

POSSIBILITIES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE LITERARY FOLKLORE

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Connecting points between the study of literary folklore and profound psychology are treated in this paper, specially the (mostly indirect) influence of C. G. Jung that can be traced in Slovenian and European folklore studies. The psychologic point of view seems to be the most attractive and convenient nowadays in the research of fairy-tales.

As on one side the profound psychology was coming towards a literary (and other) folklore by the use of its materials and some findings, the literary folklore was at the same time approaching a profound psychology by considering some of its professional starting points. It is however, not possible to affirm that it has always been fertilized directly from the Jung's school, although there can be noticed quite many connecting points between them. That question would certainly demand more thorough study.

In the year of 1902 Ivan Prijatelj published a dissertation *Psychological Parallelism*,¹ for which he found the stimulation from the Russian expert Alexander N. Veselovskij.² In the Introduction we find out that psychological parallelism "is based on allegorization of a subject with an object and vice versa",³ and that what ethnology and anthropology

¹ Ivan Prijatelj, "Psihologični paralelizem / s posebnim ozirom na motiv slovenske narodne pesmi", *Zbornik znanstvenih in poučnih spisov*, Slovenska Matica, Vol. IV, ed. by Luka Pintar, Ljubljana 1902, pp. 1-22.

² See remark 1, p. 1.

name animism from the point of literary science gets the name of "*psychological parallelism*". A man is receiving pictures from the outside world. The frame of these pictures he carries inside and he is himself the measure of all these pictures. We unintentionally transfer our life consciousness expressed above all in movements, also to the other nature, wherever we see motion, i.e. action. Therefore we often give to the subjects of external nature the human attributes. Such subjects are, of course, animals which remind us the most of human beings, and then also plants... organic and inorganic world lives - in a man. Such outlook at all the world is called animistic. It is appearing most frequently in the poetical creations... The basic sign of the psychological parallelism is a naive look at the nature. And here is a meeting point of a primitive man and a modern poet. We can easily say that regarding the means used by the primitive man for making and multiplying his denominations, there is not a great abyss between the first and the last man, but there are connections between both spiritual organisms. Such a connection is an animistic outlook of the world. And it is interesting that animism which lies in the base of some titles, is quite analogic to the psychological parallelism of our lyric poetry. They are both descending from the feeling, which could be called the *lyrical sense*. The lyrical sense is transforming the affect in the artistic way, objectivating it, looking at it and showing it with some subject in nature. Only after the affect was objectivated, formed, so to say visible, it is able to show itself in its full plasticity and light... And the ability to give shape to the affect is above all significant for a poet. A real poet does not describe anything, but puts everything in front of our eyes...

Thus we demand from the poetical language to speak like that, *so that at the same moment, when we hear an expression, we also see a picture*. Such metaphors are especially noticeable in the folk song. A natural man, whose life is not guided so much by reason than by feelings, can see without needing much phantasy all his moods shown in nature. He is transferring his feelings into the surrounding nature and everywhere in it he is looking for the expressions of his inwardness. This very transfer of himself into the nature personifies external objects and represents basis of the anthropomorphic process of human thinking."⁴

Prijatelj is ascertaining in the described process of thinking of the primitive man also the roots of ancient belief about the "beginning of the human race", while in the analytical part of his proceedings he is selecting comparatively the psychological parallelism in Slovene folk song "by the motive of flowers growing from the grave of two lovers and getting united

³ See remark 2.

⁴ See remark 1, pp. 1, 2, 3.

above them."⁵ It is important that Ivan Prijatelj already at the beginning of the twentieth century essentially agrees with the later on so many times emphasized standpoints of Jung, namely that the allied motives from the literary folklore and mythology cannot always be explained just by their migration. Analyzing the mentioned motive Prijatelj concludes: "We have seen that our motive lies in psychosis of nearly all the nations. But the soul of the nation is a fluid, which is its conductor and its lowering blood, as well as geographical and climatic nearness. If these conditions are given (and they are always given to the neighbours that are not divided by too high mountains or two-broad deserts) the action and ceasing of a spiritual life of both nations becomes more similar. In such cases we can talk about mutual influences. In other cases, where there are not the mentioned influences, but there are still similarities in products, we have to talk about the equal psychical processes of all races. If we follow our motive by all the stated different nations, which have never been under the mutual influence, we come to the conclusion, that there can spring up some poetical formulas, allegories, symbols and metaphors from the same spiritual mood, so to say on the basic, natural, common to all the nations, let us say *human* psychic line."⁶ At some other place, when referring to Veselovskij, it turns out that he agrees with him, when he says "that from the same psychic process can come out the same results".⁷ And now it becomes clear why this phenomenon is named just "psychological parallelism". Here we cannot talk yet about the "subconsciousness and the unaware layers of psyche. Though their ways are different, Alexander N. Veselovskij and Carl G. Jung are coming in the extremes of their derivations to the equal statements.

In 1920, in England a book was published entitled *Psychology and Folklore*, written by R. R. Marett.⁸ According to Giuseppe Cocchiara the book became actual above all due to the author's interpretation of survivals, which author does not want to look upon as on the dead relic, saying: every present time contains past, and also the present time itself is tending to become past; therefore every past fact is revived with regard to the context of consciousness and in that light no historical judgment could be based on the principle of identity. The perception of some actualized fact means experiencing that fact in the new circumstances and conditions which are exerting an influence to the opinion, that in fact every survival is

⁵ See remark 1, p. 7.

⁶ See remark 1, p. 20.

⁷ See remark 1, p. 21.

⁸ R. R. Marett, "Psychology and Folklore", In: *Đuzep Kokjara, Istorija folkloru u Evropi* (2), Beograd 1985, p. 229.

some sort of renewal.⁹ Marett's name, however, is connected with a theory of pre-animism: in the mentality of the primitive man is something what is more indefinite than animism and is psychologically before it.

It is composed of certain feelings and ideas about the secret powers, which are not spirits yet, but rather undefined wishes and creatures, with the generalized name *mana, orenda*.¹⁰ And though it was just psychology that presented him with a problem of religion in anti historic way, he got in it an initiative for the notion of survival: when some mental pattern (superstition) - survival looses its original meaning, it gets a new one; without them a survival cannot last. So, proceeding from the psychology Marett discovered one of the most important principles, which regulates the life of folklore and cannot be neglected by any folklorist, no matter what kind of folklore he is dealing with. This is the affirmation of Giuseppe Cocchiara, and following Marett he adds: of course, some fact can find its predecessors in the earlier perception, which it had survived. But it is the truth at the same time, that in order to go on living, it finds a way to adapt its own life to the consciousness of the one he is renewing. In folklore everything what is dying, is coming back to life in some other form, so that later on when its cycle is finished, would give life to some new formation.¹¹ Due to only indirect data of Marett's principles and resolutions, it is not possible to give a reliable answer to the question about the impact of C. G. Jung on him, or the reverse. But the fact is that the conception of "mana" was not avoided by Jung.¹² The connecting point between the survivals and archetypes can be found in Jung's explanation that they are "psychical remains of numerous experiences of the same type."¹³

There is certainly a greater affinity between C. G. Jung and André Jolles, who is representing a thesis, that individual genres of the literary folklore, which he names "simple forms" are arising from the basis of certain spiritual conditions, which are personified in suitable movements of the language suitable to them, that is in the established forms,¹⁴ not limited by time. His thesis were developed by Kurt Ranke, and Herman Bausinger is stating in this connection that Jolles would certainly agree with Ranke, when he is explaining simple forms as "psycho-mental basic forms in such a sense that it is not a question of a conscious solution of an event, but of elementary disposition" - the creative spirit according to Jolles is certainly

⁹ See remark 8, p. 235.

¹⁰ See remark 8, p. 230.

¹¹ See remark 8, pp. 233, 235.

¹² K. G. Jung, *Duh i život*, Novi Sad 1984, pp. 337-338.

¹³ K. G. Jung, *Psihološke rasprave*, Novi Sad 1984, p. 26.

¹⁴ André Jolles, *Einfache Formen*, Halle (Saale) 1929.

not a primarily conscious act of will.¹⁵ In a dispute with Kirill V. Čistov, who does not agree with a reduction of narrative forms to such spiritual and intellectual needs, "saying that they are abstractly - psychological, newly romantic and derived from the fatal instinctive powers", K. Ranke is eagerly defending his "psychologically founded arguments", they are coming out of pains and affects, magic and rational mental processes, joy over plays and plots and all this is also keeping them. Finally, every genre is like some sort of a connecting, though spontaneous statement about the condition of human communication with the world and about it, therefore each of them must have also its own expressive function and activity.¹⁶

A more detailed study would prove how much the stand-points of C. G. Jung and K. Ranke are approaching each other, but already the habit that the other one at every narrating gives reasons for actualization of a particular genre with standard psychic human processes, is by all means bringing them together.

At least the following examples should illustrate endeavours by the help of C. G. Jung's theory to interpret the beginning, existence and meaning of the literary folklore, either in poetry or in prose.

However, in the literary folklore there is increasing a number of works, which are in their particular questions leaning directly or indirectly upon Jung's starting points and are thereby also critically moving away from the severally structural proceedings, which had been prevailing in the line for a long time and had reaped quite a great reputation also outside of it. Author of the *Lexicon of Fairy Tales*, Walter Scherf, says that he is, however, greeting Propp's radical suggestion of decomposing the fairy-tales on basis of their structural constituents, what would be "in many ways the stone of the wise men", but he cannot silently pass over the fact that the author completely overlooked the original narrating situation between a narrator and a listener, those natural coincidences that no cabinet investigator could establish." So, when he is presenting his own typology of fairy-tales, he is especially attentive to the psychologically important motives.¹⁷ In his opinion of the utmost importance that a fairy tale stirs a special psychological response at the narrator, as well as the receiver. It is not so important that they are explained, they must be, he judges, experienced and sub-consciously transformed.¹⁸

The Danish investigator Høgh Carsten is convincingly relying on Jung's starting points in his work, what can be made out already from the

¹⁵ Herman Bausinger, *Formen der "Volks poesie"*, Berlin 1968, p. 61.

¹⁶ Kurt Ranke, "Kategorienprobleme der Volksprosa", *Fabula*, 9, Berlin 1967, 1-3, p. 9.

¹⁷ Walter Scherf, *Lexikon der Zaubermärchen*, Stuttgart 1982, pp. XII-XIV.

¹⁸ See review by Monika Kropelj, in: *Traditiones*, 16, Ljubljana 1987, p. 383.

summary of one of his lectures. The structure of happening in fairy tales is showing different grades of meeting with demonic; especially from the psychological point of view it is interpreted as different stages in proportion to not self-conscious. In this light the tale about the fight against a giant ogre (AT 300-303, AT 326) ciphers a conscious consolidation of ego, his calling in the relation to the unself-consciousness, the tale about the enchanted (deeply moved) (AT 333, AT 410, AT 709), dealing with a theme of mental blocking-up or gluttony of ego into the unself-conscious, while the tale of bewitchment after the interpretation of Høgh Carstens shows partly unused relation to anima¹⁹ (AT 425 c) and partly his (schizophrenic) psychotic condition (AT 433). Even if the author would not explicitly admit it, but he has done that already, his terminology and the way of derivation shows that he methodically and faithfully follows the founder of profound psychology.²⁰ At some other occasion the mentioned Danish author is trying psychologically and pedagogically to come to the bottom of the *Little Red Riding Hood*, generally known, thanks to Brothers Grimm; by comparing it with the other versions from elsewhere. But the interpretation no longer follows only the Jung model, (in some versions the girl is prevented by her acts to be integrated with the unaware, therefore also her progress to the independence is postponed), but there are considered also various actant models.²¹

Only at the margin of these series of taking examples from C. G. Jung, it is possible to mention the study of Aija Janesliņa-Priedīte,²² as the authoress analyses the writer's procedure of Karlis Skalbe, how he developed the tradition of folklore fairy-tales into the professional art. The authoress thinks that the mentioned writer in his works perfectly expressed collective unawareness of the Lithuanian entity and formed it into the archetype pictures.²³

It looks like the psychological point of view in researching is nowadays the most attractive and likeable just by the fairy-tales.

Hans Jörg Uther is carefully sorting out the differences in functions of fairy tales: what do they mean in formation of children's world of feelings and imagination, and what are the grown-ups looking for in them.

¹⁹ See remark 13, pp. 368-377.

²⁰ Carsten Høgh, *Fairytales and Alchemy - the Psychological Functions of Folktales in the Middle Ages and Nowadays, Folk Narrative and Cultural Identity*, summaries, I, Budapest 1989, p. 96.

²¹ Carsten Høgh, "Little Red Riding Hood" (AT 333) - From a pedagogical and psychological point of view", *Folk Narrative and World View*, summaries, Innsbruck 1992, the page not numbered.

²² Aija Janesliņa-Priedīte, *Als die Bäume sprechen konnten*, Stockholm 1987.

²³ See remark 22.

American psychoanalysis consider them essential for the education of human personality, but on the other side their themes and motives are very popular in the political caricatures and jokes. Anyway, their role in the media is the matter of personal approach.²⁴ Popularity of that method is proved also by its journalistic re-echoing - readers would be interested, of course, how are in the fairy-tales projected for instance the problems of marriages.²⁵

There are certainly also existing such studies where we cannot say for sure that they are based on C. G. Jung, but they are still conceived psychologically. Benedicte Grima is opposing, that literary folklore is dealing with this and that, but emotions are a dark notion to her. In her statement she is trying to reflect "emotion discourse" and "emotion ritual" and to demonstrate that in the folklore genres the emotion is not only irrational, appropriate to women, but very much cultural (= cultivated), controllably learned. When working abroad she came to the conclusion that the Paxtuani in Afghanistan and Pakistan have a rich collection of emotional concepts. Basing on that she is standing for the idea that in folklore there should be paid more attention to the connections between language, culture and affects.²⁶

Divna Zečević is thoughtfully trying to include psychological moment into the beginning of the stories of petrified wedding - guests, as a sort of inversion to the astonishment; when a mother finds out that her son married a girl she did not like and at that news she stopped as petrified.²⁷

At the end it is necessary to remark critically that Slovene literary folkloristics is with regard to the mentioned points of view, very much after the modern tendencies, as it has nothing to show in this connection, if it does not bring into its frame the popular writing of some J. M.,²⁸ but what is in spite of that not only healthy-intellectual, but conceptional, maybe taking example from Freud's explanation of dreams.²⁹ That is what the author says: "If it is the truth that the fairy tales of all nations are in many ways the reflection of secret desires and wishes, it is worthwhile to look

²⁴ Hans Jörg Uther, *Märchen in unserer Zeit*, München 1990, pp. 7-10.

²⁵ "Eltern" = Otok in družina, No. 7, XXXIII, 1984, pp. 38-39. Translated by Radovan Prosenac.

²⁶ Benedicte Grima, "The Importance of Emotion in the Performance of Contemporary Posthum Life Stories", *Folk Narrative and Cultural Identity*, summaries I, Budapest 1989, p. 103.

²⁷ Divna Zečević, "Usmene predaje kao književna organizacija čovjekova doživljavanja povijesti i prirode", *Narodna unjetnost*, Zagreb, 1973, No. 10, pp. 46-48.

²⁸ J. M. (= Jože Maček?).

²⁹ Sigmund Freud, *K psihopatologiji vsakdanjega življenja*, Ljubljana 1975. Sigmund Freud, *Predavanja za uvod v psihoanalizo*, Ljubljana 1977.

upon them once from that side. It is certainly true, that the stories of poor step-daughters, who would like to become queens, were dreamt out by the poor girls, and the stories of the Land of milk and honey by the people who worked hard and were hungry. The tales about a little tailor who would like that people would admire him, were most probably invented by the traveling handy-crafts-men, who would like to come to the happy land. Even if we let aside this more psychological part, the fairy-tales tell us a lot about "the good old times", which were not at all so good, as we many times imagine them for the past.³⁰

The second thing what is in this connection the Slovene contribution, are single sparkles in the rich opus of Anton Trstenjak, for instance his explanation of some phrases,³¹ also from the folklorist point of view a useful developing introduction of the conception of soul and its later delimitation from the spirit, what also Carl Gustav Jung himself³² is talking about very extensively. And A. Trstenjak is leaning on him in his statement that the idea of a dragon is nothing else but a collective sub conscience about the antediluvian saures".³³

While the Slovene literature and the literary history maybe unintentionally idealize the typically Slovene symbols: the Beautiful Vida, Peter Klepec, King Mathias, Kurent,³⁴ Anton Trstenjak - the world-wide known psychologist is rather critical towards them. He is asking himself, whether there is not in the sediment of the Beautiful Vida the picture of the Mother-martyr and in her background a peculiar neurotic complex of the Slovene people. The confirmation for that observation he finds also in Peter Klepec, "the crystallized picture of a Slovene, such a type of an inferior maternal man, who has a superhuman power, enabling him to help all the other, but not himself, because a man in him has never matured into an accomplished figure of a father."³⁵ Trstenjak is deciphering a similar archetype also in Martin Krpan.³⁶

³⁰ J. M. Pravljice - Odsev želja in resničnih razmer, in: *Mohorjev koledar*, Celje 1989, pp. 141-142.

³¹ Anton Trstenjak, *Skozi prizmo besede*, Ljubljana 1989, p. 24.

³² See remark 13, p. 373.

³³ See remark 31.

³⁴ Jože Pogačnik, *Zgodovina slovenskega slovstva I*, Maribor 1968, p. 28.

³⁵ Anton Trstenjak, "Vplivi kulturnozgodovinskih razmer na oblikovanje značaja Slovencev", in: *Traditiones*, 19, Ljubljana 1990, pp. 133-143.

³⁶ Anton Trstenjak, "O slovenskem človeku", *Naši razlgedi*, 20, 10. 1989, pp. 585, 586, 587.