

SIMONA DELIĆ

Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb

## **ORAL TRANSLATION AND CULTURE: NEW METAMORPHOSES OF THE PROCNE AND PHILOMELA MYTH IN THE TRADITIONAL BALLADS OF SOUTHERN EUROPE**

The article interprets how the ballads of three diverse traditions – the Spanish, Italian and Croatian – re-write the mythic plot of Procne and Philomela under the conditions of today's (postcolonial) re-reading of the mythic plot, at a time when the concept of tradition (the myth, the ballad) has considerably altered. Relying on the reader response method and insights into the theory of translation and the modern Humanistic discourse in the comparative study of oral poetry, the text leads into consideration, for the first time, of the Croatian oral ballad tradition as belonging to the international ballad type of Procne and Philomena, which has to date been detected and interpreted in the Romance ballad areal. In that process, particular attention is paid to the interpretation of the protagonists and the plots from the position of the interpreter of the tradition (comparatist, folklorist) herself, from whose aspect these ballad plots also represent a challenge for re-examination of the ethics of the interpreter's position, the cause-and-effect logic of narration and the myths of origins built in to the very foundation of the historical-geographic method, while also stimulating rethinking of the comparatistic concept of influence. Transference between interpreter and texts (myths, ballads) leads to registration of the traces of other cultures and to their hybridisation, notwithstanding the actual direction of influences. Thanks to transference between the interpreter, the myth and the ballad, one also notices the shift in interpretation of the mythic stories in the traditional ballads. The narrative and symbolic potential of the "trauma of the neighbourhood" of which the Procne and Philomena myth speaks, a trauma that is also registered in the imaginary of Mediterranean folklore, is given an unexpected turn in the traditional ballads by lowering from the symbolic to the real level. That fact bears particular weight since the narrative contract between the narrator and the listener is that of *testimony* in the traditional oral ballads in question, in whose form one recognises the simple form of *casus*. Apart from that,

this is a case of a gender-reticulated discourse that also presents various possibilities by which the "female voice" disputes heroic history, providing various opportunities in various traditions for the intersection of the gender aspect with ethnic and class characteristics. That authorises the inclusion of these traditional plots in the comparatist "plot of mediation" (Marshall) that tries to re-examine the tradition to date of the contextual folkloristic and philological criticism of these narrative poems that are considered to be "exemplary" cases for an approach that tries to place in the foreground the ever-sensitive issue of the stance towards the Other (the narrator, text, foreign cultures, literary history, and reality).

Key words: traditional ballad, Procne and Philomela myth, plot, character, reader response, comparative study of oral poetry, oral translation, Mediterranean folklore, postcolonial criticism

## Introduction

Relying on the method of reader response, we will wander in this article through the Mediterranean ballad folklore tradition that had as its backdrop the Greek myth about the unfortunate sisters, Procne and Philomena. In the oral tradition that was not familiar with the motif of the metamorphosis of the characters into birds, these two sisters never symbolised oratory and poetry, as was the case in certain written sources. Traditional ballads were oriented towards narration about the realistic experience of the "neighbourhood trauma", the sore spot of Mediterranean folklore, seeking precisely in that experience the symbolics of their recounted eroticism. However, prior to the interpretation of the ballads themselves, we will also consider certain difficulties in the comparative study of oral poetry today. We will try to justify our interest in those poems of "cheerful epistemology, but gloomy metaphysics", which is not at all self-evident outside of the psychoanalytical discourse. To that end, we will bring to mind the interpretation of the *plot of history* and *plot of discovery* in the Oedipal myth, as seen by D. Marshall in the context of interpreting the narrative potential of the mythic plot about incest between brother-in-law and sister-in-law, as well as the plots of traditional ballads to transform the comparative discourse into the *plot of mediation*. Among other, such a plot of mediation should have the capability to demystify the *myths of origins* that are built into the foundations of the comparative study of oral poetry.

### Oral translation: Old problems, new study perspectives

What is probably the oldest form of poetry translation – oral translation – was "discovered" fairly late. So that that "old man", paradoxically enough, has

"new clothes". "The plot of the history" of the intercultural contacts and connections on the basis of which we speak, for example, of the oral translations of poems, exists only in the building up of the "plot of discovery" in the comparatistic and folkloristic discourse. With the brief pre-history of literary translations of oral poetry back from Herder's "foundation stone" in the *Volkslieder* (Cf. Delić 2004b) collection through the translations by S. Vraz and F. Marković in the 19th century in the Croatian milieu, up to the translations by N. Milićević and O. Delorko in the 20th century, the study today of oral-poetic translations together with translations of oral poetry confirms the cultural unity of the European region. On occasion, parenthesising the polysemy of terms of oral translation in everyday usage – along with the hermeneutic concept of translation as an interpretative activity that makes the subject of its study a mirror-image of the institutional position of literature and scholarship in society – we cannot but notice that the study of oral translation persistently withstands the demands of time and the study of intertextuality. In that way, its resistance to theory is based primarily on methodological anchorage in the evergreen historical-geographical method by which it valiantly denies exteriorisation of the "fear of influences" in theoretical comparative literature writing (Cf. Beker 1995:47 and further on).

Maria Tymoczko's thesis on translation in the oral tradition as a "touchstone" of the theory of translation can thus be interpreted in various ways: from the aspect of the "difficulty" of incorporating the context in the text in the extremely unstable communicational situation of oral translation or, to put it more clearly, translating in the oral tradition.<sup>1</sup> However, when

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<sup>1</sup> Tymoczko 1990:46-55. The author describes "an experiment" that Laura Bohannon carried out in 1966 in Western Africa, when she translated the story of Hamlet to the illiterate members of a native tribe. The author assumed that the story of Hamlet could be universally understood, convinced of the universal nature of Humankind, as well as of the fact that the narrative form, as well as the plot and motivation of the tragedy, were quite clear, although it would be necessary to explain certain particularities connected with customs. However, as a consequence of transference to the audience, the author introduced certain alterations in her version of Hamlet: she left out Hamlet's soliloquy, compressed the play etc., seeing that the tribal value system was at variance with understanding of Hamlet's motivation. However, even such an altered story was met with comments by the audience members. They said that Hamlet had nothing to worry about regarding what was connected with his dead father, because that role belonged to his father's brother, and the like. The audience asked the anthropologist to give them additional information on genealogy, and was interested in whether Claudius and Hamlet's brother were brothers or half-brothers, since that could throw a different light on understand the entire story. Finally, they commented that madness can be caused only by the casting of a spell on the part of relatives on the father's side. In the end, they made this further comment and started to tell their story: "You tell the story well, and we are listening. But it is clear that the elders of your country have never told you what the story really means. No, don't interrupt! We believe you when you say your marriage customs are different and your clothes and weapons. But people are the same everywhere; therefore, there are always witches, and it is we, the elders, who know how witches work" (Bohannon 1966:33; cited by Tymoczko 1990:48). The tribal elders

speaking of oral ballads, that so-called international genre, which was formed in early Modern Age Europe as the result of the cultural contacts that are the subject of cultural history research, it is also possible to view it as a "touchstone" of the comparative study of oral poems and folkloristics through certain other features of this form. On the one hand, one has *happenstance* as the basic context in which oral translation comes about, and, on the other, the fact that the deconstruction method in comparative literature is inclined to observe translations as a metaphor for the most diverse forms of transformation (Lefevere 1995). The complexity of this theme as a subject of translation theory is also underscored by a permanent, sometimes strongly, sometimes weakly, expressed symbolic overloading of the daily use of that literary term. Whereas the consideration of oral translation also burdens the registration of the current moment in which we live in the "past of the texts", there is an "eruption of reality" in the seemingly unencumbered theoretical dealing with primary texts and metatexts. That burdening of texts with the reality around us actually prompts such folkloristic and comparatistic approach that would bring to attention the multifaceted nature of oral translation, and its metalinguistic levels. Among the "aggravating circumstances" of each interpretative undertaking in oral translation of traditional narrative poems under conditions of scholarly and literary communication, one must include the fact that the notations of oral narrative poems and ballads repeat the paradox of decanting the oral "text" into a medium that is far from the oral, in an area or areas that differ from the one in which the oral translation came about or used to come about, a point that has been made in the works of Croatian folklorists.<sup>2</sup>

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decided that Laertes killed Ophelia by means of magic so that he could sell her body to witches and pay the debts he had incurred in Paris, while Hamlet, who had been put under a spell by his uncle, Claudius, went mad when he tried to kill his father's brother, although nobody would ever use force against an older relative. Apart from that, the audience congratulated Bohannon for her telling of an interesting story with "few mistakes", inviting her to tell them other stories so that they, being older, could instruct her on the true meaning of the stories so that, when she returned to her country, her elders would see that she had not just "been sitting under a bush", but had been with people who "knew things" and who had taught her wisdom. The "tribal Hamlet" raises numerous questions, both from the perspective of the theory of translation but also regarding contextual folkloristics or the comparative study of folklore: those regarding the adaptations of folklore and religious matrices in intercultural translation, the relation between the oral and the written, the transference between the translator and his/her audience, the receptive awareness of the audience and its direct "reader response", and the post-colonial subject. Finally, the above event is a first-class example of the uncertainty of the translating subject and any interpreting subject, revealing simultaneously the new contexts of reading canonical works of Western literature, the hybridisation of the original, and the inversion of the customary hierarchy in the relation between the "original" and the "translation".

<sup>2</sup> In Croatia, Tanja Perić-Polonijo, PhD (1989) deals particularly with the aspects of "written orality" and the characteristics of the notations. Oral texts are published in anthologies intended for the bookish public, but also for the so-called small ordinary reader; thus, these are

Oral translation is also a touchstone for interpretative folkloristic and comparatist approaches, since it assumes the ethical, besides the customary, gnoseological "commitment" of *cognoscenti*. In other words, if we decide to select the term *intertextuality* – steeped as it is in metalinguistic connotations (Čale Knežević 1995) – as the operative term in the comparative study of oral poetry, as well as the term *intertext* on the same terminological level as the term *formula* that is more frequently used in comparative study and folkloristics, we will emphasise even more the ethical dimension of the term *formula*. Admittedly, the latter term is also ethically stamped in the definitions of Lord and Catalán,<sup>3</sup> while the term *intertext* also additionally stresses the "anonymity" of the authorship and the "traces" of the past inscribed in the poetic signs between two performances, and their "openness" both to the poetic universe and to the universe of culture.<sup>4</sup> Using this term, we will soon be obliged also to restore to "our" intertexts the concept of historical influence trying to prevail over the already proverbial "fear of influence" present in the theoretical comparative discourse (Cf. Beker 1995:47 and further on), particularly its ideological and metalinguistic burden (Cf. Biti 1997:154-155; Nöth 2004:461; Beker 1995:46-47). Namely, the radical ideal of intertextual nature (Cf. Biti 1997) in the contextual comparative study of oral poetry – in which it is not so important which formula crosses over the linguistic and culturological border, but how it does so and why – is not feasible in analytical operationalisation.

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texts that have moved away in literary communication from the assumed imaginary "original context". The very selection of the "variants" or "versions" that are offered as being representative is, it goes without saying, the result of the individual author's philological and folkloristic selection, conditioned by the context, purpose and intention of the publications themselves. Poems, notwithstanding their diffusion, were published in 19th and 20th century anthologies under a particular title, while the title, although it had its equivalent in the so-called emic approach to oral poetry, also primarily meant, nonetheless, the input of the ideologemes of the bourgeois class, enabling the insertion of oral folklore into the canon of written literature. However, that does not mean that one should not speak of the oral translation of narrative poems, also being aware of the inadequate nature of standard procedures for the analysis of translated poems. Still, one should take into account that this is a matter of the interpretation of processive translation, an accumulation of various anonymous interventions that usually took place over a prolonged period of time, *translation in time*, translation which, in any case, does not provide the final result of a "definitive" version (which, after all, is not the case even with the translation of literary texts).

<sup>3</sup> Since it is not reduced to a mere "mnemonic device" and its functional role, but assumes a narrator and his/her skill.

<sup>4</sup> Catalán's theory of the "openness" of the romancero, which can also be applied to other oral poetry traditions, is compatible with Bremond's theory on the openness of the semantic junctions of the narrative text as well as to Eco's "resistance" to endless semiotics and the stance that the meanings of the texts are "open", but also that a supervision of sorts exists over the area of interpretational freedom (Eco 1968; quoted according to Nöth 2004:461).

Apart from that, the comparatist has to define his/her position towards the historical-geographical method.<sup>5</sup> Admittedly, papers that follow its methodological meanders have long since included – as a rule, and not an exception – awareness of the "discontinued chain" of tradition. That cautiousness, as well as recognition of the chance correspondence of individual motifs that are not the consequence of influence, acts as a muffler on the *myth of origins* built into the foundations of the method itself.

However, after identification of the intertexts as traces of actual intercultural contacts, the historical-geographical method should more playfully accept the reversibility of influence, the transference which comes about between the comparatist and the texts that are the subject of his/her study. Namely, as a consequence of that transference, the traces of other cultures are registered in these texts, regardless of their actual influence. That does not mean, of course, rejection and denial of the undeniable success of the historical-geographical method as a historiographic tool, but rather also acceptance of its light-hearted potential, to emphasise the hybridisation of the compared cultures that one arrives at, in any case, through the application of classical historical-geographical interpretation.

### **The comparative study of traditional ballads: The ethical challenge**

The reason that the consideration of the oral translation of narrative poems is "a hard nut to crack" is that oral poems that cross over linguistic and cultural borders, while encompassing diverse genres, often refer to extratextual reality that relates to the sociological family phenomenon. Distanced from extratextual realities, stylised by linguistic-stylistic procedures that refer exclusively to the oral poem's universe, this theme, which encompasses at a thematic level an entire range of interpersonal relations, still calls up consideration of the specific stance towards the Other. That stance towards the Other, steeped in ethical issues, is also present in the comparative consideration of two or more literatures.<sup>6</sup> In other words, it is no simple

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<sup>5</sup> We have pointed out the paradoxes of the *evergreen* (L. Honko) historical-geographical method, and its mythemes of "imported" and "exported" assets in previous articles. Cf. Delić 1999.

<sup>6</sup> According to Claudio Guillén, comparative literature rests on the relations that are established between sameness and diversity, between what is close and what is different, between the actual and the desired, individual and collective, what is here and now and what was there and formerly. Cf. Guillén 1985:25-37. The ethics of human relations is maintained and comparable to national literatures, while that is not ethics in the moral sense, but the need for establishment of a relationship with the Other, and realisation of the fact that we exist thanks to the Other. Cf. Guillén *ibid.* More recent comparative studies that compare authors, genres, and concrete works that belong to one or to more national litera-

matter to justify dealing with these often tragic plots of "cheerful epistemology, but gloomy metaphysics" (Cf. Marshall 1982:76)<sup>7</sup> even when comparative literature methodology is being used. Oral ballads are actually "obsessed" with the family phenomenon (the term used by M. Lüthi reminds one of Freud's term "Wiederholungszwang" or "repetition compulsion"). By the comprehensive scope of its range, the traumatic content from the sphere of interpersonal family relations in the ballads, and the way it transmits ideas on the integral nature of the world, is comparable with the image of the world as it is present in the novel (Cf. Biti 2007). Still, they are not directly linked with a reality that serves as justification for the narrative structure of the "cases" in the psychoanalytical discourse and the cathartic effect of the psychoanalytical "story". Nevertheless, that reality does manage to find its way into the ballad, largely through the instance of the character and the narrator. In this way, the comparative study of ballads and narrative poems from different traditions concerning murders, incest and various other forms of family and non-family misdeeds raises numerous ethical questions. Is it at all possible to compare poems with "strong" plots that are an extension of the long tradition of the intertwining between oral and written poetry, without the comparatist finding him/herself in the function of a writer of a comparatistic "plot of history", establishing the cause-and-effect connection between the phenomenon of distance in time and space? In any case, can ballads from diverse tradition be compared without the comparatist switching to the modernistic creation of his/her own counter-world, which only confirms "the bourgeois *status quo*"? (Cf. Marshall 1982:78). Should one give up before one even begins, as initially happens with Sartre's Roquentin, or try to restore faith in the interpretation of texts. This also happens with the very same Sartre hero when, prior to leaving Paris, he hears popular songs *by chance* on the radio, realising that they, similarly to works of art, contain "a vision of a faraway world inhabited by creatures who rise above the contingent fall from one moment to the next" in everyday life? (Cf. Marshall 1982:78-79). In our case, that would mean to restore faith in the hermeneutic effort of comparative writing and the historical-geographical method subsequent to *intentional* listening to and reading of traditional ballads, with their capability of chance illumination of "the vision of faraway worlds" that are also inhabited by creatures distanced from the contingencies of everyday life.

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tures are devoting increased attention to establishing a dialogical relationship between works, authors and the individual traditions of the comparative study of literature: words that are compared exist thanks to dialogue and mutually build on each other in what is called "the interspace" or the "third area" of comparative literature, understood as a scholarly discipline on literature that deals with the interpretation of differences. Cf. Chaitin 1998:162.

<sup>7</sup> This ballad type that is the subject of our study is characterised as one of "probably the cruellest novelistic ballads of mythical content" (Weinberg de Magis 1994).

### **Procne and Philomela myth as the comparatistic "plot of mediation"**

Oral narrative poems in which philological criticism identified traces of the Procne and Philomela myth, which were noted down by Italian, Spanish and Croatian folklorists and philologists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the 20<sup>th</sup>, entered into the oral tradition of the matrix environments at approximately the same time. Judging from the form of poetic discourse, entry of the ballads into oral tradition probably took place at the time of the Baroque, which was the literary epoch in which traditional ballads, whose narrators were largely women, also found their place in "monumental written works".<sup>8</sup> On this occasion, they can also serve as a trigger of thought that tries to answer the ethical question mentioned above on the comparative preoccupation with the oral translation. What makes the myth about Procne and Philomela particularly cruel in the presentation of its manifest content is the fact that, unlike the myth about Oedipus that is also immersed in narration about incest, the main female protagonists of the tragic *hybris*, the sisters, Procne and Philomela, do not participate in it completely unaware. They surrender themselves to passions with the possibility of foreseeing the consequences of their crime. There are also events here over which neither Procne nor Philomela has any influence: the agreed marriage between Procne and Tereus as a sign of her father Pandion's gratitude for his daughter's suitor's services to him in their military alliance. Also, Procne's desire to see her sister makes her the initiator of the tragic development of events – the past that catches up with her in the future as the murderer of her own son. On the other hand, in making advances to Philomela, Tereus knowingly suppresses the generational principle, unlike Oedipus who unwittingly abandons the chronology. That is why Tereus had to bear the consequence of the cruel anthropophagic meal: the Oedipal suppressing of the generational principle became radicalised in the myth of Procne and Philomela. By the very nature of its tragic plot, the myth still puts the emphasis on the "plot of discovery", also making it possible for the interpreter to create interpretative "recognition" (Cf. Marshall 1982:74-76).<sup>9</sup> In that way, the narrative transaction (Cf. Brooks 1984:216 and further on) that comes about in the narrative situation of the myth between the narrator and the recipient is the position of the recipient of the oracle and its

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<sup>8</sup> The Spanish ballad discourse is reminiscent of the poetic discourse of the so-called *romances vulgares* or broadside ballads, which testifies to their Baroque origins by virtue of their religious and folklore matrices. The genetic link with the Italian ballad has been analysed by Bronzini and Graves [Cf. Bronzini (1957-1961:206-213); Graves (1986:125-129)], while the intercultural contacts probably came about as a result of the presence of the Spaniards in the south of Italy.

<sup>9</sup> The myth, being a simple form that represents a specific predecessor of science and philosophy, is not contrary to comprehension and cognition (Cf. Jolles 1978:76-77).



interpreter. The myth about Procne and Philomela, classified among the myths of "ancient Greek heroes", does not establish a direct link between Pandion's alliance with Tereus, the rape motif, the anthropophagi and the subsequent transformation of his daughters into birds. So the myth, at least in the form given in Ovid's version,<sup>10</sup> is near to what A. Jolles calls the *analogon* or *mediated myth* (Jolles 1978:80-81). However, in the mediated myth "the phenomenon is not communicated to the man in response to his question, but derives from the man himself, who tries to clarify in the mythic manner and through the form of a myth the phenomenon that he has observed, which has awoken his curiosity, the explanation of which is outside his experience" (ibid). Additional hermeneutic effort is required for such a link to be established. After Ovid's rationalistic reading of the Greek myth and the long tradition of later allegorical interpretations of this myth, traces of which we can also find in Homer's *Odyssey* in Penelope's comparison between her own sadness and that of Procne (Cf. Pavletić 1894:322), we ourselves can recognise in the myth the question-and-answer situation, the dilemma of the king who is in two minds about whether he should go to war. This myth does not lack for cognitive error when Pandion accepts the military assistance of the stranger, the foreigner Tereus, to whom he gives his daughter Procne as his reward, since "every attempt of a man to penetrate into the world and to understand it from his own point of view can give rise at any moment to false conclusions and misapprehensions" (Cf. Jolles 1978:77). In response to the question as to why the sisters were transformed into birds that symbolise hope, Spring (the swallow) and the sound of sweet birdsong, the answer is offered in the caution regarding and remembrance of sadness and suffering associated with grief caused by the disasters of war and unwise alliances.<sup>11</sup> A

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Maretić's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1998).

<sup>11</sup> There are diverse Greek and Latin sources of the myth with essential differences between them; in various ways they test the various narrative possibilities of the myth, often leading to a metathesis of the events, with frequent exchange of the sister personages (Homer, *The Odyssey*, XIX; Apollodor, *Bibliotheca* III.14.8; Higin, *Fabule*; Pausania, I, 5, 4; 41.8; X.4.9). Cf. Pavletić 1894:320-323; 333. According to Ovid's version of the myth (*Metamorphoses*, VI, 412-674), Procne married the Thracian king, Tereus, bearing him a son called Itys; that marriage that was accompanied by evil omens, was the result of the agreement between her father, Pandion, the King of Athens, and Tereus, the son of Ares, thanks to whose help Pandion overcame the Thebans. Procne persuaded Tereus to return to her father Pandion and bring Philomela to her, since she was desirous of her company. When Tereus arrived at Pandion's court, his wife's sister Philomela appeared; she looked like a nymph and she awoke lust in Tereus. The reason for that sudden passion was Philomela's beauty, but also the sensual nature of the Thracian race. Tereus had hidden his desire from Procne, and spoke of his wife's wish to see her sister, while Philomela, too, begged her father to allow her to go. King Pandion agreed and entrusted him with his daughter, asking Philomela to return as soon as possible. As soon as they disembarked in Thrace, Tereus led off his sister-in-law to a stable hidden in the woods where he raped her, while she lamented, calling for the help of her father, her sister, and the gods. She reproaches Tereus, reminding him of how much he owes to her father, her sister, to her, a virgin, and to the law of marriage. She

song that would otherwise have the power in myths to lull into sleep Ares (Cf. Jolles 1978:78), the god of war, is possible only at the cost of the sacrifice of Pandion's daughters. For its part, the divine intervention of transformation itself is motivated by the sorrow of Pandion's daughters. That motif would be adopted later by Christian Mediaeval and Renaissance recontextualisation of this classical myth, without interpretation of the scarlet colour of the feathers as a consequence of the spilling of blood that preceded the metamorphosis, and by the addition of new nuances.<sup>12</sup>

Compared with oral poems, the myth is much more explicit in setting up the hermeneutic issue of "resolving secrets". The myth facilitates the transformation of the discourse in the story by means of its own

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begs him to kill her, since that would be better than rape. She threatens Tereus that she will report the crime. In a rage, Tereus ties her up, cuts out her tongue, and rapes her again. He returns to his wife and tells her that Philomela has died. After a year had passed, Philomela had woven the story of her misfortune into a cloth, planning to avoid the guard and, with the help of her maid, to send her message to Procne – in which she succeeds. During the Dionysian Festivities, Procne leaves with a group of women to free her sister. Both return to the court of Tereus and plan their revenge. Procne decides to kill their son Itys, who looks very much like Tereus, with a sword. Together with Philomela, she prepares an anthropophagic meal and offers it to Tereus, later announcing to him that he has eaten his own son. Tereus does not realise what is happening, while Philomela then throws the head of Itys at him. Tereus calls up the Furies and sets out after the sisters, prepared for revenge. The sisters escape him, transforming into birds. Philomela flees into the woods. Procne hides in a house, while traces of blood remain on her feathers. Tereus transforms into a hoopoe, a bird with a crest and a beak in the shape of a weapon. (cf. Weinberg de Magis 1994:204-207; Maretić 1998:153-161). In Higin's version of the myth, Tereus convinces Pandion that Procne has died and asks for Philomela's hand. Pandion hands over his daughter together with an escort, but as soon as they leave Athens, Tereus throws the soldiers in the escort into the sea and rapes Philomela. Arriving in Thrace, he sends her to the king of Lincea but, with the help of his wife, Philomela manages once again to join her sister. In Greek sources, Tereus is transformed into a hoopoe, Procne into a nightingale, while Philomela is transformed into a swallow; in the Latin versions, Tereus takes the form of a sparrow-hawk, Procne a swallow, and Philomela a nightingale (Cf. Alvar Ezquerro 2000:338).

<sup>12</sup> The most widely disseminated version of the Greek myth sees the nightingale as the mother grieving for her dead son, while the allusion of "the aggressor who consumes the nest like a snake" (cf. Lida de Malkiel 1978:47) is added in Vergil's allegorical interpretation of this motif. The capacity of song is attributed even to the swallow in Lope de Vege ("que llora Progne y Filomela canta"). Ibid.:51. Mediaeval allegorical literature passes on the sweet birdsong motif in the context of allegorised Eternal Spring. Cf. Lida de Malkiel (1975:40). In 19th century Western European poetry tradition, the nightingale symbolises the close connection between love and death (Cf. Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1983:604-605). The hoopoe into which Tereus is transformed in the Mediaeval tradition, which rests on Isidor of Seville's *Etymologiarium*, is a bird that feeds on dung and rubbish, hangs about graves, is extremely dirty and symbolises sinners. Later, Philomela and Procne came to symbolise the sad consequences of uncontrolled passions and even poetry and oration (Cf. Brumble 1998:270-271). On this motif of bird transformation in Old Croatian Literature see Kapetanović 2004.

autoreferential quality, taking as its theme its own thematisation of the crime: cutting out Philomela's tongue is a powerful autoreferential image, a symbol of the narrationally and ethically unspeakable nature of the crime and the aggression of the stranger, Tereus, against the autochthony of culture as it is symbolised in the characters of Procne and Philomela. Philomela weaves the artefact which, instead of her voice that would assume a close relationship and presence, provides visual testimony to the crime; transforming the main protagonists into birds is a replaying of the conflict and extends it into the region of the Otherworld.<sup>13</sup> Oral ballads from diverse traditions, known from notations made during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, which undoubtedly show discursive and narrative similarity, omit autoreferential elements. In so doing they make more difficult the hermeneutic identification of the stories and, in diverse traditions and in diverse ways, discursively obscure the story and the emotional immersion in the "plot of discovery". Consequently, the reconstruction of the story in the ballad's "plot of discovery" in traditional ballads is rendered additionally more difficult.

Our reading of the myth has no intention of establishing yet another literary-historical myth of origins. We have spoken to date of the myth of Procne and Philomela as yet another model in which it is possible to recognise "the plot of history" and "the plot of discovery", which D. Marshall interpreted on the example of the Oedipal myth. Our reading of the myth does not intend to refer to the myth as a source of topical narration about trauma in traditional ballads. Such reading would perhaps be one more version of the (psychoanalytical) myth of origins. If our juxtapositioning of the myth and oral ballads reminds one of an attempt to reconstruct and restore the "torn weave" of tradition, it does so primarily in recognition of the "musicality" (W. Benjamin) of tradition as authentic archaic heritage (Cf. Biti 2007). It is towards that same identification of the "musical nature" of tradition to which the comparatistic study of various traditions also aspires, recognising the *happenstance* of intercultural correspondence, which also supersedes and steps over the "kitchen muse" of the ballads themselves as a specific type of "reporting genre" on class, ethnic and clan conflicts, as an *avant la lettre* novel of sorts. Here, we are not searching in the myth for the "pure language" of tradition to which the "translations" refer, which could possibly also be a "trap" for the comparatistic plot. To the contrary, we want to establish a theoretical dialogue with that very same – now greatly redefined – tradition (Cf. Sniader Lasner 1994); the comparatistic plot as one of the forms of

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<sup>13</sup> We could say that, by transferring from the sphere of the auditive in announcement of the news of death – according to Nicole Loraux, a "female province" in the tragedies of Antiquity (quoted according to Slapšak 1987:7) – to the sphere of the visible in announcing the news of the rape in this myth, which did not, admittedly, serve as far as we know as a model for tragedy – the "female province" was expanded while the "male" public area of communication was subverted (Cf. Slapšak 1987).

"mediation" (Marshall). This mediation is not intended to glorify its "sources" that perhaps exist in the consciousness of the comparatist, but not in that of the narrator, and so, for that reason, not even the interpreter is authorised to link them with the "foundational trauma" located in the bygone days of the "plot of history" in the comparative study of oral translations.

Apart from that, it would seem that the myth of Procne and Philomela is appropriate for demystification of this myth of origins which, by the way, is built into the foundations of the historical-geographical method. That myth of origins is built in by way of the historical-geographic method both into the comparative study of traditional ballads, and into consideration of the permeation of oral and written literature, which sees "submerged cultural assets" in oral creations. And this demystification is manifested best through the "monstrous" personage of Tereus, monstrousness that otherwise also has the power to disrupt the logical structure of the narration (A. Gibson). In other words, in the case of Tereus, the discovery that he has committed a crime does not come about as the result of his remorse, or as the result of rational cognition. The search for causes is omitted and located in the contingency of the mythic present.

We hope that the fact that the absence of cause-and-effect sequencing of events is not only a feature of the complex narrative structures of written literature will be shown, too, by the interpretation of the traditional ballads, which also joins in the demystification of the myth of origins that is built into the narrative logic of recounting the tale. Moreover, the narrative potential of the "monstrous" protagonists to bring into question the cause-and-effect chain of events is even more emphasised in traditional ballads by the interpretative turning-point in evaluation of such personage. So one may also speak of the interpretative transference of reading ballads to the above-mentioned presentation of the reading of the myth. Naturally enough, in the interpretation of traditional ballads, one also cannot avoid the transference that the reading of the myth leaves upon the interpreter, despite the fact, as we have already mentioned, that this reading off of traces has no "etymological" character, nor do we recognise in the ballads the incomplete variants of the stories. This is even the more so because the ballads that have probably entered into oral tradition by way of some versions of popular poems or broadside ballads, unknown today, have retained in their plots certain mythemes from written literature, while nevertheless opening up their structure to oral-literary poetics. We will also recognise in the Mediterranean ballad traditions that same reversibility of "influences" that we identified between the myth and oral poetry tradition on the other side of "real"

influences, as the traces that one oral tradition leaves on another, again despite actual intercultural influences.<sup>14</sup>

### **Possible "reader response" to the traditional ballad of Procne and Philomela**

We have already mentioned how the ballads aggravate the hermeneutic identification of the "plot of discovery" by blocking autoreferential quality. In traditional ballads, the motif of the cloth into which Philomela wove the picture, sending the message of her misfortune to her sister, is absent. Admittedly, the Spanish romance allows for the message written in blood on the edge of the scarf, by which the raped sister announces the news of the crime ("*Por Dios te pido, pastor, me escribiras una letra, / a la punta de mi pañuelo, con la sangre de mi lengua, / me la escribas, me la notes, y a mi hermana se la llevas*"). In that way, the mythic iconical sign of "silenced oratory" becomes inscribable once again. However, in the Croatian ballad, the brother-in-law's lie about his wife who has "woven" "white cloth" that has become "easily torn", as well as the lie of the Italian brother-in-law about his wife who needs help in weaving cloth that is as "large and wide" as the sea, is too cryptic a message for the protagonists of the ballad in both the Italian and Croatian tradition, whose common motif is the brother-in-law's lie.<sup>15</sup> That is

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<sup>14</sup> In this study, we have added the Croatian tradition to the Spanish and Italian traditions – which were interpreted by the historical-geographical method (Bronzini, Graves). To date, as far as we know, the Croatian tradition has not been recognised as an international type of the Procne and Philomena ballad. O. Delorko in his *Istarske narodne pjesme* [Istrian Folk Poems] (1960) presents a list of its variants with the published poem and makes the following comment after the presentation of the ballad that we reproduce in the Appendix: "One of the most powerfully structured poems in our selection. Sparing in expression. The fullness of its success becomes obvious only after one has read it and/or listened to it in a more detailed way. Found in a private notebook. Rare. Entirely in the Štokavian dialect, but the initial verses are typically Istrian. Origin?" (1960:67). Admittedly, Divna Zečević spoke of the Procne and Filomela motif as being "equally popular in the oral and folk literary sphere", but she did not specify which oral poems were in question (Cf. Zečević 1978:482-484). On the other hand, the poems that K. Pavletić noted down from his Bakar interlocutor at the end of the 19th century, believed to be connected with the narrative poem in Čakavian dodecosyllabic verses entitled *Historija od Filomene* [The Story of Filomena] (1650, 1672, 1702) – the authorship of which is attributed to Ivan of Zadar – belongs by the type of its poetic discourse to the broadside type of the ballad. In our judgement, only the poem that we have given in the *Appendix* has the features of the poetic discourse that is characteristic to oral traditional poetry.

<sup>15</sup> The correspondence of these formulae in the Croatian and Italian tradition is probably the consequence of intercultural contacts and oral translation. The brother-in-law's excuses for taking away the other sister are similar in both the Croatian and Italian ballads. Cf. the following verses: "*Buen giorno, mamma mie, / ste belle e ste fierite, / ste allore de parturire, / Av'avutu un tuccu a tessere, / quann'e lungh'e larie u mare, / Vole la su sorelle, / ca vol'aiute a ncanalare*" (cf. Bronzini 1957-1961:228) with the verses in the Croatian ballad. "*Pitala Ivu punica: / – Što radi seka Anica? / Kada me pitaš, kazat ću. / Bilo je platno*

so because the weaving formula in ballads is not usually connected with negative experience. This cloth is literally torn out of the hands of the mythic Philomela, who barely intervenes in the ballads at all, and is awarded to Procne, but, even then, only in the utterance of the brother-in-law. And the ornamental death of the wife, mixed in the Italian and Croatian ballads in the glistening of the water and in the gaze of the ballad Philomela with the imaginary or real flora and fauna,<sup>16</sup> which were adopted as intertexts and "translated" in intercultural exchange, are far from being directly autoreferential. The symbolics of the sea in which the girl recognises the death of her sister, the sea as a "space of unlimited possibilities", and also as an "area of the unconscious" (Colin 2004:302), instead of giving explicit commentary on the crime and its motivation, prompts the interpreter to build on the "plot of discovery" by filling in the "empty spaces" of the stark, but associatively rich poetic narration and to reach into the collective imaginary of traditional conceptions and the collective unconscious. In so doing, he/she is unwittingly drawn into writing out what rises from his/her own unconscious, or allowing the ballad to do so. Namely, the fact is that the sea motif and the female womb are linked in the brother-in-law's lies. If it is correct to say that the symbol of the female womb with its enclosed quality contrasts with the sea as a symbol of "an endless expanse in a unending process of creation and renewal" (ibid.), then one can also read off from the brother-in-law's words, on a symbolic level and on the basis of the reading of the myth, the radical locking of the door to any possibility of co-existence. In the Italian ballad's motif of Procne's metamorphosis into marine flora and fauna, one can still gain an inkling of the possibility of renewed life after death which, through ornithological metamorphosis in the myth, serves as

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*navrgla,/ Muško je čedo rodila,/ Bilo je platno trgljivo,/ Muško je čedo plačljivo,/ Poslala mene po Maru,/ da bude Mara dadilja". [Mother-in-law asked Ivo:/ – How fares sister Anica?/ – When you ask me, I shall tell./ Some linen she wove./ A boy-child she bore./ The linen tore asunder./ The boy-child given to weeping./ She sent me to bring Mara./ For Mara to be his nanny.] (Cf. Andrić 1909:227).*

<sup>16</sup> Cf. "Što se to zasja u moru?/ Ili je sunce il mjesec,/ Ili je riba moruna,/ Ili je burma zlaćena?" [What's that glistening in the sea?/ It's either the Sun or the Moon./ Or is it the beluga fish./ Or is it a golden wedding band?] cf. Andrić 1909:227. "A moj svače, Ilija,/ Što no pjeva u moru?/ Al je riba morulja?/ Al je žaba škorulja?/ Al je pjena od mora?/ Al je guja šarena?" [Oh, my brother-in-law, Ilija./ What's that singing in the sea?/ It's either the beluga fish?/ Or is it the toadfish?/ It's either the foam of the sea?/ Or is it a colourful serpent?] C. MH 184/IEF ms 364 (1894-1895:41). "Sòruma Sciura, si beii capìii/ sugnu erba di lu mari./ sòruma Sciura, si beii occhi/ vivuliii su' di lu mari./ sòruma Sciura, si beii labbra/ su' coraii di lu mari./ sòruma Sciura, su beiu corpu/ esti scogghiu di lu mari:/ vorria pemmu ti sentu./ dimmi duvi sî tu." Bronzini ibid.:220-221. U slobodnom prijevodu gđice Claudie Milano: "Sestro moja, Sciura, Vaša lijepa kosa,/ morska je trava,/ Sestro moja Sciura, Vaše lijepe oči/ morske su školjke./ Sestro moja Sciura, Vaše lijepe usne/ morski su koralji./ Sestro moja Sciura, Vaše lijepo tijelo/ morska je hrid:/ Željela bih te čuti./ Javi se gdje si."

compensation and an eternal admonition of experienced sadness and suffering. For its part, the "monstrous" bestiary of Croatian ballads does not represent an actual metamorphosis of the girl into natural phenomena, but is a consequence of her error and is held up as a warning against suppressing crimes into the collective unconscious.

Apart from that, from our perspective, in those same marine depths from which a fantastic (in the Croatian ballads) or the actual marine bestiary (in the Italian ballad) rise up, it is not only that the mythic anthropophagic meal and the metamorphosis of the protagonists into birds have become irreversibly submerged, but also the interpretation that sees in their absence the impoverishment of the mythic story in folklore's "submerged cultural assets". So it is that in our comparatistic plot, the narrative sea in the Italian and the Croatian ballads has also become a place of transformation and "liberation" of tradition from interpretations which, for example, would recognise the decrepit structure of the once integral mythic story in the Italian and Croatian ballads.

The fact is that of all the three traditions that recount the upheaval that takes place when the suitor from afar – who is soon to become a murderer – asks for the hand of one of the sisters, encountering the objections of her mother, who suggests at the same time that the young man takes the other daughter as his wife, it is only the Spanish ballad that offers the most complex characterisation of the protagonists. The ballad, which received its title in the Spanish philological tradition from the female protagonists, explicitly refers to the myth of Tereus and the sisters Procne and Philomela (Cf. Weinberg de Magis *ibid.*:204), even retaining the trace of the mythic name of the raped sister (Felomela, Felumela, etc.). Because of its complex characterisation of the characters, the "plot of discovery" in the Spanish ballad – which is classified among the ballads of "a split within the family" that is popular throughout almost the entire Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking region<sup>17</sup> – is also the closest to the "plot of discovery" of the simple form of *casus*, which is linked with the weighing of diverse ethic norms related to the utterances and behaviour of the characters (Cf. Jolles 1978). Those characters in the Spanish ballad are presented both in their thematic, synthetic and mimetic aspect (Cf. Phelan 1989), which invites us to identify with the feelings of the protagonists, unlike the gnoseological orientation of the myth. So, it could happen that, if we were to decide in favour of the interpretation of the ethic profile of the characters in the Italian and in the Croatian tradition – which would also require reading of the symbolic potential of their open paratactical

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<sup>17</sup> For a list of the published versions of pan-Hispanic romances (Cf. Costa Fontes 1997, 1:103). More than 200 versions, largely unpublished, are kept in the Menéndez Pidal Archive in Madrid. They originate from all the regions of the Iberian peninsula, while particularly rich areas for these ballads are the Canary Islands and the Castilian areas of León and Zamora.

structures in the background of the myth and the folk literary creations of individual national traditions – we would also "Hispanicise" these poems on the other side of actual intercultural contacts, which would also be partially unavoidable. However, inserting the traces the narratively less developed traditions to the Spanish would be equally unavoidable. Thus, for example, the "fantastic" marine bestiary of the Croatian ballad actually warns of the "surplus of meaning" in the suppressed strata of ballads from other traditions.

The mentioned suitor is a member of the upper social classes in the Italian and in the Spanish tradition, while he is given the attribute of "foreigner" (a Turkish or Moorish king in the Spanish and Hispanic tradition) or "seafarer", whose unfaithfulness is a common place in Mediterranean folklore (Cf. Caro Baroja 1986:77-79). The suitor also comes "from across the sea" in certain variants of the Croatian ballad. The "monstrous nature" of Tereus is particularly underscored in the Spanish ballad by emphasis of his sensual nature, even at the moment of the anthropophagic meal: "*Qué me has dado, Blancaflor, qué me has dado Blanca bella?! qué me has dado, Blancaflor, qué a mi tan bien me supiera?*" However, even the Spanish ballad, by way of the mechanics of intertextual axiology, positively evaluates that foreigner, inserting additional instability into the hermeneutic reading of the "plot of discovery": in the Spanish ballad, Turquino, which is the name of the traditional kidnapper in ballads (for example, in the romance *Tarquino y Lucrecia*, also of classical origin) is given the most narrative space, whether it is a matter of narrative utterances or dialogues. While Ivo and Giovanni are obviously lying about the pregnancy of their wives (since they kill them immediately after the weddings),<sup>18</sup> the pregnancy in the ballad is not a lie; moreover, in some of the variants, it is Blancaflor herself who sends Turquino to seek and bring back Filomena. The ballad also tries to justify Turquino through the motif of his erotic passion for Filomena. The rape of the sister-in-law is presented as a diabolical temptation, while the ballad even goes so far as to introduce a voice in one variant of the plot ("*No vas a pasar de aquí sin aprovecharte de la cuñarda*"), which could be Turquino's inner voice, in an internal monologue that is a quite an exceptional phenomenon in folklore poetry, or perhaps even the voice of a new personage, an "enemy" (the Devil).

In the Italian tradition, in which it is possible to differentiate two basic types of plot – one tragic and the other burlesque – that are mutually interwoven, although they have retained their metric specificities, the "monstrous"

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<sup>18</sup> The motif of murdering the wife at sea in the Italian and Croatian traditions can be narrated concisely or by dwelling upon it. Cf. the similarity of the syntactical structure in both traditions in a concisely formed image of the drowning: "*Quando vienni a menzu mari, / la pigghia e la ietta, a mari*" [the C from Nicotera (Catanzaro)]. Cf. Bronzini *ibid.*:222. The Croatian verses in the Bervaldi-Lucić's version from the island of Hvar read: "*Kad su došli sred mora, / Anicu meće u more*" [When they reached the high seas, / He placed Anica in the sea] (Cf. Bervaldi-Lucić IEF ms 17/MH 49 1885:56).



"Guivanni" is also awarded ambivalent axiology. If we pause at interpretation of the version that we give in the Appendix, which belongs to the tragic type of ballad that Giovanni B. Bronzini links with laments (*pianti funebri*) – since metre of an unequal number of syllables prevails in the tragic ballads with alternation of proparoxytonic and paroxytonic rhymes, characteristic to Southern Italian laments (Cf. Bronzini 1956-1961, II: 20, 205)<sup>19</sup> – we will also notice the narrative forms of the narrator's identification with the brother-in-law: the Calabrian ballad explicitly recognises the dissatisfaction of the young man with the mother's decision to give him the other daughter as his wife, while the explicit nature of the ballad is proclaimed in a burlesque tone ("*Si la pigghia pi šcornu e pi nenti/ e si la leva di cca e di ghià*") (Cf. Bronzini *ibid.*:222). Thus, although the narrator largely held the floor until the brother-in-law's arrival again at the house, there is no detailed description of the brother-in-law's crime, although the implicit evaluation of him is negative. The "monstrousness" of this protagonist, who is transformed in the myth into a hoopoe, which desecrates graves – in the burlesque versions – found largely in the "heel" of the Apennine boot, in the ballads from Puglia and Salento in which the irregular paroxytonic rhymes prevail, which can be linked to the tradition of the Mediaeval satires in verse – is given a new "turn of the screw". The son-in-law, who was somewhat shy in the tragic versions and did not have much to say, takes upon himself the role of narrator in the first person in these burlesque versions: he is the one who recounts that he had been strolling one day with "a pair of boots" with which he had managed to capture the hearts of both girls, but how they had cheated him by marrying him to the "uglier one", after he had proposed to the "more beautiful one". Apart from that, those ballads make profuse use of so-called twofold / ambiguous focalisation. The vantage point alters several times in the ballads, even within one and the same sentence: the narrator carries on with his commentary directly from the utterance of the character, as if a baton is being passed in a relay race.<sup>20</sup> In this way, it is emphasised that the viewpoints of both the narrator and the brother-in-law are identical. It can therefore be assumed that when the narrator speaks, the brother-in-law's words are echoed in what he says, and vice versa.

In the lyrical Croatian ballad in which one can identify a similar plot division as in the Italian tradition, as regards the tragic or comic formation of the plot, and also the metre used, octosyllabic verse or heptameter,<sup>21</sup> the

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<sup>19</sup> Bronzini published 29 versions (*ibid.*:177-265) that originated from Southern Italian regions (Calabria, Basilicata, Puglia, Molise, Abruzzo, Emilia Romagna) and from Sicily.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *ibid.*:228: "*Quann'arrivò mezz'a la vie/ u mani m•bitti lu mittie*". The dialect in which the ballads are composed also contributes to the mixing of the narrative points of view, since the verbal endings can relate to both the third and first person singular.

<sup>21</sup> We presently have access to several versions of the Croatian ballad, while its geographic dissemination testifies to the fact that it probably entered into tradition via Italy, and that

brother-in-law is given even more space for a somewhat more positive or, at least, neutral ethical profile. The Croatian ballad, too, narrates how "young Ivo" asks for the hand of a girl whose mother objects to such a marriage, offering at the same time that the young man marries her sister, confirming how the motif of unhappy love or unhappy marriage echoed broadly in the intercultural exchange of these stories told in versified ballad form. The motif of unhappy love, which offers a different motivation to the "foreigner" from the uncontrolled mythic passion of Tereus, is particularly emphasised in the Croatian ballad. Unlike the ballad *Il cognato traditore*, the Croatian ballad places the accent on the way the wife drowned, when her request for water – which could also be the water of life – is met with Ivo's rejection, and the sequence ends with the wife drowning. Apart from that, Ivo is more restrained on his second sea voyage than Guivanni, since the rape motif is absent. It can be assumed that that particular narrative element is absent in the Croatian versions because tradition censors narrations about incest, as in other ballads about incest between brother and sister or father and daughter.<sup>22</sup> (It is also possible that what we have here is a trace of the first part of the voyage of Thereus and Philomela in the Ovidian tradition of myth reinterpretation.) An indication of seduction by the brother-in-law (*a Pavlu dubkom se uzdahlo*<sup>23</sup> / *while Pavle heaved a deep sigh*) is found only in the prose version from the island of Hvar. Despite everything, such development of the plot makes possible the neutral presentation of the "villain" along the entire narrative axis of the plot, even at the end where the punishment of the son-in-law murderer is often absent, as in the Italian tradition.

Contrary to all expectations and far from the tragic *hybris* of the mythic Pandion, the main "villain" in the Spanish, the Italian and the Croatian tradition is the mother. Not only is she allocated the most narrative space in

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fairly early on. We were able to examine 11 versions of which all except one were collected at the end of the 19th century. Most of those versions are unpublished, and are part of the *Matrix Croatica* Manuscript Collection. They originate from Slavonia (the Petričević, Topalović, and Zdjelarević versions), one was noted down in the Gorski Kotar region (the Ugarković version), one is from the island of Hvar (the Luka Bervaldi Lucić version), while three were found among ethnic Croats living in northern and southern Bosnia (the Boškić version and the two Šestić versions). A complete version was noted down in western Slavonia (Delorko) in the 1950s, and many *incipits* of this ballad have been noted down in Istria as the beginnings of songs that have no connection with the original. For a list of published and manuscript versions cf. Delorko (1960).

<sup>22</sup> On censorship as one of the modalities in adapting the plot see Honko 1981.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. the text in the Appendix; MH 49/IEF ms 17 (1885:56-57). The collector, Šestić, published the following comments beside one version of the ballad collected in Bosnia: "They told me that in this song, the Bosnian maiden was proposed to by foreigners, even from across the sea. Anija was not dear to them, so they threw her into the sea, which Marija learnt of from the "Bosnian sea foam" and she ran away, although she, too, found her grave among the waves of the blue sea in the first version" (Cf. MH 20/IEF ms 120, 1889:38).

the dialogues and in the narrator's commentaries, but the mimetic aspect of her character is linked with attributes indicating "miserliness", "greed" and "self-interest", and even "frivolousness". So there are inklings of the mother's miserly nature in the tragic Italian ballads as she notices the richness of her son-in-law's attire ("*Bonu venutu, iènnaru meau/ cu ssa glanteria*") (Cf. Bronzini *ibid.*:222), while that version also ends with the girl's curse of her mother: at the end of the poem, the girl accuses her mother of the fact that she is "dead" or of having sent her to a "brothel", which is the ending characteristic to the majority of the Italian versions. If the mother is assumed to be miserly in the Sicilian-Calabresian versions, there are no doubts on that point in the ballads from Salento and Abruzzo ("*Mo vene u gineri mie/ con du cavall erie,/ con du cavalle d'argiente,/ con du cavalle d'oro,/ manghi si fosse nü gran Signore*") (Cf. Bronzini 1957-1961, II:228). If she was previously considered to be a sinful woman, now it is quite clear that she would confess only to Satan (Cf. Bronzini *ibid.*:232). The readiness of the mother to give her second daughter into her brother-in-law's care is not brought into question in any of the three examples that we give in the Appendix. However, in the Croatian lyrical ballad, such readiness on her part introduces changes into the narrative axiology: the mother who had been introduced at the beginning of the ballad in a positive botanical image as "a vine that bore two clusters",<sup>24</sup> transforms into "a hag" in the verse "The hag gave me Marica". In the Spanish ballad, the character of the mother is somewhat more ambivalent due to the fact that she justifies her decision to give the hand of her older daughter to a foreigner: a mother has the right firstly to marry off the older daughter,

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<sup>24</sup> That particular motif is an example of certain other points of correspondence between the Croatian and the Italian ballads, uncovering a process of motif adaptation in the Croatian tradition that took hold despite the fact that it appeared only sporadically in the Italian. Thus, for example, the Croatian tradition makes profuse use, in its transmission, of the botanical metaphor that describes the idyllic situation prior to the arrival of the son-in-law, as well as the disintegration of that situation after the crime of which the ballad speaks having been committed. The botanical metaphor is found in only two versions of the Italian tradition (the L and B version in Bronzini's book). "*Ieri sira chiantai nnu tàccaru,/ la matina lu cchiai fiuritu;/ se ne spezzi la cima,/ poi scuprire la marina*" (Bronzini 1956-1961:238). The variant was noted down in Botrugna (Terra d'Otranto). It goes as follows in Ms Claudia Milano's free translation: I planted a tree last night./ This morning I found it in bloom./ If you break off its crown./ You will see a harbour. The variant from Pizzo Calabro (Catanzaro) is even closer to the one transmitted by the Croatian tradition: "*O rùndini, e no rùndini,/ chi vai alla terra mia,/ salutami chiia mammal (...)/ Dinci c'avia dui rosi n'càmmara/ e nuuu nci li sapia/ c'avia a Gloria la beia/ ed a Scieurina mia*" (*ibid.*:221). (Cf. M.'s free translation reads: Oh, Swallow, Swallow./ Travelling to my country./ Greet my Mama for me./ (...)/ Tell her she had two roses in her house/ And did not know it./ She had lovely Gloria./ And my Scieurina." Cf. with the Croatian variants: "*Urodi loza vinoval/ Porodi jedna dva grozda,/ I moja majka dve kćeri,/ Obadve dade jednomu*" [The grapevine bore fruit/ One gave two clusters./ And my mother two daughters./ And she gave them both to one] (Topalović 1842:50-51). This is obviously not a case of literal translation, but the idea of the botanical metaphor is transferred into the Croatian tradition.

by which she remains faithful to the customs of her country. Nevertheless, the ballad, too, underscores the motif of the mother's miserliness since, in some versions, she agrees to give her daughter to the foreigner only after her future son-in-law promises to give her opulent gifts. Here, too, the raped daughter in certain variants sends two letters in which she blames others for her fate, and one of those letters is sent to her mother.

The dominant female protagonists in the myth and even in the popular literature, the unfortunate sisters Procne and Philomela, are allocated relatively little dialogical space in the traditional ballads, so that we learn more about them largely through the statements of the other characters, or through the narrator's commentaries. Importance is placed on the sisters' age, of which the mother informs us at the very beginning of the poem, but only in the Spanish and Croatian ballads this information is given to us in an explicit way, while it is in some doubt whether this is a matter of real influences or of correspondence in the development of narrative possibilities in both traditions, or it could be a matter of reference to the identical customs of first marrying off the older daughter.<sup>25</sup> The older ballad sister barely intervenes actively except through the narrator's commentary about rape, cutting off the tongue (the Spanish ballad) or the drowning (the Italian and Croatian ballads). In that way, the traumatic potential of the gender aspect of the female protagonists is muffled.

In Ramón Menéndez Pidal's notation of the Spanish ballad, which is given in the Appendix, the Spanish "Procne" intervenes only in the sequence of preparation of the anthropophagic meal, although she is stamped in some other version with the attribute "jealousy". The character of Filomena, who only rarely intervenes in the ballad, seems to reciprocate her brother-in-law's love in some versions ("*Este camino, cuñada, camino de amores era*") and, contrary to the role of the "absolute victim" in the myth, she herself provokes her sister's spontaneous abortion with her letter. We have already emphasised the lyrical sequences in which the ballad Filomena intervenes in the Croatian

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<sup>25</sup> While the Italian ballads simply state that the groom married "the uglier one", some of the Croatian versions also mention the age of the sisters: "*Ženio se mlad Marko, / on isprosi Jelenu, / ne da majka Jelene, / majka daje Mariju, / Marija je starija, / a Jelena mudrija*" / Young Marko married, / he proposed to Jelena, / but Mother won't give Jelena, / Mother gives him Marija, / Marija is older, / while Jelena is wiser (Cf. IEF ms 44, 1951:16). "*Majka hrani dvi kćeri, / Jednoj ime Anija, / Drugoj ime Marija, / Anija je starija, / Marija je glavniija*" / Mother rears two daughters, / One is called Anija, / The other is called Marija, / Anija is older, / [but] Marija is the real one (Cf. MH 20/IEF ms 120, 1889:38). Spanish ballads, too, can begin without precisely defining the age of the protagonists (as, for example in Sephardic and Columbian ballads), but the following opening is much more frequent: "*Pasó por allí un galán, se enamoró de una de ellas, / se enamoró de la menor, le dieron la mayor de ellas*" (Cf. Cossío and Maza 1933:315). The customary order is inverted in the Catalan tradition: the mother offers the younger daughter, while the groom gives priority to the older sister, which also contributes to the negative evaluation of the mother.

and Italian ballads (the motif of recognising her sister's death in the sea, the thirst formula). Still, the ballads underscore the associative richness of the characters, who are completely passive in the sense of accepting the fate that is intended for them. Thus, the associative potential of the female characters in the Spanish ballad is underscored by the fact that the names of the sisters are found at the end of the verses linked by assonance (é-a), located in that way in a paradigmatic series with other nouns that represent the semantic axis of the plot in the Spanish romance:

– Buenos días, tía Sabel! – Truquillo, muy 'nhorabuena!  
Vengo a ver si Usted me da la su hija Felumena,  
para limpiarme la casa y pa casarme con ella.  
– Felumena no por cierto que es chiquita y muy pequeña,  
te daré a Blancaflor, te daré a Blancabella.

In the later course of the romance, words such as: *lengua*, *moviera*, *tienta* and *tierra*, appear at the same semantically marked places. The traumatic potential of the gender aspect of the female characters is alleviated by the fact that the female characters are denied the possibility of directly intervening in direct speech in the ballad. Still, the associative links that are established in the rhyme and the assonance between those female protagonists, along with the vertical axis of the plot means that the traumatic nature of their experiences is not fully suppressed. However, at the same prominent place in the Italian ballad, the verses in which the anisosyllabic verse interchange, linked by proparoxytonic and paroxysitic rhymes, do not employ the names of the sisters, but rather "brother-in-law", "mother", "letter" and "sea":

– Aucille ce vei vulanne  
vulte la cape a chista vanne,  
sapisse la case de mamma mea,  
ca t' ave' a ffà purtà na lettera  
a chilla cana de mamma mea.  
A ttenite do rosi n•gambe  
e non l'à ssapute tenè:  
iune se la gode u mare  
e l'altra se la gode lu cuanate.

It is interesting to note that even the Croatian lyrical ballad – which belongs to the genre in which, admittedly, the assonance appears somewhat more frequently, with rhyme present only in exceptional cases – displays rhyme in the selected example, which can also be just one more piece of evidence that what is in question is an adaptation in the oral translation, which was arrived at by intercultural contacts with the Italian tradition.<sup>26</sup> However, the selection of the rhyming words, as in the Spanish tradition, places the very names of the sisters in a prominent place:

<sup>26</sup> There is also rhyme in the same sequence in the Italian ballad: "*Quann'arrivò a lu mari ricciu:/ Ced è stu mari che sta mmene tantu ricciu?/ – Da ste menate le so tricciu.*"

– Niti je sunce nit mjesec,  
Niti je riba moruna,  
Niti je burma zlaćena,  
Već tvoje seke očice.  
To čula seka Marica,  
Skočila Mara u morje:  
Kad nema seke Anice,  
Nek nema ni nje Marice!

We have already mentioned that the reconstruction of the story in the ballad's "plot of discovery" is made additionally difficult. Although as many as three characters in the Spanish ballad hear the news of the crime (Blancaflor, Turquino and the mother) this "recognition" is mentioned only in passing ("*La hermana desde lo supo como habia parir moviera*"; "*La madre de que lo oyó, desmayada se cayera*"). Only one of the sisters learns the news of a crime in the glistening of the sea in the Italian and Croatian traditions. It is as though there is a "resistance" of sorts on the part of narrators in the diverse traditions to the story-telling of the tragic plot, so that the plots of the ballad, more obviously than that in the myth, confirm Winnett's thesis on the creation of hermeneutic nodes along the length of the entire plot, with her criticism of Brook's emphasis of the ending, in which Brooks calls upon W. Benjamin. That ending coincides with death in a considerable number of works of fiction, so that death becomes the point of departure of the semantic metamorphosis or, to put it in other words, the semantic metamorphoses that take place along the length of the entire plot line. Thus, although we, too, reject the idea of recognising the ending as the key place of semantic metamorphosis in the ballad, the fact is that the traditional ballad opens up to diverse evaluative procedures and utterances on the part of the protagonists, particularly at the end. So the plots in the Spanish romances vary: Blancaflor kills her husband; he kills her; Divine Justice punishes Turquino, or he commits suicide when he learns that he has eaten his own son and that Blancaflor has been aware of his rape of her sister (Weinberg de Magis 1994). And then again, it is not unusual in the Italian ballads if the odd poem changes the evaluation of the "kidnapping" of the girl in the plot, in such a way that the violent act is transformed into a promise of future marriage with the brother-in-law, as happens in the ballads in which the girl finally asks her mother for her dowry.<sup>27</sup> The traitorous brother-in-law is not punished or even condemned by the explicit commentaries of the narrator, not even in those Italian ballads that are linked to the *pianti funebri* tradition, which end with the lament of the girl, who nevertheless does not commit suicide. In the Croatian tradition, too, apart from the girl's suicide, other possibilities exist for the rounding out of the plot. Those ballads can also end with only the sister's lamentation. In the Hvar version with a prose commentary, the brother-in-law and the sister are

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Bronzini 1957-1961:240-241: "*Mamma mia, beddha mia, / si tieni dote, maria a mia.*"

offered a happy denouement, similar to those in some of the Italian versions; when the sister-in-law hears that her sister is dead, there are no longer any obstacles for the "real bride and groom" to start their life together, so that it is said in the prolongation that "he takes Jelica home".

The foregoing synoptical reading of the Spanish, Italian and Croatian ballads whose narrators are traditionally folkloristic and philological interlocutors from rural communities was not intended to indicate the existence of a certain narrative archetype, but rather to draw attention to the traces that reading of similar narrative structures leaves on all ballad traditions, independently of the orientation of actual influences. From the position of the bearers of tradition, each of these ballads which derive from notations made in diverse periods in different traditions, is included primarily in an intertextual dialogue with traditional ballads from their own tradition, enriched in this way by semantic strata that the ballads do not have in other traditions.<sup>28</sup>

In the Spanish ballad, natural ethics demands condemnation of the behaviour of all the protagonists, although attempts are made to justify them in the narrations. Instead of being one-dimensional, these characters are largely complex ones who surrender to their passions but who are, for that very reason, capable of calling into question social practice and customs that are taken for granted. Although exogamy with a foreigner is clearly condemned in the ballads, in many of its versions ("*Madres las que tienen hijas, que las casen en su tierra;/ que yo, para dos que tuve, la Fortuna lo quisiera,/ una murió manecada [sic] y otra de amores muriera*") the Hispanic ballad queries, more than other ballad traditions do, the tragic consequences of a marriage concluded in keeping with "the customs of the country", and not for love. Evil deeds, punishment, temptation, the Devil, and Divine Justice all play an important role in the plot, for which reason the structure of the ballad is similar to that of an example. However, representation of the characters as

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<sup>28</sup> The Croatian ballad corresponds with the ballad *Frane I Lijana*, in which fishermen catch escaped fish in their nets, believing that they really are "fish". The popular ballad that Pavletić noted down at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century could also be included in the interpretation of traditional ballad intertextuality. It corresponds in its details with the Spanish ballad, as well as with the long narrative poem of Ivan of Zadar (Kapetanović 2004).

The suitor deceit motif in traditional ballads prompted Bronzini to suppose that the Italian ballads refer to the "mock bride" wedding ritual (Fr. *fiancée cachée* or *fiancée substituée*; Engl. *Mock Bride*; Ger. *Falsche Braut*) that exists in numerous European traditions, and is interpreted as a means of driving away spells from the young couple. Cf. Bronzini *ibid.*:187. In one particular version of that dramatised folklore play, the wedding guests pretend to be hunters searching for a doe, a partridge, or something similar. However, the parents palm off upon them an old and lame woman, with the excuse that this is the bride they are seeking. Only after the wedding guests' third request that they be given the bride do the parents bring them the real one (Cf. Lozica 1996:302-307; Bonifačić Rožin 1963:11, 157). The Spanish romance intersects again with the ballad *Tarquino y Lucrecia*, which is of classical origin, and indirectly also with the moralistic artistic ballad of Juan de Timoneda to which it is not genetically related.

tragic and ambiguous creatures, enclosed in a vicious circle of mistaken decisions and tragic conclusions, also manages to have as its theme, similarly in both the Italian and Croatian versions, the extent to which the individual can succeed in avoiding the exemplary nature that is imposed upon him/her by the sacralised image of the world. Through that very thematisation, it also manages to take possible dissident positions.

Finally, all three traditional ballads known under the titles, *Sestrine oči u moru* [Sister's Eyes in the Sea], *Il cognato traditore* and *Blancaflor y Filomena* can be linked with the tradition, more frequent in the Mediterranean region, of first marrying off the older sisters without the consent of the young people involved. Taking that into consideration, the ballad also speaks of the possible consequences of handing over "a mock bride" instead of the "real" or beloved one, both in the tragic and in the comic versions. The ballad criticises that social practice although it also examines certain other themes, such as the social imbalance of marriages between members of diverse social strata (hypergamy) or with seafarers, as typical representatives of unreliable foreigners. It also considers the phenomenon of exogamy in versions in which the seafarer sets out to search for a bride "across the sea", which can also possibly be the eastern coast of the Adriatic in the versions from Ravenna. However, in the attempts to justify the brother-in-law's unacceptable behaviour, incest as a form of revolt, penetrates into the foreground in certain versions. While what is in question in the Italian versions is hypergamy, or marriage to a member of a higher social stratum, the marriage itself leads to a disastrous outcome in the Croatian versions.

It should still be underscored, however, that when the tragic ballads are attempting to justify the brother-in-law, this is not a case of a commonplace in misogynous tradition, by which the raped woman deserves her fate since she must have at least enticed her rapist, "the sinful king" (Cf. Moya 2000:91 and further on). Nor is it a case of the ballads trying to justify Evil. Ballad personages are not real people and their evaluation is not subject to the same criteria as applied to "actual" people. Those traditional poems start out from the assumption of natural morality, but, still, they do not punish the criminal in the denouement. Unlike the mythic brother-in-law, the ballad one's "thematic aspect" is not closed at the end of the ballad, which enables tradition by way of that personage to polemise with certain social practices that are considered unjust (marriage without love) from the perspective of the individual, although they are regarded as desirable from the perspective of the traditional community, since they apply the brakes to excessive individual aspirations. The tragic ballad weighs the diverse norms and suggests that, had the characters made different decisions, they still would have been equally tragic or mistaken. In that sense, the structure of tragic ballads is more similar to the structure of casuistic stories (*casus*) than to the moral exemple. By presenting burlesque characters and structure similar to *Schwank*, the Italian comic



ballad makes us aware of the synthetic aspect of the characters and the space that they inhabit. However, it can count on one more "turning of the screw": perhaps the disguises will never again disappear, and the Carnival-like order, in which incest becomes one of the masks of Eros, will be established forever.<sup>29</sup>

Such a "plot of discovery" or such "plots of discovery", with respect to the diversity in the interweaving of the gendered with the ethnic and social aspects of the protagonists (Cf. Wallach Scott 1997<sup>2</sup>) and that not merely in various Mediterranean traditions, but also within individual traditions, warns of the need for caution in reading a considerable number of poems and seeking for their common denominators. This is even the more so since this is a matter of a simple form of *casus*, in which each variant brings its nuances of diverse evaluation. Unlike the myth in which the established narrative transaction between the narrator and the listener can be recognised as the position of the recipient of the oracle and its interpretation, in the oral traditional ballads, in whose form we recognise the simple form of *casus* (Cf. Delić

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<sup>29</sup> Although we will not go into any detail here on comparison of the ballad and the popular texts of the individual traditions, we should point out the change in the evaluation of the mythic Tereus, as well as the introduction of the ideologemes of foreign oral tradition. In the Croatian *Historija od Filomene, hćere kralja Pandijana* [The Story of Filomena, Daughter of King Pandian](1650; 1672; 1702), which is attributed to Ivan of Zadar, Ovidian myth was three times longer than the original (from 262 verses it grew into 786 rhyming dodecosyllabic lines couched in the Čakavian dialect). Even though the author of the long narrative poem did deny his readers the Ovidian comparison between the exalted emotional states of his characters and behaviour from the animal world, he expanded the dialogical and monologue parts. Thus, Ovid's omniscient and heterodiegetic narrator who knows everything about the thoughts and feelings of his characters is converted in *Historija od Filomene* into direct speech dialogue and monologues. However, even though he faithfully followed Ovid's story, omitting only certain details (for example, the ominous omens at the wedding of Procne and Tereus), he emphasised the negative evaluation of Tereus's character in just the way that oral tradition does not, not even when openly condemning this evil-doer. The narrator bestows on Tereus, who is the "king of the land of Drinopolje" in *Historija*, similar to the "Turkish king" in the Spanish oral ballads, these epithets and syntagmas: "evil Tereus", "impure pagan", "most evil Patarene" and the like, not to mention the epithets Tereus earns from the lips of the enraged Procne (Cf. Kapetanović 2004:298-299). Even though the *Historija* and the ballads probably entered into oral and/or popular tradition around the same time, they persisted in their own and separate micro-worlds that perhaps could only sporadically come into contact and interweave on the level of the poetry discourse and/or of adopted ideologemes. In our case, it seems that there were no such links. Something similar occurs with the evaluation in the artistic ballad by the Spanish poet Juan de Timoneda, published in the collection *Rosa de amores* (1573). With its learned style and faithfulness to Ovid's myth, that romance with assonance on the *ó* and *ía*, unlike the *é-a* assonance in the traditional romance, cannot be considered an early version of the traditional romance, although the plot of the romance reminds one of certain versions from the Spanish peninsula and the Canary Islands (Cf. Weinberg de Magis 1994).

1997),<sup>30</sup> the narrative contract between the narrator and the listener is that of *testimony* that is given particular weight due to the fact that the ballad discourse is a gendered one that is permeated in different ways in various traditions with ethnic and class characteristics, which also represents various possibilities by which "the female voice" opposes heroic history. Marriage with a foreigner bears the symbolic evaluation of a *mésalliance* and the influence of foreign culture on the autochthonic, while the symbolic range of the motif of incest between the brother- and sister-in-law moves in the ballads from referring to war right up to revolt against entrenched social norms. The symbol of the female womb, linked with the pregnancy motif present in all three of the traditions considered, contrasts in its sealed quality with the sea as a symbol of an endless expanse in a never-ending process of creation and renewal (Colin 2004:302), whose symbols are directly linked in the Italian and the Croatian traditions in the sequence of the brother-in-law's lies, underscoring the contrast between the enclosed nature of domestic culture and the open possibilities offered by cultural *mésalliances*. The area in which this interaction between autochthonic and foreign culture unfolds is obviously openly condemned in all the interpreted ballad traditions, examines, but also somewhat surprisingly in ballads with happy denouements, shyly or openly affirmed, despite the entrenched norms. This affirmation can relate only to the local community, but then, only in folkloristic and philological interpretation that notes all the variants in the national region, can also be given generalising attributes, easily transposed into the essentialist attributes of national identity. One could speak of the "cunning" of the ballad's Mediterranean "plot of history" in that it does not blame for the crime only the foreigner but also the mother, so that the thematic aspect of these stranger protagonists, which is augmented along the entire narrative axis of the plot, does not remain open. This also makes the plots of these ballads an exemplary instance of the comparatistic plot of mediation, which questions the cause-and-effect connection between sameness and diversity, between what is close at hand and what is different, between the actual and the desirable, the individual and the

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<sup>30</sup> In that paper, as in others (Delić 2002; 2004b), we have emphasised the exemplary significance of ballads alongside the *casus*; however, in the light of more recent research, we recognise the *casus* form as characteristic for the form of traditional narration such as is often found in oral ballads. Namely, there is no doubt that the pragmatic function of oral narrative ballads confers an exemplary function, so that one may speak in that sense of ballads-examples, although the irreducible "excess of meaning" of the ethical content and the melding of pagan and Christian elements, always direct the genre to evaluation, characteristic to the *casus* form as it is exemplified in the mentioned works. In any case, the Mediaeval form of the exemple cannot be reduced to a moralistic lesson. Therefore, the classification offered in former papers demands supplementation to the *casus* denominator as a simple, comprehensive form that straddles within itself both the "*exemple*-ballad" and the "*casus*-ballad" in the narrow meaning of those words. Today, we would also replace the offered historical-Enlightenment classification by withdrawing those forms into the syntagmic axis.

collective, what is here and now and what was once there (Cf. Guillén 1985:25-37).

### **A conclusion of sorts... and ballads again**

In our reader response to traditional ballads we have intentionally omitted enumeration of *all* the similarities and differences between the considered traditions, as well as detailed comparison between the structures of traditional ballads and Ovid's and other versions of the myth, which we refused to identify as the "foundational trauma" of the oral narrative poems that we have been dealing with in this article, and which have perpetuated themselves through the centuries with the parallel existence of written sources, which would be a variant of the psychoanalytical myth of origins. Evoking the myth in synoptical reading of the ballad was primarily intended to emphasise the hybrid traces that reading leaves in diverse traditions, notwithstanding the course of actual influences. The mythic story has also served us as a theoretical framework for establishing the comparative *plot of mediation* that would be capable of resisting the consideration of ballads as "submerged cultural assets" and its inherent concept of the myth of origin, which is also one of the former "childhood ailments" of the historical-geographical method. In addition, on this occasion we have not referred in detail in the article to the written sources of the individual national literatures accessible to us today (Timoneda, Ivan of Zadar). We are aware that the philological "etymological" imagination could, no doubt, be attracted by a fact such as the proximity of individual traditions to diverse versions of the myth (for example, the possible closeness of the Italian and Croatian ballads that unfold in the maritime environment to Higin's version of the myth, unlike the "continental" Spanish ballad nearest to Ovid's myth), while structuralists could be interested – as is already the case – in the similarity of Ovid's version of the myth to the Spanish ballad that is the only one to include the anthropophagia motif (Cf. Weinberg de Magis 1994). We have emphasised in the Introduction the importance of the "interpreter's choice" in anthological selections of poetry, which necessarily transmits value judgements and a certain interpretation of tradition, as well as the theoretical framework of the article, hoping that they have provided a frame, if not also justification, for omitting detailed analysis of by far the most expansive body of Spanish ballads, along with the interesting Italian and Croatian corpus. The fact that only the version from León noted down by Ramón Menéndez Pidal, probably in the first decade of the 20th century, the Italian version from Matera that was written down by Bronzini in 1953, and the Croatian 19th century version from Stari Mikanovci from Marko Petričević's manuscript collection were fitted under the interpreter retort, while other less representative variants and versions – less representative, in our view, for interpreting the hybrid nature of

Mediterranean folklore – leaving them to float in an aura-like manner as a broader context in interpretation of individual ballads, undoubtedly impoverished the interpretation for all those minute details that change from version to version, from variant to variant, while they are so dear to folklorists and philologists (including the author of this article) and deserve monographic analysis, such as exists for individual traditions (Cf. Gutiérrez Estévez 1981), that would be virtually impossible in the comparative context that wishes to encompass a larger number of international ballads.

However, apart from the representative nature of narrative structures, the selection of the individual ballads that we have looked at through the magnifying glass of reader response – although done with a "heavy heart" because of the omitted examples – has been carried out bearing in mind the objective of comparison of the observed traditions. The intention has been, by juxtapositioning the Italian, Croatian and Spanish traditions, to emphasise only those similarities and differences that cast light on and underscore certain places in Mediterranean ballad traditions – such as "the trauma of the neighbourhood", an integral part of the Mediterranean imaginary – that were in a position to call into question the myth on the origin and cause-and-effect narrative logic of the narrated traumatic experiences. Besides, we tried to underline in our interpretation the importance of the gender aspect of the personages interwoven in different traditions in different ways with the class and social aspect. Here, the fact that the Spanish protagonist was a "Turkish" or "Moorish" king, while the Croatian protagonist came from somewhere on "the other side of the sea", and the Italian was a member of the Italian upper class, all indicated the class and social contentions that are present in the subtext of the traditions themselves and once again proved the "musicality" of tradition, also recognised in the myth, "on the other side of the kitchen muses" of the ballads themselves. Aware that, by seeking out a possible dialogical area between the traditional *evergreen* historical-geographical method and the contemporary Humanist discourse, we could well leave unsatisfied the followers in one and the other camp, we nevertheless gladly accept the risk of the selected method, believing in the necessity for methodological hybridism in the interpretation of the multiply hybrid Mediterranean folklore.

If we wished to reformulate today the question "Why are we still narrating ballads today?" (Cf. Delić 2004a) into the question "Why are we still interpreting?" those tragic narrative songs, we would have to emphasise that our understanding of oral tradition is influenced by concepts such as "post-colonial criticism" or "Mediterranean folklore". We could say that the symbolic structure of the eroticism in these ballads is preoccupied with the phenomenon of "avoiding the trauma of the neighbourhood", but the symbolic is restored to realistic content by way of the synthetic or mimetic aspect of the characters, so that the exemplary significance of the ballads is avoided. And it is through that actual avoidance of the unambiguous lesson on "avoiding the

trauma of the neighbourhood" through the narration of these ballads today, also largely by female narrators, that they deserve that we concern ourselves with the "accidental" translations far away from the "literal translations" in this post-ideological time, in which the essentialist concepts of gender and nation are being deconstructed. The accidental nature of oral translation on the one hand, and the immersion of its symbolic structures in narration of real experience of traumatic events on the other, makes it impossible for us to observe those poems as mere "historical fragments" thrown up by "the tide of time" which, for that reason, cannot be incorporated in some coherent national Mediterranean, Central European or Balkan "history book" (Cf. Bhabba 2002). Philomela's weaving has not faded; it is just being rewoven.

## APPENDIX

### A. Croatian tradition

#### A.1.

Sestrine oči u moru Rodila loza dva grozda, Hranila majka dvi kćeri; Jednoj je ima Anica, Drugo je ime Marica. Prosio Ivo Maricu, Ne da mu majka Maricu, Već daje seku Anicu. Kada su došli na morje, Zaiska Ana vodice: – Dodaj mi, Ivo, vodice, Iz tvoje bjjele ručice! Govori Ivo Anici: – Savi se, Ano, u morje, Napi se hladne vodice! Savi se Ana u morje, Da pije hladne vodice; Turi je Ivo u more, Napi se Ane vodice. A kad je prošla godina, Al ide Ivo punici. Pitala Ivu punica: – Što radi seka Anica? – Kada me pitaš, kazat ću. Bilo je platno navrgla, Muško je čedo rodila;	Sister's Eyes in the Sea The vine bore two clusters, The mother reared two daughters; One was named Anica, The other named Marica. Ivo proposed to Marica, Her mother won't give him Marica, But offers her sister Anica. When they reached the sea, Anica asked for water: – Give me water, Ivo, From your small white hands! Ivo says to Anica: – Lean over, Ana, over the sea, Drink your fill of cool water! Ana leans over the sea, To drink the cool water; Ivo pushes her into the sea, Ana drinks her fill of water. And when a year had passed, Then Ivo visits his mother-in-law. Mother-in-law asked Ivo: – How fares sister Anica? – When you ask me, I shall tell. Some linen she wove, A boy-child she bore;
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Bilo je platno trgljivo, Muško je čedo plačljivo. Poslala mene po Maru, Da bude Mara dadilja. Dade mu baba Maricu. A kad su došli na morje, Zasja se nešto u morju. Pitala svaja Marica: – Šta se to zasja u morju? Ili je sunce il mjesec, Ili je riba moruna, Ili je burma zlačena? Govori Ivo Marici: – Niti je sunce nit mjesec, Niti je riba moruna, Niti je burma zlačena, Već tvoje seke očice. To čula seka Marica, Skočila Mara u morje: Kad nema seke Anice, nek nema ni nje, Marice! <sup>31</sup>	The linen tore asunder, The boy-child given to weeping. She sent me to bring Mara, For Mara to be his nanny. Grandma gave him Marica. And when they reached the sea, Something glistened in the water. Marica asked her brother-in-law, – What's that glistening in the sea? It's either the Sun or the Moon, Or is it the beluga fish, Or is it a golden wedding band? Ivo said to Marica: – It's neither the Sun nor the Moon, Nor is it the beluga fish, Nor is it a golden wedding band, But it's the eyes of your sister. When Marica heard these words, She jumped into the sea: When sister Anica is no more, There'll be no more me, no Marica!
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## A.2. Prozna verzija

"Nevjesticu majka nakitila što je ljepše mogla. Pavle nije štedio ljepe Ane, a kamoli njezinog bogatog nakita – onako lijepu nakićenu, utepi je u morske dubine. Kad Pavle vodio Jelicu, š njom se razgovara ponajviše oko ljubavi; čedna i stidna prelijepa Jelica glavinjavo virila u dno mora i u morske talase, kojih je lađa briječeći parala; ridki mu odgovor davala. Lađa prestala briječiti, a Pavlu dubkom se uzdahlo: u toj par Jelica ugleda na dnu mora gdje se nješto lijeska i cakli, pa je pitala Pavla da li su ono ribe, ljuške ili b iserje. Tada njoj Pavle očitova da su ono kosti utopljene joj sestrice Anice, koju mu na privaru njezina majka bila dala, ali da sad joj se je osvetio i da je ona [Jelica, nap. L. B. L.] njegova. Tako je Jelicu doma odveo."<sup>32</sup>

## A.2. The prose version

"Her mother decked out the bride as best she could. Pavle did not indulge Ana, and certainly not her rich jewellery – beautifully adorned as she was, he pushed her into the deep sea. When Pavle was accompanying Jelica, he spoke to her largely of love; the pure and shy Jelica, who was so beautiful, stared unsteadily into the depths of the sea and the waves, which the boat was breaching; and she rarely answered him. The

<sup>31</sup> Published in the collection *Hrvatske narodne pjesme*, No. 5, p. 143, Zagreb, Matica hrvatska, 1909. This version from Stari Mikanovci, from the Marko Petričević manuscript collection, 1888.

<sup>32</sup> The narrator was Marija Fabris-Musinović; noted down by Luka Bervaldi-Lucić on the island of Hvar. Copy from the manuscript collection of *Matrix Croatica* No. 49, pp. 56-57; stored at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb.

boat stopped heaving, and Pavle gave a deep sigh: at that moment, Jelica looked down into the sea where something was glowing and shining, so she asked Pavle whether those were fish, or scales or pearls. Then Pavle told her that those were the bones of her drowned sister Anica, whom her mother have given to him in deception, but that now he had taken his revenge and that she [Jelica, L. B. L.'s note] was now his. And that is how he took Jelica home."

## B. The Italian tradition

### Il cognato traditore

Iere sere scibbe a la chiazza  
e truvaie la lüsce a lu balcone.  
De stavane do sere  
ca se vulevene ammaretà.

– Mannangille l'ambasciatelle  
si si vole ammaretà.  
– Pe ammarete ce stoche ie,  
cume ve piasci a Ssignurie.

Quanne fuie a lu trasci,  
la chiù belle me cape ie.  
Arruvate a lu spusà  
la chiù brütte me fanne trovà.  
In presenza de tanta ggente  
me la pigghie e nun dichì niente.  
Me la metti n' rsid gavallerie,  
tocca tocca la brutta miè.  
Quann' arriv'a u mari riccie,  
dà lo tagghi la so triccie.  
Quann' arriv'a u mari granda,  
dà la mena totta quanda.  
In cape de nove misi  
a la sereche se ne scì.

– Mo vene u gineri miè  
con du cavallerie,  
con du cavalle d'argiente,  
con du cavalle d'oro,  
manghi si fosse nù gran Signore.

– Buon giorno, mamma miè,  
ste belle e ste fierite,  
ste allore de parturare.  
Av' avutu nu tuccu a tessere,  
quann' è lung'h' e larie u mare.  
Vole la su surelle,  
ca vol' aiute a ncanelare.  
– Spiccite, spiccite, Ros' Antonia,  
è bbinute to canate

Last night I went into the square  
And saw a light on a balcony.  
Two sisters were there  
Who wanted to wed.

– I asked them  
If they would marry me.  
– I should be the one to marry,  
If I take your fancy.

When I went into the *trasuta*,  
They showed me the loveliest one.  
When the time to wed arrived,  
I had to take the ugly one for wife.  
The crowd was very large,  
And I took her without a word.  
I put her on a horse.  
Far, far, ugly wife of mine.  
When we reached the open sea,  
I cut off her braids.  
When we reached the deepest sea,  
There I beat her.  
After nine months had passed,  
I travelled to my mother-in-law's house.

– My son-in-law's arriving  
With two gentlemen,  
With two silver horses,  
With two golden horses,  
As if he were a nobleman.

– Good day to you, my mother,  
She is well and carrying,  
She'll have the child any day.  
She had to weave a piece of linen,  
As large as the sea is large and wide.  
She wants her sister,  
To help her with her weaving.  
– Hurry, hurry, Ros' Antonia,  
Your brother-in-law's arrived,

che te vole pe ncanalà,  
à ggì co to canate  
manghi si scissi co nu fr ate.

– Si frate mi saria  
chiù cuntente me n' avev' a ggì:  
nu fratele me pot' accidi  
e nu cuanatu me po tradì.

Quann' arriv' o mezz' a la vie  
u mani m'bitti lu mittie.  
– Mio cuanato, mio cuanato,  
ci m' a acömenz' a ffà!  
Ci u ssape la mia sorelle  
niente bene l' ava bulè.  
– Tante male put' avè  
ca to sorelle nun pute sapè.

Quann' arrivò a lu mari ricciu:

– Ced è stu mari che sta mmene tantu ricciu?  
– Dà ste menate le so tricciu.

Quann' arrivò a lu mare grande:

– Ced è stu mare che sta mmene tante grande?  
– Dö l' ò menate totta quanda.  
– Aucille ce vei vulanne  
vulte la cape a chista vanne,  
sapisse la case de mamma me a,  
ca t' ave' a ffà purtà na lettera  
a chilla cana de mamma mea.  
A ttenite do rosi n' gambe  
e non l' à ssapute tenè:  
iune se la gode u mare  
e l' altra se la gode lu cuanate.<sup>33</sup>

He wants you to go with him to weave linen,  
Go now with your brother-in-law  
As if he were your brother.

– If he were my brother,  
I would be happier to go,  
A brother could kill me,  
But a brother-in-law deceive me.

When they came to half the way,  
He placed his hand upon her breast.  
– Brother-in-law, brother-in-law,  
What is that you do!  
If my sister should hear,  
She would not be pleased.  
I can do just as I like,  
There's naught that she can hear.

When they reached the open sea:

What's so lovely in the sea?  
Those must be her tresses.

When they reached the deep sea:

What's that so large in the sea?  
– It's here I pushed her overboard.  
– Little bird, who's flying,  
Turn around this way,  
Let it be known in my mother's house,  
I must send a letter  
To that witch who is my mother.  
She had two roses in the room,  
But knew not how to keep them:  
The sea takes its pleasure in one  
And her brother-in-law in the other.

## C. The Spanish tradition

### Blancaflor y Filomena

– Buenos días, tía Sabel! – Truquillo, muy 'nhorabuena!  
– Vengo a ver si Usted me da la su hija Felumena,  
para limpiarme la casa y pa casarme con ella.  
– Felumena no por cierto que es chiquita y muy pequeña,

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<sup>33</sup> Bronzini, Giovanni B. 1956, *La canzone epico-lirica nell' Italia centro-meridionale*, pp. 227-229. The translated version is from Matera (Basilicata province), noted down by G. Bronzini 85 in 1953. My thanks go to Ms Claudia Milano who translated the ballad from Italian into Spanish.



te daré a Blancaflor, te daré a Blanca bella.  
Se casaron, se esposaron, se la llevó pa su tierra,  
y de allí a los nueve meses, volviera en casa su suegra.  
– Buenos días, tía Sabel! – Truquillo, muy n'horabuena!  
Lo primero que pregunto si la mi hija queda buena.  
– La su hija buena buena, en días de parir queda,  
vengo a ver si Usted me da la su hija Felumena,  
para lim piar la casa mientras la otra está buena.  
– Se la vistiré de oro, se la calzaré de seda,  
si eso me dices Truquillo, llévala muy n' hora buena.  
Montó en su caballo blanco, Felumena en una yegua,  
y encomenzó a navegar por unas matas espesas.  
– Este camino, cuñado, no es camino de regla.  
– Este camino, cuñada, camino de amores era.  
– Mira que dices, Truquillo, que es el diablo que te tienta,  
te has casado con mi hermana, yo soy tu cuñada mesma.  
Se apeara del caballo, y la apeó de la yegua,  
y la ató de pies y manos, y hizo lo que quiso della.  
Bajó por ahí un pastor, mandadito por Dios era.  
– Por Dios te pido, pastor, me escribieras u na letra,  
a la punta mi pañuelo, con la sangre de mi lengua,  
me la escribas, me la notes, y a mi hermana se la llevas.  
La hermana desque lo supo como había parir moviera,  
y de lo que ella movió, lo guisó en una cazuela,  
y le diera de cenar a Truquillo cuando venga.  
– ¿Qué me has dado, Blancaflor, que me has dado Blanca bella?  
¿qué me has dado, Blancaflor, que a mí tan bien me supiera?  
– Mejor te supieron, traidor, los besos a Felumena.  
– ¿Quién te lo ha dicho, la Blanca, quién te lo ha dicho, la bella?  
– A mí no me lo ha dicho nadie, pero yo bien lo supiera.  
La madre de que lo oyó, desmayada se cayera,  
y después que record, desta manera dijera:  
– Madres que tengáis hijas, casailas en vuestra tierra,  
que yo de dos que he tenido, la disgracia cayó en ellas,  
una viuda y sin marido, y otra mezclina y sin lengua.<sup>34</sup>

### Blancaflor and Filomela

– Good day to you, Sir Sabel! – Truquillo, you are welcome here!  
– I have come to ask for your daughter Felumena's hand,  
That she cleans my house and that I take for my wife.  
– I cannot give you Felumena for she's young and small,

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<sup>34</sup> An unpublished version, kept in the Old Fund of the Ramón Menéndez Pidal Archive, document No. 71 in the "Blancaflor y Filomena" folder. The ballad was noted down in Valdeón (Riaño district), in the León province, by Ramón Menéndez Pidal and was narrated by Gregoria Alonso. The same ballad singer told another version of the ballad on September 3 or 4 in 1909. For more information on the fieldwork expedition done by Ramón Menéndez Pidal that is related to the narration of this ballad (Cf. Catalán 2001, I:57-58).

I wish to thank Profesor Diego Catalán for his kind permission to publish this version of the *Blancaflor y Filomena* ballad and for his detailed information on the collector of this ballad, and the circumstances under which it occurred.

I shall give you Blancaflor, I shall give you lovely Blanca.  
So they married, tied the knot, and he took her to his country,  
And after nine months had passed he returned to his mother-in-law's house.  
– Good day to you, Sir Sabel! – Truquillo, you are welcome here!  
Then first she asked – is my daughter well?  
– Your daughter's well, she'll give birth any day,  
I have come to beg you give me your daughter Felumena,  
To clean my house until her sister gives birth.  
– I shall dress her in gold, and wrap her in silk,  
If you say so, Truquillo, take her in good will.  
He mounted his white horse, Felumena sat on the mare,  
And they started to make their way through the thick forest.  
– This path, brother-in-law, is not the right path.  
– This path, sister-in-law, is the path of love.  
– Take heed what you say, Truquillo, the Devil is tempting you,  
You have married my sister, I am your sister-in-law.  
He dismounts from his horse, and takes her down off the mare,  
He ties her hands and feet, and has his will with her.  
A shepherd boy chances along, God himself sent him on that way.  
– In the name of God I beg you, shepherd, write a letter for me,  
On the edge of my scarf, with the blood from my tongue,  
Write it and take it to my sister.  
When her sister heard, she lost her child, the child she was about to bear,  
And of that child she prepared his meal,  
When Truquillo came, she served it as his dinner.  
– What have you made me, Blancaflor, what have you made me lovely Blanca?  
What have you given me, Blancaflor, that pleases my palate so well?  
– You relished more, unfaithful one, the kisses of Felumena.  
– Who told you that, Blanca, who told you that, my beauty?  
– No-one did tell me, but I learnt the truth.  
When her mother heard of it, she fell into a swoon,  
And when her consciousness returned, she spoke in these words:  
– Mothers, you who have daughters, wed them in your own country,  
I had two, and misfortune befell them,  
One was left a widow without a husband, and the other one, poor thing, without a tongue.

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### **USMENO PREVOĐENJE I KULTURA: NOVE METAMORFOZE MITA O PROKNI I FILOMELI U TRADICIJSKIM BALADAMA JUŽNE EUROPE**

#### **SAŽETAK**

Članak interpretira kako balade triju različitih tradicija, španjolske, talijanske i hrvatske, preispisuju mitski zaplet o Prokni i Filomeni, u uvjetima današnjeg (postkolonijalnog) ponovnog iščitavanja mitskog zapleta kad je koncept tradicije (mita, balada) uvelike promijenjen. Uz oslonac na metodu čitateljskog odgovora i uvide teorije prevođenja i modernoga humanističkog diskurza u komparativni studij usmenog pjesništva po prvi se puta

uvodi u razmatranje hrvatska tradicija usmenih balada kao pripadajuća međunarodnom tipu balade o Prokni i Filomeni koji je dosad bio zapažen i interpretiran u romanskom baladnom arealu. Pri tome se posebna pozornost poklanja interpretaciji lika i zapleta iz pozicije samog interpretatora tradicije (komparatiste, folkloriste) iz čije vizure ovi baladni zapleti predstavljaju također i izazov za preispitivanje etike interpretatorove pozicije, uzročno-posljedične logike pripovijedanja i mitova o porijeklu ugrađenih u same temelje povijesno-geografske metode, a potiču i na preispitivanje komparatističkog pojma utjecaja. Transferencija između interpretatora i tekstova (mita, balada) dovodi do upisivanja tragova drugih kultura i do njihove hibridizacije bez obzira na stvarni smjer utjecaja. Zahvaljujući transferenciji između interpretatora, mita i balada zapaža se i interpretativni obrat u tumačenju mitske priče u tradicijskim baladama. Narativni i simbolički potencijal "traume susjedstva" o kojoj pripovijeda mit o Prokni i Filomeni, traume koja je upisana i u imaginarno mediteranskog folklor, dobiva neočekivan obrat u tradicijskim baladama spuštanjem simboličke razine zapleta u realnu. Ta činjenica ima posebnu težinu s obzirom da u razmatranim usmenim tradicijskim baladama, u čijem obliku prepoznajemo jednostavni oblik kazusa, pripovjedni ugovor između pripovjedača i slušatelja jest onaj *svjedočenja*, a osim toga, riječ je o rodovski premreženom diskurzu koji predstavlja i različite mogućnosti kojima "ženski glas" oponira herojskoj povijesti, a koji u različitim tradicijama predstavlja različite mogućnosti ukrštanja rodovskog aspekta s etničkim i klasnim obilježjima. To ovlašćuje uvrštavanje ovih tradicijskih zapleta u komparatistički "zaplet medijacije" (Marshall) koji pokušava preispisati dosadašnju tradiciju kontekstualno folklorističkog i filološkog pristupa pristupa ovim pripovjednim pjesmama koje se smatraju "egzemplarne" za problematiziranje etički i ideološki uvijek osjetljivog odnosa prema Drugom (kazivača, teksta, strane kulture, književne povijesti, zbilje).

Ključne riječi: tradicijska balada, mit o Prokni i Filomeni, zaplet, lik, čitateljski odgovor, komparativni studij usmenog pjesništva, usmeno prevođenje, mediteranski folklor, postkolonijalna kritika