

# REAL AND VIRTUAL SPACES OF REVISITING THE QUESTION “WHAT TO DO WITH FOLKLORE?”

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*In 1975, the question “What to do with folklore?” very clearly expressed the position of Slovenian folklore studies of the time. It was aimed at society, which the experts deemed indifferent towards tradition. A new examination primarily asks whether today this question can be addressed to the same audience and ask the same thing. Is it once more directed at society, or does it perhaps demand self-reflection by scholars, who, without extensive theoretical consideration, often find it difficult to justify their research topic and presence today?*

Keywords: *folklore studies, folk, understanding of folklore, context, folklorism.*

*Leta 1975 je vprašanje Kam bi s to folkloro? zelo jasno izrazilo stališča tedanje slovenske folkloristike. Namenjeno je bilo družbi, po presoji stroke brezbržni do izročila. Vnovično soočenje z njim pa je predvsem dilema, ali ima lahko danes to vprašanje istega naslovnika in enako vsebino. Ali je spet namenjeno družbi ali pa morda zahteva samorefleksijo stroke, ki brez širokega teoretskega premisleka marsikdaj težko opraviči predmet svojega raziskovanja in svojo navzočnost v sodobnosti?*

Ključne besede: *folkloristika, ljudskost, razumevanje folklore, kontekst, folklorizem.*

As a secondary-school student, I was tidying up our home library and found a tiny book entitled *Kam bi s to folkloro?* (What to Do with Folklore?). Ever since, this book has stayed in my mind, not only because its format prevented me from finding an appropriate spot on the shelf for it, but also because I could find no good grounds for the question posed by the author.

This was not a question pertaining to my generation, and therefore I did not feel addressed by it. Indeed, it was asking about something that surrounded us, something that had its place in our world, yet something that we did not elevate above our creative world. We also had our own songs and our own dreams. We felt restricted and song was our unlimited virtual space, the space of our inner freedom—the freedom that was also illustrated by jeans from Trieste, American movies, and the huge billboards beyond the Karavanke Mountains.

Leafing through the tiny book again, prompted by preparations for a symposium in Ljubljana in 2009, opened up new perspectives. This was not because it had not been necessary to go buy jeans in Trieste for a long time, nor it was because, as a former communist country in transition, Slovenia received an abundance of cultural images from the West. The more I sought to understand the contents of the book when re-reading it, the less clear it was to me how to interpret both the text and the title today.

In 1975, Zmaga Kumer wrote the program guide *What to Do with Folklore?* to raise a question considered of essential importance in folklore studies at the time. It was her belief that the understanding of folklore had changed completely from the true meaning of this word, or the meaning defined in 1846 by William John Thoms (Kumer 1975: 6, Thoms 2010 [1846]: 25). Having been a field researcher for many years and the author of a number of seminal works in Slovenian folklore studies, she felt partly responsible for not letting this tradition fade into oblivion. Her book raised the question that was central to the folklore studies of the time: how to stop or at least stem the process of forgetting tradition and how to help shape the understanding of folklore.

Zmaga Kumer thus sought to provide this view with the right interpretation, to confer deviations from tradition with instructions for how to incorporate them into contemporary life. She supported the issue with the most common uses of the term as encountered among people, also listing expletives as well as “what was sometimes labeled ‘cultural assets’ and the kitsch sold together with souvenirs.” Having listed diverse meanings, she then asked with a clearly perceivable distance: “And what really is folklore?” (Kumer 1975: 5).

The 2009 international research symposium in Ljubljana sought to answer this question, using this very issue as the point of departure for considerations and as its title: “What to Do with Folklore?” At this conference commemorating Zmaga Kumer, several researchers from Slovenia and abroad presented their differing views on the issue of folklore and the role of folklore studies. The emphases in their observations diverged to various extents from folklore studies that based its existence on social indifference towards tradition and, as an advocate of cultural activism, viewed its mission in conveying to society the image of proper folk culture, together with guidelines for evaluating and preserving what defines a nation.

Part of these considerations, featured in this issue of the journal *Traditiones*, provides a well-thought-out combination of these views. Their line of thought is stretched between problematizing the central interest of folklore studies and the issue of perspectives on contemporary society—between what we see and what we should see. Imposing on us in this regard is the dilemma of what is real and what is virtual. This relates not only to what was highlighted at the symposium as a new thematic field that contemporary folklore studies should extend to; that is to say, highlighting the virtual exceeds the manifestation that is integrated into our awareness and evaluation through the Internet. The question is both wider and deeper, and undoubtedly worth considering.

This challenge, together with the issue of positioning between images from the living environment, the written word, and the Internet, is what marks this combination of papers. It is this issue that Sigrid Rieuwerts uses to begin her discussion of the history of folklore research. She focuses her question on the area that was long the most

prominent within folklore studies: the study of ballads. To the thought “What to do with folklore?” she adds: “What to do . . . with ballads?” This does not refer to ballads themselves, but to what positions them into life, for the social context, and thus also to unveiling individual personal attitudes towards tradition. She emphasizes the issue of social context by reanalyzing the poetry repertoire of Mrs. Brown of Falkland; that is, from when interest in song tradition was first emerging. She substantiates this new discussion of her work by establishing that, alongside the song transcriptions, there is nothing to directly inform us of the social or cultural context of these ballads. She thus concludes her discussion by saying that “The story behind the story is still to be revealed.”

The issue raised here is wider and, considering the professional self-sufficiency that prevails too often, it urgently demands greater consideration. That is, the consideration that was launched in Slovenia by a dialogue between folklore studies and ethnology, and which raised a new question two years after Zmaga Kumer’s publication as a response from the viewpoint of ethnology: “Is the current Slovenian ethnology equal to anti-folklore studies?” As an indirect response, it drew attention to the urgency to socially contextualize the phenomena explored by folklore studies, the controversial understanding of “folk”, and indirectly also to the urgency of studying the context (Kremenšek 1977/78) as understood by ethnology.

Despite the links between Slovenian folklore studies and folklore studies in Croatia, which at the time was influenced by American contextual theory and had thus distanced itself from the traditional conception and had been problematizing the boundaries between folklore studies and ethnology (Lozica 1979), folklore studies in Slovenia was mainly interested in tradition as such. Definitions of folklore were still far from the view that saw it as a communication event within context, even though Croatian folklore studies preserved the interest in the tradition and the historical aspect of folklore phenomena (Marošević 2010: 21).

As a result, the need to study the context is today all the more present in Slovenian folklore studies (cf. Pisk 2008). The issue of the absent context, or of the lack of interest in it, is highlighted in this issue by Miha Kozorog in his article “Nekaj pripomb za več družbenega konteksta v slovenski folkloristiki” (Some Comments on Including More Social Context in Slovenian Folklore Studies). He draws attention to the urgency of studying the context by discussing two examples: the myth of salamander-laced schnapps and street singing in Tolmin. He establishes that, despite having accepted the concept of the “folklore event,” folklore studies still has not rid itself of the focus on form. His critical consideration focuses on one of the basic premises of folklore studies: the rule of variation. He states that folklore studies, which is strongly informed by interpretations in discrete social contexts, should also incorporate unique performances. This would also emphasize the common circumstances that enable or produce folklore events.

The need to incorporate the context is therefore present today either as renewed discovery of stories from past research or as an urgent adjustment of contemporary research. With the new perspective, the past also needs to be discovered anew, alongside the present. However, observations of certain past studies that failed to pay attention to the context, including those performed by Zmaga Kumer, have identified a certain respect for the context or attention towards the bearers themselves, such as the social position and singing roles of individual singers (cf. Kumer 1986).

However, the basic goal of the conceptual world to which the generation of Zmaga Kumer belonged was the responsibility to capture what is total and representative. Researchers sought to capture the overall culture of a nation. Not only did they struggle for it, they believed in it. Maybe even more so in songs than in other cultural expressions. Within this mental framework, one might sense the consequence of the genesis of interest in folksong: a folk song was “cultural objectivization that is produced by the people or one of the people. In it, the way of thinking of the people as a whole is reflected. In this case, a folk singer is a singer for all the people, and a folk song becomes the common good of all the people because it is sung with the folk spirit” (Fikfak 2008: 30).

On this basis, this generation labored meticulously and responsibly to produce seminal works in folklore studies that contemporary research is based on. Furthermore, this generation improved the work of their predecessors and performed fieldwork enthusiastically to contribute to the archive. They believed in the image of the nation rather than the diversity of society, which is why they supported the position that “our song tradition is nevertheless uniform enough to integrate Slovenians into one nation, that it is Slovenian in general, and that it could not be claimed that the songs feature any special features pertaining only to the people of individual regions, as people might think” (Kumer 2002: 12).

Based on this belief, this generation performed exemplary work within their mental horizons. They are given respectful credit accordingly, even after the theories of socialization and the awareness of the social construction of the reality (Berger and Luckmann 1988 [1967]) have enabled us to understand reality in a different way. At the same time, being aware of the interpretative element in seeking meanings, the work of folklore specialists has also been distancing itself from the feeling of omniscience: “The sense we make is ‘ours’, and may or may not coincide with that intended by those whose behaviour it was” (Cohen 1995: 20).

With these findings, the omniscient position of the researcher faded, and the conflicting nature of being aware of this might currently be most strongly reflected in folklorism. It is the question of folklorism that opens up major divergences from previous views because traditional folklore studies used to label this field extremely negatively: “Various tourism events and village parties of all kinds, if only they show the slightest traces of customs or dances, are labeled folklore, and even the term ‘folk-

lore apparel’ has appeared to describe what was once called the ‘national costume’” (Kumer 1975: 5).

Just as the understanding of folklore has been distancing itself from former concepts, so has the interpretation of its repeated manifestations or interpretations triggered new understandings, and sometimes complete miscomprehension of the aspirations of previous generations. Today, views on these issues are being problematized by the youngest generation of researchers, who have also contributed three articles to this issue.

A comprehensive theoretical confrontation with former perspectives is provided in the contribution by Saša Poljak Istenič. She discusses the attitude toward folklorism in Slovenia and beyond and presents it using the case of the annual Peasant Wedding. She provides a critical assessment of the attitudes of ethnologists participating in these processes, and seeks to elucidate the phenomenon from the actors’ perspective. A similar topic is discussed in the contribution by Tuomas Hovi on Dracula tourism in Romania. He tackles the question by defining and applying the concept of authenticity and stereotypes. He examines how tourism, which some see as a threat to heritage, can also promote that very same heritage. The role of tradition and folklorization is also featured in the contribution by Irene Egger, who explored the Almdudler dance in Vienna. Based on examining the dance in traditional costumes, she notices the mixture of tradition and its contemporary interpretations, and in music the mixture with modern genres as well. This is because people do not wish to distinguish between traditional forms and forms related to tradition, an example being pop-folk music.

In a different way, folklorization is also discussed by two contributions focusing on the role of musicians in the continuation or co-creation of music tradition. In this respect, Ana Hofman explores Yugoslav Partisan songs and the formation of the canon of Yugoslav folklore, and Pekka Suutari examines the role of songwriters in the Russian Republic of Karelia. The first article discusses the question of how official discourses influenced the formation of Yugoslav Partisan folklore after the Second World War, and the second study deals with the representation of folk elements in the music of two Karelian authors, trying to establish how singing in Karelian influences identification.

In the European environment, the issue of identification and what is national is among the key creators of the attitude towards tradition (cf. Bohlman 2004). With regard to this, interesting findings are provided by the contribution on folklore and ethno-nationalism in Mexican-American literary production. María Herrera-Sobek traces the formation of Chicanos’ identity and determines that folklore is an integral and necessary part of political processes. Thematically related to this issue is the contribution by Iranian authors Mohammad and Mohsen Hanif, exploring the importance of Safavid tales in the construction of Iranian national identity.

The findings on how important heritage is in forming identity reflects the stories of European nations that sought their special identity in folklore for political reasons.

At the same time, one can still sense the continuation of these concepts that, while looking for the distinctive features of a nation, often neglect individual regional, social, and generational differences. Similarly overlooked are ethnic mixes, which in the research on song tradition is largely limited to the similarity of ballad motifs.

This story remains part of our professional daily routine. This is why the demands to include research with a contextual emphasis with contemporary contents have been insufficiently met. It is because folklore studies has been using the materialized image of tradition as the basis for national identification, which directed its focus on form. The dialogue among researchers was also mostly carried out at this level. By analyzing the international contacts of the Latvian researcher Anna Bērzkalne, Rita Treija draws attention to this dialogue. She thus illustrates the creation of a network of professional collaboration, which has directed the work of individual researchers to a great extent. The basis for such contacts was the formation of folklore studies archives, which also enables the renewed use and revival of the materials collected.

A way to ensure such renewed use, although subject to criteria other than folklorism, is the revival of folklore images in artistic creativity. Among the contributions here, the article by Merja Leppälahti explores such a case: while examining two works of Finnish fantasy literature, she establishes that numerous folklore creatures start living their new lives in fiction. In her research she relies on Lauri Honko and his interpretation of folklore as a process. According to his interpretation, folklore has two lives: in its first life it lives in its original environment, whereas its second life is taken from the archive for new uses.

It is this view that helps us understand the perspective on folklorism and the interpretations that are introduced into the understanding of folklore by its agents: anyone that recognizes identity in contemporary considerations of tradition and in its combinations of various times, images, and genres.

This view also deviates from the understanding of “folk” that had no problem identifying both the national as well as traditional and social dimensions of “folk”. Within this view, “folk” is also observed in its contemporary form, in diverse interpretations of culture that also provide the space to seek personal, social, political, national, and other identities. It deviates from the kind of folklore studies that is convinced its beliefs are infallible, and approaches the currents in folklore studies that questions its role, analyzes its thoughts, and in critical communication among researchers primarily addresses the question of “What to do with folklore” to itself.

The viewpoint supporting this consideration was at least partly expressed at the symposium that this issue of *Traditiones* relates to. With all due respect to the work and role of Zmaga Kumer, which was specially highlighted at the symposium, it was also stressed that today folklore studies must reexamine its perspective and also start studying emerging forms. The demand was expressed directly that, apart from traditional music, popular music should also be studied.

It is the contributions exploring how views on the traditional are being pervaded by modern elements that very informatively justify the demand to shift views. The identity that traditional folklore studies primarily saw in distinguishing national elements is today seen by people in the combination of everything shaping them. This includes the support of the Internet, which is becoming an increasingly self-evident part of our reality as a virtual world.

Are the real spaces of folklore studies therefore still the same as they were at the time when folklore studies developed as a discipline? Or is the world of authentic “folk”, as we were used to seeing it, becoming increasingly virtual, detached from reality, and has a combination of the real and virtual world become our present reality that demands thorough attention from the researcher? Just like the stage performances of “authentic” tradition in the form of music folklorism have become an important part of our present reality. This is not only due to the fact that the space between scholarly reconstruction and folk reproduction has increasingly been becoming the domesticated setting of modern folklore, but also due to the broad understanding of the “folk” that has never been quite fully defined, as well as the understanding of authenticity and the increasingly relevant assertion of copyright.

When Zmaga Kumer wrote “But profession is one thing, and everyday use another” (1975: 6) in line with the principles of Slovenian folklore studies of her time, the question of “What to do with folklore” appeared to be a natural consequence of the folklore scholar’s view of the world. Contextual folklore studies, or folklore studies that also seeks to look at the vitality of tradition from the viewpoint of its actors, will see the question in a different light. “From the researcher’s defining questions and objective answers, more or less associated with the facts of culture, the core of disciplinary transformations has shifted to concrete life practices and the performative aspect. Their variety and temporariness do not favor extensive generalizations. At the turn of the century, research practices and thus caught in a series of options between the discourse of the omniscient researcher and a polyphony that also takes into account other levels and actors.” (Slavec Gradišnik 2008: 16–17)

Therefore the question of “What to do with folklore” is not the echo of an admonition that was once insufficiently considered, nor is it a list of solutions to bring the “original real” folklore back to our everyday lives. Instead, it is a question posed to ourselves. It is the problem of how to apply the responsibility outlined by folklore studies to understand the world around us—the world that has persisted, the world that has been changing, and the world that has been emerging.

In the lens of an observer, attention to context must capture all recognizable forms. In this way the concern of losing the most precious songs, which has been present in folklore studies since its very beginnings, gets a different indication. The role of the archivist that keeps the intellectual values of yesteryear has been expanding to include the role of the observer and the interpreter that understands the views on these forms as an

important part of constructing folkloristic thought. This attitude is different from what it used to be like in Kumer's time. "Some people believe that the folk song is done for, that the expression of our time lies in pop songs, and folk-pop melodies for the simple folk" (Kumer 1975: 25). These thoughts also represent a challenge to the contemporary character of the discipline.

This challenge is a story that emerges again and again—not only one we observe, but also one we experience. It is a story in which the emic enters the etic, either intentionally or subconsciously—and not only today, but in all the times that help shape us, including the year 1975. That year, which was also when the book *What to Do with Folklore?* was published, the former Yugoslavia was represented at the Eurovision Song Contest in Stockholm by the Slovenian band *Pepel in kri* (Ashes and Blood) with the song "Dan ljubezni" (A Day of Love). Even before it was performed at Eurovision, the song became a hit. Although critics predicted that it would place high, it only reached thirteenth place (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PH89OtPhEk0>). After the show, not only the band *Pepel in kri*, which performed the song, returned from Stockholm; with it, all the Slovenians also returned home disappointed despite not having been there—everybody that believed our song would be heard in Europe and that we would be heard alongside it. (cf. Bohlman 2000: 286–293) Disappointed with the result, we felt connected, and we also identified with the song.

The results faded away, but the song remained. It has been passed on to younger generations and has remained present among all, but especially among those that believed in the "most beautiful day," as celebrated in the song. It marks many gatherings and as a "golden oldie" it denotes modern folk character. To the generations that experienced its journey to Stockholm, it represents a memory of communist times, when a song was the only thing that could travel freely. When we were discussing this at home, my youngest daughter, who has just become a teenager, interrupted the conversation saying: "Please, don't keep going on about that song. It's old and weird, and besides, we've already heard it a hundred times!"

The real and virtual spaces of folklore studies require new consideration.

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## REALNI IN VIRTUALNI PROSTORI PREMISLEKA O VPRAŠANJU »KAM BI S TO FOLKLORO?«

*Prispevek na podlagi osebnih izkušenj in premisleka o podobi folkloristike na Slovenskem odpira problem razumevanja vprašanja »Kam bi s to folkloro?« v današnjem času. Vprašanja postavlja med dva dogodka, med prvo srečanje s knjižico s tem naslovom, ki jo je leta 1975 izdala Zmaga Kumer, in vnovično branje leta 2009, ki ga je spodbudila priprava simpozija z istim naslovom.*

*Zmaga Kumer je leta 1975 s programsko knjižico Kam bi s to folkloro? odprla vprašanje, ki se je tedanji folkloristici zdelo središčnega pomena: po njenem prepričanju se je razumevanje folklore povsem oddaljilo od pravega pomena te besede. Kot dolgoletna raziskovalka na terenu in avtorica številnih temeljnih del slovenske folkloristike se je čutila soodgovorno za to, da tega izročila ne prepusti pozabi. S knjižico je odprla vprašanje, ki se je tedanji folkloristici zdelo najpomembnejše: kako zaustaviti ali vsaj zaježiti proces pozabljanja izročila in kako sooblikovati razumevanje folklore. Pogledu, kakršnega je zaznala v javnosti, je Zmaga Kumer zato želela dodati pravilno interpretacijo, odklonom od izročila napotke za njegovo vključevanje v sodobno življenje: ob nizanju različnih pomenov je skušala razložiti, kaj je folklor v resnici.*

*S tem vprašanjem se je leta 2009 spoprijel mednarodni znanstveni simpozij v Ljubljani, ki si je za izhodišče svojega razmišljanja in za svoj naslov izbral prav dilemo »Kam bi s to folkloro?« / »What to Do with Folklore?« Na znanstvenem srečanju, posvečenemu spominu dr. Zmage Kumer, so svoje poglede na vprašanja folklorne in vloge folkloristike strnili različno misleči domači in tuji raziskovalci. Poudarki njihovih opazanj so se v različni meri odmikali od tiste folkloristike, ki je svoj obstoj utemeljevala z družbeno brezbriznostjo do izročila in kot zagovornica kulturnega aktivizma svoje poslanstvo videla v tem, da družbi posreduje podobo »prave« ljudske kulture, hkrati z napotki za vrednotenje in ohranjanje tega, kar nas opredeljuje kot narod.*

*Del razmišljanj, nanizan v tem zvezku Traditiones, je premišljen preplet teh pogledov. Njihova os je vpeta med problematizacijo težišča zanimanja folkloristike in vprašanja pogledov na sodobno družbo. Med to, kar vidimo, in to, kar bi morali videti. Ob tem se vsiljuje dilema, kaj je pri tem realno in kaj virtualno. Ne samo tista, ki je bila na simpoziju poudarjena kot eno od novih tematskih področij, kamor mora seči sodobna folkloristika: izpostavljanje virtualnega namreč presega pojavnost, ki se prek spleta vpleta v našo zavest in vrednotenje. Vprašanje je širše in globlje, vsekakor pa je vredno premisleka.*

*To vprašanje hkrati z dilemo umeščanja med podobe iz življenjskega okolja, pisano besedo in splet zaznamuje tudi ta preplet prispevkov. V ospredju je bilo vprašanje družbenega konteksta: to je vidno bodisi kot vnovično soočanje s preteklim zanimanjem za pesemsko izročilo, kakor je v svojem prispevku nakazala Sigrid Rieuwerts, bodisi kot sodobna zahteva vede po obravnavah konteksta, kot je na izbranem primeru pokazal Miha Kozorog. To hkrati nakazuje dvoje pogledov, ki bi jim danes morali slediti. Vprašanje, ki se odpira ob tem, je širše in ob večkrat preglasni samozadostnosti vede nujno zahteva globlji premislek. Tistega, ki ga je na Slovenskem začel dialog med folkloristiko in etnologijo in opozoril na nujnost družbenega umeščanja pojavov, ki se jim posveča folkloristika, na spornost razumevanja ljudskosti, posredno pa tudi na neogibnost preučevanja konteksta.*

*Miselni svet, ki mu je z vso odgovornostjo pripadala tudi generacija Zmage Kumer, je kot temeljni cilj razumel zajetje totalnega, reprezentančnega. Raziskovalci so si prizadevali, da bi posredovali podobe celotne kulture naroda. Niso si le prizadevali zanjo: vanjo so verjeli. Morda v pesmih še bolj kot v drugih kulturnih fenomenih. Na tej podlagi je ta generacija z vso vestnostjo in odgovornostjo ustvarila temeljna folkloristična dela, na katera se opirajo iskanja mlajših kolegov. Nadgrajevala je delo svojih predhodnikov in s terenskim delom zavzeto bogatila arhiv. Verjela je v podobo naroda, zagovarjala enovitost izročila in njegovo drugačnost od izročila drugih narodov in v tem prepričanju opravila monumentalno delo. To ji s spoštovanjem priznavamo tudi potem, ko je z novimi spoznanji o družbi in družbeni konstituiranosti znanja bledeel vsevedni položaj raziskovalca.*

*Največ razhajanj s preteklimi pogledi odpira vprašanje folklorizma, saj je to področje tradicionalna folkloristika označevala izrazito negativno. Poglede na to danes problematizira najmlajša generacija raziskovalcev, ki je s tremi prispevki, z obravnavo Kmečke ohceti Saše Poljak Istenič, s prispevkom Tuomasa Hovija o drakulskem turizmu v Romuniji in s prika-*

zom Almdudlerjevega plesa na Dunaju Irene Egger navzoča tudi v pričujočem zborniku. Te presoje dopolnjujeta prispevka, ki se ukvarjata z vlogo glasbenikov pri nadaljevanju ali soustvarjanju glasbene tradicije: Ana Hofman analizira oblikovanje podobe partizanske folklore po drugi svetovni vojni, Pekka Suutari pa reprezentacijo narodnega v glasbi dveh karelskih avtorjev.

Vprašanje identifikacije in nacionalnega je v evropskem prostoru eno od osrednjih oblikovalcev odnosa do izročila. V pričujočem zvezku o tem izrisujejo zanimiva opažanja Maria Herrera Sobek s prispevkom o folklori in etno-nacionalizmu v mehiško-ameriški literarni produkciji ter Mohammad in Mohsen Hanif, ki predstavljata pomen safavidskih pripovedi pri graditvi iranske nacionalne identitete. V ugotovitvah, kako pomembno je izročilo za oblikovanje identitete, prepoznamo zgodbe evropskih narodov, ki so v folklori iskali svojo drugačnost iz političnih razlogov. Hkrati še vedno občutimo nadaljevanje teh konceptov, ki v iskanju narodne prepoznavnosti pogosto spregledujejo individualne, regionalne, socialne in generacijske razlike. Podobno spregledujejo tudi nacionalna prepletanja, ki se v obravnavi pesemskega izročila v veliki meri omejujejo le na sorodnosti baladnih motivov.

Ta zgodba ostaja del našega strokovnega usakdanjika. Prav zato so zahteve po vključevanju kontekstualno poudarjenih raziskav s sodobno vsebino premalo slišane. Folkloristika je namreč identifikacijo narodov opirala na opredmeteno podobo izročila, kar je usmerjalo njeno raziskovalno osredinost na oblike. Na tej ravni je v veliki meri potekal tudi dialog med posamičnimi raziskovalci. Na ta dialog z analizo mednarodnih stikov latvijske raziskovalke Anne Bērzkalne opozarja tudi Rita Treija, na oživiljanje folklornih podob v umetniški ustvarjalnosti pa ob obravnavi dveh finskih fantazijskih literarnih delih Merja Leppälähti. Prispevki torej ponujajo različne poglede na to, kako z odgovornostjo, ki jo je izrisala folkloristika, in z zavedanjem nikoli povsem definirane ljudskosti razumeti svet okoli nas. Tistega, ki vztraja, tistega, ki se spreminja, in tistega, ki nastaja – kot na videz tuji in preveč popularni ali pa povsem udomačeni prostor sodobne folklore.

Večina teh pogledov pa nas ločuje od tistega razumevanja ljudskosti, ki je brez težav prepoznavalo tako nacionalno kot tradicionalno in socialno razsežnost ljudskega. V obzorje ljudskosti so zajeta tudi njena sodobna pojavnost in različna razumevanja kulture, ki prav tako ponujajo prostor za iskanje osebne, družbene, politične, narodne ali katere druge identitete. Odmika se od folkloristike, ki je prepričana o nezmotljivosti svojih nazorov, in se bliža folkloristiki, ki se sprašuje o svoji vlogi, pretresa svoja razmišljanja in v kritični komunikaciji med raziskovalci vprašanje »Kam bi s to folkloro?« postavlja predusem sebi.

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