

A REVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH ON CROATIAN MYTHOLOGY IN RELATION TO NATKO NODILO

SUZANA MARJANIĆ

*In a review article¹ on the subject, I will focus on Natko Nodilo's study *Religija (stara vjera) Srba i Hrvata*, na glavnoj osnovi pjesama, priča i govora narodnoga (*Religion [Old Faith] of Serbs and Croats, on the Main Basis of Folk Poems, Stories and Narratives*) (1885–1890), which is considered the first reconstruction of Ancient Croatian mythology. Namely, all contemporary research on Croatian mythology/old faith partially originates from this reconstruction, therefore, I will devote the second part of this article to Nodilo's problem as a historian dealing with the interpretations of 19th-century mythophobes regarding the reconstruction of the South Slavic old faith.*

Keywords: *Natko Nodilo, Vitomir Belaj, Radoslav Katičić, mythophobes*

*V preglednem članku se avtorica osredinja na študijo *Natka Nodila Religija (stara vjera) Srba i Hrvata*, na glavnoj osnovi pjesama, priča i govora narodnoga (*Religija (stara vera) Srbov in Hrvatov na podlagi ljudskih pesmi, zgodb in pripovedovanja*, 1885–1890), ki velja za prvo rekonstrukcijo hrvaške mitologije. Vse sodobne raziskave hrvaške mitologije ali starega verovanja namreč delno izhajajo iz te rekonstrukcije, zato avtorica drugi del članka posveča težavam Nodila kot zgodovinarja, ki se ukvarja z rekonstrukcijo južnoslovenskega starega verovanja, kakor so ga interpretirali mitofobi v 19. stoletju..*

Ključne besede: *Natko Nodilo, Vitomir Belaj, Radoslav Katičić, mitofobi*

The scientific study of myths began in the mid-19th century with the development of comparative philology, which originated from the idea of a common Indo-European language. Comparative mythology developed from it. Therefore, if there is a common Indo-European language, then there is also a common belief system, specifically in the context of a common belief matrix and, therefore, not in the context of an entire common belief system (cf. Šišić 1912: 310). Catherine Bell, one of the leading scholars in ritual studies, systematized the myth-ritual theories based on this notion. In this sense, mythological and ritualistic theories can be observed within the context of anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn's conclusion that the conflict between dichotomous theories at the end of the 19th century, namely the question of which came first – the myth or the ritual – is as pointless as the question of the (cosmic) chicken and the egg (Bell 1997: 8). The combination of mythologism and ritualism manifests itself in contemporary research on Croatian mythology, marked by Radoslav Katičić and Vitomir Belaj. Katičić and Belaj succeeded to build the Croatian pantheon by reconstructing the Ancient Slavic religious system – based on sacral poems

¹ “This work has been fully supported by the Croatian Science Foundation under the project *Narrating fear* [IP-2016-06-2463].” In this article, I will provide a synthesis of some of my previous research on this topic (Marjanić 2002, 2003, 2015, 2016). Furthermore, I have included some syntheses from my encyclopaedical article on the myth from the *Croatian Encyclopaedia of Literature* (ed. by Velimir Visković, Zagreb: The Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography, 2010–2012).

that were sung during the rituals and were their integral part (Katičić 2008: 1–2) – and incorporating it into a wider Indo-European framework (Indo-European comparative mythology) (cf. Marjanić 2003, 2016).

Milivoj Solar demonstrates the union of the scientific chicken and egg (the 19th century conflict between ritualism and mythologism) in his chapter on Bronisław Malinowski and functionalist theories of myth (Malinowski 1971 [1948]: 94). In the words of Solar, instead of the scientific chicken and egg, Malinowski offers a simple solution: The Egg of Columbus – strategies of field research and life in the field (Solar 1998: 105). Namely, Malinowski was critical towards all previous theories of myth (e.g. Friedrich Max Müller’s theory of nature and psychoanalysis), except for James Frazer’s ritualistic theory because he considered Frazer his teacher and predecessor. Frazer assigned a decisive role to the ritual thanks to his predecessor, William Robertson Smith, and his totemistic theory as the origin of religion. In short, Frazer interpreted myths as subsequent commentaries of rituals. In his excellent interpretation, Solar states that Malinowski went a step further: he combined the myth and the ritual as the front and back side of the same phenomenon – while the myth confirms, the ritual renews; the ritual is the invocation of eternity (ibid.).

Because a partial mythical matrix has been preserved in Croatian oral literature, folk customs and beliefs, such as mythical tales of supernatural beings and phenomena, Croatian pre-Christian belief, and the mythical system can be based on a comparative hermeneutic interpretation of folklore texts. It is a combination of philological (interpretation of reconstructed mythical texts) and ethnological, cultural anthropological (reconstruction of ritualistic, customary action) methods, as shown by Belaj in his book on the mythical background of Croatian folk customs and beliefs (1998a).²

Ivan Filip Vezdin, the founder of European indology, focused the interest of cultural historians on Indian culture, thus enabling Indo-European philology and mythological comparative studies. Luka Ilić Oriovčanin followed the same path in the book *Slavonian Folk Customs* (1846) which is a valuable contribution to the establishment of Croatian ethnology and folkloristics, and which helped him introduce the Indo-European (“Indian”) comparative interpretation of Ancient Croatian mythology to Croatia, thus severing ties with the Baroque tradition (cf. Belaj 1998a). Since Ilić’s intention was not to reconstruct Ancient Croatian mythology, the first study of this kind is Nodilo’s *Religion of Serbs and Croats, on the Main Basis of Folk Poems, Stories and Narratives* (1885–1890). Nodilo changed the title to *Old Faith of Serbs and Croats, on the Main Basis of Folk Poems, Stories and Narratives*³ in

² In the review of the studies of the mythical matrix of Croatian oral literature, folk customs and beliefs, from medieval founding myths of a nation (*origo gentis*), for example, the legend of the arrival of Croats led by five brothers and two sisters, to Illyrianism in which a new mythology, united under the ideology of “the Illyrian myth” with the idea of a common origin and “the Illyrian antiquity”, is created (cf. Belaj 1998).

³ Interestingly, since Nodilo’s study was republished in 1981, the title *Stara vjera Srba i Hrvata* (Old Faith of Serbs and Croats) became standard without the subtitled determinant.

“Corrections and Amendments” (Nodilo 1885–1890, vol. 101, 1890). The titular phrase “old faith” is a compromise solution and its meaning lies between *mythology* and *religion* (cf. Pavić 1981). Katičić (2017) used this compromise in his latest book, which he named *Stara vjera* (Old Faith), following in the footsteps of Nodilo’s interpretation.

Nodilo’s reading of the mythical matrix in folklore creations is formed within naturism –Müller’s theory of solar mythology and theory of spring and dawn, and Adalbert Kuhn and Wilhelm Schwartz’s theory of meteorological mythology. He based his reconstruction of South Slavic mythology (“old faith”, “religion”) on folklore texts, emphasizing that “the first religious treasure of a nation” are epic poems, more specifically, “pure” epic poems (“where wonders appear at every meter”),⁴ “mythical stories” (fairy tales) from which he interprets the mythical matrix, in conjunction with chronicles of Christian missionaries, in particular Helmold’s *The Chronicle of the Slavs*. Marcel Kušar (1907) followed Nodilo in a book on mythological folk tales. Nodilo begins the reconstruction of the South Slavic pantheon based on Helmold’s *Chronica Slavorum*, because, as he states, the largest number of historical evidence preserved is of the “old faith” of the Northwest Slavs – Poles “and their neighbouring tribes on the lower Elbe (Laba) river and the Baltic Coast” (N331).⁵

As for the interpretation of fairy tales in the context of the interpretative matrix of the mythology of nature, this research is still recognized today, that is, as Maja Bošković-Stulli observes, the

solar, lunar, astral and meteoric concepts of a mythical origin and the meaning of fairy tales are remembered [...] as a brief episode in science, but the idea that the origins of fairy tales and epic poems are based on myths or are closely related to the myth is a current idea in modern science. (Bošković-Stulli 1997: 10)

Likewise, Ljiljana Marks (2008: 314) notes, “today’s rediscovery of Croatian mythology and research on the Slavic pantheon is not, in some of its settings, much different from Nodilo’s interpretations.”

⁴ Note: Nodilo emphasizes true/pure epic poems, which he determines, compared to pure historical poems, using the category of miracles. Nodilo believes that true/pure epic poems contain the matrix of an ancient religion, and they are collected in Vuk Karadžić’s second collection of folk poems (*Srpske narodne pjesme II*). Therefore, in his research on the *old faith* of Serbs and Croats, Nodilo uses this collection of poems as the basis for his research (N14). Apart from these poems, which Karadžić called *junačke najstarije* (oldest heroic [poems]), Nodilo says that one should also start with *bugarštica* poems collected in Baltazar Bogišić’s *Narodne pjesme iz starijih, najviše primorskih zapisa* (Folk Poems from Older, mostly Littoral Records, 1878).

⁵ I use the abbreviation N (for Nodilo 1981) with the page designation. – Helmod wrote about the religion of the Obotrites and the Rani on the basis of his own observations, considering that the pagan cult was being restored after the death of king Canute Lavard in 1131 (cf. Łowmiański 1996: 133).

The aforementioned is proven within the local context in the latest research by Katičić who increasingly refers to Nodilo's reconstruction and applies his "old faith" phrase that is perfectly situated within the dichotomy of mythology – religion. In the preface to the book *Green Grove – Tracing the Sacred Poems of our Pre-Christian Antiquity* (2010), Katičić⁶ also points out the role of Stjepan Verković, his *Vede Slavena* (Slavic Vedas, 1874), and how, to him, "it has ceased to be a phantasmagoria and became a very tangible reality". However, Dutch comparative scholar and cultural historian Joep Leerssen points out that Verković was a pan-Slavic enthusiast, deceived by his own source, rural teacher Ivan Gologanov, who gave him what he deceptively claimed was his collected folkloric material (Leerssen 2016: 86).

This mythological research, as far as the Croatian context in the 19th century is concerned, was encouraged by Franjo Rački, who demanded that the mythology of certain Slavic "tribes" had to be reconstructed by tracing oral tales, poems, and customs (*Književnik*, 1864: 1). During this time, mythological studies were written by Stanko Vraz (*Kolo*, 1847: 5), Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski, whose study on fairies (*Arhiv*, 1951: 1; parts had previously been published in *Danica*, 1846) is the first of its kind written in the field of Croatian/Slavic philology, Slovenian author and recorder of folk songs and narratives Matija Valjavec (1865),⁷ Ivan Radetić, whose *Overview of Traditional Croatian Literature* (1879) is considered to be the first Croatian work on the topic of oral literature, Gjuro Šurmin (1900), and Velimir Deželić (1911). Moreover, although Vatroslav Jagić, in his *History of Croatian and Serbian Literature* (1867) referred to "folk fables, stories, and tales" as materials from comparative mythology and ethnology, he still carefully distanced himself from the mythological theory and accepted Benfey's migration theory (cf. Marks 2008: 312). In many of his contributions, some of which he published in his journal *Archiv für slavische Philologie*, he critically evaluated the source in order to warn about the unilateralism of mythological interpretation (cf. Bošković-Stulli 1997).

Nikola Sučić (1943) and Franjo Ledić (1969–1970, 1973) have romanticized Ancient Slavic mythology and mythology of Croats. Nikola Gržetić Gašpićev had done something similar before them (1900), as well as, in newer times, Marinko Marinović (1999).

Contemporary research on Croatian mythology is marked by Katičić and Belaj who reconstructed the Croatian pantheon with Perun the Thunderer as the supreme deity by reconstructing the Ancient Slavic belief system and incorporating it into a wider Indo-European framework (Indo-European comparative mythology). Using the holy rhyme

⁶ Furthermore, in the "Introduction" to the aforementioned book, which is (for now) a pentalogy on this subject, Katičić points out that the subject of his research is "the reconstruction of Ancient Slavic sacred poetry [...], not the reconstruction of Slavic myths, as it is usually perceived" and that everything presented is based on "fragments of pre-Christian ritual texts which were found and recognized in oral literatures of Slavic languages" (Katičić 2010: V–VI).

⁷ At the beginning of his study *On Goddesses of Time and Fate*, Valjavec wrote that in 1864 Franjo Rački stated that the only true path for Slavic mythology was to reconstruct the mythology of certain Slavic tribes on the basis of folk tales, poems and customs, and how, following this trace, he was opening his own discussion on goddesses of time and faith (Valjavec 1865: 42).

“*hoditi – roditi*” (“to walk – to give birth”) during the period between 1984 and 1987, Katičić began reconstructing the fragments of ancient Slavic mythical tales of the divine hero of fertility and vegetation. Following the research of Vjačeslav V. Ivanov and Vladimir N. Toporov in philology and semiotics, as well as Katičić’s semiological-etymological approach, Belaj (1998a), traces the mythical stories about a vegetation deity whose life imitates the life of a grain by reconstructing pagan components in Croatian folk customs and beliefs. In that sense, while Nodilo represents mythologism that is based on F. M. Müller’s mythology of nature, Belaj as ethnologist and Katičić as philologist represent ritualism (in combination with mythologism), primarily the ritualism (totemism) of J. G. Frazer and his *Golden Bough*.

In addition to exploring mythical beings from oral traditions (*orko* and *macić*), Ivan Lozica (2002), in his book on the pagan heritage, interprets the relationship between the myth and rituals/customs using, as an example, the ritualistic or mythological meaning of old masks from Dubrovnik (Turica, Čoroje and Vila), by reconstructing Ancient Slavic deities from the word *koleda*, and by linking the procession of *kraljice* (queens) with the pre-Christian *koleda* and the custom of choosing the king. In his book on the destiny of a pre-Christian cult in the period of witches’ persecution, Zoran Čiča (2002) observes the ecstatic cult of fairies and elves in the context of the Eurasian shamanistic technique of ecstasy. Stipe Botica (2013), in his history of Croatian oral literature,⁸ considers the contemporary research on Croatian mythology, as also conducted by Ljiljana Marks. While Marija Novak (2007) explores the mythical matrix of the spiritual culture of northern Croatia, Luka Šešo (2016) in his book on supernatural beings focuses on the Dalmatian outback, and Evelina Rudan Kapec (2016) in her book on fairies from Učka (2016) explores the supernatural phenomenon of Istrian oral tradition. It is also necessary to mention a collection of presentations (Marjanić and Prica 2010) from the Croatian Ethnological Society Symposium *Stanje i tendencije mitoloških istraživanja danas* (The State and Tendencies of Current Mythological Research), held in Zagreb in 2007, and I would hereby like to highlight Sonja Miličević Vukelić’s paper “Wicca: Old and New Religion?”.

AGAINST MYTHOPHOBES AND A FEAR OF AUTHORITY OF THE MYTHOLOGICAL KIND

Nodilo’s definition of the term *myth* is determined in the first sentence of his study written in an interrogatively ironic way: “In Serbs and Croats, are there myths, tales of the gods?” (N1) whereby he initiates a discussion with “foreign” mythologists, researcher of Slavic languages and literature Louis Léger and Slovenian philologist Franc Miklošič, who denounce Slavic mythology, and, thus, the mythology of the two ethnic groups important

⁸ In the chapter “Mit/em” (Myth/eme), the author recognizes Vitomir Belaj, Tomo Vinšćak, Lidija Bajuk and Vid Balog as Katičić’s successors.

to Nodilo. Nodilo refers to Léger's article "Esquisse sommaire de la mythologie slave" (*Revue de l'histoire des religions*, Paris 1882) in which Léger points out that Slavic deities, in comparison with the Greek system, have neither a "family nor a genealogy" (according to N1). In addition to Léger, Nodilo believes that philologist Franc Miklošič's (1875: 20) statement that the Slavs performed "natural" religious worship without "gods", "their grand Olympus barely had enough gods to fill all days of the week with their names" (according to N1), is even "harsher". Léger's assessment of Slavic mythology partially shows inadequate knowledge of other mythological/religious systems, because, for example, Vedic myths serve as riddles describing the organization of the world and they do not tell stories about gods. It means that the divine genealogy of Vedic gods cannot be established, and, as Mislav Ježić pointed out, Vedic texts truly have a rich treasury of myths without containing any mythology (cf. Ježić 1987).

In comparison with Léger, who Nodilo no longer mentions in his study, thus showing an aversion towards Léger's concept of Ancient/Slavic mythology, Nodilo (because he is not a philologist) still often adheres to Miklošič's etymological explanations. Nodilo quotes the aforementioned authorities' expositions on Slavic mythology in an ironic fashion: "The creators of legends are Indians and Iranians, the Hellenes and Germans, but not the Celts, nor the Latins, nor the Slavs" (according to N1). He reinforces the irony with sarcasm: it is interesting that the Celts ("boastful schemers"), the Latins/Romans ("ice-cold formalists"), the Croats and the Serbs do not have the epic poem, and therefore, logically, do not have the myth (N1). Furthermore, he *incredibly* sarcastically summarizes the expositions of several already mentioned *foreign authorities on the state of* South Slavic mythology: "These gods do not marry, nor are they merry, nor do they fight battles; their throne is not on purple or golden clouds, nor do they walk on thin air. In a word, such gods are not anthropomorphic" (N1). Therefore, given that the mythical material is unwritten, and thus invisible, and regarding the mosaic nature of mythical fragments, some authorities have concluded that the Croatian and Serbian mythology do not exist (N8). Nodilo negates the aforementioned mythologists' concept that Slavic mythology is not subject to anthropomorphism using, for example, figures of the anthropomorphic dragon and fairies (cf. N438–439; cf. Marjanić 2002, 2003). However, he confirms the conclusion of these mythophobes according to which "our [...] Olympus is dusty and rotten, so its true saints are no longer within our view" (N8). For his next *attack* on the *magnificent* expositions of *these* foreign mythologists, Nodilo mentions Helmold as the greatest chronicler on "Slavic religion", and his *Chronica Slavorum*, which testifies that "the Slavs attributed sorrow and joy to their gods" (cf. N10). Therefore, if the Slavs attributed emotional categories/phenomena to their gods, the statement about the mythical reality of the Slavic Olympus is perfectly justified; therefore, its reconstruction is also justified.

Nodilo quotes Léger's conclusion (1882) on Slavic mythology: "As far as what we know about Slavic gods, they are completely different from Greek anthropomorphism. Apart from some exceptions, they do not have families nor a genealogy" (according to

N1).⁹ Apart from Léger, the “exemplary philologist” Miklošič (1875: 20) was even harsher (“the critical blade”) when he assumed that the Slavs performed religious service (as far as the state of the natural religion) without gods (according to N1). Léger’s assessment of Slavic mythology partly reveals his “ignorance” when it comes to other mythologies. For example, Vedic myths serve as puzzles that describe the organization of the world and they do not tell “stories of gods”, which means that the divine genealogy of Vedic gods cannot be established: “Vedic texts truly have a rich treasury of myths, without having any mythology at all.” Or following Müller, who used the term henotheism for the earliest form of Vedic religion as a differentiating from, of course, monotheism, but also polytheism, in which there is a hierarchy of deities (cf. Müller 1997a, 1997b: 266, 291–293). Compared to Greek gods that are anthropomorphic, Vedic deities are not subject to theophoric anthropomorphism, since they are natural forces (cf. Ježić 1987: 45), and, while Zeus’s “battle” with the Titans takes place (in mythical history) only “once”, Parjanya’s battle reiterates every year (the cosmic cycle of repetition). As Vedic gods are close to natural forces, Slavic gods, due to their own anthropomorphism, are subject to parallelism with, for example, Greek and Roman deities. Nodilo negates some mythologists’ opinions that it is not possible to compare the deities of the Northwest Slavs to the Olympus of the South Slavs within the framework of comparative mythology: “In contrast, I say, the gods are essentially the same here and there, and the only thing that might be different are the god’s names” (N331).

By negating the mythophobic school on the allegedly invisible Slavic mythology (cf. Šišić 1912: 309), Nodilo established the existence of Slavic mythology. With the help of this method, he found a like-minded person who “long ago, before me, had emphasized the same thing” (N2). This scholar was, of course, Vatroslav Jagić: “There are reasons to believe that a mythological epic bloomed even among Ancient Croats and Serbs” (Jagić 1867: 22, according to N2). However, the Jagić-Nodilo *like-mindedness* is not at all justified¹⁰ as far as concerns their definition of folklore forms as sources for the reconstruction of Ancient Slavic mythology. Even though Jagić (1867) referred to “folk fables, stories and tales” as the “materials of comparative mythology”, he had still carefully distanced himself from the mythological interpretation of genesis and the adoption of tales, and accepted Benfey’s migration theory “to which he remained faithful until the day he died”

⁹ Léger, in his article “Esquisse sommaire de la mythologie slave” (1882), which Nodilo uses as a starting point for an interpretative showdown with Léger, says, among other things: “Mr. Stojan Novaković, then Serbian Minister of Education, one of our most spirited friends, translated that little work of mine and printed it in *Prosvetni Glasnik*, No. 1, year 1883. The translation was reprinted in the newspapers *Slovinac*, which, at that time, had been published in Dubrovnik” (Léger 1984: 7–8). In the context of the aforementioned, Léger doubted that Perun was present in the South Slavic pantheon (cf. Filipović 1948: 63).

¹⁰ While Jagić emphasized that the epic form was older and that the “later, historical element of folk poems overwhelmingly pushed the oldest religiously-mythological content appropriate for narration out of the poetic form, and it withdrew into the prose of folk tales” (Jagić 1867: 293), he abandoned this concept the following year (Jagić 1868: 226–228).

(Bošković-Stulli 1983: 13). In addition to this, in his Berlin journal *Archiv für slavische Philologie*, ever since it was first issued in 1875, Jagić sought to clean up King Augeas' stables of Slavic mythology by critically evaluating the sources and assuming a positivist approach. Specifically, he rebutted the uncritical use of folklore forms without which, according to him, Slavic mythology cannot and should not be reconstructed. He was completely right because during his time there were still no methodical tools for properly comparing data from written sources with data from folklore texts (Belaj 1998a: 40–41). Therefore, in his evaluation of Nodilo's study, Belaj points out how the subtitle (the first title of the study was *Religion of Serbs and Croats, on the Main Basis of Folk Poems, Stories and Narratives*) already confirms that "he did not accept Jagić's critical approach in the reconstruction of the Ancient Slavic religious system and mythology, which, as a consequence, meant that his great work was no less critical than other romantic works of that time and that it did not provide any basis for further serious work" (ibid.: 41). As a modified evaluation of Nodilo's study, I quote the following conclusion: "a grandiose attempt to reconstruct the Ancient Croatian religion, but, unfortunately, without an elaborated method" (Belaj 1998b: 350). Or, as Ivo Petrinović (1982: 36–37) would identify one year after Nodilo's study was published in the Logos edition: "his conclusions [are] too daring so that it does not have the value that such a work might have. However, no scientifically-based critique of this work has been carried out to this date." Or, as one historian's judgment of Nodilo's work reads: "Many who were confused and even impressed with Nodilo's findings tried to use the statement that it is a work of science fiction as an excuse" (Antoljak 1992: 367).

Given that Nodilo starts from the premise that "the first religious treasure are female"¹¹ and "heroic" poems (oral literature) – particularly emphasizing "true/pure epic poems" which he determines, compared to "pure historical" poems, using the category of "miracles" (N13, 20) – and "mythical stories", he begins the reconstruction of the "old faith" based on the aforementioned "sources". Contrary to Nodilo's "allegorical" interpretation (allegorism) of female and heroic poems and mythical stories, which he regards as the first source of studying the myth, and which he explores within Müller's mythology of nature (naturism) – the theory of the myth as the "disease of the language" (cf. Vries 1984: 38), Belaj and Katičić base their reconstruction of the mythical background of Croatian folk customs and beliefs on New Year's Eve (pre-Christian *koledas*) and St George procession poems announcing the holy wedding that takes place on Midsummer's Day. Compared to Nodilo, who reconstructs the incestuous hierogamy of the supreme divine twin binomial

¹¹ *Female* songs, according to Karadžić in *Serbian Folk Songs I*, are wedding songs, drinking songs, songs in honour of someone, lamentations, *kraljičke* songs, *dodolske* songs, *koleda* songs, Christmas songs, "songs to be sung during *časni post*", pious songs, mythological songs, songs to be sung on the *prelo*, harvest songs, dance songs, songs that were sung in Budva on Ascension Day, lullabies, "love and other female songs", etc. Simplified, and in short, they are lyrical poems determined by *gender* – female as *lyrical*, in comparison to male as epic, *heroic* (warrior – epic poems).

(Vid-Vida/Živa), Katičić-Belaj's reconstruction focuses on the incestuous hierogamy (incest from ignorance) of the twin descendants (Juraj-Mara) of the supreme divine duality.

All this highlights the fundamental difference between Nodilo's and Katičić-Belaj's reconstruction, depending on the primary source used in the reconstruction of the South Slavic pantheon (cf. Marjanić 2002, 2003). Furthermore, compared to Indo-European comparative mythology in Nodilo's *Old Faith of Serbs and Croats*, which (in part) neglects the South Slavic-Russian-Baltic links (in the aforementioned phrase, under Baltic links, I mean the Baltic people),¹² Katičić and Belaj achieve the reconstruction of the Croatian pantheon (with supreme/masculine deity The Thunderer/Perun) within the framework of Slavic and Baltic folklore forms, the reconstruction of the Ancient Slavic religious system and its integration into Indo-European comparative mythology (cf. Belaj 1998a: 29–31). And while Katičić and Belaj start their reconstruction with Perun (regarding *The Kiev Chronicle*), Nodilo starts his from Svantevid, considering that Helmold's *The Chronicle of the Slavs* determines Arkona's Svantevid as *deus deorum* of the Baltic-Polish Slavs (Svantevid's Temple in Arkona on Rujana – the present-day Baltic island of Rügen). Helmold's *Chronicle* also mentions the Polish goddess Siwa, which Nodilo defines as the supreme Slavic goddess, and, on the South Slavic level, Nodilo shapes the theomorphic binomial Svantevid-Siwa as Vid-Vida/Živa (N, chapter "Sutvid and Vida"). Therefore, it is possible to have two reconstructions of the South Slavic goddess because, while in Helmold's *Chronicle* the Polish goddess is Siwa (Živa), in *The Kiev Chronicle*, the Russian goddess is Mokoš (cf. Marjanić 2002, 2003). This determination of the supreme divine couple is the fundamental difference between the two reconstructions.

Nodilo thus tries to prove that the religion reported by Helmold, the religion of the Antes that Procopius talks about (Procopius' report reduces this *only* to the Antes), and the religion of the South Slavs, which his study reconstructs, are ONE religion (N33). In order to expand Svantevid (scientific-mythological prosthesis) as a supreme deity to other Slavs from the area of the Baltic Slavs, he uses the claim that religion is "neither local nor provincial, but universal, nation-wide. [...] The only truth is that the secondary religious lines are drawn differently, in some branches of those tribes only the names may be different" (N32). In addition to the fact that Helmold defines Svantevid as the supreme deity of the Rügen Slavs (N382), Helmold is of interest to Nodilo for another reason: Helmold provides a testimony to dualism ("religion of the two principles") in the religions of the previously mentioned Slavic tribes, and within this framework, apart from Svantevid, indicates the existence of his opponent, Crnobog (N32; cf. Helmold 1966: 159). Namely, there is no division between (ethically) good and evil deities in natural religions, given that (each) deity possesses both good and evil (cosmic) aspects. "The good gods, whenever they were sad or weak, were seen by our fathers as traitors" (N451).

¹² I use *Baltic Slavic* for the Baltic Slavs, and *Baltic-Slavic* (or as noted by Belaj (2000) – Balto-Slavic) for religious matrices of the Baltic people and the Slavs.

In the context of the aforementioned, I am providing Nodilo's presented conceptualizations of the South Slavic Supreme god – Vid (the deity of the *old faith* of Serbs and Croats)¹³ and his parallelisms within the framework of Indo-European comparative mythology, which can be summarized (and more clearly) illustrated in a table.

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| “old faith” of Serbs and Croats | Vid |
| Vedic <i>mythological system</i> | Dyaúh pitā, Varuna (cf. N696) ¹⁴ |
| Baltic Slavs/Temple of Arkona on Rügen | Svantevid |
| Iranian <i>mythological system (Avesta)</i> | Ahura Mazda |
| Antean <i>mythological system</i> | Jakobog |
| Greek mythology | Zeus |
| Roman mythology | Iuppiter, Janus (N33, 26, 37), Mars |
| Germanic mythology | Donar, Zio, Wodan (N83, 26, 78) |
| <i>Saxon</i> mythology | Beldeg (N680; Beldeg as Baldr or Odin; cf. N132) |
| Scandinavian (Nordic) mythology | Thôrr, Týr (N83, 26), Frey (N78), ¹⁵ Odin (<i>one-eyedness</i>) |

Let us return to the contextualization of the interpretative correlation Nodilo-Jagić. So even though Nodilo calls Jagić his “like-minded colleague” on the second page of his study, these two methods are different because, after Jagić's intervention, “only a few names of Western and Eastern Slavic gods remained certain”, and it “made an impact on serious researchers” to such an extent that they “refrained from any mythological research for a long time” (Belaj 1998a: 41). Due to a lack of historical sources, Nodilo states that it is possible to follow the trail of Russian mythologists who use folklore forms for the reconstruction of the Ancient Slavic myth. (It is interesting to note that he does not mention any mythological study of the Russian mythologists in the notes of his study.)

¹³ Nodilo opens the pagan matrix of incestuous hierogamy, with a twin mytheme in which (Svantevid) Vid's *wife* is, as a family figure, his sister – she is *not no one's* daughter (N64– with a mythical interpretation of four oral-written poems. In the combination of *pagan-Christian* worlds from songs in Serbian cultural circles (see “Narodne pesme” – XLV, 1866: 645), in which shepherds Vid and Vidosava are brother and sister, he reveals the Christianized matrix in the mytheme of Vidosava's sacrifice (*throwing* herself under a sabre) which solves Vid's alternative: “*Either you will love me faithfully, /Or you will feel my sabre's kiss*” (N65).

¹⁴ Nodilo introduced the parallelism Svantevid/Vid-Varuna in “Corrections and Amendments”, emphasizing that Varuna (*sky*) is “older” than Indra (cf. *Rigveda* X, 124; N696)

¹⁵ On religious priapism and Nodilo's comparison Svantevid-Frey cf. chapter “South Slavic Vid and the religion of rain” (Marjanić 2002).

TWO IN ONE OR ... – THE ETHNIC PHRASE IN THE TITLE OF NODILO'S STUDY

In determining pagan (and folklore) matrix of Serbs and Croats, Nodilo establishes equality between the two ethnic groups: "In this act, Serbs are what Croats are, and Croats are what Serbs are. For us, the synonymy between one and the other is complete" (N2). However, when he mentions ethnic synonymy, he mentions how he observed the *heathenry* of the two ethnic groups: "Investigating the heathenry of the Angles and the Saxons is one; so, to us, the heathenry of Serbs and Croats will be one" (*ibid.*). Nodilo summarizes the link because he reconstructs the Croatian and Serbian "old faith", whereby the conjunction "and" (grammatically) functions in an integral way (which will *later* be replaced with a dash in other/political systems). The quest for a "common treasury" (this is Nodilo's metaphorization of a mythical matrix) of the religious thought of Serbs and Croats can be hampered by different Christian matrices (Croatian Catholicism-Serbian Orthodoxy). "Some", such as Juraj Biankini, used this conclusion in determining Nodilo's "national" orientation (cf. Antoljak 1992: 361).¹⁶ Nevertheless, Nodilo states the opinion of "some" scholars according to which the Serbs and the Croats, as they moved to their present-day homelands, formed as two separate nations, "each with somewhat of an own language, customs and religion." He continues: Serbs "probably" originated from the Antes ("from the tribes of unmixed, pure Antes"),¹⁷ and now they are shtokavians, and Croats – initially chakavians – "seem to be of half-Polish origin" (N2). Nodilo promotes the thesis of two different ethnic groups in the pagan age with the same "old faith", a common pagan matrix that has remained

¹⁶ The right-wing faction of the Serbian political ethnomyth particularly refers to Nodilo's conclusion – "In Dubrovnik, if not from the very beginning, then certainly since ancient times, the Serbian language has been spoken: spoken – by the people, by the nobility, both at home and in public life, as well as in the community, and Serbian was also the language of discussion." Slobodan Jarčević's *opinion* is as follows: "Nodilo was absolutely right, although today, nobody in Croatia would dare to support his scientific judgement. By recognizing Dubrovnik Catholics as Serbs, all foundations of official Croatian history would have been destroyed, including the claim about the 'historical right' of the Croatian state to this town with a Serbian population and Serbian civilization heritage." (Jarčević 1998) However, Jarčević, does not state that Nodilo used the terms "Serbian" and "Croatian" language synonymously: "We in Dalmatia are of Serbian or Croatian origin, so we do not speak any language apart from either Serbian or Croatian. Therefore, the language in our dictionaries can only be Croatian-Serbian or Serbian-Croatian or only Croatian or only Serbian, but not at all – Slavic-Dalmatian" (*Il Nazionale*, Zadar, 12 March 1862 – Croatian supplement to *Narodni list*, 15. 3. 1862; article "Tko o svadbi, tko o bradvi" [On Weddings and Hatchets]; according to Grabovac 1961: 418). Namely, Nodilo, referring to Ján Kollár, emphasizes that there are four Slavic languages: Russian, Czech, Polish, and South Slavic (cf. *Il Nazionale*, 1862, No. 36; according to Vince 1978: 482).

¹⁷ In his *History of Middle Ages for the Croatian and Serbian People*, Nodilo (1905: 439–440) points out that, in the ancient times, the Croats (just like the Serbs) belonged to the Eastern Slavs (therefore, the Antes). The *General Encyclopaedia of the Yugoslav Lexicographical Institute* (1981/VII: 488) states that Jordanes used the name "Slavs" for the ancestors of the South Slavs, for the Eastern Slavic tribes – "the Antes", and for the Western Slavs – "the Veneti".

deeply embedded in various Christian matrices, both of Croatian Catholicism and Serbian Orthodoxy. Within the concept of a half-Polish origin of Croats, he refers to White Croatia ('white' meaning 'western' in Iranian, and 'red' meaning the 'southern' side of the world, cf. Pavličević 1994: 32) which was located near (present-day) Krakow. Namely, Constantine Porphyrogenetos, in Chapters 31 and 32 of *De administrando imperio*, reports how, in the early Middle Ages, there was The Great (White) Croatia, located around Krakow (behind the Carpathians), from which Croats came to Pannonia and Dalmatia. Hence, Nodilo later changed the original definition of Croats with an ethnically "uncertain" attribute – "half-Polish" origin. In "Corrections and Amendments", he omits the genealogical origin of the Serbs "from the Antes" and removes the "half-Polish" designation concerning the Croats, leaving only one part of the sentence: "Are Serbs shtokavians, and Croats chakavians" (N645). He does not specify whether Croats and Serbs are two separate nations or a single nation "or if they are an entire people, with two synonymous names, having an older chakavian dialect, and a newer organically developed shtokavian dialect" (N2). The *ethnic phrase* in the title of Nodilo's *Old Faith of Serbs and Croats* is structured according to Nodilo's understanding of the common matrix of the "Serbian-Croatian" mythology ("religion", "old faith"):

Since ancient times, Croatianhood or Serbhood has become so intertwined, fused together and comparable, that today it is difficult to scientifically discern, ethnically speaking, what is Croatian and what is Serbian. [...] I do not know the answer to these questions, just as an English person would not be able to talk about the ancient times of the Angles and the Saxons. (N2)

He interprets the "justifiability" of placing the Serbian *ethnos* in an *initial* position in the title of the study with the thesis: "it depends only on our main source, on folk poems and stories, mostly originating from the Serbs" (ibid.). It stems from the erroneous methodology of his study since he did not take into consideration the materials that had not been systematically collected, just as Karadžić had done.¹⁸ From this, he concludes: "the Serbian side of our people is extraordinarily cautious" and – "the Serbs, among the Slavic people, are probably the most reliable guardians of folk remnants of the old faith" (N585).

Regardless of there being, as he further demonstrates, a "greater difference" between the Italian tribes (Umbrian, Oscan, and Latin) – than between Slavic tribes in the period when they had been pagans – comparative mythologists nevertheless made parallelisms between individual deities of the Italian tribes. It is worth noting that Nodilo considers "spiritual communion", in addition to linguistic and religious communion, as a part of ethnicity (note that ethnopschoanalysis is an essential part of his comparative mythology).

¹⁸ He notes in "Corrections and Amendments" – "the Angles are Germans of Suebian origin, and Anglo-Saxons are the Scandinavians' closest neighbours" (N669).

He uses Jacob Grimm's statement from *Deutsche Mythologie* as a starting point for the aforementioned definition of ethnicity: "This spiritual, linguistic and religious community of the great human tribes J. Grimm had noticed some fifty years back" (N331).

CONCLUSION – STILL ON THE TRACK OF NODILO'S RECONSTRUCTION

Contrary to critical readings of Nodilo's study, as demonstrated in his notes by Belaj, in Katičić's most recent book, the title of which he based on Nodilo's *Old Faith* (the phrase "old faith" is well positioned in the domain of the mythology-religion dichotomy), he demonstrates that not all Nodilo's reconstructions are to be interpretatively rejected. Namely, I can refer here to Clifford Geertz's observation of the two features of anthropological study of religion after the Second World War. He observed how, after 1945, there was no significant theoretical progress and how the anthropological study of religion was still living on the conceptual capital of its predecessors. Secondly, all the terms, which are used in the anthropological study of religion, stemmed from a very narrowly defined intellectual tradition – namely, Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, Freud or Malinowski (Geertz 1998: 118). This diagnosis can also be applied to today's interpretation of the old faith, which is further demonstrated by the interpretative return of Katičić to Nodilo's study. And without interpretative fear...

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PREGLED SODOBNEGA RAZISKOVANJA HRVAŠKE MITOLOGIJE V RAZMERJU Z NATKOM NODILOM

V preglednem članku se avtorica osredinja na študijo Natka Nodila Religija (stara vjera) Srba i Hrvata, na glavnoj osnovi pjesama, priča i govora narodnoga (Religija (stara vera) Srbov in Hrvatov na podlagi ljudskih pesmi, pripovedi in pripovedovanja, 1885–1890)), ki velja za prvo rekonstrukcijo hrvaške mitologije. Vse sodobne raziskave hrvaške mitologije ali starega verovanja namreč delno izhajajo iz te rekonstrukcije, zato avtorica posveča drugi del članka prav težavam Nodila kot zgodovinarja, ki se ukvarja s tem, kako so mitofobi v 19. stoletju rekonstruirali južnoslovansko staro verovanje.

Poleg Nodilove polemike s tujimi mitologi, slavistom Louisom Légerom in jezikoslovcem Francem Miklošičem, ki so zanikali slovansko mitologijo, obravnava s tem tudi temeljna Nodilova etnosa, kakor se kaže v mitologiji. Prav tako tematizira podobnosti in razločke med Nodilovo rekonstrukcijo in sodobnimi raziskavami Radoslava Katičiča in Vitomira Belaja. V nasprotju z alegorično interpretacijo ženskih in junaških pesmi in bajeslovnih pripovedi, ki jih ima Nodilo za prvi vir preučevanja mita in jih nato preučuje v okvirih Müllerjeve mitologije narave (naturizem) – teorije mita kot “bolezni jezika”, Belaj in Katičič v rekonstrukciji bajeslovne podlage hrvaških ljudskih šeg in verovanj izhajata iz novoletnih in jurjevskih obhodnih obrednih pesmi, ki napovedujejo sveto svatbo, ki poteka na poletni kresni dan. V primerjavi z Nodilom, ki rekonstruira incestno hierogamijo vrhovnega božanskega binomija dvojčkov (Vid–VidalŽiva), se Katičič–Belajeva rekonstrukcija osredinja na incestno hierogamijo (incest iz neznanja) dvojčkovih potomcev (Juraj–Mara) vrhovnega božanskega dvojstva. In medtem ko se Katičič–Belajeva rekonstrukcija opira na Peruna (po Kijejskem letopisu) kot vrhovnega staroslovanskega boga ali božanstva, se Nodilo sklicuje na Helmoldovo Kroniko Slovanov, ki za deus deorum baltskih-polabskih Slovanov določa arkonskega Svantevida (Svantevidov hram v Arkoni na Rujani – sedANJI baltski otok Rügen).

Dr. Suzana Marjanić, research advisor, Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies, Šubićeva 42, HR-1000 Zagreb, Croatia, suzana@ief.hr