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THE DISTINCT AND AUTONOMOUS WORLD OF THE ORAL LEGEND: OLD AND NEW READINGS

The core hypothesis in this text is that oral tradition, too, as a significant component of cultural identity and the main determinant of the folkloristic profession, is a continuous – historical and contemporary – process of multi-layered interpretation of repetitive procedures and symbols in the human community, and not an inherited cluster of unquestionable facts, spiritual values and completed texts.

The interaction between processes of tradition and re-traditionalisation in shaping the manifold aspects of cultural identity is examined on the basis of notations of oral prose, largely mythic and historical legends.

The text proceeds from the assumption that tradition is not a set of unchangeable values but rather a creative process by which each individual, generation, writer of notations, researcher or author defines his/her heritage and identity. Therefore, the paper scrutinises which content becomes part of oral tradition in particular time periods, how it does so (how it is reshaped), in which contexts and the significance given it to, also depending on the ruling scholarly paradigms. The actual process of creating tradition is studied in that context, the tradition that people constantly shape and create, deconstruct and renew, perpetuating certain values and re-interpreting them in the search of supports for self-cognisance. Various interpretative levels of tradition, oral legend particularly, also depend, of course, on who is interpreting them, with which intent/purpose/objective; they depend on the conceptions and the value system of the community and the individual and on the social, cultural and political atmosphere.

Key words: Croatia, 19th century, 20th century, legend, mythology, tradition, re-traditionalisation, interpretation

Systematic notation of and research into popular tradition, primarily poems, followed by stories as well as other oral literary genres, began among the Croatians in the first half of the 19th century and was connected with the National Revival. Ljudevit Gaj, poet, prime mover and ideologist of the Illyrian Movement, also himself notated singular legends in the Kajkavian dialect, largely about native-place localities and domestic historical traditions. They are significant although

almost unknown. In contrast to them, Gaj's clan legend about "the Slavic ancestors" – the brothers Čeh, Leh and Meh – who originated from Krapina, is very widely known, almost as well as the legend of the settlement by the Croatians in this part of the world in the 10th century. The legend tells of three brothers who moved away from Krapina and founded the great Slavic nations: the Czechs, the Poles and the Russians. It has been established that the legend of the three brothers did not originate in domestic oral tales, but they were disseminated in written form through the centuries in the works of chroniclers and historians, while the aura of local oral legend was created thanks to Gaj. Gaj's manuscript also contains a text that was unknown until the 1960s: it is made up of questions for potential associates in relation to tales, information about the past of Krapina, its natural environment, toponyms, epithets, terms for the months, stars and plants, about Slavic mythology, beliefs, customs, and about poems, stories and proverbs. Although research interests had not yet been professionally articulated, they related to everything that could expand knowledge about native place localities and the homeland at large, and particularly to folklore. Patriotism and scholarly incentives were closely intertwined, which was characteristic to national revival and the germ of folkloristic scholarship, not only among the Croatians. For that reason, Gaj's *Questions*, although they remained in manuscript form at the time, lie in the foundations of Croatian folkloristics.

It was the *Pitanja na sve prijatelje domaćih starine i jugoslavenske pověstnice* [Questions for All Friends of Domestic Old Times and Yugoslavian History], set by Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski in the first issues of the *Arkiv za pověstnicu jugoslavensku* [Archive for Yugoslavian History] (1851), that was meant to inspire the Croatians to collect local history and culture, but also oral stories and beliefs. Kukuljević's questions were still not differentiated there or strictly orientated to individual fields of scholarship, but they undoubtedly marked a turning point and the end of the Croatian Revival era. In the first place, this activity was to entail collection of original material "in the field", whence it originated, but its publication and interpretation were regarded as being equally important.

With his published work, Kukuljević himself can be taken as an example of successful achievement of the set objectives; he published two key works in this field at the mid-century: a historical study of the history of Medvedgrad, a fortress standing in the hills above Zagreb, and a broad study about fairies in oral literary sources. Both those studies, each in its own field, were paradigmatic for the new profession, and their influence, a renewed reading from a different angle and accentuation of individual quotations in the light of scientific modes and methods, can be monitored in Croatian folkloristics right down to the present day.

Firstly, about the history: in the drafts of the by-laws of the Society for Yugoslavian History there was mention of "critical analysis of the history of our people". For that reason, a list is given of types of sources that should be collected

in a wide range from classical, written sources and material remnants all the way to popular, ethnographic sources. Everything was encompassed which, in a word, falls under the category of “traditional life” (Gross 1985:426). Historical awareness had to be impregnated with national awareness in the new ideological aura that was mobilising both political and cultural action, but also demanding a new level of historiography. “Patriotic” historical stories were no longer enough, so that historians tried to attain the level of German, Ranke-type idealistic erudite-generic history within whose structure the methodology “would create history as ‘a popular science’ that would offer legitimacy to Croatian national particularity, also, however, within its Yugoslavian framework” (Gross 1996:174).

Kukuljević was a historian, and it was assumed that historians would wield equal influence with their works on Croatian political and national awareness and direct the attention of the educated Croatian strata towards the history of their own people.¹ It is in that context – both methodologically and nationally – that Kukuljević’s study on the history of Medvedgrad should be examined: on the one hand, it is a scholarly historical discourse that describes historical events just “as our fathers left them to us noted down in books, and even more in manuscripts, in sheets and in charters” (Kukuljević 1854:32), while, on the other hand, what is sometimes a very tense story is recounted, combining and fantasising the facts so that it would all be interesting “to the curious learned world”, and would also teach, educate, promote and awaken patriotic awareness. The historical material is given in a supplement, but when there are not enough original historical data, oral and ethnographic sources are called upon.² It was that very search for archaic content and expression of the “popular soul”, reaching back into the very deepest past, which permitted historical legends to be wedged into the scholarly historical section as part of uncertified and unverified history. That inspired an emotional, affective, poetic description of the history of Medvedgrad that had considerable influence on later historians, and writers and chroniclers of the city of Zagreb. Individual statements corresponded directly with historical legends from even older sources, but also with the findings of 20th century research.³ The oral tradi-

¹ Kukuljević was a polymath, his biographers and subsequent interpreters of his historical work (Tadija Smičiklas, Josip Šidak, Stjepan Hajduk) called him self-taught, primarily because he did not have an academic education, and they denied him scientific reading and interpretation of his historical sources.

For example, T. Smičiklas, who gave the most complete description of Kukuljević’s life and work, regrets that Kukuljević did not at least “complete formal education” in Vienna, but emphasises, for that very reason, his advantage and courage, which was inexpressibly well-suited to his prolific output (Hajduk 1998:273).

² In the supplement, 39 historical contributions from the 1251–1657 period were published in Latin.

³ These were primarily parts of legends about the execution of Matija Gubec, the Black Queen and the curse on the city, the subterranean corridors, and about the search and digging for buried treasure around the fortress. More on this in: Marks 1994; 2000; 2001; 2006.

tion in his text is identifiable in later historical but primarily in literary works (Milan Bogović, Josip Freudenreich, August Šenoa, Josip Eugen Tomić, Milivoj Dežman) (Marks 1998; 2006).

In a special edition entitled *Narodne pripovjesti o Medvedgradu* [Folk Tales about Medvedgrad], local historical legends⁴ in a small separate collection of six stories were published for the first time. They were not a notation of actual tales from the Zagreb area, but were rather amended and adapted to the writer's free interpretation on the path of Kukuljević's uncovering of the "popular soul", but can, nonetheless, continue to be regarded as popular tales. At the same time, they are not a mere appendage to the historical text: they augment the historical scenario, since Kukuljević's commentaries and supplements try to give the stories a historical framework just as the historical data are interwoven with legends.

Along with the discovery of their own national awareness, the 19th century was also a century of discovery of their own tradition and efforts, through the collection of traditional texts and the description of individual personalities, to present Croatian mythology. That wish derived in part from awakened romantic desire to note everything that belonged to the body of what was Slavic, in the broadest sense, although largely everything that was Croatian. That aspiration corresponded with the European science of that time, primarily with the work of the Brothers Grimm, who introduced the term legend (Sage) into scholarship and made it known in its meaning today. They established their criteria in that famous sentence "The fairy tale is poetic, while the legend is more historical". It was just that determinant "historical" that was the cause of incorrect interpretations in which the anecdotal depictions of historical events and persons acquired the status of authentic sources. And to that extent, both in their works and those of their followers, there is an interweaving of historical and mythological material.⁵

Croatian research into oral tradition starting from the mid-19th century was prompted on the one hand by the above-mentioned patriotic rapture, but it also found its scholarly warp and weft in the aura of the then-current European research.⁶ Therefore, mythological themes appeared in growing numbers beside

⁴ Kukuljević 1854:129–132: The Black Queen, The Medvedgrad Raven, Mliečnica, The Royal Well, The Large and Small Brick-built Fish-Pond, The Medvedgrad Cannon.

⁵ Testimony to the revitalised interest in mythology (seen and interpreted differently) is found in the rich scholarly literature that has been published over the last ten years or so throughout the world and in Croatia, too, while the Brothers' Grimm *German Mythology* has experienced its first translation into English and its American publication (New York 1966), as well as its publication in Austria (Graz 1968).

⁶ Gaj's journal *Danica ilirska* (*Danica horvatska, slavonska i dalmatinska* u prvome godištu) [Illyrian Morning Star / Croatian, Slavonian and Dalmatian Morning Star – in the first year of publication] together with publishing translated articles by leading Slavic scholars of that time and texts of proverbs, also published poems along with tales with a folklore topic, stylised admittedly into some sort of romantic or edifying text on the discovery of one's own past. It was in that context

the historical articles, so that, for example, texts about fairies from oral literary tradition were published among the first articles that were intended to show the distinct Slavic mythology. The poet Stanko Vraz, who was distancing himself from romantic celebration of the homeland in the *Kolo* journal, published Ljubomir Martić Hercegovac's notations about fairies in an 1847 article, *Pabirci bajoslovni* [Mythological Gleanings]. Vraz gives a critical introduction, saying that "Slavic mythology will never bear that clarity and perfection, which we praise today in Ancient Greek and Scandinavian mythology, because we lack the written documents from long ago, from pre-Christian times, to achieve that". Thus, Vraz continues, we should collect grain by grain in all parts of the homeland, and that he will not be "setting up systems" in *Kolo* "but make known the building blocks of the material for that science", hence the heading *Gleanings* (Vraz 1847:58–59).⁷

In 1846, I. Kukuljević Sakcinski published his work "Bajoslovlje i crkva; Vile" [Mythology and the Church; Fairies] in six parts in Gaj's *Danica hrvatsko-slavonsko-dalmatinska*, which was the first integrally systematic text about those mythic creatures in the Croatian language.⁸ He saw the causes for the neglect until then of mythological themes in the indifference to "the populace and their spiritual treasure, such as popular poems, tales, customs, proverbs, etc.", since previous writers largely took their material from published books. Therefore, it was recommended that one went directly to the common man "to learn from his lips that manner of thinking and spiritual perceptions" [...] because it would be possible only in that way "to cast light upon our Yugoslavian mythology and, through it, on popular philosophy and domestic history" (Kukuljević 1851:86), a norm partly implemented only at the mid-20th century. Fairies as mythic creatures in Croatian tradition were the focus of Kukuljević's interest, but he was not at all interested in genre specificity and diversity in fairy characteristics in each individual example. His work was a monograph about fairies as mythic creatures, with interpretation based on the German mythological school, on the one hand, which gave him well-foundedness and currency and was in step with the European scholarship of that time; on the other hand, as he propagated, he reached for prose and lyrical oral literary material that had been collected by that time and did not rely on literary and historical sources. The general attributes of fairies, as they are described in Kukuljević's work, are also identical with all material collected later (more on this in: Marks 2003). It was not important to Kukuljević that there was

the the story *Vila povodkinja* [The Water Fairy] was published, along with the oldest confirmation of the legends about fairies who built the Pula Arena in one night, and its name *Divić* was found in the 1842 *Danica*... as a poem from Peroj, noted down by the Slavist scholar, Izmail Sreznjevski (Bošković-Stulli 1997:92).

⁷ Stanko Vraz announced that the following *Kolo* book would contain an article by Lj. Martić about *mora* and witches, that is, once again about mythic female creatures.

⁸ The complete article was re-printed in the first issue of *Arkiv za pověstnicu jugoslavensku* [Archive for Yugoslavian History] in 1851.

no diachronic or synchronic correspondence in the material, or that the mythic traits of the fairies from relatively recent material were directly compared and weighed against the mythic notions of fairies in productive long-dead mythologies (Greek, German). As if possible comparison between similar if not common features of Croatian fairies and Greek nereids could confer greater value on our corpus. That search for proof of the greatest possible age of certain researched themes would considerably increase interest in historical legends, particularly in their interpretation and the search of the most bygone trace of a particular locality, just as greater age guarantees greater current significance, and also extension into the future (more on this in Marks 1996; 1997).

Let us still stay a while in the 19th century. Vatroslav Jagić, philolog and professor in Leipzig, Berlin and Vienna, gave considerable space to articles about oral stories in the international journal *Archiv für slavische Philologie*, which he himself edited and published in Berlin. Along with work by other authors, he also published the results of his own research. In 1871, that is, some twenty years after Kukuljević, he published a monograph study on the *grabancijaš dijak* [black school student], simultaneously a cleric and wizard, according to records of oral legends collected largely by Matija Valjavec. His research motifs and scholarly starting-points were different. Jagić was a philologist and mythological interpretations were foreign to him and even almost odious; he was not interested in the functional link between the *grabancijaš* and similar personages in oral tradition, who have remained vital there to the present day. He observed legend through the critical viewpoint on the permeation of folk and learned culture, as one of the obvious examples in which “the origins of popular belief are based on influences from above, that is, it comes from that stratum thanks to which the people otherwise receive lessons in belief and superstition, that is, largely from the priesthood” (Jagić 1948:177).

His argumentation was based on the discovery and submission for consideration of sources, on proof and comparison of the connections between the personage of the *grabancijaš* in analysed notations and Mediaeval sources, and the broader Southern Slavic and Hungarian oral prose tradition and Croatian literature (from Držić, Đurđević, Gašparoti’s *Cvet sveteh* [The World of the Saints] from the years 1752–1781, to Tituš Brezovački’s *Matijaš grabancijaš dijak*).⁹ Jagić’s positivist,

⁹ That particular Jagić paper obviously resounded through the scholarly circles of the time and four years later we find a paper about the *grabancijaš dijak* in the oral tradition of the Hungarians by the Hungarian scholar, Dr. Oskar Ásbóth, in *Arhiv IV* (1880) four years later, while the work of M. Gaster about *Šolomonar*, that is, about the *grabancijaš dijak* according to the oral tradition of the Romanians, was published in the VII Annual of the *Arhiv* in 1884. Both papers stemmed from Jagić’s work, referred to it, discussed certain philological conclusions with the author, and supplemented it in a certain way with texts from their own environments. Their interpretative procedures were identical. That means that they both researched the etymological originals of the term *grabancijaš* and possible enclitics and derivations in their own languages, and then commented on the similarities and differences in the acitivity of the *grabancijaš* as described in the texts.

critical philological approach did not provide for any scrutiny of those stories or for interpretations that did not rest solely and exclusively on factography. Therefore, the only elements he took from the legends about the *grabancijašes* were those that confirmed his stances that could be categorised as philological analyses, while setting aside and rejecting comparative mythic interpretation (more on this in Marks 2008, 2009). Therefore, it is logical that he was more inclined to the migrational theory of dissemination of tales and the theory of adoption, unlike mythology theories – although he did give in detail comparative examples from the Brothers' Grimm *German Mythology* in his explications. Jagić was most influenced by the work of Reinhold Köhler, an industriously critical and philologically orientated collector with broad knowledge of classic and living languages, with whom he published several works giving comparative divergences between Slavic and European narrative material. His interest was focused on comparison of the origins, content and motifs and not on the narrative form. Variants in oral literature, which folkloristic scholarship would later elevate onto a pedestal, dealing for many years with variant and invariant forms, analysing each notation to the utmost detail by various methods, including extra-textual non-verbal and contextual components, were completely irrelevant to him. He chose only the differential elements in the texts.

Jagić's positivist philological method has had a greater influence than all the others on the Croatian scholarship of the 20th century, right up until today. Therefore, it is not surprising that Maja Bošković-Stulli in her 1971 selection of what had been the best or most important folklorist studies until then chose Jagić's (somewhat shortened) study (Jagić 1971). Later scholarly studies, researching the mythic creatures in oral legend, almost always relied on that proven method, searching primarily for the origin of the names of the mythic creatures and interpretation of their morphological and functional characteristics. Efforts to find (or prove) possible linguistic derivative words or enclitics were always in the foreground and they were meant to be a guarantee and confirmation of mutually interwoven borrowings or adoptions from diverse neighbouring or distant nations and cultures (or regions of the same peoples). That was not and still is not anything negative and that method has given rise to orderly registers of certain processed mythic creatures (such as the *krsnik*, mythic marine creatures, the *orko* and the *macić*) (Bošković-Stulli 1960; 1973; Lozica 1995). The aesthetic components of the texts were significant for the inclusion of a text in anthological selections or oral prose.

Natko Nodilo, yet another of the indispensable personages in 19th century research, started out in his learned study on religion – or, as he later called it, the old faith of the Serbians and Croats – “from the main basis of the poems, stories and speech of the masses”, proceeding from almost the same German mythological school, analysing almost the same texts as Kukuljević and Jagić, but without

accepting Kukuljević's approach or Jagić's exact interpretation.¹⁰ He adopted the idea of the Indo-European mythological solar and lunar interpretation of texts, meaning that he found meteorological and celestial phenomena in the texts (the Sun, the Moon, the stars, night and day, darkness and dawn, storms and winds), which was also supported, among others, by Adalbert Kuhn, Wilhelm Mannhardt, and Max Müller (astral-symbolic theory). Therefore, in folk tales Nodilo saw "the last turbid residue, and then, at the very bottom, layers of folk religion [...], the final transformation of myths, the remnant of the people's faith" (Nodilo 1981:17). In analysis of the world of fairies, Nodilo, unlike Kukuljević, stopped at fairy functions in the Croatian texts written until that time, since such a classification was "the only rational one in the form of the mythological" (Nodilo 1981:503).

Nodilo's approach and interpretation also belong to his time; however, the re-discovery of Croatian mythology and the research into the Slavic Pantheon today has not moved on far from Nodilo's interpretations in some of its precepts. So it is that in the battle between the fiery dragon and the cleric, the Christian hero, we can also find the battle between Perun and Volos.¹¹ In her critical analysis of Nodilo's monograph, Suzana Marjanić, similarly to in many of her papers on mythic themes, found herself partly in Nodilo's interpretation in the light of the new scholarly paradigm of mainstream folkloristics, which is turning away from the aesthetic towards the ethical/cognitive and searching for revalorisation and re-interpretation of early mythological and folkloristic approaches, opening up new research into the role of folklore in society, but also new research methods and new research projects in the 21st century. That is no longer a mere philological study of legend only as a folklore narrative genre or as literature but rather, by linking it with an alertness to anthropological research, the researchers also observe it as possible performance practice within the complex of customs and rituals in diverse religious systems (in shamanism) (Marjanić 2002; 2005). Such an approach has also initiated analysis of mythic female creatures (fairies, witches and *mora*) in legends from the viewpoint of eco/feministic interpretation (Marjanić 1998; 1999; 2002; 2004).

Expanded old monograph studies of certain mythic creatures (Bošković-Stulli 1960 on the *kršnik*) do not come about at all because of new data or research, but primarily because of new, multi-layered and more broadly encompassed overview of the researched themes (Bošković-Stulli 2006). In the same way, they extract in-

¹⁰ Natko Nodilo's studies were published in *Rad JAZU* [Papers of the Yugoslavian Academy of Sciences and Arts] from 1885, and a re-issue was published in 1981. On the path of the German mythological school interpretation, Nodilo compared in his study both fairies and *grabancijaš* with Slavic, German and Scandinavian deities or, for their part, with atmospheric phenomena (thunder and lightning).

¹¹ See more on this in: Belaj 1998 and Radoslav Katičić's mythological studies referred to there. See Lozica 2007 for a critical review of that method.

terpretation of old material from the stylistic or aesthetic sphere of verbal folklore and move towards analysis of syncretic entities of belief/magic. Efforts are made to cast light retroactively and to understand the emergence of legend from human attempts at verbal manipulation (or management) of Nature and of society (Marks 2007). It is as though we find ourselves once again in the 19th century. But that is also because of the fact that creatures in the positivistic, exact and unimaginative 20th century were not permitted to live independently in their own *un-divine*, fluid mythic world of lower beings, with their possibilities won through the centuries of transformation, adaptation, assumption of the outlines and natures of others, and transformation from one creature into another. They were not permitted to be a world unto themselves, separate from ours, but also closely interwoven and connected with it. We took their measure from our experience and put them into separate pigeon-holes – even when they wanted feverishly to get out of them or at least to spread out through a few of them. Perhaps they are more perfect than we are and therefore cross peacefully over state and cultural borders, both winning and losing each time. The new paradigm gives them a chance for a new and difference co-existence with people.

Within the framework of its folkloristic (philological, ethno-theatological and similar) research in the second half of the 20th century, folkloristic scholarship in Croatia was significantly marked and defined by the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb, also denoting breakthroughs in the approach to folklore.¹²

From the 1950s to the 1970s, prior to major demographic and social changes in the villages, major systematic field research, both collective and individual, began. It gave rise to numerous notations, which were largely published later in books and in anthological selections.¹³ Speaking from today's perspective, after a time lapse of half a century, it can be said that it was those very notations that became the fundamental body of Croatian oral heritage in the 20th century; they were also probably the last collections to be amassed and made relevant in such a way that a group of diverse humanistically and philologically trained professionals noted down – each from his/her own field of scholarship – the still living forms of oral literary tradition. They were also the basis for establishing folkloristics as a scholarly activity that stood opposed to the 20th century's more or less politically-hued

¹² See more on the Institute's research in: Marks and Lozica 1998.

¹³ Bošković-Stulli 1959; Delorko 1960; five volumes in *Pet stoljeća hrvatske književnosti* [Five Centuries of Croatian Literature]: Delorko 1963; 1964; Bošković-Stulli 1963; 1964; Bonifačić Rožin 1963.

utilisations, supporting research of popular creativity in the social and historical context. However, it was itself to pay tribute in large part to political implementations in its time. For its part, that corresponded with the context of socialism, but also with the current scholarly paradigms of that period.

The article by Roman Jakobson and Petr Bogatyrev *Folklor kao naročit oblik stvaralaštva* [Folklore as a Special Form of Creativity],¹⁴ undoubtedly had far-reaching influence, leading to a different type of investigation of oral prose, in which the difference between the functioning of written and oral literature was emphasised. Along with Propp's *Morfologija bajke* [Morphology of the Folk Tale] and then-current theory about context and performance, that article in the late 1960s enabled M. Bošković-Stulli to change the scholarly paradigm in domestic folkloristics. In 1968, obviously after the conference in Budapest in 1963 dedicated to research into legend,¹⁵ she wrote her text on legend as a stumbling block in the classification of oral prose, presenting the dilemmas of that time and classificational solutions on theme, motif, function and other criteria for differentiating individual groups of legends.¹⁶ That has remained the sole text in Croatian scholarship until today that deals with legend from the theoretical aspect and it was, in fact, the foundation for all subsequent classification of legend in regional collections and anthology selections. Legend was divided on all sides according to motifs, while comparison with other Croatian, broadly Slavic and other variants of the same motif were noted (along with classificational numbers of certain outlined and partly published catalogues of that time). All the known confirmations in printed and manuscript sources were quoted. In some regional collections (from the Istrian Peninsula and the island of Brač) those notes grew into authentic studies on the individual motifs, since they did not stop only at listing variants from printed and manuscript sources, but they were mutually confronted and compared, while the origin of the motif and the morphological and functional features of the mythical being were analysed in detail.

M. Bošković-Stulli's article raised the question of catalogisation and classification of legends and that of setting the borders between legend and other prose genres. The issue has remained largely unsolved to the present day, some of those questions having disappeared with the change in the research angle, while the

¹⁴ First published in Croatian in: *Usmena književnost: Izbor studija i ogleda* [Oral Literature: A Selection of Studies and Models] (Bošković-Stulli 1971).

¹⁵ That was a conference of the Committee for Legend Research of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (the ISFNR), at which the eminent researcher Kurt Ranke presided, while as early as in the following year, 1964, the reports and discussion were published in *Acta Ethnographica*. The Proceedings contained 14 papers and 10 "discussions and results of research".

¹⁶ The article was first published in 1968 in *Radovi Zavoda za slavensku filologiju* [Papers of the Institute for Slavic Philology], No. 10, Zagreb, and was reprinted in Bošković-Stulli 1975:121–136. Another important work is that of M. Bošković-Stulli also dedicated to the fairy-tale (1983): definition of concepts and the specificities of terms in the Croatian language.

compilation of a national catalogue has ceased to be topical. This is regrettable because of the practical nature of all catalogues, since we would be able to move more easily and quickly to some extent and to cope better in the world of mythic creatures if we had at least some common, even roughly outlined guidelines. Today's response to catalogues is partly to be found in the dictionaries of mythic creatures (or handbooks with similar titles that have been burgeoning in recent years, largely in the eastern world during the transition period),¹⁷ these actually being the same attempt to enclose and restrain the mythic beings between two covers, accompanied by a description of their differential features in relation to other creatures. In my opinion, the power of the consumer society has also played a role here – since a catalogue is, after all, the result of long-term and painstaking research by only a small group of scholars, while dictionaries and similar popular, illustrated handbooks can sell well. In some way, they fit in well to our story of re-traditionalisation: they offer a broad and diverse readership old national mythic creatures that are tidily organised, well-described and outlined (if not also drawn).¹⁸

Propp's classification of legends, which also includes an entire complex of *skaz*, so-called "stories from life" (life stories, autobiographic notations, personal experiences from army service, war, reminiscences about childhood, youth, and school days) shaped in keeping with the narrative laws of legend, also caused a shift in research and expanded its thematic borders. A large body of texts that had been invisible until then became a part on an equal footing of an old oral literary type. With the introduction of the *skaz* into the entire corpus of legends, a classificational solution was found for all the numerous texts that had, admittedly, belonged to oral tradition, but had been "marginal" and transitional towards non-literary genres, not lending themselves to classification under any of the customary thematic groups. It is not most significant in this process that such contemporary notations can be included equally in this way in the complex of oral legend, but rather that it also throws a new light on very old notations. Thus, for

¹⁷ Over recent years, a dictionary of mythic beings has been published in Bulgaria, Macedonia, and one is being prepared in Slovenia and in the Czech Republic; preparatory work is being done on the Croatian material.

¹⁸ Individual studies deal with particular motifs in Croatian legends. The mythic creatures in Croatian legends are discussed in detail in collections (Bošković-Stulli 1959; 1968; 1975a) and in certain thematic discussions: about the *krsnik* (Bošković-Stulli 1960=1975; amended and expanded edition 2006), about witches (Bošković-Stulli 1991), about the *orko* and the *macić* (Lozica 1995=2002:41–97), about *buried treasure* (Karanović 1989; the Croatian material is part of a broader entirety), about fairies (Marks 2003), about fairies, witches and wizards (Čiča 2002).

The historical themes in historical legends are considered in individual studies: on the Peasant Revolt (Zečević 1973), on the lives of the serfs (Bošković-Stulli 1984:151–182), on the collective murder of the local lord (Bošković-Stulli 1991:108–123), those that have sprouted in places of some violent death (Rajković 1988:87–98 and 1993), on Diocletian (Marks 1997), on Matija Gubec (Marks 1998), on the relation between the history and legends about Medvedgrad (Marks 2006).

example, historical autobiographic texts (for example, Baltazar Adam Krčelić's *Annuae* from the 18th century) would now be read in a new way. Authors who had been declared almost to be historical falsifiers became from this view interesting and modern authors. It was discovered that the historical text was accompanied by lively, almost newspaper reporter-like interest in everyday life, gossip, in banal events which, at this distance in time, seem even more interesting than the so-called real history. These notations and their age demonstrate the durability of the *skaz* as a type. The importance of that genre would be shown in Croatia during the 1990s by the opening up of numerous war stories and recounted post-war traumas, biographies, diaries, and war-time testimonies where scholarly papers would unify the previous research into everyday life with an ear for contemporary anthropological considerations (Jambrešić 1995; Jambrešić Kirin 1996).

A return of sorts to semantic interpretation in the light of the literary anthropology that brought folkloristic works nearer to the anthropological research into cultural values was characteristic to Croatian folkloristics in the 1990s. Everyday literature was researched in Zagreb and its immediate surroundings (Marks 1994; Zečević 1976; 1986; 1995) and the results of that research unified both old and more recent research, the seasoned paradigms and these new ones. The texts (or their fragments) that were collected belonged largely to the legend genre. Folklore was revealed in a different light: as a contemporary and dynamic process. Thus, the narratives that emerged from everyday situations, recounting of personal experiences, stories directly prompted by television broadcasts, newspaper articles, urban rumours, and gossip became the subject of research. It was seen that those stories undoubtedly comprised an independent category of oral literary prose, close in genre to legend, but corresponding in theme and style characteristics to modern mainstream urban stories (Bošković-Stulli 1978; 1983; 1984; Zečević 1976; 1995; Marks 2000; 2001).

However, some ten years ago, at the change of the century and the millennium, it was as if our field of interest turn back once again and jumped the century behind us so that today's critical examination of only synchronic research, notations in which the current performance with all the accompanying contextual and performative components was more important than the text itself. The research that had dominated in the last thirty years or so of the 20th century, would once again discover the 19th century, not only as a "hidden treasure chest" but also as a source of classificational and theoretical paradigms that, with certain re-interpretations, we would found to be unbelievably satisfying. That is shown by re-readings, and actualisation and return to the old studies referred to, but also by "adjustments" to our own earlier studies with augmentations derived, conditionally stated, from the new paradigms, but that could also be based on certain of the mentioned mythological studies from the 19th century (Bošković-Stulli 2006; 2006a; Marjanić 2005; Marks 2007; 2007a). It is that very shift in the scholarly

paradigm in world folkloristics away from the aesthetic towards the ethical/cognitive that demands revalorisation of old mythological folkloristic approaches and opens up new research into the role of folklore in society. That “re-semantisation” of folklore seeks revaluation and re-interpretation of folkloristic achievement from the last century, new research methods and new research in the 21st century, so that it sometimes seems that traditionalisation is unavoidable.¹⁹

During the period of transition, and particularly during and after the Homeland War, the desire for uncovering one’s own past (heroic, better, more important, with a fairy-tale quality, mythic, and graced by a ruler) accompanied the increased patriotic enthusiasm. Therefore, there was a sudden expansion in the legend collections (correctly called so since it seems that that particular title indicates something wondrous, celebrated, exceptional, more valuable than other stories, and legends is what they always are as far as genre is concerned), which were largely edited by authors or by lovers of history and the past. That re-traditionalisation can be seen in the adaptations of the oldest historical texts, recounted in the style of learned historical legend, referring to old sources (*Ljetopis popa Dukljanina* [The Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja], the work of Porfyrogenet) – but also providing casually re-told notations of historical legends that had been published in the collections of institutional associates, also implying almost always that they were historically authentic without any ear for the historic nature of the genre components of legend (Kovačević 1993; Vrkić 1995; Đurić 2005).²⁰ The intention of the editors (and the publishers) of those collections is to illustrate history, but also to teach by example, to inform, and to educate, almost as in the awakened enthusiasm of the 19th century. The numerous historical novels that appeared in that very period in Croatian literature (Nedjeljko Fabrio, Ivan Aralica, Ivo Brešan) can illustrate the postmodern, but also the thesis on re-traditionalisation.²¹

At the same time, editors are publishing re-editions of old classical collections of tales and legends (Fran Mikuličić, for example), collections put together during the 1950s and 1960s but preserved in manuscript form without having been

¹⁹ At the same, a series of popular publications and editions (with pretensions to be scholarly or at least professional) with mysterious titles appeared, such as *Tajne u džepu* [Secrets in the Pocket]. Here, the mythic beings were described romantically and arbitrarily, largely in the European literary tradition. Croatian oral and literary tradition was ignored, perhaps because it did not seem sufficiently attractive to the authors (Viktoria Faust: *Vampiri* [Vampires], 1999.; *Vješnice – knjiga sjena* [Witches – A Book of Shadows], 2000.; *Vile* [Fairies], 2002. All of them were published in Zagreb by *Zagrebačka naklada*).

²⁰ I am giving only typical and random examples as illustration, while detailed analysis of that output, which was exceptionally interesting, is outside the framework of this text.

²¹ The only authors whose texts with historical themes (connected with Zagreb) show an ironic disengagement from their own history, showing national history without pathos and with parody in the style of contemporary postmodern and pseudo-historical novels are Ivan Kušan with his novel *Medvedgradski golubovi* [The Doves of Medvedgrad] (1995) and Hrvoje Hitrec with his collection of stories *Zagrebačke legende* [Zagreb Legends] (1994).

published to date as integral local collections belonging only to some particular area, with only individual texts having been included in anthology selections of stories within the entire corpus of Croatian oral literary tradition (Konavle, Župa Dubrovačka, and the Dubrovnik Littoral). Newly assembled local collections of mythic legends are being published (Istria), not only to preserve, publish, and to teach about what has been collected, but also for drafting of mythic maps with exact locations intended for tourists (Orlić 1986; Ogurlić 1996); fantastic Istrian beings in the new publications are represented as creatures between fiction, the everyday and ritual (Perić and Pletenac 2008). Re-traditionalisation can also be seen in Boris Perić's expansive novel *Vampir* [Vampire], which is based on Valvasor's 17th century notations about Jura Grando, the Istrian vampire. The popularity of that novel, the opening of a café named *Vampire*, and the printing of special "vampire cook-books" speak in support of the newly-discovered and exciting hunt for legend and local tourism's exploitation of legend.

In an era of transition and globalisation, the question of cultural identity in the European and world context has become a focal point of discussion and reflection – in the humanistic sciences and in everyday life. Creation of the Croatian State and the Homeland War during the 1990s called up the past for good reason and sought the revalorisation of history. In that process, we sometimes forgot that the past had indeed passed and ignored the discursive nature of history. A return to one's roots in the service of building national identity deepened the interest in folklore and traditional culture, but – under the influence of public opinion and the media – it also renewed to a certain extent the 19th century conception as a remnant of national days of yore.

That process in the social sciences today is called re-traditionalisation and is usually interpreted as a response to the de-traditionalisation carried out under socialism. Analogous processes exist in post-colonial and Islamic societies – but also in Japan, America and Europe. Analysis and comparison of interpretational procedures in the oral prose of the Croats during the 19th and 20th centuries, primarily in legend, should reflect the tendencies referred to above. I chose legend because it is narratively a more current and productive genre than the other prose genres, than fairy tales, for example, while its mythic and historically constituent components are also much more adaptable to diverse and various adaptational utilisations and interpretations.

In today's aura of awakened national, regional and local identity, too, folklore is blooming once again, dissolving the synthetic dichotomy of folklore and folklorism, captivating the media, taking up a new symbolic role and submitting to brisk re-evaluations at many social levels. Legends are incredibly hardy, adaptable and attractive at the same time to various readings, interpretations and utilisation. It is up to us to watch what is happening, to notate, comment, but never to try to intervene in that distinctive, remarkable, autonomous and specific world.

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OSOBIT I SAMOSVOJAN SVIJET USMENE PREDAJE: STARA I NOVA ČITANJA

SAŽETAK

Glavna je hipoteza teksta da je i usmena tradicija, kao bitna sastavnica kulturnoga identiteta, i glavna odrednica folklorističke struke, kontinuirani (povijesni i suvremeni) proces višeslojne interpretacije repetitivnih postupaka i simbola u ljudskoj zajednici, a ne baštinjeni skup neupitnih činjenica, duhovnih vrijednosti i dovršenih tekstova.

Na zapisima usmene proze, poglavito mitskih i povijesnih predaja, razmatra se interakcija procesâ tradicije i retradicionalizacije u oblikovanju mnogostrikih aspekata kulturnog identiteta. Polazi se od pretpostavke da tradicija nije skup nepromjenljivih vrijednosti, nego kreativni proces kojim svaki pojedinac, naraštaj, zapisivač, istraživač ili književnik određuje svoje kulturno naslijeđe i identitet. Stoga rad ispituje koji se sadržaji u pojedinim vremenskim razdobljima upisuju u usmenu tradiciju, kako se upisuju (preoblikuju), u kojim kontekstima i koja im se značenja pridaju, ovisno i o vladajućim znanstvenim paradigmatima. U tome se kontekstu propituje proces stvaranja tradicije, koju ljudi stalno oblikuju i stvaraju, razgrađuju i obnavljaju, perpetuirajući neke vrijednosti i reinterpretirajući ih u potrazi za osloncima samospoznaje. Različite interpretativne razine tradicije, poglavito usmene predaje, ovise dakako i o tome tko je interpretira, s kojom namjerom/svrhom/ciljem, ovise o predodžbama, vrijednosnom sustavu zajednice i pojedinca te o društvenom, kulturnom i političkom ozračju.

Ključne riječi: Hrvatska, 19. st., 20. st., predaja, mitologija, tradicija, retradicionalizacija, interpretacija