest (Tolstaya, 2021).

were transformed in such a way that they continued to express older worldviews<sup>17</sup> (Tolstaya, 2021, 13), as well as new vernacular expressions appearing to express the needs of the people in their current historical and cultural context.

This mixing of different beliefs and their adjustments, however, is not limited to the past. Today the plurality of beliefs is more accessible than ever, and new forms of religiosity exist. Religious expression, despite seeming quite rigid (especially regarding institutional religions such as Christianity) is always in flux and adapting to the contemporary needs of society and the individual.

### THE ROLE OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY IN THE TERRITORY OF SLOVENIA IN THE CONTEXT OF FOLKLORE

Nineteenth century Slovenian folklore therefore combined Christian and non-Christian elements without much hesitation. However, from the point of view of identity, Catholicism prevailed. In the construction or rather “invention” of an ideal Slovenian, Christianity played an extremely important role. Being seen as a good Christian was at the core of the emerging Slovenian identity as it is clear from this article by Matija Majer from *Novice*:



Slovinci so terdni kristjanje in pobožni ljudje, ako ravno si kadaj kaj povzgo od starih časov ali od slovenskih Sibil. Idi ob nedelji ali ob prazniku v kako slovensko cerkev in vidil bodeš, kakó naši ljudje na Krajskim pobožno molijo — kakó na Goriškim vsi z jednim glasam lepo pojó, kakó na Štajerskim, zvesto božjo besedo poslušajo; prepričal se bodeš, da je naše ljudstvo pobožno, da so Slovenci dobri kristjanje. — Obrekovati jedniga jediniga človeka že ni prav, koliko krivejši je po nedolžnim obdolžiti cel jeden rod, kakor da bi bili naši Slovenci polni samih krivih vér. — Bodimo pravični! mi sami proti sebi, proti svojimu narodu! Ako se mi Slovenci sami zametujemo, kdo nas bode spoštoval? — Kdor je sam sebi hud, komu bo dober? —

Fig. 3: Majer (1844, 172)<sup>18</sup>.

17 This is, for example, expressed in the calendar that in folk culture often only superficially accepted Christian content and reinterpreted according with traditional mythological notions of calendar time related to magical elements of agricultural practices (Tolstaya, 2021, 2; cf. Eliade, 1963, 171–172).

18 Translation: Slovenians are avid Christians and pious people, even though they occasionally share stories of “the olden days”. One can see every Sunday or on a holiday the people praying piously in Slovenian churches. How they uniformly sing beautiful songs in Goriška, how they attentively listen to God’s word in Štajerska; you can rest assure that our people are pious, and that Slovenians are good Christians [...].

Morality and »correct« beliefs and attitudes as defined by the Catholic Church became inexplicably linked with the new national ideology that permeated all aspects of life – from acceptable social behaviours, reading materials, expressions of sexuality (cf. Polajnar, 2008; Remec, 2016) to practicing religiosity and folklore beliefs and practices (cf. Mlakar, 2021, 216). Having the “right” folklore was a reflection of the nation’s character. As folklore collector Ozvald Dular (*Novice*, 18. 1. 1865, 29) expressed: “Among the younger and more cultured people the stupid superstitions are, thank God, disappearing; we can only wish that they vanish completely.” Folklore that did not suit this type of criteria was not systematically collected and studied but subjected to criticism. The collectors did not accept folklore as a whole, it was not accepted as an organically diverse system of religious imagery and folk perceptions, but rather as individual narratives or practices that must first be subjected to moral evaluation, before being considered worth researching and preserving. Therefore, the folklore materials published in the newspapers and other media should not be taken at face value, as they often express more about the mindsets of the collectors themselves than about the realities of the folk (similarly in other parts of Europe of the time; cf. Porter, 1999, 256). The sources of folklore that included (unwanted) religious motives are thus lacking. A similar consequence can, for example, be observed in 19<sup>th</sup> century Polish folklore. Due to factors such as the religious intolerance of Polish folklore collectors, religiously (and morally – in the sense of obscene) inappropriate folkloric materials were not recorded as they were considered “heresies spread by the Calvinists” (Brzozowska-Krajka, 2006, 17). The actual peasants, however, were much more religiously tolerant and did not make such black and white religious distinctions nor did they condemn them (Brzozowska-Krajka, 2006, 17).

This created a confusing relationship and discourse of Christianity in relation to non-Christian and pre-Christian beliefs and practices as witnessed in *Novice*. While Christianity was seen as the only “right” religion and way of life, there was simultaneously great admiration and enchantment over what were seen as “pagan remnants”. They were seen as highly valuable and their preservation in written form was seen as essential. As the poet and politician Anastazij Grün wrote:

*The Slovenian songs, especially the folk ones, reveal an internal bond between the nation and its past. There are a few songs from pagan times that have survived. During the fight against idolatry the Christian priests fought fiercely to its detriment; however, they should be praised for that, as the compensation and blessing of Christianity was bountiful. I cannot, however, justify the efforts of the clergy who, after Christianity was already victorious, still continued their fight against innocent people by coercion to only allow liturgical songs to be sung* (*Novice*, 6. 11. 1850, 188).

Similar attitudes were observed in 19<sup>th</sup> century England where collectors simultaneously condemned the brutish customs of the lower classes and in the same breath lamented the “olden days” of imagined “merrie England” (Porter, 1999, 256). Much



like in Slovenian lands, their folklore was praised (when considered to be a Pagan remnant) or condemned (when the noble quality of the supposed “pagan remnant” was replaced by the notion of “superstition”) (cf. Porter, 1999, 258).

## ENCHANTMENT IN 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SLOVENIAN FOLKLORE

In order to fully understand the fascination that Slovenian folklore collectors and 19<sup>th</sup> century researchers had for “Pagan remnants”, we need to take into account the concept of “enchantment”. From the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the understanding of modernity has been incompatible with enchantment. The term “modernity” has usually been associated with concepts such as rationality, secularism, democracy, urbanisation, industrialisation, and bureaucratisation which left little room for enchantment, which is associated with things such as astonishment with wonders, magic, and mysteries that are almost intrinsically seen as part of the pre-modern world view (Saler, 2004, 137–138). In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the German sociologist Max Weber proposed the concept of the “disenchantment of the world”. Weber and likeminded scholars suggested that rationalisation that accompanied capitalism replaced mythical beliefs, spirituality, belief in supernatural forces and religiosity with secularism. Weber understood disenchantment as a long historical process, originating in the rise of Western monotheism in ancient Israel; the process was further boosted by the Protestant Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that, as perceived by Weber, drove the sacred from the world that was then devoid of mystery and magic. According to him, the process of disenchantment had its origins not in the scientific, but in the religious realm<sup>19</sup> (Houtman, 2020, 664).

Weber, however, did not develop a consistent disenchantment theory, therefore, his views are interpreted in various ways. To complicate matters even further, the concept of disenchantment is often accompanied by other terms that are difficult to uniformly define, such as magic or rationalisation (Radulović & Đorđević Belić, 2021, 9).

In the context of this paper, the concept of disenchantment is interpreted (in a similar way to Mladenović Mitrović, 2021, 90) as the idea of vanishing folklore due to the rise of rationality and modernisation in the modern world very much present in *Novice*, especially when referring to “desirable” forms of folklore. In this sense, disenchantment with the world is not strictly linked to the sacral any longer, but also with a wider array of the fantastic, irrational, and the supernatural (Mladenović Mitrović, 2021, 90).

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19 The concept of disenchantment as proposed by Weber has, however, inevitably been the subject of criticism. One of the critiques is that Weber did not notice that Protestants held a belief in the existence of magic (as manifested in the banishment of witches) or that he failed to recognise religion’s capacity to survive and adapt to modern times (Radulović & Đorđević Belić, 2021, 10).

Enchantment is considered to be a normal part of the human condition<sup>20</sup> and can be invoked in many ways, such as participating in immersive-entertainment experiences, watching a film, reading a book, encountering art or nature or meeting a religious or social leader or a favourite celebrity (Drinkwater et al., 2020, 196). Enchantment is often linked with religion<sup>21</sup>, but is, in my opinion, a broader concept than the sacred, the secular and the religious.

How was the disenchantment thesis reflected in folklore and folklore studies? As proposed by Radulović and Đorđević Belić (2012, 14), the great disruption in the nature of European folklore is the consequence of Christianisation that greatly affected the old beliefs. The second big change was connected with the modern age and the subsequent disappearance of folklore regarded as “traditional”; the latter also coincided with attempts to preserve and canonise (especially national) folklore (Radulović & Đorđević Belić, 2012, 14). What modernisation also brought was the disappearance and transformation of traditional cultures, including the loss of the so-called “classical” genres such as fairy tales or oral tales and the disappearance of genres that are more closely related to traditional ritual or at least their dislocation to the margins of the genre system. This was also accompanied by the marginalisation of the position of traditional customs. What also occurred was the fragmentation process (i.e., that certain examples of folklore survived in very small groups), the change of carriers of folklore (e.g., the ritual text transformation into children’s folklore) or the crossing over from the domain of active usage to the sphere of passive knowledge. Thus, the folkloristic conceptualisations can be understood in the context of the belief in disenchantment, of trying to save the remnants of the old world, not altered or corrupted by the Enlightenment or modernisation (Radulović & Đorđević Belić, 2012, 20).

As far as religion is concerned: representatives of 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanticism saw religion in all its manifestations – in traditional forms, in its mystical or heretical manifestations – as an important means of re-enchantment. However,

20 From a psychological point of view, enchantment could be characterised as a complex and malleable psychological state regulated by a blend of perceptual, attentional, and interpretational mechanisms. Drinkwater et al. (2020, 201) give this description of enchantment: “Taken altogether, we propose that “enchantment” is best characterized as a special *arousal* (or altered) *state* that occurs when a person becomes engrossed within a cognitive- affective melee of “pleasant” ideations and emotions like excitement, surprise, awe, and wonder, *simultaneously mixed* with more “unpleasant” ideations and emotions such as uneasiness, dislocation, tension, and unpredictability. This juxtaposition is the embodiment of dis-ease or dissonance, which ostensibly results from a “person ↔ environment” enaction that disrupts an individual’s normal experience (and state of “ease”) with a sudden, unexpected, or profound awareness. In turn, this awareness fosters a transformative experience of presence or oneness with “a transcendent power, agency, or Other.” Such occurrences are net positive for most people, but there can be negatives.”

21 Enchantment can, as mentioned, be linked with the religious, but there are also “secular” forms of enchantment. It can also demonstrate the fluidity that is encompassed in this concept – for example: religion can easily lose its identity as “religion” and turn into something else, like entertainment; or entertainment can in some cases be taken as sacred or “religious” (Utriainen, 2016, 50). It is generally very hard to judge what religiosity means to an individual or rather where they experience it.

in addition to the other sources of enchantment, they turned to magic, alchemy, esoteric arts, or astrology; they also rediscovered pagan myths and folklore (Saye & Löwy, 2005, 436).

We could see the aforementioned fear of disappearing folklore as a form of disenchantment, the loss of magic, the mysterious, an idea that is also deeply rooted in Romanticism, that is one of the possible influences on Weber's theoretical work<sup>22</sup> (Mladenović Mitrović, 2021, 91; cf. also Saler, 2004; Aspren, 2018, 17). Actually, long before Weber's time the Romantics sensed the disenchantment of the world that was a result of processes such as industrialisation and urbanisation. They lamented the disappearance of the sense of community and the growth of modern technology as they saw it as turning nature into a machine, taking away the beauty, mystery and magic it once possessed (Coudert, 2017, 732–733). Nostalgia, in a sense, can be seen as "enchantment with distance" (Kitson & McHugh, 2015, 488).

After the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the concept of disenchantment has been used for different scholarly endeavours, such as a historical analysis of the decline of magic, the study of revival of magic through re-enchantment or the emergence of new religious movements and spiritualities (Aspren, 2018, 18). As Partridge (2016, 316) puts it, alternative spiritualities are a by-product of secularisation with the privatisation of belief and the decline of religious monopolies creating a thriving context for both this secularisation and privatisation. The process of disenchantment, as understood by Weber, thus, does not lead to secularity (*idem*), but rather to different expressions of enchantment that, enabled by our information-rich and self-oriented societies, facilitate the construction of new identities and the re-enchantment of our lives (Partridge, 2006, 320, 327).

## VERNACULAR RELIGIOSITY AND ENCHANTMENT – THEN AND NOW

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the territory of Slovenia, the concerns regarding folklore with religious elements were contextualised within the broader frame of nation-building and Christian values. While vernacular religion has always displayed a mixture of pre-Christian and Christian worldviews, this was the first time that it was subject to a broader moral evaluation with large scale political implications. As demonstrated in this contribution, while searching for the noble building blocks of the emerging Slovenian nation, the collectors and folklorists studying this material were faced with

22 Actually, there are several points linking Romanticism and Weber's theory, such as viewing the traditional values of the lower strata of society in opposition to modernity, and the understanding of the 19<sup>th</sup> century socio-economic dynamics as driven towards the modernisation and rationalisation (Mladenović Mitrović, 2021, 91–92). While Weber did not use typically Romantic terms to describe the enchanted world as pure, authentic, uncorrupted, he did, however, see traditionalism as "magically motivated" and agreed with the Romantic idea of the peasants being strongly tied to nature. He also attributed "magical means" to "the savage" that was also attributed to archaic societies in the past; this is also one of the fundamental ideas in Romanticism: that before modernity man was uncorrupted by civilisation (Mladenović Mitrović, 2021, 92). This is in accordance with the evolutionist view of religion as previously described.

the unnerving realities of vernacular beliefs and practices among the common people that did not fit the imagined (and desired) dualistic system of noble remnants of “Pagan” beliefs and “advanced”, “truth-based” Christian beliefs and practices. What they actually encountered (besides orthodox beliefs and practices) was a messy mixture of religious orthodoxy mingled with undesirable non-Christian elements deemed “superstitions” and “tainted” Christian beliefs and practices that unapologetically reinterpreted and utilised Christian teachings.

Time and time again, folklore has been proven to be a living thing; one of its fundamental characteristics is its flexibility and adaptability. Even though there seems to be no room for motifs that are characteristic for “traditional” folklore in the modern world, a closer look reveals a surprising amount of motif continuity – although in different forms, adapted for the contemporary folklore carrier. For example, legends of ritual murder from pre-modern times were transformed into stories about kidnappings and mutilation in shopping malls or to stories about the thefts of bodily organs. In the 1980s and 1990s there was a reoccurring topic of ritual satanic murders, which is one such example of reoccurring and modernised examples of the ritual context return (Radulović & Đorđević Belić, 2021, 18).

In addition, the human mind is quite capable of accommodating diametrically opposed concepts – it can simultaneously believe in intelligent design and evolution, God and chance, destiny, and fortune (Morgan, 2009, 11–12). Such contradictory elements are also seen in 19<sup>th</sup> century Slovenian folklore, mostly collected among the peasants, however, on a day-to-day level their coexistence did not seem to pose a problem.

Since the beginning of the discipline, folklore studies have dealt with what can be described as enchantment, as this is the core of folklore, however, this sentiment was also enhanced by romantic and nationalist discourses of the time that saw folklore on the brink of extinction and as the last echo of a bygone past permeated by uncorrupted morality and a traditional way of life that needed to be cherished and saved from being completely forgotten. Such a view was a reflection of the exoticisation of traditional cultures (Radulović & Đorđević Belić, 2021, 14–15). In a way, it is quite ironic that modernity, thought to carry the blame for tradition dying out, in an epistemological sense actually created tradition and made it a modern product (Anttonen, 2005, 13).

Collecting 19<sup>th</sup> century Slovenian folklore can thus be seen as an attempt to save the last traces of enchantment in the world, however, this also contributed to its institutionalisation which is, paradoxically, a sign of rationalisation. Seeing folklore as “remnants” also made it an artefact that needed to be obtained, studied, and preserved (Mladenović Mitrović, 2021, 113). This was even more true for folklore that had, as they assumed, Pagan remnants that evoked a powerful sense of enchantment and thus fascinated the collectors. Folklore has, however, proven to have a remarkable potential for survival and adaptation – stories can adjust their content to new social, political, or other contexts; characters can change, or supernatural elements can even be replaced with seemingly rational ones giving the impression of disenchantment

(cf. Radulović & Đorđević Belić, 2021, 18). As argued by Coudert (2017, 707–708) there have been periods of disenchantment throughout Western history, and that they occurred every time anyone envisioned a previous age as being, unlike their own, enchanted<sup>23</sup>; however, new forms of enchantment arose each time to fill the gap.

Despite the often-claimed assertions of disenchantment of the world (cf. Thomas, 1991; Weber, 1993) and superstition and magic being replaced by rational thought, enchantment never really went away. Enchantment seems to be an inherent part of the human condition (Drinkwater et al. 2020, 196).

In the time of emerging modernity, enchantment became associated with marginalised groups within the Western elites, with the “primitives”, with children, women, and the lower classes (Saler, 2006, 696). The boundaries between concepts such as religion, superstition and magic have been in a perpetual process of being readjusted and redefined (cf. Walsham, 2008). The need for enchantment is powerful – it can defy rational alternatives and evidence that point to the contrary, as attested to in folklore, religious miracles, theatre, art etc. As far as the more “standard” religious expression is concerned, different expressions currently exist and are constantly emerging: from personalisation of religious expression to fundamentalism, creating new “alternative” religious expressions, all the way to ideologies of which some hold a quasi-religious potential. Even the confidence in science has its counterpart in movements undermining scientific authority (e.g., medicine) as well as in different social phenomena (such as conspiracy theories, environmental movements etc.) (Radulović & Đorđević Belić, 2012, 11). Additionally, as the scholar Alessandro Testa (2017a, 26; 2020b, 9) recognises, another form of religiosity has formed in recent decades: forms of vernacular or “folk” religion that are re-appropriations of popular beliefs and practices that existed before modernisation, along with emerging religious aspects of cultural heritage (especially intangible heritage) production and consumption. However, as pointed out by Martín (2009, 282), we should not consider these other phenomena as lower forms of religiosity or as pseudo-religiosity as all of them are, in their own way, sacred and “the sacred exceeds religion”. This raises the question of folklorism (i.e., the invention and adaptation of folklore, including using it outside the cultural context within which it was created) and the usage of certain enchanting folklore elements in cultural heritage construction and as tourist attractions.

23 The first mention of an old and widespread motif of the departure of fairies (claiming that there used to be fairies everywhere, but that they have since left our world) in British history is in Geoffrey Chaucer's, *Tale of the Wyf of Bathe* at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Josephson-Storm, 2017, 137). This could be a sign of disenchantment in the folkloric sense, however, this obviously occurred centuries before processes associated with the later concept of disenchantment, such as modernisation and urbanisation. The fairies, nonetheless, continued to be mentioned up to this day and in the next centuries new forms of their departure from our world have appeared (Josephson-Storm, 2017, 138). Stories about the departures of certain folklore characters are also known in Slovenian folklore, however, to my knowledge there has been no systematic research done on them. Nonetheless it would be an interesting topic for further research.



People (at least the educated elites) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century recognised the every-day enchantment, magic, and irrationality in the pre-modern times (Partridge, 2006, 321) and made them a source to fulfil their need to be enchanted. They saw themselves on the verge of a disappearing world full of wonder and magic. While they saw themselves as representatives of the modern, rationality-based, and Christian future, they longed for the imagined world of the past, free of the constraints of their own society. While they were unable to recognise the enchanting, magical, wonder-filled elements of their own world, they projected the need for wonder into the past and into the lower levels of society. The very beginning of the discipline of folklore studies can actually be seen as a search for enchantment, for the lost world and the wonder-filled past (Radulović & Đorđević Belić, 2021, 21). This need for enchantment, the “lure effect” is, as Partridge (2006, 321) puts it, embodied in the term “occulture” that, similarly to pre-modern times, thrives beyond the specialist theologies and rituals of the official religions. It is part of the culture that “belongs to the people” (idem) and is in that sense closely connected with the notion of vernacular religion. While today we are freer to express the need for enchantment, be it in neo-Pagan religiosity, in nature, participating in immersive-entertainment experiences, in meeting a socio-religious leader, in fantasy films or cultural heritage (cf. Drinkwater et al., 2020, 196), we often still look to the past as a source of magic and awe that we feel are being suffocated and are lacking due to the demands of everyday life.

## DRAGOCENI OSTANKI PRETEKLOSTI IN VRAŽEVERNE NEUMNOSTI: RELIGIOZNOST, NACIONALIZEM IN OČARANOST V SLOVENSKI FOLKLORI IZ 19. STOLETJA

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### POVZETEK

*Prispevek na primeru slovenske folklorne druge polovice 19. st. predstavlja do sedaj še neraziskano tematiko prepletanja folklorne, vsebujoče religiozne elemente, z na Slovenskem dominantno katoliško religijo ter vlogo te folklorne v izgradnji slovenskega naroda. Avtorica na podlagi analize objav v Kmetijskih in rokodelskih novicah ugotavlja obstoj nekonsistentnega diskurza o vernakularni religioznosti, na katero so zbiralci naleteli med kmeti: vse, kar je bilo povezano s krščanstvom, je bilo vrednoteno pozitivno, nekrščanski elementi v folkloru pa so bili ali visoko cenjeni (če so bili dojeti kot »poganski ostanki«) ali pa ostro obsojani (če so bili dojeti kot »vraževerje«). Folklor je moral odražati karakter »pravega Slovenca«, zato je bila podvržena moralnemu ocenjevanju in selekciji, vrednotilo se jo je na podlagi njene »uporabnosti« v procesu razvijajočega se slovenskega nacionalizma, s katerim je bilo tesno povezano tudi krščanstvo. Slednje je predstavljalo merilo za vrednotenje vseh drugih verovanj in praks, s katerimi so se zbiralci srečali med kmečkim prebivalstvom. Pri interpretaciji dojemanja folklorne v 19. st. se avtorica prispevka nasloni tudi na koncept »očaranosti« (angl. »enchantment«), ki mu slovenski folkloristiki še nismo posvečali veliko pozornosti. V iskanju zaradi modernizacije domnevno izginjajoče očaranosti so namreč slovenski intelektualci projicirali čarobnost in skrivnostnost v preteklost in v nižje sloje družbe. Vernakularna religioznost 19. st. na Slovenskem se kljub poskusom moralnega vrednotenja in discipliniranja spodbujanega s strani graditeljev slovenskega naroda in katoliške Cerkve kaže kot izrazito pluralna, hkrati pa članek osvetljuje ideološke reinterpretacije folklorne z religioznimi elementi v nacionalne namene. Izvirni doprinos članka predstavljata analiza uporabe in reinterpretacije folklorne z religioznimi elementi v nacionalne namene ter vloga koncepta »očaranosti« pri dojemanju tedanje folklorne.*

*Ključne besede: religioznost, nacionalizem, očaranost (angl. enchantment), slovenska folklor, 19. stoletje*

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## SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE FAIRY TALE COLLECTION *CROATIAN TALES OF LONG AGO* BY IVANA BRLIĆ-MAŽURANIĆ

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper analyzes the fairy tale collection Croatian Tales of Long Ago by the Croatian author Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, interpreting its social functions. Several important social functions are considered in fairy tales: national and supranational (Slavic) imaginary, Christian values, and patriarchal order. These social functions are analyzed in individual fairy tales, considering the thesis of Dutch scientist André Jolles that the primary social function of fairy tales is to express the community's idea of justice and injustice.*

*Keywords: Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, Croatian Tales of Long Ago, social function, justice*

## FUNZIONI SOCIALI DELLA COLLEZIONE DI FIABE *RACCONTI CROATI DI UN TEMPO LONTANO* DI IVANA BRLIĆ-MAŽURANIĆ

### SINTESI

*L'articolo analizza la raccolta di fiabe intitolata Racconti croati di un tempo lontano dell'autrice croata Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, interpretandone le funzioni sociali. Le fiabe vengono esaminate nell'ottica di diverse importanti funzioni sociali: l'immaginario nazionale e sovranazionale (slavo), i valori cristiani e l'ordine patriarcale. L'analisi delle funzioni si basa sulla tesi proposta dallo scienziato olandese André Jolles, secondo la quale la funzione sociale primaria delle fiabe sarebbe quella di esprimere il concetto della giustizia e dell'ingiustizia proprio di una data comunità.*

*Parole chiave: Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, Racconti croati di un tempo lontano, funzione sociale, giustizia*

## INTRODUCTION

Although the fairy tale, judging by the different levels of interpretation and definition, as well as regarding the strong theoretical-interpretive appeal over a longer period, seems to be an extremely complex literary genre, the Dutch theorist André Jolles included it in his study (1930) on the so-called simple literary forms. Simple forms, respectively created within the folklore – legend, saga, myth, riddle, saying, case, memorabile, fairy tale, and joke – as elaborated by Jolles, are simple regarding their social functions: each of these forms expresses only one, a prominent social function which is given to it by the community. Therefore, Jolles also sees the fairy tale as a simple form, reading from it only one, dominant social-literary function. However, it does not refer to the opposition of good and evil, which we are accustomed to considering as the inherent meaning of a fairy tale, but to the articulation of the so-called naive morals of the community, as Jolles calls it. In other words, the fairy tale does not talk about what the community considers good and what is evil and does not deal with moral articulations or interpretations of the narrated events; instead, the fairy tale expresses what the community considers just and what is unjust. Jolles argues his thesis with the interpretation of several fairy tales, the most impressive of which is the analysis of Perrault's *Puss in Boots*, in which we are forced to reject moral judgment to properly understand the fairy tale. Namely, the protagonist in boots breaks all moral codes (he lies, cheats, steals, threatens, and is violent) to crown it with murder at the end – and yet, as readers, we are not inclined to consider him a negative character. On the contrary, we are ready to consider the final situation that is achieved by murder as a “happy ending”, precisely in opposition to the ethical code of the community, which would be more inclined to sanction lies, fraud, robbery, and murder. Instead, the Puss is not only rewarded for all its evil deeds but also receives social recognition in the form of a noble title. Jolles interprets this in the context of the social function of the form, which has the task of expressing the community's expectations and demands that the unjust initial situation is corrected by the end of the fairy tale, regardless of whether it is a moral or amoral act. On the trail of this interpretation of the social functionality of the fairy tale, which Jolles applies also to the auctorial fairy tale (Perrault's, the Brothers Grimm, etc.), I will analyze the fairy tale collection *Croatian Tales of Long ago* by Croatian author Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić,<sup>1</sup> which is considered the best fairy tale collection in Croatian literature and is part of its canon. Namely, I see the social functionality of this collection in its imagological-ideological layer regarding several social codes relevant to the creation and reception of the collection. The first of these codes concerns authorship, i.e., the fact of the author's gender, which not only significantly marked the initial reception of the

1 Quotations from the fairy tales in this paper are taken from the English translation by Fanny Copeland, published in 1924, in which the author's name is given as Berlić-Mažuranić.



Fig. 1 and Fig. 2: Book cover (left) and first page (right) of *Croatian Tales of Long Ago* by Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, English translation (1924), illustration by Vladimir Kirin (Wikimedia Commons).

collection but was (and partially remains) the primary code for the social valorization of the author's work in Croatian culture.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the collection was published in 1916, at the time of the First World War, while Croatia was still part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and therefore the theme of the articulation of national identity was rather socially attractive. This topic is ambitiously but strangely shaped in this collection as an amalgam of Slavic mythological remnants and Croatian traditional patterns. And finally, the important meaning code of the collection refers to the affirmation of the patriarchal order, and it is precisely in this segment that I see the most expressive ideological action, which I will show in the following analysis.

- 2 In this context, it seems interesting to note that Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić mentions her reluctance to assert herself creatively, considering it inappropriate for her gender (cf. Zima, 2019). Furthermore, although at the time of her literary activity, female authorship in Croatian literature is no longer so rare, female authors are extremely underrepresented and subordinated. In 1935, Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić was proposed for membership in the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts, but the proposal was not accepted, and, as can be seen from the minutes, the author's gender was one of the reasons for the rejection. In the second attempt (1937), she was elected to the membership of JAZU as a corresponding member, and as the first woman ever in this Academy since its establishment (cf. Zima, 2014 for more on that).

## FAIRY-TALES AND THEIR SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

*Croatian Tales of Long Ago* by the author Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić were published for the first time in 1916 in Zagreb, by Matica hrvatska, as a collection of six fairy tales.<sup>3</sup> At the time of publication, the author is no longer a literary beginner – it is her fifth book. However, all her previous books had very limited publishing and reception reach: the first booklet, a collection of children's poems and stories entitled *Good and bad*, small in scope and reach, she published by herself, for family needs – as a Christmas gift to her children in 1901. The second book, a collection of children's poems and stories, *School and Holidays*, was published in 1905 by the Croatian Pedagogical-Literary Association, a publisher specializing in children's and pedagogical publications, with relatively limited distribution and reception. After that, she published a collection of poems, again by herself: a booklet, more precisely a 24-page brochure with the title *Pictures*, published in 1912, a few years later (1916) she will designate as her favorite book. In 1913 she published the children's novel *The Strange Adventures of Hlapic the Apprentice*, again published by the Croatian Pedagogical-Literary Association, this time with a significantly more favorable reception outcome: although pedagogical and children's-literary editions at that time did not have a serious reception, the novel will reach Antun Gustav Matoš, the central literary figure of Croatian modernity, who will publish an extremely favorable review of the book, not to say a panegyric, in the magazine *Savremenik* (Matoš, 1913, 615–616).

Matoš's designation of "classic book" which he called *The Strange Adventures of Hlapic the Apprentice* permanently marked not only the novel itself but also its canonical representation. When, therefore, three years after the appearance of that novel, Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić published the collection *Croatian Tales of Long Ago*, she correctly felt that the audience would react more favorably to an already well-known name, and rather ambitiously changed the publisher, moving from a small, narrowly profiled publisher to Matica hrvatska, which at that time was not only among the leading Croatian publishing houses but also had a clearly defined and implemented publishing policy of promoting the national cultural identity, into which *Croatian Tales of Long Ago* fit perfectly.

When the collection was published in December 1916, the critical reception that followed, although extremely positively intoned, was quite cautious about genre determinations and placing the collection in the children's and/or adult

3 In the first edition, the collection contained the fairy tales *How Quest Sought the Truth*, *Fisherman Plunk and his wife*, *Stribor's Forest*, *Little Brother Primrose and Sister Lavander*, *Reygoch and Bridesman Sun and Bride Bridekins*, and illustrations by Petr Orlić. The collection was published a second time in 1920 by the same publisher, textually unchanged, but without illustrations. In the third edition, in 1926, the collection was published with two new fairy tales (*Topoko the Wanderer and Nine Princes and Jagor*) and with new illustrations by Vladimir Kirin. On the circumstances of the publication of the collection, cf. Zima, 2019.



literary system. Until then, the literary form of the fairy tale did not appear in the genre grid of Croatian (adult) literature of modernism, and apart from Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, only Vladimir Nazor would affirm it to some extent in that period.<sup>4</sup> Antun Branko Šimić, writing an account of Brlić's collection, explicitly calls the literary form of the fairy tale a simple genre and writes his positively intoned criticism despite this "simplicity", favoring the author's stylistic and semantic virtuosity against the limiting features of the genre. At the beginning of the 20th century, the fairy tale is still very firmly connected to the folklore domain, and critics of Mažuranić's collection are hesitant to interpret the fairy tale as part of canonical literature. This literary genre would receive full affirmation only a few decades later, with the nominations of the *Croatian Tales of Long Ago* for the Nobel Prize for Literature in the 1930s<sup>5</sup> and with the first literary-historical forays into recent Croatian literature, in which Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić would appear primarily as an author of *Croatian Tales of Long Ago*.<sup>6</sup>

Among the most striking interpretations of this collection in the first wave of reception is certainly the account of Antun Branko Šimić, published in the newspaper *Obzor* on February 27, 1917. Šimić, whom himself would enter the canon of Croatian poetry four years later with the collection *Transformations* (1920), at the time of this review was only 18 years old; this youth is seen in the presumptuousness and even the impudence with which the young man approaches *Croatian Tales of Long Ago*, in the introduction clearly expressing an extremely underestimating attitude towards female literary authorship.<sup>7</sup> If we exclude the author's mentioned remark about the fairy tale as a "simple genre", Šimić's conclusion, which loudly echoed in subsequent presentations and largely determined the fate of the collection, refers to the emphasized national identity articulated in Mažuranić's fairy tales: "Ivana Brlić Mažuranić," claims Antun Branko Šimić, "is so specifically Croatian as the Croatian region, Croatian costume and Croatian wines" (Šimić, 1917, 1). This thesis is complementary to another important imagological-ideological complex affirmed in fairy tales – the notion of Slavic or all-Slavic identity. The collection is deeply immersed in the Slavic mythological imaginary at the level of motifs and narration, and especially at the level of character design, mostly based on

4 About the fairy tale in the fin de siècle period in Croatian literature, cf. Žmegač, 1995. In the collection *Istrian Tales* (1913), Vladimir Nazor writes several stories with features of the literary form of the fairy tale.

5 Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature four times (1931, 1935, 1937 and 1938). The nomination documentation is signed by Gavro Manojlović, who was at the time of the first two nominations the president of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts, and who has written a study on the fairy tales for the nomination procedure, in which he affirms the literary form of the fairy tale in the context of canonical literature. More about the nominations and Manojlović's study in Zima, 2014.

6 On the treatment of Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić in histories of Croatian literature cf. Zima, 2018a.

7 The first sentence of his review states: „Women have never written well in our country“ (Šimić, 1917, 1).

Russian mythological and folklore material, which the author referred to as a source for certain motifs in her fairy tales. When, in the mid-1920s, the collection was translated first into English, and then into other European languages, the reception abroad saw this very element of the collection – the connection with Slavic folklore and mythological storytelling – as the most expressive, even to such an extent that in 1929 the author, in a private letter to her son Ivo, needs to clarify that it is an author's work and that she imitates, but does not take over, folklore structures through the narration. At the time of the creation of the collection, the author, as she explains in that letter, was reading a study on Russian folklore and mythology by the Russian folklorist Aleksandr Afanasyev,<sup>8</sup> and she shaped individual characters by adopting some of the written features or motifs. Later research (cf. Kos-Lajtmán & Horvat, 2011) will show that, apart from Afanasjev, among her sources were Anton Tkany's lexicon *Mythologie der Alten Deutschen und Slaven* (1827), the collection of folklore tales (1858) by Matija Kračmanov Valjavac and the writings of Ivan Kukuljević-Sakcinski (1851) on folk mythology, but, as Brlić-Mažuranić emphasizes in the aforementioned letter to her son, the plot arrangement and narration are entirely her own.

An example of this creative process can be cited, for example, the character of grandmother Muggish in the fairy tale *Bridesman Sun and Bride Bridekins*; Muggish, which is the name of the supreme Slavic female deity (according to Katičić 2011), in that fairy tale is an important character who initiates the plot and has some of the epithets recorded in Slavic mythological tales, but the narration refers to the love affair between Bride Bridekins and Oleg the Warden, in which Muggish is a catalyst, not a central character. The process with the character of Muggish perfectly outlines Mažuranić's creative process. In his interpretations of Balto-Slavic pre-Christian beliefs, Radoslav Katičić (2011) interprets the goddess Muggish as the wife of the supreme god Perun who, together with her husband, is the mother of the Sun; Katičić metaphorically shows the ambivalent character of that mythical figure. An important element of the mythical syntagmatic associated with Muggish is its relation to water, contained in the name (which alludes to water and wet); water often boils in Muggish's mythical repertoire, and Katičić also interprets this motif lexically, connecting boiling water and the motif of the (golden) key that unlocks spring, also associated with Muggish. Furthermore, her role is also connected with death, and in her repertoire is also the function of the mother of the graves, that is, the guardian of the passage to the underworld/death. In the fairy tale *Bridesman Sun and Bride Bridekins*, almost all motifs of this repertoire are transmuted and reinterpreted in the storytelling: one of the most important motifs in the fairy tale is the lost key, the central fairy tale structure refers to a wedding that can be fatal for both the bride and the groom due to the anger of the empress who

8 „The poetic outlook on Nature by the Slavs“, 1865–69.

was offended by their actions, and the Muggish is initially benevolent towards Bride Bridekins, but in the continuation of the story, she turns against her, angry because of girl's disobedience. The resolution of the fairy tale is brought by the Sun, grandson of Muggish (in Slavic mythology, it is a maternal relationship, not a grandmother: Muggish is the Sun's mother), and in the finale, Muggish opens the land under the emperor's army and is thus connected to the fungus, earth, and ruin, i.e. with the epithet of the mother of the graves or the gatekeeper at the entrance to the underworld.

Such a peculiar creative process, as well as the undoubtedly strong affirmation of the idea of national identity located by Šimić, can be interpreted in two ways: on the one hand, Viktor Žmegač (1997) interprets the poetic elements of relying on mythological storytelling and affirmations of mythical thinking as elements of neo-romanticism, one of the poetic systems at the period of the *fin de siècle*, in which the turning to mythical thought is the central link with the romanticism contained in the name. On the other hand, the social-ideological position of these fairy tales can also be read against the background of the author's extra-literary or social-political ideas, whereby the idea of all-Slavic unity is located as a kind of family heritage, as the author herself will formulate in her *Autobiography* (1916), in which she will attribute her "love" for Slavism to her parents' influence: "The first conscious feeling that arose in me in my parents' house was love for the Croatian homeland and for that broad, enthralling notion of Slavism, of which this love is the core. This is not only the first feeling, but in a way, it is the original, from which my other feelings were later created" (Brlić-Mažuranić, 2013, 129–130; translation mine). This romanticized remark, however, can also be connected to the political sympathies of the author's family, first of all, the grandfather, and then the father,<sup>9</sup> and it is not uninteresting to see in the author's fairy tales the fusion of the national and supranational imaginary – Croatian and Slavic – in the context of the idealization of heroism, fidelity, modest existence, and patriarchal order.

Jack Zipes (1988), writing about the social functions of the fairy tale, sees its connection with the process of constituting national identity as one of the key functions of fairy tales in romanticism – in the process in which the fairy tale transgresses from the folklore domain to the literary canon. The process of the national constitution that European countries went through in the 19th century will leave its traces in fairy tales as well, Zipes claims, exemplifying this thesis with the Grimm brothers' fairy tales, that is, with the social and political functionalization of fairy tales in the process of adaptations of folk

9 The author's grandfather Ivan Mažuranić (1814–1890) and father Vladimir Mažuranić (1845–1928) are both prominent public figures – Ivan Mažuranić is a politician and the first Croatian ruler who did not have noble origins, while Vladimir was among the highest judiciary in the country and president of JAZU from 1918 to 1921. Both were active in politics, with Ivan being one of the founders of the People's Party, formed on ideas of the Illyrian movement.

tales. Nevertheless, in the period that follows, from the *fin de siècle* to the 20th century, the social functions of fairy tales, especially in the domain of children's literature, change significantly, according to Zipes, abandoning national integration and national constituting functions, and favoring relaxation and entertainment as new postulates of children's literature and culture in the 20th century. The poetics of neo-romanticism, however, which, as Žmegač (1995) claims, is constituted precisely by the thematic and ideological reliance on the mythical and mythological, briefly in the period of the *fin de siècle* will invoke again the national-constitutive sentiment. So, although at the time of the creation of Mažuranić's collection, children's literature was trying to be affirmed independently of social-political functionality, her collection fits into another, also current neo-romantic code, which strives to re-affirm the national as one of the meanings of children's literature.

If we take a closer look at the motifs and meanings of *Croatian Tales of Long Ago*, we recognize primarily the ideologues of longevity and tradition as parts of the national and supranational (all-Slavic) imaginary. The next ideologeme refers to the attitude towards old age, then to the hierarchical social organization, to some elements that are intertwined with Christian ideology such as the idealization of modesty, obedience, and forgiveness, and finally to the patriarchal system as the subtext of all the fairy tales in the collection.

*Croatian Tales of Long Ago* affirm, romanticize, and favor the life patterns of the unspecified past, and in the narrative processes, a happy ending is a return to the original, ancient, pre-situation. The culture of *fin de siècle* is symbolically located in the urban spaces, but in *Croatian Tales of Long Ago* anything urban is omitted, and where the word "city" is used, it has the meaning of "fortress". The stories all take place in rural areas, the events are played out according to pre-modern, emphatically traditional patterns and life models, and urban culture is not represented in them. Contrary to *fin de siècle* individualism, *Croatian Tales of Long Ago* established the interpersonal as a core value. Where social structures are shown, they are based on hierarchy (*Little Brother Primrose and sister Lavender*, *Topoko the Wanderer and Nine Princes*, *Reygoch*), and the privileged social microstructure is certainly the (wider) family based on Christianity (*How Quest sought the truth*, *Stribor's Forest*), patriarchal (*Fisherman Plunk and his wife*, *Bridesman Sun and Bride Bridekins*) and customary values (*Jagor*). Linguistic and stylistic archaism, largely interpreted in linguistic and linguistic studies of the collection, underline the key figure of the spoken language, given that the social communities described in the *Tales* are without exception pre-literate and/or illiterate, therefore they necessarily rely on the traditional transmission of civilizational patterns orally, in narrative mode. No character in the *Tales* writes, writes down, or reads what is written down. Space is conquered by walking or riding a horse, and apart from the boat, no other means of transport is mentioned in the fairy tales; it is interesting, though, that space can be conquered in fantastic ways (for example, flying on a raincoat or

flying in eagle's claws). All communities in the *Tales* are pre-monetary, and value or opulence is expressed by an abundance of means of exchange. All the communities in the fairy tales are rural and dependent on cultivating the land or, in two fairy tales, on fishing, and all communities are firmly connected to natural rhythms. Food in fairy tales implies modesty and a rudimentarily developed process of cultivation – we are talking about basic foods such as bread, eggs, fish, cooked vegetables, honey, and forest fruits.

Furthermore, in all eight tales in the collection, the key element of order is the acceptance of hierarchy and obedience to the bearer of social or gender power. The bearers of social power are presented in the domain of feudal social relations – in the fairy tale *Little Brother Primrose and sister Lavender* power is held by the princess, in the fairy tale *Bridesman Sun and Bride Bridekins* highest authority is empress, in the fairy tale *Topoko the Wanderer and Nine princes* prefect holds the power, in the fairy tale *Fisherman Plunk and his wife*, the authority is royal. Particularly interesting is the fictional coda in the fairy tale *Little Brother Primrose and sister Lavender*, in which the community – the principality – demands the princess and her son to take over the power in the previously stateless community:

*The people of the village got to know the wisdom of the princess and Relya's strength. Presently they remarked how well the Golden Gridle became the princess, and, although none of them had ever seen the princess before, they said: 'She must be our noble princess.' And so they gave Relya and the princess a great piece of land and begged Relya to be their leader in all things and the princess to be their counselor. (...) From all sides, they flocked together and went to the foot of Mount Kitesh to beg Relya to be their prince, because they have heard of his strength and courage and of the wisdom of the noble princess. Wherefore people promised with their own hands to build them a new castle, all fair and stately. Relya accepted the people's offer because he rightly judged that God had given him such great strength and courage, and had delivered him from his hot and cruel temper so that he might be of use to his country. So Relya became a prince; and the princess, who was getting old by now, yet lived to see great happiness in her old age. And when the princess and Relya, with Lavender and Primrose, entered their new and stately castle for the first time, the village children scattered evergreens and sweet basil on their path, men and women pressed round the princess, seized the hem of her robe and kissed it (Berlić-Mažuranić, 1924, 253–254).*

Even in those fairy tales in which there is no direct mention of social power, such as the fairy tales *How Quest sought the truth*, *Jagor*, or *Stribor's Forest*, the narrative is structured hierarchically and the human protagonists accept it, although they are not directly subject to it: in the fairy tale *How Quest sought*



*the truth*, the highest value instance is represented by All-Rosy, an allegory of the Christian God, who sits on top of a glass hill in a golden castle. In *Stribor's Forest*, the title phrase already implies possessiveness, i.e., ownership, and the title character Stribor is a forest elder who rules from the castle. In the fairy tale *Jagor*, on the other hand, which most directly affirms longevity and tradition as core fictional values, the hierarchy is determined by age, and the oldest is also the wisest and most respected; authority is therefore won by old age. It is similar to the fairy tale *Reygoch*, in which the oldest is also the wisest, where wisdom and age are said to be superior to size and strength, given that the giant Reygoch, supernaturally physically strong and superior to all other characters, is subordinate to the weak but wise old men.

Furthermore, the order is regulated by the attitude towards tradition as well as by the high valuation of modesty and poverty. Considering the direct affirmation of Christian ideological topos in four fairy tales,<sup>10</sup> and the indirect one in one,<sup>11</sup> the values of fairy tales in the reception, especially in recent times, are also read as Christian (cf. Milanja, 1977; Hranjec 2003; Špehar & Salopek 2015), especially by privileging submission, but also the idealization of poverty to abundance. Such values are most directly manifested in the context of food. In all fairy tales in which the motif of food or feeding appears, even incidentally, modest but nutritionally hearty food will be positively evaluated, at the expense of an abundance of luxurious food that cannot satiate the heroes. This motif appears most clearly in the fairy tale *Fisherman Plunk and his wife*, in which the title character Plunk despises his poor and tiring fisherman's life, in which he modestly and monotonously feeds on the fish he catches during the day and the cooked greens that his unnamed wife, the protagonist of the fairy tale, picks on the coast. Plunk yearns for abundance and luxury and because of this yearning he is ready to sacrifice his wife and son, but when he finally arrives at the beautiful and luxurious court of the King of the Sea, the choice and very luxurious food offered to him cannot satisfy his hunger. Paradoxically, he asks the Sea King for a plate of humble food, boiled greens. In the fairy tale *How Quest sought the truth*, the values connected to food are further radicalized in the context of

10 In the fairy tale *Stribor's Forest*, Christian symbols and dogmas are directly presented, including God's commandments, the crucifix, and the concept of sin and redemption. In the fairy tale *Little Brother Primrose and sister Lavender*, the crucifix protects the children from pagan evil forces. In the fairy tale *Reygoch*, there are no direct allusions to Christianity, but the world is indirectly presented as the work of God: "And therefor God has caused that little staff to fall down there and the staff held up the pillar under the earth", (Berlić-Mažuranić, 1924, 108) — "Don't be afraid, children" — said Lilio to the shepherds, "The Lord never created that monstrous giant for evil, else he would have killed half the world by now" (Berlić-Mažuranić, 1924, 116), and in petrified syntagms (God's creation, God's will, God's secret) was preserved connection with the Christian repertoire. In the fairy tale *Jagor*, an unworthy father who, under the influence of his second wife, neglected and lost his son, goes to "God's judgment", after he repented and went looking for his son, and died in the process.

11 In the fairy tale *How Quest Sought Truth*, which Cvjetko Milanja (1977) reads as structurally Christian, an allegorical reading finds out Christian elements (paradise, sin, redemption).



Fig. 3: Vladimir Kirin, illustration accompanying Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić's fairy tale *How Quest Sought The Truth*, 1922 (Wikimedia Commons).





*Fig. 4: Vladimir Kirin, illustration accompanying Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić's fairy tale How Quest Sought The Truth, 1922 (Wikimedia Commons).*

food availability: if food is hard to get and the heroes are struggling to provide food, it will be positively valued, but the easy availability and abundance of food imply moral corruption, and that in so much so that the grandson who has become rich and therefore has food easily available will try to kill the grandfather who disapproves of such behavior.

The motif of food is also connected to another social function: the affirmation of the patriarchal order. This motif is very interestingly manifested in the fairy tale *Fisherman Plunk and his wife*: the gender distribution in this domain is highly symbolic and refers to Plunk's fishing and fish preparation (which is the traditionally male domain of hunting and wildlife) and the woman's picking of a modest wild plant (greens) which is cultivated by water, a vessel and the closed space of the house and in the domain of female competence.

Jack Zipes (1988) sees patriarchy as an implied or explicit subtext of fairy tales since the earliest authorial transmutations of this genre. In *Croatian Tales of Long Ago*, the patriarchal order is the dominant structure, despite the striking inadequacy of the male characters in the fairy tales. The patriarchal order, which Branka Galić (2002) defines as the relationship of male power over social institutions in a dual articulation (the power of men over women and the power of older men over younger ones), in *Croatian Tales of Long Ago* rests on the willingness of the female characters to accept the dominance of the male characters, despite that they are shaped in various ways as insufficient or inadequate: weak, stupid, unreliable, incompetent and otherwise inappropriate. In *Stribor's Forest* the only male character, a young man over whom his mother and daughter-in-law are in conflict, is called a fool, and his stupidity progresses in the narrative. In the fairy tale *Fisherman Plunk and his wife*, in which I will analyze the paradox of the patriarchal order in more detail below, the titular Plunk is a completely inadequate character and visibly inferior in all respects to his unnamed wife. In the fairy tale *Little Brother Primrose and sister Lavander*, the hero Relya is not only inconsistent, but also inadequate in an interesting way, considering that the women (the fairy and the girl) give him instructions on how to behave, and he completes the tasks following their instructions. In the fairy tale *Reygoch*, the titular giant is completely dependent, inexperienced, and incapable of independent functioning. In the fairy tale *Topoko the Wanderer and the Nine Princes*, Prefect Jurina, although he rules the county, is powerless in front of his wife Jelena, and the fable develops from this powerlessness. In the fairy tale *Jagor*, the father of little Jagor is completely inadequate in his role as a father, because of which he dies, and the narrative energy gathers around the stepmother, that is, in the relationship of the conflict between the little Jagor and the stepmother. In short, in fairy tales, female strength is suppressed or is a function of masculinity, except in those fairy tales in which female characters do not appear at all (*How Quest Sought the Truth*). It is interesting, furthermore, that demonic or evil female characters also appear in two fairy tales (the stepmother and the mythical

monster Baba Poludnica in *Jagor* and the cruel empress in *Bridesman Sun and Bride Bridekins*), but they also fit into the scheme of the patriarchal order, showing the danger of destruction of patriarchy – if the female characters do not obey and obstruct the order, they will end tragically: both human female characters, the stepmother and the empress, die a tragic and extremely cruel death.

The fairy tale *Fisherman Plunk and his wife* can be read as an example of the social functionalization of the fairy tale in the context of the patriarchal order. The two titular protagonists are already treated differently by naming them: by not naming the woman, who will take the initiative and the status of the protagonist from the middle of the fairy tale, it is precisely her subordinate position that is expressed. The gesture of naming in the fairy tale is strongly patriarchally motivated: even the male child born by an unnamed woman in marriage with Plunk will be named, although his role in the fable is secondary, and the woman and her late mother, who restore the patriarchal order and rehabilitate the worthless Plunk, remain nameless. The fairy tale is about the disciplining and re-education of the fisherman Plunk, tired of poverty. Plunk longs for abundance and opulence and tries to achieve it by fantastic means, using the power of the fantastic figure of Dawn-maiden, the ruler of fish and the sea. The Dawn Maiden will even listen to him twice: the first time, upon his request for wealth, the Dawn Maiden sends him an unnamed girl who becomes his wife, supplements his modest diet by collecting greens, and in the evening tells him fantastic stories about kings and wealth. Marriage and then fatherhood is not enough for Plunk, however, and he will mistakenly think that his wife is a fairy (because she knows how to tell stories so beautifully), and after he realizes that he was mistaken, he will ask Dawn-Maiden for the second time to afford him wealth and that after physically abusing his wife, threatening to kill her, forcing her to search for the wealth of the Sea King and then leaving her when she lost her son on that search and became speechless from grief. In this sequence appears the motif of miraculous female narration, well known since *The Arabian Nights*, which Karen E. Rowe (1986) sees as a central female function in fairy tales. Female narration in fairy tales overcomes the social silencing of women, i.e. taking away their voice. Rowe analyzes the motif of women's weaving as a metaphor for a secret female code that articulates the female voice in a society that prefers the voiceless woman. At the same time, women's storytelling is situated in the domain of traditional transmission of community knowledge, where the usual figure of the storyteller is precisely the older woman. On the other hand, in *Fisherman Plunk and his wife*, the motif of the female voice/narration and taking away female voice reflects patriarchal order in the situation of a strong (narrative) female voice that the unnamed woman acquires through motherhood, and then taking away her voice when she also loses her function as a mother, that is, when she loses a child by accident. In other words, in patriarchy, a woman has a voice only as a mother. The further



course of the story is as follows: Plunk gets access to the court of the Sea King, and therefore leaves his wife and goes to the luxurious, golden court. And while Plunk gradually has to learn a lesson there and realize that opulence did not satisfy him and that true happiness lies in modest family life, the mute woman mourns in their deserted cabin during that time. It should be repeated here that Plunk physically abused the woman before his disappearance and threatened to kill her, but the woman is still looking for a way to find and get back her abusive husband. She will receive instructions for this undertaking from her dead mother, using the motif of animal language; at her mother's grave, a hind will speak to her in a mute language, apparently representing the spirit of her deceased mother (a motif known from, for example, the Grimm brothers' fairy tales). The deceased mother will convey to her unfortunate daughter the instructions for the restoration of the patriarchal family, twice: when the woman loses hope in Plunk's return, the mother forces her to continue searching for him. A woman embarks on a difficult, adventurous journey full of obstacles to get her husband back, and on the way, she goes through a trial when her lost son appears to her, and she is offered to give up the search for Plunk in exchange for the child's return. However, she rejects the offer and continues to search for a worthless abusive husband. This loyalty of hers will paradoxically pay off in the end: she will succeed in freeing her husband from the court of the Sea King, and her son will return with him. The paradox of such an ending, however, refers to the end of the fairy tale in which the protagonists will forget the whole adventure: Plunk's worthlessness and his violence are forgotten, but so are women's courage, persistence, and strength. "When they sat down that night to their supper of wild spinach, they had clean forgotten all that had happened. And but for those twin pipes, there is not a soul would remember it now" (Berlić-Mažuranić, 1924, 90–91). Patriarchy rests on inadequate and insufficient masculinity: only female consent maintains that order. It is a female acquiescence reinforced by generational transmission: mothers will ensure that their daughters do not question but accept patriarchy and consider such acquiescence a virtue. Similar ideas can be seen in other fairy tales, although not in such a direct way: the idealization of motherhood, the silent suffering of violence and injustice without resistance, the affirmation of the Christian idea of forgiveness, and the expectation of a fantastic reward. On the other hand, male heroism is reinterpreted and recontextualized to a great extent: in the fairy tale *Little Brother Primrose and sister Lavender*, male heroism is portrayed as aggressive and inappropriate, and the hero Relya must "tame" and abandon aggressive behavior to assert himself as a protagonist. In the fairy tale *Bridesman Sun and Bride Bridekins*, the protagonist Oleg ban is the prototype of a traditional heroic male figure and he, the only one of all the male characters in fairy tales, fulfills his function, although his heroism is "softened" by his primary role as a lover for Bride Bridekins. The paradox of male heroism is perhaps most clearly depicted in the fairy tale of *Topoko the Wanderer and*

*Nine Princes*, in which the nine boys will temporarily occupy the male domain and, although they are children, kill the antagonist with swords. This murder, however, although committed by children, is treated as heroism in the fairy tale and the children emerge from it morally uncompromised, similar to André Jolles' interpretation of fairy tales as stories about naive justice demanded by the community and not about good and evil.

If we try to read *Croatian Tales of Long Ago* considering the opposition between good and evil, we are faced with actions and events that resist our understanding of morality: the heroes are murderers (even children) and bullies, and the heroines suffer violence (even children). But, if we read them aware that narration reflects justice and fairness as seen by the community, then we understand how the course of the fairy tale will end the initially unjust situation and re-establish order, whereby this order relies on a sense of justice considering the analyzed social codes.

## DRUŽBENE FUNKCIJE ZBIRKE PRAVLJIC *PRIPOVEDKE IZ DAVNINE* AVTORICE IVANE BRLIĆ-MAŽURANIĆ

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### POVZETEK

*Prispevek analizira zbirko pravljic Pripovedke iz davnine avtorice Ivane Brlić-Mažuranić in interpretira njene družbene funkcije. Pripovedke iz davnine, ki so bile prvič objavljene leta 1916, so bile takoj po izidu sprejete z navdušenjem in razglašene za zbirko, ki zvesto prikazuje hrvaško identiteto in samo bistvo hrvaštva. Prispevek se osredotoča na ideološke in imagološke značilnosti te pravljичne zbirke, natančneje na značilnosti, povezane z nacionalno in nadnacionalno (slovansko) družbeno artikulacijo. »Davnina« iz naslova zbirke implicira idejo dolgoživosti in predstavlja identiteto, predvsem nacionalno, kot strukturo dolgega trajanja. »Davnina« sega v čas nepismene, hierarhično organizirane družbe in majhne skupnosti, ki močno ceni tradicijo in starost. Poleg tega zbirka pravljic predstavi nekatere krščanske vrednote, vključno z idejo o grehu in odpuščanju grehov, skromnosti in pokornosti. Nazadnje pa je v pravljicah predstavljen tudi patriarhalni red, in sicer kot nekaj paradoksalnega, z nezadostnimi moškimi liki in močnimi ženskimi liki, ki so pripravljeni ohranjati prevlado moških. Te družbene funkcije analiziramo v posameznih pravljicah, pri čemer upoštevamo tezo nizozemskega znanstvenika Andréja Jollesa, da je primarna družbena funkcija pravljic izražanje ideje skupnosti o pravičnosti in krivici.*

*Ključne besede: Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, Pripovedke iz davnine, družbena funkcija, pravica*

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## A ROMANTIC FAIRY TALE AND ITS SOCIAL PURPOSE IN TIMES OF WAR: *THE WOMAN WITHOUT A SHADOW* BY HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL

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### ABSTRACT

*The Woman without a Shadow* is both the title of an opera resulting from the collaboration between Hugo von Hofmannsthal and the composer Richard Strauss in the three years immediately preceding the outbreak of the First World War, and that of a fairy tale in which the writer, from 1912 to 1919, reworked the subject of the libretto. With a specific focus on the second version, this essay sets out to describe how, beyond the complex symbolism of the formal structure (which initially makes one think of an artistic product finely crafted, but completely unrelated to historical reality), Hofmannsthal's fairy tale is actually intimately connected to the cultural and 'social' project developed by the author during the years of the First World War. It was this project that gave rise to the veritable 'mythology of the social' that lies at the heart of this fairy tale, in which Hofmannsthal revisits the very cornerstones of Romantic aesthetics and gives them a modern twist.

**Keywords:** *Fairy tale, Hofmannsthal, First World War, Romanticism, Metapoetics, Aesthetics, Social Project, Cultural Renaissance, Myth*

## UNA FIABA ROMANTICA E IL SUO INTENTO SOCIALE IN TEMPI DI GUERRA: *LA DONNA SENZ'OMBRA* DI HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL

### SINTESI

*La donna senz'ombra* è sia il titolo di un'opera lirica nata dalla collaborazione fra Hugo von Hofmannsthal e il compositore Richard Strauss nei tre anni immediatamente precedenti allo scoppio della Prima Guerra Mondiale, sia quello di una fiaba in cui lo scrittore, dal 1912 al 1919, rielabora l'argomento del libretto. Concentrandosi sulla specificità di questa seconda versione, il contributo intende delineare come, al di là della complessa simbologia della struttura formale (che inizialmente farebbe pensare a un prodotto artistico finemente elaborato ma del tutto astratto dalla realtà storica), la fiaba di Hofmannsthal riveli uno strettissi-



*mo legame con il progetto culturale e 'sociale' sviluppato dall'autore negli anni della Prima Guerra Mondiale. Da tale progetto si origina a una vera e propria 'mitologia del sociale' che costituisce il nucleo di questa fiaba e nella quale Hofmannsthal riprende e riattualizza i cardini dell'estetica del Romanticismo.*

*Parole chiave: fiaba, Hofmannsthal, Prima Guerra Mondiale, romanticismo, metapoetica, estetica, progetto sociale, rinascimento culturale, mito*

### THE WOMAN WITHOUT A SHADOW: A FAIRY TALE BETWEEN HISTORY AND MYTH

*The Woman without a Shadow* is actually the title of two works of art: an opera in three acts by the composer Richard Strauss with a libretto by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, which was written in the three years preceding the outbreak of the First World War, and premiered at the Vienna State Opera on 10 October 1919, and a prose work by Hofmannsthal written between 1912 al 1919, in which the subject of the libretto was reworked as a fairytale (on the genesis of *The Woman without a Shadow*, cf. Hofmannsthal, 1975, 270–282). As Hofmannsthal said himself in a letter to the German philosopher Rudolf Pannwitz, the two versions of *The Woman without a Shadow* should be seen as two completely separate chapters in his artistic production. In fact, he believed that compared to the libretto, the prose version had “inexhaustible significance, leading into the deepest depth”, and that despite the greater difficulty involved in its creation, it was a much more refined work from the aesthetic point of view (cf. Hofmannsthal & Pannwitz, 1994, 127). In his opinion, then, the fundamental difference between the two versions regarded not so much the variations in the storyline, but specific differences in form and style. Indeed, while the opera presents a Baroque scenario based on illusion and *trompe-l'oeil*, the prose version has to do without the elaborate facade of an operatic production which takes inspiration from seventeenth century stage scenarios: it takes on the “more severe” compact form of the myth (Hofmannsthal & Pannwitz, 1994, 127). This is all the more significant if we consider that the choice of using the form of the fairytale combined with the myth was made in 1917, at the height of the First World War, when the questions being posed by history were of impelling urgency, and at a time central to the development of Hofmannsthal's ‘cultural politics’ (in fact, just a few years later, he would oversee the first edition of the great Salzburg Festival) (cf. Wolf, 2014).

It is no coincidence that in the very same letter to Pannwitz mentioned above, Hofmannsthal makes the connection between his own fairytale and the Romantic prose tradition, and in particular the fairytale *Undine* (1811) by the novelist

and playwright Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué (cf. Hofmannsthal & Pannwitz, 1994, 127)<sup>1</sup>. Inspired by the work of the Renaissance physician and occultist, Paracelsus, Fouqué's tale tells the story of a water nymph, a creature neither divine nor human, able to take on human form but unable to gain a soul except by marrying a human being. Through her marriage to the knight Huldbrand von Ringstetten, Fouqué's Undine succeeds in gaining a soul, but along with this comes all the suffering connected to a mortal existence: the tribulations of a hostile world and the pain caused by her husband's infidelity, which eventually leads her to drown him in her own tears and return to the water, her primary element. Although it does not have the same tragic ending as Fouqué's tale<sup>2</sup>, Hofmannsthal's story has much in common with Fouqué's: in fact, his woman without a shadow, the daughter of Keikobad, king of the spirit realm, is also a hybrid creature, both elemental and supernatural, a fairy who can change shape and take on animal form. She, too, falls in love with a mortal, the emperor of the south-eastern isles, and becomes his wife, whereupon she leaves the enchanted kingdom of her birth; like Undine, she too is attracted by the world of mortals. However, while the symbol at the heart of the romantic novella is the soul, it is the shadow which is central to the twentieth century fairytale. This motif is not unknown to German Romanticism (think of Chamisso's *Peter Schlehmil*, for example), but in Hofmannsthal it symbolizes a new theme, rich in meaning, namely motherhood. In fact, Hofmannsthal's empress must give birth within twelve months of her marriage to the emperor in order to avoid her husband being turned to stone and in order for herself to become truly human. This change from Fouqué's material, as we shall see in more detail in the second part of this article, is anything but marginal in Hofmannsthal's reworking, also because it has significant implications from the poetological point of view. Indeed, in the wake of the Romantic tradition, Hofmannsthal's tale can also be seen as a metareflection on the structure and function of poetry. This helps to explain the complexity of its form, which the writer himself pointed out in a letter to Rudolf Borchardt dated 7 July 1917. In it, he described the fairytale as the most difficult work he had ever written (cf. Hofmannsthal, 1975, 418). But apart from the enormous complexity of its symbolic structure, the difficulty involved in

- 1 Hofmannsthal was familiar with Fouqué's fairytale and greatly admired it: in 1912, he included it in the anthology of German storytellers (*Deutsche Erzähler*) which he had edited for the publishers Insel Verlag. On the other sources he made use of, cf. Hofmannsthal, 1975, 273-282. Among those most often mentioned are Mozart's *Magic Flute* and Goethe's *Faust*. Pannwitz was just as interested as Hofmannsthal in Fouqué's story: he had already begun to write an epic poem based on the Undine theme years earlier. Indeed, before a meeting with Pannwitz which took place in the October of 1917, Hofmannsthal asked him to bring a transcription of his *Undine*, from which he could then take notes for *The Woman without a Shadow*, cf. Hofmannsthal, Pannwitz, 1994, 127 and Hofmannsthal, 1975, 437 sq. On Pannwitz's *Undine*, cf. also the critical edition (Pannwitz, 1999).
- 2 It is worth pointing out, for instance, that in Fouqué's *Undine* the marriage ends in tragedy, whereas in Hofmannsthal's fairytale, as we shall see, marriage is given a positive connotation.

writing *The Woman without a Shadow* also arose from the connection with its social function, in that moment of crisis that was the First World War. Though at first glance its elaborate, encrypted ‘wrappings’ might make one think that the author was trying to escape the present by means of literature, it is undeniable that *The Woman without a Shadow* is actually closely connected to the time it was written in. It is an expression of the “social” project which had been maturing in Hofmannsthal’s mind throughout the war years. In that sense, and paradoxically, the fairytale is a committed piece of writing precisely because it was conceived of as a conscious stand *against* the culture and society of the time. In a letter dated 23 August 1919, to the Austrian journalist and intellectual, Berta Zuckerkandl, written immediately after a stay in Ferleiten (an Alpine village close to the peak of the Großglockner in Austria, during which time he wrote the last three chapters of the fairytale), Hofmannsthal stressed the element of social criticism implicit in *The Woman without a Shadow*:

*In Ferleiten I spent fifteen hours a day on my own, it’s twenty-five days since I even saw a newspaper. You’ll understand that I rediscovered myself, that the “fairytale” is finished, that true reality has emerged triumphant over futility, over so-called reality* (Hofmannsthal, 1975, 424).

The contrast between “true reality” and “futility” described here makes it clear that the author is convinced that the ‘primary’ world of poetry is superior to the ‘secondary’ one of reality, and that, particularly in a time of crisis, the former can make its presence felt in the latter in order to bring about social and cultural change. This assertion of the dominance of poetry over the other spheres of reality can be traced back to positions of cultural criticism sustained by that generation of Romantics who came to the fore between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, during that time of great political instability which was the French Revolution (cfr. among others Behler, 1989). By preaching the exclusive dominance of poetry, Hofmannsthal not only echoes the radical aesthetics of the romantics, but also their ‘Kulturkritik’.

In that sense, *The Woman without a Shadow* is inextricable linked to the First World War, a moment in history when its author began to believe that it would finally be possible to bring about that “revaluation of all values” described by Nietzsche, in order to arrive at a new cultural renaissance. That explains why, in a letter to Raoul Auernheimer dated 22 October 1919, Hofmannsthal describes his fairytale as “a poetic fragment difficult to interpret, deeply rooted in the individual, intimately hostile to our own era” (Hofmannsthal, 1975, 424). With these words, the writer is emphasizing the complexity of his tale, in its formal structure and symbology its fragmentary nature and psychological dimension (characteristics typical of Romantic literature) and at the same time, the extent to which its intention was to make a statement against the spirit of the times.

## METAPOETICS AND THE ‘MYTHOLOGY OF THE SOCIAL’

Organized symbolically into seven chapters, *The Woman without a Shadow* is constructed on two levels, which reproduce the two classic conceptual dimensions to be found in Romanticism, namely ‘spirit’ and ‘life’ (on the links between the fairytale and Romantic *Kunstreligion*, cf. Fossaluzza, 2012). In the narrative language adopted here, the supernatural realm of Keikobad represents the spirit, while the dyers’ humble village symbolizes life. Between these two symbolic extremes we find the kingdom in the middle, the place of synthesis: the emperor’s blue palace, or in other words, the sphere of poetry and art<sup>3</sup>. To show the fundamental symbolic importance of this ‘third place’, the fairytale begins right here, in the emperor’s palace, where the empress is also in residence. By now, she has left her father’s spirit realm and has been married for nearly twelve months. Nothing spoils her happiness; only her nurse is aware of the threat hanging over her if she does not succeed in obtaining a shadow, and with it, motherhood. For the twelfth time in a year, a messenger from the realm of the ‘spirit’ comes to the blue palace to ask the nurse whether the empress is with child and for the twelfth time, the nurse says she is not. The emperor has gone looking for his favourite falcon, which he himself chased away in a moment of anger, and he plans to stay away for three days. Everything leads us to think that the empress will lose her last chance to gain a human shadow and that she is doomed. But the emperor’s falcon returns to save the situation, bringing the empress her long-lost talisman. There she reads the inscribed message which reveals the terrible fate that threatens her own happiness and that of her husband: “I myself shall be his death, because I walk on earth and cast no shadow!” (Hofmannsthal, 1993, 7). Her “deadly fear” and the unspeakable “desire to save her beloved” (cit.) lead the young woman to attempt a desperate remedy, and try to find a shadow in the world of mortals. This marks the beginning of the empress’s adventures in the ‘inferior sphere’ of ‘life’, a place until that moment completely alien to her:

*“Lead to the man whose shadow is for sale, that I may buy it. I shall kiss his feet.”*

*“Mad child,” cried the nurse, “do you know what you are saying? Do you not shudder at them even in your dreams, though you barely know them? And know – you want to live among them! To deal with them – speech for speech, breath for breath? To return their glances? To cringe to their malice? To fawn on their baseness? To serve them? For that’s what it amounts to. Don’t you dread it?”*

*“I want a shadow!” cried the empress. “Let us go down that I may serve one of them to gain a shadow. Where is the house, bring me to it! I wish it!”* (Hofmannsthal, 1993, 9).

3 As regards the literary tradition concerning the symbolic relationship between the aesthetic sphere and the colour blue (or sky blue) which recurs throughout Hofmannsthal’s fairytale, we should recall the blue flower image in Novalis’s mythical romance, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. On the connections between Novalis’s romance and Hofmannsthal’s fairytale, cf. Endres, 2000, 332 sq.

Obviously, the place where the empress must go in search of motherhood is the village of the dyers, amid ‘life’. But for the inhabitants of the kingdom of Keikobad, this means demeaning oneself to the level of a horrid, vulgar world, which, as emerges in the quotation above, appears to be dominated by a grim materiality<sup>4</sup>.

Unravelling the story’s complex symbolic network, what the reader is faced with is an allegory of its author’s poetics: the village of the dyers is a metaphor of ‘life’ but also a metaphor of a warped<sup>5</sup>, corruptible society, which either out of greed or vanity, is willing to bow down before the alienating principles of money. Whereas the empress represents aesthetics, having been born in the ‘spirit’ realm and now residing in a beautiful palace in the ‘kingdom in the middle’. She is the personification of art, which, so as not to disappear into the sterile hardness of stone, must achieve fertility by making a painful pact with ‘life’.

Through the use of this symbology, in *The Woman without a Shadow* Hofmannsthal proposes an allegory which is at the same time poetic and social (cf. also Mayer, 1993). In fact, the writer presents two levels of interpretation which are interconnected and interdependent: at the poetic level, he uses allegory to express the philosophical basis of his aesthetics focusing on three categories of Romantic origin: ‘spirit’, ‘art’ and ‘life’; at the social level, on the other hand, he conjures up an ideal society based on two symbolic poles, namely ‘aristocracy’ and ‘people’. While the philosophical dimension of ‘aesthetics’ equates in social terms with ‘aristocracy’ and that of ‘life’ with ‘the people’, the transcendental level of the ‘spirit’ is only indirectly social, because it can only become visible in a fragmentary, symbolic form, and namely through art. It is no coincidence that the kingdom of Keikobad is always kept in the background and only becomes a place of action in the most intensely symbolic moment of the fairytale: the seventh and final chapter.

The second and third chapters of the fairytale are set in the humble village of the dyers, where the empress is trying to find the way to obtain the “water of life”<sup>6</sup> (Hofmannsthal, 1975, 110), and are focused on the seduction and corruption of the dyer’s wife by the wily nurse, while the fourth chapter (particularly significant and totally absent in the libretto of the opera), takes us back to the ‘kingdom in the middle’ to show us the encounter between the emperor and his seven “unborn children” (*die Ungeborenen*). As we know, the final version of this

4 By way of example, see how ill at ease the empress felt as soon as she arrived in the dyers’ village: “Bravely she wanted to pass near them, but her legs were paralyzed by the terror in her heart. Every hand that moved seemed to reach for her; abhorrent were so many mouths so close. The pitiless, covetous and yet, it seemed to her, terrified glances from so many faces gathered in her breast. She saw the nurse looking around for her. She wanted to follow but almost went under in a tangle of men.” (Hofmannsthal, 1993, 11).

5 The three brothers of Barak the dyer are the clearest metaphor for the deformed nature of this society: the one-eyed man, the one-armed man, and the hunchback.

6 The *leitmotiv* of water (or golden water) as a symbol of life recurs throughout Hofmannsthal’s tale, as well as in the various versions of *Undine* (including those of Paracelsus, Fouqué and Pannwitz).



chapter was completed between November 1917 and January 1918. It was greatly influenced by the conversations Hofmannsthal had with Pannwitz between 11 and 13 October 1917 in Baroness Gabriele von Oppenheimer's villa Ramgut, not far from Bad Aussee in the Austrian region of Styria. There, the two writers met to have intense discussions about various aspects of *The Woman without a Shadow*<sup>7</sup>. Hofmannsthal considered Pannwitz (together with Eberhard von Bodenhausen) one of the people who gave him the greatest motivation to write his fairytale<sup>8</sup>, particularly because of Pannwitz's assistance in the difficult drafting of the fourth chapter<sup>9</sup>, a role that Pannwitz himself described in his essay of December 1919, *Hofmannsthal's Erzählung 'Die Frau ohne Schatten'*<sup>10</sup>.

Located symbolically exactly at the centre of the fairytale, the fourth chapter represents an eloquent allegory of the sphere lying mid-way between 'spirit' and 'life', namely the world of art. Bringing together 'life', 'spirit' and 'aesthetics', the fourth chapter is thus the first point in the story in which the author provides a true metapoetic reflection based on these three conceptual pillars. In this sense, the "unborn children" who do not yet know the temporal dimension<sup>11</sup>, represent "Platonic ideas" (Hofmannsthal & Pannwitz, 1994, 592), but at the same time are allegories of potential works of art still waiting to be created. In the fourth chapter, then, the allegory of procreation within marriage presented in the first three chapters becomes an allegory of artistic production, in a parallel most fittingly expressed in the beautiful metapoetic carpet woven by the "unborn" maiden:

*The girl had knelt down at the head of the table. She spread the carpet and invited him to sit down on it. The tapestry was beneath his feet; flowers fused into animals, from the beautiful vines hunters and lovers emerged, falcons floated above like drifting flowers, all embraced one another, all were entangled with each other. The entire work was immeasurably magnificent. But a coolness, which reached to his hips, seemed to raise from the weave.*

7 Cf. Hofmannsthal's letter to Pannwitz dated 21 October 1917 (Hofmannsthal & Pannwitz, 1994, 136) and Hofmannsthal, 1975, 271 sq. In October 1917, Hofmannsthal read some excerpts from his fourth chapter to Pannwitz, cf. the letter of 28 January, 1918 (Hofmannsthal & Pannwitz, 1994, 199).

8 Cf. the letter of 31 October 1919 to Dora von Bodenhausen (Hofmannsthal, 1975, 425).

9 Another crucial issue about which Hofmannsthal turned to Pannwitz for help was the figure of Efrit, the hybrid creature used by the nurse to seduce the dyer's wife in the fourth chapter. In July 1918, the depiction of Efrit was causing the author so many problems that he asked Pannwitz for advice and then actually stopped writing the fairytale until the June of 1919. Cf. Hofmannsthal's letters of 3 and 4 August 1918, Hofmannsthal & Pannwitz, 1994, 253 sq.

10 *Hofmannsthal's Fairytale, The Woman without a Shadow*, cf. Hofmannsthal, Pannwitz, 1994, 588–594. The essay was published in the Munich journal, *Der neue Merkur*. It was Hofmannsthal himself, who was enthusiastic about Pannwitz writing an essay about his fairytale, who suggested it should be published in that journal (which he thought had a readership suited to his cultural aims) and contacted the editor Ephraim Frisch (cf. the letter of 6 November 1919, Hofmannsthal & Pannwitz, 1994, 418 sq.).

11 "Time?" said the girl and looked at him with a confused expression. "We do not understand time, but it is our whole desire to get to know time and to become subject to it!" (Hofmannsthal, 1993, 44).

*“How did you succeed in conceiving this work with such perfection?”  
He turned to the girl, who had humbly retreated a few steps.  
The girl immediately lowered her gaze, but she answered without hesitation.  
“When I weave I separate beauty from matter; all which entices the senses and  
lures them to madness and decay I leave out.”  
The emperor gazed at her. “How do you go about it?” [...]   
“[...] I do not see what is, nor what is not, but that which is eternal, and weave  
accordingly” (Hofmannsthal, 1993, 41).*

This passage constitutes an extraordinary piece of aesthetic theory and literature about literature and it is difficult to find a clearer expression of Hofmannsthal's poetics<sup>12</sup>. In fact, it is a narrative version of Hofmannsthal's neoromantic aesthetics, in which the “unborn” maiden's weaving is an allegory for an aesthetic paradigm built on a precious, intricate network of signs which becomes a kind of poetics that has abandoned the principle of *imitatio*, and lost all direct contact with the world of ‘phenomena’. Just like the maiden's weaving in Hofmannsthal's fairytale, in the author's aesthetics, every one of the knots that make up the network of signs becomes a signifier freed from its meaning. It creates infinite new meanings with other signifiers, and transforms itself into a sign abstracted from its object, in order to become part of a symbolic tapestry with a parallel meaning to the one informing phenomenological reality. This aesthetics is an expression (though still fragmentary) of a transcendence no longer totally accessible rationally, and becomes the exclusive dimension of a world completely transformed into poetry, which no longer recognizes any difference between ‘art’ and ‘life’.

There is no doubt that the fourth chapter of the tale is inspired by the aesthetic theories of Romanticism: is an allegory of Romantic poetics and of a world completely turned into poetry on the basis of these theories (cf. Baioni, 1999; Lavagetto, 2002 for the premises of these poetics). The fact is, however, that at this point, the aesthetic experiment illustrated in the central chapter of Hofmannsthal's fairytale ends in failure, with the emperor turning to stone. The attempted fusion of ‘life’ and ‘spirit’ in art is unsuccessful, the “unborn children” are unable to find a way into life and remain in that sphere which precedes existence. The temporary failure of the aesthetic experiment represented in the middle of the fairytale (a failure underscored by the empress's absence) is no mere coincidence. Indeed, the unsuccessful fusion can be ascribed to the emperor's inability to respond to his children's needs: on three occasions, he fails to hear their calls (Hofmannsthal, 1975, 145, 149, 157), on three more occasions, he ignores their desperate pleas (Hofmannsthal, 1975, 156 sq.) and in the end, having lost all these opportunities, all that remains to him is to lock himself up in an egoism whose aridness is magnificently represented by the solitary stone statue with which the chapter

12 On Hofmannsthal's poetics since the early work cf. Streim, 1996.

concludes. This frigid image of death leaves no doubt as to the ‘moral’ of this episode: narcissism is not enough to create art, just as individualism is not enough to save marriage as the basic unit of the community. For the author, in a completely romanticized world, poetic synthesis must also be social synthesis, and can only take place in presence of a real ethical choice that goes beyond the personal needs and wishes of the individual and thus even of the artist himself.

After this failure, the fifth and sixth chapters take leave of the emperor’s realm and take us back to the world of ordinary people, in which the dyer’s wife, bewitched by supernatural forces, performs an action which is just as selfish as that of the emperor: she gives up her shadow to the nurse for good, sacrificing her marriage and her “unborn children” to her own vanity and greed. Only at the very end, in the seventh chapter, do we finally see the miracle that will bring about the fusion between ‘spirit’ and ‘life’, and this will happen thanks to the altruistic choice of the empress. Indeed, while the nurse represents some kind of “demonic animal” (Hofmannsthal, Pannwitz, 1994, 591), impervious to any kind of humanity and able to forget the dyers very quickly<sup>13</sup>, the character of the empress has enough ethical substance to feel a sense of guilt and compassion for them:

*“Let us go, you before me,” called the empress, “and find them again, even if they have been dragged away by spirits and are a thousand miles from their house. For we have become thieves and murderers to them, and all the blood from our veins is not enough to make good what we have done to them.”*  
*The nurse cowered to the side and could not sustain the gaze of her mistress. She was afraid that the empress would swoop down upon her like a bird and step on her with the soles of her gleaming feet, so dreadful was the anger on her face (Hofmannsthal, 1993, 77).*

The sole desire of the repentant empress is to repair the damage caused to the dyer and his family. But in line with the classic structure of fairytales, the test that the young woman has to overcome in order to make up for the consequences of her actions in the sphere of ordinary mortals requires a level of goodness that is almost superhuman: she must choose whether to drink the golden water from a goblet, thereby obtaining motherhood and bringing her beloved emperor back to life, or let the dyer’s wife keep her shadow (thereby enabling her to become a mother) but having herself to sacrifice any idea of children and love:

*Their chill penetrated her inmost being and paralyzed her. She could not take a single step, neither forwards nor backwards. She could do nothing but drink and win the shadow, or spill the cup. She felt herself destroyed and withdrew into*

13 In a letter to Pannwitz dated 4 August 1918, Hofmannsthal describes the nurse thus: “[...] nothing which is human can touch her, in this sphere she is chemically invulnerable [...]”, cf. Hofmannsthal & Pannwitz, 1994, 254.

herself. From her own diamond depths words rose clearly, as if sung at a great distance – she had only to repeat them. Without hesitation, she spoke.

“I am beholden to you, Barak!” she said, and stretching the arm with the cup straight before her, she emptied the cup at the feet of the cloaked figure (Hofmannsthal, 1993, 90).



Fig. 1: Alfred Roller Kostümfigurine: Die Frau ohne Schatten. Blatt 12. Die Amme (The nurse, costume figurine by Alfred Roller for the opera „Die Frau ohne Schatten“, 1919). KHM-Museumsverband, Theatermuseum Wien<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Other figurines by Alfred Roller depicting, among others, the emperor, the empress, the dyers and the messenger can be found in the digital database of the Vienna Theatermuseum at the following links: <https://www.theatermuseum.at/de/object/681706/>, <https://www.theatermuseum.at/de/object/681716/>, <https://www.theatermuseum.at/de/object/681722/>, <https://www.theatermuseum.at/de/object/681723/>, <https://www.theatermuseum.at/de/object/681724/>, <https://www.theatermuseum.at/de/object/681736/>, <https://www.theatermuseum.at/de/object/681737/>, <https://www.theatermuseum.at/de/object/681739/> (last access: 2022-09-03).

By making the altruistic choice to sacrifice her marriage and her children in order to repair the damage done to the dyer's family, the empress passes the test and is rewarded by unexpectedly obtaining what she thought was lost. It is only by making this agonizing ethical choice that the young woman succeeds in turning around the situation and working a miracle. She obtains motherhood, brings her husband back to life and achieves that synthesis which seemed imminent but did not materialize in the fourth chapter: that fusion between the vital impulse which the empress had encountered in the sphere of ordinary mortals (without which her world would be frozen into a motionless, lifeless image), and the nobility of spirit typical of the superior sphere from which she comes, without which life would be no more than blind animal instinct. With this act of 'renunciation', Hofmannsthal's empress provides the perfect allegorical representation of the process of artistic creation, which, in the author's opinion, must take place between the two conceptual poles of 'life' and 'spirit' and must always entail an ethical choice.

Indeed, we should recall that the fusion which comes about in the seventh chapter, significantly sealed by the "symbols and verses which praised the eternal mystery of the chain of being that links all things on earth" (Hofmannsthal, 1993, 94) that appear on the empress's talisman at the end of the fairytale, is not just a *poetical* allegory: it is a *social* allegory too, as the author himself pointed out in his collection of notes *Ad me ipsum*: "The Woman without a Shadow": Triumph of the allomatic. Allegory of the social"<sup>15</sup>. For him, in fact, the completion of the process of artistic creation coincides with social fulfilment through marriage, which for Hofmannsthal is not primarily a bourgeois institution, but a religious sacrament and poetical allegory.

In conclusion, then, apart from the complex symbology in the formal structure of *The Woman without a Shadow*, which might make us think initially of an artistic creation finely wrought but completely removed from its historical context – a beautiful arabesque produced in the enchanted solitude of an ivory tower, Hofmannsthal's fairytale is actually closely connected to the social and cultural project developed by its author during the years of the First World War. In his letter of 14 november 1919 to Marie Luise Voigt (the future wife of Rudolf Borchardt), Hofmannsthal once again uses the image of the tapestry to be found in the fourth chapter in order to give a clear explanation of the connection between his fairytale and the war: "Together with today's letter, I am sending you the 'fairytale', the story of the woman without a shadow which I wove like a craftsman in the course of all those dark years of the war, embroidering or sewing into it many intuitions, hopes and fantasies" (Hofmannsthal, 1975, 427).

15 Hofmannsthal, 1980, 603. As used by Hofmannsthal, the neologism "allomatic" (from the Greek "ἄλλος": other) is synonymous with "social", or "ethical".



The war too, then, is interwoven with the numerous symbolic knots that make up the warp and weft of Hofmannsthal's fairytale. He himself appears to have been well aware of the role played by history in his work, when he added a note in 1921 to the *Ad me ipsum* collection: "Without the actions and the suffering of individuals, no myth can be born. And so it was necessary that the events of 1914 onwards should take place, in order for those struggles to be reshaped into myth" (Hofmannsthal, 1980, 617)<sup>16</sup>. In the interconnection between history and myth described in these lines<sup>17</sup>, it was the war that provided the background for the neoromantic fairytale *The Woman without a Shadow*. As we have tried to show here, this was how Hofmannsthal came to create a specific cultural project which produced a fully-fledged 'mythology of the social'.

16 Where not otherwise indicated, English translations of quoted passages are by Judy Moss, whom I would like to thank for translating this article into English.

17 On Hofmannsthal's understanding of myth in his early work, cf. for example Eder, 2013, 9–54. On his later concept of the mythical and of the super-historical (*das Überhistorische*), starting with the First World War up to the later *Turm*-Dramas, cf. the detailed introduction and the first chapter in Mionskowski, 2015, 13–152.

## ROMANTIČNA PRAVLJICA IN NJEN DRUŽBENI NAMEN V ČASU VOJNE: ŽENSKA BREZ SENCE HUGA VON HOFMANNSTHALA

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### POVZETEK

*Ženska brez sence je naslov opere, ki je nastala kot plod sodelovanja med književnikom Hugom von Hofmannsthalom in skladateljem Richardom Straussom v treh letih neposredno pred izbruhom prve svetovne vojne, in hkrati tudi naslov pravljice, ki jo je Hofmannsthal med letoma 1912 in 1919 priredil za libreto. V prispevku, ki se posebej osredotoča na poznejšo različico pravljice, skuša avtorica prikazati, kako je ta, če odmislimo kompleksno simboliko njene formalne strukture (ki sprva sugerira skrbno oblikovan, a od zgodovinske stvarnosti povsem ločen umetniški izdelek), v resnici tesno povezana s kulturnim in »družbenim« projektom, ki ga je Hofmannsthal razvijal v času prve svetovne vojne. Iz tega projekta je izšla prava »mitologija družbenega«, ki tvori jedro omenjene pravljice, v kateri se Hofmannsthal vrača k osnovam romantične estetike in jih reinterpreterira v modernejšem duhu.*

*Ključne besede: pravljica, Hofmannsthal, 1. svetovna vojna, romantika, metapoetika, estetika, družbeni projekt, kulturna renesansa, mit*

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**OCENE**

***RECENSIONI***

***REVIEWS***





*Jakob Norberg: THE BROTHERS GRIMM AND THE MAKING OF GERMAN NATIONALISM.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2022, 268 pages.

Jakob Norberg's monograph on the brothers Grimm is not the first study to directly link the German philologists and authors of world-famous collections of fairy tales with the rise of nationalism in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century German lands. However, Norberg, a professor of German studies and researcher of »political concepts«, takes a different approach compared to previous analyses, which have mostly been focused on analyzing the components of nationalism in their *Children's and Household Tales*. He is primarily interested in the Grimms as representative of a specific profile of European scientists who, against the background of social and political changes after the French Revolution, participated in building a new model of legitimization of political power, tied to the idea of the organic concept of cultural community. Norberg outlines the specifics and antagonisms of cultural nationalism and sharpens them in comparisons with other political currents of the time.

Already in the introductory chapter, he set the tone for his research by establishing a dichotomy between the »philosopher king« and the »philologist king«. According to Norberg, the first is embodied by Plato with his political philosophy oriented towards reflections upon universal justice, the second by the brothers Grimm, who conditioned the exercise of ideal political authority with the linguistic and historical delineation of the community. The arguments made in the book are based on these parallels. Norberg presents cultural nationalism as a narrow, but also intellectually contradictory response to the 19<sup>th</sup> century socio-political dilemmas. By quoting scholar of nationalism John Breuilly he emphasizes that the principle of nationality was developed in a narrower group of »second-rank thinkers«. With the exception of Herder and Fichte, the leading thinkers of the era found nothing intellectually interesting or challenging in this newly emerged political idea of community. Norberg supports this argument by employing the notions of sociologist Ernest Gellner that nationalist doctrines »are hardly worth analyzing«. Rather than demanding intellectual discourse, they represent a kind of religion. Norberg emphasizes that nationalism was initially indeed a scientific project which stemmed from a specific method in researching the past. It was, however, very soon motivated by nation-building tendencies rather than by scientific findings.

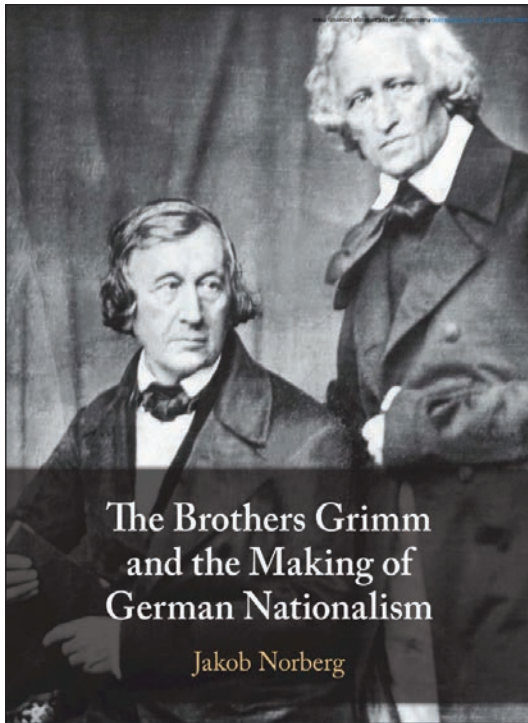
Norberg devotes a good part of the book to an analysis of the establishment of a new regime of knowledge production, the key goal of which was the legitimization of a new form of political order. This is illustrated by an analysis of the Grimm brothers' key works, *German Grammar* (1819, 1826, 1831, 1837), *German Legal Antiquities* (1829), and *German Mythology* (1835). He argues that they were written with the clear intention of distinguishing the particularities of German language and culture, which was supported by analyses of the assumed continuous settlement of the territory and the organic

connection of German history, people and forms of organizing life. All this is best expressed in Jacob Grimm's monumental last work, *The History of the German Language* (1848).

The special value of Norberg's book is in the detailed analysis of the political activities of the brothers Grimm. It is precisely here, where the antagonisms in the application of the cultural organic community in the nation-building project are most clearly expressed. Norberg offers a comprehensive analysis of the political profile of Jacob Grimm, the more politically active of the brothers. The author portrays him as a typical academically educated thinker who spent large part of his life working as librarian, but was later also a professor and for a few months in 1848 a member of the Frankfurt National Parliament. There he stood for that the otherwise Danish-ruled but German-speaking duchy of Holstein should be under German control. Norberg placed great emphasis on this speech, while Grimm addressed a letter with a similar request to the Prussian king Frederick William IV. Norberg notes that only in the field that concerns the delineation of territories on the basis of language and the demarcation of German and un-German (*deutsch and undeutsch*) Grimm felt competent, but also called to speak, even to advise kings and princes. With regard to other questions concerning the foundations of good government he was undecided and vacillating. »Legitimate government was,

for him, not first and foremost a matter of a just distribution of goods, protected basic rights, or popular consent, but of a close cultural fit between rulers and ruled« (p. 5). If the Grimms perceived themselves primarily as guardians, even redeemers of German culture, they tied their political role to the belief that they should be treated as "mediators" between the »organic people« and their king.

*Children's and Household Tales* are the youthful work of the brothers Grimm, but key to their scientific and political profiling. At the same time, their collections of fairy tales, which were first published in 1812 and 1815, mark a key turning point in the conception of history from the perspective of cultural nationalism. Although the Grimms



wrote in the preface of their fairy-tale collection that they did not significantly change the obtained narrative heritage, later analysis showed this to be untrue. In the 1980s, John M. Ellis, professor of German literature at the University of California, in the book *One Fairy Story Too Many: The Brothers Grimm and Their Tales* noted that they very freely and completely unscientifically adapted the narrative sources (later also archival materials) with the aim of affirming German culture. It is interesting, however, that some prominent theorists of fairy-tales rejected Ellis' findings with the thesis that the Grimms were only adapting the narrative tradition to bourgeois taste. The current consensus is that their collecting of fairy-tales was also motivated by a response to the French occupation of their native Hesse.

Norberg took a step further in this research. He conducted a detailed analysis of their writings on the German proto-nationalists, some of whom were also personally known to them. Their correspondence shows that they were inspired by the ardent opponent of French rule, the historian Heinrich Luden, nationalistic historian, poet and essayist Ernst Moritz Arndt, the Herderian thinker Friedrich Ludwig Jahn and the philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Jacob Grimm wrote to his mentor Friedrich Carl von Savigny that Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation* was the best work he had ever read. Norberg points out their translation of the medieval militant poem *Der arme Heinrich*, as they wanted to use the proceeds to help their compatriots in the fight against the French invaders. But he also notes that they soon understood their historical role in strengthening German exceptionalism, i.e. not through militant nationalism, but – complementary to it – through the invention of the cultural space of Germanness. Their collections of fairy-tales are an expression of this mentality. »While the collection of tales was not a repository of martial values and attitudes, to be evoked with pathos in a popular struggle for recovered national German or local autonomy, they did represent a cultural space to be cherished and protected, the mundane but cozy places around the hearth and the kitchen, typically tended to by women« (p. 61). With his analysis, which takes into account broader political and socio-historical contexts, Norberg succeeds in his aim of transforming the established image of the brothers Grimm as homey folklorists, lovers of German words and stories. Of course, the reader will form his own opinion – also on the basis of other studies – to which extent their fairy-tales were motivated by nationalism.

Although the focus of Norberg's book is on the lives and work of the brothers Grimm, this is namely primarily a theoretical study of cultural nationalism, i.e. a study of the political idea, its evolution and early manifestations. It could be said that it is among the more revealing, since it directs attention to the main source of the power of nationalism. Despite all the later theories of the nation, primordialist or constructivist, comparative and synthetic approaches and the multitude of typologies of this social phenomenon, it returns to its origins and reminds us that cultural nationalism is basically a very simple mechanism that tries to ground the political system to an unscientific, teleological re-reading of history.

Through a socio-historical analysis of the Grimm's fairy-tales, especially of the way in which they addressed the proto-political elements in the community, this general feature of nationalism is sharply brought into focus. Namely, Norberg's study suggests that cultural nationalism is an easily adaptable, but theoretically difficult political ideology to encompass, since it bases its legitimizing power on pre-ideological, pre-discursive formations, while constantly erasing the traces of their seams. Norberg seems fully aware of this, which is why he prefers to describe rather than to theorize on this social phenomenon.

Historically, cultural nationalism may have contributed to the stabilization of the political space, but democratic rights in nation-states flourished only after its evacuation from public discourse. In this respect, cultural nationalism has nothing to do with patriotism, although it tries to appropriate love of country. In the dichotomy between the »philosopher king« and the »philologist king«, Norberg clearly takes the side of the former, also by hinting that providing a good quality of life to all members of the community, regardless of their cultural or other affiliations, is also, if not the most patriotic act.

**Marjan Horvat**

*Panos Sophoulis: BANDITRY IN THE MEDIEVAL BALKANS, 800–1500,*  
New Approaches to Byzantine History and Culture.  
Palgrave, 2020, 188 pages.

The book is a monograph on banditry in the medieval Balkans, published in 2020 by the renowned publishing company Palgrave Macmillan as part of the New Approaches to Byzantine History and Culture series. Its author is Panos Sophoulis, Associate Professor at the University of Athens teaching history of the peoples of South-eastern Europe, who, following years-long research, presented this work of exceptional importance for historical science.

The book begins with acknowledgments, showing appreciation to all those who contributed to the success of the work. Professor Sophoulis' book is divided into eight sections. In addition to Introductory considerations, which define the subject matter of research, its chronological frame, and the time span, it also refers to the sources used, issues encountered, and an overview of the most important previous researchers of this area and their results. To understand bandits and banditry, the author particularly emphasises that the study *Bandits* by Eric Hobsbawm is a must (1981). In his theory of social and societal robbery, a bandit fights oppression and injustice by the ruling social groups. It is a form of class conflict and class resistance in agrarian and border societies toward the ruling class. Hobsbawm's bandits want to put right the injustice of the rich towards the poor and prevent the exploitation of the weak. Their violence is a form of protest against the social needs' drivers. However, such a model is not applicable to most of the reported banditry acts in the Balkans in the Middle Ages.

The banditry research was placed in the framework of the Balkan peninsula from the 9th to the 16th century. Faced with the chronologically and thematically inconsistent archival records, Panos Sophoulis embarked on the laborious collection and analysis not only of the plethora of scattered written Byzantine, Bulgarian, Serbian, Dubrovnik, and other sources (Code of Justinian, lives of saints, books of travels, letters, Serbian Emperor Dusan's Code, the Statute of the City of Dubrovnik of 1272, archived documents from the State Archives in Dubrovnik) but also of archaeological and ethnographic literature. In this way, it was possible to follow the natural-geographical characteristics of the bandits - where they lived, the population, political circumstances, the lifestyle of the people, and the dynamics of the bandits in the Balkans from the Middle Ages, until the dawn of the modern times.

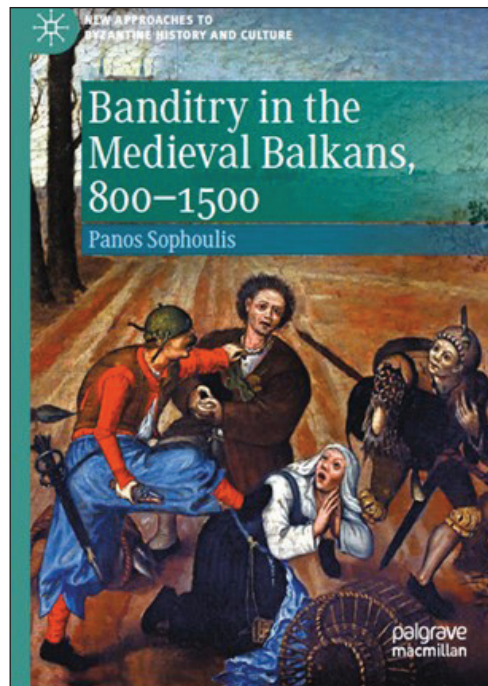
Writing on this subject is highly challenging because it depends on the number of sources and the content of the documents collected. The most important sources for the banditry history in the South Adriatic are kept in the Dubrovnik Archives. In research on this subject, the author used only some previously unpublished documents from the series *laments de foris* (*complaints concerning crimes committed outside the city*), one of the rare series recording the minutes of the complaints on crimes and offences. Offences committed in the area of



the Dubrovnik hinterland involving a citizen of Dubrovnik, either as a victim or perpetrator, were recorded in it.

The heroic outlaws' tradition is most evident in England, with Robin Hood as the most important figure, representing the principled resistance to the corrupt authorities. However, the situation in the Balkans is different. Based on the sources, the author verifies the hypothesis that peasants, soldiers, and nobility are connected with the banditry. Most of the bandits came from the ranks of cattle farmers, who played a prominent role in reported banditry incidents in the Balkans. There are several reasons for this: they possessed skills that could easily be put into military use if needed, and because of varying forms of pressure, shepherds often resorted to banditry. Soldiers were trained to use weapons throughout their lives, so naturally, they were perceived as potential bandits. Another reason for the banditry was irregular payments of wages, so resorting to banditry was necessary for survival. In the 14th and 15th centuries, members of local nobility encouraged or were directly involved in acts of violence, including robberies. Following the robbery, they were completely exempted from punishment. The robbers were connected and had a support network that provided information about the victim to be attacked and whose goods were to be taken. The attackers targeted the victim in advance, gathering information and then preparing the ambush. They usually worked in groups, so a group of bandits had between 10 and 15 members. Relatives and/or members of their community often provided bandits with support, shelter, or food, who may have shared some of their profits in return. Bandits were most likely to attack merchants because they were believed to carry valuable goods or money. Apart from merchants, the bandits also targeted other travellers: envoys, messengers, clergy, craftsmen, etc. The author helps us in many ways to get to the bottom of a complex banditry mechanism and fathom, or at least try to understand, how it worked.

The medieval authorities tried to prevent the emergence and spread of banditry by legislation, as it posed a danger to order and peace. Actions were taken through two measures: legislative and field responses to specific banditry phenomena. The author also addresses widespread myths about 'good' bandits in this book. In the eyes of the authorities,



they were considered lawbreakers, while their relatives and other members of the community perceived them as heroes and crafted poems and tales in their honour.

The shortcoming of the monograph is the limited use of sources from the series *Lamenta de foris*, as well as no reference to the charters issued to the City of Dubrovnik by the Byzantine, Serbian and Bosnian rulers. In these charters, the main goal of Dubrovnik merchants was legal regulation of the position of Dubrovnik citizens, primarily to protect their trading business. The charters contain provisions that protect Dubrovnik citizens, guaranteeing their security, inviolability of their property, freedom of movement and trade, and in some cases, compensation for damage.

A particular value of this book is doubtlessly its clear, interesting, and, in some segments, the dynamic language of exposition, capturing the readers' attention, and a story told in such a language seems simple, interesting, and captivating, even though it is an extremely complex issue. Professor Sophoulis' book is a kind of daily history of political, economic, and social circumstances in the Balkans from the 9th to the 16th century. We deem it an extremely valuable study on banditry in the Medieval Balkans, which is enhanced and thematically expanded to an area that was not fully explored by scientific research. We are therefore grateful to the author and publisher for this valuable contribution to a better understanding of the medieval history of the Balkan Peninsula, with a particular focus on banditry.

**Marijan Premović**

*Federico Tenca Montini: LA JUGOSLAVIA E LA QUESTIONE DI TRIESTE, 1945-1954.*  
Bologna, il Mulino, 2020, 315 strani.

*Federico Tenca Montini: ... TRST NE DAMO! JUGOSLAVIJA I TRŠČANSKO  
PITANJE 1945-1954.* Zagreb, Srednja Europa, 2021, 209 strani.

Over the past decades, the Slovenian-Italian borderland has witnessed numerous academic and less academic studies related to the history of the area. Undoubtedly, the most prevalent are those relating to the issue of demarcation, the Peace Agreement and the related affiliation of Trieste (referred to as the Trieste question), as well as the post-war extrajudicial killings – the so-called *foibe*; thus, studies relating to the first decade after the Second World War. The reader and researcher can already choose from a large number of works that address these issues, as well as Yugoslav-Italian (diplomatic) relations in this period, in various ways and from different angles. It is therefore reasonable to ask what else Italian publishing has to offer us in this respect?

The *il Mulino* publishing house is considered to be one of the most prestigious publishers of scientific monographs in Italy and has taken an important step in this direction by recognising the quality and added value of the study by the young sociologist and historian Federico Tenca Montini. His updated and slightly revised doctoral thesis was published in 2020 under the title »La Jugoslavia e la questione di Trieste, 1945-1954« (*Yugoslavia and the Trieste question, 1945-1954*). The publication of this work was supported by other prominent research and academic institutions in the region, including the *Friulian Institute for the History of the Liberation Movement* (*Istituto Friulano per la Storia del Movimento di Liberazione*), the *Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia* (*Regione autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia*), the *Slovene Research Institute – SLORI*, the *Faculty of Arts of the University of Zagreb* and the *University of Udine*. The name of the University of Zagreb cannot be overlooked by an attentive reader, and it appears here for a special reason – the doctoral thesis out of which this study is drawn is the result of a joint doctoral dissertation project (*cotutelle de thèse*) between the University of Teramo and the University of Zagreb.

In addition to numerous reprints in Italian, the work was translated into Croatian a year later by the author himself. Under the title »...Trst ne damo! Jugoslavija i Tršćansko pitanje 1945-1954.« (...*We will not give Trieste! Yugoslavia and the Trieste question 1945-1954*) an equivalent translation was published in 2021 by the *Srednja Europa* publishing house and with the support of the *Istrian Region* (*Istarska županija / Regione Istriana*), which has also been reprinted. Both monographs will thus be the subject of this review.

In the preface to the Italian version, the great contribution of the study to the existing works was highlighted by Jože Pirjevec, who is known not only as one of the most important historians of the area, but also as the author of an important work – one could say a precursor to the study by Tenca Montini, *Trieste is Ours! The*

*struggle of Slovenians for the sea (1848-1954)* (*Trst je naš! Boj Slovencev za morje (1848–1954)*, Ljubljana, Nova revija, 2007). Pirjevec rightfully explained one of the main reasons why this study can offer something new to the field; Federico Tenca Montini is one of the few Italian historians who has also mastered the Croatian and Serbian languages, which broadened the horizons of his research to that half of the archives which, due to unfamiliarity with the language, is »irrelevant« for other Italian historians. A comparative analysis and cross-review of Italian, Slovenian, Serbian and Croatian (archival) sources can thus (finally) offer Italian readers a comprehensive picture of the key turning points in Italo-Yugoslav diplomacy in the period between 1945 and 1954.

Tvrtko Jakovina, a prominent Croatian historian, an expert of Yugoslav diplomacy and foreign policy in the post-Second world war period, wrote the introduction to the Croatian edition of the monograph in similarly selected words. He stressed that the study is exactly what »our historiographies« (i.e. Slovenian, Croatian and Italian) need – »an honest, brave and multidisciplinary interpretation of what happened, which cannot be reduced to a single experience or a single national narrative«.

Unlike the Croatian edition, the Italian edition is enriched with a linguistic note (*Nota linguistica*), through which the author attempts to inform the Italian reader about the correct pronunciation of the Croatian, Serbian and Slovenian terms that appear in the text. This is a useful addition that goes beyond the limits of the study itself and, above all, seeks to provoke the Italian reader to pay more attention to the apparently marginal aspects of the problem addressed by the study; while over the years the Italian public has produced many variations of names and italianised their pronunciation, Tenca Montini seeks to discourage the reader from doing so. Correct pronunciation is, above all, a sign of respect for another culture and another language, thereby giving equal status to the other side of the same coin. Thus, acknowledging the equal status of what cannot be reduced to a single (national) narrative.

The study is divided chronologically into three chapters: *Exchange of coins (1945-1948)* (*Scambi di*

## La Jugoslavia e la questione di Trieste, 1945-1954

Federico Tenca Montini

il Mulino

*monete (1945-1948) / Monete za podmičivanje), Socialism with American wheat (1948-1953) (Socialismo con grano americano (1948-1953) / Socijalizam na Američkoj pšenici) and We will never trust anyone again (1953-1954) (Non ci fideremo più di nessuno (1953-1954) / Više nikada nećemo nikome vjerovati).* In addition to a rich set of hitherto unknown sources of Yugoslav provenance which the author has thoroughly researched, his work is distinguished by his knowledge of all the most important studies on the Trieste question to date. A good historian knows it is not enough to be able to collect sources, he must also be able to place and interpret them correctly, which Tenca Montini has undoubtedly done impeccably. What particularly stands out is his precision, accuracy and thoroughness in interpreting the sources and, above all, his broader view of the Trieste question, which is not only that of a historian but also that of someone who, through an in-depth study of the problem, has managed to understand the world that shaped the destiny of Trieste.

Throughout the chapters, the author skilfully interprets a number of sources and in particular highlights the Yugoslav perspective on the Trieste question, which has been lacking in previous studies. By examining the archives of the most important Yugoslav diplomats of the time (in addition to a thorough analysis of the archives of Josip Broz-Tito's cabinet, also the archives of the most important Slovenian diplomat

at the time, Edvard Kardelj, and his Croatian colleague, Vladimir Bakarić), the monograph gives us a new, more accurate picture of key moments and turning points. Nor does it ignore the view from the »outside«, especially the British, American and Soviet points of view, since it was already clear before the liberation of Trieste that the future of the city would not depend only on the interests of Yugoslavia and Italy.

The sub-chapters are sensibly divided and distinguish the author's carefully prepared work designed for the reader, as he recounts, without unnecessary embellishments and kitchy titles, the defining moments, events, agreements and important meetings that took place during this period. The reader can open the monograph and easily find what is of most interest to them – whether





it is the liberation of Trieste, the Belgrade and Duino Agreements, the Peace Conference or the meeting between Tito and Togliatti. In this way, the study has certainly become the most important reference work on the Trieste question thus far.

Tenca Montini has also paid special homage to both Pirjevac and Jakovina, which is particularly notable in the Croatian version, by borrowing or alluding to the titles of their previous studies. To Jakovina's work, *Socijalizam na američkoj pšenici* (Zagreb, Matica hrvatska, 2002), in the second chapter with the same title (*Socialismo con grano americano / Socijalizam na Američkoj pšenici*), and to Pirjevec's monograph *Trst je naš! Boj Slovencev za morje (1848–1954)* in the Croatian edition of the title ... *We will not give Trieste! (...Trst ne damo!)*. The last, of course, also implies one of the main messages of his work; between 1945 and 1954, Yugoslav diplomacy fought to »not give up Trieste«, because it had failed from the very beginning to prove that »Trieste is ours«. The idea that »Trieste is ours« had to be abandoned by the Yugoslav leadership practically as soon as it withdrew from the city after the Duino Agreement (June 10, 1945), which resulted in the fighting over the following years to ensure that Trieste would not be handed over to Italy.

The Croatian cover is also worthy of special attention, featuring an illustration from 1947 by Pavle Jovanović entitled *Marshal Tito*, which portrays the Yugoslav President in a determined posture with his clenched fist resting on a map. Yugoslav leadership were extremely reluctant to let Trieste go, but at the same time it was quite clear that at some point they would have to. If they did not obtain Trieste during this struggle, at least Yugoslavia realised that it had no real ally either in the West or in the East. As a result, it created a new foreign policy strategy – the Non-Aligned Movement – which, as Tenca Montini rightly notes, allowed the country to remain »effectively torn between East and West« even afterwards.

The study by Tenca Montini is certainly one of those works that will become a historiographic classic of this border region and beyond. Not only because it offers for the first time a comprehensive view of Yugoslav-Italian diplomacy in the period 1945–1954. But also, and above all, because it offers researchers an interdisciplinary model for addressing the complex issues of a shared history that aims to build bridges rather than tear them down. In a space of many conflicting and contested narratives, such studies are indispensable for overcoming these conflicts and for understanding what this space *is*; that is, a space of many memories that should not compete with each other but should rather coexist side by side.

Urška Lampe

*Zoltán Kövecses: EXTENDED CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THEORY.*

Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020, 196 pages.

Metaphor has been a central concern for scholars around the world. Since Lakoff and Johnson introduced Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) in their seminal book *Metaphors We Live By*, much additional research has investigated the notion that metaphor is not simply an ornamental device in language, but a tool for conceptualizing reality. A recent overview of theories of metaphor can be found in Gibbs, Kövecses, Dancygier and Sweetser. Metaphor is an extremely complex mental concept and we cannot capture its complexity if we tie ourselves to existing views on this subject matter.

*Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory* makes a full-fledged and elaborate depiction of metaphor with numerous case studies. It is a successful monograph to combine the features of the embodied and discourse metaphor views. It identifies the main ingredients of CMT, outlines the shape of the new view about CMT, and draws out its implications for a general understanding of metaphor. This book enriches the work of researcher in areas ranging from metaphorical cognition to discourse studies.

The book is organized into eight chapters preceded by an “Introduction” in which the author outlines the “standard” CMT and lists several outstanding issues and weaknesses inherent in CMT. Chapter One provides a synopsis of the main propositions that Kövecses develops in the forthcoming chapters: (i) the demarcation between the literal and figurative meanings, (ii) the metonymic basis of primary metaphors, (iii) the organization of conceptual structures, (iv) the contextual factors for metaphorical conceptualization, and (v) the online and offline nature of metaphors.

Chapter Two argues that many basic categories are conceptualized figuratively rather than literally. The view that both abstract and concrete concepts may be conceptualized metaphorically or metonymically is different from the view of unidirectional metaphorical mapping from the concrete to the abstract domain in CMT. To save the CMT view of unidirectionality, he claims that concepts consist of an ontological and a cognitive part. Concepts can be said to have both ontological content and figurative construal aspects of their meaning. Kövecses states that there are no pure content-ontology-based concepts and figuratively-construed concepts. Concrete concepts are more frequently conceptualized literally, because the ontological content dominates over the figurative construal aspect. However, abstract concepts are more often conceptualized metaphorically or metonymically because the construal part predominates over the ontological part.

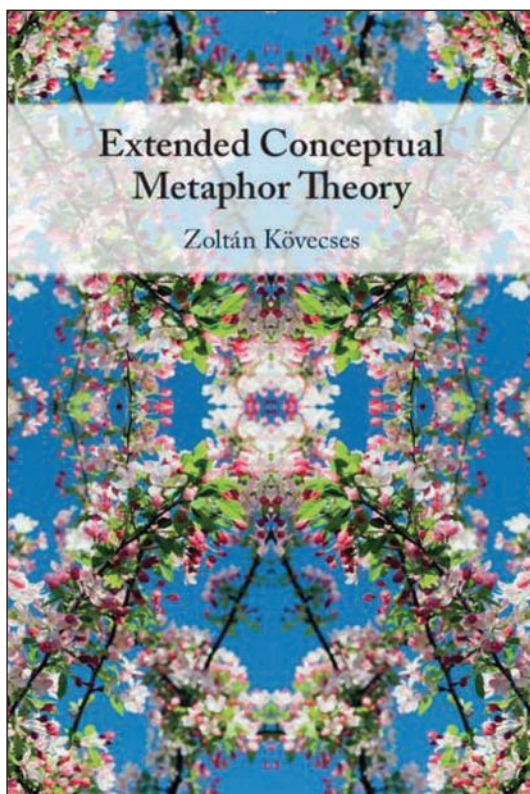
Chapter Three tackles the complex issue of whether metonymies play any role in the emergence of metaphors. Kövecses claims that correlation metaphors emerge from frame-like mental structure indirectly through a metonymic stage. The book favors establishing the relationship between meta-

phor and metonymy by evaluating characteristics of the conceptual system, and further distinguishes metaphor from metonymy by taking into account the larger structure of the conceptual system, both thematic hierarchies and frames, as well as the cognitive operations of generalization (schematization) and specialization (elaboration).

Chapter Four offers a multilevel view, a hierarchical four-level view of metaphor in which conceptual metaphors occupy different levels of schematicity. It proposes that image schemas, domains, frames and mental spaces are vertically interconnected in metaphorical conceptualization. Kövecses uses BUILDING as a source domain concept to explain its conceptual structures with various levels of schematicity. Kövecses also shows implications of the multilevel view of metaphor at superficial metaphors, deliberate metaphors, metaphorical idioms and visual metaphors.

Chapter Five proposes a contextualist version of CMT. Kövecses argues for a broad conception of context in metaphorical conceptualization and outlines the most important elements in contextual component of CMT: (i) the elements of metaphorical meaning making, (ii) the most common contextual factors that function in the use and creation of metaphors and (iii) the cognitive mechanism through which contextual factors produce metaphors in natural discourse. Kövecses focus on the role of context in the generation of metaphor and believes that the metaphorical meaning of prototype in natural discourse is from the common ground of shared knowledge between speaker and listener. The priming effect can occur only if the conceptualizers (both speaker and listener) can build the appropriate conceptual pathway between the intended target-domain meaning and the particular experiential content.

Chapter Six surveys the online and offline processing of metaphors. To explain how conceptual structures at higher levels influence metaphor production and comprehension,



two quintessential online metaphorical phenomena are discussed: mixing metaphors and conceptual integration. Kövecses states that metaphors are processed online dynamically at the level of mental spaces, grounded heavily in offline conceptual structures at the higher levels of image schema, domain, and frame. The offline and online metaphorical structures are all needed for a complete understanding of how conceptual metaphors work in natural discourse. Offline conceptual structures at the higher levels are put to cognitive work online in mental spaces in working memory.

Chapter Seven identifies the main ingredients of the extended view of CMT, characterizing the important distinctions it involves, outlining the broad shape of the new view, and drawing out its implications for a general understanding of metaphor. Multilevel nature claims that conceptual metaphor involves various components, such as metaphorical meaning, conceptual structure, memory and ontological status. As regards contextual embeddedness, the extended view involves four types of context: situational, discourse, bodily and conceptual-cognitive context. In the extended view, Kövecses distinguishes three types of conceptual pathways: schematicity hierarchy pathways, adhoc pathways, and shared image schema pathways. He interprets the application of these different pathways results in different kinds of conceptual metaphors.

Chapter Eight is the summary chapter to assess the responses to the five questions above, with a brief comparison of the extended CMT with its sister theory. Kövecses revisits the five questions that inform the content and structure of the extended view.

*Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory* presents a holistic view of how conceptual and contextual factors influence metaphor production and comprehension in a coherent framework. Based on his previous studies of the metonymic basis of correlation metaphors, the global and local contexts, and hierarchical levels of metaphor, this book opens exciting new pathways for the study of metaphors. It overcomes some criticisms of CMT, such as the unidirectionality of metaphorical mappings, the ignorance of context, makes heavy use of theoretical models for analyzing metaphors, providing us with elucidations of metaphorical meanings, and attempts to compensate for that neglect of conceptual metaphor. The extended view has three main strengths.

In the first place, this monograph refines cognitive dimension by means of thinking of conceptual metaphors as consisting of four levels, which holds that metaphor is a systematic multi-level mapping set. It challenges the concept structure of metaphor, which holds that “image schema, domain, frame, mental space” are all used to organize and construct our experience. However, it also integrates those terms into a well-organized hierarchical system. This multi-level view is in accordance with the previous studies on metaphor, such as metaphorical systematicity, levels of Schematicity, and “metaphor cascades”, but this book takes the schematicity hierarchy a step further in proposing mental spaces as the least schematic level of conceptual structures. In the extended

view, the function of schema hierarchy is not only limited to the conceptual structure in long-term memory, but also closely related to the operation of conceptual structure in working memory. Metaphorical conceptualization results from the priming effect of one or several contextual factors that trigger the setting-up of a schematicity hierarchy in the situation of discourse. Extended CMT successfully combines the embodied and discourse metaphor views. The multi-layered view is advanced, which can account for a variety of metaphor-related phenomena and methods in a unified manner, such as psycholinguistic experimentation at the level of image schema, the intuitive and lexical approach and the frame-net type approach at the levels of domains and frames, the discourse analytic approach and neuroscientific experimentation at the level of mental spaces.

The second main strength is that it puts forward a dynamic system view of metaphor, establishes a dynamic system metaphor model, and provides valuable resources in understanding different forms of metaphor. The extended view combines offline schema hierarchical structure (image schema, domain, frame) and online dynamic processing mental space. It also takes into account offline and online dynamic system models to explain the occurrence of metaphor. Compared with previous studies such as linguistic experience, bodily experience, cultural experience, and dynamic system models, it proposes the interactional turn for the future of metaphor studies. It emphasizes the combination of an offline schematicity hierarchy and its online functioning in a unified view of metaphor as both a product and a process. The system takes in information about the conceptualizers, the discourse, the goals of the participants, the objects and events present in the situation and views that various experiences contribute to metaphorical meaning construction, which dynamic view accounts for the socio-pragmatic function of metaphorical expressions in naturally occurring discourse.

The third main point is that the extended view explains the context embeddedness of conceptual metaphor, which not only explains the universality of metaphor but also its variability. Kövecses argues that conceptual metaphors are both conceptual and contextual, and he attributes different experience to context, such as bodily experience, cultural experience, and linguistic experience, etc. The extended view details situational context (e.g., physical environment, cultural situation, social situation), discourse context (e.g., surrounding discourse, knowledge about speaker/topic/hearer), conceptual cognitive context (e.g., metaphorical conceptual system, ideology) and bodily context (e.g., correlations in experience, bodily conditions). All these go beyond the indication of the traditional view of context and contribute to the factors of metaphorical conceptualization. The context embeddedness focuses on the cognitive operations of non-contextualization and the path of metaphor realization in the contextual discourse level, which extends the study of body-related metaphor. It points out that context influences metaphorical conceptualization in a spe-



cific discourse situation, dynamically proves the metaphorical priming effect and recognizes the creative role of contextual influence. This view reasonably explains a theory that integrates the context of metaphor comprehension and production into CMT.

The extended view reveals that such a comprehensive theory of metaphor cannot simply explain what makes certain metaphors universal but makes other metaphors so variable across cultures and individuals. The argument for a broad conception of context and schematicity hierarchies in metaphorical conceptualization is preferable to other views because it extends the study of metaphors that are body-based in the usual sense in CMT. The metaphors based on the situational, the discourse, the conceptual-cognitive context and the bodily one, far outnumber universal correlation-based metaphors. The extended view captures how contentful experience in various types of context can prime the use of metaphors in particular discourse situations.

*Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory* is an in-depth research monograph that develops a comprehensive account of the conceptual, linguistic, and communicative dimensions of metaphors. It illustrates diverse phenomena for metaphor studies in scope, perspective, and method. This theoretical framework will open a well-rounded pathway for the study of metaphorical creativity, metaphor in culture and metaphor in use. Although the extended view is just a hypothesis which needs experiments to test its validity, it can be a good model for readers to analyze metaphorical conceptualization, embodied cognition, lexical semantics, multimodal discourse, discourse analysis, cultural linguistics and literature study.

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