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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.¹ *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.²

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 Kropf (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 rose³. 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.⁴ 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.⁵ 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.⁶ 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.⁷ 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.⁸

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 29th 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 3rd 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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