

MEMOIRS FROM THE PAST PEREGRINATIONS TO THE "SLAVIC SOUTH"

Ethnologist' comments on a text from the beginning of the century

CZESLAW ROBOTYCKI

Unwersytet Jagiellonski
Katedra Einografii Slowian
Gródzka 52
P - 31 - 044 Kraków

UDK 39:910

Izvorni znanstveni rad
Original scientific paper
Primljeno: 01. 08. 1988.

The paper deals with the mythical organisation of culture as an element of ethnological pattern applied on a travel-record. The biography of Jan Magiera (1876 - 1958), a Polish philosopher, folklorist, polonist and admirer of the South Slavic culture, is presented here, and a passage where Zgreb, Dubrovnik and Dalmatia are also mentioned. The author establishes the main stereotypes which guided the writer of travels to experience the south Slavic cultural circle almost as his own Gallician (Krakow, Lavov).

1. Facts

Jan Magiera (1876-1958), Doctor of Philosophy, a folklorist and a teacher of the Polish language at Cracow grammar-schools, in 1903-1906 made several trips to the area inhabited by the southern Slavs. Those journeys had been carefully planned. Interested in Slavic problems since his studies, Magiera concentrated his research and popularization work on them. He knew the southern Slavic languages, the history of the area, and believed in unity and cultural relations among the Slavic countries - mainly the western and southern ones. As a publicist he propagated the idea of united Slavic South. His memoirs from past peregrinations: "In the Slavic South. Relations and impressions." were published in 1911. The book, illustrated by Rudolf Valic and Dragomir Renavic, Croatian artists, was published by the Association of Friends of Southern Slavs.¹ In his "relations and impressions" the author often uses several repeated patterns, easily discernible in spite of the expressive language based on the Polish modernism.

One of those patterns is comparing the objects and landscape seen during the journey with the Polish cultural scenery of the Austrian Galicia of that time, especially in

1. J. Magiera, In the Slavic South, Relations and Impressions, Cracow 1911, p. 63

Cracow and Lvov. The following examples present what the author saw in Croatian Zagreb in 1906:

"... We stopped at the Zagrebian railway station. "Kolodvor" is beautiful and reminds me, in miniature, of the new railway station of Lvov..."²

"... Academic Square. Its center is occupied by the southern Slavic Academy of Sciences founded in 1860... thanks to Strossmayer, patron and protector of Croatian science. A Pole visiting Zagreb could not miss sanctuary of radiating altars of Croatian science... There are valuable monuments and souvenirs of the past, mummies, Roman coins excavated in the Slavonic area, and also Etruscan inscriptions and stone monuments from the remotest times... and yet, a Pole would turn his eyes upwards to the floor occupied by the magnificent Strossmayer Gallery. An artist, connoisseur of Arts-would be attracted by paintings of Italian and Dutch masters... where quite a lot of space is filled with Polish masterpieces. Siemiradzki in the first place³ ... somewhere else a picture by Matejko (Killing of the king Przemyslaw)⁴ and by Kotarbinski (Flight to Egipt)⁵. Just as in Cracow National Museum..."

"... and yet as if we were in some other, different museum... There the heads of slender and white monuments hidden under the bushes, only too vividly remind one of Cracow Jordan Park⁶ ... The highest monuments of Zrini, the famous defender of Sziget against the Turks in 1566... the square named Zrinjevac after the hero..."

"... our guides and companions found a resting place for us, a corner we felt ... as on an excursion in Zakopane, somewhere under Giewont. The Zagrebian Tuszkanac is a really nice spot.

A deep canyon like the ravine among Skaly Panienskie near Bielany..."⁷

" the red church of St. Mark holds the same important position and meaning as St. Mary's church in Cracow.⁸ The old shrine had been founded by Bela IV..."

"... as the A-B⁹ line for Cracowers in Sunday afternoon in spring, the Ilica is the same for the people of Zagreb every evening. The street, perhaps the longest in Zagreb is quite

2. Lvov - a Polish town, at the time Magiera wrote his memoirs the capital of the Austrian province: Galicia and Lodomeria. The province was created in 1772 after Austria had seized a part of the Polish Kingdom. It disappeared from the European map in 1918.

3. Henryk Siemiradzki (1843 - 1902) a Polish painter, representative of the formalism, devoted to ancient motives.

4. Jan Matejko (1838 - 1893) a Polish painter, the most distinguished representative of historical painting. Painted mainly monumental compositions based on facts from the Polish history.

5. Wilhelm Kotarbinski, (1842 - 1921) a Polish painter, author of several ancient and biblical scenes.

6. Henryk Jordan (1842 - 1907), a doctor and initiator of the atheletic education of the young. In 1888 - 9 he founded in Cracow, from his own resources, an English park with several fields for the young to play on. There was, in its central part, a flower-bed - labyrinth round shaped, surrounded by 44 pedestals with busts of famous Poles. It was to be a place for patriotic lectures to the young.

7. Skaly Panienske (maiden Rocks) - a part of Wolski Woods - nearby Cracow - a favourite excursion place in spring and summer.

8. Gothic church in the centre of Cracow (Square) dedicated to St. Mary. The basilica, one of the most famous in Cracow. Magnificent Gothic (altar) and baroque interior.

9. The A - B Line - a side of Cracow Square. Its northern frontage is a place of Sunday walks of the Cracowers. There were renowned pastry shops and cafes, there.

wide as well..."

"... The University of Zagreb, rather poor and shabby, recalling the Polish University in Lvov...¹⁰ was founded in 1860 under the auspices of bishop Strossmayer..."

"... Standing in Theatre Square, I dreamed I was in Lvov - the Lion's City, and not there in the South. "Narodno kazalište" of Zagreb is only a bit smaller than the Lvov Theatre and less decorated, but its general outlook and shape reflects the shrine of the Polish Melpomene..."¹¹

In Dubrovnik, from where the blue Adriatic waters of the stormy Slavic ocean can be seen, the following associations come to the author's mind when standing in front of St. Blazey's church:

"... and here, also clouds of pigeons sit on the dome of the shrine... and I think not only of Venice but also of the inhabitants of St. Mary's spire..."

At the same time the author thinks about the places he visits according to another pattern created by facts and events of the Croatian past interwoven together with the Hungarian history. Coming back again to Zagreb:

"... here Croatian and Magyar troops were facing each other on a war path eight centuries ago. The armies were waiting... for a sound to charge. But the chiefs concluded treaties... The peace was signed. The armies retired singing joyfully... It happened in Anno Domini 1202..." (that surely concerns the >Croatian and Hungarian league signed after the 2nd campaign of Koloman in 1102)...

"... Above the Ban square in the upper part of the town, called the capitol... lofty and proud spires of St. Stephan cathedral shoot into sky... when in 1468 the Turks crossed Sava, the walls of the capitol sheltered the citizens of Zagreb..." (the author refers to one of the Hungarian and Turkish wars of 1468, 1483, 1491, 1493).

"... The Shrine of Zagreb has been proud of its long life... there are everywhere monuments of the past centuries, since XII century when Andrew II had the Sanctuary of God consecrated in 1207, going to Palestine together with the crusaders..."

"... St. Mark square is also of historical importance. Here judgements were passed and sentences carried out... here was Matija Gubec, the leader of peasants' rising, sentenced to death in 1573... An image of condemned can be seen on one of the houses..."

In Dubrovnik, standing in front of the monument of Gundulic, the author remembers:ž

"... the said Gundulic praises in Osman's songs the Turkish and Polish wars of 1621, when the Polish army gained the famous victory, and the southern poet saw the Počish king Vladislaus IV leader of a crusade against the Turks..."

A special kind of impression came to the author's mind contemplating the landscape. It was a mark of the past when, for example, Magiera wrote "... Nearly every stone in St. Mark square could provide a page to the book of judgements often bloody and mysterious..."

It is an urban paysage. A real pressure of lyrical images is forced onto the author at the coast of the "Slavic ocean" - the Adriatic - during his walks in Dubrovnik and trips to the nearby island of Lokrum. Apart from a great number of historic information, the

10. The university in Lvov was opened in 1783 in the place of the former Academy founded by the Polish King Jan Casimir

11. The new theatre in Lvov was built in 1899 in the styles of historical eclecticism.

reader may yield to the atmosphere:

"... The mighty high seas angrily broke a door in the stony hill and left a rocky arc above the cave as natural bridge across the abyss of 'Mare Morte' ... It's a spot where you can dream about the human life and contemplate the intricacies of the universe and soul... Lokrum could be called the paradise..." "Looking far ahead towards the sea, I stare where the infinity flickers... waves of luminous water stretch their white necks as swans, or disappear, like ostrich heads, under the water-level..." "...And the water tempts, invites and whispers: come and I'd be your lover. I looked into the eyes of the water and embraced in reveries dreamed of Lorelay listening to the amorous whisper of laughing wave... Then a whistle of a steamer bursts the bubbles of the reverie..."

"... The sea swells and agitates her angry waters... the waves rush at the coast, grasp the rocks trying to hit us with a stone, like the Oedypian Cyclope, but for nothing... a giant body rolled powerless down to the bottom of the abyss. And we, the victors, sail on proudly conquering the ocean. Tomorrow in Split!..."

The chosen fragments by Jan Magiera come from one of his journeys to the Croatian and Dalmatian coast. During his other peregrinations the author was also in Slavonia, Bosnia, Serbia and Bulgaria. The general tone of his memoirs doesn't change. They are kept in the high register, filled with ideas of the Slavic unity. All the people he meets are "Slav Brothers". He points out the frankness and friendship that different Slavic groups show towards each other. He looks for Polish traces everywhere and overwhelms the reader with information on heroic periods of the Slavic history. Contemporary events (for example: the congress of writers and journalists in Sofia - 1906) are presented here in the light of that unity so important to him. His observations aim at finding the "Slavic spirit". Thus all his memoirs written down and published in several years after the journey are very uniform.

2. Conclusions

Those evident schemes unconsciously used by the author in his "relations and impressions", show an associatory, scholarly and meditative matrix of his reactions during the journey. They reflect his ideological attitude. The journey recalled the author's awareness and images of the world known to him - his own world. Magiera's incessant Polish associations were doubtless affected by his dwelling on his own world. He was coming from Cracow, the fifth largest town of the Austrian Empire,¹² and a lively centre of the Polish culture. At the beginning of the century it was a place of patriotic celebrations of various cherished anniversaries, a place where history and its heroes were worshipped.¹³

According to numerous writers of that time, a visit to Cracow was a lesson of patriotism. Such a visit would awake national traditions and strengthen ethnocentric emotions.

Expeditions to the South further confirmed the author's views. In his memoirs he stressed repeatedly that he adhered to a country of several conglomerate cultures. The lack of integration of Austria and Hungary was evident to him. For example, in his account

12. J. Bieniarzowna, J. Malecki, *History of Cracow (dzieje Krakowa)*, vol. 3, Cracow 1985, p. 313.

13. *op. cit.*, p. 259 - 297.

from the Zagrebian journey, he mentions some anti-Magyar riots in spring 1903. The author was a declared Slavophil. His historic erudition was mainly orientated towards facts from the Slavonic history. Magiera found in the "Slavic South" what he had known before, and experienced what he wanted to experience. He touched the Slavic history and met with the warmth of friendship and unity.

When interpreting the meaning of those past memoirs one should remember that the author was a philologist, a connoisseur of literature and thus, as it often happens, his accounts are essays at literary creation at the same time. That is clear from both the descriptions of nature and his own impressions produced by the observation of the surrounding world. But here, time and again the same pattern has been repeated. The images of the "Slavic South" are drawn by a Polish neoromantic observer. Romantic figures (Mickiewicz, Schiller) are legible, and the Young-Polish, pantheistic symbolism (water, swans, paradise, light, space meadows, mountains, canions, etc.) easily visible.

This relation of a past journey should be based on historical background. That would shed some light on the quoted author's associations, shown on canvas of the Polish culture in Galicia.¹⁴ As it is known, that culture was at that time deeply influenced by Vienna of the end of the century. It was that Vienna from where the monumental, historical eclecticism in architecture was spreading into the Empire.¹⁵ Also, there, the vanguard literature and the art of "jugendstil" was being created. The latter is regarded to be an important trend of the European culture.¹⁶

Matters were quite different in Croatia. Known is the animosity of Cratian intellectuals against everything that came from Vienna (Anton Matosz, Tin Ujević, Miroslav Krleža).¹⁷ And yet, a Pole coming from Galicia to Zagreb finds there Galician, and thus Viennese traces (railway station, theatre, park, patron of the university, etc.). How it was possible will be shown further on. The question of cultural relations of the past Austria and Hungary, actual anew, should be considered here.

That contemporary controversy is connected with the "Mitteleuropa" conception. The thesis of the Viennese influence is supported by some and disputed by others; the more it is discussed the wider the opinions polarize. Jan Magiera's impressions read *à la lettre* as a historical source might provide evidence to the thesis of that influence. However, an ethnologist would show considerable reservations, indicating the specific way of building these associations by the author of the "Memoirs from the Slavonic South". Therefore a further analysis is necessary.

3. Interpretation

To read the discussed text according to the rules of culture is to show a mechanism of mythical perception of the world. As we know, the taming of strangeness bases on reducing a phenomenon to its nature and then including it into one's own, already known cultural context. Cognitive patterns, thus created, fix the features of reality to be

14. Common name of the Polish territories seized by Austria in 1772 - 1795.

15. T. Dobrowolski, *The Art of Cracow (Sztuka Krakowa)*, Cracow, 1978 p. 456, 488.

16. J. Clair, *Sceptical Modernity (Sceptyczna Nowoczesność, "res Publica" No 1: 1989 Warsaw, p. 57 - 64* (an essay of the French connoisseur of Art, written on commission of the Polish magazine).

17. D. Kisz, *Variations on Central European Problems (POLish translation), "Res Publica" No 1: 1989, Warsaw, p. 21 - 31*

considered, show the ways of collecting and selecting the information. That scheme also determines the essence of the world perceived. It possesses its own core of conception and an area of permissible transformation. The above principles decided on the author's observation in the Slavic South. Surely, they themselves and their associational context - the Galician scenery - were not analogous, and could be placed only at the interval of the uniformity of essence. The truth of a detail concerned only the native landscapes.

A mythical element of the strangers' image is their stereotype. It can be positive, but was much more discussed as a negative one. Apart from everything else it can be, too, a specific instrument of study transforming both the tradition and parts of cultural experience.¹⁸ Jan Magiera, quite unaware led the stereotype into the positive direction. Travelling in the South he was already established views of the Slavs (that conventional, mythical knowledge of anteriority) Magiera unceasingly tried to go beyond the stereotype, showing his friendly experience. Thus he preserved his pro-Slavonic attitude, since a stereotype is the knowledge of those already convinced. The pregrination into the "Slavic South" is formally and objectively a part of the type of so called documentary prose. The nearest in analogy are the analysed memoirs from "Peregrination in Italy" by Hipolit Taine - a XIX century scientist.¹⁹ They are full of sociological and psychological observations, history and archeology. The work was very popular in Poland at the beginning of the century. Further connections of the discussed journey relations can be found, in correct proportion, in the tradition of the type. Here belong the diaries from a journey in Italy, an XVIII century didactic novel by J. W. Goethe. That journey is of a considerable importance for ideology and construction. In general, it can be said that the spiritual way of travelling is a common figure of the European humanities and literature. The "topos" of the wanderer, his behaviour on the way, journeys into the unknown, fulfill the mythical structures of maturity, of acquiring knowledge or transformation. The number of literary variants concerning the places shared before and the contemporary European art, supply the best evidence to the above thesis.

According to this analysis it can be stated that a reader of Jan Magiera's narration of the journey to the "Slavic South", not only accompanies him to the South, but also penetrates his soul which is perhaps more interesting. Only in such a double meaning I think it necessary to present and analyse the memoirs. They provide historical information and, what seems more important, are a document of the author's consciousness and, in different words, of his cultural individuality.

So banal nowadays, this statement of the stability of the mythical organization of culture, need not to be proved every time. It is, after all, an element of ethnological paradigm. Thus, basing on the "ready" language of the ethnological theory, it could be applied to this text. The results of the analysis are similar to many others and somehow already known. I yielded to that still alluring temptation to use the ethnological key to the phenomenon not previously considered by ethnology. However, those successive methodological replicas, that commonly occur in excess are, according to Thomas Kuhn, a warning that the paradigm may be running out.²⁰

18. A. K. Bajburin, (ed.) *Etničeskije stereotipy povedenija*, Leningrad 1985.

19. H. A. Taine, *Voyage en Italie*, Librairie Hachette, Paris 1898, Tome 1 - 2

20. T. S. Kuhn, *The Essential Tension*, Chicago Univ. Press. 177

REFERENCES:

- Bajburin, A.K.: *Etničeskije stereotipy povedenija*, Leningrad, 1985.
Bieniarzówna, J. - Malecki, J.: *History of Cracow* (Dzieje Krakowa), vol. 3, Cracow, 1985.
Clair, J.: Sceptical Modernity, (Sceptyczna Nowoczesność), *Res Publica*, Nr.1, 57 - 64.
Dobrowolski, T.: *The Art of Cracow* (Sztuka Krakowa), Cracow, 1978.
Kisz, D: Variations on Central European Problems (Polish Translation): *Res Publica*, Nr 1, Warsaw, 1989.
Kuhn, T.S.: *The Essential Tension*, Chicago Univ. Press, 1977.
Magiera, J.: *In the Slavonic South, Relations and Impressions*, Cracow, 1911.
Taine, H.A.: *Voyage en Italie*, Tome 1 - 2, Hachette, Paris, 1898.

SJEĆANJA NA DAVNA PUTOVANJA PO SLAVENSKOM JUGU

Komentar etnologa na tekst s početka stoljeća

Sažetak

Članak obrađuje mitsku organizaciju kulture kao elementa etnološke paradigme primijenjene na putopis. Nakon biografije Jana Magiere (1876 - 1958), poljskog filozofa, folklorista, polonista i zaljubljenika u južnoslavensku kulturu, te citata u kojima se spominje Zagreb, Dubrovnik i Dalmacija, analizom autor utvđuje osnovne stereotipe koji su rukovodili putopisca da doživi južnoslavenski kulturni krug gotovo kao svoj vlastiti, galicijski (Krakov, Lavov)

Njegove etnološke implikacije odnose se na shvaćanje i primjenu etnološke paradigme u analizi jednog neromantičarskog putopisa u kojemu putovanje ima bitno idejno i strukturno značenje dolaženja do zrelosti, spoznavanja znanja i doživljavanja raznolikosti promjena. To stvara stereotipnu mitsku svijest kojom se povezuju elementi starijeg i suvremenog europskog stvaralaštva.