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**P**andemija Covid-19 in družba

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**L**a pandemia Covid-19 e la  
società

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**R**eflections of pandemics  
Covid-19 in the society

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# Emotions of Fear in Narratives about the Plague and the Contemporary Pandemic

==== Monika Kropej Telban =====

Pripovedi o kugi in drugih pandemijah povzročajo strah in napovedujejo smrt in lakoto ter povzročajo vrsto čustev med ljudmi, predvsem nelagodje. V tem članku je analizirano, kako pripovedno izročilo o kugi, čeprav staro in preživeto, ponovno prihaja na dan v kolektivnem spominu in podzavesti, ko ljudje ponovno doživljajo podobne izkušnje, kot jih je izkusilo človeštvo pred stoletji. Čeprav pandemija Covid-19 – s katero se soočamo med leti 2019 in 2022 – ni tako smrtonosna kot kuga, jo vendar občutimo, kot stalno grožnjo. V članku je predstavljeno, kako stari tradicionalni družbeni konstrukti ponovno prihajajo na dan v sodobnih povedkah in pripovednih diskurzih o Covidu-19 in kako se občutje strahu odraža v družbenem življenju ljudi, kakor tudi v njihovih pripovedih, vicih, teorijah zarote in lažnih novicah, ki krožijo po spletu.

.....  
 KLJUČNE BESEDE: pandemija, kuga, Covid-19, folklor, sodobne povedke

Narratives about the plague and other pandemics essentially induce fear and predict death and hunger, triggering a variety of emotions among people, particularly anxiety. The paper discusses how the motifs of plague narratives – despite being ancient, traditional and old – resurface from the collective memory and the subconscious as people now have experiences comparable to those endured by humanity centuries ago. Although the COVID-19 pandemic that confronted the planet from 2019 to 2022 is not as deadly as the plague, it is still an ongoing existential threat. A discussion is also presented of the ways that old traditions and social constructs re-emerge in contemporary narratives and discourses about COVID-19, and how the atmosphere of fear affects the emotional and social lives of the people, along with their narratives, jokes, fake news, and the conspiracy theories that have been circulating online.

.....  
 KEYWORDS: pandemic, plague, COVID-19, folklore, contemporary legends

## INTRODUCTION

In Slovenian and some other Slavic languages, the word “fear” translates to *strah*, which may also mean “ghost”. Discussed is a special kind of spectre of fear – the pandemic or global sickness, also known as the Black Death.<sup>1</sup> Contemporary legends and discourses

<sup>1</sup> The name “Black Death” for the plague appeared during the devastating global epidemic of bubonic plague that struck Europe and Asia in the mid 1300s. The plague arrived in Europe in October 1347 when 12 ships from the Black Sea docked at the Sicilian port of Messina. The name “Black Death” was later used for all plague or cholera sicknesses.

about the COVID-19 pandemic are compared with the experiences of similar fears and distress during the plague, cholera, the Spanish flu, and other similar virulent diseases.

Lutz Röhrich established that among narrative folklore it is precisely legends that are the most pessimistic and often characterised by anxiety or fear since the humans appearing in them are typically at the mercy of supernatural forces, and in folk narratives there is a looming, primary fear of being decimated, even vanquished by a certain disease (Röhrich 2018: 252). Further, Jon D. Lee claims that all disease narratives “revolve around a single emotion in all its many forms: fear”, and that the more frightened and anxious those listening felt about the plot line, the more likely they were themselves to pass it on (Lee 2014: 169, 171; as cited in: Hiimäe et al. 2021: 25).

In the modern European narrative world, frightening supernatural creatures in particular are preserved, expressing the fear of dying, of the dead, of the dangers and terrors of black or malefic magic and, not least, a perfectly well-founded fear of illness (Šešo 2020: 192). These types of stories, namely, also help to disperse and transmute the fears that overwhelm people in certain situations.

The plague, as referred to in the lore of some European nations, had nearly fallen into oblivion before the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in 2019 in Wuhan. This global phenomenon revived narrative folklore surrounding a ‘plague event’, also seeing it widely return to the people’s mode of cognition and mental discourse.<sup>2</sup>

After exploring the Estonian folk narrative on the plague in comprehensive archived materials (Hiimäe 1997), Reet Hiimäe established that within the framework of legends about dangerous places – for instance of the places where spread of the plague is mentioned – a mental map can be formed, which covers the threat’s emergence in the community, and escaping from it (Hiimäe 2016, 179–181). Timothy Tangherlini concluded similarly – also while focusing on plague narratives – that in folk belief, people quite logically try to create narrative maps of the route of the plague spirit as personification of the disease (Tangherlini 1988). Many similar motives were spread in plague narratives across Europe because folklore shows certain universal patterns and activating methods.

### BRIEFLY ON FOLK NARRATIVES ABOUT THE PLAGUE AND HEALING PRACTICES<sup>3</sup>

Plague epidemics have stricken humanity in various periods of history, causing massive death of the population, even the collapse of cultures. In the wake of the Plague of Athens, the Ancient Greek state began to shrink, the Antonine Plague in the second half of the 2nd century triggered the Roman Empire’s downfall, while in the 6th century the Plague of Justinian likewise shook the foundations of the Eastern Roman Empire. The Bubonic Plague or Black Death, which killed nearly one-third of Europe’s

<sup>2</sup> Kaarina Koski (2016, 32) introduced the term “mental discourse” in the sense of a cognitive map reflecting the conditions in which people live, and their narratives about what is happening to them.

<sup>3</sup> I analyse the plague narrative tradition and healing practices in more detail In Kropěj Telban (2022).



Figure 1: Danse Macabre, Church of the Holy Trinity in Hrastovlje, painted by John of Kastav, finished in 1490. The motifs are influenced by the medieval pandemic of the plague ([https://sl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mrtva%C5%A1ki\\_ples\\_\(Hrastovlje\)](https://sl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mrtva%C5%A1ki_ples_(Hrastovlje))).

population, arrived on the continent in 1347 on trade ships from Central Asia. The Great Plague in the late 17th century also left grave demographic and economic devastation, particularly across Europe.

The plague anchored itself in the people's historical memory and subconscious. Already in Ancient Rome, it was thus stated: "From plague, pestilence, and famine, Good Lord deliver us!" [*A peste, fame et bello – Libera nos Domine!*].

In folk ideation, the plague was an evil spirit killing cattle and people. Affected populations, especially in Europe, conceived it as a supernatural or mythological entity, the way they imagined death, nightmare, famine and various other afflictions. In a personified form, it appeared in the demonology of many nations, as a figure of one of the greatest fears in those epochs and places where it was ravaging. The plague narratives in European folklore were preserved as either accounts of the conditions and escape from the pandemic of the plague and its potential treatment, or as folk legends of the Plague personified – a demon massacring people and animals. This ideation joined death, famine and pestilence as some of the biggest archetypal fears of the time.

The motifs of the folk narratives concerning the plague were included in "The Migratory Legends" catalogue (1958) by the Norwegian folklorist Reidar Christiansen in the sub-chapter *Legends Concerning the Great Plague*, (7080–7095). Their thematic horizon is naturally far more diverse, as seen in the materials preserved in the archives of various research institutions, academia, and in printed sources.

In the Slovenian space, a folklorist who wrote about the plague and accompanying famine – in the shape of the insatiable creature *Netek* – was Ivan Grafenauer (1958). The plague was associated with hunger, which the *Netek* personifies in Slovenian folk tradition. People narrated that *Netek* (Gluton) travelled the world, bringing hunger to a homestead if he was not fed well while visiting. Similar narratives can be found in other parts of the Alpine world, among the Rhaeto-Romance people in Switzerland, and in Voralberg in the Austrian Alps, in the figure of the voracious man Glutton.

Elsewhere as well, the narrative tradition speaks of war and famine related to the plague. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, legends state that a year of plague is followed by a year of famine (Softić 2020: 165). Romanian peasants, in fearful expectation of the plague which supposedly wanders around in the figure of a woman, left food by the side of the road for travellers to feast on, with a view to turning the malaise away (Grafenauer 1958: 190).



Figure 2: Gvido Birolla: the Plague (Möderndorfer, Šašel 1972).

In the European space, the plague is represented in folklore by personified images of a woman, man, boy, girl, or a contagious travelling pair. In regions where the word “death” is of the masculine gender, the plague is often also represented as a man, while where “death” is feminine in gender, the plague often analogously appears in the image of a woman. Also frequent are representations of contagious couple – a man and woman who go from town to town causing people to fall ill. A German legend from Schweinfurt by the River Main talks about a deathly man reaping the souls of people and a pestilent woman (the plague) raking them aside. Similar narratives have been preserved in Central Europe, especially in the Alpine world, they have been documented in Northern Europe as well, even in Iceland as analysed by Terry Gunnell (2001: 49–50).

Swedish legends narrate how the plague arrives from the South in the form of a beautiful young boy followed by a pestilent girl (*pestflicka*), who sweeps her broom outside houses causing everyone in the village to perish (Grimm 1835: 994).

In the Estonian narrative tradition, the plague is personalised in masculine form as a young or “black” man, enumerating the places where he is destined to go, allowing the people to evade the plague or attempt to prevent it (Hiimäe 2016).

In Europe, a widespread idea was that the plague cannot cross water alone and will frequently be carried or ferried to another place. Timothy Tangherlini establishes that Scandinavian people often spoke of a plague that travels a set route to the places it is headed to, being ferried across a river, or across the sea to an island (Tangherlini 1988). Similar legends are also documented in the French-Breton, Prussian, and Polish folk traditions. Many stories of this kind were narrated by the South Slavs, among others they were published by Matija Valjavec (1858: 243) and Friedrich Krauß (1883, 1890: 67), while also inspiring the Slovenian poet Anton Aškerc (*Midnight Passenger*, 1890). The plague epidemic was spreading in Serbia which was at that time ruled by the Ottoman Turks even as late as in 1787 when Vuk Stefanović Karadžić was born in Trsić, with these places leaving an impact in his life and his work.

The legends frequently mention that the plague is afraid of dogs or cats, while also being driven away by the crow or a rooster (Valjavec 1858; Softić 2020: 164).

To protect themselves from disease, the people ploughed the ground around their village in various ritual ways, for example having women drag the plough around the village thrice (Möderndorfer 1964: 130). Tradition in the surroundings of Bosnian Gradiška speaks of how the village required twin sisters and two black oxen born by the same cow. Overnight, a brand-new plough had to be constructed and the twin sisters ploughed a furrow around the entire village while fully naked (Softić 2020: 163). In this custom, next to the geometric element – a circle, supposed to protect from evil forces, magic power was attributed especially to the ploughed furrow-line as an enchantment, where the details of who and how this action was performed were highly ritualised. Memory of the old agrarian rituals is preserved in these narratives from the South Slavic space.

Believing that the demon of a person’s disease could be defeated by a positive spirit, people also practised a magical treatment: ‘hammering the plague’ into a tree. They bore a hole into a tree (linden, oak, willow), which was supposed to be a holy tree. At sunrise on the following day, they placed in the hole a small amount of the sick person’s blood,

some nails or hair, then crammed it into the hole, put a nail in the tree, and hoped the demon of the disease would be defeated by the tree's spirit (Travnar 1934: 78–79).

People also tried to keep the plague at a distance with incantations and protective magical seals, apocrypha and charms, albeit not many of these remain intact. One of the oldest Slovenian charms against the plague is described in the Carinthian *Duhovna brauna* (Spiritual Protection) from 1740<sup>4</sup>:

*Sir Franciscus Salorius bore witness to bishops and other men of the cloth having gathered to hold a council in 1547. Because twenty bishops and several senior clerics had already died of the plague, the Patriarch of Antioch (?) recommended using all letters (buhštabi) that Bishop Zacharias from Jerusalem had approved to protect homes from the plague. They were to be printed and worn on the body. People heeded the advice, and no one died of the plague again; and when they wrote them on their front doors, no one ever died of the plague from that house again. These are the letters against the plague: + ZDIA + BIZ + SAB + ZHGP + BFRS.*

An incantation from 1851 against all contagious diseases was also preserved in the Book of Incantations by Jakob Rant from Dolenčice in Poljanska Dolina.<sup>5</sup> The incantation runs as follows:

*I call Jacob in the name of Saint Benedict and in the name of the holiest of Saints in the Heavens and on Earth, looked on with zinaji (?) of Adonis (?)*

*Attanatos Deous*

*God the mightiest of the Holy Trinity*

*zpik = tro = ik = volf*

*This is Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah. Draw three crosses and take three breaths in the air, and then make four heavenly signs using (?) (. S ō . . S S ō S S o. L. ♀). Then pray seven of Our Fathers in honor of the Holy Trinity and the Patron Saints.*

It was a common practice across Europe for people to wear pouches around their necks containing sewn-on charms or magical protection seals written on pieces of paper.<sup>6</sup>

To defeat the plague, people erected plague columns, churches and chapels dedicated to patron saints considered as protectors from the plague, notably Saint Roch, Saint Sebastian, Saint Rosalia, Saint Barbara and Saint Oswald. One of these columns still stands in the district of *Krakovo* in Ljubljana where in 1598 the plague spread quickly. It is inserted in a house fronting as a sculpture in the form of an angel sitting on the

<sup>4</sup> Dolenc/Zupanič Slavec, Makarovič 1999: 45; Kroje Telban 2022: 31.

<sup>5</sup> The Book of Incantations by Jakob Rant, locally known as Kočar from Dolenčice no. 9 in Poljanska Dolina. The manuscript is from 1851 (Möderndorfer 1964: 23–24).

<sup>6</sup> For more on this, see Kroje Telban 2022: 70–71.

skull of death with a sand glass clock in his hands. Legend has it that the plague stopped at this house at 21 Krakovska street, and ceased killing.

Prohibiting travelling to another place can amount to an extremely strict and demanding human sacrifice. A story preserved in Treibach in Austrian Carinthia speaks of the tragic fate of a young girl who was thrown into a pit and buried alive to prevent the plague from spreading (Möderndorfer 1964: 33). In towns with a plague guard in place, newcomers and wares were not allowed to pass without health certificates called *fede*.

Especially prevalent and broadly used were rituals of protection from the plague or for treating it using medicinal plants and apotropaic ceremonies. Spaces in houses and stables were fumigated with juniper (*Juniperus communis*) and charcoal, with the addition of Alpine valerian (*Valeriana celtica*), myrrh (*Commiphora*) and incense. Plants holding special powers were seen as particularly including garlic, burnet saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*), wild angelica (*Angelica silvestris*), white butterbur (*Petasites officinalis*), cuckoo-pint (*Arum maculatum*) and heath speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*). Medicines or apotropaic ingredients also included parts of toads (*Bufo vulgaris*), spiders (*Araneida*) as well as snake-stones.

Similar plants and practices were also used to heal from or treat the illness. The plague was primarily treated with medicinal plants, vinegar, wine, honey, tobacco and a range of other natural remedies.

In the countryside, for help people most often turned to village healers and witch doctors, whereas physicians, if accessible at all, mainly tended to patients in towns and mansions. During the plague, they would don special protective outfits to avoid becoming infected with the disease themselves. They wore a leather cloak and covered their faces with beaked masks and spectacles. The long 'beaks' were filled with a mix of aromatic herbs believed to protect against infection (Golec 2001: 37).

From the time of the plague

Sneezing was seen as a symptom of the plague, with this expression "God help you!" or "God help us all!" becoming widely used throughout Europe. Moreover, some curses or swearwords spread at that time, for instance in Slovenia "Naj te kuga!" or in the Slovenian region Bela Krajina: "Kuga te vgnjela" (666/31:19), meaning: "Let the plague take you!". People also invented proverbs like:



Figure 3: Plague sculpture in the district of Krakovo in Ljubljana, 1599 (Photo: Stanka Drnovšek).

*Se prikaže kuga v bližini, kupi si par močnih črevljev in beži tako dolgo, da bodo podplati raztrgani.*

[If the plague appears nearby, buy yourself strong shoes, and run as fast as you can!"]<sup>7</sup>

Vernacular health concepts, narratives and behaviour during the plague, and later on at the time of cholera varied, reflecting the time and circumstances of their existence.

## DISEASE NARRATIVES AND CRISIS FOLKLORE ABOUT COVID-19

As Reet Hiimäe stresses, COVID-19 shows the multitude of combined dimensions that approaches to health can consider. Besides purely medical and bodily outputs, significant social, religious, narrative, emotional, and material-technological aspects arise simultaneously, and must be taken into account and researched (Hiimäe 2021: 8). All of these aspects are reflected in the narrative culture and pandemic lore of the time.

Humanity's recent past is a macabre reminder of the plague during the period of some epidemics like deadly cholera, or the Spanish Flu which caused many deaths after the First World War, and resurfaced after the Second World War to a somewhat smaller degree. Now, in the third millennium, when most people had believed this impossible in the developed world, we are witness to a global pandemic of a new 'plague', the respiratory disease COVID-19 which – while less deadly – likewise causes mass death, fear, anxiety, neuroses, poverty, widespread economic crisis, and violence. This is all reflected in contemporary legends, narrative discourse, conspiracy theories, and other pandemic lore.

The Internet has become an important forum for discussing the supernatural, the extraordinary, and the emotional experiences that people are forced to cope with (Koski 2016: 13). This means discourses based on people's interaction with COVID-19 – their opinion of the pandemic and their lived experiences of the circumstances – are part of everyday discussion online, chiefly on social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Internet forums.

Early responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, already during the first wave in March 2020, included frequent humorous dialogues, jokes and memes about the subject, in line with the understanding that people ease their existential fears, traumas and distrust using humour. Online humorous content began to circulate, ridiculing the emerging conditions of life. Although these conditions caused frustration and deep anxiety, it is interesting that not much of it was specifically morbid disaster humour, as established by Theo Meder based on content collected in the Netherlands (Meder 2021: 135).

In Slovenia many puns, jokes and memes were recorded,<sup>8</sup> for instance:

<sup>7</sup> M. Slekov, Kuga na slovenskem Štajerskem. Slovenski gospodar 17, št. 18 (3. 5. 1883), p. 142.

<sup>8</sup> For more, see: Mencej 2022.





Figure 4: Little Red Riding Hood in the time of COVID 19.



Figure 5: Just to remind you who invented greeting people with a forearm.



Figure 6: *Be good, I'll be back soon.*



Figure 7: *Damn, they have made such a panic that even I am afraid of it.*

*Mars says to Venus: "Look how Earth's been improving since it's been on COVID-19!"*

*Why are folks buying toilet paper like crazy? – Because 1 sneezes and then 10 shit their pants!*

*They told me a mask and gloves were enough to visit the store, but I'm smart enough to wear a shirt and jacket as well.*

As these examples reveal, many jokes and memes originating during the COVID-19 pandemic attempt to diffuse fear and ease the emotionally-laden situation through humour and catharsis.

In the first wave of the epidemic, people often shared advice, encouragement, vernacular cures, and personal experiences. They also reanimated the memory of the literature and arts concerning the plague, among others writing:

*Doing similar activities as the literary protagonists of Boccaccio, we may get ourselves through the dark times of the coronavirus. There are, of course, many alternatives to storytelling – board and card games, watching series or films, cooking, reading ... all such leisure one might normally, when not under a forced quarantine, have no time for. Panicking makes no sense since there are no reasonable actions to take, except for following the epidemiological and hygiene guidelines, and diligently keeping away from those who might be at serious risk of infection. And so, focusing on various activities at home and staying safe is the way to go.*

The interest in such literature was so strong that it then became impossible to obtain the book *Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio.

Popular advice also appeared with regard to practices that might protect people from the virus, or at least ease the disease symptoms, such as by consuming vitamins C and D, vinegar, zinc, plenty of vegetables etc.

During wave two of the epidemic that began locally in October 2020, people described their lived experiences with the virus, for example in the report below published on 14 March 2021 at the website Protikorona.si:

*I'm a 59-year-old entrepreneur from Ljubljana, and I've recently gotten over an infection with the SARS-COV-2 virus. I was probably infected on 29 February when my friends and I had dinner together. Nobody was then showing any symptoms of the disease. A few days later, on 3 March, I was still free of any symptoms and going about my day, spreading the virus. In the evening, I had a meeting with 12 people. We were in a confined space, most of those present were eventually infected even though we were several metres apart.*

*The next day, I felt a little sore in the morning but had no other problems, and so I held a few more meetings where I likely infected another three people. In the afternoon, I felt so tired that I decided to stay at home. My condition worsened considerably on Thursday, 5 March. After 4 March, I was in self-isolation, although I wasn't aware of my exact disease yet. I suspected it was the flu, which was then in season. On Sunday 8 March, I was informed that two of my friends, from among those at our dinner together had tested positive for the novel coronavirus. They immediately told me while I was self-isolating. My partner and I went to be tested the next day, and received a confirmation of positive. I then quickly told everyone who I'd been in contact with. /.../*

*Unfortunately, my illness progressed: the infection spread to my lungs and I was hospitalised at the infectious disease unit of the UKC in Ljubljana. At 59 years of age, this was my first stay ever in hospital! It wasn't pleasant. My mind was full of questions to which there were no answers. I must say the staff were incredibly dedicated, kind, always ready with a smile, so full of positive energy and encouragement even though the conditions are harsh ... with face-coverings and goggles that keep getting misty ... /.../ After a week, my condition improved sufficiently to be released. /.../ The last two tests for COVID-19 were negative, but it'll take me a long while to fully recover seeing that I lost 8 kilograms during my illness. It's definitely done damage to my body.<sup>9</sup>*

Curiously, the date the author purports to have been infected (29 February 2021) does not exist since 2021 was not a leap year; and the 8 March mentioned was not a Sunday as is stated but a Monday, while likewise 5 March was not a Thursday but a Friday.

<sup>9</sup> Also published in "Glasilo Ljubljana", March 2021, dedicated to the novel coronavirus.

The general style and syntax arouse suspicion regarding whether the post was written by an actual COVID-19 patient, given that it is oddly reminiscent of a political messaging ‘discourse-template’ of the possible consequences of treating the virus lightly.

Presented here are only some examples of expressing certain vernacular health concepts and behaviour in Slovenia on which ideologies and personal values have a great impact.

It is characteristic of many of these discourses that they reveal a certain mistrust of the punitive and therapeutic politics of the State. In public discourse, it was often only stressed how COVID-19 is harmful, without not enough advice being given to people about how to improve their immune system. People understood this as a threat and hence many of them developed mistrust, and searched for consolation on the Internet.

The genres of narrative discourses and stories emerging around the subject of the coronavirus online in the Slovenian space primarily fell under conspiracy theories, fake news, and a wide variety of circulating rumours. Oft-discussed themes included that the outbreak of the virus had spread from the ‘wet market’ in Wuhan in China; or that the virus was purposefully created in China in a laboratory as a biological weapon. Common themes also referred to the breakdown of society, of institutions and of individuals.

On the other hand, the central messaging of the conspiracy theories was that the intention behind the virus’ global spread was to reduce the human population. Many of these theories related to the topic of the creation and dissemination of the coronavirus, and the problematic issues of the vaccine.<sup>10</sup>

Conspiracy theories of this kind are global and often rely on the QAnon movement, one of the centres from which conspiracy theories have spread with considerable speed.

In Slovenia, a growing number of people either categorically disbelieve the existence of the COVID-19 phenomenon (and interpret the deaths as being due to pneumonia, the flu, a sinister plan etc.) or, in even bigger numbers, follow the alternative narratives of ‘self-professed doctors’ and public thinkers warning people against vaccination and compliance. Further, some intellectuals developed their “reasonable theories against vaccination” – mistrusting the government and science – explaining that people also die from vaccination, and that it is the right of every individual to decide what is done to their body.

Under the influence of conspiracy theories, on 12 June 2021 a vaccination station in Ljubljana was physically attacked and its staff temporarily prevented from working. An “anti-vaccination” group of people also started in 2021 to organise demonstrations on the streets of Ljubljana or in front of the premises of the broadcaster RTV-Slovenia. Their reactions to the advice of doctors or politicians were not only hostile but often even threatening in character.

During the first wave of the pandemic crisis in 2020, people revived old beliefs and narrative traditions with the aim of defeating COVID-19. These narratives soon

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<sup>10</sup> For more about this, see: Babič 2022; *Folklore ee* 82 / 2021; *Contemporary legend* 10 / 2020: *Special Issue on COVID-19*.

became global. In Italy, they sang from the balconies. In the UK, they placed pictures of rainbows in their windows. In India, they chanted “Go corona”. Around the world, solidarity in the face of the coronavirus took many forms.

In Japan, memory resurfaced about the ancient beast *Amabiko* renamed *Amabie*, which helps ward against the coronavirus. It has three legs, a beak, scaly skin, and floor-length hair.

*Amabie: The Ancient Beast Helping Japan Ward Off the Coronavirus*  
The mermaid-like creature began appearing on social media in Japan in early March and was soon being tagged in upwards of 30,000 posts a day. Manga artists rendered the creature in their own styles, sharing images alongside messages wishing for an end to the virus.

*Amabie then got official recognition when Japan's health ministry made it the face of its public safety campaign. After that, it started appearing on cookies, face masks, candy, bread rolls, the obligatory Starbucks logo pastiche, and even statues in parks.*

*According to a woodblock-printed news sheet dated April 1846, the creature made its first and only appearance in the sea off Higo Province, now Kumamoto Prefecture, on the southern island of Kyushu. As the story goes, a government official went down to the beach to investigate reports of something shining in the water.*

*When the official arrived, a mermaid-like creature emerged, introduced itself as “Amabie who lives in the sea”, and issued two predictions. “For the next six years, there will be a bountiful harvest across Japan, but there will also be an epidemic”. Amabie then told the official, “Quickly draw a picture of me and show it to people”, and disappeared back into the sea.*

*Nagano Eishun, librarian of the Fukui Prefectural Archives and an expert on ancient spirits, says Amabie is one of more than a dozen prophecy beasts reported during the Edo period, and it probably derives from an ape-like creature with a similar name.*

*In 1843, three years before Amabie first appeared, there were reports of a three-legged simian in the same province. The furry beast went by the name Amabiko and its origin story was strikingly similar. A woodblock printed news sheet from the era said a man went down to the sea to investigate reports of glowing lights. Amabiko introduced itself, predicted a rich harvest and an epidemic, then claimed that people would survive and live long, healthy lives if they saw the creature's image.*

*“The two have so much in common, it's natural to think that Amabiko was Amabie's former self”, says Nagano. And he says the monkey was far more famous than the mer-creature in the 19th century. During times of plagues, such as cholera and dysentery, people used a picture of Amabiko as a good luck charm.*

*Nagano says the creature probably changed form as its story spread across the country through drawings and people took liberties with their interpretations. He adds that commercial interests may have driven both the creativity and the creature's insistence that it had to be seen.*

*“The woodblock printed news sheet, called kawaraban, was basically a single sheet of paper with a piece of illustrated news or gossip”, he says. “The producers always wanted an interesting story to catch people’s attention, so they got inventive, like perhaps letting a spirit warn people they’d get sick unless everyone had a copy of that image”.*

*After many decades out of the spotlight, Amabie is finally getting the attention it craves with some help from social media.*

*It seems human nature hasn’t changed much since the 19th century, and the image of this strange creature is still able to provide some kind of solace. But Nagano says there’s a fundamental difference between then and now.*

*“Back in the 19th century, those images were only supposed to save the person who bought the news sheet. But now people are spreading the images to protect everyone. I would say that shows we’ve made big progress.”<sup>11</sup>*

The reminiscent on the plague columns is the “plague column – Corona” – erected in Vižmarje in Ljubljana. The sculptor Franc Zavodnik says he has been regularly disinfecting it with WD40.<sup>12</sup>



Figure 8: Amabie – the Ancient Beast Helping Japan Ward off the Corona-virus.



Figure 9: The “Plague column – Corona” in Vižmarje in Ljubljana with the sculptor (<https://www.dnevnik.si/1042934644>).

<sup>11</sup> NHK Japan Broadcasting Corporation World-Japan: Yamamoto Saori; <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type7080.html#denmark>, accessed 15. 4. 2021).

<sup>12</sup> <https://theworldnews.net/si-news/v-ljubljani-kuzno-znamenje-ki-je-posveceno-koronavirusu>.

Narrative discourses connected to the COVID-19 phenomenon can easily be found on the Internet. Researchers already began collecting such online records during the first pandemic wave. For instance, at the Institute of Slovenian Ethnology in Ljubljana the blog “Vsakdanjik” was already set up in April 2020, and numerous ethnological institutions are compiling entire archives of this content, providing interesting and valuable documentation of the pandemic era.

## CONCLUSION

In grave situations like the outbreak of an epidemic or pandemic, people adapt to the newly arising circumstances and look for ways out of the crisis. Their daily practices and narratives reflect the ways and customs they rely on to deal with an infectious disease.

Narratives emerging around the subject of the disease – precisely because they address fears – have a fundamental function of assisting people through difficult existential situations. Conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a huge number of stories, jokes, memes, contemporary legends, and other epidemic folklore seeking ways out of the crisis or allowing individuals to express their emotions and experiences. These reflect how people tried to protect themselves from becoming ill, what their reactions were like, and how they survived the pandemic. On the other hand, many fake news and conspiracy theories have emerged and continue to do so, causing a destructive current of ideation and even activity. As the Dutch folklorist Theo Meder established, these types of narratives provide complex insights into the emotions and lived experiences in society. Notably, the lockdown in mid-March 2020 led to many people being confined to their homes, sparking markedly increased online activity and interest in social media, in the active (creation/narration) and passive (consumption) senses (Meder 2021, 135).

While old legends surrounding the plague narrate how it was spreading – often in personified form: how the people protected themselves from it, and how they treated it, the narrative discourses on COVID-19 describe the lived experiences of individuals, their ways of enduring the pandemic, their thinking, including pessimistic examples, and humour through which they attempted to achieve catharsis and emotional stability – and all of this occurring in the modern, highly technologically advanced era characterised by global media ubiquity. As Ian Brodie stresses, “our knowledge of legends, rumours, and conspiracy theories is little comfort in this ever-changing world as we also seek scientific knowledge about this virus. /.../ As folklorists, and legend scholars in particular, we are uniquely able to recognize immediately the patterns of contemporary legends and quickly provide a critique of them in real time, placing the legends within the longer arch of legend history” (Brodie 2020: 1).

The anthropologist Dan Podjed posits that the virus is not just a natural phenomenon but also an important social actor since the pandemic has radically transformed the ways we live, work and socialise. In addition, it has further deepened the disparities between rich and poor, leading to economic, demographic, and various psychological crises (Podjed 2020).

It is clear that pandemics, including COVID-19, are some of the worst catastrophes affecting humankind. They bring fear of physical and mental suffering at a very fundamental level of human existence.

The COVID-19 crisis has evidently also called into question the freedom of the individual, extreme solitude, the economic crisis facing many people, and psychological problems. The atmosphere of generalised suspicion concerning the masks, test materials and vaccination was provoked. The narrative folklore reflects all of this, having become extremely globalised due to the digitalisation of society and “techno-feudalism”<sup>13</sup>. Also globalised has been the advice regarding what to consume to remain healthy, even if some practices are extremely strange, like drinking bleach (Varikina) or inserting WD-40.

While tradition addresses epidemics from ages past with considerable seriousness, obedience and worry, the modern responses are often different. They also exhibit humour, expressions of irony and frustration, anxiety, malicious pleasure and general distrust, especially in the mainstream media and politics. Narrative discourses also attempting to identify a culprit are based on emotions like fear, confusion, anxiety, doubt and mistrust. Nevertheless, even though the past and present activities and discourses appear quite different at first glance, they share some underlying similarities. These loosely include: folk advice on foods to eat and for protection against infection, the closing of borders and quarantine, the personification/memefication of the disease – and even in contemporary world, plague- or corona-columns, the summoning of ancient mythological beings back into the popular consciousness to assist in the struggle against the virus. New and traditional elements sometimes interweave, despite the very different societal and cultural attitudes causing them.

The COVID-19 pandemic is surrounded by a huge number of conspiracy theories and fake news. Researchers in the USA as well as Europe establish that the people resonating with and spreading conspiracy theories are often in conflict with the government or the prevalent cultural and social order; and yet, the context of such inclinations and activities is far broader, more nuanced and complex. Folklorists should continue to research this pluralism of opinions and perceptions and the heterogeneousness of health beliefs, narratives and practices.

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<sup>13</sup> This term was presented by Cedric Durand (after Monique Selim 2021: 16).



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## ČUSTVA STRAHU V PRIPOVEDIH O KUGI IN SODOBNI PANDEMIJI COVID-19

MONIKA KROPEJ TELBAN



Pripovedi, ki nastajajo na temo bolezni in pandemij, kot sta kuga in Covid-19 pogosto zbuja strah in napovedujejo smrt in eksistenčno krizo. V članku je na kratko predstavljena motivika folklornih pripovedi o kugi, ob tem pa primerjalno predvsem razmere ob pandemiji Covid-19.

Številne pandemične pripovedi, diskurzi, vici, memi in sodobne zgodbe iščejo pot iz krize ali posameznikom omogočajo, da izražajo svoja občutja. V njih se kaže, kako so se ljudje skušali braniti pred tovrstnimi boleznimi, kakšne so bile njihove reakcije in kako so premagovali epidemijo. Nastajajo tudi lažne novice in teorije zarote, ki povzročajo destruktivni tok razmišljanja in dogajanja. Tovrstne pripovedi omogočajo vpogled v občutke in čustva v družbi.

Medtem ko povedke o epidemiji kuge pripovedujejo, kako se je kuga širila – pogosto v personificirani podobi, kako so se ljudje branili pred njo, kako so se zdravili in so epidemije iz preteklih obdobj obravnavane z veliko resnostjo

in zaskrbljenostjo, se teh tem sodobni odzivi na Covid-19 pogosto lotevajo s humorjem, izražanjem frustracij, strahov, zlobe in nezaupanja. Vendar pa tudi opisujejo življenjske izkušnje posameznikov, kako so premagovali epidemije, njihova razmišljanja ob tem, tudi negativna in kontraproduktivna. Vse to pa je v sodobnem visoko tehnološko razvitem času zaznamovano z globalno medijsko odmevnostjo.

Za razliko od reakcij na kugo so s pandemijo Covid-19 povezane številne teorije zarote in lažne novice. Raziskovalci tako v Zveznih državah Amerike kot v Evropi ugotavljajo, da so ljudje, ki širijo teorije zarote in tisti, ki jim verjamejo, pogosto v konfliktu z vlado ali družbenim sistemom. Vendar je kontekst tovrstnih nagnjenj in dejanj mnogo širši in bolj kompleksen.

Virus torej ni le naravni pojav, ampak pomemben družbeni akter, saj zaradi te bolezni živimo, delamo in se srečujemo drugače. Poleg tega pogloblja razliko med revnimi in bogatimi, povzroča gospodarske in demografske krize in številne psihične težave.

Vendar pa, čeprav so pretekla in sedanja dejanja in diskurzi na prvi pogled povsem drugačna, je med njimi nekaj podobnosti. Tako npr. tudi v času pandemije Covid-19 ljudje svetujejo kaj jesti in kako se obraniti pred virusom; uvaja se zapiranje meja, karantene; ljudje so celo začeli poosebljati bolezen in oživljati oziroma posodabljati stare bajeslovne like, ki naj bi pomagali premagati virus.

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# COVID-19 Conspiracy Theories in Slovenia

— Kristina Radomirović Maček, Saša Babič —

Članek obravnava teorije zarote, ki so povezane s pandemijo COVID-19 v Sloveniji. Raziskava je potekala na gradivu, zbranim na spletu ter s terenskim delom. Vsebina je analizirana s semiotičnega in folklorističnega vidika, zgodbe pa so kategorizirane glede na funkcijo in glede na izpostavljeno temo, teorije zarote pa so obravnavane tudi z vidika mitološke strukture. Teorije zarote, povezane s pandemijo, izhajajo iz že uveljavljenih teorij zarote, ki pa so v konkretnem kontekstu pandemije povezane z večjo in neposredno grožnjo zdravju in svobodi človeštva, za katero se domneva, da jo izvajajo zarotene zle sile.

.....  
KLJUČNE BESEDE: teorija zarote, COVID-19, pripoved, semiotika, digitalna kultura

The article discusses conspiracy theories concerned with the global crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic in Slovenia based on material collected from the Internet and during fieldwork. Content is examined using the well-established foundations of conspiracy theories, the semiotics of the conspiracy theories, and their mythological structure. Pandemic-related conspiracy stories appear to emerge from already established conspiracy narratives, linking them to a bigger and imminent threat to the health and freedom of humanity, believed to be perpetrated by conspiring evil forces.

.....  
KEYWORDS: conspiracy theory, COVID-19, narrative, semiotics, digital culture

## INTRODUCTION

Conspiracy-based narratives are neither a recent social phenomenon nor a cultural product of modernism. They are known since at least Roman times, e.g., when the Jews were accused of having poisoned the water supply and causing a plague. Throughout Europe's cultural history, conspiracy-based narratives have followed times of crisis and social change, and been an important model for explanatory storytelling during periods of unsettled meaning (Kline 2017: 186, Merlan 2019: 13, Varis 2019: 2). After the French Revolution, reaching its peak in the 20th century (Oberhauser 2020, Girard 2020), the conspiracism in modern conspiracy theories took the form of mass transmission (Wojcik, 2003: 247), undergoing a particular poetic transformation in the digital ecosystem.

Although the most important contributions on the subject are made by American academics using examples from American history and culture (Girard 2019: 567), the European cultural history of conspiracism relies on its own matrices. After all, conspiracy theories are considered to be a global phenomenon (as shown in Routledge 2019).

Conspiracy theories have not been researched as often or as explicitly in Slovenia. Scholarly lack of interest in this field has stood out during the COVID-19 crisis, when many have sought to understand the source of the multiple conspiracy theories. Slovenia's conspiracy theories should be contextualised and researched within the scope of four spatial-temporal contexts: a) the tradition of European conspiracy theories in the 20th century (like in Girard 2019); b) Balkan conspiracy theories matrices (like in Blanuša 2019); c) the post-socialist era of conspiracy theories shared with Eastern Europe and Russia (as studied in Routledge 2021); and d) global conspiracy-based narratives emerging in Western popular culture. Insight gained into COVID-19-related conspiracy theories, given that we know much more about their narrative potential and preferences, means it is necessary to look back and rethink the conspiracy-related narratives involved. The current success and popularity of conspiracy-based narratives on COVID-19 and their connection to the numerous, already globally spread conspiracy theories reveals a strong conspiracy narrative tradition. At the same time, the conspiracy narrative models of storytelling are already a familiar response to epistemological dissonances in everyday life.

The media largely tried to 'fact-check' conspiracy narratives with scientific and researched articles, criticising the content of the conspiracy stories and their spread through comments in the public. Still, by making them a topic in the news, the media also helped to strengthen (yellow print) and give exposure to these theories. The question is whether public speaking about conspiracy theories assists in spreading them or whether this refers more to unleashing the long-silenced conflict between conspiracy theorists and their important opponent or 'collaborators' – the mainstream media (MSM). On the other hand, ignoring the spread and existence of conspiracy theories might bring even more serious consequences when one considers their constant success, growth and thus influence on public life (Radomirović Maček 2020: 5).

This article does not however engage in the truthfulness or lack thereof of the content of conspiracy theories. Based on numerous examples, we may say that conspiracy theories cannot simply be labelled truthful or wrong *per se* (Uscinski 2018: 5), mostly due to their specific epistemological path (Piazza 2011) or being grounded on fundamental attribution error and other logical fallacies (Pelkmans, Machold 2011: 68). We therefore consider them as narratives which function in society according to the matrices of folklore storytelling rules. Based on the semiotic approach, analysis is conducted on the narratives and their function in the relatively large outbreak of viral infection in Slovenia.

The topic of conspiracy theories about COVID-19 has attracted considerable interest and scientific analyses, published as proceedings at many conferences and debated in various articles, which rethink the psychological background of conspiracy theories research. For example, Uscinski J., Enders A., Klofstad C. et al. (2020) consider the connection between rumours and Internet space, Shahsavari S, Holur P., Wand T., Thangherlini T., (2020) are opening the new possibilities for conspiracy theories research

online. Conspiracy theories are becoming significant research subject also as part of the thematic journals like *Contemporary Legend* 3/10; the Estonian journal *Folklore* vol. 82 etc. with all the authors included, and books (the recently most visible: Bodner et al. 2014; Baeva, Ilieva 2021 etc.) or monographs (Gonsalo 2021; Butter 2020). It is also a subject of interest in considerable interdisciplinary research stressing the importance of researching conspiracy theories online, like in Shahvasari S., Tangherlini T., Holur P., Roychowdhury (2020), Gruzd A., Mai P. (2020), and Ahmed W, Vidal-Alaball J., et al. (2020). They have also at a minimum become an important subject of essayistic journalism, such as in Scott M. (2021).

## METHODOLOGY

Today's communication environments make alternative points of view more visible than ever before (Stano 2020: 1). Several studies focused in the past on the dissemination of conspiracy theories in the mass media, while research into conspiracy theories in the digital setting remains a novel expertise (Stano 2020: 2). The most important online transmission aspects underpinning the methodology of online conspiracy theories are: going viral (quantitative dissemination), spreadability with recontextualisation (qualificative transformation potential), information overload and echo-chamber effect (Stano 2020). The research methodology includes both quantitative and qualitative analytical apparatus, often supported by specific software that segments and measures data according to certain parameters. The recent scientific drive to understand the velocity of the spread of online conspiracy theories calls for interdisciplinary research methods based on social analytics, digital ethnography and user path analysis such as the social big data analysis (Erdman 2016; Madisson 2016; Thibault 2016), and more recently (Caballero 2019; Stano 2020; Shahsavari, Holur et al. 2020; Varis 2019; Varis, Hoe 2020). These approaches build on the fact that the modern worldwide web is based on a participatory culture to diffuse online information, with the *many-to-many* communication model instead of the mass media *one-to-many* model (Stano 2020: 3, Caballero 2019: 135). Briefly, the key step in disseminating online CT is *re-sharing*, where more viral means more popular and visible, while more popular seems to amount to more relevant. The online group of material was collected as part of a 2-year research project<sup>1</sup> on various digital platforms; social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), blogs of conspiracy theory influencers, and webpages of social organisations whose activism is based on conspiracy theories and conspiracy-based ideology. It includes over 1,000 units collected from the start of the COVID-19 epidemic in Wuhan, namely between 14.2.2020 and 3.12.2021, when the working classification was created. For the purposes of this paper, only qualitative aspects of the collected online material are to be presented with a view to detecting the narratological diversity of COVID-19 conspiracy theories in Slovenia these days.

<sup>1</sup> The doctoral dissertation title which includes the conspiracy theories material mentioned above "Contemporary narratives and notions about the end of the world in the area of former Yugoslavia", Kristina Radomirović Maček.

Alongside the online material, the article includes data collected through participatory observation, interviews and discussions with various known individuals and social networks from printed and audio-video media. This arose from a public call to collect COVID-19 humour and conspiracy theories issued by the ZRC SAZU Institute of Slovenian Ethnology and disseminated through e-mails. These two groups of material are divided and explained in a four-part typology, while the characters are grouped into seven narrational functions (Radomirović Maček 2021).

At this point, our approach is more narratological and semiotical than contextual. Nevertheless, our interpretation includes certain of the main functional aspects of conspiracy theories in Slovenia nowadays. We also raise the question of networking COVID-19 conspiracy theories with some previously established conspiracy theories that may have influenced the narrational line and lent a few well-known motifs to the COVID-19 conspiracy mindset.

### CONSPIRACY THEORY

While definitions of conspiracy theory have different focuses, in this article we focus definitions that expose narrative and myth, and the elements of time and evil. The definitions provided are also supported with semiotic apparatus and used for folkloristic research of conspiracy theory.

The general definition of the content of a contemporary conspiracy theory is that it constitutes a belief that an event/situation is the result of a secret plan made by powerful people or entities. Conspiracy theories lead to the following dichotomy: on one side, there are evil conspirators who hold financial, symbolic or political supremacy together with evil intentions regarding the common good while, on the other side, there is an enlightened group of people who have discovered the mentioned evil plan and are fighting to defeat it (Barkun 2016: 1-2). At its centre we are dealing with plots including numerous hypotheses and possibilities very close to the potential–actual relationship (Zupančič 2022). Bratich (2008) defines conspiracy theory as “any narrative that accounts for an event by positing a collusion of agents who seek to determine the course of the event according to the agents’ agenda, and at the expense of others’ agendas. In addition, the collusion, the agenda, and/or the determination are shrouded in secrecy”. Byford (2014: 90) puts it this way: Tales of conspiracy, the cause of disease or some other crisis are “marked with distinct thematic configuration, narrative structure and explanatory logic /.../ common motifs and tropes”. Marjanić (2016) goes further and interprets these narratives with the help of urban legends, with the difference that conspiracy theories contain emphasised paranoid matrices, and here we may add non-folklore material, like fake news, misinterpreted scientific data, phony documents, false or decontextualized statements etc. By locating conspiracy theories next to urban legends, Marjanić also defines them as one of the folklore genres, reflecting social anxieties in a narrative form. A conspiracy theory refers to a perception and is the fear of an alleged set of facts, while conspiracy itself refers to an act (Pipes 1997: 21).



In folkloristics generally, a conspiracy theory is a narrative circulating in society based on the folklore principle: often relayed through live communication, it has several variants, considers the questions of belief and believing in the narrative, and discusses the burning fears of society. The well-positioned location of conspiracy stories in the conceptual framework of society proves and reflects other folklore genres like rumours, which are often linked to conspiracy stories or even socially interpreted as them. Many rumours are also categorised in the media as a conspiracy theory, even though rumours are somewhat conceptually different. Rumours are claims made about reality (Donovan 2015: 13413), usually unofficial interesting stories or news items that may or may not, and spread quickly from person to person. Rumours are “usually brief and do not necessarily have a narrative element” (Mullen 1972: 96) and, unlike unwarranted, global conspiracy theories, rumours generally have no mythological structure and lack a narrative structure. Rumours about COVID-19 resonated in the media (during the COVID-19 pandemic they also appeared in official speech, being addressed as an ‘infodemia’, although historically they were spread by informal speech and the Internet or personal communication on a daily basis: they were negative (in Slovenia, they burst out in the spring of 2021). Yet, when it comes to the COVID-19 rumours, we cannot draw a parallel between them and urban legends as is often suggested (see Donovan 2015: 13413). In this case, the rumours lacked a narrative element, only clusters of rumours that could create a focal point (Mullen 1972: 96) and they changed within a short time, weekly or even daily. Rumours emerged and disappeared without any continuation. They emerged at new critical moments in the pandemic, either the rising death rate or the state’s medical equipment purchases. Still, many of these rumours were built on existing conspiracy theories, or used as additional support for the conspiracy narrative, which explains why a deeper look at rumours makes sense – to establish the wider context and the connections among the conspiracy narratives.

Conspiracy theories also partly function as a mythological/demonological narrative (Marjanić 2016: 112): a great evil imprecisely defined (only seemingly realistic, but actually abstract) with the intent to harm people, use them, or cause a commotion. Many conspiracy theories are established on the apocalyptic tension: they describe the final battle between good and evil (QAnon, Antichrist CT), predict the end of humanity (Computer Called Beast, Chipping and Depopulation CT), announce the end of the world as we know it (different Techno Dystopian conspiracy theories) etc. While conspiracy theories can have a very complex storyline, the protagonists are always constructed through a two-dimensional perspective: good and evil. The visible division is between ‘light’ and ‘dark’ forces of the particular mythopoetics, with the dark forces being the results of secret actions by groups, organisations, countries or other entities that represent evil. These forces of evil are very diverse, from classical (Freemasons, Jews (Judocracy), satanists and illuminati), through to classes of the world’s financial and political hierarchy (the rich, Bill Gates, George Soros, communists, cultural Marxists, Antifa) and extra-terrestrial beings (aliens, coming from a parallel universe or reptiles from another world). Unlike mythological narratives, conspiracy theories involve humans rather than gods and demigods (Marjanić 2016: 120), albeit some of our fieldwork records show

that even in conspiracy theories evil characters acquire a degree of ‘divinity’. One informant mentioned that the powerful sinister characters have royal, otherworldly, even extra-terrestrial blood –they are not regular human beings but take something from a sinister, transcendent world: “they say these aren’t people, they’re a kind of mixture, but not people proper, that’s why they go around doing these ultra-psychopathic things (like Satanism, paedophilia etc.) /.../ we cannot perceive everything that exists, we only see what’s in our human visual spectrum, so we don’t see these beings from the other realm /.../ all the members of royal bloodlines, the Rothschilds etc., they have their genetics, they take the bloodline from these other beings. They’re bred together, so they have human characteristics and special ones, too, this is how they know so much and recognise one another /.../ they’re intelligent but without any empathy, besides they’re not creative. Humans are creative and these half-bloods exploit our inventiveness, so these families and beings can then use it for themselves” (interview with a male respondent, 38 years, Ljubljana, 18.12.2020).<sup>2</sup> We found another example of the same transcendental nature of the vaccinated in the Internet material: “I cannot believe it, I noticed the same thing, in Maribor, at the vaccination place, there was a similar ‘person’, although I am unsure if ‘it’ was male or female, it was extremely white, had icy-blue eyes, I don’t know what’s going on, but that vaccine must be some kind of a poison. Has anyone seen something similar?” (12.5.2020, Facebook comment).

The narrative time in a conspiracy theory is always the time of the narrating (as Degh (2001) also showed for urban legends), yet it is simultaneously always apocalyptically oriented to the future, the future advocates the “time of the final judgement” (Klepec 2016: 63), as is also present in myths. As Dyrendal, Robertson and Leiden (2018: 36) state: “The conspiracy mytheme is almost automatically linked with another element that is common to religious myth: that of the apokalypsis, or ‘revelation’ of secrets of the past, present, and future”. Notably, the outcome of modern conspiracy theories is almost always bad or even damning (with no re-birth into a new life) since its fatalism expresses a strong apocalyptic paradigm. In today’s Western world, the apocalypse is often transmitted and limited to the level of humanity and the material world rather than the level of ontological destruction as we may find, for example, in a myth or in the main institutional religions. If we do not perceive the world as a divine creation whereby an absolute creating entity has a plan for the eternal afterlife, then there is no place for eschatological optimism in the modern world. Conspiracy theories in some ways reflect this deficiency: instead of personalised evil in the face of Lucifer, we have the secret elite with a doomed plan; instead of the promise of an eternal kingdom, the emptiness of ecological disasters awaits us, or the dystopia of the world of cyborgs is foretold. Conspiracy theories are awaking the need for centralised Evil, which can be discovered, fought and destroyed. The mythological modelling of the conspiracy theory was already noticed by Lotman (1988), subsequently further discussed in the article by

<sup>2</sup> It is noted that the interviewee received information about the “extra-terrestrial blood of royal families” on the Internet, generally by listening to online talks on the topic. The original author of the idea was not revealed, the interviewee simply confirmed that they believed this notion to be true.

Leone, Madisson and Ventsel (2020: 47). Lotman's view on mythological modelling is interpreted as the outcome of conditions of social stress and anxiety: "although the mythological modelling to the sacral order is characterised with transcultural meta-text, it is transformed into the perception of contemporary events, so that the interpreter can recognise the original forms of the meta-text, which has its source in cultural memory" (Leone, Madisson and Ventsel 2020: 47). The mythological modelling of contemporary conspiracy theories might not be as intense and clear as that in archaic communities, yet it still "organises a specific kind of meaning-making that perceives tragic events not as a succession of unfortunate coincidences, but as motivated by one and the same original cause: Evil" (Leone, Madisson and Ventsel 2020: 47).

We apply semiotics and its sign theory while trying to discern the meaning-making of conspiracy in these narratives. Conspiracy theories build meaning-making on the search for secret signs of conspiracy, and on demonstrating the significance of such signs; these sign-based models for mapping reality are usually simplified (Leone, Madisson and Ventsel 2020: 44). We can illustrate this simplified perspective of the almost random and provisional connection between signs with the help of the early responses to COVID-19 seen on social media. The TV series *The Simpsons* predicted COVID-19 in an episode where, in order to entertain humanity, a secret elite is plotting based on the evil plan of an imaginary cat-virus. Another example is that the first 5G tower was built in Wuhan, the city in which the outbreak started; this is where the 5G–COVID-19 connection started to arise. Conspiracy theory, i.e., a sign from a semiotic perspective, therefore explains a series of events as signifiers by positing a conspiracy as their cause, i.e., signified; that is, the events are seen as "the result of a group of people acting in secret to a nefarious end" (Birchall 2006: 216-217). A telling example of that is a very interesting argument used by conspiracy theorists when confronted with the fact their storyline is actually already known from other conspiracy theories, to which they respond: "Yes, smart people knew that this was coming, so they wanted to secretly warn us". This backward prediction lap or reinterpretation of old 'facts' in relation to the new context is very common in conspiracy theory storytelling. Mark Fenster also notes that a conspiracy theorist sees even trivial everyday events as signs of conspiracies and manipulation and that these function as "a form of hyperactive semiosis in which history and politics serve as a reservoir of signs that demand (over)interpretation and that signify, for the interpreter far more than their conventional meaning" across time (Fenster 2008: 95). The passion of producing a conspiracy theory is not only seen in conspiracies but also in creating the theory, "assembling or recognising the things to attest to it, interpreting and connecting the clues" (Zupančič 2022). Conspiracy theories focus on specific explanations within the appropriate ideological and cultural context (Byford 2014: 92), and give numerous hypotheses and possibilities (Zupančič 2022). In these contexts, they may be seen as a rational attempt to explain complex situations, a cognitive mapping that locates the 'culprit' and attempts to explain the situation (without radically thinking through the propositions) (Klepec 2016: 64).

Conspiracy theories find strong motivation in the belief that a certain truth exists, that someone knows this truth, and that this omniscient agent rules the world. The world is not random and chaotic, but shaped and overseen by the one agent or group that possesses greater knowledge (in the sinister, nefarious sense). To communicate these ideas, conspiracy theories rely on specific rhetoric to convey an aura of secrecy, create a symbolic elite, and reproduce the division between insiders and outsiders (Leone, Madisson, Ventsel 2020: 46) and aim to address the masses in addition to any mainstream rejections (Byford 2014: 92) so as to gain publicity and exposure. Desirable rhetoric is characterised by both metonymic logic (one that is close to the source of evil in order to be affected by it) and metaphoric logic (the more similar the objects are, the more they are perceived as connected) (M. Lotman 2009: 1239 cited in Leone, Madisson and Ventsel 2020: 45). On the first level, conspiracy theories are mostly paranoid (Bratich 2008: 3, Zupančič 2022) whereas the stated fundamental myth of conspiracy theories is not to be discussed: the discursive relationship of conspiracy theories is with “a regime of truth” (Foucault 1980), while manipulation and deceiving are prevalent in these discourses (Zupančič 2022). The worldview of people who follow conspiracy theories is based on knowledge and individual research which they gain through patience and dedication. Accordingly, they need to explain and convince other people of their truth so as to fascinate, cause fear and get attention in the storytelling context. As our fieldwork also showed, their knowledge collides with belief and thus labelling them as a conspiracy theorist seems offensive and aggressive. Here, talking about conspiracy theories is often transmitted to the level of belief and induces the problem of identity more than remaining on the level of constructive dialogue.

## COVID-19 CONSPIRACY THEORIES IN SLOVENIA

The COVID-19 virus phenomenon shook the world in 2020. The official outbreak of the virus was located in China, allegedly due to inadequate hygiene measures at the “wet market”. The highly contagious and for some even fatal virus spread very rapidly; the first positive coronavirus test in Slovenia was recorded on 5 March 2020. Before then, the virus seemed far away from people’s minds, even though neighbouring Italy had already confirmed it had a COVID-19 epidemic. People did not perceive the virus as a particular threat, nor as something that would be conceptually labelled an enemy against which we must ‘wage war’ (while later, all media and political discourse surrounding the virus contained a conceptual war metaphor linked with the disease (“we are fighting the disease and defeat it by healing ourselves”): doctors and nurses are the “first lines of defence / in the trenches”, we “fight” the virus in everyday life, we can win the “battle” against the virus with measures etc.). After an epidemic was announced in Slovenia, two diametrically opposed tendencies were present in the social sphere: the first being that COVID-19 was merely a flu, and the second that the apocalypse and final transformation of the world is heralded by the new disease. These two paradigms have stayed alive until today and have significantly marked the development of types and sub-types of COVID-19 conspiracy theories.

On 15 March 2020, the government began imposing epidemiological measures at various times mandating the wearing of masks, banning gatherings of people (except close family members), while closing schools, shops, museums, cultural institutions and libraries. As the strictness of the pandemic measures increased and the political crisis grew, so did scepticism regarding the virus and the institutions. The initial public reactions to the measures included discussions about perceived threats to democracy: the mask mandates, and organised movement or restrictions in public, closed spaces were seen as amounting to forced behaviour. Soon after the initial reactions, conspiracy theories grew in volume. These did not emerge in the Slovenian space per se, with the ones with the greatest momentum being global, heard across the world with possible minor adaptations (for example, describing Germany or even Italy as one of the antagonists, not China or the USA). Social networks were filled with conspiracy theory narratives and opinions about them, followed by media exposure – partly questioning whether there was any truth in these theories and partly trying to actively discredit the conspiracy claim.

The first conspiracy theories that immediately began circulating in Slovenia (and were heard in conversations cited in printed media and Facebook, as well as disseminated via email) were that: a) the virus came from a laboratory (it was brought to China by American soldiers, who are also responsible for its further spread); b) China created the virus in a lab and used it as a biological weapon; c) the USA created the virus to ruin the Chinese economy; d) the government wants to restrict human rights (dictatorship) and destroy small businesses; e) the virus was spread for (urgent) artificial selection: to reduce the number of old people; f) 5G radiation weakens the immune system, combined with the vaccine that contains surveillance chips the government will use to control humanity; and g) Bill Gates: chips for the vaccine will be made by Microsoft (recently developed tech to be used to exert general control over society).

In order to more systematically present the conspiracy theories and their variants circulating in Slovenia, we must consider seven different functions or clusters of motifs based on narrative agents. This division of characters based on their functions is first created based on the Internet material (Radomirović Maček 2021), although the subsequent fieldwork data confirmed its validity.

1. **Function of evil conspirators** – enemies of the people and the common good. Representatives of a ‘dark order’, who are following a secret plan. The evil conspirators, the central antagonist in conspiracy narratives that circle in Slovenia, are usually said to be the richest and most influential people; they cannot be detected by their name (except for some like Bill Gates, George Soros or the Rothschild family). The conspirators are more often referred to as secret groups of unknown (or mostly unknown) individuals, such as the Kaballah, the Illuminati, or members of the Deep State, and are plotting to enforce a single world government overpowering humanity. Slovenian versions of these conspiracy theories rarely mention specific nationalities, such as American, Chinese or German (even though it is noticeable that Germany appears as the negative, predator country in the Slovenian context); in most cases, the group of threatening Others is a hidden, shadow elite. Among them also we find: the

Freemasons, Jews, satanists, globalists, Babylon system, Big Pharma, elite and rich psychopaths and paedophiles, the Government, the Deep State, and Cultural Marxists. As noted, many of these are already known in conspiracy theories and storytelling. The choice of the evil conspirator points to the next function.

2. **Function of the plan against the common good.** Their goal is to: control, depopulate, profit, establish the techno-dystopia via chipping, cause a holocaust (or concentration camps) and facilitate genocide. It is implemented with the help of Helpers and Collaborators.
3. **Function of Helpers and Collaborators.** These vary and are found on different levels, from the MSM (mainstream media), the WHO, NGOs, war profiteers (mainly politicians) through to scientists, people who check PCT (abbreviation for prebolel, cepljen, testiran – the recovered, vaccinated, tested), bureaucrats, institutions and migrants. Helpers and collaborators are the first target of the enlightened agents. It is thus no surprise that the enlightened often express their dislike of the MSM in social networks and attempt to discredit them with accusations and silencing, like the following one published on Facebook: “I found the cure for corona virus: – Turn off the TV!”.



Image 1: <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=2826295177626785&set=a.1387812728141711>



Image 2: RTV (National television!)  
Your lies are killing people!

or one from the protests staged in front of Slovenian National Television building.

4. **Function of Saviour(s).** This function is shared between an individual and the group. They call themselves free people, “wolves”, enlightened citizens of Slovenia, natural people (in contrast to the vaccinated who are artificial and in the possession of international pharmaceutical companies or the US government), fighters for freedom, and independent researchers.

5. **Function of Whistle-blowers.** Whistle-blowers make up a very important part of the narrative. It is they who have found out about the ‘plandemic’ and serve as proof of the conspiracy; namely, the heroes in the fight against the evil conspirators. Typically, they are widely celebrated because they need protection from powerful evil. They hold medical titles, or have worked in at vaccine companies, or at least have a medical education to decode the truth of the vaccine or virus: whether it exists or does not, as the case may be.
6. **Function of Traitors** – this is very closely connected to the collaborators and helpers. The difference lies in their ignorance, they are the ‘sheeple’ (sheep+people), ‘ovce’, who are being manipulated. Sometimes they are referred to as being unenlightened, stupid, ‘educated’, the false elite or, simply, the vaccinated.
7. **Function As a Tool of Evil:** the primary tool is the vaccine, which may be described as: a DNA manipulator, a chip, genetic filth, poison, a brew, a genetic treatment, an annihilator with a third chain of the DNA material etc. Apart from the vaccine, the tools of Evil include: 5G, Chemtrails, PCR sticks for testing, and face masks.

This database of functions can make it easier to follow the conspiracy theories storyline, but might also be a good indicator of keywords for the online research methodology. As they are more motifs, we collect and divide them into functions to make it easier to track the most frequent variants of the conspiracy theories. For now, we can talk about four main types of COVID-19 conspiracy theories in Slovenia (Radomirović Maček 2021). These variants are divided into types by criteria in relation to the virus and appear in the following order:

1. **Type A: The virus is not dangerous.** This type of variant considers several narrative points: The virus is not as dangerous as it is presented, it is simply an excuse for social control; vaccines are the medicalisation of natural living and are unnecessary; traditional vaccines are fine, the problem is that MRna vaccines are experimental and not safe enough, rendering natural immunity the best choice. Pharmaceutical companies are in crisis due to the healthy lifestyle trend, and more people are doing sports and eating healthy food, forcing them to find other ways to make a profit. Vaccines are actually triggers for different diseases (chiefly cancer), meaning that in the future we will need to buy more medicine from these companies. This type of variant has a strong anti-capitalist background, while individualism, democracy and a healthy (bio, ecological etc.) lifestyle are openly promoted. They reference already known conspiracy theories like Big Pharma, Bill Gates, and the New World Order. In cyberspace and social networks, they emerge through individuals, organisations and webpages that promote bio food without supplements, organic products, sports and workouts, namely, a strong individualistic philosophy that everybody is able to control their own destiny and live as they wish. For example: “Hahaha, the globalists conduct and the government performs the repression. The point of corona is actually to take all the rights and freedoms away from us, like in the social credit system in China, to do away with printed money, and to vaccinate everyone en masse and change our genetic nature. Long story short, the New World Order is coming, people! The Babylon system is failing, and this is their last chance”.

2. **Type 2: The virus doesn't exist.** This variant uses strong antivaccine propaganda. At the beginning, it referenced Andrew Wakefield and other known antivax activists. They go even deeper by saying that viruses do not actually exist, there is only a 'poison' from some kind of source (typically ricin, which is dispersed through chemtrails, testing sticks, masks or emitted with the help of 5G towers) that makes us sick with "COVID". They stand for common sense and folk wisdom by rejecting institutional knowledge and strongly confronting the MSM and scientific authorities. One Slovenian organisation that bases its anti COVID-19 activism on such narratives violently entered the studio of the national television broadcaster (RTV) demanding space to "tell their own truth" to the people. They claimed: "The Chinese virus does not exist, today we got the proof from an Australian university that no virus exists. Over 34 pages it is explained the truth of how the Rockefellers made huge business with viruses, and now they are conducting world depopulation, because they invented the solution – the chip-ccine (čipivo slov.: čip+cepivo=čipivo) for the problem of the 'virus'. This organisation has a strong Internet campaign. With their participation in the 'Wednesday' protests (against the COVID-19 measures), they continue to gain the public's attention in order to become a relevant political subject. These types of variants are easily connected with the Chemtrails conspiracy theories (CTs), the Diseases are Artificial CTs, with the Film Your Hospital movement and with many Antivax CTs. They refer to the values of freedom of choice and human rights.
3. **Type 3: The virus is an artificial bio-weapon or a genetic treatment.** The 'little man' in the storms of history is the chief protagonist of such narratives. The official worldview, media representations and everything that is learned in public schooling is simply a simulation masking the actual history that is going on. Dark forces are treating the governments and the media like puppets. They are using more symbolic and fantastic language than used in the discourse of the previous types: this is the era of the snake (poison, medical staff, evil force) and the needle (vaccine), the fighters of light must reveal the apocalypse occurring behind the scenes. The Third World War has already begun, with the children being the first to be attacked, so many stories about infertility, birth defects following vaccines, paedophile elites and hidden laboratories where evil conspirators experiment with vaccines and foetuses. For example: "It happened in Turkey! Hairy babies and babies with tails are born to vaccinated parents". Or, like in the next variant: "The Black swan, how things are going should be moving off the African continent towards Europe, and that force will shake us all, but the transfer of that force will be in the Alps. So, above Mount Triglav, pretty much here. I feel that from March and I warned you already. Now we are almost there". Besides the apocalyptic discourse, prophetic language frequently in use. Currently, there is a variant in Slovenia (tracked down from the Balkans<sup>3</sup>) in which the new virus is ready to arise: "(...) Actually, this is the next pandemic – the

<sup>3</sup> In the Slovenian Internet space, variants of the Marburg virus are supported with shared material (video or quotes about conspiracy theories from influencers in other parts of the WB) in the Serbian or Croatian languages. For example, in variants which include ricin, the most commonly referenced influencer is the clinical psychologist Mila Alečković, known for her anti-COVID activism.



Marburg virus. Symptoms of this virus are very similar to the side effects of the vaccines (...). The plan of governments around the world is to cause panic once again by telling that the side effects are not side effects but the symptoms of Marburg, which is more contagious than corona (...), then they will get you to a PCR which is staged to be positive, so to call ‘positive people’, then they will say that everyone must take the vaccine against this Marburg, and this vaccine will have that thing, deadly thing, ricin in it. (...)”. This type is very closely connected to the QAnon, antisemitic and racist CTs and the Deep State CT, while it is observed that their storytellers are found on the far-right end of the political spectrum which they often show, among others, via affection for former US president Trump or for anti-migration propaganda. On the other hand, the vaccine in such conspiracy theories is a tool for decreasing fertility. It was often heard in the conversations that parents do not wish to vaccinate their children, which they explained by not knowing what the vaccine might do to a young person; it might destroy their health or even cause infertility.<sup>4</sup> The last infertility argument was mostly heard from the parents of daughters. This argument typically continued with the expressed fear their daughters would be unable to have children and create their own family.

4. **The virus is an nanotechnology asset.** The point of vaccination is to insert chips into human bodies and achieve a techno-dystopian world. The human body will become technologised, leading to a new era of cyborgs. The syndrome of magnetic arms or mysterious magnetic fields around the body following vaccination is well known in these kinds of narratives. The goal of the evil conspirators is to destroy human society with digital control where the hybrid human is privately owned by multinational digital corporations. Anxiety regarding the idea of the anti-nature element of the human body is the main preoccupation of the storytellers, such as the values of a pure and natural human. This type commonly refers to CTs such as a Computer Called Beast, the QR or Bar Codes, HAARP, and includes the links between 5G and COVID-19<sup>5</sup>. The core idea is that the Antichrist will arise in the digital space, where the signs are devious and have no meaningful background. Avatars without a voice or body dominate in this demonic ecosystem of cyberspace, they appear to have chthonic smiling faces without a soul and tangible past. In this ‘simularium’, everything can be manipulated, retouched and falsified. As in the examples: I1: “Has anyone noticed how the vaccinated have lately started to behave aggressively? More people have confirmed this, I also noticed it.” I2: “Me too, aggressive and bitter. David Icke told to be aware this autumn and to observe the behaviour of the vaccinated. Something in their consciousness will change. Nanotechnology will start to work. “Or the following example: “The USA decided that everyone vaccinated in the world is their property because they are patented by their law, and are not humans anymore. With modified

<sup>4</sup> The conspiracy theory about infertility somewhat follows the earlier conspiracy theory about HPV virus vaccination, which in 2009 was added to the compulsory vaccinations for girls.

<sup>5</sup> These similarities reflect different narrative elements: motifs (chip, poisoning from the air, ricin etc), tropes (digital control, cyborgs, surveillance systems, weather control) and storylines, such as exemplified in the 2020–2021 Radomirović Maček research.

DNA or RNA GEN vaccination, you are the property of the ones who patented this genetically modified vaccine (...). They are not people anymore but trans-people so their human rights are lost”.

We must be aware that these types represent ideal variants. The situation in the field is much more complex since many motifs and narrative fragments are fluid and easily attached to various spectra of motifs. An example of the intertwining of different types is seen in the next example: The evil conspirators are supposed to also interfere in our daily habits, trying to enforce a sterile, anti-social environment and thereby weaken the immune system.<sup>6</sup> In one interview (male, 1957, August 2021), the question of why the interviewee thinks there is a chip in the vaccine was responded to with a set of his own questions: “Why wouldn’t there be a chip? Why would they try so much to vaccinate all of these people all around the world? It is obvious!! They want to control us!”. Concerning the question of who is trying to control us and why, the answer was “I don’t know who, they, who can afford it. And it is always about money”. All of these quite soon coalesced to form a major conspiracy theory arc, further reaffirming that not only do the conspiracy theories “sound remarkably alike” (Byford 2014: 90), but even have ‘travelling motifs’ transmitted from one narrative to another, they emerge and are re-argued. However, these travelling motifs are not the subject of this paper.

After the vaccinations against COVID-19 were approved, the conspiracy theory very soon emerged that the hidden elite is trying to gain control of the population through the vaccination plan. The vaccination contains technology transmitting information about each person, the ‘chip’: it will transmit activities, habits, even physiological processes like heartbeat, metabolism etc.

Consequently, an interdisciplinary study about online CT during the COVID-19 crisis (Shahvasari, Thangerlini, et al., 2020) shows that individuals are not really aware of the whole narrative of the conspiracy theories. In the storytelling process they decide which part is the most convenient to talk about. As mentioned, like many folklore narratives conspiracy theories have an open structure, they have the structure of a network, which is very easily spread with new narrative fragments. One might argue that this web-like characteristic explains the huge success on the Internet, which similarly has a web structure.

#### BEHIND THE CONSPIRACY: UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL TENSIONS AND FEARS

Conspiracy theories thrive on the fear and confusion that accompany contemporary socio-cultural upheavals. Both Bauman and Castells argue that fear has become one of the most effective mobilising emotions in modern society (Bauman 2006; Castells 2009), and the media-fuelled proliferation of irrational fears is a powerful force undermining the ability to critically assess the social world (Leone, Madisson, Ventsel 2020: 45).

<sup>6</sup> This conspiracy memeplex was also disclosed in an interview in a more or less similar variant.

The process of fear is also semiotic: “The temporal distance between the immediate experience of the fear object and the interpretation of the same allows for an intensification of meaning-making processes. Conspiracy theories are central epiphenomena of this kind of meaning-making in the context of an atmosphere of anxiety” (M. Lotman 2009: 210 cited in Leone, Madisson, Ventsel 2020: 45). Potential referents for conspiracy theories are usually therefore individuals who fear explicit phenomena in the culture, typically based on cultural memory. Zupančič (2021) links conspiracy theories with Lacanian comments on jealousy and the pathological factor with it; still, Zupančič also stresses that with conspiracy theories it is never the individual pathology but the social pathology that is registered. This collective aspect is crucial not only because it can be discussed from the folkloristic perspective, as the engine of storytelling, but can also be a clue for the functional analysis of modern conspiracy theories.

Like all conspiracy theories, this COVID-19 conspiracy narrative builds on fear and confusion: fear of losing one’s health or even life and that of one’s relatives, friends due to a deadly disease, fear of excessive control, of surveillance, digitalisation, fear that some external agent controls more of our lives than we do. The language of fear concerns disease, death, totalitarian social control and uses certain elements of reality interpreted as fearful omens and warning signs: “When two things are similar, one is a sign of the other and vice versa” (Eco 1990: 164). People start to intentionally draw connections and similarities between two phenomena, sometimes tentatively, often simply to enable a connection which might present itself as a fearful omen, even when connections are not evident. The similarities are supported by explanatory narratives, typically exaggerated and over-emphasised, all with a view to show the threat of the phenomenon. These signs connect and the connections are upgraded with new signs, and once again with new signs – this is how the chain of conspiracy-based narratives then expands the content and support the fear of technology and control: 5G is radiation yet also technology that will control humans via chips inserted through vaccination. The already existing connection between HAARP (high-tech technology system) and ricin coming from the chemtrails is hence easily amalgamated with previous ones. Signs like the Internet network, disease, chip, and control taken separately by its purpose and source do not have any connection, yet the narratives link them and even add some natural phenomena as fearful omen, such as the position of the clouds in the sky or the direction of the wind.

Different narratives often show society’s tendency to polarise the phenomena into the ontological ‘good’ and ‘bad’, and conspiracy theories on every level go even further in this polarised logic: an antithetical opposition between ‘us’ and ‘them’, brightness–darkness, nationalism–cosmopolitanism, prosperity of culture–cultural disaster, honesty–corruption etc. (Ventsel 2016: 315-325), and the demonised alien and/or distant Other is usually characterised as paranoia towards the human institutions of modern society itself (Auspers 2012: 24). The distant, threatening Other is transformed into a mythological beast (as described at the start of this article) that seems to be invincible (albeit some conspiracy theorists fight it with disclosures and persuasion).

Confusion in the conspiracy theories about COVID-19 is not only seen in the narrative, where the emphasised misleading of the population creates the basis of fear, but is

also noticeable in the functioning of the Slovenian medical profession, the government, and the public. Confusing information about the virus and the corrupt dealings in Slovenia that accompanied the respond to it and created a perfect storm for doubt and mistrust, providing an ideal environment for conspiracy stories to flourish.

All four main characteristics of conspiracy theory: fear, confusion, doubt and mistrust are observable in the COVID-19 conspiracy narrative and were felt by the general public.

Therefore, even trivial everyday events

soon became seen as signs of manipulation by conspiratorial forces, such as mandatory medical face masks that have come to embody coerced behaviour.

[Conspiracy theories do not exist, only conspiracies exist. The corona virus is a conspiracy with which the (hidden) leaders wish to justify the upcoming worst economic crisis, they want to scare people and redirect their focus elsewhere. National governments are gladly using it and cooperating with the media in this effort. They are scaring people with fascist measurements, restricting movement with the intention of creating a herd of sheep that they can take whatever they want from! From money to dignity!]

## ESCAPING THE CONSPIRACY: TOWARDS HUMOUR AND PARODY<sup>7</sup>

Conspiracy theories reflect society and its fears. Still, humour also reflects well-positioned phenomena in society: when a phenomenon is well-known and well-positioned, another of the possible reactions is a humorous response, in this case to being fearful and the exaggerated claims. Putting these narratives into humorous form makes them lose authority: the exaggeration becomes so over-emphasised that it trivialises the fear of a greater danger posed by 'evil'; their mythological nature is negated by comedy. However, humour usually points to the topic's importance: conspiracy theories are obviously increasingly present in society, and are being taken seriously, given that the humorous



Image 3

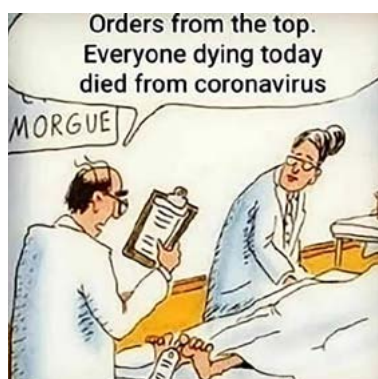


Image 4: Instagram page Koronazlom, 27.2.2020

<sup>7</sup> For more, see Mencej Mirjam (2022).



Image 5: [Aha! The corona virus is targeting men! A conspiracy of the new world order so that all rich men can have all the women for themselves]

form cannot function if the semantic referent is not understood widely. This means that while we can say that conspiracy stories are nevertheless narratives of a disaster, just the opposite, humour proves its importance in the contemporary narrating situation.

## CONCLUSION

Pandemics, including COVID-19, are some of the biggest crises affecting humankind. Diseases in themselves bring a fear of physical and mental suffering, of losing one's loved ones. As such, they are a sign of suffering and represent evil on the very foundational level of ontology. It seems that the individual must often justify their suffering cognitively and therefore place the responsibility on the numinous Other: on

either the mythological God (who wants to punish society) or the demonised group of governing people (who wish to exploit society).

This diabolical group of people and entities in conspiracy narratives is a cabal of rich, influential and mysterious, albeit hidden individuals. With the help of collaborators, Evil distributes its tools (virus, vaccine, chip-ccine) in order to subordinate, destroy and control humankind. Just like we have a need to understand and define Evil, we have an aim to have or be a hero in the final transformation. Luckily, the enlightened individuals, with the help of whistle-blowers, do whatever it takes to reveal the decentralised Evil, to fight against its minions, and bring the light of knowledge to the sinful and deceived. These and similar mythological structures have followed humanity throughout the cultural history of any civilisation. Conspiracy theories are not the fantasies of foolish people, far from it, they are logical response to times of crisis and disappointment. Their characters are based on our postmodern reality. In a world without gods, promises of the afterlife, and cruel economic inequality, the suffering of the little man is even stronger and more visible than ever before due to the possibility of having insight into every corner of this globalised world with the help of the Internet. Feelings of fear, insignificance, marginalisation and anger regarding the deafness of others make conspiracy theories possible, in turn awakening the known mythological patterns.

People use conspiracy stories to make the world manageable and understandable. By wanting to map and control the world, storytellers exhibit a tendency to demand an answer to everything. The control is supposed to ease the collective fear and confusion caused by the disease and the upcoming control by a hidden elite; both disease and control (including the fearful control of the hidden elite as well as to gain control over the situation) are signs connoting fear, terror, apprehension, 'the wrong way for humanity

to evolve'. All of these identifications are utilised as the language of fear also within the conspiracy theory on COVID-19: the fear that our lives and future will be destroyed, the fear we will lose our freedom, that someone else will take charge of our lives. Namely, scepticism and disbelief are the starting point of the conspiracy theory, even though subsequent conspiracy theories in further give another, truer explanation, which seems to be the one single truth (Zupančič 2022). In the process, the scepticism and distrust are replaced with the explanation given by the conspiracy theory. On the other hand, turning these conspiracy theory narratives into a humorous form makes them lose their authority: the fear and danger are trivialised, their mythological nature is negated with comedy. Moreover, transforming them into a humorous form shows that conspiracy theories are narratives that are well established in our day-to-day discourse and experiences. After all, these conspiracy theory narratives can fuel the engine of storytelling and also be a clue for the functional analysis not only of modern conspiracy theories but of society and related humour as well.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Slovenia has been overloaded with various suspicions: some turned out to be factual wrongdoings, some remained on the level of rumours, and others were altered or added to conspiracy theories. Considering that the pandemic is not yet over, people will spread new rumours, and conspiracy theories will evolve and be added to the mythology arc, while their basis of fear, confusion, doubt and mistrust will remain. Likewise, public interest in conspiracy theories will continue: identifying a culprit for the social anxiety, providing an explanation – these are intra-social narratives that are passed on in daily communication.

The seriousness of people understanding and acknowledging conspiracy theories is also evident in the adjacent use of popular humour: memes and jokes about conspiracy themes prove that people pay some regard to the narratives, as it is only in this way that the comedic referent can be widely understood. Likewise, among some segments of the population, the mythopoetic narrative of a 'great evil at work' continues to drown out science, thereby fanning the flames of fear and doubt.

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## TEORIJE ZAROTE O COVID-19 V SLOVENIJI

KRISTINA RADOMIROVIĆ MAČEK, SAŠA BABIČ



Teorije zarote so znan pojav še iz starorimskih časov (npr. obtožba Judov za epidemijo kuge) in so spremljevalni pojav vseh družbenih kriz in sprememb. V Sloveniji so večjo odmevnost doživele v času pandemije COVID-19 (2020–2022), kjer so na podlagi starejših teorij zarote, njihovimi združevanji, dodajanjem novih narativnih elementov izoblikovale nove, vendar so te povezane s starejšimi zgodbami. Članek obravnava teorije zarote kot zgodbe, ki jih uporabniki prenašajo tako ustno kot prek medijev (in se ne sprašuje po njihovi resničnosti). Raziskava je temeljila tako na kvantitativnem (več kot 1000 enot) kot kvalitativnem analitičnem pristopu; zgodbe so bile zbrane tako s terenskim delom kot prek medijev in spleta v času pandemije.

Pandemije, vključno s COVID-19, spadajo med največje družbene krize. Bolezni same po sebi prinašajo strah pred fizičnim in duševnim trpljenjem, pred izgubo bližnjih. Zato so znak trpljenja in predstavljajo zlo na temeljni ravni ontologije. Zdi se, da mora posameznik velikokrat spoznavno opravičevati svoje trpljenje in zato odgovornost prelagati na numinoznega Drugega: bodisi na mitološkega boga (ki želi kaznovati družbo) bodisi na demonizirano skupino vladajočih ljudi (ki želijo izkoriščati družbo).

Ta diabolčna skupina ljudi in entitet v pripovedih o zaroti je krog bogatih, vplivnih, čeprav skritih posameznikov. Zlobneži s pomočjo sodelavcev distribuirajo svoja orodja (virus, cepivo, »čipivo«) za podrejanje, uničenje in nadzor človeštva.

Tako kot moramo razumeti in definirati zlo, pa se v teh zgodbah kaže tudi cilj biti junak v končni preobrazbi: razsvetljeni posamezniki s pomočjo žvižgačev naredijo vse, kar je v njihovi moči, da razkrijejo decentralizirano Zlo, da se borijo proti njegovim privržencem in prinesejo luč spoznanja grešnim in zavedenim. Te in podobne mitološke strukture so sledile človeštvu skozi celotno kulturno zgodovino katerekoli civilizacije. Teorije zarote niso domislice neumnih ljudi, daleč od tega, so logičen odziv na čase krize in razočaranja, vpogleda v vsak kotiček tega globaliziranega sveta s pomočjo svetovnega spleta. Občutki strahu, nepomembnosti, marginalizacije in jeze zaradi gluhosti drugih omogočajo teorije zarote, posledično pa prebujajo znane mitološke vzorce.

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# Življenje s COVID-19 v spletni folklori

— Mirjam Mencej —

Članek obravnava meme o virusu COVID-19, ki so bili deljeni na Facebook skupini Belief Narrative Network's od njenega začetka aprila 2020 do konca avgusta 2020 (ko je bil ta članek napisan), torej med prvim valom pandemije. Avtorica obravnava glavne skrbi članov skupine, ki se odražajo v temah, ki jih meme obravnavajo, in vloge, ki so jih imeli ti v njihovem življenju.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: spletna folklori, meme, korona, COVID-19, virus, pandemija

The article discusses memes about the COVID-19 virus shared in the Belief Narrative Network's Facebook group since its inception in April 2020 until the end of August 2020 (when this article was written), i.e., during the first wave of the pandemic. The author addresses the main preoccupations and anxieties of the members of the group as they reflect on the themes addressed in the memes, and the roles the memes played in their lives.

KEYWORDS: Internet folklore, memes, COVID-19, virus, pandemia

## UVOD

Folklori, kot vedno znova potrjujejo raziskave folkloristov, tako ali drugače odseva kulturni in socialni kontekst, znotraj katerega se širi. S pomočjo folklorne ljudje nagovarjajo ne le svoje strahove, ampak izražajo tudi širše družbene in kulturne vrednote in pričakovanja, se spopadajo s pritiski in konflikti, utrjujejo družbene norme in sproščajo tesnobe, ki jih sprožajo ekonomske, politične in druge spremembe v družbi. Kot piše Halfstein, bi morali folkloro razumeti pravzaprav kot »razširjeno metaforo družbenih sprememb«, ki »zagotavlja narativni okvir za pogajanja o njihovem pomenu, veljavnosti in vplivu na kulturni sistem vrednot in identitete« (Halfstein 2000: 96; glej še Honko 1962: 118; Ward 1976; Fine 1985; Tangherlini 1994: 18–19; Dégh 2001: 127–28; Ellis 2003: 11–12).

Glede na to da je pandemija koronavirusa sprožila strah pred boleznijo in so ukrepi za njeno zaježitev vsaj začasno, če ne dolgoročno, temeljito spremenili in zaznamovali način življenja ljudi skorajda vsepovsod po svetu, lahko torej lahko upravičeno pričakujemo, da se bo na pandemijo in z njo povezane spremembe odzvala tudi folklori. Res so etnologi /antropologi /folkloristi marsikje po svetu že takoj po izbruhu epidemije postali

pozorni na to, kako ta vpliva na naše življenje; različne institucije, kot so muzeji, inštituti idr., so pozivale k zbiranju gradiva, npr. spletnih dnevnikov posameznikov v času epidemije, fotografij vsakdanjega življenja v tem času in seveda tudi folklore, na primer šal na temo epidemije. A večina teh zbirk obsega gradivo znotraj nacionalnih okvirov. Ker pa ima pandemija svetovne razsežnosti in so v boju proti njej države skorajda po vsem svetu sprejele bolj ali manj enake ukrepe, se zdi, da takšna situacija ponuja tudi enkratno priložnost za raziskavo globalno razširjene folklore in obenem primerjavo in opazovanje podobnosti v odzivu nanje in razlik, ki se kažejo kot kulturno specifične.

Ker digitalna tehnologija danes prežema vse naše življenje, se seveda tudi folklor, kot oblika izrazne kulture, v veliki meri širi digitalno. Če izhajamo iz razumevanja folklor, ki se pojavi, kjerkoli pride do »neformalne, vsakdanje medsebojne komunikacije (»iz oči v oči«, kamor sodi tudi spletni »pogovor«) (McNeill 2009: 84), lahko rečemo, da splet, zlasti med mladimi, danes predstavlja verjetno celo najpomembnejšo platformo za širjenje folklor. Internet kot medij, ki uporabnikom omogoča hitro širjenje informacij, obenem pa anonimnost, se kaže kot idealen kanal za transmisijo folklor. Tako kot v ustno posredovani folklori so tudi na spletu nosilci folklor posamezniki, ki si v medsebojni interakciji delijo mnenja, videe, podobe in osebne spomine. Zaradi anonimnosti avtorjev elektronsko posredovana folklor pogosto vodi celo v bolj avtentičen izraz uporabnikovega pravega jaza ter izraža družbene strahove in predsodke ljudi bolj neposredno kot ustno širjena folklor (Blank 2009: 9). Splet tako daje platformo vernakularnim glasovom in ustvarjalnemu izražanju t. i. »malega človeka« in je prostor participatorne kulture, znotraj katerega posamezniki in skupine lahko izrazijo svojo ustvarjalnost.

Lahkota, s katero se folklor širi po spletu, namreč zlahka zakrije dejstvo, ki ga ne smemo prezreti, da gre za ustvarjalni proces in za zavestno odločitev ljudi, da primerke folklor ustvarijo, poustvarijo ali samo prepošljejo dalje in tako podelijo z drugimi. Ustvarjalnost je pomembna značilnost folklor, in ta vidik je dobil v novi Blankovi definiciji folklor, ki je najprimernejša za raziskovanje na spletu, tudi ključno vlogo. Kot piše Trevor Blank, lahko folklor definiramo kot »zunanjji izraz ustvarjalnosti – v neskončnem številu oblik in interakcij – posameznikov in njihovih skupnosti« (Blank 2009: 6).

Sodobni način življenja folklor na spletu na eni strani omogoča njeno izjemno hitro širjenje od posameznika v lokalni in globalni prostor. Na drugi strani pa splet predstavlja tudi arhiv, v katerem se folklor z vsega sveta ohranja in kjer nastajajo neke vrste nova »dediščina« (Blank 2009: 6; Heimo in Koski 2014: 4–6). Zavedanje o tem je vodilo v pobudo izvršnega odbora Belief Narrative Network (BNN) pri International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR), ki združuje folkloriste s skorajda vseh celin, da pričnemo na spletu dejavno zbirati folklor prav na temo pandemije koronavirusa. 8. aprila 2020 smo zato ustvarili posebno Facebook (FB) skupino, dostopno na povezavi <https://www.facebook.com/groups/625573241323757/?ref=bookmarks>, kjer smo objavili poziv k sodelovanju pri zbiranju folklor na temo koronavirusa oz. virusa covid-19, pa tudi pri zbiranju terenskih fotografij, videoposnetkov, prvoosebni pripovedi o osebnih izkušnjah življenja v času korone itd. Naš poziv je tako rekoč v hipu naletel na izjemen odziv – v naslednjih nekaj dneh in tednih so se Facebook skupini pridružili člani BNN, pa tudi širše ISFNR, a tudi mnogi drugi, ki niso folkloristi, saj so se vabila k sodelovanju

kmalu razširila izven meja folkloristične skupnosti; v skupino so bili sprejeti vsi, ki so se želeli priključiti, ne glede na folkloristično izobrazbo. Avgusta 2020,<sup>1</sup> to je v času pisanja tega članka, je skupina tako združevala že več kot 400 članov in članic v vsega sveta, zlasti iz Evrope, Azije, Južne Amerike in ZDA. Čeprav so nekateri v njej izstopali po pogostosti svojih objav, pa je splošno gledano objavljalo zelo veliko število ljudi.

Čeprav je bila skupina ustanovljena iz strokovnih razlogov – zbiranje folklornega gradiva na temo koronavirusne bolezni in ukrepov za njeno zajezitev, ki bi kasneje omogočilo njeno raziskovanje – pa ti nagibi za uporabnike spletne strani BNN FB skupine nikoli niso bili v ospredju. Medtem ko so nekateri sodelujoči folkloristi, predvsem na začetku, v svojih komentarjih res občasno opozarjali na različice istih memov in na njihov kontekst – kar so pač vsebine, ki zanimajo folkloriste – so bili takšni »strokovni« komentarji na FB skupini vedno v manjšini. V FB skupini posamezniki praviloma objavljajo folkloro na temo korone predvsem zaradi zabave, užitka ob (virtualnem) druženju ter deloma še iz želje doprinesiti k ustvarjanju zbirke primerkov take folklore. Največje število objav na tej strani predstavljajo memi, redkeje tudi fotografije s terena, fotografije grafitov, video posnetki, krajša besedila, časopisne objave, občasno pa tudi najave (na primer mesečnih spletnih predavanj, ki jih organizira izvršni odbor BNN, in sem jih v tistem obdobju kot predsednica prispevala sama) in razni pozivi.

V tem članku bom na kratko predstavila spletno folkloro, objavljeno v BNN Facebook skupini, ki je nastala kot odziv na pandemijo in ukrepe za zajezitev virusa na začetku pandemije, tj. v času od začetka aprila, ko je bila ta FB skupina ustanovljena, do konca avgusta 2020, ko je bil ta članek dokončan.<sup>2</sup> Po začetni diskusiji o žanrih in intertekstualnosti spletne folklore na temo covid-19 se bom osredotočila predvsem na meme in teme, ki jih ti najpogosteje nagovarjajo. Pogostost določenih tem, ki jih folkloristi nagovarja, namreč očitno razkriva tiste dejavnike, ki v ljudeh sprožajo največ tesnobe. Čeprav ta članek zaradi prostorske in časovne omejitve raziskave (april–avgust 2020) ni namenjen poglobljeni analizi, primerjavi in interpretaciji obravnavanih spletnih folklornih »besedil«, ampak zgolj njihovi kratki predstavitvi, bom v svoji analizi vsaj do neke mere pozorna tudi na to, kako se globalno razširjena spletna folkloro prilagaja specifičnim kulturnim okoljem ter kakšne funkcije opravlja v življenju t. i. sodelujočih v tradiciji (*tradition participants*), torej ljudi, ki folkloro na temo koronavirusa ustvarjajo, širijo dalje, spreminjajo ali pa zgolj pasivno sprejemajo.

<sup>1</sup> Članek je bil v obliki referata z naslovom *Življenje s koronavirusom v internetni folklori* prvič predstavljen na spletni konferenci *Vsakanje življenje v času epidemije. Nove izkušnje, etnografija in refleksija*, ki jo je organiziral Oddelek za etnologijo in kulturno antropologijo FF UL 19. maja 2020. Konec avgusta 2020 je bil članek dokončan in oddan za objavo. Žal se je objava zavlekla najprej iz organizacijskih razlogov, zatem pa zaradi tehničnih razlogov do objave v Glasniku SED, kjer so bili objavljeni drugi prispevki s konference, ni prišlo. Ker bi lahko v članku namreč predstavila največ osem primerkov memov, sem se odločila, da članka ne bom objavila, saj brez prikazanih memov ne bi imel pravega smisla. Urednici Studije Mythologicae Slavice, Saši Babič, se najlepše zahvaljujem, da je omogočila, da bo v tej objavi lahko prikazana večina memov, o katerih članek govori.

<sup>2</sup> Po tem ko je bila članek avgusta 2020 že napisan in oddan v objavo, je bilo objavljenih nekaj člankov na temo spletne folklore o covidu-19. Nekateri avtorji so v njih prišli tudi do deloma podobnih rezultatov, a ker v času pisanja tega članka še niso bili natisnjeni, jih v razpravi ne upoštevam, naj pa jih na tem mestu nekaj naštejemo: Nicholls 2020; Pulos 2020; Aslan 2021; Bischetti, Canal, Bambini 2021; Blaber, Gougoumanova, Palatnik 2021; Chłopicki, Brzozowska 2021; Dynel 2021; Olah, Hempelmann 2021; Sebba-Elran 2021; Strick 2021.

## ŽANRI

Zdi se, da so koronavirus in ukrepi za njegovo zaježitev že zelo zgodaj po začetku epidemije vstopili tudi v folkloro. Zlasti v Aziji so temo hitro pograbili profesionalni ali polprofesionalni ljudski pevci in jo navezali na tradicijske folklorne motive, na primer tiste, ki so tipični za čudežne pravljice. Tako so že kmalu začeli prepevati pesmi o virusu kot o zlem nasprotniku in o zdravstvenih delavcih kot junakih – borcih proti zlemu nasprotniku ter opevali ukrepe za zaježitev virusa kot čudežna sredstva, ki junakom pomagajo v boju proti nasprotniku. V Indiji je tema koronavirusa vstopila tudi v ljudsko likovno umetnost. (Slika 1)

Motiv koronavirusa je seveda vstopil tudi v ustno pripovedno folkloro. Medijska objava (*ABP live*, 23. Marec 2020), ki opozarja ljudi, naj ne nasedajo »izmišljenim govoricam«, ki trdijo, da bodo tisti, ki bi med pandemijo zaspali, okamneli (zato so mnogi menda prejeli telefonske klice, ki naj bi prepričali, da bi zaspali in tako okamneli), se sklicuje na *povedke*, ki so se na začetku epidemije razširile na podeželju severne Indije. Kot je dandanes že običajno, so se tudi v zvezi s tem virusom seveda takoj razširile povedke o *teorijah zarote*, ki jih folkloristi razumemo kot posebno podzvrst povedk. V njih kot glavni krivec za koronavirus nastopa – poleg iluminatov, Billa Gatesa in drugih – zlasti 5G tehnologija. O teh na spletni BNN FB strani lahko sklepamo po memih, ki se iz njih v glavnem norčujejo – kar je občasno vodilo tudi v ostre odzive njihovih zagovornikov, ki so nasprotovali, češ da ne gre za »teorije« zarote, ampak zgolj za zarote. (Sliki 2, 3)

Korona je vstopila tudi v kratke folklorne žanre, na primer *pregovore*, ali bolje rečeno »meta-pregovore« (prim. Dundes 1979: 50–58). Ti včasih humorno potvarjajo pregovor, na primer tako, da izjavo definirajo kot pregovor, recimo: »Maska odganja virus tako kot tangice pokrivajo rit. Kitajski pregovor.« Včasih pa se sklicujejo na splošno znan tradicijski pregovor in ga humorno preoblikujejo, na primer: »Za paremiologe: koronavirus je nekoč na Kitajskem slišal, da vse poti vodijo v Rim«. Medtem ko prvi seveda leti na izvor koronavirusa na Kitajskem, se drugi nanaša na pregovor »Vse poti vodijo v Rim« ter obenem na kasnejši prenos žarišča bolezni s Kitajske v Italijo in je očitno nastal v času hudega izbruha epidemije v Italiji.

Na spletni strani Facebook skupine BNN naletimo tudi na *koronauganke*, recimo naslednjo: »Kako se prepozna čarovnico? Leta 1485: V vodi ne utone.<sup>3</sup> Leta 2020: V karanteni se ne zredi.«

A daleč največ primerkov folklorne, ki so jih člani FB skupine objavljali na spletni strani, namenjeni koronavirusu, bi lahko uvrstili v žanr *memov* (*memes*), ki se – v nasprotju z drugimi, zgoraj omenjenimi žanri, ki se sicer pogosto širijo kot spletni memi, a se lahko prenašajo tudi ustno – širijo izključno preko spleta. Zato se bom v nadaljevanju članka osredotočila samo na ta žanr, in sicer predvsem na meme, ki so sestavljeni iz vizualne in/ali besedilne podobe (zaradi težje predstavitve se bom na tem mestu izognila memom v obliki videoposnetkov, ki jih je sicer na spletu prav tako kar veliko število).

<sup>3</sup> Gre za t. i. preizkus z vodo, s katerim so v zgodnjem novem veku, v času lova na čarovnice, dokazovali, ali je oseba čarovnica ali ne: če ni potonila, je bila prepoznana kot takšna, če je, je obveljala za nedolžno.

## MEMI KOT FOLKLORNI ŽANR

Termin *mem*, ki se nanaša na širjenje kulturnih enot, je – kot analognega terminu *gen*, ki implicira širjenje bioloških informacij – skoval Richard Dawkins. Kot etski koncept predstavlja mentalno enoto, ki se širi od možganov ene do možganov druge osebe s pomočjo posnemanja. Kot emski termin, zlasti med mladimi uporabniki interneta, pa obsega različne široko razširjene spletne vsebine, tj. razne oblike obdelanih podob (fotošopov), kratkih videoposnetkov, šal, gest, obraznih izrazov in verbalnih fraz, ki so postali široko razširjeni in popularni. Praviloma vsebujejo element humorja, imajo potencial za intertekstualnost, zanje pa so značilne tudi neobičajne primerjave (Blank 2012: 7; Heimo in Koski 2014: 6). Shifman je spletne meme definirala takole: a) gre za skupino digitalnih enot, ki imajo skupne značilnosti vsebine, oblike in/ali mnenjske pozicije; ki so bile b) ustvarjeni z zavedanjem drugih; in c) so jih mnogi spletni uporabniki širili dalje, jih imitirali, in/ali spreminjali.<sup>4</sup> (Shifman 2014: 41)

Spletni meme predstavljajo kulturne prakse udeležbe v medsebojni interakciji. Izrazne vzorce, ki se kažejo v različicah, katerih obstoj je za večino folkloristov ključni kriterij za identifikacijo folklore (Dundes in Pagter 1975: xix), lahko jasno prepoznamo tudi v memih (Blank 2012: 6–7), kar meme nedvomno potrjuje kot folkloro (prim. Ellis 2003: 83). Spremenljivost se lahko nanaša tako na likovno podobo kot na besedilo mema ali pa se kaže v kombinaciji obeh. Meme, ki so bili razširjeni že pred izbruhom koronavirusne bolezni, so se v času pandemije pogosto prilagodili aktualni temi zgolj s spremenjenim besedilom ali sliko, ali pa s kombinacijo obojega, pogosto celo v več različicah. (Slike 4, 5, 6, 7)

Seveda pa so nastali tudi novi meme, mnogi prav tako v več različicah. Zlasti v variantnosti likovnega ozadja se včasih jasno razkriva raznolikost kulturnih kontekstov, znotraj katerih se širijo sicer globalno razširjeni meme. V memih z istim besedilom, a različnim likovnim ozadjem, je tako včasih mogoče jasno prepoznati potrebo ljudi, da folkloro, ki prihaja iz druge kulture, prilagodijo svojemu lastnemu kulturnemu okolju tudi na spletu, tako kot to praviloma velja za folkloro v ustnem prenosu – celo, če to zahteva nekaj dodatnega truda in časa. (Sliki 8, 9)

## INTERTEKSTUALNOST

V nasprotju z nekaterimi memi, ki so bili razširjeni že pred izbruhom pandemije in so se naknadno zgolj navezali nanjo (prim. zgoraj slike 4–7), pa so mnogi drugi meme, ki obravnavajo različne vidike življenja s koronavirusom, nastali na novo in nimajo prepoznavnih modelov od prej. A ne glede na to lahko v obojih pogosto identificiramo prepoznavne »tradicijske« reference, na katere se sklicujejo. Nekatero od teh referenc izhajajo neposredno iz folklore same – tako na primer najdemo kar precej memov, ki

<sup>4</sup> »(a) a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance, which (b) were created with awareness of each other, and (c) were circulated, imitated, and/or transformed via the Internet by many users.«

se navezujejo na čudežne pravljice, zlasti na globalno razširjeni čudežni pravljici Sneguljčica in Rdeča kapica. Ti morata biti za svojo mednarodno prepoznavnost sicer bolj hvaležni popularni kulturi, zlasti hollywoodskim predelavam, kot pa klasičnim načinom transmisije folklore. (Slike, 10 11, 12, 13)

Na drugi strani najdemo tudi meme, ki se navezujejo na folkloro znotraj specifičnega kulturnega konteksta. Samo memi, katerih spremno besedilo v ruščini kaže na to, da so nastali v Rusiji, se, na primer, navezujejo na vsebino *bilin*, ruskih ljudskih junaških pesmi, v katerih nastopa ljudski junak Il'ja Muromec, ki v memih postane »junak samoizolacije«. (Slika 14)

Pogosteje kot na folkloro pa se zlasti globalno razširjeni meme navezujejo na globalno popularno kulturo, kar je razumljivo, kajti le (široko) prepoznana intertekstualnost lahko sproži globalen humoren odziv. Tu izstopajo kulturni filmi, kot so Gospodar prstanov, Matrika, Vojska zvezd, John Wick, Ko jagenjčki obmolknejo, Bilbo je nekoč v Hollywoodu, Forest Gump, Briljantina, filmi Quentina Tarantina itd. Seveda ne gre niti brez Chucka Norrisa, verjetno najbolj priljubljene figure v svetu spletne folklore, ki v svojem slogu rešuje vse težave. (Slike 15, 16, 17, 18)

V »mem-predelavah« naletimo tudi na svetovno znana dela likovne umetnosti, ki predvidoma sodijo v splošno izobrazbo povprečnega člana *conduita*<sup>5</sup> memov – na primer Michelangelovega Davida in Da Vincijeve Zadnje večerje (ki je bila posebej popularna v času velikonočnih praznikov), pa tudi nekatere najbolj slovite slike avtorjev, kot so recimo Monet, Van Gogh, Gauguin idr. (Sliki 19, 20)

## TEME KORONAMEMOV

Memi, ki so nastali v začetnih mesecih pandemije koronavirusa in se neposredno navezujejo nanjo, predvsem na ukrepe za zaježitev, jasno razkrivajo specifične tesnobe, skrbi in nezadovoljstvo ljudi v času spopadanja s pandemijo – od strahu pred pomanjkanjem, do spodbujanja k upoštevanju ukrepov za zaježitev epidemije, pa do kritičnih pogledov na ukrepe in norčevanja iz njih. V mnogih memih se, ne glede na to, katere vsebine izražajo ali problematizirajo, kot stalnica pojavlja motiv smrti in pogrebne tematike (prim. spodaj), kar, se zdi, kaže na to, da so ljudje v tem času veliki meri zares občutili, in skozi meme tudi izražali, strah pred lastno smrtjo in smrtjo bližnjih. V nadaljevanju se bom osredinila na nekatere najpogostejše teme, ki so prevladovali v memih v mesecih po izbruhu pandemije.

<sup>5</sup> *Conduit* je termin za komunikacijsko verigo oziroma stik, ki se vzpostavi med posamezniki, ki sprejemajo in prenašajo posamezne primerke / žanre / tipe / motive itd. folklore (Déggh 1995: 176–177).



*STRAH PRED POMANJKANJEM*

Čeprav se je v enem od memov pokazala skrb pred pomanjkanjem hrane – z referenco na kanibala Hannibala Lecterja iz filma *Ko jagenjčki obmolcknejo* (»Če zmanjka hrane, imamo še vedno drug drugega.«) – pa antropologov najbrž ne bo začudilo, da ena od prvih in glavnih tem, ki so bile zares množično obravnavane v spletnih memih, ni bil strah pred pomanjkanjem hrane, ampak strah pred pomanjkanjem toaletnega papirja. Čeprav zaradi prevlade evropskih, severnoameriških in azijskih udeležencev na FB strani BNN ni mogoče delati zanesljivih globalnih medkulturnih primerjav, se, vsaj glede na zbrane podatke, zdi, da je bil ta strah sicer veliko bolj prisoten na Zahodu kot na Vzhodu; memov na to temo, ki bi bili očitno postavljeni v azijski kulturni kontekst, nisem zasledila. Čeprav so memi odsevali strah pred pomanjkanjem toaletnega papirja, pa so se največkrat posmehovali kopičenju zalog, ki ga je sprožil strah pred pomanjkanjem. (Slike 21, 22, 23, 24)

*»SOCIALNA« DISTANCA*

Zahteva po medsebojni distanci je bil eden od prvih ukrepov, ki so jih uvedle vlade po vsem svetu, da bi preprečile širjenje virusa in smrti kot posledice okužbe. Tudi v tej skupini memov pogosto naletimo na tematiko smrti in pogrebno tematiko ter prigovarjanje k vzdrževanju distance, ki naj bi preprečila okužbo in potencialno smrt. (Sliki 25, 26) A didaktična vloga memov, ki opozarjajo na nujnost distance, kot je razvidna iz zgornjega mema, ni vedno v ospredju; ukrep je sprožil tudi mnoge kritične odzive. Že samo poimenovanje ukrepa je v memih vzbudilo posmeh. (Slike 27) V memih, ki se navezujejo na vzdrževanje zahtevane distance, pogosteje kot na spodbujanje k spoštovanju ukrepa naletimo na norčevanje iz njega in kritičen odnos (Slika 28), občasno tudi kulturno specifično samoironijo. (Sliki 29, 30)

*DEZINFEKCIJA, UMIVANJE ROK*

Mnoge humorne odzive v memih je sprožilo tudi poudarjanje pogostega umivanja in razkuževanja rok in površin, posebej navodila glede pogostosti in dolgotrajnosti oziroma natančnosti pri umivanju rok. Kljub humornim vsebinam pa tudi tu, tako kot v zgornjih dveh tematskih skupinah memov, pogosto naletimo na podobe smrti. (Slike 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36)

*MASKE*

Prav tako je eden od prvih ukrepov vlad ob pandemiji, tj. uvedba obveznega nošenja mask v javnih prostorih, izzval množico odzivov v memih. Nekateri memi, se zdi, izražajo občutek ljudi, da nošenje mask kot zaščita pred okužbo z virusom spominja na filme, ki prikazujejo življenje po apokalipsi. (Slika 37)

Drugi so bolj humorni – na primer mem o Van Goghu z masko, zataknjeno za eno uho (saj si je, kot je splošno znano, drugega odrezal), ki se navezuje na njegov avtoportret, ali pa sloviti nasmeh Mone Lize v Louvru izza maske. (Sliki 38, 39)

A ti memi so tudi posmehljivi in kritični do ukrepa: pogosto smešijo pretirani pomen, ki ga dobiva nošnje mask (in rokavic) v našem vsakdanu, in se norčujejo iz nove, spreobrnjene lestvice norm vedenja, po kateri prej nesprejemljiva dejanja v primerjavi z neupoštevanjem ukrepa nošenja mask (in rokavic) naenkrat postanejo sprejemljiva in povsem nepomembna. (Sliki 40, 41)

#### *UKREP SAMOIZOLACIJE*

Tudi zahteva po samoizolaciji oziroma karanteni na domu je na različne načine pustila odtis v memih. Na motiv samoizolacije se tako navezujejo memi tipa »Vrste žensk/ moških, ki ...«. Ta tip folklorne je bil prepoznan že mnogo pred pandemijo in se praviloma nikoli ne širi z ustnim prenosom, ampak nekoč le s fotokopiranjem (prim. Dundes in Pagter 1975), kasneje prek medijev in v današnjem času zlasti po spletu. (Slika 42) Tudi ta ukrep je v memih pogosto naletel na posmeh. Memi se pogosto norčujejo iz tega, kako se siceršnje povečevanje produktivnosti v sodobni neoliberalni družbi naenkrat spremeni v svoje nasprotje – cenjena postaneta »ne-delo« in pasivnost, torej to, kar je sicer obsojano. (Slika 43)

#### *KAZNI ZA NEDOVOLJEN ODHOD OD DOMA*

Medtem ko so redki memi didaktični in spodbujajo k upoštevanju ukrepov, se pogosteje kot da bi predstavljali obliko kulturne didaktike, ljudje iz teh ukrepov norčujejo, jih sprevrtaajo in poudarjajo njihovo absurdnost ter problematizirajo kazni za nedovoljeno prekinitvev samoizolacije, s čimer obenem sproščajo napetosti ob občutkih ogroženosti osebne svobode, ki so jih ti ukrepi, kot se zdi, vzbudili. Memi pogosto sledijo vzorcju, v katerem je na znano likovno ozadje dodana fotografija ali slika policajja, ki zapisuje kazen zaradi kršitve prepovedi odhoda od doma, tako da je poudarjena absurdnost situacije, v kateri je kazen izrečena. (Sliki 44, 45)

Ker je obdobje najhujše karantene zaradi razglašene epidemije na Zahodu sovpadlo z velikonočnimi prazniki (a ne le zato), so se mnogi memi na temo socialne izolacije in njene kršitve (pa ne le ti!) navezovali tudi na krščanske vsebine, natančneje na svetopisemsko zgodbo o Jezusovem vstajenju in praznik velike noči; v teh Jezus običajno preverja, če že sme zapustiti grob, ali pa je zaradi odhoda iz groba oglobljen. (Sliki 46, 47)

#### *DOVOLJENE IZJEME ODHAJANJA OD DOMA*

Posebej veliko komičnih spreobrnitev je v memih doživela omilitev prepovedi odhajanja od doma in sprehajanja samo za lastnike psov. Norčevanje iz ukrepa – ali pa morda izraz obupanih sanjarjenj o tem, kako se izogniti omejitvam – kažejo tudi memi, ki prikazujejo razne domisljice, s katerimi poskušajo ljudje priti do enakih ugodnosti, kot so jih deležni lastniki psov, na primer s sprehodom živali, ki se jih sicer ne vodi na sprehode, kot so kokoši idr. (Slika 48)

Humorni učinek ti memi pogosto dosežejo prek spreobrnitve običajne vloge, v kateri je pes odvisen od lastnika, v vlogo, v kateri postanejo ljudje odvisni od živali. (Sliki 49, 50)

Takšna spreobrnjena perspektiva se tudi sicer pojavlja v mnogih drugih koronamemih. (Sliki 51, 52)

Vse te podobe spreobrnjene vloge človek-žival v memih izražajo, kot se zdi, tudi občutek popolne izgube nadzora nad situacijo, v kateri smo se znašli in v kateri smo na milost in nemilost podrejeni vsakokratnim bolj ali manj (ne)smiselnim ukrepom vlada-jočih struktur.

#### *ŽIVLJENJE V SAMOIZOLACIJI IN NJEGOVE POSLEDICE*

Mnogi memi problematizirajo tudi druge vidike življenja v samoizolaciji in posledice, ki jih prinaša takšno življenje. Glede na to, da je del članov BNN Facebook skupine zaposlenih na univerzah in študentov, ne čudi, da so bili priljubljeni tudi memi na temo poučevanja in konferenc, ki potekajo po Zoomu, ki so med karanteno za večino postali del akademskega vsakdana. (Sliki 53, 54)

Memi pogosto opozarjajo tudi na pomanjkljivosti in slabo kakovost šolanja na daljavo pa tudi na neenakost pri dostopu do izobrazbe po spletu. (Sliki 55, 56) Tudi v teh memih naletimo na družbenokritično ost: pogosti so, na primer, memi, ki opozarjajo na problematičnost vsakdana, v katerem dela v službi ni več mogoče ločevati od prostega časa in družinskega življenja, ki je v času epidemije postal nova resničnost za mnoge zaposlene. (Sliki 57, 58)

Kot so vseskozi opozarjali mediji, je prisilna izolacija marsikje prinesla tudi povečane napetosti in nasilje v družinah, psihične stiske in težave, ki se lahko kažejo tudi v kompulzivni konzumaciji hrane. Vse te teme najdemo tudi v memih; predvsem strah pred debelostjo je postal iztočnica za številne meme, kar očitno izraža tudi ponotrzanost norm, ki jih sodobna družba postavlja pred ljudi. (Slike 59, 60, 61, 62)

Po prvih nekaj mesecih karantene, ko še kar nismo videli konca, so se začeli vrstiti tudi memi, ki so izražali strah pred dolgotrajnostjo karantene in anticipirane spremembe med njo in po njenem koncu; smrt in apokaliptično razpoloženje tudi tu ne umanjata. (Sliki 63, 64)

#### *DRUŽBENE TEME*

Mnoge od tem in vsebin, ki se izražajo v koronamemih, kot že rečeno, niso nove, ampak so v tem času dobile le novo obliko ali pa se je stara vsebina v njih prilagodila na novo situacijo. Tesnobe, ki jih sprožajo črnoglede napovedi glede prihodnosti planeta zaradi globalnega segrevanja, onesnaženja (prim. Babič 2020: 134–136), izumiranja živalskih in rastlinskih vrst itd., se tako kažejo tudi v memih na temo korone. Spodbudne novice o pozitivnih vplivih izolacije na domu na okolje (manjša onesnaženost ozračja zaradi manj izpušnih plinov) so tako spodbudile nastanek cele vrste memov, ki so v glavnem sledili nekaj vzorcem, ki so se občasno tudi prepletli. Njihova iztočnica je bila, na primer »Delfini so se vrnil v beneške kanale/Italijo, medtem pa ...« (Slike 65, 66, 67)

ali alternativno: »Ko so ljudje v izolaciji ...« (Slika 68) Druga skupina memov, iz katerih je razvidna ekološka naravnost njihovih ustvarjalcev in skrbi zaradi onesnaženja okolja, in ki se nanašajo na pozitivne posledice izolacije na okolje, na katere so opozarjali znanstveniki, pa se je začel s stavkom »Zaradi zmanjšane onesnaženosti ...« (Sliki 69, 70)

Razlika med obema skupinama je predvsem v tem, da se memi prve skupine večinoma osredotočajo na vrnitev tistega, za kar se je zdelo, da je »zaradi onesnaženosti« stvar daljne preteklosti – od prazgodovinskih dinozavrov in mitičnih pošasti v Anglijo, Skandinavijo, na Škotsko (Nessie), vampirjev v Srbijo, do heavymetalcev v Skandinavijo, pa do vrnitve komunizma – »rdeče« Jugoslavije na Balkan, Lenina in Stalina v Rusijo itd. V drugi skupini, na drugi strani, pa je poudarek na videnju, »prepoznanju« tega, kar je bilo zaradi onesnaženja ozračja prej »nevidno«, na primer »matrice« oziroma Boga alias Keanuja Reevesa (v navezavi na franšizo Matrica), (Disneyjevega) Plutona, Google oblačkov, duha Marxa nad Berlinom itd.

V koronamemih poleg prevladujočih »ekoloških skrbi« zaradi klimatskih in drugih škodljivih posledic za naravo, ki jih povzroča človek, prepoznamo tudi skrbi glede ekonomskih posledic epidemije (včasih tudi z vtkanimi ksenofobnimi vsebinami). Prav tako se najdejo v njih sporočila, ki izražajo skrb za ohranjanje javnega zdravstva. (Slike 71, 72, 73)

## ZAKLJUČEK

Memi na temo koronavirusne bolezni in ukrepov za njeno zaježitev, ki so bili objavljeni v Facebook skupini komiteja Belief Narrative Network v prvih mesecih razvoja pandemije in sem jih v tem prispevku na kratko predstavila, jasno izražajo tesnobe, s katerimi so se ljudje soočali ob začetku pandemije – od splošnega strahu pred smrtjo, tesnobe zaradi izgube nadzora nad lastnim življenjem in avtonomnega odločanja glede osebnega gibanja in delovanja, do bolj specifičnih strahov, kot so strah pred pomanjkanjem hrane in zlasti toaletnega papirja. Obenem pa kažejo tudi odnos ljudi do ukrepov za zaježitev epidemije, ki je bil le redko pozitiven in veliko pogosteje kritičen in posmehljiv.

Funkcija izražanja tesnob in strahov ob epidemiji pa tudi nestrinjanja z naloženimi ukrepi, ki jo memi opravljajo, je gotovo do neke mere terapevtska. Prek nagovarjanja strahu ob epidemiji in tesnob, ki so jih sprožali v ljudeh ukrepi proti epidemiji, skozi folkloro oziroma natančneje skozi meme lahko ljudje vsaj do neke mere sprostijo nakopičena čustva; ob dejstvu, da v memih ključno vlogo igra humor, je tak terapevtski učinek seveda še dodatno ojačan. A tudi »skupnostni« vidik mem-folklore, tj. dejstvo, da ustvarjanje, sprejemanje in širjenje memov pa tudi njihovo spreminjanje, vsečkanje in komentiranje, povezujejo ljudi in kažejo vpletenost posameznikovega izraza v skupnost (Heimo in Koski 2014: 4-8), ima v času epidemije in zlasti prisilne izolacije še posebej pomembno vlogo. Občutek, da v nevarnem in za marsikoga osamljenem obdobju karantene niso povsem sami s svojimi strahovi, ampak so povezani v (vsaj virtualno) skupnost, na sodelujoče v conduitu nedvomno še dodatno deluje terapevtsko.

A memi, kljub humornim vidikom, ne delujejo le na ravni zabave, niti ne zgolj na ravni ugodnih terapevtskih učinkov kar zadeva sproščanje psihičnih napetosti. Skozi meme

posamezniki pogosto izražajo tudi širše družbene tesnobe, nagovarjajo ideološke teme, izražajo družbeno kritiko in do neke mere delujejo celo subverzivno. Poleg zgoraj omenjenih skrbi zaradi globalnih sprememb na Zemlji, življenja v neoliberalnem kapitalizmu, pa tudi specifičnih (pričakovanih) družbenih sprememb kot posledic pandemije, ki jih memi problematizirajo, se v mnogih memih kaže tudi izrazit strah ljudi, da bodo ukrepi proti epidemiji vodili v popoln nadzor družbenih institucij nad posamezniki. (Slike 74, 75, 76)

Družbenokritični vidik je seveda še posebej razviden iz memov z eksplicitno politično tematiko, uperjenih predvsem proti posameznim političnim vodjem – v memih tako nastopajo politiki, kot so Putin, Vučić, Trump, Bolsonaro, Lukašenko idr. Medtem ko kritična ost, uperjena proti prvima dvema, leti predvsem na njun avtokratski način vladanja (pri Putinu tudi v navezavi na volitve, s katerimi si je podaljšal možnost vladanja do leta 2036), drugi kritizirajo neresne odzive političnih vodij na epidemijo. Mem proti Bolsonaru tako meri na njegovo zanikanje nevarnosti virusa, ki je ljudi izpostavila nevarnosti in pripomogla k velikemu številu nepotrebnih smrti, mem, ki opozarja na pitje vodke kot učinkovitega sredstva proti okužbi, pa smeši Lukašenkovo propagiranje tega »ukrepa« proti korona virusu. Memi letijo tudi na Trumpovo nesmiselno in nevarno propagiranje hidrociklina kot zdravila proti virusu, obenem pa se v njih včasih tudi Trumpa samega prikazuje kot virus. (Slike 77, 78, 79, 80, 81)

Skozi meme lahko ljudje izražajo svoje vrednote in kritizirajo vrednote drugih na bolj sprejemljiv način kot kdaj koli prej; memi, kot pišejo Miller in drugi, predstavljajo neke vrste »moralno spletno policijo« (Miller et al., 2016: xvi). Še več: koronameme do neke mere lahko razumemo tudi kot »taktike« (de Certeau 2007: 39–53), tj. kot vedénje oziroma kulturne produkte, s katerimi ljudje nasprotujejo dominantnim družbenim strukturam, jih »izigravajo«, spodkopavajo in tako predstavljajo njihovo protiutež, pa čeprav (zgolj) v virtualnem svetu (kolikor je tega danes seveda sploh še mogoče ločevati od vsakdanjega življenja – prim. McNeill 2009: 84). To je morda najbolj očitno razvidno iz mema, s katerim naj to kratko predstavitev spletne »koronafolklore« tudi zaključim, ki ukrepe proti epidemiji »spodkopava« tako rekoč v samem temelju: definira jih kot obrede, »religijo«, ki zahteva slepo poslušnost. (Slika 82)

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## LIVING WITH THE COVID-19 VIRUS IN INTERNET FOLKLORE

MIRJAM MENCEJ



The article discusses memes about the COVID-19 virus shared in the Belief Narrative Network's Facebook group since its inception in April 2020 until the end of August 2020 (when this article was written), i.e., during the first wave of the pandemic. After first briefly discussing various genres and the intertextuality of the Internet folklore shared on the website, I focused on the themes discussed in the memes about COVID -19. The frequency of the themes referred to in these memes clearly reveals the factors that at the start of the pandemic were triggering the greatest anxiety in people. The limited period of less than 4 months encompassed by this article and the time of writing it (August 2020) when the pandemic was still ongoing means that its aim is not an in-depth analysis, comparison and interpretation of the memes, but a brief presentation of their main types and contents and the preoccupations, fears and anxieties of members of the group as revealed in these memes, along with the roles they play in people's lives. With their inherent humour, they certainly hold therapeutic value by releasing anxieties, while their sharing and commenting helps people have a sense of belonging to the community and connecting with others, which is especially needed at a time when many were isolated at home alone. However, the memes also proved to be a tool for people to express their social anxieties and criticism.

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Slika 1: Community Transmission: Coronavirus Enters Bengal's Folk-Art Form.



Slika 3: Si vedel? Morilske ose naredijo osirje v 5G stolpe, kjer ustvarjajo covid-19 cvetni prah. Samo polavtomatsko orožje lahko ubije morilske ose.



Slika 5: Mazaška sredstva proti koronavirusu, ki vas bodo ubila – Ljudje, ki poslušajo Trumpa – Vsi prekleti znanstveniki in zdravniki na Zemlji.



Slika 2: 16. stoletje–21. stoletje.



Slika 4: Dobesedno katerakoli maska – Vsakdo – Umivanje rok, dezinfekcija, izogibanje stikom.



Slika 6: Poglejmo, kdo se v resnici skriva za covidom-19.





Slika 7: Zdaj pa pogledjmo, kdo si v resnici – Država Tretjega sveta.



Slika 9: V tvoji biografiji je vrzel. Kaj si počel leta 2020? – Umival sem si roke.



Slika 11: Sneguljčica dobi od mačehe koronavirus namesto zastrupljenega jabolka.



Slika 8: V tvoji biografiji je vrzel. Kaj si počel leta 2020? – Umival sem si roke.



Slika 10: Pravljice v času pandemije.



Slika 12: Tako, tako ... obiskati babico ... to bo stalo 250 evrov!



Slika 13: Košaro s hrano zate sem pustila zunaj, babica! – P...i kovid!

Тридцать лет и три года лежал Илья Муромец на печи. Такого подвига самоизоляции ещё не знала Русь.



Slika 14: Triintrideset let je Il'ja Muromec ležal na peči. Tako junaškega dejanja samoizolacije Rusija še ni videla.



Slika 15: Gondor kliče na pomoč – in Wuhan bo odgovoril.



Slika 16: Covid-19 ubije psa Johna Wicka. Do konca tedna bo virus izbrisan.



Slika 17: Vožnja v januar – vožnja v maj.



Best coronavirus meme yet  
LMFAO

Slika 18: Chuck Norris je bil izpostavljen koronavirusu (covid-19). Virus je zdaj v 14-dnevni karanteni.



Slika 19: David-Covid.

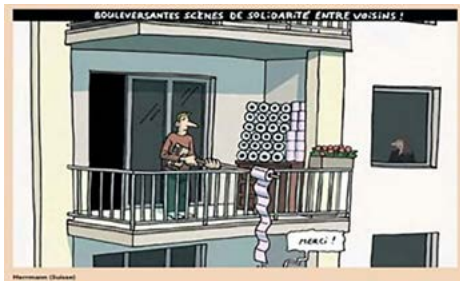


Slika 20: Briga me, kdo je tvoj oče, to je nelegalno druženje.

### THE STAGES OF CAPITALISM



Slika 22: STOPNJE KAPITALIZMA: Dobrine se izmenjuje z dobrinami; denar se izmenjuje z dobrinami in storitvami; roboti izmenjujejo delnice teoretične tržne vrednosti v prihodnosti za zavarovanje tveganja rasti; dobrine se izmenjuje z dobrinami.



Slika 21: Ganljivi prizori medsosedske solidarnosti – Hvala!



Slika 23: Resno?



Slika 24: Postkoronavirusni moški, ki izkazujejo svoje lovsko-nabiralniške sposobnosti, da bi privabili partnerke.



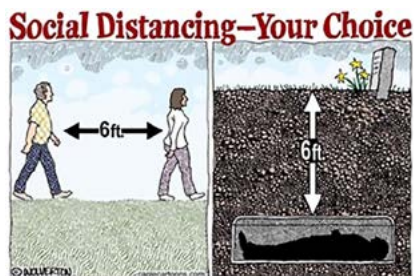
Slika 25: Ohrani 2 metra distance!!!



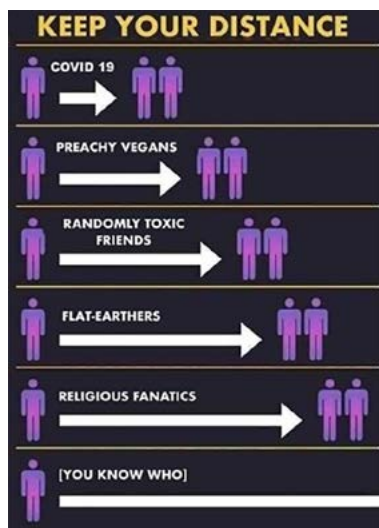
Slika 27: Socialno distanciranje – Fizično distanciranje.



Slika 29: KAKO BLIZU JE PREBLIZU? ODVISNO, KJE ŽIVIŠ. Končno je grozne dvometrske distance konec. Estonci se zdaj lahko vrnejo nazaj k svoji običajni petmetrski.



Slika 26: Socialno distanciranje – tvoja izbira.



Slika 28: OHRANI DISTANCO Covid-19; pridigarški vegani; naključni strupeni prijatelji; ljudje, ki verjamejo, da je Zemlja ravna; verski fanatiki; Saj veš, kdo.



Slika 30: Tovariš Stalin demonstrira socialno distanciranje.



Slika 31



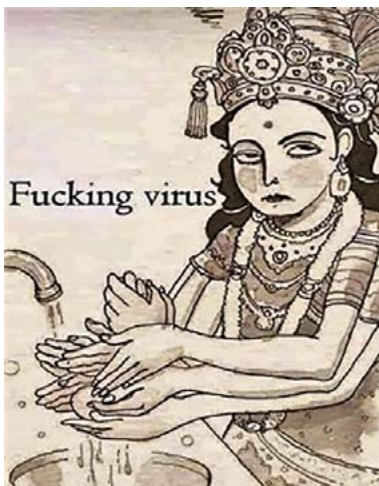
Slika 32



Slika 33: Jaz po tem, ko si v enem dnevu umijem roke 57-krat po 20 sekund.



Slika 34: Če si samo še enkrat umijem roke!



Slika 35: Prekleti virus.

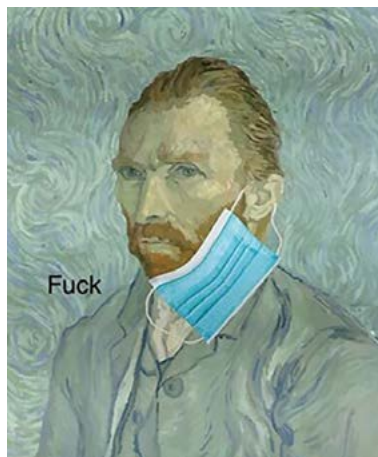


**Kurva narobili paniky že sama sa bojím**

Slika 36: Kurba, naredili so takšno paniko, da sem se še sama začela bati.



Slika 37: Odhajam v trgovino. Potrebuješ kaj?



Slika 38: Jebemti.



Slika 39: LOUVRE JE ZDAJ ODPRT! Covid-19 omejitve v praksi [Nasmeh Mone Lize].



Slika 41: *Te prstne odtise, Stirlitz\*, smo našli na kovčku ruske radiotelegrafistke.*  
 - *Gruppenführer, priznati moram, res sem ruski obveščevalec.*  
 - *Zaradi mene ste lahko tudi ameriški! Ampak zakaj ste brez rokavic? Bi nas radi vse okužili?!*



Slika 40: Zakaj pa je on brez maske?

\* Max Otto von Stierlitz, stereotipni vohun v sovjetski in post-sovjetski kulturi, sicer glavna oseba ruskih romanov Julija Semjonova, ki jih je ta izdal v šestdesetih letih 20. stoletja, in njihovih televizijskih priredb (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stierlitz>).





Slika 48: Ko nimaš psa, pa moraš na sprehod



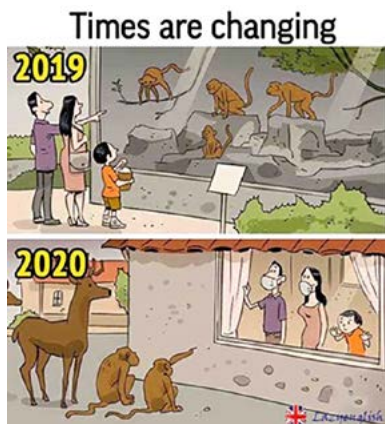
Slika 49: Stojnica za sprehode. 1 sprehod – 15 evrov; 2 sprehoda – 20 evrov.



Slika 50: En pes ima pravico peljati na sprehod samo enega človeka! Ta mora imeti dokumente, biti na vrvcu in imeti nagobčnik.



Slika 51



Slika 52: Časi se spreminjajo.



Slika 53: Se vsi slišimo?

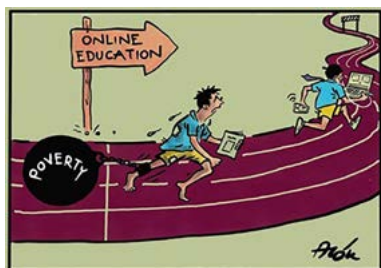




Slika 54: Dobro, smo vsi tu? – Juda manjka, ker nima dostopa do brezžičnega interneta.



Slika 55: Vaš primer je precej zapleten. – Zakaj, zdravnik? Kaj se je zgodilo? – Imate bolezen, ki je bila obravnavana na predavanju, ki sem ga leta 2020 zamudil med učenjem na daljavo po Zoomu.



Slika 56: Izobraževanje na daljavo. [revščina]



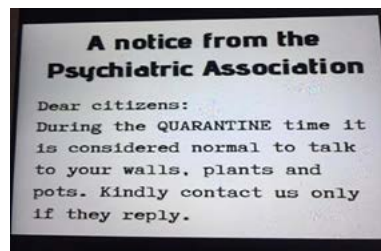
Slika 57: Ne morem se spomniti – ali delam doma ali živim v službi?



Slika 58: Kdaj pa se ti danes vrneš iz službe?



Slika 59: Po koncu karantene pred uradom za razveze.



Slika 60: Sporočilo Psihiatrične zveze: Dragi državljani: v času KARANTENE je normalno, da se pogovarjate s svojimi zidovi, rastlinami in posodami. Kontaktirajte nas samo v primeru, da vam ti začnejo odgovarjati.



Slika 61: Panda povprečno je 12 ur na dan. Človek v karanteni je kot panda. Zato se imenuje pandemija.



Slika 64: Konec je blizu – Tega ne bo nikoli konec. Tvoj optimizem se mi gabi.



Slika 65: Delfini se vračajo v Italijo. Medtem pa v Srbiji ...

## 4 stages of quarantine.



Slika 62: Štiri stopnje karantene.



Slika 63: Otroci se vračajo v šolo po koroni.



Slika 66: Delfini se vračajo v Italijo. Medtem pa v Evropi ...

Babushka  
9 Apr at 17:02 · 🌐

**Dolphins have returned to Italy**

**Rusia :**



Slika 67: Delfini so se vrnilo v Italijo. Medtem pa v Rusiji ...

**With Humans in isolation wildlife returns to normal in Scotland.**



Slika 68: Ko so ljudje v izolaciji, se divje živali na Škotskem vračajo v običajno stanje.

**Due to less pollution, God is now visible from Earth.**

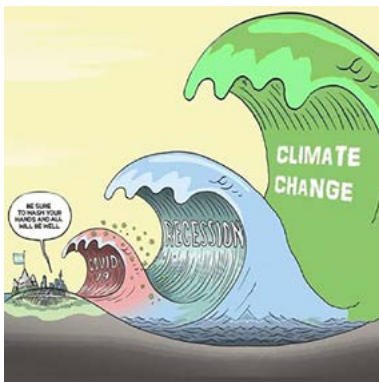


Slika 69: Zaradi manjšega onesnaženja je z Zemlje zdaj mogoče videti Boga [Matrica].

**Due to reduced pollution, we can now see the Matrix**



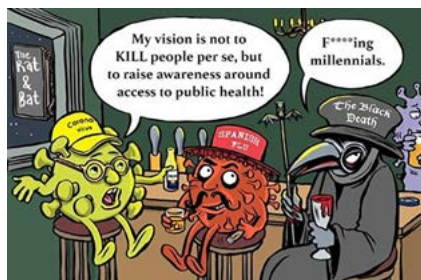
Slika 70: Zaradi manjšega onesnaženja lahko zdaj vidimo Matrico.



Slika 71: Pazi, da si boš umival roke, pa bo vse v redu. COVID-19 – RECESIJA – PODNEBNE SPREMEMBE.



Slika 72: Spet izgublamo delež na trgu zaradi kitajskih izdelkov!



Slika 73: Moja vizija ni UBITI ljudi kot takih, ampak dvigniti zavedanje glede dostopnosti do javnega zdravstva! – Prekleti milenijci.



Slika 74: АКЦИЈА! Izdaj dva soseda, ki se sprehajata po dvorišču, in si v zameno prisluži pravico do 30-minutnega sprehoda.



Slika 75: NOVA NORMALNOST. JEBI GA. LJUDJE-OVCE NOVE NORMALNOSTI [UBOGAJ]: satelitsko sledenje; zaviralec možganov; vsajen čip; senzor socialne distance; odstranjen spol; neskončno cepljenje; nagobčna maska; gumijasta hrbtenica; obvezen telefon: sledenje, identifikacijska številka cepiva, dovoljenje za potovanje, število socialnih točk, digitalna denarnica.

When you finally get your vaccine and start emitting your own wifi signals.



Slika 76: Ko si končno cepljen in začneš oddajati lastne brezžične internetne signale.



Slika 77: Ne! Ostani doma, bomo že sami izpolnili [volilne lističe].



Slika 78: Se že ve, s katero barvo bomo letos barvali jajca, je Vučić že kaj povedal?



Slika 79: Brazilski znanstveniki so ustvarili masko, ki bo rešila na milijone življenj.



Slika 80: Ne pozabi! Prvi kozarček je namenjen razkuževanju rok!



Slika 81: Trump virus.



Slika 82: Gre pri korona virusu za epidemijo ali politiko? – Koronavirus je religija. Vanjo lahko verjameš. Lahko ne verjameš. Toda obredom je treba slediti.



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Razprave

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Studi

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# The Treasure-bearer in East Slavic and Finno-Ugric Contexts

— Mare Kõiva, Elena Boganeva —

Namen tega članka je primerjalna in strukturalno-semantična raziskava narativov verovanja v leteče kače in zakladonoše na vzhodnoslovanskih (beloruskih, estonsko ruskih, drugih slovanskih) in ugrofinskih (estonskih, votskih, livonskih, finskih, vepskih) območjih ter povezanosti teh narativov z baltskimi in skandinavskimi verovanji. Gradivo je bilo zbrano med 19. in 21. stoletjem. Sodeč iz razpoložljivega gradiva, je bil lik ustvarjen z opisovanjem lastnosti leteče kače in zakladonoše: izvora (kako se je nadnaravno bitje rodilo in kdo ga je rodil), splošnih pojavnih oblik, časovnih in krajevnih vidikov, obnašanja (aktivno/pasivno; obredi) in žanrske pripadnosti (proces pripovedovanja zgodb, percepcija lika).

KLJUČNE BESEDE: zmaj, hut, škrat, magija, mlečna magija, zakladonoša, cmok

The goal of this article is to conduct comparative and structural-semantic research into belief narratives concerning flying serpents and treasure-bearers in East Slavic (Belarusian, Estonian Russian, other Slavic traditions) and Finno-Ugric (Estonian, Votic, Livonian, Finnish, Vepsian) regions related to Baltic and Scandinavian beliefs. The source material was collected between the 19th and 21st centuries. Based on the available materials, a character profile was created with respect to the following features while describing a flying serpent and a treasure-bringer: description of the origin (how and from whom the supernatural being originates), general forms of appearance, aspects of time and location, as well as the creature's behaviour (active/passive; rituals) and genre affiliation (the process of storytelling, perception of the character).

KEYWORDS: dragon, *khut*, *kratt*, magic, milk magic, treasure bearer, *tsmok*

## INTRODUCTION

The goal of this article is to conduct comparative research into belief narratives concerning flying serpents and treasure-bearers in East Slavic (Belarusian, Estonian Russian, other Slavic traditions) and Finno-Ugric (Estonian, Votic, Livonian, Finnish, Vepsian) regions related to other Scandinavian beliefs. Based on available materials collected between

the 19th and 21st centuries, we created a character profile with respect to the following features while describing a flying serpent and a treasure-bringer: terminology (names, designations), and the mutual actions of people and a supernatural being; the origin (how and from whom the creature originates), general forms of appearance, time and location and modality issues, as well as behaviour (active/passive; motivated/ritual, rituals and their functional alternatives), the genre affiliated with the message, notes and comments about the process of storytelling and the perception of the mythical creature.

Different belief complexes intertwine in the corpus related to a mythical flying serpent and a treasure-bearer. For example, there are motifs of a dragon, in Belarusian folklore named *tsmok* and *khut*, and texts about a serpent-lover<sup>1</sup> who, at the same time, was also a spirit-enricher.

Treasure-bearing spirits mostly take the form of a flying fiery serpent, except for the West Belarusian *khut*, which is not tied to a specific form and can take the appearance of either an animate or inanimate object, as well as entities of the Belarusian-Lithuanian border areas like *aitvaras/skalsininkas/kutas/hutas* whose appearance is distinctly polymorphic. Exterior polymorphism (zoomorphism, ornomorphism, or shape-shifting into an object) is also common in such Estonian, and Estonian Russian diaspora's, entities as *kratt*, *tont*, *puuk* etc. However, even shape-shifting treasure-bearing entities are often depicted as flying fiery serpents.

In the East (as well as the West and South) Slavic tradition, the treasure-bearing serpent can also be a supernatural lover, and which case he has a dual appearance, taking the form of a fiery serpent in the air, and that of a human on the ground (Levkiyevskaya 1999: 332–333). The serpent appears as a deceased husband (or groom) that a woman misses dearly, and engages in sexual activity with her. As a result, the woman either becomes ill or dies if she is unable to find a way to drive the dangerous visitor away<sup>2</sup>. In Belarus, texts about a serpent lover that also simultaneously function as a treasure-bearer were recorded from the rural oral tradition even more recently (Boganeva 2012: 30, No 15–17).

In Estonian, Finnish, Swedish and other Finno-Ugric and Scandinavian traditions, as a rule treasure-bearing spirits are never combined with the concept of supernatural lover. In these traditions, a supernatural lover is a separate entity whose origins are connected to dangerous, restless undead or demonic forces. According to information available in archives of the Estonian Literary Museum, treasure-bearing spirits are not supernatural lovers in the mythology of the Estonian Russian diaspora. As we show later, the beliefs of Estonia's Russian diaspora concerning treasure-bearers were heavily influenced by traditions among the native population: this includes both borrowing Estonian entity names not found in Russian (*kratt*, *tont*, *puuk*, *pisuhänd* etc.) and their visual representation, abil-

<sup>1</sup> The appearance of a flying fiery serpent in East Slavic traditions encompasses at least three functionally different mythological entities: a) a treasure-bearing spirit; b) a supernatural lover; and c) a spirit that heralds tragic social events or natural disasters. With different origins, each of these entities takes different forms and appearances.

<sup>2</sup> One such method used by Belarusians (and Russians) involves the use of hemp seeds: the woman places hemp seeds in her hair and later combs them out before eating them in front of the serpent. When the serpent asks what she is doing, the woman replies that she is combing lice out and eating them. This will cause the serpent to fly away and never return.

ities and actions. Therefore, since Estonian tradition has never combined treasure-bearing spirits with supernatural lovers, texts with similar occurrences are also not found in the Estonian Russian diaspora (there are 36 Russian texts featuring treasure-bearing spirits in the ELM archives). Our article about treasure-bearing spirits accordingly does not consider the supernatural-lover entities common in the *East Slavic* tradition.

The treasure-bearers and flying serpents were often polymorphic: anthropomorphs, zoomorphs, or animated objects.

We aimed to deconstruct these legends into sequences, plots and motifs so as to determine the consistency and details of the information concerned with these mythical creatures.

Ethnographic and folkloristic methods were used to explain the legends and other belief narratives about the supernatural being, with use of the semantic-structural method, which shares features with the ethnolinguistic-folkloristic approach of the Moscow School and its development in Belarus. Yet, our approach has features similar to comparative method and situation analyses used in Estonia (Loorits 1949, Laagus 1973). Nikita Tolstoi (2013: 19) formulated his direction, initiated in the 1970s, as follows: “Ethnolinguistics is a part of linguistics, a subdiscipline which orients the scholar towards investigating the correlation and coherence between a language and folk culture, language and archaic mentality, language and folk art, through their interrelations and diverse correspondences. Ethnolinguistics is not just a hybrid of linguistics and ethnology, or a mixture of certain elements, factual or methodological, of one discipline and another”. Our analysis entailed dividing the entire verbal text into categories, with each part of the text being analysed with respect to these categories. Since all text variants are analysed using a single category system, the texts are all comparable (Loorits 1949, Penttikäinen 1968, Laagus 1973, Kõiva and Boganeva 2021; Levkiyevskaya 1999).

The ethnic corpuses vary in size and are based on the level of intensity involved in the collection work. The amount of material collected from small nations is obviously smaller, and we operated with some corpuses through story catalogues, meaning that we did not pursue a more detailed statistical analysis.

The main information sources about flying serpents in Belarusian folklore are ethnographic publications and modern field materials (BFELA; Avilin 2015: 172–177; Boganeva 2012: 27–31; Bogdanovich 1895: 73–74; Drevlyanski 1846: 3–25; Nosovich 1870: 213; PEZ 2011: 81–82; Pietkiewicz 1938: 11; Romanov 1912: 290; TMKB 2011: 485–488). The primary source for the Estonian and Estonian Russian lore is the folklore archive of the Estonian Literary Museum, the digital tool Skriptoorium, and publications (cf. Eisen 1895 and 1919; Kõiva and Boganeva 2021), whereas the main source for the Livonian, Votic, Finnish and Swedish lore is publications (Livonian: Loorits 1928; Votic: Arukask 1998, Västriik 1998, Ariste 1943; Finnish: Jauhiainen 1998; Swedish: Klintberg 2010).

References to these creatures can also be found in modern society in political or other discourse, or are again in the spotlight for cultural, political or other reasons. The aim of the article is to examine which creatures and what kind of notions are involved in a particular region’s lore, and any similarities and differences.

## BRIEFLY ABOUT TERMINOLOGY AND ACTION

The Belarusian mythical creature *khut* (*Xym*) is in many ways similar to the flying, fiery serpent of enrichment. The *khut* hatches from an egg laid by a 3- or 7-year-old rooster (typically a black one); it is a polymorphic demon with traits of both *domovoy* and *dvorovoy* (a house spirit; Salavei 2011: 503)<sup>3</sup>. In other Slavic narrative traditions, folktales talk of the dragon or dwarf treasure-bearer *Blagonič* that hatched from a rooster's egg (Kropej 2012: 109–111).

Another Belarusian demonological creature *tsmok* (*цмок*) – a dragon – finds many parallels in Slavic languages and mythologies (cf. Russian-Proto-Slavic *смокъ* (a serpent); in Bulgarian *смок* (a grass snake, deaf adder); in Czech *zmok* (a dragon); in Slovak *zmok* (*domovoy* a house spirit); in Polish *smok* (a dragon), in Slovenian *ses* (a serpent – the name *ses* derives from the verb *sesati*, meaning to suck; cf. Kropej 2012: 238). According to Brückner, *смокъ* originally meant ‘the one who sucks’, akin to *смоктать* (to suck) mentioned by Fasmer (1987: 303). The creation of the *tsmok* character was influenced by the Christian legend about the battle of St. George (St. Yuri) with a terrible dragon. In Belarusian folklore, the *tsmok* is a traditional character in magical and heroic fairy tales about serpent slayers as well as in a poem about St. Yuri (George) and Tsmok. Pavel Drevlyanski distinguished three types of *tsmoks*, one of which, *tsmok-domovik*, is very similar to a fiery serpent that brings riches (Drevlyanski 1846: 262–267).

The Belarusians and Lithuanians have many cultural connections, explaining why similarities can be detected among the Lithuanian *aitvaras*, a flying spirit that brings wealth; Lithuanian Belarusians in the north-west of Grodno region also know of *skalsininkas*, *kutas*, *khutas*, *skutas*, *sparyzius*, *paryzius* and *damavykas*. *Aitvaras-kutas* brings riches (grain, money, gold); it emerges from an egg, loves fried eggs, and burns a house down if it suspects that the master disrespects them. In short, it possesses many of the traits of domestic evil spirits, just like its Belarusian counterpart.

Quite different terminology concerned with flying (fiery) serpents can be found in the lore of Estonian Russians. We observe typical Russian/Slavic features: *Zmey* is the name given to a serpent usually referred to as “flying” by Russians (Belova 2012: 24–26; Makhracheva 2012: 19–21; Levkiyevskaya 2019: 434–459; Petrova 2012: 23–24; Skulachev 2012: 21–23), Belarusians (Boganeva 2012: 27–30) and Ukrainians (Belova 2012: 24–25; Levkiyevskaya 2019: 434–459). The names of the flying serpents given by Estonian Russians are largely influenced by their close proximity to Estonians and their mythology: *puuk* (a bearer, a tick), *nasok* (‘the one who carries’, probably derived from the word *носу́ть* meaning: to carry), *tont* (a ghost, a bearer), *lendva* (a flying object, a witch arrow, a mythical disease); *kratt* (a bearer); *haldjas* (a protector, spirit), *kratt*; *pyvsh/pyuch*, *põvš*, *puvchish/puktish*, *puksish*, *puksik* (different versions of *puuk* or bearer) – the terminology denotes treasure-bearers or spirit-protectors. According to Loorits, *pūķis* is

<sup>3</sup> *Domovoy* and *dvorovoy* (or *khlevnik* in Belarus) in Russian and Belarusian mythology may differ in regional traditions: *domovoy* is a spirit of the household that inhabits and exerts its power only within the house, whereas *dvorovoy* or *khlevnik* is a spirit of the farmyard, or barn, protecting the domestic animals in the barn (horses, cows etc.).

also known in the traditions of Latvia and Lithuania as well as in Western Russia close to the Baltic republics. A well-established Western Russian term about *puuk* or *pūķis* is *pyvsh/pyuch* (Loorits 1949: 208; cf. Karulis 1992). A couple of additional names recorded in Estonian are *täht* (a star) and *punane kukk* (a red rooster) – with both referring to its forms of appearance.

In the Estonian language, approximately 30 different terms or local names exist for the mythical treasure-bringer. Linguistically, one Estonian term – *pisuhänd* – refers to the image of a fire serpent, even though neither a serpent nor a flying serpent are mentioned in the Estonian descriptions as attention has been drawn to the sparking tail or fire tail that is described and by which the creature is identified.

Five terms are almost equally popular, with these terms and their variations in different dialects seeing wide use: *kratt* ('a bearer'), *pisuhänd* (a bearer, a fire tail, a sparking tail); *puuk* (a tick, meaning 'to suck'); *tont* (a ghost); *vedaja* (a bearer, a treasure-bearer) – which are all treasure-bearers, or sometimes referred to as grain-, dairy-, money- or fish-bearers. *Puuk* is a loanword from Swedish (*puke*) or from Low German (*spök, spük* – a ghost, a spook, an otherworldly creature). *Tont* is not only a term for a treasure-bearer but also for a vague supernatural being, an evil spirit, a monster, a ghost (EKSS 2009, ETY 2012; Skriptoorium; VMS 1996). Almost all of these terms are also used in compound words to denote sub-categories of mythical or symbolical creatures, to express a negative (less often also a positive) emotion; to mark the villain, the compulsion, the syndrome etc.; they are curse formulas, exclamations. Words like *kratt* sometimes hold a broader meaning in standard language, including stealing or something shabby, poorly dressed, naughty etc.

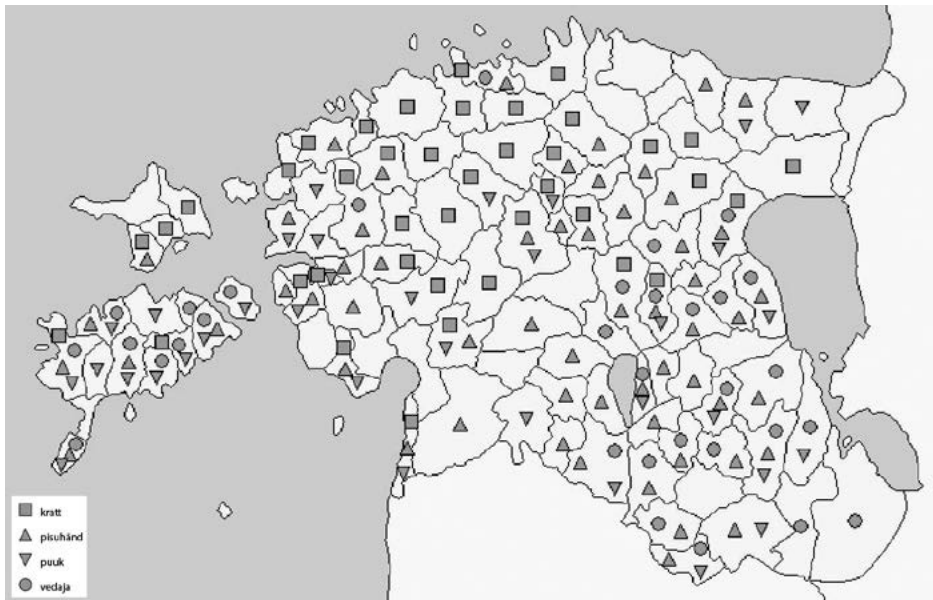


Fig. 1. Estonian terminology connected with a treasure-bearer; map by M. Kõiva 2021

Votian *lemmüs*, *para*, *lennos*, in some villages *kandashka* ('a bearer'), is mostly connected with a human, especially a witch, and only scattered data exist about a flying serpent (Västriik 1998). The meaning of *lemmüs* was originally *noidannuoli* (a witch arrow), reconstructed as 'flying, fluttering fire' (cf. Estonian *lemmed*, *lembed* – sparks, fire particles; *pisu* has the same meaning) and also meant as a meteor, a ball of lightning, or some thunder-related phenomenon (Ariste 1943: 309).

The most typical Finnish names are *para* (*maitopara* – milk para, *voipara* – butter para) and *mara*. The Finnish *para* comes from the Swedish *bära* (cf. Estonian Swedish *päär*) and denotes a milk-stealer or milk-bearer (Jauhiainen 1998); the Karelian and Vepsian name is *para* (Vinokurova 2014).

The main task of the flying serpent or treasure-bringer is to steal from others and bring grain, bread, milk, beer or money to its master. In gratitude for the wealth the serpent brings, the master must constantly give work to or feed it. However, it is the butter topping in the *kratt*'s porridge bowl that triggers action in the most common Estonian narrative, as evidenced by hundreds of records: "A servant eats the *kratt*'s food and shits in the bowl instead" (Aarne 1918, Aarne S.53). The same motif is popular among Votians (Västriik 1998) and Finns (Jauhiainen 1998: H191).

#### ORIGIN OF THE SERPENTS OF ENRICHMENT

In all the traditions considered here, the masters of the flying serpent are partly associated with witchcraft and sorcerers, or a farmhand's imitation of witchcraft. The traditional method for obtaining a serpent involves several steps and belongs to the mythical and fantasy dimension. In Belarus, an egg laid by a rooster (possibly a remnant of 16th-century myths about cockatrice-like creatures, a natural tiny, often yolkless egg reproduced before the hen is properly laying or after its reproductive period) must be carried next to one's bosom for 1 to 7 years, and then a flying serpent will hatch out of it.

According to Pavel Shein, a cat, not a serpent/snake, hatches from the egg. The cat is invisible during the day but appears at night when everyone is asleep. The landlady feeds it with scrambled egg and in return the cat brings her grain or money stolen from others (Shein 1902: 303). Shein also refers to a story in which a cat comes at night to eat the scrambled egg and frightens the young daughter-in-law to death. The young woman had slept next the stove, which the cat crossed each time on its ice-cold paws (Shein 1902: 303-304). That is, even though in Shein's description the cat is functionally identical to the enrichment snake, the last detail – the ice-cold paws – moves it closer to a ghost.

For Estonian Russians, the owners of flying enrichment serpents are typically associated with witchcraft and sorcerers, or demons, and thus their origin is referred to as the outcome of a deal between demons and knowledgeable people (sorcerers): *You will sell your soul, thus 'puvchish' carries money home* (ERA, Vene 11, 509 (115); Laura, 1928). According to Uno Harva (1948), the Finnish *para* also denotes a sorcerer while the devil

as a tick is an expression of *piritys* (< spiritus) in Finland; the same tradition is spread in Estonia and Livonia (Loorits 1928: 68–70, Loorits 1949: 167–168).

In Estonian belief narratives, the mythic being – a treasure-bearer – is associated with extremely diverse folklore:

– A self-made and animated *kratt*, which can make it self and be revived by verbal magic and magical actions, sometimes requiring the help of an evil force. Such a mythical being can also be purchased, but since it is a supernatural helper the relationship between the master and the mythical helper is complex. Magical helpers may appear upon reading the *Seventh Book of Moses* or the *Black Book*<sup>4</sup>, an ancient religious complex in itself, a famous book of knowledge and power (Eisen 1896; Ljungström 2015; Klintberg 2010: M 85, type P 41–43); Davies 2010; Kõiva 2011a). The self-made creature refers to a complex of witches possessing supernatural knowledge. The tradition of *kratt* has several parallels with the *spiritus*, especially legends about difficulties of doing away with a *spiritus* or *kratt*.



Fig. 2. Kratt in the 2017 fantasy drama film *November* by Rainer Samet. Photo from <https://www.filmfreakcentral.net/ffc/2018/02/november-2017.html>

– A human or their soul is a *kratt*, mostly an anthropomorphic figure. Especially in the Estonian and Livonian traditions, one finds the well-known image of a witch whose soul can fly, and acts as a treasure-bearer, while her body lies breathless on the ground. In Estonian and Livonian lore, both men and women can fly to collect treasures or suck milk.

– An animal-shaped *kratt*.

We must consider this variety and the ambivalent processes because folklore is not a clear-cut system. Based on the material analysed, we may say that in the Estonian texts in which the narrator is the protagonist of the story typically male and sometimes even concrete persons, known by their name, are mentioned. The *kratt* can be stopped by calling out to it: *If you called out the name of the person who acted as a kratt, it dropped all the treasures it was carrying* (E 36146/7 (15) Ambla, 1898). According to beliefs, the treasures carried by the *kratt* were usable. At the end of the story when the treasure-bearer is forced to throw its load away, the narrator concludes: *The treasure-bearer left its sack with peas in it. Women distributed the peas among themselves. My granny also ate those peas* (RKM II 68, 191 (13) Simuna, 1955).

<sup>4</sup> According to folk belief, this was a collection of magic that originally belonged to the Bible but was separated from it. The background to the beliefs and legends of the Black Book was the existence of both handwritten and printed books containing magical formulae and recipes. The clergymen and healers are the persons to whom the Black Book has most often been associated. A survey about the magical books or *grimoires* was written by Owen Davis *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Even though, according to the economic gender division, women were supposed to perform milk witchcraft, it is once again not uniform since the mythical milk stealing could be a job for either gender. In this respect, the Estonian and Livonian material differs from the Finnish and Swedish narratives where women are the main practitioners of witchcraft. The same pattern applies more generally in Estonian stories, for example, more men were accused at witch trials than women, which differs from European practice (Uuspõu 2001 [1938]). It is also evident that even in belief narratives young men are involved in various adventures and affairs more often than women, i.e. the young man is also more active in the storyworld (cf. Honko 1962).

– A specially made and animated *kratt* was a four-legged creature, yet a three-legged milk tick also existed, with two legs at the front and one at the back. There were also two-legged and one-legged creatures. In southern Sweden, *mjölkhare* (a milk hare) was well known (Klintberg 2010: 289); after being shot with a silver bullet, it is transformed into its original components: burned sticks, threads, and fur.

One of the standard plots in Estonia describes a farmer who goes to Riga with the intention of buying a *kratt* for himself from the Riga fair. On his way back, he looks at the creature he got from the seller and only sees a bunch of unnecessary clutter on his sleigh and then throws it all to the side of the road. Later on, the farmer travels the same road and discovers that the creature he had bought was still a *kratt* because it had carried grain and other valuable stuff there (cf. Jauhiainen 1998 in the Finnish tradition).

The parallel noticed in connection with the Slavic tradition is remarkable: the treasure-bearer's relationship with the house spirit (cf. Latvian *mājas gars* (~kungs), in German (Haus-) *Kobold*, in Russian *domovoi*, in Votian *maja-elukas*, and in Estonian *tont*, who originally was probably also a house spirit (cf. Loorits 1949), and had features in common with the *spiritus*.

Estonian folklore demonstrates that each household had one or two of these creatures; it was chiefly farm owners who had them, or at least people considered to be wealthy. In a humorous tale, a servant imitates his master by making a *kratt* and, in the absence of suitable material, makes it with one leg. However, the latter is very agile yet also somewhat lazy and does not feel like going far from the house, so it starts to steal the grain the master's *kratt* brought for him (E 15897 (25) Võnnu).

The way the *kratt* is animated also varies. The Estonian treasure-bearer was made on three consecutive Thursday nights in the same month at the intersection of three roads. The materials used were pieces of worn-out fabric, pea stalks, ropes, old wooden bowl halves (for buttocks), an old hank (for the tail), a piece of glowing coal for the heart, pieces of iron for the teeth etc. In order to give it a soul, one had to steal sacramental wine from a church, keep it in one's mouth and bring it home to animate the *kratt* (ERA II 12, 289 (1) Simuna, 1931). In general terms, the same tradition spread among Estonian Russians.

It is often necessary to give three drops of blood to animate it, and in the stories the devil sometimes himself appears at the crossroads (cf. Klintberg 2010: 290).

In many versions, people try to cheat the devil: blood is withdrawn from the paw of a cat or from a piglet. All of these elements add humour and excitement to the stories (RKM II 169, 407/9 (706) Sangaste, 1963).



Verbal magic as well as the spells used to make the *kratt* were widely employed in Estonia (Kõiva 2011b), although some spells find parallels in the narratives about making a supernatural creature (a werewolf) and/or from metamorphoses:

*A fire tail or ghost*

*In the olden days, people used to make fire tails or ghosts. On three Thursday nights, all sorts of old litter were put together. To breathe life into it, you read:*

*Kiuh, kauh hair on your head!*

*Siuh, sauh tail behind!*

*Piuh, pauh head on you!*

*An old man had made his own [kratt]. His son secretly went to see and heard the words uttered. As later also told to others. (ERA II 14, 247 (32) Anna, 1929)*

The corpus of charms is rich (over 50 texts); some ask the treasure-bearer to bring grain and promise to feed the treasure-bearer:

*Come, dear krätt,*

*Come next door to me,*

*Bring my grain,*

*Back from the neighbours' granary!*

*Feed you with bread then*

*And give you the joy of milk,*

*Shall not make you carry a heavy load*

*Neither gold, nor silver. (ERA II 159, 506/7 (85) Martna, 1937)*

The Belarusian *khut* is closest in appearance and function to the *kratt*. However, *khut* is not made from old things or objects but has the ability to metamorphose; it can turn into any creature or thing, including a fire serpent.



Fig. 3. Making of a *kratt* treasure-bearer. Performance by Maret Ubaleht, photo by Siiri Kumari 2018. <https://www.siirikumari.com/the-smell-of-cinders-and-rain/creation-of-the-kratt>



Fig 4. *Kratt*, an example of community art, 2018 <https://www.flickr.com/photos/46785534@N06/15028865166>

A milk *kratt* or a milk tick (*piimapuuk*) could also act imperceptibly and only ‘tick drops’ or drops of milk or excrements remained in the well, on the table, wall or trees (cf. Sweden: Klintberg 2010: 289; Latvia: Laime 2013).

When a treasure-bearer was punished, it was believed that the person who had brought the milk in this form became ill (the same motifs are known in Belarus). A custom in Saaremaa was to throw the found excrement of the mythical creature into the fire, leading the perpetrator to suffer stomach-ache (constipation), which could only be relieved when a member of the victim’s family gave them something (water, food, tools or utensils).

Another aspect typical of modern legends about the treasure-bearer is a change in explanation. The observed phenomenon may be interpreted according to the old tradition in the periphery of Estonia, like in Setomaa and on the islands of Muhu and Saaremaa. Still, we can also find a new model of interpretation – aliens. This model began to emerge in the 1970s in connection to the attention being paid to unusual atmospheric phenomena and the expansion of UFO folklore. The latter mainly spread through a variety of lectures, translations, or handwritten pamphlets, and helped instil knowledge about aliens, not only in Estonia but in Belarus as well (Kõiva 1996; Butov 2021). This broadened the explanatory model and drew attention to different light phenomena, for example, the descriptions of flying serpents – something resembling a fire wheel – by Russians living in Estonia during the 1930s. Again, this is a process entailing changes, retranslations, and a set of vernacular perceptions.

## VISUAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FLYING SERPENTS

Belarusian and Ukrainian traditions contain stories of serpents that walk instead of fly (Levkiyevskaya 2019: 439; TMKB 2011: 486–487). In Belarusian tradition, we find the appearance of a serpent depicted as “shaggy, scary and tall”, yet most importantly it does not fly; it walks, and walks upright, that is, in this description, the serpent possesses the features of both zoomorphic and anthropomorphic creatures. Ukrainian folklore also includes stories of serpents that walk instead of fly (Levkiyevskaya 2019: 439, No. 9). Some remarkable features are attributed to the flying serpents as they appear in flight, emphasising their fiery, luminous nature. Certain changes can be noticed in descriptions of the serpent’s colour, the brightness of its glow, and its shape based on the way it flies and what it is carrying.



Fig. 5. Tsmok. Monument in Lelepe, Belarus. Photo from <https://www.toursoyuz.by/2018/08/14/18-zhniunya-proy-dze-festyval-u-gostsi-da-lepelskaga-tsmoka-pragrama/>

Estonian Russians say that it glows yellow when it is carrying milk, and when it is carrying money it glows red (ERA II 109, 107 (48)). In Estonian lore, most forms of *kratt* – the self-made and human-shaped ones – are visible as fiery streaks.

A characteristic shared by all the regions under investigation is the anthropomorphic figure of a flying serpent or treasure-bearer. For instance, modern Belarusian lore contains purely anthropomorphic descriptions of a serpent of enrichment. It may be observed that, even with such an anthropomorphic appearance, the serpent is still flying, despite it looking like a man and wearing shoes that need to be dried (Boganeva 2012: 29, No. 8).

In Livonian folk belief, a witch or a witch's soul in the form of a *kratt* is seen flying in the sky, carrying milk or cream to its family. According to beliefs, it used to milk cows or suck milk, take cream from others and bring full barrels of milk back to its family. Besides the anthropomorphic and artificial *kratt*, zoomorphic ones also fly as fiery streaks. The mythical being is described as follows: it flies under the sky like a streak of fire; sparks are flying; it flies through the air, has fire in its mouth; like a stripe it goes through the air, a flame of fire in its wake; flies like a fire, leaving a tail behind; flies like a big bird overhead; comes like fire; a bird comes and fire appears in the yard; through the air like a black ball or a pile of wood or a haystack. A toad is seen sucking on the cow in a barn, leaving like a streak of fire through the air etc. (Loorits 1928: 40 ff.).

Like the Estonians, the Livs describe the anthropomorphic treasure-bearer as an ordinary persons, but when they practice witchcraft they turn into a streak of fire, a broom, or a bird, flying through the sky. Again, narrators refer to real people by their names, speaking about how they acted as milk ticks. It is said that the body of a person lay lifeless on the ground until the soul acted as a tick. Here we can see an overlapping with the tradition of a whirlwind (Est. *tuulispask*) that steals grain and other things. Some reports in Livonian folklore state that only the witch that escapes through the chimney, with an oven broom between her thighs, milks cows. Some stories specify that the witches have a vessel with them – for example, a bladder, a large one like a pig's bladder, into which they put milk to take it home; however, they cannot take butter. In some descriptions, the witches are black while the vessel into which they milk is also black, but the red tail behind them is like fire.

The Livonian witches can be invisible when they are sucking milk from a cow, while their shadow can be seen on the barn wall. Loorits gives an example where the storyteller's mother understood that somebody had been sucking on her cow every night. One morning, she went to milk it and on the wall saw a naked man with big balls, which were decreasing; then there was a flash like a flame



Fig 6. Kratt-bearer, Kristjan Raud, 1927. Wikipeddia.

of fire and he disappeared, but that morning the cow had not been milked (Loorits 1928: 42, Loorits 1926: S 152).

In Estonian tradition, the zoomorphic *kratt* figures were known as milk-bearers: a toad, frog, (black) dog, (black) cat, bird, crow, (black) rooster, chicken, duck, eagle, squirrel, or a snake, or commonly known as a milk sucker and a demonic creature. At the same time, the snake shares features with the house snake, which was fed and banned from killing.

A ‘fish-bearer’ was widespread in the Estonian inland, but not along the coast or on the islands where fishing was a daily activity. The *silgukratt* could be a person, yet it was common for it to take the form of a cat (grey or black, and rarely also a yellow one), sometimes a large bird or a chicken. The money-bearer, or *rahakratt*, was a lesser-known character tasked with bringing money to the master. Records of *rahakratt* originate from different parishes, with it mainly appearing as anthropomorphic or artificial creatures.

Votian tradition mentions *para* primarily as a human (often a witch) who milked cows (Västrik 1998). The Finnish *para* appeared in the form of an animal (rat, toad, frog, bird), a ball of fire, or a woman. It is the owner or the milk stealer (cf. Jauhiainen 1998: H1-300). A woman was also the owner or the “milk bearer” in Sweden (Klintberg 2010: 289).

## ACOUSTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF FLYING SERPENTS

In Belarus folklore, flying serpents of enrichment lack specific acoustic characteristics, which is not typical of mythological creatures. *Rusalka*, *pharaonka*, *domovoy*, *lesovik*, *bannik* and other demons usually possess certain auditory characteristics, sometimes very diverse, reflected in their respective tales. *Rusalki*, for instance, make vague sounds, entice and call people, laugh, cry, and sing, among others, insightful and enlightening songs. *Domovoy* and *dvorovoy* (*khlevnik*) can talk with their masters and answer questions; evil spirits make terrible noises (Vinogradova 2000: 179-199). Although the acoustic image of Belarusian spirits-enrichers is generally uncertain, some texts about a flying serpent published by Pavel Shein in the early 20th century say the serpent’s flight is accompanied by noise (Shein 1902: 302). Shein also presents the image of a spirit-enricher in the form of a cat whose movement is always associated with a slight noise and a buzz (Shein 1902: 304).

The flying serpent is an exceptional, silent character, although its visual characteristics are vibrant and detailed. If the serpent is unhappy with its master, it does not chastise him or make its disapproval known with sounds, but burns the house down and flies away to serve another master.

Although the flying serpent lover is visually similar to the serpent of enrichment, it has a distinctly different auditory image. In a famous tale about the serpent lover, hemp and lice, the serpent asks a woman eating hemp seeds what she is doing. The woman answers that she is eating lice and the serpent leaves her forever.

In the Estonian corpus, acoustic parameters indicate that the treasure-bearers communicate with the master or has discussions with them and they also communicate with each other. *Para* also communicates with humans in the Votian tradition (Västrik 1998).

In legends, the milk-bearer and the fish-bearer vomit up milk or fish and thus make corresponding sounds.

The way the master calls the creature is interesting as the human employs typical onomatopoeia: calls, imitation of a sound made by or associated with an animal or a bird, or imitative and suggestive words for a greater effect.

The treasure-bearer's speech is remarkable, often using distorted foreign words and expressions or baby talk. In the legends under study, two *kratt* discuss the quality of food using baby talk:

*In a household the hostess put food in the attic for the kratt. The farm servant was not given as good food as the kratt. [One day he followed the hostess to the attic.] The servant ate the porridge left for the kratt and did his thing in the bowl instead. Kratts came to eat. One of them said: "Kuku pupp!" ['Good porridge' in baby talk], the other one: "Äka pupp!" [äka = kaka, 'bad, shit porridge' in baby talk]. The second kratt won the argument. Then they set the house on fire. (ERA II 30, 65/6 (4) Torma, 1930)*

Tactile experiences are very rare, which is why they are not addressed here.

#### TEMPORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SERPENT OF ENRICHMENT

Unlike with the mythological *khut* and *tsmok*, the events in the texts take place in real historical time and usually in the time of the narrator, or in the recent past. The image of the treasure-bearer or flying serpent is associated with certain workflows, e.g. harvest and other periods related to winter supplies. This means the mythical creature's image is situational. The least known in Estonian tradition is a *kratt* who moves about in wintertime.

In Belarusian tales about a serpent of enrichment, it can be seen during the winter months (one informant recalled she had seen the serpent while sledding downhill as a child), in autumn, in late summer during grain threshing, and during the off-season in spring and autumn (the mistress is "drying the serpent's shoes") (Boganeva 2012: No. 5, 7, 8).

In Estonia, the most common time for milk stealing and milk magic was the period from the day the cattle were let out (around 1 April) until Midsummer Day (24 June). The motifs of milk magic are more closely related to spring (Easter, St. George's Day) when it is done either by means of dust picked from the tracks of a neighbour's herd, by the symbolic milking of junipers or fences, or by calling for milk while sitting on the branches of a tree (the same in Sweden; see Klintberg 2010: type P24 ff.). It was believed that butter made from the stolen milk had blood cells in it; the same motif appears in Swedish legends (Klintberg 2010: type P22).

The 'fish-bearer' acts during spring and summertime, the 'grain-bearer' in summer and also in autumn, when it is darker. The animated creature is connected with Thursday, namely, the most popular time for magic rituals.

As for the time of day when the act was accomplished, in Estonia this depended greatly on the type of bearer. They can act in the evening, in the morning, or at night, but certainly at a time when the grain has been winnowed.

*The treasure was carried by the kratt also during the day. If there is nothing else to carry, they carry hay from meadows. (EKS 2, 161/2 Torma, 1890)*

As for the time of day, in most cases the Belarusian tales and the legends found in the Russian archive of the Estonian Literary Museum do not explicitly mention it; still, based on the information collected it may be concluded that night is the serpent's preferred time. The tale of a shimmering luminous serpent suggests a darker time of day. In some cases, night time is explicitly mentioned (ERA, Vene 4, 64 (7); Boganeva 2012: 29, No. 6, 7, 8).

#### TYPICAL LOCI FOR THE SERPENT OF ENRICHMENT

The vast majority of narratives under investigation talk about a village environment; the activities take place on farmland or between farms and villages, in meadows, on village or inter-village roads, in which case the narrator, being on the outside, sees a *kratt* flying in the sky. The making and acquisition of the treasure-bearer occur in a space of magical significance such as a crossroads or a forest road outside the village. The treasure-bearer is often bought in the city of Riga (see above), the administrative centre of Livonia. Riga represents a more distant space/city where miraculous cases are possible from the storytelling point of view.

Moreover, the structure of the farmstead is revealed in via legends. In both Estonian and Estonian Russian legends, the most typical loci for the serpent in the house are the attic and the threshing floor, or a storehouse for milk or grain, or a barn. The grain carriers lived in the attic, under the roof, and were given food there. They went in and out through a hatch, a gable end window. This was also considered to be the reason that a tail of fire was seen entering a house. Even today, people believe that a streak of fire that goes into a house but does not cause a fire is a *kratt*. In Votian tradition, the porridge for the treasure-bearer is put in an oven, on a rake, or in a barn (Västriik 1998).

#### METHODS USED TO WARD OFF THE TREASURE-BEARER

In Belarusian texts, including modern ones, the spirit-enricher in the form of a flying serpent is often envisioned as an *au pair* and is not associated with evil spirits. In this case, as a rule the owners do not protect themselves from it, and try to please it with their favourite food. Yet, when the snake threatens a person's life or property they employ typical methods of protection from evil spirits: a cross, prayers, sharp iron objects etc. (Boganeva 2012: 29-30).

However, one Belarusian ethnographic description by Alexander Dembovetski from the 19th century gives a curious ‘instruction’ regarding the destruction of the serpent-enricher. The owner must find out where the snake sleeps, then take a rope, cover it with tar, and hit the serpent with it. The serpent takes different guises and asks to be hit again (which cannot be done), and then dies. If the owner listens to the snake and hits it again, the snake will kill him and burn the property down (Dembovetski 1882: 498-499). Estonian lore stipulates that, while punishing the treasure-bearer, numbers must not be counted in the correct order:

*Volmer grabbed it, took a whip and gave the treasure bearer a good beating, counting: ‘One, two, four; one, two, four’. The treasure bearer was screaming: ‘Say one, two, three!’. As soon as Volmer had said one-two-three, the treasure bearer vanished. (E 45211/2 Paistu, 1905)*

In Estonia, we can find verbal charms against the treasure bearer and all the usual methods of protection against evil spirits like crosses, prayers, and sharp iron objects, but a common belief is:

*Then undo all the cords and buttons around you and the fire tail will drop its load. And if you put a silver bullet in the gun and you shoot it in the direction of the fire tail, it will also drop its load. If you see a fire tail and throw a lit match or an ember at it, it will set the master’s house in fire (E 16787 (1) Pärnu-Jaagupi, 1895).*

#### PERCEPTION OF THE FIERY SERPENT

Legends and belief narratives usually address the viewpoints of the narrator and the listener. In rituals, a distinction is made between the viewpoints of the spectator, the ritual leader, and the ordinary participator. Also in our cases, a distinction is first and foremost made between the stories and experiences of the narrator or transcriber, and those that they have heard from their friends and relatives as to which the narrator has no direct experience. There is a considerable number of people’s own experiences in the Estonian corpus, and among the texts of Estonian Russians and also in the more recent Belarusian texts. We even have eyewitness accounts (ERA, Vene 11, 445 (9); ERA, Vene 11, 445 (9)). Such experiences are distinguished by emotional evaluations and often lead to new arguments and interpretations. Doubts about the existence of flying serpents are much less common.

Estonian Russians at the start of the 20th century generally considered flying serpents to be evil spirits.

*Tont is a serpent. It brought goods to its master. It was Satan himself, they said. (ERA, Vene 1, 699 (3))*

One Estonian Russian narrator reflects on whether the flying serpent comes from God or Satan, and concludes that it does not come from God.

*The flying serpent... I don't know if it was sent by God or the Evil One. Probably by the Evil One. God would just give it to man if he wanted to make him rich, and it [the serpent] wouldn't have been necessary.* (ERA, Vene 1, 218/9 (22))

In modern Belarusian lore, the narrators rarely state that they themselves have witnessed flying serpents, and mainly refer to the stories told by their relatives and friends (Boganeva 2012: 28, No. 2, 13, 30).

Not all modern narrators living in Belarusian villages believe in the existence of flying serpents:

*There used to be legends about a serpent that brought riches to a wealthy man. He had storehouses, this and that... We didn't have this. ... Well, they were just fairy tales.* (Boganeva 2012: 28, No. 4)

The perception of the character described by the Belarusian narrators is far more ambiguous than that of the Estonian Russians. In contemporary records, the serpent that brings wealth has a dual interpretation. On one hand, it is a household deity, similar to that described by P. Shpilevsky<sup>5</sup> and A. Bogdanovich, which contributes to the enrichment of its master (not necessarily a sorcerer). It is only about such a serpent that the following could be said: *You know, daughter, if only we had such a serpent ...* (Boganeva 2012: 28, No. 1). This kind of serpent, a serpent of enrichment, is not usually referred to as an evil spirit. In this regard, the text that was recorded as told by Maria Seliverstovna Kokhanovskaya (b. 1927) is especially telling. When asked whether the serpent is an evil spirit, she answered affirmatively, yet sounded very uncertain: “Well, yes, it’s probably an evil spirit ...”. And then she immediately changed her opinion, stating that “it does exist since bats exist...” (Boganeva 2012: 28, No. 2). On the other hand, the serpent can be clearly presented as an evil spirit, a means of enrichment for its masters – sorcerers.

<sup>5</sup> The work of Pavel Shpilevsky under the pseudonym P. Drevlyansky “Belarusian Folk Traditions” has been repeatedly criticised because many characters were almost completely invented by the author (see Toporkov 2002: 245-254; Levkyevskaya 2002: 311-351). However, as E. Levkyevskaya correctly notes, not all the characters described in the “Belarusian Folk Traditions” are fictions invented by Drevlyansky himself. Some belong to characters that really exist in Belarusian mythology and are described with sufficient correspondence to folk ideas (Levkyevskaya 2002: 318). One of these characters is Tsmok or an enrichment serpent.



## ACTORS IN THE BELIEF NARRATIVES

Belief narratives convey behavioural instructions for how to cope with the situation, while a noticeable part of the narratives concerns how to make a *kratt* (which components are needed, what must be done, in what chronological order the actions have to be performed, and which verbal techniques to use). Some texts describe the behaviour of a servant or maid who discovers the *kratt* and either scares them away, insults them verbally, kicks them, or kills them. There are more characters in the story of spoiling the *kratt*'s porridge: the *kratt*'s feeder and the master or lady of the house, the servant, and the *kratt*. The *kratt* is active in both bringing in goods and breaking the contract and starting fires. Sometimes, in the final phase, the servant re-enters the game, throwing the *kratt(s)* who had escaped from the house into the fire as well, thereby destroying the evil creature.

One of the characters may be a mysterious merchant or salesman from Riga, and certainly the devil or a representative of evil forces in stories about acquisition of the *kratt*, as well as about the treasure-bearer as a miraculous and dangerous helper who constantly demands work; its appearance is connected with, for example, a book of witchcraft or *The Seventh Book of Moses*.

Different actions hold various functions in the stories. The links between an action and an object are contrasting, and it is already clear from what was mentioned above that distinct characters are either active or passive in the stories.

1. Activities related to acquiring a mythical creature are connected with a spatial location. In most cases, there is a short introduction to present the setting, characters, and period of time. More often, the mythical being's activities are related to a farm and the economy; some stories see it as working in the open air, in a barn, or in a shed.
2. There are many texts in which a person passively observes the actions of a treasure-bearer.
3. A person observes the actions of a treasure-bearer and actively tries to stop them: performs magical activities to stop a hostile action (cuts shoelaces, undoes buttons etc.) so that the treasure-bearer falls or drops what it is carrying.
4. Texts in which a person and the treasure-bearer take turns being active (making the treasure-bearer a story of spoiling the *kratt*'s porridge; if the conditions of the 'agreement' are not met, the serpent destroys the farmer's property).

Many stories describe fantastical elements of the tradition: a person who can turn into a treasure-bearer or a whirlwind, moves like light or in a physical form across the sky and cover distances quickly. The peculiarity of East Slavic and Finno-Ugric folklore is that unusual abilities can also be used by ordinary people either by imitating others or through the influence of new skills.

## THE TREASURE-BEARER AS PART OF THE CULTURAL SPACE

The participation of mythical characters in professional culture and various art forms is a topical question. St. George, the patron saint of many Christian cities and countries, and especially his struggle with the dragon, which also symbolises the struggle of Christianity with non-Christianity, paganism and evil, is depicted in both monuments and icons in many countries. In Estonia, such a monument, depicting St. George's fight with the dragon, was erected near the Tori Church in Pärnu County in 2006 to mark Estonia's victory in the War of Independence and the country's regained independence. However, a large monument in the centre of Minsk has now become a memorial to those killed in the 2020 struggle for freedom, and has become an important national symbol. The statues of a *tsmok* (in a provincial town) and a dragon in a green area of Minsk in Belarus are related to different mindscapes. The statue of the dragon has a good-natured appearance and resembles recent media figures. This figure has also been painted as a sign of protest in the colours of the unofficial flag of Belarus.

The mythical treasure-bearer, especially the *kratt*, holds a special role in Estonian professional culture where it is depicted in all media and art forms: ballet, musical forms, literature (including children's books), productions, art, films, community art sculptures from handy natural materials, and staged performances captured in professional photographs. The *kratt* is reflected in company names, computer-software names etc. In other words, although its shape has changed, it is still part of today's culture, having both humorous and serious roles.

## LIMITED GOOD AND THE TREASURE-BEARER

In our analysis, we proceeded from legends and the storyworld and discarded the idea of placing the action in a concrete social environment. The purpose of a legend is not to provide a truthful description of events and experiences but to present an unusual experience and sometimes also moral dilemmas. While describing the material, we also considered the anthropologist George M. Foster's theory of a limited good (1965), which was supplemented by John Kennedy (1966).

In the second half of the 19th century serfdom was abolished in Estonia and people's economic opportunities were improved. Peasants started to buy freehold title to farms. On their land lived cottagers who worked for the farmers, as well as the 'farm's proletariat' – maids, farmhands, seasonal workers, herders, craftsmen etc. If we analyse the *kratt* stories from a social aspect, the *kratt* is usually owned by a farmer or his wife who communicate directly with them, yet in stories they are also made and obtained by poorer peasants and farmhands.

The corpus of stories is implemented in very many registers: in addition to the serious discourse of legends, stories in the style of fantasy, humour, sarcasm etc. can also be heard. The voices heard also vary: young and old, women and men, representing various social strata. To some extent, the stories reveal the labour division between genders: milk

magic on the farm is women's sphere and women are more connected to it, whereas the grain-bearer is chiefly made by men, who also operate it. The fatal blow is delivered by young people – a farmhand or a maid. Either out of ignorance or dislike for the things seen (a cat vomiting milk into a pot), they ruin the magic practice, frighten the spirit off, kill it, or spoil its food. This kind of behaviour is displayed when a supernatural creature is encountered whose existence young people cannot interpret because they lack knowledge of the olden world and, even if some links emerge, they reprehend the use of witchcraft and magic. The postulate of many stories seems to be the warning that if you use a magic helper you can lose your life and riches following a brief period of wealth.

Narratives and beliefs about treasure-bearers are ambivalent as is the attitude to the treasure-bearers, yet there are no records of a documented boom in making treasure-bearers and treasure-seeking, nor can we witness any economic development in the *kratt* stories (cf. Taylor 1986). Treasure-hunting stories are quite realistic, at the same time the treasure-bearers like *kratt* are attributed with highly fantastic capabilities of shape-shifting, soul-wandering and witchcraft. The action still takes place in the village and on an old-fashioned farm. The dwelling has only one floor, which in the 20th-century modern village became a sign of wealth, and the creature does not choose a town as its habitat. During the 200-year period when the stories were written down, technological development was at a standstill. There are no novel materials, the *kratt* is still made from old junk, and no laws of robotics are applied.

In most cases, several explanations are possible. For example, moral choices, but also cases in which the motifs convey experience yet do not link the phenomenon with acquiring wealth and other benefits; the treasure-bearer has no immediate connection with any person, and its existence is self-evident like snow or rain, an unexplained phenomenon.

E. Boganeva recalls: "In 2013 I wrote down a story about the narrator's mother walking through the forest and a black rooster following her. And the mother knew that if she threw something at the cock, it would crumble into a heap of gold. Although they led a shabby life, the mother decided that she did not need this gold as it would come from evil spirits. She came out of the forest without throwing anything at the cock, and the latter disappeared. The narrator said that her mother was very religious, a Catholic. It means that the moral conflict let her give up wealth". M. Kõiva added a conversation with her great-aunt's husband, a miner, who was pondering some coloured balls of light moving about just above the ground in his home village near a town, heading for the attic of a wealthy farmhouse. "*Kratts*", he guessed. "But they did not bring wealth. Cold light!". In 1998, a female Setu singer described a treasure-bearer in the form of a window frame, a frame of light that followed her and then suddenly changed direction.

## CONCLUSION

A general rule is that the imagery of mythical creatures has changed over the centuries. The description of a demonic character (flying fire, a burning sheaf, various anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures) is based on what it is carrying, or sucking. It is possible that

different creatures have merged into one. Estonian Russians also associated the flying serpent with *kratt*, *tont*, *haldjas* – the Estonian demonic characters. The *kratt* here was made of various items and old junk, and then animated with sacramental wine secretly brought from a church.

The perceptions of fiery serpents among Belarusians and Estonian Russians are similar to the Lithuanian beliefs about *aitvaras*, a flying spirit that brings wealth and emerges from an egg laid by a 3- or 7-year-old rooster.

The imaginations and stories associated with these names have changed following the development of the lived folk religion and are changing, developing local circumstances and new international motifs like UFOs to replace the treasure-bearer.

When we compared the traditional Belarusian perceptions of flying serpents of enrichment with those of Estonian Russians reflected in archival records from the 1920–1940s preserved by the Estonian Literary Museum, we found several similarities in the description of: (a) the appearance of the demonic character (flying fire, a burning sheaf etc.; the serpent changes its colours, brightness and shape based on what it is carrying); (b) the mutual actions of the serpent of enrichment and the master it serves (the man feeds the serpent, the serpent enriches its master; if the conditions of the ‘agreement’ are not met, the serpent destroys its master’s property). As concerns the origin of the serpent of enrichment, some texts from Estonian and Votic narratives contain an ancient mythical layer of motifs about the serpent having emerged from a rooster’s egg that a person had to carry beneath their clothing for 1 to 3 years. In the tales of Estonian Russians and Estonians, the serpent usually appears as a result of a man’s deal with evil spirits (selling their soul to the devil, signing their name in blood etc.). In addition, Estonian Russians identified the flying serpent with a *kratt*, an Estonian demonic character. In this case, the animated *kratt* was made from various items of old junk, and then brought to life with sacramental wine secretly brought from a church. In Estonian tradition, one of the most important hypostases is the animated treasure-bearer and helper. This creature finds parallels in many cultures, including in Northern Europe. Further, the complex of Estonian milk magic as well as the ‘milk tick’ or ‘milk-bearer’ has a wide cultural background. Estonian lore is characterised by close relationships with the Baltic-Finnic and Swedish lore as well as the Slavic and German traditions; yet, there are also considerable historical and cultural differences in the gender aspect or differences in animal-shaped treasure-bearers.

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## ДУХИ-ОБОГАТИТЕЛИ В ВОСТОЧНО-СЛАВЯНСКОМ И ФИННО-УГОРСКОМ КОНТЕКСТАХ

MARE KÕIVA, ELENA BOGANEVA



Целью статьи является представление результатов сравнительного и структурно-семантического исследования верований и текстов о духах-обогатителях, в том числе в образе летающего/огненного змея, в восточнославянском



фольклоре и финно-угорских традициях (эстонской, водской, ливонской, финской, вепсской) в связи с прибалтийскими и скандинавскими верованиями об этих персонажах.

Статья опирается как на опубликованные фольклорные тексты 19-21 вв. белорусов, русских, в меньшей степени украинцев, так и на не публиковавшиеся ранее архивные коллекции записей 19-20 вв. русских Эстонии, эстонцев, финнов, ливонцев, водов, вепсов, которые содержатся в Эстонском литературном музее.

Огненный змей в белорусских традиционных представлениях существует до сегодняшнего дня в двух воплощениях: духа-обогаителя и мифического любовника, при том нередко змей в роли мифического любовника выступает одновременно и в качестве духа-обогаителя. В области терминологии (названий) у белорусов преимущественно преобладают описательные номинации: *огненный/летающий (летучий) змей*, но чаще всего — просто «змей». На северо-западе Беларуси встречается мифологический персонаж *хут*. По своим функциональным характеристикам хут во многом подобен змею-обогачителю (летающему, огненному), однако хут — полиморфный демон, с чертами домового и хлевника. Еще один белорусский персонаж, близкий к огненному змею и хуту — *цмок* — дракон. Белорусский огненный змей также близок к литовскому *айтварасу* — летающему огненному змею, носящему богатство. Айтварас — полиморфный демон, может являться в образе огненного петуха, вороны, реже кошки. На северо-западной Гродненщине среди белорусских литовцев он известен под именем *айтварас*, а также под именами *скальсиникас*, *кутас*, *хутас*, реже — *шкутас*, *спарыжус*, *парыжус*, *дамавікас*.

На имена летучих змей у эстонских русских, во многом повлияла их близость к эстонцам и их мифология: *пуук* (носитель, клещ), *насок* («тот, кто несет»), *tont* (призрак), *lendva* (летающий предмет, ведьмина стрела, мифическая болезнь); *кратт* (носитель); *алдыас* (защитник, дух); *пывш/точ*, *пывш*, *пувчши/пуктыш*, *пукшиш*, *пуксик* (разные варианты пуук или носитель). Пукис также известен в традициях Латвии, Литвы, Западной России, близкой к прибалтийским республикам.

В эстонском языке для мифического обогаителя существует около 30 различных терминов или местных названий. Эстонский термин — *pisuhänd* — относится к образу огненного змея. Почти одинаково популярны пять терминов, причем эти термины и их вариации в разных диалектах широко используются: *kratt* («носитель»), *pisuhänd* (носитель, огненный хвост, искрящийся хвост); *puuk* (сосущий); *tont* (призрак); *vedaja* (носитель, клад) — все они являются носителями сокровищ, или иногда их называют носителями зерна, молочных продуктов, денег или рыбы. *Пуук* — заимствование из шведского (блевать) или из нижненемецкого (*spök*, *spük* — привидение, привидение, потустороннее существо). *Тонт* — это термин не только для обозначения духа-обогаителя, но и для неопределенного сверхъестественного существа, злого духа, чудовища, призрака.

Происхождение летающих змеев-обогатителей у белорусов и русских Эстонии обычно связывается с колдовством и колдунами. У эстонских русских змеи-обогатители в основном отождествляются с бесами, поэтому об их происхождении говорят как о результате сделки между бесами и знающими людьми (колдунами).

Что касается Кратта, то он является рукотворным произведением человека из хлама и негодных вещей. Для того, чтобы оживить это изделие человека, выполняют магические манипуляции с причастием, принесенным из церкви. Последний мотив имеет распространение у эстонцев, финнов, эстонских русских.

У белорусов до начала 21 века сохранился древний пласт представлений о змеях-обогатителях, которые часто считаются разновидностью домашних духов. Так, происхождение змея связывается с петушиным яйцом, которое вынашивается человеком. Такой мотив происхождения леучих змеев широко известен также в других славянских ареалах. В терминологии западных украинцев, верования которых близки к белорусским, змей-обогатитель называется «годованец» или «вихованок», что дословно означает «воспитанник».

Кроме того в статье составлено описание духов-обогатителей (летающих/огненных змеев) по следующим признакам: внешний вид, темпоральные характеристики, локус обитания, действия персонажа по отношению к людям (активные/пассивные) и действия людей по отношению к персонажу (в том числе предписания, запреты, обереги). Рассматривается диапазон восприятия персонажей (от нечистой силы, inferнального существа до духа-помощника), образы духов-обогатителей (летающих змеев) в современном культурном пространстве.

Ключевые слова: летающий/огненный змей, дух-обогатитель, кратт, магия, молочная/рыболовная магия

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# From Ritual Communication to Convivial Entertainment: Reflections of Old Drinking Rituals in Folk Songs

— Vita Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė —

Članek obravnava spremembe v obredih pitja in kako se odražajo v folklori. Za podrobnejšo razpravo so izbrane beloruske in litovske pesmi, ki si delijo več podobnosti. Pesemski motivi, analizirani v članku, kažejo jasne povezave med obredi pitja in folkloro (poročne pesmi in šege zaročnega pitja) ter določeno implicitno kulturno povezavo med starimi obrednimi odnosi in praznovanji v poznejših časih (motivi prazničnih pesmi, parafrazirani v pitnih tradicijah). Teoretični okvir prispevka izhaja iz raziskav s področja folklorne, obrednega komuniciranja in zgodovine tradicionalnih pijač, ki preučujejo kulturno kontinuiteto življenjskih pojavov skupnosti. Izkušnje obrednih odnosov, ki se prenašajo iz roda v rod, lahko spodbudijo obstoj arhaičnih kulturnih oblik, tudi če so specifične obredne prakse že davno zamrle in so postale nepomembne, saj so se življenjske okoliščine ljudi bistveno spremenile.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: ljudske pesmi, obredi pitja, pogostitev, tradicionalne pijače (medica, pivo, vino, vodka), obredno komuniciranje.

The article considers changes in drinking rituals and how they are reflected in folklore. Belarusian and Lithuanian songs sharing several similarities are selected for a more detailed discussion. The song motifs analysed in the article show clear links between drinking rituals and folklore (wedding songs and betrothal drinking customs), along with a certain implicit cultural link between the old ritual attitudes and festivities in subsequent times (motifs of feast songs paraphrased in drinking traditions). The theoretical framework of the paper is supported by research from the fields of folklore, ritual communication, and the history of traditional beverages that examines the cultural continuity of community life phenomena. The experiences of ritual attitudes passed down from generation to generation may encourage the existence of archaic cultural forms, even when specific ritual practices have long died out and become irrelevant as people's life circumstances have changed significantly.

KEYWORDS: folk songs, drinking rituals, feast, traditional drinks (mead, beer, wine, vodka), ritual communication.

## INTRODUCTION

Anthropologists, mythologists and folklorists who study the content, expression and changes with respect to old religious and community-based rituals often state that the old ritual communication is generally reflected in modern mass events, gatherings of various groups, or simply in everyday communication. One may interpret the norms of etiquette, linguistic stereotypes and folklore motifs which arose from elements of old community rituals as signs pointing to the decay of traditional culture, yet also as evidence of its vitality and adaptation to a constantly changing worldview. Old drinking rituals are among such traditional phenomena which have seen many transformations and taken peculiar forms in folklore.

This article seeks to answer several questions through analysis of folklore and old wedding customs while also exploring relevant research on ritual communication and the customs prevalent in community feasts of the later period. Namely, how do changes in the old drinking rituals take place, and how are their separate elements transformed into the entertainment-related self-expression of the participants at various feasts? Which explicit and implicit reflections of old drinking rituals can we detect in comparatively recent folklore forms? Another relevant question is: how can the investigation of these reflections add to the wider studies concerning the folkloric reception of culture?

Lithuanian and Belarusian folk songs are selected in this article as the folkloric material for investigation. Several relevant motifs in these songs are discussed in an attempt to highlight how archaic drinking rituals are reflected in folklore, and their particular modifications<sup>1</sup>. The shared qualities of Lithuanian and Belarusian songs have been discussed by folklore researchers on many occasions. Coinciding folkloric motifs and poetic images, as well as parallels in melodic types, characterise the ballads and wedding, work, calendar and other songs of the two nations (for more, see Misevičienė 1968, 1985; Žičkienė 1996, 2011). Ethnographic data show the two nations share much with regard to calendar festivals, agrarian customs, and the way of life in the traditional community generally. From a historical perspective, these folkloric connections and mutual influences may be explained by both their close geographic vicinity and shared historical experience, going back to the times of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

<sup>1</sup> The idea for this research emerged in the course of the several years the author of this article spent preparing the scientific publication “The Book of Lithuanian Folk Songs” (“Lietuvių liaudies dainynas”), Vol. 24, entitled “Feast Songs” (“Vaišių dainos”). The volume comprises folk songs recorded in the 19th century – the start of the 21st century, stored in manuscript collections and printed publications of folklore; the main folkloric motifs of these songs include beer brewing, gathering the guests and seeing them off, vivid encouragements to drink to the bottom of the glass, passing a drink around in circle, praising the hosts, etc. As the author analysed several thousands of song variants from different regions of Lithuania and explored the ethnographic contexts of their existence and their connections with the folklore of neighbouring countries, it has become evident that these folklore pieces of relatively recent origin contain the elements of old drinking traditions, albeit rendered in a distinctive way and, more often than not, difficult to recognise. The investigation also revealed that in relatively recent past (approximately at the start of the 20th century), a considerable amount of feast songs was widely sung at weddings as a natural part of the ritual, and, as the ritual died out, they eventually developed into cheerful “drinking songs” accompanying different community festivals. It should be noted that this tendency, i.e., the eventual incorporation of the folk songs previously linked to ritual contexts into community entertainment, may be observed in the folklore of many countries.

Two groups of songs are selected for a more detailed investigation<sup>2</sup>. The first group comprises Lithuanian and Belarusian wedding songs containing motifs of ritual drinking; specifically – the set of wedding songs related to rituals in the betrothal period. Drinking rituals in existence during the betrothal period as reflected in the songs are explored based on considerably well-documented ethnographic descriptions of Belarusian and Lithuanian weddings of 19th century/early 20th century and folkloric material gathered in the same period. Another group of songs analysed in the article is Lithuanian feast songs of a comparatively recent origin that exhibit explicit links with the old songs (especially wedding ones) and might alternatively be called drinking songs. Accordingly, in the following parts of the article two different, albeit closely interconnected cases of drinking rituals being reflected in folk songs are presented: the motifs of wedding songs which show clear links to the ritual context of betrothal, and the repertory of feast songs oriented to entertainment-related feast practices, denoted by distinctive paraphrases of traditional beverage consumption.

It should be noted that this article does not seek to comprehensively analyse the origin of old drinking rituals, the aspects of their distribution or the history of traditional beverages. These fields of interest have received the close attention of scholars from different countries in recent decades<sup>3</sup>. We are more concerned with the directions taken in the changes occurring in the ritual drinking tradition, especially when the old ritual practices were already extinct. This question is briefly discussed in the part below.

#### SOME NOTES ON CHANGES IN DRINKING RITUALS AND FOLKLORISATION TENDENCIES

Old written sources, folklore data, and numerous archaeological, anthropological and ethnological investigations show that traditional beverages like mead, wine, beer or vodka have an ancient and rich history in both Europe and other continents (Dietler 2006: 232–235). Since ancient times, they have accompanied religious rituals, community festivals, and life events of an individual, and been widely used as an integral part of libations, to confirm ritual actions, and even as a ‘seal’ holding legal power in important agreements. As researchers of the history of traditional beverage consumption state:

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<sup>2</sup> Different folklore sources were consulted in the selection of Belarusian and Lithuanian song texts relevant for the investigation. A substantial amount of wedding songs was selected from scientific publications of Belarusian and Lithuanian songs (see Вяч.П., LLD.VD). The author of this article also used the early ethnographic wedding descriptions published in the 19th century which usually provide summaries of rituals together with related songs. The Lithuanian feast songs analysed in the paper were selected from the series “The Book of Lithuanian Folk Songs”, Vol. 24 “Feast Songs” (published in 2019; cf. LLD.VŠD). Folk song collections stored at the Archive of Lithuanian Folklore were also consulted.

<sup>3</sup> In recent decades, numerous investigations on the use, cultural meaning and ritual significance of traditional beverages have been carried out. With reference to relevant research on this topic in the field of Lithuanian and, in a wider respect, Baltic ritual culture, the works of mythologists and folklorists Daiva Vaitkevičienė (2011, 2019), Bronė Stundžienė (2004), Nijolė Laurinkienė (2012), Elvyra Usačiovaitė (Усачёвайте 2009) should be mentioned. Comprehensive data on the traditions of ritual consumption of mead, beer and vodka in the Slavic countries may be found in the ethnolinguistic dictionary “Славянские древности: Этнолингвистический словарь” (1995–2012).

the importance of these alcoholic beverages is evident in the multiplicity of customs and regulations that developed around their production and uses. They often became central in the most valued personal and social ceremonies, especially rites of passage, and were ubiquitous in such activities as births, initiations, marriages, compacts, feasts, conclaves, crownings, magic rites, medicine, worship, hospitality, war making, peace making, and funerals (Keller, Vaillant).

When delving into the drinking traditions of more recent historical periods that still have noticeable attributes of community life, one observes over the last 200 years the consumption of beverages at festive gatherings of European and other nations has been and remains actively combined with various ritual attitudes. The process of sharing drinks itself encompasses different actions evidently stemming from ritual, and which formerly held sacred meanings. Although for every individual nation this 'drinking culture' has its own features (preferences are observed to vary for drinks or even drinking), a considerable share of feast customs has universal attributes. Here one could include numerous 'international' drink-related gestures and attitudes that are practised quite actively; we note a few of the popular ones easily observable in the feasts of most European nations: before drinking, the drinking vessel is raised in the air, the remainder of the drink sometimes is spilt over one's shoulder; the feast participant sitting beside is greeted (a drink to their health is taken); feast participants compete over who will drink quicker or a greater quantity; when a drink is finished, the glass is turned upside down; sometimes people stand up while consuming a drink etc. Scholars of culture history easily recognise the reflections of archaic drinking rituals in these festive 'performances'. Even these days, in wedding, christening, house-warming and other celebrations in different countries (especially in rural regions) attended by family members, relatives or neighbours, one can hear the hosts encouraging the guests to drink more, and to drink their glasses right to the bottom. All of these festive communication elements have long been seen as an expression of hospitality and popular feast customs. Generally speaking, when celebrating, modern communities do not identify the origin or primary purpose of their actions or accompanying verbal formulas which come from the old ritual contexts, but merely repeat their variations as certain norms of etiquette, habits of social behaviour, or as an engaging tradition that helps to unite members of a group. Over time, peculiar forms of feast culture developed in different countries that were gradually more oriented to entertainment, yet simultaneously preserved some elements of a ritual character, albeit profoundly transformed. According to the author of "Alcohol and Culture", the anthropologist David G. Mandelbaum: "drinking in a particular society may be either a sacred or a profane act, depending on the context, and the people may not be aware of the basic principles and meanings that are actually involved" (Mandelbaum 1965: 281).

The verbal communication of feasts which forms an integral part of the festive 'performance' discussed above has evolved into different forms of folklore. This communication is directly related with the consumption of traditional beverages; it manifests in concise oral formulas and as longer texts intended for specific occasions. In line with local

traditions and occasions for feasts, it may appear as laconic greetings while drinking to the health of the person sitting next to an individual at a feast and bestowing wishes of happiness and prosperity on them, brief toasts, or, to the contrary, as toasts marked by elaborate rhetoric, as well as songs sung by all feast participants that are called *drinking* or *feast* songs. All of these creative activities directly related to beverages and their use and performed by feast participants have long been part of the folklore of various nations and received the considerable attention of scholars investigating traditional culture. In his study “An Anthropological View of Alcohol and Culture in International Perspective”, the anthropologist Dwight B. Heath defines the connections between the drinking traditions and the folklore observed in the cultures of many nations around the world in the following way: “much of what is learned about drinking, whether favorable or unfavorable, is passed from one generation to another through stories, songs, poems, tales, and sayings that reflect long-term cultural experiences and attitudes” (Heath 1995: 343). The “long-term cultural experiences” he mentions should encourage folklore researchers to primarily view the reflections of the old drinking traditions in folklore as a distinct cultural continuity characterised by a specific internal logic and inevitable folkloric paradoxes. It is well known that their poetic character, distinctive symbolic expression and variance caused by the oral tradition mean that folklore texts, especially folk songs, cannot always be seen as a reliable source of knowledge and exploration of community life in the old times. Nonetheless, having selected appropriate tools for analysis, one may recognise a range of explicit and implicit traces of archaic ritual communication in them. Perhaps the most viable research direction here is the thorough investigation of folklore contexts (historical, social etc.), delving into the tendencies of folklore genre development etc.

In contemporary folklore research, the approach taken to folklore texts of various genres as an integral part of everyday life and ritual communication of the traditional community is more relevant than ever.

## DRINKING RITUALS AS REFLECTED IN BELARUSIAN AND LITHUANIAN FOLK SONGS

### 1. “THEY GAVE THEIR DAUGHTER AWAY FOR A GLASS OF VODKA”:

#### THE FOLKLORIC VERSION OF A DRINKING RITUAL IN WEDDING SONGS

As noted, traditional beverages have made up an important part of the ritual life of a community since ancient times. According to Martin A. Lynn, “drinking accompanied the important rites of passage of birth, marriage and death, the festivals of the agricultural calendar and of the liturgical year, and royal, civic, religious and fraternal rituals” (Lynn 2001: 120). Out of all the listed “rites of passage”, wedding rituals and customs stand out because they continue even today. It is known that archaic wedding customs were first and foremost related to entering into a contract between two families that acquired a legal status via the ritual consumption of traditional beverages. Recent research on Baltic beverages and associated rituals indicates, “historical and ethnographic facts provide the

most data on three areas where a drinking ritual served as a legal act: concluding a marriage, peace treaties, and contracts of exchange (gift and purchase and sale agreements)” (Vaitkevičienė 2019: 337). Hence, the primary role of traditional beverages at wedding rituals was to finalise the marriage contract between the bride’s and groom’s families during the betrothal. It was particularly important in pre-Christian times when the official canonical marriage was still not in place. During the betrothal<sup>4</sup>, the mutual agreements on the material assets given by parents and the bride’s consent to the marriage gained a legal status. This explains why the contracts had to be concluded in the presence of community members (neighbours and relatives served as the witnesses to the contracts and undertakings), and the final legitimisation of the marriage contract was a common feast at which drinks appear to be the main ritual element. A similar order of concluding marriage contracts was found among many European nations until the first half of the 20th century. It should be noted that the ritual consumption of traditional beverages came to wedding customs from the archaic past of community life – its origin is related to ancient libation rituals (for more, see Biegeleisen [1928]: 38–39).

Numerous situations of ritual drinking may be observed at traditional weddings in both Lithuania and Belarus (also in many other Slavic nations). The folklorist Bronė Stundžienė analysed Lithuanian wedding rituals and their reflections in songs and noted that drinking “acts”, numbering approximately 20, accompanied all wedding episodes from matchmaking through to the end of the wedding feast. Stundžienė states, “in all cases, the dual purpose of drinking acts catches the eye: it signifies the ritual separation from one family and the incorporation into another one. In the first case, the bride’s family drink as a sign of giving the bride away, in the second case the groom’s family drink as a sign of accepting the bride” (Stundžienė 2004: 46). Still, the ritual consumption of traditional beverages during betrothal is viewed as the most important act because, as stated, the betrothal was the main part of the wedding ritual.

Linguistic data confirm that consolidation of the contract concluded between the families of the bride and groom during the betrothal by means of community-based drinking was viewed as the key point of the ritual. In Lithuanian, Belarusian (and many other Slavic) languages, the names referring to this wedding stage are directly linked with the words *gerti*, *pragerti*, *degtinė* (to drink, to drink as a sign of giving [the daughter] away, vodka) etc. Here, we mention several of such names based on the monograph “Marriage and Wedding in Slavic Folk Culture” (“Брак и свадьба в славянской народной культуре”) by the ethnolinguist Aleksandr Gura: Lithuanian – *užgėros*, *pragėros*, *sugertuvės*;

<sup>4</sup> Here it should be explained that *betrothal* in this case refers to the initial stage of traditional wedding, lasting from matchmaking to the wedding itself, which takes place at the house of the bride’s parents. During this period, the families of the bride and of groom made arrangements regarding the allocation of financial and material assets and also negotiated specific aspects of the wedding organisation. Other essential moments of betrothal: the bride’s consent to marriage (frequently known as “giving the hand in marriage”); ring exchange between the newlyweds; gift exchange between both sides etc. As time passed and the rituals were reduced, the initial stages of a wedding, which in both Belarusian and Lithuanian ethnographic “vocabularies” had a variety of names, inevitably changed, were combined etc. (see Фядосік 1980: 20; Vyšniauskaitė et al. 1995: 284–286).



Belarusian – *запойны, першыя, другая (вялікая) і трэцяя запойны*<sup>5</sup>; Ukrainian – *запойни*; Polish – *zapoiny*; Slovak – *prepíjanie*, Serbian – *пијење девојке*, etc. (for more, see Гупа 2011: 412).<sup>6</sup> All of these old names for rituals refer directly to the culmination of the betrothal – the establishing of mutual agreement between the family of the bride and the family of the groom through a common feast, where the key action was the sharing of drinks among the ritual participants in a specific order, thereby legitimising the agreements. First, the beverages brought by the representatives of the groom’s family were consumed. As a Belarusian wedding description of the 19th century states, “vodka brought by the representatives of the groom has a significant role: it may be consumed only after the agreement is concluded and it serves as the confirmation that the bride’s parents will honour their promise” (Довнар-Запольский 1888: 11–12). The betrothal ritual occurring after the “economic” agreement between the two families is described by Antanas Juška, the most prominent collector of Lithuanian wedding customs and folk songs of the 19th century:

The bride gives a small posy of rues wrapped into a white kerchief to the groom. The groom takes it, unwraps the rues and attaches them to his chest, takes the kerchief for himself, removes a ring from his finger and gives it to the bride. In exchange, the bride gives her ring to the groom and puts it on his finger; afterwards, they kiss each other. The groom *užgeria nuotaką* (drinks to the health of the bride), and they must drink the cup together to the bottom. Then parents, relatives, friends, and neighbours <...> bestow the wishes of happiness, good days, and a long life upon the newlyweds. They all begin drinking, singing, and celebrating. This is *pragertuvės* (drinking as a sign of giving the bride away), or *žiedynas* (betrothal) (Juška 1880: 9).

Motifs of beverages and drinking are common in Belarusian and Lithuanian wedding songs dedicated to the stage of betrothal. They present a distinct folklorised perspective of the key point of the marital agreement, where a joint feast of the participants and witnesses of the betrothal serves as final confirmation and seals the girl’s consent to marriage, the promise of her parents to give the agreed material assets to the groom’s family, the mutual exchange of gifts, as well as the ring exchange between the bride and the groom. This ritual ‘pouring a drink on’ the marriage contract by using traditional beverages also signified that it was irrevocable. This may be why the ‘theme’ of drinking is so frequent in songs dedicated to this wedding stage. One motif from betrothal songs of both nations stands out as the most popular and most capable of reflecting the festive drinking tradition, which may generally be called *Už degtinės stiklą tėvai atidavė/pardavė dukrą* [The

<sup>5</sup> Note that in Belarusian wedding customs and rituals exceptional attention was paid to “drinking in a sign of giving the daughter away”; the feast legitimising marital agreements was held three times.

<sup>6</sup> A linguistic connection of a similar character is also typical in several other European languages. The Polish historian and ethnographer Henryk Biegeleisen wrote extensively about this subject in 1928 (Biegeleisen [1928]: 36–37).

parents sold/gave their daughter away for a glass of vodka]. Below, we provide a few of the most characteristic examples of the discussed motif in Belarusian and Lithuanian songs<sup>7</sup>.

### Examples of Belarusian songs

(1) *Да прапою, прапою, Да Тацянкинъ татулька Да прапиў сваё дзіця; Да на новымъ ганачку, Да за мёду шкляначку, За горелки чарачку* (Карский 1916: 248).

(Tatyana's father drank his child away. He drank her away on a new terrace, for a glass of mead, for a cup of vodka.)

(2) *Да прапиў бацька дачку, Да ні за грош, ні за капейку, Да за чарку гарэлкі* (Вяс.П 147).

(Father drank his daughter away not for a grosz, not for a kopeck, but for a glass of vodka.)

(3) *Ай, што й гэта за матачка, Што прадала і дзіцятачка. За горкую й водачку Прапіла малодачку. Лёгка было й прапіваці, Цяжка будзе й забываці* (Вяс.П 138).

(What sort of a mother is she, she sold her own child. She drank her young daughter away for bitter vodka. It was easy to drink her away, it will be hard to forget her.)

(4) *Ой, п'яніца, прапойца Да й Дунечкіна матка: Прапіла сваю чаду На горкай гарэлцы, На салодкім мядочку*<sup>8</sup> (Вяс.П 156).

(Oh, what a drunkard Dunechka's mother is: she drank her child away by drinking the bitter vodka, the sweet honey.)

(5) *Матка дочку прадала, прадала, На горелоце пропила, пропила* (Карский 1916: 248).

(Mother sold her child, drank her away by drinking vodka.)

(6) *Не гневайся, дзевачка Что мы цябе прапілі. Прапиў цябе ўбесь народ, Твой таточка напярод. Усе пілі чарачкай, А твой таточка шкляначкай* (Вяс.П 179).

<sup>7</sup> In this article, the quotations of songs are provided in Belarusian and Lithuanian together with English translations. As this paper aims to render the folkloric content and meanings of songs as accurately as possible, a literal translation is given instead of a poetic one. It should be noted that not only texts but also melodies of Belarusian and Lithuanian songs have many similarities. This investigation focuses only on the lyrics of songs; hence the instances of melodies are not included.

<sup>8</sup> Together with this song, the following remark of the singer is recorded: “[The song is sung] when the groom's parents and the bride's family drink vodka in a sign that they accept the gifts and the marriage agreement” (Калі сваты і родныя нявесты запіваюць гарэлкай дары і згоды на шлюб).

(Don't be angry, girl, that we drank you away. Everyone drank you away, first of all – your father. Everyone drank from small cups, your father drank from a big glass.)

### Examples of Lithuanian songs:

(7) *Stikliukėlį penktą gėrė, Jau tėvelį perkalbėjo, Tėvelį perkalbėjo, Tėvas dukrele žadėjo* (JSD 253).

(They were drinking the fifth glass, they have already persuaded the father, the father promised them his daughter [in marriage].)

(8) *Skamba kanklės Ir trimitatės, Eina močiutė Graudžiai verkdamą. Vakar vakarą Aš girta buvau, Mano dukružė Aš pažadėjau. Jau šiandien šiandien Išsiblaivėjau, Jaunos dukružės Labai gaila* (LLD.VD 60).

(*Kanklės*<sup>9</sup> and trumpets sound, mother walks and cries bitter tears. Yesterday I was drunk, I promised my daughter [in marriage]. Today, I have grown sober, I feel sorrow for my daughter.)

(9) *Už arielkos puskvortelę Pažadėjo dukterelę. Ar taip pigiai užauginai, Ar vargelio nepažinai, Ar nesupai naktį lopšelio?* (LLD.VD 64).

([Mother] promised her daughter [in marriage] for half a quart of vodka. Was it so cheap to raise her, did you not experience any hardships, did you not rock the cradle overnight?)

(10) *Girdžiu, pragėrė, liliava, Matka dukrele, liliava. – Pragerk, motule, liliava, Margas karveles, liliava, Ne mane jauną, liliava. Girdžiu, pragėrė, liliava, Tėvas dukrele, liliava. – Pragerk, tėveli, liliava, Margus veršelius, liliava, Ne mane jauną, liliava* (LLD.VD 65).

(I hear, mother drank her daughter away. – Mother, drink away motley cows, not me, a young girl. I hear, father drank his daughter away. – Father, drink away motley bulls, not me, a young girl.)

Attention should be paid to the fact that the folklorisation of drinking rituals in songs occurs in distinctive ways that conform to the laws of song poetics. In a sense, ritual contexts are 'reformulated' to fit the poetic canon of the songs and adapted to their poetic logic. Those parents who give away or sell their daughter for beverages are seemingly reproached and condemned (see examples 3, 4, 9). This folkloric version of the ritual communication clearly belongs to the general ritual context of a wedding (together with, for instance, the bride lamenting upon leaving her parents' home, scolding, or even scornful remarks made to the representatives of the groom's family and expressed in a speech or song).

<sup>9</sup> A Lithuanian box-zither musical instrument.

As evidenced by copious ethnographic material and our investigations of the rituals in Lithuanian and Belarusian traditional weddings, the wedding negotiations and related drinking rituals were held at the house of the bride's parents. The initial negotiations between the bride's parents and representatives of the groom's family were sometimes conducted in a 'neutral' place, often a tavern in the town or village. On such an occasion, drinks were also consumed in order to strengthen, to 'pour a drink on', the agreements. The folklorisation of such contracts and accompanying feasts is arguably seen in the songs of the two nations:

(11) *Atpuskėly buvau, Karčemėlėj gėriau, Su ženteliais kalbėjau,  
Dukrele pažadėjau* (LTR 514/53).

(I attended a patronal festival, I was drinking in a tavern, I was talking  
with sons-in-law, I promised my daughter [in marriage].)

(12) *Праною, праною! Праниў бацька дачку У Слуцку на рыначку*  
(Вяс.Об: 403)

(He drank her away, he drank her away! Father drank his daughter away  
in the city of Slutsk, at a market.)

The poetic image of a daughter/a girl who was "drunk away" (i.e., given away for beverages and for money) that reappears in songs is directly linked with the archaic customs of buying brides. According to the ethnographic descriptions of Lithuanian and Belarusian weddings, the whole narrative about the matchmaking stage is based on "sale–purchase" negotiations, while matchmakers who come to a girl's parents' house are portrayed as merchants in dialogue between the two families, as well as in songs. The frequent use of money in betrothal rituals should also be viewed as an echo of the archaic 'bride-buying' customs. Some of them are directly related to drinking rituals. The following custom is an example of such ritual communication: "a young man drops a coin into a glass full of vodka and drinks to the health of the girl. She takes the money, drinks vodka, and passes the glass on" (Вяс.Об, p. 387).

Overall, it should be stated that even though betrothal songs embody a poetised view of the principal moment of the wedding, it is obvious that this layer of folklore still has a direct connection with archaic wedding rituals. The song motif discussed above (*The parents sold/gave their daughter away for a glass of vodka*) is the most characteristic motif of Belarusian and Lithuanian betrothal songs, but is far from being the only one. As research on betrothal songs indicates, "next to the motif of negotiations, the motifs of drinking are similarly frequent" in such songs (Sauka 1988: 14).

2. “DRINK THE GLASS AND SHOW ME THE BOTTOM OF IT”:  
PARAPHRASES OF DRINKING RITUALS IN LITHUANIAN FEAST SONGS

As noted, various drinking motifs recur in wedding songs and are often directly linked to wedding customs. Lithuanian folklore research shows that long ago following the death or significant transformation of the old wedding rituals, a large number of the songs that had accompanied them were gradually incorporated not only into wedding celebrations but into other community feasts and entertainment. Already in the Lithuanian cultural press as far back as in the early 20th century, an article (author unknown) about betrothal customs and related songs noted that songs performed as part of wedding drinking rituals have acquired a new meaning over the course of time: “young people sing them at their gatherings; they are also sung in various feasts: christenings, name days, etc.” (Užgėros 1913: 39).

Moreover, around the end of the 19th century and early in the 20th century a multitude of new songs appeared that dealt with beer and vodka, the merry sharing of drinks, encouragement to drink to the bottom of one’s glass, etc. Slowly emerging from all of these old and new songs was a separate corpus of songs named “feast songs”, or “drinking songs”. In recent years, these songs have received growing scholarly interest from folklorists and mythologists (Vaitkevičienė 2019: 23–24, 141–144; Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė 2015). Conditions for the exploration of feast songs as an integral part of community-based communication have improved following a recent publication of them in a scholarly volume<sup>10</sup>. Songs of a similar character can be found in the folklore of several nations. In community feasts, feast songs are inseparable from other forms of feast folklore such as toasts, board (drinking) games, jokes; they are unquestionably related to the consumption of traditional beverages. According to Kevin Grace, “the genre of drinking songs owes its existence to the celebration and conviviality that is associated with the consumption of alcohol” (Grace 2010: 77).

Below, we present several of the most popular motifs from Lithuanian feast songs that interpret the drinking theme in a particular way. These selected instances represent song types with numerous variants. These songs were put down in writing at the end of the 19th century and start of the 21st century.

Perhaps the most frequent motif deals with encouraging a person/s to drink to the bottom of the glass. This motif may generally be called *Išgerk stiklą, parodyk dugną* (“drink the glass and show me its bottom”). Many feast songs contain active encouragement to consume the whole beverage and not leave a single drop in the vessel. The songs also call to “turn the glass upside down”, “show the bottom of the glass”, “roll the glass across the table”, i.e., to prove that the liquid has been fully consumed. Such songs also claim that any guest who does not drink their glass to the end will be “punished” and need to drink several more servings. All of these imperatives found in songs are connected to the general atmosphere found at feasts, where singing is combined with drinking and a range of traditional gestures (raising glasses, drinking while standing up etc.).

<sup>10</sup> For more detailed information, see footnote 2.

(1) *Išgerki stiklęli Visą į dugną, Neliki sveteliams Savo lašelių* (LLD. VŠD 819).

(Drink the glass to the bottom, don't leave a drop for the guests.)

(2) *Išgerk stiklęli ir parodyk dugnelį* (LTR 5571/54).

(Drink the glass and show [me] the bottom [of it].)

(3) *Išgėriau stiklęli In dugnelį, Paritau stiklęli Per stalęli* (LLD.VŠD 252).

(I drank the glass to the bottom, I rolled the glass across the table.)

(4) *Versk ant šono stiklinęle, Parodyk dugnelį* (LTR 3839/22).

(Tip the glass on its side, show me the bottom of the glass.)

(5) *Jei sklenyčios neišgersi Ir ant dugno neapversi, Tris gersi, tris gersi* (LTR 3957/8).

(If you don't drink the glass and turn it upside down, you will drink three more, you will drink three more.)

The encouragement to drink one's beverage "to the bottom" heard in the feast songs of considerably late origin and surviving until these days as an amusing entertainment, in its origin is an ancient cultural phenomenon, presumably linked to the archaic drinking rituals of the Baltic peoples. The book "Deliciae Prussicae oder Preussische Schaubühne" by Matthäus Prätorius, published at the end of the 17th century, along with other old sources, describes libations being poured on the soil during community gatherings as offerings to the Earth Goddess, household deities, or souls of the departed (for more, see Vaitkevičienė 2019: 298–304). An integral part of this ritual was performed when community members drank from the same vessel as the vessel was being passed around a circle and every participant in the ritual drank it down to the bottom. When ritual contexts died out, passing a drink around a circle became an element of communal communication in entertainment and gained new meanings. In modern times, the custom of drinking from the same vessel by passing it around a circle has died out in communal feasts in Lithuania and other countries. It was replaced by drinking from separate drinking vessels given to each feast participant. The encouragement to drink one's glass to the bottom survives even today, although it has turned into an invitation for guests to drink as much and as swiftly as they can.

Another equally popular motif in feast songs is drinking "to one's health". It should be noted, however, that wishes of health, happiness and joy are very common in these songs. The addressees of such wishes are the hosts of the feast, the guests, neighbours, and relatives.

(6) *Už gaspadoriaus sveikatą Mes išgersim su ukvata. Už gspadinės sveikatą Mes išgersim tris stiklines* (LTR 4528/178).

(To our host's health we will eagerly drink. To our hostess's health we will drink three glasses.)

(7) *Cinkt cinkt, stiklą pakeldamas, Klan klan, į gerkli leisdamas. Į tava sveikatą, į mana žyvata, Ei vyvat, ei vyvat!* (LLD.VšD 430).

(Clink clink, lifting the glass, clank clank pouring into the throat. Here's to your health, and here's to my life, hey, vivat!)

(8) *Gaspadoriau, gspadine, Būkit visi linksmi, Būkit visi sveiki* (LLD.VšD 800).

(Host, hostess, may you all be happy and healthy.)

(9) *Giminėlės mano, Mylimieji mano, Tai mes gerkim, uliavokim, Kolei sveiki esam* (LLD.VšD 40)

(My beloved relatives, let's drink and be merry while we are healthy.)

(10) *Sveika sveika, mūs sesula, Alaus gereklela* (LLD.VšD 82).

(Greetings, our sister, a drinker of beer.)

(11) *Kad mes sveiki vis būtum, Arielkėlį vis gertum* (LLD.Vš 249).

(So that we'll be healthy and will always drink vodka.)

The anthropologists/folklore researchers Albert Baiburin and Andrej Toporkov believe “the custom of drinking ‘to one’s health’ is undoubtedly of mythological origin”. According to these scholars, the prototype of this custom was drinking in honour of a deity. Even though greeting one’s table companion while passing a drinking vessel on to them may seem like a simple gesture, its ancient meaning is profound (Байбурин, Топорков 1990: 150).

We do not have firm grounds to state that a direct link exists between feast songs and the old drinking rituals. In these songs, the repeated encouragement to drink to the bottom of one’s glass, to pass the drinking vessel around the table, the wishes of happiness, joy and especially of good health are all not explicitly related to archaic ritual practices but through models of behaviour and interpersonal communication that have been around for hundreds of years and were formed under the influence of ritual communication. Therefore, the drinking motifs in feast songs which unexpectedly remind one of the old drinking rituals are more appropriately to be viewed as paraphrases of ritual communication or as certain allusions to an implicit ritual experience. It is likely that feast songs were created in order to verbalise and sing about the actions of the hosts and guests during feasts (passing a drinking vessel around the table, encouraging people to drink to the bottom of their glass, turning the drinking vessel upside down etc.), which, as mentioned, is closely connected with the old rituals. In this way, the reflections of archaic drinking rituals were introduced in more recent folk songs.

The community members, gathered around a festive table and passing drinks around, are united by mutual goodwill, the joy of being together, the desire to share food and drinks and thereby have an experience of a feast and humans coming together. As D. G. Mandelbaum states, “drinking together generally symbolizes durable social solidarity – or at least amity – among those who share a drink” (Mandelbaum 1965: 282). Feast songs enable a better understanding of the essentially changed reality of traditional beverage consumption, where the sacred ‘vertical’ ritual experience is transformed into a ‘horizontal’ experience of interpersonal connection. Regardless of the reason that people gather together, it is essential that their being together, while sharing drinks and food, chanting sacred hymns, or singing merry drinking songs, constitutes a feast in the widest sense of the word. It may be viewed as a pause *hic et nunc*, taken to rejoice in the great company of friends and relatives, to drink to each other’s health, wish happiness, and to celebrate life itself, having forgotten one’s work and other troubles at least for a moment. This vivacious attribute of traditional gatherings that is found in many nations round the world was extensively analysed by the philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin. In his book “Rabelais and His World”<sup>11</sup> dedicated to the carnivalesque medieval folk culture, he writes: “the banquet always celebrates a victory and this is part of its very nature. Further, the triumphal banquet is always universal. It is the triumph of life over death” (Bakhtin 1984: 283).

Even though they no longer exhibit a noticeable connection to the old drinking rituals, feast songs fulfil a distinctive communicative function – they bring the community together, create a positive atmosphere, and bring joy. In this context, the songs also serve to provide a certain ‘musical background’ for the feast while also acting as a common creative activity which unites the community. In the words of Grace, “drinking songs continue to be a dynamic rather than static cultural expression of group behavior” (Grace 2010: 78).

## CLOSING REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

Ellen B. Basso and Gunter Senft, the editors of the collective monograph “Ritual Communication”, argue that a ritual is not only an action or event, but an experience as well: “ritual is not only something done but also something experienced in the doing” (Basso, Senft 2009: 3). The specified “ritual experience” unites generations of people living in different époques. The experiences of ritual attitudes passed down from generation to generation may encourage the existence of archaic cultural forms, even when specific ritual practices have long died out and become irrelevant as people’s life circumstances have changed significantly. After all, even such habitual, arguably ‘automatically’ performed actions, such as a handshake upon greeting someone, or the especially popular drinking “to one’s health” at feasts, have an ancient and remarkable history that reveals the abundance, transformations and a certain universality of ritual actions. As noted by the scholar

<sup>11</sup> First edition: *Творчество Франсуа Рабле и народная культура средневековья и Ренессанса* [François Rabelais and the Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance], Moscow: Художественная литература, 1965.



of religious studies and the ritual theorist Catherine Bell, “at one time or another, almost every human activity has been done ritually or made part of a ritual” (Bell 1997: 91).

In this article, we considered how the elements of the old community-based drinking rituals are developed in folklore. The song motifs discussed in the paper show explicit links between drinking rituals and folklore (wedding songs and betrothal drinking rituals), as well as a certain implicit cultural connection between the old ritual attitudes and the festivities of later times (the motifs of feast songs paraphrased in drinking traditions). In both cases, we can still talk about active community-based traditions of beverage consumption. Meanwhile, beverage consumption in modern times has acquired an essentially different character. Numerous studies on the history of beverage consumption reveal an obvious shift from community traditions to individual self-expression: as the old ritual communication faded, community-based drinking customs have gradually become a means of fulfilling one’s personal needs or even of alleviating psychological difficulties. On the level of interpersonal communication, the sharing of drinks has become established as a social act ensuring mutual understanding and convivial relationships. As scholars of the history of traditional beverages state, it is:

not that the ancient uses of alcohol have been forgotten: a drink is still the symbolic announcer of friendship, peace, and agreement, in personal as well as in business or political relations. In modern society, however, many people discover that drinking can often help them to suppress the overwhelming inhibitions, shyness, anxieties, and tensions that frustrate and interfere with urgent needs to function effectively, either socially or economically (Keller, Vaillant).

The culture of traditional beverage consumption has developed from the most archaic religious rituals and the use of drinks to legitimate significant community contracts to beverage consumption being more a form of pastime, a way of relaxing and creating an elated mood, and an integral part of entertainment and interpersonal communication. Notably, traditional beverages and the practices of their consumption remain a connecting link between the customs of archaic celebrations and contemporary feasts, and also serve as a means for creating a festive atmosphere. In the most general sense, “alcohol is universally associated with celebration, and drinking is, in all cultures, an essential element of festivity” (Social and Cultural Aspects of Drinking 1998: 9).

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## ОТ РИТУАЛЬНОЙ КОММУНИКАЦИИ К ЗАСТОЛЬНЫМ РАЗВЛЕЧЕНИЯМ: ОТРАЖЕНИЯ ДРЕВНИХ ОБРЯДОВ В НАРОДНЫХ ПЕСНЯХ

Вита Иванаускайте-Шейбутиене



Тема данной статьи – вопросы, касающиеся соотношения ритуальной коммуникации и фольклора. На основе актуальных антропологических и фольклорных исследований выясняется, как меняется обрядовое употребление традиционных напитков и как отдельные элементы архаического ритуала трансформируются в современные застольные развлечения, также какие прямые и косвенные отражения древних застольных обрядов можно обнаружить в относительно поздних формах фольклора.

Для исследования привлечены две группы белорусских и литовских народных песен. Первая группа – литовские и белорусские свадебные песни, имеющие прямую связь с обрядами *пропивания невесты* (бел. *запойны*; лит. *pragertuvės*). Так же использовались этнографические описания белорусских и литовских свадебных обрядов XIX века. Вторая группа – литовские застольные песни относительно позднего происхождения.

Традиционные напитки (мед питный, вино, пиво или водка) имеют очень долгую и богатую историю в Европе и в других континентах. С незапамятных времен они сопровождали религиозные обряды, коллективные праздники и важные события жизни человека, широко использовались в либациях, а также служили юридическим утверждением важных соглашений.

В белорусских и литовских свадебных песнях довольно часто встречаются мотивы, связанные с обрядовым употреблением традиционных напитков. Одним из самых распространенных является мотив «отец (мать) пропил (продал) дочку за водку». Песни с этим мотивом сопровождали обряд обручения. Укрепление брачного договора между сторонами невесты и жениха повсеместно совершалось путем совместной трапезы, главной частью которой всегда была выпивка, обозначающая *пропивание невесты*. Фольклорный мотив дочери, отдаваемой / пропиваемой за напиток или деньги, связан и с архаическими обычаями покупки невесты. Этнографические описания свадебного обряда обоих народов подтверждают, что весь сватовской нарратив основан на переговорах «купли-продажи», а сваты, приезжающие в родительский дом девушки, в диалогах и песнях обычно изображаются как купцы.

Фольклористами давно замечено, что при исчезновении или существенном изменении старых свадебных и других обрядов многие их сопровождавшие песни в конечном итоге стали частью разнообразных застольных развлечений. В литовском фольклоре образовался довольно большой массив *застольных песен*, включающий старые (в первую очередь свадебные) и новые (созданные в конце XIX в. и в первой половине XX в.) песни, имеющие разные застольные

мотивы. Самыми популярными оказались призывания пить до дна, покатыть чашу по столу, перевернуть и показать её дно, пить на здоровье гостей и хозяев, пожелать здоровья, счастья и др. Во время праздничного застолья пение этих песен обычно совмещалось с разными жестами и действиями ритуального происхождения: пить стоя; выливать остаток напитка через плечо; выпить до дна, обнять и поцеловать рядом сидящих и др. Песни такого рода известны в фольклоре разных народов.

Нет веских оснований говорить о какой-либо прямой связи между застольными песнями сравнительно позднего происхождения и старинными общественными ритуалами. В этих песнях повторяющиеся призывы выпить до дна, пожелания счастья, радости и особенно здоровья более уместно называть парафразами ритуальной коммуникации. Застольные песни выполняют уникальную коммуникативную функцию – они создают позитивную атмосферу и объединяют сообщество.

Проанализированные мотивы песен отражают как прямую связь между ритуальным употреблением традиционных напитков и фольклора (свадебные песни и обряд *пропойн*), так и некоторую косвенную культурную связь между архаическим обрядовым поведением и поздними застольными развлечениями (мотивы застольных песен как парафразы древних обрядов).

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# Народная демонология Полесья в контексте восточнославянских традиционных верований

ЧАСТЬ 2. НЕЛОКАЛИЗОВАННЫЕ МИФОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ  
ПЕРСОНАЖИ. ЛЮДИ С ДЕМОНИЧЕСКИМИ СВОЙСТВАМИ\*

Людмила Н. Виноградова

Članek preučuje folklorna demonološka verovanja, razširjena na ozemlju Polesja, regije na meji Ukrajine, Belorusije in Rusije. Tradicionalna kultura te regije je zelo zanimiva za etnologe in jezikoslovce najširšega profila, saj ohranja številne arhaične elemente občeslovanskega pomena. V prvem delu naše raziskave sta bila obravnavana dva bloka mitoloških verovanj: duhovi domačih in naravnih lokusov ter demoni-pokojniki, ki se vračajo z drugega sveta. (Prvi del članka je objavljen v Studii Mythologici Slavici 24 (2021).) V drugem delu članka so analizirana verovanja o likih, ki pripadajo drugima dvema mitološkima skupinama: skupini določenih nelokaliziranih duhov (hudič, personifikacija vihra, personifikacija smrti, duhovi bolezni, liki zastraševanja) in različnim kategorijam živih ljudi, obdarjenih s posebnim znanjem (čarovnice, čarovniki, zdravilci, volkodlaka, ljudje ozkih poklicev). Raziskava poteka na podlagi podatkov vzhodnoslovanskega mitološkega sistema.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: vzhodnoslovanska nižja mitologija, ljudska demonologija, tradicionalna verovanja Polesja

The article studies folk demonological beliefs in the territory of Polesye, a region located on the border of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. The region's traditional culture is of great interest to ethnologists and linguists of the broadest profiles since it retains many archaic elements of common-Slavic significance. In the first part of our research, two blocks of mythological beliefs were considered: the spirits of domestic and natural loci, and the demons-deceased returning from the other world. (The first part of the article is published in *Studia Mythologica Slavica* 24 (2021).)

The second part of the work analyses beliefs about characters belonging to the two other mythological blocks: a group of certain non-localised spirits (devil, personification of a whirlwind, personification of Death, spirits of diseases, intimidation characters) and different categories of living people endowed with super-knowledge (witches, sorcerers, healers, werewolves, people of narrow professional occupations). The research was carried out taking data about the East Slavic mythological system into account.

KEYWORDS: East Slavic lower mythology, folk demonology, traditional beliefs of Polesye

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В первой части настоящего исследования, опубликованного в журнале (SMS 24 (2021)), были рассмотрены два блока мифологических поверий: о духах домашних и природных локусов и о возвращающихся с того света покойниках. Эти данные были зафиксированы на территории Полесья, расположенного на пограничье трех языковых и этнокультурных ареалов (украинского, белорусского и русского), а на западе соседствующего с Польшей. Вторая часть статьи посвящена анализу поверий о таких персонажах, которые входят в состав двух других мифологических блоков. Имеются в виду нелокализованные духи (черт, персонификация вихря, персонификация Смерти, духи болезней, персонажи, которыми запугивали детей) и разные категории живых людей, наделенных сверхзнанием (ведьмы, колдуны, знахари, человек-оборотень, люди узкопрофессиональных занятий).

В системе полесской демонологии лидирующие позиции занимает обширный класс вездесущих злых духов, чертей, многократно упоминаемых в самых разных поверьях, фольклорных жанрах и речевых стереотипах. Слова *черт/черти* используются в региональной традиции для обозначения ряда персонажей с разными мифологическими характеристиками. Имеются в виду такие разновидности образа черта, как: антагонист Бога-творца, совместно с которым он принимал участие в сотворении мира, но затем был сброшен в пекло за гордыню; множество вредоносных демонических существ, проникающих в дома людей и вмешивающихся в их повседневную жизнь; незримые духи, способные вселяться в тело человека, делая его больным или бесноватым; духи-«хозяева» природных локусов (водяной черт, лесной черт, болотный черт); духи домашнего пространства (домашний черт). Наконец, этим же словом часто обозначается вся нечистая сила в целом. Однако наряду с этим существует в народных представлениях полешуков и вполне определенный мужской персонаж, именуемый *чертом*, со своим индивидуальным набором характеристик.

Вера в реальное существование чертей частично сохранялась у старшего поколения полешуков вплоть до XX века, — что проявляется в обычае произносить специальные формулы-обереги, если приходилось употребить слова *черт/черти*: «дай Боже его нэ бачыты», «хай оны счэзнуть», «не пры хате будь сказано».

В качестве эвфемистических обозначений этого персонажа в Полесье используются следующие имена-заместители: *нехарошый, нэдобрый, нэчыстыый, неприятель, не свой дух, чорны дух, злый, лыхый, врэдный, поганый, дурный, пустый (пустэ), гыдкый, враг, грэх, беда, изверг* и др.

Внешность черта как обитателя пекла описывается в полесской мифологии через общеизвестные признаки: заросшее шерстью, рогатое и хвостатое антропоморфное существо с копытами на ногах. Однако в текстах суеверных рассказов этот персонаж практически всегда действует либо в виде человека-инородца (горожанина, «пана в капелюше»), либо в виде животного-оборотня. Устойчиво сохраняется традиция изображать черта как человека с аномальными ногами (птичьими, звериными или чрезмерно толстыми, тонкими, заросшими шерстью и т.п.) либо с одной ногой — человеческой, а другой — куриной. Среди многообразных оборотнических ипостасей этого персонажа особым образом выделяются: вихрь; летящий огненный объект;



предметы, в том числе – копна сена. Привычными для чертей местами обитания или временного пребывания считаются: вода/болото, лес, перекрестки дорог, кладбище, мосты, полевые межи, заброшенные пустые дома; кроме того, его излюбленным местом пребывания считается лоза (ивовый кустарник).

Поверья о происхождении этого персонажа известны в Полесье в двух версиях: черти – это падшие ангелы, либо черти произошли из душ умерших людей: «Душа, которую нэ прыймають на том свете, бо вона ужэ погана. То вона ужэ пэрэробляецца чортом» (Виноградова, Левкиевская 2012: 419 № 60).

В качестве антагониста Бога-творца черт выступает в текстах на сюжет «громовержец преследует своего противника», причем в Полесье зафиксированы наиболее архаические варианты текстов, оформленные в виде спора–поединка двух противников; ср.: «Черт с Богом поспорили. Бог сказав: “Я тэбэ убью громом”, а чорт говорыць: “А я сховаюся пид дэрэво!”. А Бог говорыць: “А я дэрэво побью и тэбэ забью”. А чорт: “А я пид чоловика подлечу”... [и т.д.]» (Виноградова, Левкиевская 2019: 566 № 347). Этот сюжет (имеющий древнейшие индоевропейские корни), напрямую связан с широко известными у всех славян поверьями о том, что черти очень боятся грома, так как Бог или св. Илья стараются поразить их молнией.

К числу общеизвестных вредоносных функций этого персонажа в полесской мифологии относятся прежде всего действия, характеризующие его как богопротивника и пособника Антихриста: черт предлагает человеку подписать договор о продаже души; забирает души грешников в момент их смерти; искушает людей соблазнами, подталкивает их к самоубийству; оказывает человеку услуги в обмен на его посмертную душу; вселяется в человека, делая его бесноватым; загораживает дорогу прихожанам, идущим на пасхальную службу. Другой комплекс мотивов отражает тенденцию переносить на черта признаки других мифологических персонажей. Полешуки верили, что он сбивает людей с пути, заводя их на бездорожье; топит купающихся в водоеме; вредит домашнему скоту; черт-любовник приходит по ночам к тоскующей женщине под видом ее умершего мужа. Подобно духам болезней, черт запрыгивает на спину пешеходу, замучивая его непосильно ношей.

Большой популярностью пользуются в Полесье рассказы на сюжет о встрече человека, едущего по дороге, с одиноким домашним животным (барашком, овечкой, козленком, гусенком), которого он пытается поймать и положить к себе в повозку. По пути к дому повозка становится все тяжелее, кони едва тянут ее, когда же человек крестится, черт-оборотень хохочет и исчезает. Второй распространенный сюжет связан с обрядами зимних гаданий молодежи о замужестве, в которых, – как считалось, – в качестве духа-прорицателя участвует черт. При гаданиях с зеркалом девушки остерегались увидеть отражение злого духа, так как он мог материализоваться и задушить свою жертву.

Перечень нейтральных действий черта (не направленных на человека), его типичных занятий, пристрастий и привычек находит отражение в популярных сюжетах о том, что черти справляют свою свадьбу или устраивают совместные гулянья; приглашают на нее музыканта, одаривают его щедрой платой, а когда тот возвращается домой, дары оказываются грудой мусора. Черти описываются как

большие любители музыки; их незримое присутствие в селе распознается по звукам музыкальных инструментов и пения. За образом черта закреплен мотив сезонных переходов каких-то незримых духов, которые ранней весной выходят из воды и садятся на вербу; после ее освящения в Вербное воскресенье они переселяются в жито и травы; после освящения цветов на Троицу черти якобы садятся на яблоню, а после освящения яблок на Спаса возвращаются в воду и остаются там до Крещения. И такие переходы нечистой силы происходят из года в год.

Ярко выражена в полесской мифологии связь черта с вихрем. Считалось, что вихрь – это ипостась или локус пребывания чертей; либо это результат деятельности злого духа; либо порывы сильного ветра являются признаками появления и исчезновения черта.

Тема противостояния человека по отношению к черту охватывает большой круг мифологических нарративов, описывающих типовые сюжетные ситуации: человек распознает антропоморфную фигуру черта по его аномальным ногам (по копытам или куриным лапам); этот же признак выдает чертей, принявших вид сельских парней, когда те приходят на вечеринку. Избавиться от черта, – по народным поверьям, – можно было, если бить его левой рукой наотмашь. Охотник, стреляющий в черта, не может убить его, так как для обычных пуль он неуязвим. При встрече с чертом человек вспоминает правило, что убить или обезвредить злого духа можно лишь одним ударом, ибо при повторном битье он оживает.

При отсутствии в полесской низшей мифологии полноценных образов атмосферных духов, весьма сильные позиции в ней занимает значительный по объему круг представлений о вихре как о чрезвычайно опасной, вредоносной силе. Демонический статус вращающегося ветра, бури, урагана определяется тем, что причиной этого природного явления считается смерть колдуна или ведьмы, а также акт самоубийства человека; либо вихри создаются летающими в воздухе умершими некрещеными детьми, злыми духами. Вместе с тем в полесской народной фразеологии, относящейся к вихрю, отражается прежде всего мотив «чертовой свадьбы». При виде крутящегося пыльного ветра полешуки говорили, что это «черти свадьбу справляют», «гуляют», «женятся»; или «черт дочку замуж выдает»; или это «свадьба ведьмы с чертом». Другие варианты толковательных моделей, объясняющих происхождение вихря, основаны на следующих действиях черта: он якобы «летает в вихре», «катается на нем», «песок крутит», «танцует», «ведьму гонит», «черт черта несет», «сатана душу грешника несет» и т.п.

Считалось, что попавший в вихрь человек становился больным и немощным. Вредоносные свойства такого ветра переносились на закрученные им вещи (расстеленное для просушки белье, вытканное полотно), которые воспринимались как «нечистые». Поваленные бурей деревья не использовались на строительство. Большой комплекс апотропейных действий, направленных на защиту от вихря, во многом совпадает с оберегами против нечистой силы.

Особый раздел низшей мифологии Полесья составляют персонификации календарных праздников и дней недели, а также человеческих состояний (страха, болезни, смерти).

Традиционными для восточнославянской мифологии признаками наделяется в Полесье образ персонифицированной Смерти. Она описывается чаще всего как высокая, худая, бледная женщина в белой одежде, безоружная или с косой (серпом, ножом, вилами) в руках. Но в полесских описаниях встречаются и свидетельства о ее красоте (женщина с длинными волосами, с венком на голове) либо уродливости (большая, зубастая, лохматая). Отмеченная в поверьях западных и центральных районов исследуемого региона ипостась Смерти как тени, тумана, воздушного столба, огонька, совпадает с визуальными формами существования души, покинувшей человеческое тело. Большой редкостью для общеславянского образа Смерти являются ее, отмеченные в Полесье, предметные воплощения в виде копны сена или круглого объекта (колесо, мяч). Иконописный стереотип Смерти-скелета также редко фиксируется в полесских поверьях.

В местных рассказах об этом персонаже наиболее типичной оказывается следующая ситуация: человек видит, как незнакомая женщина в белом направляется к дому, где лежит больной (либо ее видят уже выходящей со двора), — и сразу после этого следует сообщение, что умер кто-то из жильцов этого дома. В других вариантах быличек о Смерти она ведет себя как более активный персонаж: ходит по селу, спрашивает, где живет такой-то человек; сообщает о цели своего визита; стучит в окна дома, окликает хозяина по имени и т.п. Свою главную функцию — прерывания человеческой жизни — она осуществляет либо при помощи орудий убийства, либо другими способами (душит, дает выпить отравленное питье). Но иногда этот персонаж характеризуется как милосердное существо, которое можно уговорить продлить срок жизни. Для мифологической прозы Полесья весьма характерен сюжет «Смерть-кума», широко известный в восточнославянском фольклоре (Бараг и др. 1979: 123, № 332).

По ряду показателей образ Смерти сближается с образами персонифицированных болезней (особенно моровых, повальных). И та и другие могли выглядеть как высокие, костлявые женщины, старые или молодые, в белой или черной одежде, с распущенными волосами, но наличие орудия убийства в руках характерно только для образа Смерти. При этом повальная болезнь часто изображается как женская антропоморфная фигура с коровьими копытами. Оба персонажа характеризуются однотипными сюжетами, в которых женоподобное существо просит человека переправить его на другой берег водоема; либо подсаживается в телегу к вознице с просьбой подвезти к ближайшему селу; либо запрыгивает на плечи пешехода с требованием отнести себя в назначенное место. За оказанную услугу эти вредоносные персонажи щадят человека, а все остальное население в округе вымирает. В ряде случаев трудно определить, имеется ли виду в рассказе образ персонифицированной болезни или Смерти.

В полесской мифологии признаками персонифицированного существа наделяются такие болезни, как: *ночницы* — персонажи, вредящие грудным детям; *колтун*; лихорадка; моровая болезнь; скотья повальная болезнь; в меньшей степени — падучая (*чорная хвороба*) и холера. Из общего числа всех сообщений о болезнях как мифических существах на первое место в Полесье выступают *ночницы*, духи,

вызывающие беспрестанный плач ребенка. Их вредоносные действия описываются словами: «приходят», «пристают», «нападают». Они осмысляются как невидимые духи, проявляющие себя лишь ночью и вредящие маленьким детям. Об их немногочисленных мифологических функциях можно судить по текстам заговоров от детской бессонницы. Считалось, что ночницы проникают в дома тех хозяек, которые после захода солнца сушат детские пеленки во дворе; что они пугают по ночам детей; шумят в доме, садятся прясть или ткать; насылают на детей недуги и т.п. Этим вредоносным духом можно обмануть, подложив в колыбель запеленатую куклу. Либо рекомендовалось рассыпать маковые зерна под окнами и возле дверей: пока ночницы не пересчитают все зерна, они не смогут проникнуть в дом.

Демоническим происхождением объясняется появление у человека спутанных, свитых комом волос на голове (*коўтун*). Эта болезнь воспринимается полешуками как особое мифическое существо, живущее в человеке и способное вызывать разные виды недомоганий (головные боли, раздражение глаз, ломота костей, озноб). Считалось, что колтун перемещается внутри человека вверх, в голову и затем выходит наружу, принимая вид спутанных волос. Зафиксированы многообразные рекомендации и предостережения, относящиеся к лечению (отрезанию) колтуна. Полесье оказывается восточной окраиной бытования поверий о колтуне, центром которых является Польша.

Антропоморфный женский облик приписывается лихорадке, которая обозначается следующими названиями: *шухля*, *шихля* (западные районы Полесья) либо *хиндя*, *хинтя* (центральные и восточные районы). Кроме того, в разных местностях встречаются многочисленные варианты других названий: *трясуха*, *варагуша*, *лыхитныця*, *прапасница* и др. Весьма широко используется также термин *тётка*; о заболевшем лихорадкой говорили: *его тётка поймала*. В мифологических поверьях и в лечебных заговорах этот персонаж описывается по-разному. Судя по источникам первого типа (поверья), лихорадка действует как единичный персонаж и выглядит как «пани ў капелюшы», а в заговорах это некое множество женщин, – босых, голых, простоволосых, черных, косматых, хромых, кривых и т.п. Судя по народным представлениям, лихорадка любит вареные яйца (поэтому больные носили их при себе, чтобы задобрить болезнь); боится внезапных громких звуков (этим можно было ее отогнать); не выносит неприятных запахов; опасается грома, который ее может убить.

Значительно меньшей степенью персонификации характеризуется падучая болезнь (эпилепсия), называемая в Полесье: *чорная хвороба*, *своя слабость*, *прыпадыны*, *падучка*. Считалось, что она пребывает в теле каждого человека со дня его рождения (*родзимая балесть*), но проявляет себя не у всех. Она воспринимается как «нечисть», которая боится освященных предметов; не любит, когда в церкви окуривают больного ладаном; покидает больного, если целитель присядет над ним голым задом со словами: «Какая ты гостья, такая тебе и честь!».

Довольно часто фиксировались в исследуемом регионе рассказы о повальных скотских болезнях (*коровяча смерть*, *свыняча хвороба*, *падь*). Чаще всего им приписывается вид высокой женщины, либо бабы в белом, либо простоволосой

девки, красивой «пани», но с коровьими копытами вместо ног, которая появляется в ночное время, просит возницу подвезти ее к селу. Считалось, что она не может проникнуть в село, если его «огородить обыденным полотном», т.е. выткать коллективно за одни сутки полотно и обойти с ним вокруг селения.

Персонажи-урашители, упоминаемые в формулах запугивания детей, представлены группой слабо индивидуализированных образов, включенных в тексты, которые используются для предостережения детей, чтобы она не приближалась к опасным локусам. Первой частью подобных текстов является запрет («Не подходи к воде!»), а второй – угроза, исходящая от вредоносного существа («Топельник утопит»). К таким существам, которыми пугают непослушных детей, в Полесье относятся, во-первых, общеизвестные персонажи местной демонологической традиции (черт, русалка, утопленник, домовик, ведьма и др.); во-вторых, специфические «детские» персонажи-страшилища (*железная баба, баба-яга, дед с бородой, бабай, нимка* и др.); в-третьих, люди-«чужаки» (цыгане, евреи, нищие); в-четвертых, некоторые животные (волк, змея, жаба). Приписываемая им функция устрашения сводится к ряду агрессивных действий: они якобы могут забрать ребенка с собой, спрятать его в мешок, унести к себе, избить, задушить, затащить в воду и т.п.

Мифологизация людей, наделенных сверхзнанием. В Полесье к этой категории полудемонических существ относятся: ведьмы, колдуны, знахари, ворожки-гадалки, чернокнижники, а также специалисты в области разных ремесел (пастухи, кузнецы, мельники, пчеловоды, гончары, строители и др.). Всех их объединяет общий признак – обладание эзотерическими знаниями и умениями, что проявляется в специфической семантике глаголов: *знать, ведать, уметь, понимать, ведьмарить, колдовать, чаровать, ворожить* и др.

Самый высокий потенциал вредоносности из этой группы персонажей закреплен за образом ведьмы. Ее народные названия (*ведзьма, видьма, ведьмарка*) являются преобладающими на всей исследуемой территории, но иногда в значении ‘ведьма’ могут использоваться мифонимы, служащие для обозначения других «знающих»: *знахорка, чародейка, колдунка, волиэбница, ворожка*. В житомирских селах зафиксированы фразеологические обороты со значением ‘ведьма’: «баба с мухами в носу» или «та, что мае в носу сатану»: «У нас кажут, шо вьедьма – цэ баба з мухами. Цэ погана баба, шо много знае. Баба з мухами [в носу] – цэ вьедьма» (Виноградова, Левкиевская 2010: 100). Эти фразеологизмы позволяют обнаружить связи с аналогичной западнославянской терминологией, относящейся к «знающим» людям.

Известны две версии происхождения ведьм: свое сверхзнание они получают либо при рождении от матери-ведьмы (разновидность «родимых» ведьм), либо в результате заключенного договора с чертом (разновидность «ученых» ведьм). Последняя из этих версий в Полесье является наиболее распространенной. Мотив «ведьма знается с чертями» – один из главных идентифицирующих признаков этого персонажа, его стойкая характеристика: *ведьма — то баба, шо зналася з чэртями; тая, шо знае чортиў*. Все свои чудесные свойства ведьма приобретает благодаря содействию черта. По одному брянскому поверью, способность к оборотничеству

сохраняется у ведьмы по ночам до тех пор, пока злой дух сидит в ее теле, а как только пропоют первые петухи, нечистый дух исчезает, и ведьма-оборотень опять становится женщиной. За услуги чертей женщина вынуждена приносить им в жертву членов своей семьи.

Мало релевантными для представлений о ведьме оказываются в Полесье сведения об особенностях ее внешнего вида; обычно считается, что она ничем не отличается от сельских женщин. Лишь по украинским (житомирским) данным, у нее есть маленькие рожки и хвостик.

Среди почти безграничных оборотнических ипостасей этого персонажа (преимущественно зооморфных) часто встречаются растительные образы (ветка, корень, пень, ежевика, куча листьев, копна сена) или круглые предметы (колесо, решето, обруч).

Наиболее типичные для ведьмы мифологические характеристики проявляются в сфере ее вредоносной деятельности. Почти все беды и несчастья в селе объяснялись колдовством ведьм: неурожаи, падеж скота, болезни людей и домашней живности, несчастные случаи, пожары, неудачи в промыслах.

Прежде всего, ведьме приписывается способность отбирать молоко у чужих коров (это ее основная функция). Считалось, что она до восхода солнца собирает с травы на пастбище первую росу, чтобы напоить ею свою корову, но тем самым отбирает «молочный добыток» у других сельских коров (западное и центральное Полесье). Причем происходит это в период весеннее-летних праздников: на Ивана Купалу или в Юрьев день (реже – на Благовещение, на Пасху, во время Петровского поста). Вообще злокозненные по отношению к односельчанам действия этого персонажа чаще всего проявляются в особые календарные даты. К наиболее распространенным способам отбирания молока в полесских поверьях относятся следующие: ведьма проникает ночью в чужой хлев в виде животного-оборотня и сосет вымя чужой коровы; во время общесельской вечерней дойки она, стоя в своем хлеву, подвешивает рушник и «надаивает» с него молоко (а у соседей уменьшаются надои); произносит клички проходящих мимо ее двора коров (Пеструха, Чернуха, Бурёха), чтобы молоко от них перешло к ее корове; она умела перенять молоко одним своим взглядом и т.п. Во множестве вариантов бытует в Полесье сюжет о человеке, который на рассвете выводит коней и видит, как его соседка волочит цедилку по росистой траве; понимая, что она «ведьмарит», он повторяет ее действия (волочит по росе вожжи), произнося при этом слова: «Что куме, то и мне». В результате у него в хлеву с подвешенных вожжей безостановочно течет молоко.

Вторая по значимости вредоносная функция – насылание порчи на людей, грудных детей, на домашний скот и даже на растения. Типичные для ведьмы приемы вредоносной магии представлены следующими действиями: она подкладывает во дворе или в доме жертвы предметы, осмысляемые в народе как опасные, связанные с семантикой «нечистоты»; «вынимает след» того человека, которому хочет навредить; закручивает «завитки» (связанные узлом колосья) в чужом злаковом поле с пожеланием хозяину зла и ряд др. «Сильная» ведьма могла, кроме того, превратить человека на несколько лет в животное.

Преимущественно в западном Полесье распространены представления о способности ведьмы негативно воздействовать на погоду: вызывать засуху («замыкать дождь»), градобитие, затяжные дожди, а также устраивать пагубное нашествие на дом своего недруга змей, жаб или вредных насекомых.

Многообразные стереотипы поведения этого персонажа раскрываются в большом комплексе бытующих в Полесье мифологических сюжетов. Повсеместно распространены рассказы о «мучительной смерти ведьмы», которой мешает умереть сидящий в ней черт; поэтому она пытается передать кому-нибудь из присутствующих людей «своего духа». Столь же популярны рассказы о том, как проникшую ночью в чужой хлев жабу-ведьму калечит хозяин усадьбы, а на другое утро распознает (по характеру телесного увечья) вредителя среди женщин-односельчанок. Менее широко распространен типичный для образа ведьмы сюжет о «полетах на шабаш». В полесских вариантах отсутствуют описания самого шабаша, а все повествование сводится к сообщению о том, что в ночь на Ивана Купалу все местные ведьмы верхом на березовых палках (на кочергах) слетаются на самое высокое в своей округе дерево и там празднуют, веселятся, распределяют, кому какая жертва достанется. Зато достаточно частотным в этих нарративах оказывается мотив: случайный человек подсматривает за готовящейся к полету ведьмой, повторяет ее действия и летит за ней вслед.

Весьма характерным для полесских рассказов о ведьме является сюжет о том, что она испытывает потребность прикоснуться к церковным атрибутам, восполняя тем самым свою колдовскую силу: на Пасху она старается ухватиться за ризы священника или за плащаницу; дотронуться до икон; поцеловать замок церковных дверей; оторвать и забрать себе кусок чего-нибудь «свяченого».

Потребность жителей села выявить среди односельчанок «ведьмарствующих» женщин способствовала порождению множественных рассказов о способах их распознавания. В Полесье наиболее типичными из этих способов были следующие: человек наносил увечье обнаруженному возле своих коров животному-оборотню и затем следил, какая из сельских женщин окажется покалеченной; наблюдал за необычным поведением женщин в церкви во время пасхальной службы; пытался распознать ведьму по поведению ее коровы (та не могла перешагнуть через специально расстеленную на дороге нить, пряжу, веревку). В западном Полесье широкой популярностью пользовался магический способ принудить ведьму явиться самой к разоблачителю. Для этого человек использовал цедилку, через которую процеживалось молоко испорченной коровы: кусок ткани протыкали иголками и кипятили в горшке над костром; считалось, что ведьма от этого испытывает нестерпимую боль и, чтобы прекратить мучения, сама приходит к человеку.

Только для образа ведьмы (из ряда других «знающих» людей) характерен такой высокий статус магического специалиста, который позволяет ей соперничать с Богом. Свидетельством тому может служить гомельская легенда о ведьме, делавшей в чужом жите вредоносную «завитку» (чтобы забрать урожай с чужого поля). Ходивший по земле Бог увидел это и заклил ее словами: «Злая-беспутная, не разогнись!» Она застыла в поле в виде согнувшейся фигуры, но сказала в ответ: «А

ты, злой-беспутный, не вознесись на небеса!»). Три года ведьма не могла разогнуться, стоя в поле, а Бог не мог вернуться на небо до тех пор, пока не снял с женщины проклятье, а она позволила ему возвестись на небо (Виноградова, Левкиевская 2019: 572 № 372).

Образ колдуна занимает в персонажной системе полесской демонологии менее сильные позиции по сравнению с ведьмой. Наряду с названием *колдун*, часто используются его варианты: *знахор*, *видьмак*, *ведьмач*, *чародей*, *чорнокнижник*. Некоторые мифологические признаки этого персонажа совпадают с характеристиками ведьмы: колдун получает свое сверхзнание от связи с нечистой силой; способен превратить человека в животное; насылает порчу на людей и скот; отбирает молоко у чужих коров; расплачивается с чертями за их услуги душами близких родственников; обречен на трудную смерть. В отличие от ведьмы, этот мужской персонаж из разряда «знающих» людей проявляет свою злокозненную сущность независимо от календарного времени. Приобретение колдовского сверхзнания объясняется контактами человека с чертом либо тем, что желающий стать колдуном изучает «черную книгу». В отличие от ведьмы, колдун редко принимает вид животного-оборотня. Ему приписывается умение повелевать змеями или волками. В западной части Полесья распространены представления о том, что возникновение сильного ветра, вихрей и бурь связано с колдунами. Одним из наиболее частотных является в местной традиции сюжет о колдуне в виде вихря: человек бросает в центр налетевшего вихря нож или топор (на которых тут же проявляются следы крови), а в дальнейшем обнаруживает этот свой инструмент в доме пораненного колдуна.

Для полесского персонажа весьма показателен мотив (широко представленный в восточнославянской демонологии) – «колдун портит либо охраняет от порчи свадьбу». Считалось, что он мог «испортить» жениха и невесту (либо свадебных гостей), если его не пригласили на свадьбу в качестве главного распорядителя или почетного гостя: делает так, что повозка с молодыми опрокидывается; кони встают и не хотят везти; свадебное застолье не удается; молодые ссорятся; все участники свадьбы превращаются в волков.

Второй тоже широко известный сюжет – «черти завладевают телом колдуна в момент его смерти» – связан с очень популярными в Полесье представлениями о том, что после смерти колдуна бывший в его услужении черт пытается вселиться в его тело. В быличках на эту тему умирающий отец-колдун просит сына пронаблюдать, как в его мертвое тело будет влезать черт, и обучает, как предотвратить это (надо вылить на умершего крутой кипяток). Повсеместно в Полесье бытовали рассказы о том, что после своей смерти колдуны становились ходячими покойниками.

Знахарь/знахарка (шептун/шептунья) воспринимаются в Полесье преимущественно как персонажи-помощники, которым приписывается умение: снимать насланную колдунами и ведьмами порчу; исцелять грудных детей и домашний скот; возвращать пропавших животных; обезвреживать «завитку» в злаковом поле; распознавать виновника бедствий или причину хозяйственного упадка; угадывать будущее; расколдовывать человека-оборотня; выводить домашних насекомых; тушить пожар и т.п. В рассказах о знахарях отсутствуют типичные для ведьм и колдунов мотивы:



«связь с нечистой силой», «трудная смерть», «посмертное хождение». Считалось, что действуя в интересах людей, знахари используют «молитвенные заговоры» и «божьи слова». Вместе с тем, по широко известным полесским поверьям, все категории «знающих» людей могли действовать как во вред людям, так и на пользу им, – в зависимости от их личного расположения или нерасположения к конкретному человеку.

Меньшей степенью демонологизации отличается в региональной традиции группа людей, обладающих узкопрофессиональными знаниями: гончары, мельники, пасечники, строители и т.п. По представлениям полешуков, освоить секреты ремесла можно было только с помощью нечистой силы, а овладев эзотерическими знаниями, ремесленники якобы приобретали некие сверхъестественные способности: они становились ясновидящими (легко распознавали того, кто украл их изделия); пастухи умели заговаривать скот от хищных животных; строители могли навести порчу на новый дом, если были обижены на хозяев; пчеловоды способны были наслать болезни на того, кто ворует у них мед. Считалось, что магической силой обладали умельцы-музыканты: бывало, что они превращали свадьбу в волков. Сравнительно мало в Полесье рассказов о чудесных свойствах пастухов и кузнецов.

Некоторые колдовские и знахарские способности приписывались также пришельцам-чужакам (нищим, цыганам и проч.).

Волколак. Лишь условно к разряду «знающих» людей примыкает человек-оборотень, поскольку он часто выступает в полесских рассказах в роли жертвы колдовства, и сам не может расколдовать себя. Другая разновидность волколака – это обладающий сверхзнанием человек, который превращается в волка по своей собственной воле, чтобы в таком обличье вредить скоту односельчан. В качестве такого «знающего», умеющего превратить людей в волков, выступали: обиженный кем-то колдун, брошенная женихом девушка, злая теща, мачеха и др. Менее распространены в Полесье представления о том, что волком-оборотнем становится человек, рожденный в «нечистое» время. Соответственно его перевоплощение в волка происходит (помимо его воли и без вмешательства колдунов) в строго определенные календарные даты. Именно такой образ волколака выступает в сюжете (редко фиксируемом в Полесье, но очень широко распространенном в западнославянской и карпатоукраинской мифологии) о том, как муж с женой косили сено; муж на минуту отлучился, и в это время на женщину напал волк; она отбилась от него вилами, но тот успел вырвать кусок ее юбки; когда муж в своем обычном виде вернулся на место сенокоса, жена увидела застрявшие меж его зубов нитки от ее одежды и распознала таким образом волколака.

Самый распространенный в полесских рассказах способ добровольного перевоплощения в волка – перепрыгивание через некую преграду (через воткнутый в землю нож или три колышка; через пень; гребень) или кувырканье через голову. Такое же кувырканье в обратном направлении якобы возвращало колдуну его человеческий вид.

А в качестве приемов вредоносной магии по превращению людей в волка выступают следующие действия: колдун заставляет человека пролезть сквозь

хомут; опоясывает его наговорным поясом; принуждает съесть заклятую пищу или выпить снадобье; набрасывает на свою жертву волчью шкуру.

Возвращение волколаку человеческого обличья происходит либо по прошествии назначенного ему срока заклятья; либо при условии, что кто-нибудь ударит его по спине, или назовет человеческим именем, или накинет на него человеческую одежду.

Прочие мифологические персонажи и сюжеты. На востоке Полесья (гомельско-брянское пограничье) бытуют представления о так называемых *дабрахожих людях*, к которым причисляется группа персонажей, произошедших из душ умерших людей – «приспанные» младенцы (т.е. нечаянно задушенные спящей матерью грудные дети); некрещенные дети; а также русалки, домовики и ряд других. Они характеризуются как существа, отличающиеся от нечистой силы; о них говорят, что это не духи, а обыкновенные люди, только они невидимые существа, что они – «з таго свету людзи». Считалось, что за почтительное к ним отношение «доброхожие» могли обеспечить человека достатком и удачей, а за нанесенную обиду (даже случайную) жестоко наказывали: могли наслать болезнь, навредить домашнему скоту и т.п. (Клімковіч, Аўтушка 2011: 137; ТМКБ 2013: 742–745).

В западных полесских районах сохранились лишь отголоски поверий о ребенке-подменьше, подброшенном людям взамен украденного у них собственного новорожденного младенца. Они представлены в основном запретами оставлять грудных детей на меже, пока мать работает в поле. В форме таких же единичных свидетельств бытуют представления о неких блуждающих огнях (*бегучыя агні*), в которых превращались души людей, погибших в результате несчастного случая.

Во множестве полесских поверий и быличек действуют некие не идентифицированные персонажи, именуемые: *лякачка*, *пужайло*, *белая жанчына*, *нядуга*, *зализна баба*, *итось нэлюдске* и т.п. Их главная функция – испугать человека своим внезапным появлением или звуками. В Гомельском Полесье эти персонажи-пугала назывались: *зданкі*, т.е. те, которые кажутся человеку, мерещатся ему (от глагола *здаваться* ‘казаться’).

Традиционно к низшей мифологии примыкают широко известные у всех славян сюжеты, не связанные с конкретными демонологическими персонажами, но включающие ряд сведений о нечистой силе. Они служат основой для рассказов о спрятанном кладе и о чудесном цветке папоротника. Оба сюжета представлены в мифологических поверьях Полесья и оба включают мотив «Нечистая сила охраняет клад/папоротник, не допуская до них людей». В рассказах о кладоискательстве отмечаются некоторые признаки персонификации самого клада (он пугает людей, принимает вид разных предметов). Аналогично и в полесских поверьях о папоротнике: считается, что растение может превращаться в жаб, змей, других животных. Оба мифологизированных объекта проявляют свою чудодейственную силу в особые календарные даты: клад выходит из-под земли и начинает светиться в ночь перед Пасхой или на Ивана Купалу; в купальскую ночь зацветает папоротник. Кроме того, приобретение папоротника осмыслялось как один из способов стать «знающим» человеком.

Заклучение. Низшая мифология Полесья в целом характеризуется рядом признаков, которые подтверждают предположение о ее весьма архаичном состоянии. Одним

из них является тесная генетическая связь многих персонажей (домовика, русалки, некрещеных детей, ходячих покойников, водяных духов-утопленников) с душами умерших людей. Русалки и некрещеные дети воспринимаются в большей степени как «душеньки» детей, чем как демоны. Об этом же свидетельствует факт отсутствия в местной персонажной системе сложившегося образа упыря/вампира как покойника, уже утратившего кровнородственные связи с человеком и способного вредить всем подряд. Слабая индивидуализация духов-«хозяев» природных локусов тоже связана с представлениями полешуков о том, что все окружающее пространство (водоемы, болота, леса, поле) населяют идентичные по своей природе множественные духи (души «нечистых» покойников или черти).

Второй такой признак – явственная связь полесских персонажей (ведьмы, русалки, в меньшей степени волколака и черта) или персонифицированных образов (клад, папоротник) с мифологией календарного времени, от которого зависит их поведение. Наконец, характерным для местной мифологической системы оказывается вовлеченность демонологических представлений в календарные обрядовые комплексы (троицкие «проводы русалки»; купальские обряды «изгнания ведьмы»).

К числу остаточных реликтов относятся хорошо сохранившиеся поверья о волколаках; о препирательствах (в форме диалога) друг с другом Бога-громовержца и его противника; о собаках-«ярчуках», способных распознавать ведьм; о вихре как персонифицированном природном явлении и ряд др. Устойчиво сохраняется в Полесье подробно разработанная «ткаческая» мифология, в значительной степени утраченная в других восточнославянских традициях.

Чрезмерно перегруженная мифологическими функциями и характеристиками фигура черта впитала целый ряд признаков, не свойственных для него; например, сведения о сезонных переходах из воды на растения и обратно в воду.

Если в количественном отношении (по общему составу персонажных типов) полесская народная демонология, может быть, не выглядит слишком многообразной, то в содержательном смысле она демонстрирует чрезвычайно широкий охват типичных демонологических сюжетов и мотивов как общеславянского, так и западноевропейского распространения. Подобное системное описание разных этнокультурных традиций может в дальнейшем послужить основой для создания труда по сравнительно мифологии славянских народов.

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FOLK DEMONOLOGY OF POLESYE IN THE CONTEXT  
OF EAST-SLAVIC TRADITIONAL BELIEFS:

Part 2. Non-localised characters; people with demonic properties

LUDMILA N. VINOGRADOVA



The folk demonology of Polesye is of great interest to ethnologists of a wide profile because it combines the features of different neighbouring ethno-cultural traditions. This is due to the fact that the territory of Polesye borders Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, and in the west it is a neighbour of Poland. In addition, a peculiarity of the local culture is that it retains many common-Slavic elements in the most archaic forms. The research was conducted taking the data about the East Slavic mythological system into account. The work is published in two parts.

The first part is devoted to beliefs about the spirits of domestic and natural loci, and about the dead returning from the other world. Part two of the article examines two major blocks of Polesian mythology: beliefs about mythical creatures that are not assigned to a specific locus (devil, personification of a whirlwind, personification of Death, spirits of diseases, intimidating characters) and a complex of beliefs about people possessing super-knowledge (witches, sorcerers, werewolves etc.).

The lower mythology of the region under study is characterised by a number of features that add support to the notion of its archaic state. One of them is the close connection of many characters (housekeeper, mermaid, deceased un-baptised children, the 'walking dead', water spirits come from drowned men) with the souls of deceased people. Mermaids and un-baptised children are perceived in the local tradition more as spirits of relatives than as malicious demons.

This is also evidenced by the fact that in Polesian mythology there is no fully formed image of a vampire as a demon-deceased, who has already lost blood ties with a person and able to harm everyone in a row. The weak individualisation of images of spirits – «masters» of natural loci is also associated with the idea that the entire surrounding space (reservoirs, swamps, forests, fields) is inhabited by multiple spirits identical in nature – the souls of «impure» dead or devils.

The second sign of the archaic culture of Polesye is the clear connection between demonological characters (witches, mermaids) with the mythology of calendar time on which their behaviour depends. Finally, the involvement of demonological subjects in spring-summer ritual complexes is characteristic of the local tradition (cf. Trinity rituals "seeing the mermaid off"; *Kupala*-rituals of "exorcism of the witch"). Remaining relics include well-preserved beliefs about *wolkolaks*; about the disputes between the god of thunder and his adversary; about the vortex as a personified natural phenomenon and several others.

Although from the perspective of the general structure of character types (in quantitative terms), Polesian demonology perhaps does not look too diverse, in a meaningful sense it demonstrates an extremely wide coverage of typical demonological plots and motives of both common-Slavic and Western European distribution. The systematic description of the Polesian demonological tradition could be used for comparative studies in Slavic mythology.

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# «Нечистые» покойники в представлениях населения белорусско-русского (Полоцко-Псковского и Витебско-Смоленского) пограничья

Владимир Е. Овсейчик

Članek obravnava razumevanje »nečistih« mrtvih na podlagi gradiva belorusko-ruskega (Polock-Pskov in Vitebsk-Smolensk) obmejnega območja. Posebna pozornost je namenjena analizi takšnih kategorij »nečistih« mrtvih, kot so nekrščeni otroci, samomori in čarovniki. Študija je tudi na podlagi sodobnih materialov pokazala prisotnost številnih arhaizmov v teh predstavah. Prispevek spremlja razvoj pogrebnih obredov »nečistih« mrtvih, pa tudi verovanja, povezana z njimi. Študija temelji na objavljenem in arhivskem gradivu ter avtorjevih zapiskih. Pomembno mesto v razpravi ima gradivo folklornih in etnografskih odprav, ki so bile izvedene v regiji ob koncu XX – začetku XXI stoletja. Velik del teh gradiv je objavljen prvič.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: folklorna demonologija, "nečisti" mrtvi, samomori, nekrščeni otroci, čarovniki, pogrebni obredi, beloruska meja

The article deals with the perceptions of «un-pure» dead people on the basis of the materials of the Belarusian-Russian (Polotsk-Pskov and Vitebsk-Smolensk) borderland. Special attention is paid to the analysis of such categories of «un-pure» dead people as unbaptized children, suicides and sorcerers. The study has shown the presence of many archaisms in these representations even on the basis of contemporary materials. The paper traces the evolution of the funeral rites of the «un-pure» dead, as well as the beliefs associated with them. The study is based on published and archival materials, as well as the author's notes. An important place in the study belongs to the materials of folklore and ethnographic expeditions which were conducted in the region at the end of XXth – beginning of XXIst century. A significant part of these materials is published for the first time.

KEYWORDS: folk demonology, mythology, «un-pure» dead, suicides, unbaptized children, sorcerers, funeral rites, Belarusian-Russian borderland

Существенным фрагментом славянской мифологической системы являются персонажи, происходящие от умерших людей. Особое место среди них занимает группа так называемых «нечистых» покойников. К данной категории относятся покойники, умершие преждевременно, не «своей» смертью, а также те, кто при жизни общался с нечистой силой. Исследование поверий и представлений, связанных с этой группой персонажей, чрезвычайно актуально. Как справедливо отмечали Е.Е. Виноградова и О.А. Левкиевская, «мифологизация умерших – один из наиболее

продуктивных механизмов создания демонологических образов в славянской традиции» (НДП 2012: 7).

В славянской гуманитаристике проблематика, связанная с «нечистыми» покойниками, не относится к числу неразработанных. Интерес к ней проявляется уже довольно длительный период. Еще в начале XX в. русский исследователь Д.К. Зеленин опубликовал свою фундаментальную работу «Очерки русской мифологии: умершие неестественной смертью и русалки» (1916 г.), где систематизировал материалы по мифологическим персонажам, которые происходят из «нечистых» покойников (Зеленин 1995). Особенную популярность данная проблематика получает в конце XX – начале XXI в. В этот период был опубликован ряд серьезных исследований российских ученых Л.Н. Виноградовой, Е.Е. Левкиевской, О.А. Седаковой, С.М. Толстой (Виноградова 1986; Виноградова 2000а; Виноградова 2000б; Виноградова 2001; Виноградова, Толстая 1994; Седакова 1983; Седакова 2004; Толстая 2001; НДП 2012).

В работах, опубликованных в конце XX – начале XXI в. по данной проблематике, значительное место было отведено анализу полесских материалов. Эта особенность обусловлена тем, что Полесье воспринималось исследователями как «архаическая в этнокультурных отношениях область» (Толстой, Толстая 1983: 7), а также «одним из тех «узловых» славянских регионов, по отношению к которым в первую очередь следует ставить задачу комплексного изучения славянских древностей» (Толстой, Толстая 1983: 8). Такое понимание полесского региона надолго предопределило подходы в исследовании многих аспектов традиционной культуры славянского (преимущественно восточнославянского) региона. Данная направленность этнографических, фольклористических и этнолингвистических исследований вылилась в доминирование собственно полесских материалов при рассмотрении многих явлений традиционной культуры восточных славян. В то же время другие регионы славянского мира представлены значительно меньше.

В качестве региона данного исследования было выбрано современное белорусско-русское (Полоцко-Псковское и Витебско-Смоленское) пограничье<sup>1</sup>. Эта территория представляется довольно перспективной с точки зрения исследования архаических пластов духовной культуры славян. Традиционный этнокультурный ландшафт пограничья сформировался в результате длительного межэтнического взаимодействия и нашел своё отображение в различных сферах народной культуры региона, в т.ч. в мифологии и обрядности. В работе две зоны на белорусско-русском пограничье (Полоцко-Псковском и Витебско-Смоленском) рассматриваются как общий регион. Исследования, проведенные на этих территориях, показали удивительное сходство их этнокультурных традиций<sup>2</sup>. В статье предпринята попытка комплексной

<sup>1</sup> В соответствие с современным административно-территориальным делением в регион исследования будут входить территории Витебской области (Республика Беларусь), а также Псковской и Смоленской областей Российской Федерации.

<sup>2</sup> Исследования Полоцкого государственного университета Витебско-Смоленского и Полоцко-Псковского пограничья осуществлялись в ходе работы по темам БРФФИ-РФФИ: «Традиционный культурно-языковой ландшафт белорусско-русского (Витебско-Смоленского) пограничья XX – начала XXI в.: символика фольклорных образов, ритуальные функции и их коммуникативные репрезентации»



характеристики представлений и поверий о «нечистых» покойниках у населения белорусско-русского (Полоцко-Псковского и Витебско-Смоленского) пограничья на основе материалов XIX – начала XXI в. Особое внимание уделено анализу таких категорий как некрещенные дети, самоубийцы и колдуны. В работе также прослеживается эволюция верований и обрядовых действий, связанных с этими группами персонажей. Для выявления региональных особенностей данного фрагмента славянской мифологии, а также его представления на общеславянском фоне, материалы с белорусско-русского пограничья не редко сопоставляются с материалами иных региональных традиций (в первую очередь, с полесской). В статье широко используются материалы современных полевых фольклорно-этнографических исследований автора. Значительная их часть впервые вводится в научный оборот.

### «СВОЯ» И «НЕ СВОЯ» СМЕРТЬ

Согласно традиционным верованиям населения региона натуральной («правильной») смертью человека считалась «своя» смерть (т.е. смерть «от старости»). В таком случае смерть человека наступает в результате того, что тот прожил свой «век»: *«А, стары як памёр дык ён аджыў ужо век свой...»* (Фольклорный архив Полоцкого государственного университета<sup>3</sup>, Докшицкий район Витебской области). Такая обусловленность объясняется связью в традиционном сознании понятия «век» (продолжительность жизни человека) с его «долей», которая ему дается при рождении (Толстая 2010: 131). На анализе славянского материала О.А. Седакова приходит к выводу, что в традиционном обществе век как срок человеческой жизни (который не имеет точного количественного измерения) – время наполненное, близкое к доле, время расходования первоначально заложенной жизненной потенции (Седакова 2004: 40). В таком случае натуральная смерть человека наступает, когда тот исчерпал свою жизненную силу, потратил ее в течение всей жизни. В представлении населения региона эта схема может быть выражена следующим образом: *«Ну, чаму ён памірае, хлеб увесь свой з’еў»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Докшицкий район Витебской области). Согласно таким верованиям срок человеческой жизни четко определен его долей, как и момент наступления смерти: *«Ну раней жа ж не памрэш, калі табе назначана столька ты і пражывееш»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Глубокский район Витебской области). Как следует из материалов XIX – начала XX в., наделяет долей и отмеряет продолжительность человеческой жизни Бог. Такие поверья довольно широко представлены и в современных полевых записях, зафиксированных в регионе (ПЭЗ 2011а: 54–57). В таком случае продолжительность

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(2014-2016; № Г14РП-003); «Традиционный этнокультурный и языковой ландшафт Витебско-Псковского пограничья в конце XIX – начале XXI в.: уровни репрезентации и динамика кросскультурных связей» (2016-2018; № Г16РП-004); «Субкультура детства в дискурсе устной истории, языке и фольклоре Витебско-Псковского пограничья XX – начала XXI века» (2020-2022; № Г20Р-095).

<sup>3</sup> Далее – ФАПолоцкГУ.

жизни может быть определено следующим образом: *«Ну ўжо нада ж усё, што чалавеку назначана ад Бога, нада ўсё прайці»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Глубокский район Витебской области). В связи с этим смерть человека «от старости» определялась как *«па-божаму памерці»* (ТМКБ 2004: 387).

Вариант «умереть своей смертью», согласно традиционным представлениям, является идеальным. В славянской традиции схема предусматривает отклонение как в сторону преждевременной, так и в сторону запоздалой смерти («недожитого» и «пережитого» века) (Байбурин 1993: 102). Поверья о «пережитом» веке более характерны для южных славян. В восточнославянской традиции, как свидетельствуют материалы исследования О.А. Седаковой, такие верования не имеют широкого распространения. Существуют некоторые особенности одежды и транспорта на похоронах стариков, а также поверья о том, как некогда стариков убивали («сажали на лубок»). По мнению О.А. Седаковой последние представления были распространены преимущественно на Украине (Седакова 2004: 41). Однако, как свидетельствуют материалы, аналогичные поверья довольно широко распространены в белорусском традиционном эпосе, в том числе и на севере Беларуси (ПЭЗ 2011а: 37; ЛПП 1983: 104–108). Зафиксированы они и в Псковском регионе даже по материалам записей конца XX в. (СПО 2004: 152). При этом все же надо согласиться с Д.К. Зелениным и О.А. Седаковой, что более распространены на восточнославянской территории представления о преждевременно умерших и умерших «не своей» смертью (Зеленин 1995: 39–40; Седакова 2004: 39–41).

Согласно верованиям населения региона, умершие «своей» смертью переходили в категорию «дедов» (предков). К им относились с глубоким уважением и регулярно поминали (Аўсейчык 2015). Преждевременно умершие характеризовались как «нечистые» покойники. Они лишались этого почитания (а потому и поминовения), считались опасными для живых. Согласно традиционным представлениям, преждевременная смерть оставляла покойнику не потраченную в земной жизни энергию, которую он должен тратить после смерти, но уже на вред людям (МБ 2011: 449).

Следы архаических представлений о «недожитом» веке еще до нашего времени сохраняются в своеобразном характере похорон молодежи. Так, специфической является похоронная одежда молодых людей, достигших возраста вступления в брак, но при жизни браком не сочетавшихся. Таких покойников было принято хоронить в свадебной одежде («как под венец»). Подобные верования широко предоставлены и в современных записях: *«Як на вяселле: дзеўцы адзявалі вэлом, белая плацце, а мальцу – касцюм, кветачку, ленту»* (Шарковщинский район Витебской области) (ТМКБ 2004: 379). Сохранилась также традиция молодых покойников из дома на кладбище не везти, а нести на руках: *«Вот тут кладбішча блізка. Был маладой парэнь, пад паязд папал. Сколька яму была, шаснаццаць. Ну яго няслі хлопцы, аднакласнікі, ціпа вот вашага возраста. Он в васьмом класе учылся. І так яго атняслі да этага кладбішча»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Верхнедвинский район Витебской области). По мнению О.А. Седаковой, из двух традиций перемещения гроба из дома на кладбище: нести и везти, более архаической видится первая. Не зря при сосуществовании обеих

традиций в локальном варианте обряда первая характерна для похорон «опасных» покойников (Седакова 2004: 76–77). В условиях мифопоэтического мировоззрения такими опасными и представляются молодые покойники, поскольку еще не исчерпали свою жизненную силу и могут ее использовать на вред живым.

В фольклорно-этнографических материалах, зафиксированных в регионе, довольно широко представлены поверья о возвращающихся с «того» света беспокойных душах. В современных записях, как правило, «хождение» покойника объясняется нарушениями в проведении похоронного обряда («не то надели», «не выполнили волю» и др.). Такие верования отчетливо прослеживаются по современным полевым материалам из северной Беларуси (ПЭЗ 2011b). В связи с этим в современной похоронной обрядности населения региона сохраняются строгие предписания и запреты относительно подготовки умершего к погребению (Овсейчик 2021: 57–58). Несколько реже в полевых записях встречаются сюжеты, в которых «хождение» покойника объясняется не выполненными обязанностями при жизни (муж приходит к жене, жених – к невесте, мать – к ребенку и т.д.). В более поздних описаниях «хождение» покойника может объясняться и его «безбожным» поведением при жизни. В ряде случаев это касается атеистического образа жизни в советский период. При этом показательно, что несмотря на существенную эволюцию представлений, архаическая модель «земля не принимает нечистых покойников» срабатывает и в новых условиях: *«І ўсё врэмя хадзіла [после смерти женщина-комунистка – О.В.] і здавалася, відна, да сарака дней не прымала яе зямля. І на тым свеце не прынялі»* (Докшицкий район Витебской области) (ПЭЗ 2011b: 198).

С течением времени архаические представления о «своей» / «не своей» смерти и потенциальном вреде покойников, умерших преждевременно, претерпели значительные изменения. На основе анализа славянских материалов О.А. Седакова приходит к выводу, что всякая внезапная и насильственная смерть уже не рассматривается как причина «хождения» покойника, а умершие не считаются «нечистыми» и «опасными» (например, это касается молодых умерших). А некоторые виды «не своей» смерти приобретают противоположный статус «святой» смерти (Седакова 2004: 46). Как следует из полесских материалов, «святой» смертью может считаться смерть от молнии (Седакова 1983: 254). Аналогичные поверья фиксируются и в северной Беларуси в современный период: *«<...> молнія забівае чалавека, які Бога дастойны»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Бешенковичский район Витебской области). Но при этом в регионе еще встречается и обратная интерпретации такой смерти: *«Як нярун забіваў чалавека, то ён лічыўся вельмі грэшны»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Глубокский район Витебской области).

Как свидетельствуют восточнославянские материалы, некоторые категории умерших также перестают считаться «нечистыми». Согласно полесским материалам второй половины XX в., «нечистыми» перестают считаться те, кто утонул. На основе анализа полесских материалов О.А. Седакова пришла к выводу, что такая смерть даже считается «святой» (Седакова 1983: 254). Однако, как показывают материалы конца XIX – начала XX в. и современные полевые материалы с Полоцко-Псковского и Витебско-Смоленского пограничья, такая характеристика относится только к тем

умершим, которые утонули не по своей воле. Утопленников-самоубийц еще и в современный период устойчиво относят к общей категории «нечистых» покойников. Прочно сохранялся и запрет хоронить их на общих кладбищах. «*Было запрэщчона хараніць нехрышчоных, тых, хто навесіўся, утаніўся*» (Полоцкий район Витебской области) (ПЭЗ 2011b: 197). «*А на стараму закону далжны ўтопленікі, даўленікі не на кладбішчы, а каля кладбішча хараніць*» (Полоцкий район Витебской области) (ПЭЗ 2011b: 214–215). Сохранились также представления о том, что утопленников, как и других самоубийц, нельзя поминать вместе с остальными умершими. При этом в материалах описываются довольно специфические способы их поминовения: «*Утопленікаў толькі памінаюць. Памін доходзіць, када памыеш плацце, папалошчыш, тады, гаворуць, прыдзі, сядзь на парог і памяні. Гаворуць, толькі этат паміна даходзіць*» (Городокский район Витебской области) (ТМКБ 2004: 387).

Как следует из материалов XIX – начала XXI в., у населения белорусско-русского пограничья категорию «нечистых» покойников составляли самоубийцы и некрещеные дети (однако в более поздних записях последние исключаются из этой группы), а также умершие, которые при жизни считались колдунами. Вместе с тем, как следует из материалов (преимущественно полесских), в славянской традиции к «нечистым» относились также и иные категории покойников. К ним причислялись умершие беременными женщины и роженицы (раньше сорока дней после родов и т.о. не прошли обряд церковного очищения) (Толстая 2009: 90). К категории «нечистых» могли относить и тех, кто умер в «нехорошее» время. Так, в Полесье считалось, что девушка, которая умрет на Русальной неделе, станет русалкой (Левкиевская 2009: 119–120). Свидетельства и материалы по этим категориям «нечистых» у населения Полоцко-Псковского и Витебско-Смоленского пограничья довольно отрывочные и несистемные. А потому восстановить их образ на основе имеющихся материалов не представляется возможным.

## НЕКРЕЩЕННЫЕ ДЕТИ

Значимый фрагмент народной мифологии населения пограничья составляют поверья об умерших некрещеных детях. Уже достаточно рано под влиянием христианства поверья об умерших детях распались на две традиции: одна касалась некрещеных детей, к которым сохранилось отношение как к «нечистым», вторая – крещеных, которые считались ангелами (Седакова 2004: 46). Источники XIX – начала XX в. довольно четко отражают такое разделение. Более архаических представлений в фольклорно-этнографических материалах этого периода не встречается. В ряде случаев лишь фиксируются некоторые уточнения относительно того, кто мог стать ангелом. Так, на Витебщине считалось, что ангелом мог стать только тот ребенок, который еще не ходил, не говорил и не отведал молока матери (Никифоровский 1897: 46).

Как показали исследования Е.Е. Левкиевской по материалам Полесья, образ некрещеного ребенка имеет довольно слабую степень демоничности. Он не обладает

какими-либо демоническими свойствами и принадлежит скорее к ряду «душ», чем к демонам. Согласно таким верованиям, некрещенные дети почти не вредят людям, как другие «нечистые» покойники. В полесской традиции они предстают несчастливыми существами, которые не могут попасть в рай (НДП 2012: 225–226). В значительной части материалов в регионе Полоцко-Псковского и Витебско-Смоленского пограничья такая характеристика данного образа соответствует выводам Е.Е. Левкиевской. Однако некоторые этнографические и фольклорные материалы XIX – начала XX в. указывают на более архаические представления. Так, по свидетельству этнографов Н.Я. Никифоровского и А.Е. Богдановича, некрещенные дети, как и женщины-самоубийцы, после смерти превращались в русалок (Никифоровский 1897: 295; Богданович 1895: 77). В современный период все же большая часть записей рассказывает про ангельский статус всех умерших детей, вне зависимости от крещения.

В быличках и поверьях населения региона довольно распространенным является сюжет о том, что души некрещенных детей не могут попасть в рай, а потому летают по ночам и просят окрестить. Их нахождение в этом мире объясняется в народных поверьях тем, что такие души не принимает Бог, поскольку они не крещены и не имеют имени. В традиции населения региона распространенным является сюжет о символическом «крещении» после смерти некрещенных детей. Как следует из анализа источников, данная традиция распространена на территории всего региона. Согласно народным поверьям, факт крещения (даже после смерти) разрешит таким душам попасть в рай. Сама процедура проводится при встрече с душой умершего и имеет характер имянаречения: «Умершее без «кста» дитя не разлучается с местом погребения до семилетнего срока. По ночам оно приходит в дом родителей и кровных родственников, требуя «кста и пахова» жалобным воплем. Для успокоения дитяти и собственного, нужно перекреститься и перекрестить место перед собою, откуда слышится плач. <...> На всю жизнь счастливый будет тот, кто даст дитяти имя: стоит только произнести два-три имени того пола, к которому принадлежит дитя, - и оно смолкнет. Но когда вопль об имени не прекращается, нужно привести другое лицо, не объясняя ему ни причины, ни цели и ничего не говоря о своей неудаче, при повторении которой дитя особенно болезненно вскрикивает и оставляет землю» (Никифоровский 1897: 17–18).

У населения региона также фиксируются поверья, согласно которым душа некрещеного ребенка ассоциируется с падающей звездой. Такие представления довольно характерные для северобелорусской традиции (МБ 2011: 195). Мотив падающей звезды как души некрещеного ребенка спорадически фиксируется на западе и востоке Полесья, а также у поляков (НДП 2012: 235). Считалось, что для того, чтобы спасти такую некрещеную душу нужно в момент «падения» ее перекрестить и дать имя (МБ 2011: 195; НДП 2012: 235–237). Аналогичные поверья фиксируются и в ходе современных полевых исследований в регионе:

*«Вот, казалі, вот як зорка ляціць, дык гэта няхрышчанае дзіцё ляціць, хто няхрышчаны памёр, дак вот гэта няхрышчаны, тады нада храсціць як увідзіш: “Во імя Айца...” Перахрысіць, каб яно ўжо, гэта ж, ляцела, ня хрышчаныя, кажучь,*

дзеці, ну гэта мамка казала і татка во гэдак во кажсаць: “Зорачкі, звёздачкі гэтыя лятуць, гэта ж няхрышчаныя дзеткі паміралі”. Вайна ж во ведама была сколькі ж гадоў, а ўсяк жа ж, во, кажсаць, няхрышчаныя дзеткі паўміралі» (ФАПолоцкГУ, Докшицкий район Витебской области).

*«А не казалі нічога, вось як зорка ляціць па небе? Ну, дык гэта кажсуць, душу не прынімаець Бог. <...> Хрысціць нада. <...> Ну. Кажсуць, тады прымуць. Кажсуць, калі дзева, дык Ева, а калі малец, дык Адам. <...> Еслі дзева, дык Ева, а еслі малец, дык Адам. Ну гэта нас вучылі малых»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Докшицкий район Витебской области).

Широкий комментарий в фольклорно-этнографических записях получил запрет хоронить некрещеных детей на общих кладбищах. Такой запрет строго выполнялся еще в первой половине XX в. Воспоминания об этом встречаются и в ходе современных полевых исследований в регионе: *«А вось дзеці ж паміралі часцей малыя. Як яшчэ не хрышчаны дзіцёнак? – Ну як ня хрышчаны, дык ужо дужа непрыятна. Дажэ не хацелі на кладбішчы хаваць, хавалі там з бірага кладбішча, там дзе ня свенчаныя кладбішча, там хаваюць»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Шарковщинский район Витебской области). Как свидетельствуют фольклорно-этнографические материалы, во второй половине XX – начале XXI в. такие верования значительно эволюционировали. Прежнее представление о «нечистоте» детей, умерших некрещеными, в современном обществе заменяется на противоположное об их «невинности» и «негрешности»: *«А вот маленькі яшчэ дзіцёнак, такі нехрышчоны? – Ён яшчэ нягрэшны»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Глубокский район Витебской области). В связи с этим, похороны детей происходят в наше время вместе с остальными умершими. При этом показательно, что в ряде случаев обязательным считается «прикопать к родным», т.е. похоронить рядом или в ту же могилу: *«А дзяцей прыкапаюць да сваіх родных і туды хароняць»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Глубокский район Витебской области).

Как свидетельствуют современные полевые материалы, обязательной процедурой во время погребения на кладбище считается «крещение» умершего ребенка. Однако эта процедура не аналогична выше описанному ритуалу имянаречения. Она трактуется уже как обязательный элемент христианской обрядности: *«А вот нехрышчоныя дзеці, яшчэ маленькія, што, тожа не харанілі раней на кладбішчы? <...> – А, гэтакі хароняць. Гэткага хароняць, самі вадой свяцонай пасвенцяць, хрэсцік павешаюць яму і ў магільцы закапаюць»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Миорский район Витебской области). Похожий ритуал, по свидетельству респондентов, мог выполнять и священник: *«Памершага дзіця бацюшка крысціў і даваў яму імя»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Глубокский район Витебской области).

## САМОУБИЙЦЫ

Отдельную категорию умерших составляют самоубийцы, которые в традиционном мировоззрении существенно отличались от покойников, умерших от старости. Среди населения региона довольно распространены представления о том, что к

самоубийству человека подталкивает нечистая сила. В таком случае считается, что смерть не обусловлена только волей человека. Такие верования широко встречаются в источниках XIX – начала XX в. Они прослеживаются и по материалам современных полевых исследований: *«Каб чалавек навесіўся, то гэта яго чорт цягне»* (Лепельский район Витебской области) (ПЭЗ 2011b: 217). В связи с этим представлением распространен и сюжет о том, что когда человек перекрестится, произнесет молитву или вспомнит имя Господа, то нечистая сила отступит и самоубийство окажется неудачным: *«Раз перакрысьціўся, значыць, не навешаецца»* (Глубокский район Витебской области) (ПЭЗ 2011b: 216). В регионе фиксируются и представления о том, что самоубийство нельзя совершить, когда на человеке есть нательный крестик. Распространены в современных записях сюжеты о том, что как только человек снимет крестик, то может повеситься:

*«Калі ў чалавека хрэсцік на грудзях, чалавек ніколі не навешаецца, бо чорт баіцца хрэста»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Миорский район Витебской области).

*«А тады адзін раз ей гэта ўжо надаела, і яна задумала навешацца, і не магла неяк атважыцца, пака хрэсцік не сняла з шыі. Як хрэсцік сняла з шыі, палажыла на стол, і ўсё – навешалася»* (Шарковщинский район Витебской области) (ПЭЗ 2011b: 216).

Как свидетельствуют материалы XIX – начала XX в. и современные полевые исследования у населения региона довольно распространенными были представления про незавидное посмертное существование самоубийц в «ином» мире. Считалось, что самоубийцы не присоединяются к общей категории предков («дедов»). Согласно общеславянским представлениям, после смерти душа самоубийц достается нечистой силе. Распространенными являются поверья относительно того, что на таких умерших «черти катаются». В традиционном эпосе населения пограничья данные представления встречаются довольно часто. Они фиксировались еще в материалах второй половины XX в.:

*«Утопленник, удушенник – черту конь»* (Фольклорный архив Псковского государственного университета<sup>4</sup>, Усвяцкий район Псковской области).

*«Шел мужик домой. Пьяненький. Встретил кума, на тройке тот ехал. Сел мужик к нему на тройку. Едут, разговаривают. А кум спрашивает: “Знаешь ты на каких конях едешь? – Тот говорит: «Знаешь, кони как кони». А кум опять: “Вот, этот – на одного показывает, – утопленник такой. Вот этот – удушенник. Вот этот – тоже удушенник...” Испугался мужик. Молитву прочитал. Очнулся. Смотрит – сидит на коряге, а ведь верст десять проехал!»* (ФАПсковГУ, Усвяцкий район Псковской области).

*«Это люди такие самотратцы – сами себя тратят, губят. Вот на них черти и ездют»* (ФАПсковГУ, Усвяцкий район Псковской области).

В связи с общеславянским представлением о том, что душа самоубийцы достается нечистой силе (черту), то его смерть воспринимается не случайной и в связи с пространственной локализацией. Как показывают материалы XIX – начала XX

<sup>4</sup> Далее – ФАПсковГУ.

в., осуществление самоубийства происходит в местах, которые на символическом уровне ассоциируются с пограничной территорией: «Особенно часто вешаются несчастные самоубийцы в хлевах, гумнах, где по народным воззрениям обитает домовый» (Добровольский 1914: 989) Про похожий характер свидетельствуют и современные полевые материалы. Значительная часть из них сообщает, что самоубийство происходит в хлеве, бане, на чердаке и т.д. (ПЭЗ 2011b: 215, 216). Среди населения распространено убеждение, что место осуществления самоубийства – плохое место. В современных записях это объясняется тем, что самоубийца связан с местом своей смерти, там он «ходит» и пугает: *«А яна гаворыць: “Я ж, дзеткі, гэтак баюся, ён жа цэлую ноч лётаець па гарэ. І я вот толькі засну і на чардаке грукатня там, дзе ён навешаўся”»* (Глубокский район Витебской области) (ПЭЗ 2011b: 217).

Смерть самоубийцы, как считается, сопровождается плохой погодой. В регионе фиксируются представления о том, что смерть «хорошего» человека и его похороны сопровождаются хорошей погодой, а смерть грешника (самоубийцы, колдуна и т.д.) – плохой. На этот счет существовали довольно специфические толкования: «Сильный и продолжительный ветер, особенно при солнечной погоде, указывает на насильственную и преждевременную смерть какого-либо человека, преимущественно, утопленника, удушенника. Возмутившийся преждевременную кончину ветер хочет выплеснуть первого из воды, а второго – сорвать с петли» (Никифоровский 1897: 214).

У населения региона по отношению к таким умершим существовал иной, чем для покойников, умерших «своей» смертью, вариант похоронного обряда. Самоубийц могли не обмывать, хоронить в той одежде, в которой они встретили смерть, иногда даже без гроба (или его делали из самых плохих досок). По ним не справляли поминки и их не отпевали (ППГ 1986: 27; Шейн 1890: 549–550). Похожие предписания еще упоминают респонденты: *«І, бывала, крыста нільзя паставіць, еслі сам сябе згубіў, задавіў. Толькі асінавы кол. А ціперь усё – і гроб купляюць, і крысты ставюць, нічога нет. Ніхто ў Бога ня веріць»* (Городокский район Витебской области) (ТМКБ 2004: 387).

Повсюду в регионе самоубийц запрещалось хоронить на общих кладбищах. Местами их похорон чаще выступали те локусы, которые в народном сознании устойчиво соотносились с пограничной территорией, или были связаны с символикой хаоса (в болотистых местах, у перекрестков, в канаве около кладбища и т.д.) (Шейн 1890: 550). Нередко самоубийц хоронили в местах их смерти. В ряде случаев, как сообщают источники, самоубийц хоронили в лесу, на поле или на горе. Могилы для самоубийц выбирались на перекрестках или на возвышенностях в лесу, которые затем обычно расчищались, чтобы их было видно издали. В Витебской губернии, на вершины кургана сажали осинное дерево, и когда оно вырастало большое, вешали на нем убитых воронов, сов, жаб и змей (ППГ 1986: 104–105). Выбор места погребения для самоубийц был обусловлен нуждой «гарантировать безопасность не только живым, но и “хорошим” покойникам» (МБ 2011: 450).



Как свидетельствуют материалы, место погребения самоубийцы устойчиво характеризовалось как «нечистое» место. Как сообщал этнограф Н.Я. Никифоровский, туда не ходят даже родные: «На могилы самоубийц не заходят даже самые близкие родственники, к ним не подпускается и домашний скот на паству, и только невозбранно сюда забегают собаки: чем больше они бесчинствуют здесь, тем достойнее наказуется самоубийца» (Никифоровский 1897: 295). Как считалось, место погребения самоубийцы могло приносить вред и несчастья: «Крестьяне пугались покойников-самоубийц, а также мест, где они закончили жизнь и где покоились. Хоронили их не на деревенских кладбищах, а везли в местечко, где было для них предназначено отдельное, не освещенное место. Существовало суеверие, что могила самоубийцы может навлекать на окрестность разные несчастья» (ЖАЛ 1998: 300).

В материалах XIX – начала XX в. зафиксирован обычай бросать на могилу самоубийцы хворост, камни и др. Существование такого обычая и его широкая представленность в восточнославянской традиции дало основание Д.К. Зеленину называть всех «нечистых» покойников по типу похорон «заложными», т.е. заложными хворостом и другими предметами. Ученый позаимствовал его из вятской диалектной лексики русских (Зеленин 1995: 41). Под термином «заложные» Д.К. Зеленин понимал заложных хворостом, досками или кольями покойников, в отличие от захороненных в землю. По мнению этнографа, этот термин отображает в себе способ похорон (Зеленин 1995: 96). Но использование данного названия в отношении общей категории «нечистых» покойников, на наш взгляд, не оправдано. В других традициях, в том числе и в белорусской, такое название не встречается. Вместе с тем и сам обычай забрасывать могилы «нечистых» покойников (в первую очередь самоубийц) хворостом, кольями, камнями не видится таким однозначным в трактовке. Предложенная Д.К. Зеленином версия (похороны не в земле, а забрасыванием хворостом, камнями) обусловлена представлениями о том, что таких умерших «земля не принимает» (Зеленин 1995: 43–46). Однако еще в начале XX в. белорусский исследователь Е.Ф. Карский связывал этот обычай с другой архаической традицией. По свидетельству этнографа, такую набросанную кучу потом сжигали. И в этом исследователь видел отголоски сжигания тел умерших в ходе похоронного обряда (Карский 2007: 314). В этой связи не случайной представляется и традиция разжигать костер на кладбище во время «*Прыкладзінаў*»<sup>5</sup>, которая и в наше время фиксируется на территории Докшицкого района Витебской области. На могиле умершего в этот день сжигали не только хворост и мусор, но и специально привезенные дрова (см. подробно: Овсейчик 2018).

Как следует из материалов, в начале XX в. сельское население беспокоило уже не столько способ похорон самоубийц, сколько место (Зеленин 1991: 354). По-прежнему, категорически было запрещено хоронить самоубийц на общих кладбищах. В ряде случаев для похорон самоубийц даже существовали отдельные кладбища. В начале

<sup>5</sup> «*Прыкладзіны*» – это поминальный обряд, совершаемый в течение первого года после похорон и сопровождается упорядочением могилы (обкладка дерном, камнями, деревом, установка надгробий и др.). Фиксируется в западной и центральной частях Витебской области.

XX в. такая особенность была характерна и для городского населения региона. Так, в Полоцке самоубийц еще в 1920-е гг. хоронили на территории древнего городища, где хоронили также и домашних животных (Дук 2010: 111). Такая ситуация объясняется тем, что в представлениях местного населения кладбище еще и сегодня отчетливо выделяется из окружающего пространства как место «святое» и «чистое». Природа этой святости, по мнению В.А. Лобача, является двойственной. Прежде всего, она следует из самого факта нахождения там умерших предков. Вместе с тем, исходный сакральный статус кладбищ обязательно должен быть легитимизирован посредством соответствующих культовых действий христианского священника (Лобач 2008: 72). По этой причине самоубийцы, которые считаются «нечистыми» покойниками, т.к. «отдали» свою душу дьяволу, не могут покоиться вместе с остальными предками.

*«Даўней жа гэта рэдка было, пры маёй жызні можа толькі два чалавекі, што задавіліся. Даўней жа яго не харанілі, кладбішча было абкапана глыбокай канаўкай, і яго харанілі не на кладбішчы, а за гэтай канаўкай. І не ставілі хрыста яму, а ставілі асінавы кол, заганялі, каб гэта паследні раз было ў гэтай дзярэўні <...>. Эта ж за вісьлініка Богу ня моляцца, за яго ж свечкі не ставяць. <...> патаму што ён аддаў д'явалу душу сваю. Яго ён туды вёў»* (Ушачский район Витебской области) (ПЭЗ 2006: 222).

Нарушение запрета хоронить самоубийц на общем кладбище, по мнению местного населения, было нежелательным и могло привести к очень негативным последствиям даже космического характера. В качестве последствий респонденты часто указывают непогоду и засуху. *«А ці казалі, чаму ня можна хараніць самагубцаў? – Ну, гавораць, дажджоў ня будзе»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Докшицкий район Витебской области). *«Ну і пахаранілі яе (самоубийцу – О.В.) на кладбішчы. Ну вот у нас гавораць, гэта кладбішча нікада вот граза ня абойдзіць. Нікада. Усягда што-нібудзь атваліць. Глі там лес пуваліць»* (Полоцкий район Витебской области) (ПЭЗ 2011b: 214). Такие представления имеют довольно архаическое происхождение и связаны с верой в то, что умершие предки могут влиять на будущий урожай, благополучие живых потомков, а также на погоду (Пропп 1995: 33).

В современный период похороны самоубийц, несмотря на сохранение некоторых довольно архаических элементов, в большинстве случаев проходят по тому же обряду, что и всех остальных умерших. При этом надо отметить, что зачастую обряд проводится в сокращенном варианте, только с выполнением наиболее важных ритуальных действий. Даже выбор места похорон таких умерших уже не диктуется прежней традицией, и погребение самоубийц проходит на общем кладбище. Прежний запрет хоронить самоубийц на территории сельского кладбища иной раз заменяется на запрет хоронить таких умерших в центральной его части: *«А вот гавораць, што вісьлінікаў і на кладбішчы не харанілі? – Дзе-небудзь у канцы, не пасрадзі, а кала плота, у канцы. <...> Цяпер стараюцца дзе-небудзь кала краю»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Миорский район Витебской области). Как свидетельствуют полевые материалы, на окраине общих кладбищ отводилась отдельная часть для их похорон. *«А праўда што гавораць самаўбіц на кладбішчы не хавалі? – Раней не харанілі цяпер ужо хароняць. <...> унярод быў куточак адведзены для іх»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Докшицкий

район Витебской области). *«А ці можна было хаваць на кладбішчы самаўбійц? – Не, іх няможна. Але як адно кладбішча, дык дзе <...> Харонят там у адный старане, там, кусочак»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Миорский район Витебской области).

Как следует из полевых материалов, с течением времени народные представления подвергаются изменениям и при похоронах самоубийц уже не наблюдается многих прежних запретов. В то же время церковные предписания относительно самоубийц являются более устойчивыми. Православной церковью не совершаются похороны самоубийц, а также запрещается их отпевать. Поэтому при похоронах самоубийц прежние регламентации могут носить только частичный характер: *«А цяпер, ці хароняць такіх людзей (самоубійц – О.В.)? – Божа ўпасі. На кладбішчы хароняць, но ні атпіваюць на ім»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Миорский район Витебской области). В свою очередь, католический костел позволяет священникам осуществлять похороны самоубийц, которые на протяжении жизни «оказывали приверженность к вере и Костелу» (ССММА 2002: 171). В связи с этим на Витебщине (преимущественно в западной ее части) встречаются случаи приглашения католического священника для похорон православного, который покончил жизнь самоубийством: *«Хаваюць, але павешаўся ён. Бацюшка не маліўся, пагіб, гаворыць нельзя. А тут у нас мая счытай дачка гэдак сама напілася зімой і павешалася. Дак прывязлі бацюшку не маліўся, а ксяндза прывязлі, заплацілі добра і маліўся і пахаваў»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Глубокский район Витебской области).

Строгий запрет существовал относительно отпевания и последующего поминовения самоубийц. Особенно это касается церковного поминовения. Однако среди населения региона существовали некоторые формы народного поминовения самоубийц. Как показывают полевые записи, в ряде случаев поминовение самоубийц могло осуществляться старцами (нищими): *«Тады ўжо после ў цэркву хадзілі, так жа іх (самоубійц – О.В.) не памінаюць, а так і паміналі, і бабкам ужо звалі, і дзед нейкі прыхадзіў маліўся, у гэтай хаце каб ужо не здавалася»* (Докшицкий район Витебской области) (ПЭЗ 2011b: с. 218).

Ряд исследователей славянской народной культуры находит факты поминовения самоубийц в Троицкий период (Д.К. Зеленин, Е.Е. Левкиевская) (Зеленин 1995: 129–140; НДП 2012: 403). Однако, как свидетельствуют материалы, такая практика наиболее характерна для русской территории. Материалы с белорусско-русского (Полоцко-Псковского и Витебско-Смоленского) пограничья не дают оснований для такого утверждения. Несмотря на распространение в регионе Троицкого поминального цикла (Аўсейчык 2015: 327–329; Овсейчик 2019: 134), поминовение самоубийц в этот период не выявлено ни в материалах XIX – начала XX в., ни в современных полевых записях.

## КОЛДУНЫ

К числу «нечистых» покойников относятся умершие, которые, как считалось, при жизни занимались колдовством и общались с нечистой силой. Согласно народным верованиям, сверхъестественные способности колдуна могут объясняться их связью с «бесами» и использованием услугами «нечистой» силы для осуществления своих целей (Никифоровский 1897: 282). «Нечистая» сила, как считалось, служит колдуну при жизни, а после смерти его душа за это достается черту (представление, распространённое у восточных и западных славян (Левкиевская 1999: 529–530)). Потому независимо от времени и обстоятельств смерти колдуны в традиционном мировоззрении населения пограничья устойчиво характеризуются как «нечистые» покойники.

В регионе общераспространённым является поверье о том, что перед смертью колдун должен передать свои «знания». В противном случае, как считалось, его смерть будет тяжелой. Такие поверья широко представлены в источниках XIX – начала XX в. Они фиксируются и в материалах современных полевых исследований в регионе: *«А вот когда она умирала, тогда мне лет шесть было, ей было очень трудно умереть, и у нее прямых наследников не было, и детей не было. Это самое, и ей, как говорят, колдовство свое некому было передать, и она очень долго мучилась, пока вот как у нас называется, не разобрали потолок. Разобрали несколько потолочин, и она умерла»* (ФАПСковГУ, Себежский район Псковской области).

«Тяжелая» смерть объяснялась тем, что его душе трудно выйти из тела и покинуть дом. Это объяснялось тем, что душа его рогатая и ей тяжело выходить из тела, или тем, что она не может проходить через окна и двери, которые обычно помечались крестами и через которые ангелы проносят «чисто христианскую душу», или из-за того, что окна и двери были окроплены «святой» водой и обожжены свечей (Никифоровский 1897: 284; Шейн 1890: 524). Похожие представления сохраняются еще и в современный период: *«Чэрэз дзверы ён ня можыць выйсці, яо толькі вынісуць нячыстыя ў паталок»* (Городокский район Витебской области) (ТМКБ 2004: 377). По мнению местного населения, тяжелая смерть колдуна может быть связана с тем, что душа не выходит из тела, так как знает, что ее ждет в «ином» мире. В таком случае, как считалось, черти вырывают душу из тела специальными крюками: «Чаровникам, что “душу чорту запродали”, особенно трудно умирать; им не помогает и “громничная” свеча, которую обычно дают в руки умирающим: душа их, зная, что ее ожидает в загробном мире, не хочет покидать тело, и черти выдирают ее особыми крючьями» (Богданович 1895: 50–51).

Для облегчения предсмертной агонии (для «выхода души») необходимым считалось в стенах или крыше дома делать дополнительные отверстия (разбирать крышу, потолок, вынимать верхний косяк дверей), одевать на шею умирающему хомут и т.д. (Карский 2007: 319; Никифоровский 1897: 284, Шейн 1890: 512). Такие же представления широко фиксируются и в современных записях.

*«Калі чараўнік памірае, должэн перадаць каму-небудзь. Калі не памірае, падымаюць столь ці надзяваюць хамут»* (Россонский район Витебской области) (ПЭЗ 2006: 207).

*«У маёй братавай была маці такая чараўніца. Дык яна як памірала сільна доўга мучылася, прасіла, каб сын у паталку падняў дзве доски. І праўда, сын залез падняў дзве сталіны, тады яна памерла»* (Полоцкий район Витебской области) (ПЭЗ 2006: 156).

*«Ну раньше это, знаешь, были колдуны. Когда он плохо умирал – отрывали три потолчины. Доски, да, три потолчины, чтоб дух выходил. Если ён колдует – он плохо умирал»* (Руднянский район Смоленской области) (СМЭС 2003: 14).

Для облегчения страданий («помочь умереть») нередко приглашали специальных «знатоков». В представлениях населения региона такими специалистами выступали старцы (нищие). Зафиксированы случаи, когда нищие (старцы) помогают умереть при «тяжелой» кончине.

*«Даўней было што, доўга паміралі. Я была сама пры гэтым дзеле. У нас была адна старая дзевушка, яна крэпка начытаная, яна спявала красіва і сабірала яна субота васкрэсенне <...> Патом саседка прыходзіць і яе просіці «Авілька, прызі ты да нас, памаліціся вы ў нас!» У яе свёкр уміраў, гэта даўно-даўным. <...> Гэта ўжо мы на трэці дзень былі, і мы нічога ў яго ня вымалілі. А вот, пака не прыйшла жабрачка. <...> Маленне не намагала. На заўтра прыходзіць жабрачка. А што не рабілі, паталок вырывалі. Ну што казалі можа, а ён жа так казаў дзядзька быў врэдны, ну нічым ніхто не прызнаваў, каб ён які врэд каму наносіў. Прыходзіць жабрачка, і будзіць казаць: “Ёсць у вас, – гэта было пры саветах, – хамут арымы?” “А чаму ж няма?!” І вот кажыць: “Вазьміце на яго як ён, так падзяржыце, налажыце”. Ён і сканаў»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Глубокский район Витебской области).

Даже по материалам современных полевых исследований можно проследить довольно распространенное представление о том, что в момент смерти колдуна происходят определенные изменения с его телом (само тело искривляется, изо рта вылетает жаба или какое-то животное и т.п.): *«И яны делаютя не поймеш чем: устанеть, ковырнётся кверху ногами, и побежала собака, обыкновенная собака»* (Дорогобужский район Смоленской области) (СМЭС 2003: 15). По свидетельству респондентов тяжелая смерть колдуна сопровождается и иными необычными явлениями: *«Дык гэты чараўнік доўга мучыўся як паміраў. Мы дзецьмі былі. Ідзем каля яго хаты, а ён гудзіць: “Гу-гу-гу, гу-гу-гу”. Доўга мучыўся»* (Бешенковичский район) (ПЭЗ 2011b: 37). В качестве особой приметы колдуна выступает его смерть в «нечистом» месте: *«А умерла она ў отхожей, ў хляве где-то или ў сарая... Да полный рот было грязи набито, навоза людского»* (Кардымовский район Смоленской области) (СМЭС 2003: 16).

Среди населения региона зафиксировано устойчивое представление о «хождении» покойников-колдунов после смерти. Как считалось, такое хождение будет приносить вред живым людям. Большинство источников второй половины XIX – начала XX в. не уточняют формы и способы «беспокойства» колдунов после смерти (Шейн 1890: 519; Крачковский 1874: 200–201). Однако в ряде случаев зафиксированы поверья о том, что колдуны после смерти «ходят», убивают людей и пьют их кровь (Добровольский 1891: 113–115; Добровольский 1893: 312; Богданович 1895: 57–58). Подобные представления довольно редкие на восточнославянском пространстве. По мнению Л.Н. Виноградовой и Е.Е. Левкиевской сюжеты про умершего-вампира,

который убивает людей и пьет кровь, характерны преимущественно для южных славян (НДП 2012: 11–12).

У населения региона распространено поверье о том, что после смерти колдуна «забирают черти». И в таком случае на место тела покойника-колдуна ложится черт (или влезает в его «шкуру»). В большинстве случаев этим и объясняется причина «хождения» колдуна после смерти. Такие представления фиксируются и в современный период на территории региона (ТМКБ 2004: 377; ПЭЗ 2011b: 21).

Согласно общеславянским верованиям, смерть (и похороны) колдуна, как и самоубийцы, связана с плохой погодой.

*«Праўда гэта ці ніпраўда, я толькі знаю, гэта было на маім быцьці, як паміраіць чараўнік, то трудзіцца, ніяк ня можаць памерці сваей сьмерцю. Тады на куце, у хаце падымаюць тры сталіны. Гэта точна. Як толькі падымуць гэтых тры сталіны, тады ён ці яна канчаецца. Гэта точна. Як дрэнны чалавек [памрэ], тады ўсё верадам ходзіць на вуліцы. І вецер, а зімой бура і сьнег, і дож, не паймёш што. Тады пагода очань-очань плахая, зьверская пагода»* (Ушачский район Витебской области) (ПЭЗ 2011b: 39).

*«А матка як памёрла, ён не паехаў дажа хараніць. Дык уздзіралі тры даскі, як памірала. І на кладбішчы тады [як хаваюць] дзеравы зашумяць, усё падымаецца, шуміць»* (Лепельский район Витебской области) (ПЭЗ 2011b: 29).

Как и других «нечистых» покойников, колдунов не хоронили на общих кладбищах: *«Гэта як січас, дык яно, а як даўней, пры Польшчы, еслі ён такімі дзеламі занімаўся вот (колдовством – О.В.), утопленік, ці вісельнік, значыць тады такіх на кладбішчы не харанілі»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Глубокский район Витебской области). *«А так гаварылі, што такіх дажа на могілках не хароняць, а толькі кала краю»* (Полоцкий район Витебской области) (ПЭЗ 2006: 156). На похоронах колдунов с целью предотвращения их возможного «возвращения» в мир живых («чтобы не ходили») многие обрядовые действия исполнялись с обратным вектором: умершего выносили головой вперед, на перекрестках гроб поворачивали кругом (Седакова 2004: 49). Смысл таких действий – «запутать» умершего, чтобы тот забыл дорогу и не возвращался назад. Воспоминания о подобных процедурах еще фиксируются среди населения региона в современный период: *«Чараўнікоў харанілі за кладбішчам. У гроб клалі ў другую сторону галавой. Харанілі галавой на ўсход, а не на захад»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Бешенковичский район Витебской области). Иногда, для того чтобы колдун не «ходил» после смерти, существовали и более радикальные методы. Для этого разрывали его могилу, отрубали голову, клали ее между ног и пробивали осиновым колом (Никифоровский 1897: 294; Шейн 1890: 519–520, 550–551). Похожие представления зафиксированы и в современный период: *«Адкапывалі яго, галаву адсякалі, паміж ног лажылі; асінавы кол у нагах убівалі»* (ФАПолоцкГУ, Миорский район Витебской области).

Таким образом, на основе анализа материалов приходим к следующим выводам. У населения белорусско-русского пограничья к категории «нечистых» покойников относились самоубийцы и некрещенные дети (в более поздних записях последние исключаются из этой группы), а также умершие, которые при жизни считались

колдунами. Иные группы «нечистых» покойников, характерные другим региональным традициям, на территории белорусско-русского пограничья либо совсем не находят отображения в фольклорно-этнографических материалах, либо представлены в них очень отрывочно и фрагментарно. Проведенный в работе анализ материалов убедительно свидетельствует о существовании достаточно архаических верований о «нечистых» покойниках у населения региона. Это подтверждают не только фольклорно-этнографические источники второй половины XIX – начала XX в., но и материалы современных полевых исследований. В региональной традиции белорусско-русского пограничья наиболее мифологизированную группу покойников составляют самоубийцы. В значительной степени это объясняется большей консервативностью и сохранностью (особенно под влиянием церкви) представлений и регламентаций относительно этой категории умерших. Это отношение обусловило довольно долгое существование особых способов их погребения и поминовения. Высокой степенью мифологизации выделяется также еще одна категория покойников – колдуны. Их демонологизация чрезвычайно высока даже в материалах современных полевых исследований. В регионе сохраняются весьма архаические верования о колдунах как о группе «нечистых» покойников. В то же время мифологический образ некрещеных детей в поверьях населения региона представлен довольно малым набором признаков и функций, чем сближается с другими региональными традициями. Довольно широкое распространение в регионе получил лишь сюжет об их символическом «крещении» (имянаречении) после смерти.

Вместе с тем, исследование мифологических сюжетов и обрядности позволяет утверждать о наличии эволюционных и трансформационных процессов, особенно во второй половине XX – начале XXI в. В регионе под влиянием различных факторов происходят существенные изменения как в представлениях, так и в погребально-поминальной обрядности этих категорий покойников. В современном обществе умершие некрещеными дети перестают рассматриваться как «нечистые», а их погребение происходит рядом с остальными покойниками. Похороны самоубийц также совершаются на общих кладбищах и проводятся по тому же обряду, что и обычных умерших, правда, часто в сокращенном варианте. Исчезли прежние предписания и из погребального обряда покойников, которые при жизни считались колдунами. Но вместе с тем отношение к данной категории в современном сельском обществе по-прежнему остается негативным. Несмотря на такие существенные изменения необходимо отметить бытование даже в начале XXI в. ряда довольно архаических представлений и поверий, относящихся к погребально-поминальной обрядности «нечистых» покойников, главным образом, среди сельских жителей старшего поколения.

Исследование также показало, что поверья и представления населения белорусско-русского пограничья о «нечистых» покойниках являются частью общеславянского взгляда на эту категорию персонажей. Но в то же время в них прослеживаются и специфические региональные детали. Поэтому их анализ как в синхронической, так и диахронической перспективе является важным для понимания общей мифологической системы славян.

## СОКРАЩЕНИЯ

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«IMPURE» DEAD PEOPLE IN PERCEPTIONS OF THE POPULATION  
OF THE BELARUSIAN-RUSSIAN (POLOTSK-PSKOV AND VITEBSK-  
SMOLENSK) BORDERLAND

ULADZIMIR J. AUSEICHYK



In the population of the Belarusian-Russian borderland, the category of «impure» dead included suicides and unbaptised children (although in later records the latter are excluded), as well as the dead who were considered to be sorcerers during their lifetime.

The material contains quite archaic notions about unbaptised children. The most widespread in the region are beliefs about the unenviable posthumous fate of such deceased. In the regional tradition of people, the motif of «baptising» after the death of an unbaptised child is widespread. The folklore materials broadly describe the prohibition on burying unbaptised children in normal cemeteries. This prohibition was strictly observed in the first half of the 20th century.

A separate category of deceased is a suicide victim who in the traditional worldview was viewed considerably differently from a person who had died of old age. Widespread ideas existed across the region about the unenviable posthumous existence of suicides in the «other world». It was believed that suicide victims did not join the general category of the dead. After death, the soul of a suicide bastard goes to some evil force. The population of the region had a different funeral rite for such a person than for someone who had died «on their own». Everywhere in the region, it was prohibited to bury a suicide in a normal cemetery.

Among the «impure» dead are individuals believed to have practised witchcraft while alive and to have communicated with evil spirits. Therefore, irrespective of the time and circumstances of death, sorcerers were traditionally and steadily characterised as the «impure» dead. It was commonly believed in the region that a sorcerer should pass on their «knowledge» before they die. Otherwise, his death was believed to be hard. Another strong belief held in the region concerns the «walking» of dead witchdoctors after they have died. Like other «impure» dead, witches were not buried in normal cemeteries.

Between the 20th and start of the 21st centuries, the funeral rituals of the Belarusian-Russian (Vitebsk-Smolensk and Polotsk-Pskov) borderland population regarding the «impure» dead changed as did their attitude to this category of the dead. In modern society, unbaptised children are no longer regarded as «impure» dead, and their funerals are held in normal cemeteries. Suicides are also buried in the usual cemeteries, with the same rites as others, but often in a shortened version. The old rituals for burying the dead believed to have been practising witchcraft while alive have also disappeared. Despite these significant changes, it is noted

that even at the start of the 21st century several quite archaic notions about funerals for the «impure» dead, mainly among elderly rural inhabitants, remain in use.

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# Rus, Russia and Ukraine between Fairy Tales and History: Alternative Slavic Fantasy by English-Language Writers

PART TWO: MODERN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES\*

————— Larisa Fialkova —————

Prispevek je drugi del prispevka; uvod in prvi del je objavljen v *Studii Mythologica Slavica* 24 (2021): 13–32). Alternativna slovanska fantazija je opredeljena kot fantastika (spekulativna fikcija), ki so jo ustvarili angleškojezični pisci na podlagi resnične ali domnevne slovanske folklore, vendar ločeno od slovanske fantazije kot take. V središču pričujočega dela je logika interakcije med slovanskimi in/ali kvazislovanskimi ljudskimi zapleti in liki z rusko in ukrajinsko zgodovino 19.–20. stoletja v dilogiji Evelin Skye ter romanih Catherynne Valente in Orsona Scotta Carda.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: Evelin Skye, Catherynne Valente, Orson Scott Card, alternativna in kripto zgodovina, fantazija

This is the second part of the paper (for introduction and the first part which addresses Medieval Rus in Peter Morwood's and Katherine Arden's trilogies see *Studia Mythologica Slavica* 24 (2021): 13–32). Alternative Slavic fantasy is defined as fantastika (speculative fiction) created by English-language writers on the basis of real or assumed Slavic folklore, separate from Slavic fantasy per se. The focus of the current part is the logic of interaction between Slavic and/or quasi-Slavic folk plots and characters with Russian and Ukrainian history of the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Evelin Skye's dilogy and Catherynne Valente's and Orson Scott Card's novels.

KEYWORDS: Evelin Skye, Catherynne Valente, Orson Scott Card, alternative and crypto history, fantasy

## THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: EVELIN SKYE'S ALTERNATIVE VERSION

Evelin Skye's interest in Russia dates back to her teens when she established a long-term pen pal called Denis Ovchinin. She went on to receive a BA in Slavic Studies from

\* Part 1, which contains an introduction to the entire paper and analysis of Medieval Rus's representation in Morwood's and Arden's trilogies (Morwood 2016, 2016a, 2016b; Arden 2017, 2018, 2019), see *Studia Mythologica Slavica* 2021. Conclusions are based on both parts of the paper.

Stanford University. In 2003, she visited Russia and went on a river cruise from Moscow to St. Petersburg (Skye 2016: 401–403, 406). This makes it only natural that St. Petersburg would become the main location of her historical fantasy dilogy. Yet, unlike other creators of alternative Slavic fantasy, she concentrates on Russia as an Empire which manifests in another key location – Kazakh’s steppe. Skye’s sources include not only Pushkin’s *The Bronze Horseman*, Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* and Dostoyevsky’s Petersburg novels, but also her old textbooks – Figes’s *Natasha’s Dance* and Olcott’s *The Kazakhs* (Skye 2016: 401–402, 2017: 413) – and fairy tales, with *Cinderella* chief among them.

In Skye’s alternative Russia, Christianity coexists with magic, which is practised by the imperial enchanter. The country’s stocks of magic are limited and dwindling due to the population’s Christian religiosity and the growing scepticism regarding power of non-Christian magic forces. There is, therefore, just a single imperial enchanter, one who typically is long-lived. When there are two candidates for the post, they must compete in the Crown Game until one of them perishes. The plot’s focus is on the Crown Game engaged in by Viktoria Andreyeva and Nikolai Karimov (later Karimov-Romanov), whose tutors, Sergei Andreyev and Galina Zakrevskaya, are sibling rivals. Viktoria Andreyeva, whom Sergei Andreyev has adopted, is in fact the abandoned daughter of the volcano nymph. She directs the magic forces of nature. Nikolai Karimov-Romanov, a fictional illegitimate son of Tsar Alexander and the Kazakh faith-healer<sup>1</sup> Aizhana, is adept at the magic of mechanics. Starting out as mortal adversaries, Viktoria and Nikolai are in fact two halves of a magic superpower. Their unity is reinforced in several exchanges of energy in which they revive each other in various situations. This voluntary gift of energy differs radically from Aizhana’s reviving herself through the energy brutally appropriated from her victims, be they plants, worms or human beings. Aizhana’s predation is similar to that of Cherryh’s *rusalka* before she meets her future husband (Cherryh 1989: 104, 154, 156; Fialkova 2020: 444; Skye 2016: 150, 369).

The timeframe of the dilogy roughly encompasses 20 years. It commences in 1805 when the imperial enchanter Yakov Zinchenko has fallen in the Battle of Austerlitz, leaving the position vacant. Its end coincides with the new Tsar’s coronation and the start of his reign in 1826, following the failure of the Decembrist coup<sup>2</sup> during which Viktoria and Nikolai fight on different sides of the barricades. Viktoria loses her hand in the battle, but Nikolai makes a prosthesis for her from the sash of the Bronze Horseman. Whole again, Viktoria can perform magic with it. Viktoria and Nikolai’s competition, the duel, deaths and resurrections restore population’s belief in magic, and the store of it grows in the country. In this new reality, Russia now has room for two imperial enchanters, with powers that, while different, are equally magnificent. The new Tsar changes the rules of the Crown Game, thereby benefiting from the united protection of the two enchanters, and the Church agrees to work with them (Skye 2016: 9, 50–51, 387–392; Skye 2017: 402–404, 413).

<sup>1</sup> A faith-healer in Skye’s definition, Aizhana might better be called a witch.

<sup>2</sup> The attempted coup was as in reality on 14 December 1825. This timeframe is somewhat wobbly. For example, one of Viktoria’s magic moves is imprisoning Nikolai inside a Fabergé-type egg, even though Fabergé did not open in Sankt-Petersburg until 1842 (Gudek 2020).



Skye's Saint Petersburg appears in the dilogy with many of its famous landmarks, their names either real or slightly altered, alongside an invented space. The landmarks include the *Ekaterinsky* (sic!) Canal,<sup>3</sup> the Winter Palace, the Imperial Public Library on the corner of Nevsky Prospekt and Sadovaya Street, Neva, Vasilyevsky Island, Chernyshev<sup>4</sup> Bridge, and the Bronze Horseman (Skye 2016: 19–20, 29, 122, 156, Skye 2017: 9, 328). The invented space includes fictional locations invented by Skye from the very beginning (Ovchinin Island and Bolshebnoe/Volshebnoe Duplo or Enchanted Hollow)<sup>5</sup> and those created by Viktoria and Nikolai through the magic they use during the Crown Game. Among the latter are Viktoria's Summer Island and Nikolai's benches. Each bench is inscribed with a different place-name – Moscow, Kazan, Kostroma, Mount Elbrus, Kizhi Island, the Kazakh steppe – and is a kind of portal, which takes the person seated in the place inscribed, into a dream if not into reality (Skye 2016: 2, 79, 236, 257–268, 398; Skye 2017: 10, 167). Another layer of invented space evokes the fairy tale. Thus, the Cinderella Bakery is mentioned on the book's very first page, located on Ovchinin Island where Sergei and Viktoria Andreyev reside. When Viktoria moves to Sankt-Petersburg for the Crown Game, the bakery moves there as well, at least temporarily. Its owner Ludmila, although a former circus performer not a fairy, claps her hands and supplies Viktoria with a dress made of snow for her first ball at the Winter Palace. The debutante Viktoria, as Lady Snow, simultaneously evokes Natasha Rostova and Cinderella, especially when her magnificent dress starts to melt (Skye 2016: 1, 151–152, 187–189, 206–207, 226–227).

From time to time, Skye uses italicised Russian words, mostly in phonetic transliteration – such as, *ochen kharasho*, *spasiba*, *tvoe zdarovyie* and, mistakenly, *myevo zdarovyie*. Many of these words concern Russian cuisine – *piroshki*, *vatrushka*, *zavarka*<sup>6</sup> and so on. The longest Russian passage is transliterated and italicised (Skye 2016: 2, 130, 132, 151, 231; Skye 2017: 204, 346).

An alternative chronotope develops an alternative history. In Skye's version, Tsar Alexander and Tsarina Elizabeth parent two teenage children (in reality not true) – Pasha/Pavel Alexandrovich Romanov and Yuliana Alexandrovna Romanova. Thus, the new Tsar is not the historical Nikolai 1, but the fictional Pavel Alexandrovich Romanov (Skye 2017: 413). Even though Alexander dies in Taganrog, like in the historical record, the cause of his unexpected death becomes Aizhana's vengeful kiss that gives him typhus (Skye 2016: 29–30, 348–351). Skye refers to the famous Decembrists Trubetskoy, Pestel, Obolensky and Volkonsky. Trubetskoy in the book, similarly to the historical Trubetskoy, does not come to Senate square on the day of the rebellion, but the reason given is his fictional conversation with Yuliana Alexandrovna, who never existed. Contradicting historical truth, the Decembrist coup does not lead to executions. Russia's death penalty

<sup>3</sup> Ekaterininskii kanal, Catherine Canal, currently Griboyedov Canal or kanal Griboedova.

<sup>4</sup> Currently, it is Lomonosov Bridge.

<sup>5</sup> The spelling varies in different books. The motif of the magic hollow may be familiar to readers of Andersen's *The Tinder-Box*. However, in Skye's version, the hollow is not in a tree, but in the Mountain and nothing should be physically removed from it.

<sup>6</sup> These are, respectively, pies, pastry filled with quark or farmer's cheese, and a dark tea concentrate.

has been abolished, and Pavel does not want it reinstated, even to punish the rebels (Skye 2017: 341–344, 409).

In Skye's alternative Slavic fantasy, the power of the state and the power of magic, both of nature and mechanics, come together within the family despite the orphaning and illegitimacy. Pavel and Nikolai are half-brothers, and Nikolai and Viktoria are, it may be assumed, prospective spouses. All types of power are inborn, but they must be drawn out through appropriate upbringing and education. Evil and good powers are inner family matters, open for rebooting. Magic and Christianity complement each other as the state's guardians. Russia's alternative future is peaceful: the Decembrists go unpunished and their ideas lead to reform.

#### RUSSIA IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: CATHERYNNÉ VALENTE'S HISTORICAL FANTASY

Valente's interest in Russia began in childhood. It was prompted by both Cold War fears and a healthy curiosity nurtured by her stepmother, who was of Russian origin. Her husband is an immigrant from the former Soviet Union who translated Russian fairy tales for her. Valente is also familiar with Russian cuisine and Russian language. In 2019, she participated in Petersburg's Fantastic Assembly, *Fantassambleia* (Fialkova 2020: 441).

Valente's plot has its roots in *Marya Morevna*, one of the most popular Russian folktales (discussed in Fialkova 2021)<sup>7</sup>. It has, however, no Ivan Tsarevich, responsible for his orphan sisters, and their mother is still alive. Three suitors appear as birds at the doorway of Marya's house, each wishing to marry her but getting her sisters instead. These birds are different from those of the folktales and of Morwood. Instead of a falcon, an eagle and a raven, they are *gratch* (a rook), *zuyok* (a plover) and *zhulan* (a shrike). The birds transform not simply into supportive siblings and princes of faraway magic lands, but also into Russian officers representing the changes in power before and after the Revolution of 1917. All are lieutenants. Gratch serves in the Tsar's Personal Guard, Zuyok in the White Guard, and Zhulan in the Red Army. While three is a typical number in folklore, in Valente's novel there are, in fact, four birds, with the fourth appearing much later. He is an elderly owl, "Comrade Koschei, surname Bessmertny", who marries Marya. Koschei is the only one whose military rank is unspecified. He is also the only brother whom Marya has not seen as a bird, despite her ability to see suitors as birds – or, in other words, to see the world's naked truth (Valente 2011: 16–19, 54–55). These breeds of bird, with the exception of the owl/Bessmertny (the Deathless<sup>8</sup>), appear in Russian without italics.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Other fairy tales – e.g., *Vasilisa Prekrasnaia* (*Vasilisa the Fair* or *Vasilisa the Beautiful*) and *Tsarevna-liagushka* (*The Frog Princess*) as well as many stories about Yelena the Beautiful – are used episodically (Afanasev 1916, Zheleznova 1966).

<sup>8</sup> Deathless, also used by Arden, is a synonym of Morwood's Undying. Different authors spell his name differently: Koschei (Morwood), Kaschei (Arden) and Koschei (Valente).

<sup>9</sup> The translations of bird breeds into English appear near the end of the novel when, one after another, they come to Marya Morevna's second husband, Ivan the Fool, to ask for some of Marya's personal possessions. Looking at the state of these objects, they learn of her pain and approaching death (Valente 2011: 321–326).

Glassford compares several English translations of this folktale and finds that suitors can be falcons, eagles and ravens, but also hawks and crows (Glassford 2018: 31, 36, 38). The hawk is somehow present in this novel in Marya's perception of Lenin's essence and the crow's eyes Marya in due time acquires herself (Valente 2011: 26–27, 284).

The plot develops in both Russia, with the focus on Marya's house, and in the magic lands of fairy tales. The house, while remaining in the same place, changes its address and its tenants. Gratch comes to Gorokhovaya Street in Saint Petersburg, Zuyok to the same street, but in Petrograd. At the time of Zhulan's visit, the street name is Kommissarskaya, and Koschei goes to Dzerzhinskaya Street. These changes in address, which virtually follow the actual renaming history,<sup>10</sup> go hand in hand with the changing social and economic status of Marya's family. At first, they live in a private house in St. Petersburg. In Petrograd and then Leningrad, Marya squeezes in with other families. Each family brings its *domovoi* or house spirit, and the house spirits organise a *Domovoi Komitet*, a pun on House Committee. Among the new tenants and alongside Russian folk characters like *domoviye* (Valente's spelling for plural for *domovoi*) and *rusalki* (water spirits, a mermaid, but without a tale), there is even a beautiful *vila*, a pagan spirit with the wings of a swan from Southern Slav folklore. In the novel, she becomes the beautiful Madame Lebedeva (from *lebed'*, swan) (Valente 2011: 15–22, 30–31, 38, 54–55, 82). The story starts before the First World War in Marya's big, happy home, and ends with the death of her shrunken house from famine during the Siege of Leningrad, February 1942 (Valente 2011: 247, 270–284, 318, 320). The novel's final date is 1952. It is well after the war between Germany and “the wizard with the mustache in Moscow” (Valente 2011: 343–344), who is recognisably Stalin. This date may signal the Doctors' Plot, an anti-Semitic campaign during 1952–1953, which started by accusing Jewish doctors of plotting the murder of top Soviet leaders. While this plot is, in fact, mentioned in the novel, in another section it is disconnected from its historical time (Valente 2011: 239). The world of the living has become the world of the dead. The dead, however, must continue their daily work and the routine of the living (Valente 2011: 348–349). In Valente's novel, Russia, like Marya Morevna, has two husbands. One is Koschei the Deathless, the Tsar of Life, who is constantly dying and resurrected, acquiring a new woman with each resurrection.<sup>11</sup> The other is Ivan the Fool. He is not the fool of fairy tales, who wins in the end. Even his surname Geroyev (‘Hero’yev) does not make him a hero. He has no bird within him. He is the fool who serves at the “factory of arrests” (Cheka, the secret

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In the original folktale, as well as in Morwood's trilogy discussed in the first part of this paper, Ivan visits his married sisters himself and leaves some of his possessions to their husbands. Whereas in the folktale and in Morwood the birds resurrect Ivan from death, in Valente's novel they simply inform him of Marya's suffering and about death gathering inside her. When help is in fact available, it comes from the sisters and not from their husbands. The inversion of roles is very prominent.

<sup>10</sup> The actual Russian name of Komissarskaya Street is Komissarovskaia. In the novel, the street becomes Dzerzhinskaya while still in Petrograd – which, in reality, takes place in 1927 when it is Leningrad. See St. Petersburg: Official City Guide <https://www.visit-petersburg.ru/en/showplace/199458/> (last accessed 14.02.2021).

<sup>11</sup> His former spouses – numerous Yelenas and occasional Vasilisas the Beautiful with their dolls – forever work in factories, bent over leaping shuttles and hurtling looms. Marya is the only one to escape this fate. Yet, in her death she remains alone as well.

police), looking for “enemies of the people.”<sup>12</sup> Ivan dies from famine during the 1942 Siege of Leningrad. His final foolish act of liberating Koschei helps Marya to reunite with her first husband and escape with him from Leningrad to the magic lands (Valente 2011: 178, 185, 278, 282–284).

Some features of Valente’s poetics are close to those of Arden whom she precedes chronologically. She gives Russian folk characters new family members, some of whom she finds in folklore and others in fiction and history. Koschei the Deathless and Baba Yaga become siblings of Viy from Gogol’s eponymous story. Gorinich’s mother happens to be the dragon from Lake Baikal, while his father is the mighty Genghis Khan.<sup>13</sup> The mechanism of ruling through terror is common to both the Party and the Golden Hord (Trocha 2020: 408). The dialectic between Koschei and Viy, the Tsar of Life and the Tsar of Death, is somewhat similar to that between Morozko and the Bear in Arden’s trilogy. Another point of similarity with Arden is the postulation of human guilt as concerns the *chyerti* (sic!) (devils) who they not only oust from towns and churches, but from the entire world (Valente 2011: 47–48, 78–79, 104, 132, 135, 206). Even the fact of Marya’s choice of Koschei predicts that Vasilisa will select Morozko. Both couples are doomed because the women are mortal whereas their magic partners are not.

Valente is heavily indebted to the Russian literature of the 19th and first part of the 20th centuries.<sup>14</sup> Direct quotations and allusions show that Pushkin’s *Ruslan and Liudmila*, Akhmatova’s *Poem without a Hero* and Gogol’s *Viy* are sources for her fantasy. Hidden allusions to Bulgakov are no less important. Ivan the Fool, as Ivan Nikolayevich Geroyev (Hero’yev), reminds readers of Ivan Nikolayevich Bezdomny (Homeless) from *The Master and Margarita*. Marya’s ability to see the supernatural behind the mask is similar to that of the Master in identifying Woland, the Satan, disguised as a foreigner. Marya’s ride with Koschei (the owl) in the driverless car parallels that of Margarita’s with the rook in the driver’s seat. Soviet writers as liars who eat in special cafes and relax in *dachas* invoke the writers’ restaurant Griboyedov in the same novel. And, of course, the narrative of life in Stalin’s Moscow in the 1930s opens the gate to a fantasy version of Petersburg-Petrograd-Leningrad (Bulgakov 1988: 23, 68–81, 157, 282; Valente 2011: 60, 98–102, 171). Finally, the village of Yaichka (sic!) (An Egg), where the dead forget the animosities of the living, is reminiscent of paradise in Bulgakov’s *The White Guard*, seen by Alexei Turbin in a dream. This paradise accepts both Whites and Reds from the front along with their women. In Yaichka. Vladimir Ilyich and his wife Nadya<sup>15</sup> Konstantinovna (Lenin and Krupskaja) not only have two sons, Josef and Leon (Stalin and

<sup>12</sup> The manager of the factory of arrests is Comrade Gorinich, Zmey Gorinich (Valente’s spelling for Zmei Gorynych), a dragon/serpent and a villain from Russian folklore. In the novel, Comrade Gorinich boasts of having organised many deaths, including the 1934 murder of Sergei Mironovich Kirov and of those falsely accused of his murder. Gorinich almost convicts Marya Morevna, but she manages to outwit him and escape the death penalty (Valente 2011: 131–136).

<sup>13</sup> Genghis Khan (1158–1227) founded the Mongol Empire. I would like to remind that the Blue she-wolf in Morwood’s trilogy discussed in the first part of this paper is also connected to Chinggisid lineage.

<sup>14</sup> Magyarody compares Valente’s Koschei with that of the Strugatsky brothers, but does not bring sufficient evidence of their similarity (Magyarody 2017; Fialkova 2021: 20).

<sup>15</sup> Nadya is a diminutive of Nadezhda.

Trotsky), but also become friendly with the Russian Tsar and his family, all of whom have been executed by the Bolsheviks (Bulgakov 1989: 233–237; Valente 2011: 293–297). On a visual level, Yaichka with its denizens is a kind of Fabergé egg.

FROM UKRAINE IN THE 1970S–1990S TO KIEVAN RUS AND BACK IN  
ORSON SCOTT CARD'S *ENCHANTMENT*

Orson Scott Card's interest in alternative Slavic fantasy originates from neither family nor education. Aware of his lack of knowledge, he hired a graduate student – a native Russian-speaker, who contacted him through Internet – to check his use of Russian language and allusions to Russian culture (White 1999). Although Card's plot addresses both Orthodoxy and Judaism, he himself is a dedicated Mormon.

His novel is set in three distinct locations. Two of them are from the familiar world – Soviet and post-Soviet Ukraine, and the USA during the 1970s to 1990s. The third is the fictional state of Taina (Mystery), ruled by the fictional King Matfei in the so-called Rus of the everlasting 9th century. Taina's principal enemy is not a historical invader like Cumans or Pechenegs, but Baba Yaga. Yet, this fairy tale character is partly identified with the historical Princess Olga (920–969) of Kievan Rus. Yaga's long-forgotten first name is Olga and she is a widow, who, like her prototype, cruelly slaughtered the leaders of the Drevlians in response to a proposal of marriage from their King Mal. Still, the Drevlians are not to blame for her widowhood. Card explains that her evil behaviour is a result of the trauma related to the sexual abuse she suffered. Her late husband, King Brat (not Prince Igor), rapes her at age 12 and later becomes a victim of her revenge (Card 1999: 65, 118). The widowed Yaga then marries a huge Bear, Rus's winter god. However, the mythological beings do not eliminate Christianity. The people of Taina are baptised and the words of the Church fathers are familiar to some. The fictional state is sealed off, separated from modern Ukraine by a clearing and a Pit in the Carpathian Mountains. The Pit is guarded by the Bear and usually invisible. Some characters, both good and evil – a modern man and a medieval princess, Baba Yaga and the saint Mikola Mozhaïski<sup>16</sup> – can cross this void between the two worlds and/or play a role in both. Using witchcraft, others can glimpse into Taina without actually crossing its border.

Card's protagonist is Vanya/Ivan Petrovich Smetski, a boy of mixed Jewish/Slavic descent from Kiev,<sup>17</sup> the son of Petr Smetski, a professor of ancient Slavic literature and of oldest dialects of Ukrainian, Bulgarian and Serbian (Card, 1999: 3, 14). In the 1970s, the family decides to emigrate to the West, a perilous undertaking in Soviet times. The

<sup>16</sup> According to Card, Mikola Mozhaïski is "the protector of sailors, ancient but unforgotten god" (Card 1999: 202). In the Orthodox Church, he is perceived as an emanation of Saint Nikolas, who, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, protected the town of Mozhaïsk against Tatar invasion <http://iordanham.orthodoxy.ru/Icons5-rus.htm> (last accessed 25.02.2021). Card uses Ukrainian form of the name - Mikola (instead of Mykola) and not Russian – Nikolai.

<sup>17</sup> It is unclear whether Vania is Russian or Ukrainian on his Slavic side. As his father's second cousin Marek owns a farm in the Carpathian Mountains and is later identified as Mikola Mozhaïski, he is likely to be Ukrainian. Card uses Russified toponym Kiev and not the Ukrainian Kyiv, although he chooses the Ukrainian spelling for the city of L'viv and for Kiev's district Podil (Card 1999: 7, 11, 26, 36).

only way to do this is apply to the Soviet authorities for visas to Israel and, once they leave, change their destination to the USA. Although the family has been living as Russians, they pragmatically adopt an Orthodox Jewish lifestyle to prove their partly Jewish roots, circumcise their men and change their names. Thus, 10-year-old Ivan becomes Itzak<sup>18</sup> Shlomo (1–12).

Two folk stories, neither Slavic and both familiar to Card's protagonist from childhood, appear in the book's first two chapters, signalling their roles as plot movers. They are the universal fairy tale *Sleeping Beauty* (ATU 410) and the Jewish story of *The Sky, the Well and the Rat*.

Ivan/Itzak Shlomo's first glimpse of an alternate reality occurs shortly before he emigrates. The Smetskis, now Refuseniks, find temporary refuge with a paternal second cousin, Marek, on his farm in the Carpathians. The boy is exploring a forest near the farm when he finds himself in a clearing at the edge of a Pit. In its center, a sleeping woman is lying on a pedestal rising up from a deep hollow. The vision is fleeting but introduces the motif of the Sleeping Beauty, who is Katerina here, the Princess of Taina, who Vanya/Itzak Shlomo will one day rescue. Soon afterward, the visas are miraculously granted and the family leaves for the USA. Ivan never tells his mother about the sleeping woman.

Time passes by. By 1991, Ivan is happily engaged to a Jewish girl, Ruthie, and has all but forgotten what he saw in the clearing. His mother, Esther, however, magically knows that Ivan has a prior marriage obligation that cannot be altered. She reminds Ivan of the old Jewish story, *The Sky, the Well and the Rat*, which she told to him as a child and which he has since studied in folklore class. A rabbinical student agrees to rescue a girl from a well if she agrees to sleep with him. She insists that he marry her and he undertakes to do so, as witnessed by the sky, the well and a rat. Upon returning home, he forgets his promises and marries another. It is not long before their two children die – one from a rat bite, and the other after falling down a well. He divorces his wife and returns to the girl (Card 1999: 18).

The next stage of Card's story starts in 1992, when Ivan arrives in the newly independent Ukraine to do a PhD on Russian fairy tales. "It was a mad project, he soon realized – trying to reconstruct the earliest versions of the fairy tales described in the Afanasyev collection in order to determine whether Propp's theory that all fairy tales in Russian were, structurally, a single fairy tale was (1) true or false and, if true, (2) rooted in some inborn psychologically true ur-tale or in some exceptionally powerful story inherent in Russian culture" (Card 1999: 22). Returning was not his wish but that of his parents, especially his mother. Yet, once back in Ukraine Ivan leaves behind the American version of life in the USSR as all terror and poverty, which had been installed in him during his studies, and instead feels the happiness of coming home. He decides to prove to himself that the woman sleeping in the clearing only exists in his dream and is no impediment to him marrying Ruthie. He returns to cousin Marek's farm, by then fully mechanised, goes into the forest – and again sees the sleeping woman on the pedestal. A star athlete, Ivan jumps over the hollow and kisses the woman, who awakes. The huge Bear who is

<sup>18</sup> Card uses form Itzak and not Itzhak – L.F.

guarding over the woman is climbing the pedestal, and Ivan's only escape is to propose marriage to the rescued woman. Card's princess has been cursed by Baba Yaga, who wants to vanquish Taina and rule over it. To stop her, Princess Katerina must marry and give birth to a child. The curse, unrelated to the fairy birthday wishes, is intended as an everlasting obstacle to marriage. The spindle is mentioned twice, but briefly and in passing – first, as Ivan's reference to a fairy tale motif, and then in Katerina's dim recollection of falling asleep (Card 1999: 54, 80). Ivan must follow Katerina to Taina where people perceive him as foolish. His behaviour is incompatible with their expectations – as in fairy tales about Ivan the Fool, and in the experience of new immigrants.<sup>19</sup> As a survival strategy, he mobilises his cultural capital – his proficiency in Church Slavonic<sup>20</sup> which helps him communicate in proto-Slavic, his professional knowledge of folklore and history, and his pragmatic familial flexibility. Having experienced becoming Jewish overnight in order to emigrate to the USA, in Taina he agrees to convert to Christianity, as is obligatory for the marriage. Even when legally wed, the couple shun physical contact. Their marriage is not consummated until much later, when they escape from Baba Yaga to the USA of the 1990s. This time, it is Katerina who becomes the immigrant, first in the Carpathian Mountains of independent Ukraine and then in the USA. The alienation gradually evaporates and love grows.<sup>21</sup>

Ivan's magical journey to Taina gives his doctorate a new angle. With his planned escape to the Present, he realises the potential of artifacts, which can be fabricated in the Past. To create the best artifact possible, he instructs the lame scribe Sergei to write down oral tales on the reverse side of an ancient parchment of the gospels, written in Old Church Slavonic, by still not canonised Kirill.<sup>22</sup> "He wanted stories about witches and sorcerers. About Baba Yaga. About Mikola Mozhaiski. About kings and queens, about lost children and wolves in the woods. (...) About Ilya of Murom" (Card 122–123).

Although Ivan realises the ethical dubiousness of his project, which Sergei would never have undertaken without his instruction, he is firm in his decision to complete it. He ensures that the parchment's carbon-14 molecules show eleven hundred years of radioactive decay to convince people that it is genuine. The plan works, making Ivan a respected professor in America and a cultural hero in the Ukraine, with a street named after him in Kiev. This street was once named after a communist who had slaughtered millions of Ukrainian kulaks. Ironically, Card sees no contradiction between Ivan's status as a Ukrainian cultural hero and the fact that it was granted to him for having discovered the earliest known versions of Russian rather than Ukrainian folktales. Simultaneously, Ivan is a king who retains the throne of Taina (Card 146–147, 383–384).

The partly-Jewish boy from Kiev thus becomes Ivan the Fool of Russian fairy tales and builds an international academic career in folklore studies. He travels repeatedly

<sup>19</sup> This paper does not address American sources of Card's plot, such as Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (Card 1999: 133–134).

<sup>20</sup> According to Card, Petr Smetski spoke to his son for 1 year in Church Slavonic (Card 1999: 14, 257), although the language was designed for religious purposes and had never been used as a vernacular.

<sup>21</sup> The Smetskis' life in the USA will be addressed in my next paper – *America and Americans in the Alternative Slavic Fantasy*.

<sup>22</sup> Card uses the Russian spelling Kirill rather than Cyril.

across the Pit that separates Past from Present – to wake the Sleeping Beauty, overpower Baba Yaga, and reconcile paganism with Judaism and Christianity.<sup>23</sup>

The idea of a modern man finding a sleeping medieval princess in a clearing came from Card's friend and business partner, Peter Johnson, and marked the beginning of his work on the novel (Vincent 2018). The source of the plot, according to Card himself, is Perrault's version of *Sleeping Beauty* and unspecified Russian folktales, which do not end with marriage. On the contrary, the marriage signals a new start as the princess dislikes her husband and tries to kill him (Card 1999: 71; Vincent 2018). Burkhardt compares Card's *Sleeping Beauty* with both those of Perrault and the brothers Grimm, in combination with Disney images and mentions Russian variants, which again are unspecified. As a sign of Russianness, Burkhardt points to the social standing of the hero, who may not be a prince (Burkhardt 2009: 241–242). Although in two Russian versions of ATU 410\* *Okameneloe tsarstvo* (*The Realm of Stone*), the hero is indeed a soldier or peasant rather than a prince, both end in a happy marriage without delay. Another relevant fact is that in the Russian versions and in that of Card the famous motif of birthday blessings from fairies to a new-born princess is completely absent. Instead, the big bird – the princess' sister – transforms the Tsardom into a realm of stone (Afanasev 1916: 204; Afanasiev 1985: 280–282). Still, neither Russian version has a sleeping princess. According to Dobrovolskaia, Russian folklore lacks the type of Sleeping beauty – ATU 410 (2021: 158). However, the sleeping beauty is the sole image from this fairy tale that is truly important for Card. His interest in delayed consummation of marriage can nevertheless be directly traced to Russian folklore. Two books here are key – *Morphology of the Folktale* and *Historical Roots of the Wonder Tale* by the same Vladimir Propp whose theory Card's protagonist Ivan/Itzak Shlomo Smetski wants to test in his PhD thesis (Propp 1968: 63–64, 73–74, 131–132; Propp 1986: 112–140, 298–299, 305–309; Propp 2012: 198–204). Propp analyses motifs and plots, which reflect initiation rites in the so-called “big houses in the woods”. Particularly important among these are *The Beauty in the Coffin*, *The Wife at her Husband's Wedding* and *The Husband at his Wife's Wedding*. According to Propp, in the period following initiation but prior to integration into the adult collective, young men had to live together in the woods in a kind of brotherhood. Women were forbidden from entering their houses, with two notable exceptions. Older women could be there as mothers to look after the young men, as could young girls, who stayed there as “sisters” during their own initiation rites. The word “sister” is used to obscure true gender relations. They acted as wives to their “brothers”. These group sexual encounters tended to morph into couples after leaving the big house, especially in the case of a child. The woman, however, had to “forget” her past. The path to a new life led through a ritual temporary death and the motif of a woman in her coffin.

According to Propp, both women and men made two marriages – a temporary group marriage in the big house in the woods, and a constant union as a couple at home as the

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<sup>23</sup> To my mind, Card's motif of the Bear as the god of winter on the clearing, that separates the two words later influenced Arden's image of a clearing with the Bear/the demon of summer on it. In both cases, the enemy later becomes an ally.



basis for a family. In some fairy tales, the hero marries twice or at least intends to marry a second time because he forgets his first wife. The abandoned first wife reminds him of their past, and the hero resumes the union, remarrying his wife from the woods/other world and abandoning or even killing his second bride. Examples of such plots are in *Morskoi Tsar' i Vasilisa Premudraia – The Sea Tsar and Vasilisa the Wise* (Afanasiev 1985: 137–142)<sup>24</sup> and *Peryshko Finista Iasna Sokola – Finist the Falcon* (Afanasiev 1985: 190–198; Zheleznova 1966).

The wife is not always good and faithful, and can be aggressive and cruel, behaviour sometimes caused by her lover, a monster. The nuptial night thus becomes a test: the bride may try to kill her husband and/or his magic helper, or to escape from him. Reconciliation between them, seen as a second marriage, signals normalisation. An example is the fairy tale *Beznogii i slepoi bogatyri – The Legless Knight and The Blind Knight* (Afanasiev 1985: 59–65; Afanasev 1916: 321–332).

The idea of the first betrothal being of greater value than the second is, as mentioned above, manifest in Card's novel through the Jewish folktale *The Sky, the Well and the Rat*. This story is known in written form from the Talmudic era but scholars believe it to be told orally prior to the Talmudic age. It has numerous folk versions and literary elaborations in various Jewish languages, e.g. Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino and Judeo-Arabic (Alexander 1998: 257). It forms the Jewish oikotype 930\*F *The Well and the Weasel as Witnesses*, one of the four Jewish oikotypes of the universal folktale *The Predestined Wife* ATU 930AA, discussed in detail by Aliza Shenhar.<sup>25</sup> Another oikotype, however, AT930\*J *Taming the Father-in-Law*, which refers to a boy of low origin and a princess, is even more relevant to Card's plot. Central to it is *King Solomon's daughter in a tower* in which the king has secluded his daughter in a helpless attempt to avoid her predestined marriage to a boy of unfit origin. In other stories of the oikotype of predestined marriage, it is mother and son and not the father who are at the centre. Importantly, Shenhar equates legends about an "imprisoned or sleeping hero" (Shenhar 1987: 33)<sup>26</sup>.

In one of the variations of this oikotype, a young Jewish scholar who is loyal to the commandments of the Torah and tradition is magically transferred against his will to a strange land where he is betrothed to a Christian princess. Transferred back, his heart remains with his bride. Both pine desperately for each other. The young man's father finds the bride, heals her and brings her to his son, but he has died of grief. His bride brings him back to life and the couple are reunited. In any case, the foreign princess always converts to Judaism because of her love for the Jewish boy. Intriguingly, this oikotype of a Jewish boy and a Christian princess is popular among Jews from Islamic countries (Shenhar 1987: 31–32, 34–37).

<sup>24</sup> The English translation of this fairy tale in Afanasev 1916: 243–255 lacks the second marriage.

<sup>25</sup> Shenhar wrote her paper addressing Aarne-Thompson's classification (AT) as Uther's reworking of it (ATU) has not been done yet.

<sup>26</sup> Prof. Eli Yassif who commented on my presentation at the annual folklore conference in Bar-Ilan University in 2022 suggested another Jewish folktale as a source of Card's story. A young man puts a ring on the finger of a sleeping woman whom he abandons without understanding the consequences. However, Ivan did not approach Katerina when he was 10.

The striking similarity between Card's plot and Shenhar's paper suggests it may be one of Card's actual sources, even though he uses the oikotype with a notable inversion. Instead of a Jewish scholar who studies the Torah, Ivan/Itzak Shlomo Smetski is a secular scholar whose Jewishness is pragmatic and superficial. Instead of the Torah, he studies non-Jewish culture. His mother, the most Jewish person among the Smetskis, sends her son away from his Jewish bride, Ruthie, to his predestined Christian wife. In Taina, he pragmatically converts to Christianity, and back in the USA continues to live as a secular Jew. The Jewish Ruthie, influenced by Baba Yaga, tries to kill Ivan but he is saved by his mother's witchcraft. According to the same logic of inversion, it is not the Jewish King Solomon who should be tamed, but a Christian King Matfei who needs the legitimate heir, but hates the idea of unsuitable son-in-law. Katerina's conversion to Judaism is not part of the narrative. It may be assumed that she did so as in the USA her children are registered as Jewish. Yet, all become Christian during their regular visits to Taina (Card 1999: 291, 387).

Card's alternative Slavic fantasy is largely based on non-Slavic folklore, be it the universal type of a *Sleeping Beauty* or Jewish oikotypes of the *Predestined Wife*. He not only makes his protagonist a folklorist, but also makes intense use of folklore scholarship. In her research into folklorists as characters in contemporary American fantastika, Shelley Ingram claims they are professionally incompetent. Card's Ivan Smetski refutes this. Capable of being both a folk hero and a scholar, he anticipates the emerging Russian fantastika tradition which treats folklorists as people with magical power (Fialkova 2020a; Ingram 2019).

## CONCLUSIONS

All of the authors discussed in this paper create their alternative Slavic fantasy using plots and motifs from fairy tales and mythology of both folk and literary origin. They either ignore the Russian epic *bylinas* or simply mention them in passing, like Morwood and Card. This is of particular interest because *bylinas*, although containing various monsters, address Russia's assumed historical past rather than the non-existent world. Where epic poetry is relevant – for example, as the source of magic – Morwood alludes to the *Iliad*. The sources of the plots openly manifested by the authors could be unreliable. Thus, Arden's trilogy is indebted not so to *Morozko* as to Marshak's play *Twelve Months*, while Card's novel not to the Russian versions of *Sleeping Beauty*, but to the contamination of the Russian folktales with the motif of delayed marriage and the Jewish oikotypes of the Predestined wife. While Valente's direct allusions to Gogol's *Viy* are merely superficial, hidden parallels with Bulgakov are evident.

Folklore characters freely merge with literary creations and historical figures. In Arden's world, for instance, Baba Yaga is a former lover of Pushkin's Chernomor and they are great grandparents of Alexander Peresvet (Lightbringer), a hero of the Battle of Kulikovo. Valente's Koschei the Deathless and Baba Yaga become siblings with *Viy* from Gogol's eponymous story, while Zmei Gorinich (Zmey Gorynych, a snake) is the son of the dragon from Lake Baikal and Genghis Khan; in Stalinist times, he convicts and

kills “enemies of the people”. Many of the female characters are proactive and powerful (Morewood, Arden, Skye, Valente), sometimes even androgynous (Arden), which lead them to husbands/mates from the supernatural world.

Chronicles are not juxtaposed with folklore as reality to fiction because they are freely manipulated by the rulers – commissioned, torn and edited (Morwood). Authors relate to folklore as an important historical database and see linguistic ability as a source of magical power. It is therefore logical that the professional folklorist proficient in languages prospers in both worlds (Card).

Alternative Slavic fantasy recreates different historical periods and events with varying levels of accuracy, from Kievan Rus in the 9th–13th centuries (Morwood, Card), the Principality of Moscow in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Arden), the Russian Empire of 1805–1826 (Skye), Russia during 1913(?)–1952 (Valente) and Ukraine between the 1970s–1990s (Card). The plots play out in fictional states such as Khorlov and Koldunov (Morwood) and Taina (Card), and in recognisable Moscow, Saint Petersburg and Kiev (Arden, Skye, Valente, Card). In many instances, famous historical events are totally reconstructed, as happens to the Northern Crusade in Morwood’s novel. It features the only conflict between Rus and the westerners in the novels under discussion. Similarly, changes occurred in the actions of Oleg of Ryazan in the Battle of Kulikovo in Arden’s trilogy and in the fate of the Decembrists in Skye’s diology. Only this last one, however, offers an alternative outcome. More typically, authors expose ‘how it really was’, creating a crypto-history rather than an alternative one. The problematic character of the chronicles, themselves manipulated, helps them do this.

The phenomenon that attracts almost all of the authors is *dvoeverie* – the duality of paganism and Christianity. Whereas this can be freely explored in a mythological mode, in historical fantasy there is always a tension between the two, from mild (Morwood, Skye) to hostile (Arden). The conflict between paganism and Christianity is perceived as the factor which negatively influences the country’s safety. Consequently, the authors strive to bring the two together for a reconciliation. The idea of unity and peace between former enemies is generally very important in this type of historical fantasy. Although there are enough historical events, featuring the Russian or Soviet army as the aggressors, they do not influence the plots. As a result, contrary to current political realities in alternative Slavic fantasy Russia does not pose a threat to the Western world. Aggression is often directed inward against Russian citizens and Russian pagan spirits.

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РУСЬ, РОССИЯ И УКРАИНА В АЛЬТЕРНАТИВНОМ СЛАВЯНСКОМ  
ФЭНТЕЗИ АНГЛОЯЗЫЧНЫХ ПИСАТЕЛЕЙ  
ЧАСТЬ 2. РОССИЯ И УКРАИНА в 19 И 20 ВЕКАХ

ЛАРИСА ФИАЛКОВА



Термин альтернативная славянская фантастика определяет англоязычное фэнтези, сюжеты которого развиваются в славянских или квазиславянских странах на базе славянского или квазиславянского фольклора. Данная публикация – это окончание статьи, общее введение к которой и первая часть, посвященная образам условной средневековой Руси, опубликованы в предыдущем номере журнала *Studia Mythologica Slavica*, 2021, 24: 13–32 <https://ojs.zrc-sazu.si/sms/article/view/10419/9566>.

Сюжет дилогии Эвелин Скай разворачивается, в основном, в Санкт-Петербурге в 1805–1826 годах, но исторически переносится в Казахскую степь, актуализируя имперскую проблематику. Знаковые Петербургские топонимы, например, Невский проспект, Васильевский остров, Чернышев мост и Зимний дворец, соседствуют не только с вымышленными Овчининим и Летним островами, но даже с Волшебным Дуплом, в котором хранится

стратегический запас российской магии. Квазиисторический фон строится на сращивании известных исторических событий – битвы при Аустерлице и восстания декабристов - с откровенным вымыслом. Контаминация имен российских императоров вызывает к жизни никогда не существовавшего Павла Александровича Романова, пощадившего декабристов. Несмотря на упоминания Бабы Яги, основой романа является не русский фольклор, а сказка *Золушка*, заявленная и на топонимическом (название кондитерской), и на фабульном уровне. В дилогии Скай Золушкин бал сливается с первым балом Наташи Ростовской (*Война и мир* Толстого). Как и в трилогии Арден, рассмотренной в первой части статьи, только объединение языческих и христианских сил способно обеспечить безопасность и процветание России.

Топонимика чрезвычайно важна и в романе Кэтрин Валенте, где смена названия города (Санкт-Петербург-Петроград-Ленинград) и переименования улицы (Гороховая- Комиссарская (sic!)-Дзержинская) являются вехами времени. Сюжет охватывает период между примерно 1913 и 1942-м годами, включая Первую мировую, гражданскую и Вторую мировую войны, заканчиваясь блокадой Ленинграда. Дело врачей 1952–1953 годов лишь упомянуто вне сюжетного развития и общей хронологии. Украина упомянута дважды в контексте ее вечных страданий. Квазигородское российское пространство сочетается с фантастическим царством Кошца Бессмертного, царя Жизни, управляющего миром совместно с Виём (персонажем одноименной повести Гоголя), ставшего у Валенте Кашеевым братом и царем Смерти, и их общей сестрой сказочной бабой Ягой. Фольклорная основа романа - сказка *Марья Моревна* эпизодически дополняется отсылкам к сказкам *Василиса Прекрасная*, *Царевна-лягушка* и о *Елене Прекрасной*. Помимо персонажей русского фольклора в романе фигурирует вила, женское мифологическое существо с лебедиными крыльями, популярное в фольклоре южных славян. У Валенте вила русифицируется, став мадам Лебедевой. В отличие от явных отсылок к русскому фольклору, к творчеству Пушкина, Гоголя и Ахматовой, аллюзии на романы Булгакова *Мастер и Маргарита* и *Белая гвардия* автором завуалированы. Обнаружить их позволяет текстуальный анализ. Как и в творчестве Арден, рассмотренном в первой части статьи, исторические персонажи в хронологически более раннем романе Валенте сращены с героями фольклора. Например, товарищ Горинич (sic!) управитель российской фабрики арестов, - сын женщины-дракона из озера Байкал и Чингиз-хана. Роман завершается посмертным примирением жертв и палачей в Кашеевом царстве Яичка (sic!), визуальный образ которого, возможно, навеян яйцами Фаберже.

Сюжет романа Орсона Скотта Карда развивается в трех основных хронотопах – в условном древнерусском государстве Тайна, пребывающем в постоянном 9-м веке, в Украине, как советской (1970-е годы), так и постсоветской (1990-е годы), и в США в те же исторические периоды. Путешествие между тремя хронотопами, выживание и карьерный успех Ивана/Ицака-Шломо Сметского в

каждом из них, будь он то сказочным королем, то американским профессором или культурным героем Украины, – это и эмиграция во времени или только в пространстве, и сказочное чудо, и реализация профессиональных знаний героем-фольклористом, человеком смешанного славянского (украинского?) и еврейского происхождения. В основе сюжета романа - *Спящая красавица*, сюжет которой в русском фольклоре отсутствует, и еврейские легенды о предназначенной жене. У Карда, как и у следовавших за ним Валенте и Арден, намечено сращивание фольклорных и исторических персонажей, бабы Яги и княгини Ольги. Знаками независимой Украины в романе Карда являются украинский язык, переименование киевских улиц и механизация фермы в Карпатских горах. В отличие от Морвуда, Киевская Русь у которого связана и с Александром Невским, и с едва упомянутыми запорожскими казаками, т.е. и с Россией, и с Украиной, средневековая Тайна у Карда ни к России, ни к Белоруссии не отношения не имеет. Вместе с тем, героем Украины Иван/Ицак Шломо Сметский становится за открытие, а точнее, за фабрикацию пергамента с русскими, а не украинскими сказками. Образы украинского фольклора в романе не встречаются.

Характерной чертой альтернативного славянского фэнтези является свободное конструирование квазиславянского фольклора и сращивание фольклорных персонажей с литературными и историческими. За редким исключением (Скай), манипуляции с историческими событиями не приводят к результату, отличающемуся от известного. Исторические документы, подверженные манипуляциям, теряют убедительность, а сказки становятся историческим источником. Знание языков и фольклора соразмерно по значимости оружию и магии. Идеалом представляются двоеверие и примирение недавних врагов, превращенных в союзников.

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# Чага, кощей и живые шерешеры

Константин Рахно

Članek obravnava interpretacijo odlomka v *Pesmi o Igorjevem pohodu*, znameniti anonimni srednjeveški epski pesmi. Obravnavani odlomek je avtorjev nagovor Vsevolodu Jurijeviču, vojaško močnemu velikemu vladimirskemu knezu. Podoba Vsevoloda je pretirana. Podobno kot starodavnim perzijskim kraljem mu pripisujejo sposobnost kaznovanja rek Volge in Don, ki so jih takrat zasedli Polovci. Istočasno se uporabljata imeni sužnja (*chaga*) in sužnej (*koshchey*), ki sta najverjetneje iranskega izvora. Severnoiranski mit prikazuje tudi Vsevolodove vazale, sinove kneza Gleba Rostislaviča Rjazanskega, žive puščice (*šereširjem*) za ogromno balisto (*tir-i-charkh*), ki se uporablja na vzhodu. Vzporednice s to podobo je mogoče zaslediti v nartskem epu o Osetih, kjer neranljivi Nart Batraz deluje kot puščica iz takšnega orožja.

Ključne besede: Pesem o Igorjevem pohodu, mitološke metafore, nartska epika, iranske izposojenke, skitsko-sarmatska mitologija, osetska folklor

The article looks at the interpretation of an episode in the *Tale of Igor's Campaign*, a famous anonymous medieval epic poem. The episode is the author's address to Vsevolod Yuryevich, the militarily powerful Grand Prince of Vladimir. The image of Vsevolod is exaggerated. Similar to the ancient Persian kings, he is credited with the ability to chastise the Volga and the Don rivers, then occupied by the Polovtsian people. At the same time, the names of a female slave (*chaga*) and a male slave (*koshchey*) are used, most likely of Iranian origin. The North Iranian myth also portrays Vsevolod's vassals, the sons of Prince Gleb Rostislavich of Ryazan, as living arrows (*shereshyrs*) for the huge ballista (*tir-i-charkh*) used in the East. Parallels of this image can be traced in the Nart epic of the Ossetians, where the invulnerable Nart Batraz acts as an arrow from such a weapon.

Key words: *Tale of Igor's Campaign*, mythological metaphors, Nart epic, Iranian borrowings, Scythian-Sarmatian mythology, Ossetian folklore

Одним из наиболее сложных для толкования эпизодов «Слова о полку Игореве» является обращение автора к великому князю владимирскому Всеволоду Юрьевичу, обладавшему большой военной мощью:

Великыи княже Всьволоде!  
 Не мыслию ти прелетѣти издалеча  
 отьня злата стола поблюсти!

Ты бо можеши Волгу веслы раскропити,  
 а Донъ шелома выльяти!  
 Аже бы ты былъ, то была бы  
 чага по ногатъ,  
 а кощеи по резанъ,  
 ты бо можеши посуху  
 живыми шерешеры стрѣляти,  
 удалыми сыны Глѣбовы... (Слово о полку Игореве 1950, 21–22, 28–29, 44).

Данный панегирик Всеволоду конструирует его образ как социально старшего по отношению к автору поэмы и наделяет владимирского князя чертами, явно отсылающими к персонажам мифологии. Несмотря на общую изученность пассажа с исторической точки зрения, эти аллюзии пока ещё не были предметом исследования. Поиск фольклорно-эпических параллелей к ним представляется важным для осознания связей поэмы как части литературной традиции Киевской Руси с устными поэтическими текстами славян и их соседей. При этом следует учитывать, что интерпретация присутствующих здесь мифологических метафор неразрывно сопряжена как с историческим контекстом, так и с этимологией употреблённых неславянских лексем.

Одной из наиболее обоснованных является гипотеза, по которой автором поэмы был галицкий княжич Владимир Ярославич. В таком случае его информированность и сам факт воззвания не являются странными. Всеволод Юрьевич, будучи моложе на три года, являлся его и княгини Ярославны дядей по матери, следовательно, должен был, согласно обычаям Киевской Руси, защищать их интересы и оказывать им помощь. Именно у Всеволода в Суздале изгнанник Владимир Ярославич побывал в середине 1183 года. Вероятно, он стал свидетелем упомянутого успешного похода Всеволода Юрьевича на волжских болгар в мае-июне 1183 года. Переяславский престол, о котором идёт речь, как и киевский, действительно являлся для Всеволода отчим: дважды, в 1132 и в 1133–1135 годах, его занимал Юрий Долгорукий. Но поскольку в апреле 1184 года пожар уничтожил столицу Всеволода, Владимир-Суздальский, его княжий двор и церкви, включая церковь Богородицы Златоверхую, в которой покоилась мать Владимира, княгиня Ольга, великий князь действительно был не в состоянии выступить в поход. Именно поэтому к нему нет призыва встать на защиту Игоря, а только горькое сожаление о его отсутствии (Махновец 1989, 127–132).

По словам автора поэмы, Всеволод мог бы даже покарать Волгу и Дон, занятые степняками, подобно тому, как наказывали реки и моря древнеперсидские цари (Геродот 1972, 71, 325). Эта гиперболизация исследователям понятна, поскольку на помощь от Всеволода мог надеяться не только Владимир Ярославич, но и его бывший тесть, великий князь киевский Святослав Всеволодович, в своё время предоставивший Всеволоду значительную помощь против Волжской Булгарии (Яценко 2006, 37). Но главным камнем преткновения являются загадочные неславянские слова в обращении к нему. Первое из них, чага, встречается в Ипатьевской летописи

под 1170 годом: «И толико взяша полона множество, якоже всимъ рускимъ воемъ наполнится до изобилья: и колодники, и чагами, и дѣтми ихъ, и челядью, и скоты, и конми» (ПСРЛ 1871, 369).

Наиболее логичное толкование предложил уже Николай Карамзин. Приведа летописный текст, он процитировал поэму со своим переводом: «пленницы, жены варваров, продавались бы по ногате, а отроки их... по резани», заметив, что издатели поэмы «не разумели слова чага, ни кощя, приняв их за собственные имена» (Карамзин 1842, 169). С тем, что чага – невольница, согласились Емельян Огоновский (Огоновский 1876, 93) и Александр Потебня (Потебня 1914, 100).

Тем не менее, востоковед Илья Березин к объяснению слова привлек тюркские языки, пояснив, что «чага по-тюркски значит: дикое дитя. Может быть, и лучше объяснять таким образом, потому что чаге противопоставляется в песне кашей. В татарском чага употребляется как неизвестного значения прибавка при слове «бала» – дитя» (Березин 1854, 71). Фёдор Корш предложил северомонгольское чага ‘мальчик’ (Korsch 1885, 644). Платон Мелиоранский сперва обратил внимание на значение слова в контексте поэмы, но затем предался всё тем же пространственным объяснениям: «Значение этого слова из контекста ясно: это половецкая «девушка». По Абу Хайяну... чаба значит ‘цыплёнок, птенец’, на урянхайском диалекте «чаба» значит ‘медвежонок’, на хамийском – ‘ребёнок’; по джагатайскому словарю Шейха Сулеймана Бухарского (Стамбул, 1298 г. мусульм. эры) ...чаба значит, между прочим, ‘дитя, ребенок, цыпленок’. В диалекте, из которого русские заимствовали это слово (половецком?) значение его было, значит, более специальное, а именно ‘дитя женского пола, девочка, девушка’. Остаток именно такого значения слова... чаба можно видеть в казак-киргизском диалекте в обороте «бала шаба»..., который значит ‘все дети’...» (Мелиоранский 1902, 23–24). Понимая значение слова, он, тем не менее, пытался отыскать ему тюркские параллели, заранее допуская, что оно половецкое и что его значение вполне могло кардинальным образом отличаться от имеющихся в современных языках тюркской группы.

Историк русско-половецких отношений Андрей Попов пошёл дальше: «Чага. Это тюркское слово означает, собственно, ‘дитя’, ‘ребёнок’. Встречалось оно и у монголов, но редко... в знаменитой золотоордынской рукописи на бересте, найденной при раскопках несколько лет назад. В летописи встречается один раз... Возможно, что в летописном тексте следует читать «и чагами – детми их», так что чага означает ‘дитя’ и здесь, понятна и высокая оценка чаги, сравнительно с кощеем (дети и подростки ценились дороже взрослых). Впрочем, возможно, что тюркский термин передавался в русской среде уже не совсем точно, принимая иные смысловые оттенки». Допускалось и иное толкование: от «туркмен. чагалы ‘с ребёнком’, ‘с детьми’, ‘имеющий ребёнка’, ‘имеющий детей’ (чага ‘ребёнок’, чагаламак ‘рождать’); узбек. чакалак ‘ребёнок’ (грудной) и пр. Русский летописец мог поставить чага вместо слова чагалы или что-нибудь в этом роде» (Попов 1949, 116). Иными словами, Попов предложил отказаться от ясного из контекста значения термина и подменить его тем значением, которое созвучное слово имеет в тюркских языках, даже если это противоречит смыслу поэмы и сообщения летописи.

Более категоричным по поводу загадочного слова чага оказался австрийский славист и ориенталист Карл Генрих Менгес, который согласился его считать половецким, несмотря на отсутствие в словарях кипчакского наречия. «Ст.-тур., чаг. ...*şağa* ‘дитя, детёныш животного, особенно цыплёнок’, чаг. *şağa* ‘дитя’, нов.-уйг. *bala-şağa*... ‘то же’, кирг. ‘то же’... Тув. *şağa* ‘медвежонок’... – табуистическое выражение, не может рассматриваться как непосредственный эквивалент тюркского слова..., поскольку общетюркск. *ç-* выступает как *š-* в восточных языках Южной Сибири. Но тув. *şağa* должно рассматриваться как заимствование из монг., где оно также встречается, ср. письм.-монг. *саха* <\**çaqa*..., халх. *с’ахх* ‘младенец’. В тур. *şağa* известно начиная с турецкого перевода «*Futūhu ʾš-Šām*» [«Завоевание Сирии»] Мухаммада ибн Омар Вакиди (1388–1392 гг.) со значением ‘птенец, не имеющий оперения’...; в современном турецком оно известно по диалектам Анатолии, кроме её восточной части, со значением ‘дитя’ как синоним *balaža*...» (Менгес 1979, 170). Славист Макс Фасмер в своём этимологическом словаре русского языка не только, со ссылкой на Мелиоранского и Корша, причислил чага к тюркским заимствованиям, но и приписал для этого значение ‘девушка’ киргизскому (на самом деле казахскому) шага (Фасмер 1986, 309). В действительности оно означает ‘дитя’ и отдельно от приведённого Березиным и Мелиоранским словосочетания бала-шага не употребляется (Кенесбаев 1987, 260).

Тюрколог Николай Баскаков подавал все гипотезы ориенталистов уже как доказанный факт: «Нет сомнений в том, что чага в «Слове» представляет собой тюркское заимствование в значении «девушка-невольница, рабыня», – хотя в тюркских языках – древних и современных... оно сохранилось только в значении «ребёнок, цыплёнок, детёныш»... Древнерусским же языком и в «Слове», и в летописях слово чага было усвоено только в значении «невольница, пленница»...» (Баскаков 1976, 228; Баскаков 1985, 157). В чём причина того, что присутствует только такое, существенно иное значение, он не говорил. И почему нельзя засомневаться, что это тюркское заимствование, – тоже. Развитие значения ‘девочка’ из значения ‘ребёнок’ действительно встречается, например, общемонгольское \**keüken* ‘ребёнок’ дало ‘девочка, дочка’ в ордосском, бурятском, калмыцком языках (Nugteren 2011, 422). Но для протомонгольского \**čaka*, прототюркского \**čaka* ‘новорожденный ребенок, детеныш’ такого развития не зафиксировано (Starostin, Dybo, Mudrak 2003, 437).

Итак, существует некое странное обстоятельство. Во-первых, значение слова стопроцентно понятно из контекста литературных памятников. Во-вторых, во всех тюркских языках, которым оно приписывается, слово со сходным звучанием имеет совершенно иное значение, которое славянским языкам неизвестно. Предполагать, что оно когда-либо его имело, не приходится, поскольку не существует фактов, указывающих на это. Причины изменения значения, если оно имело место, неизвестны. Никаких данных о принадлежности этого слова половцам тоже нет. Логично было бы допустить, что произошла ошибка и что следует поискать соответствия термина поэмы в языках других групп, где оно означало бы невольника, невольницу. При этом последние должны иметь отношение к древней и средневековой истории Северного Причерноморья и близлежащих степей. В качестве таковых вполне правомерно могли бы рассматриваться североиранские языки.

Действительно, чага на самом деле соответствует осетинскому *saġar* ‘раб’, *saġajrag* ‘то же самое’, родственному ваханскому *ġokár* ‘слуга’, ‘служитель’, употреблявшемуся в отношении касты слуг – семейств, из которых набиралась ранее прислуга для правителей, таджикскому *ġokár* ‘слуга’, сарыкольскому *ġukar* ‘слуга’, ‘прислужник’ (Абаев 1958, 286; Дюмезиль 1976, 154; Стеблин-Каменский 1999, 128). Шугнанское *ġokār*, *ġakar* – слуга, служитель, название одного из кланов в Баджуве (Карамшоев 1999, 380). В Ишкашине «существовала также каста «слуг» (ġokar...); именем их называется и теперь одна местность, откуда селение уже исчезло, и где остались только поля. В селении *ġokar* жили такие «слуги», на обязанности которых лежало окарауливание войска во время похода, а также поставка прислуги правителям. Земли *ġokar*ов были разбросаны по разным селениям, и в настоящее время эта каста, смешавшись с остальными жителями, не только не составляет отдельной единицы, но, по большей части, забыла свое происхождение. Такое же селение, с тем же названием *ġokar*, но с более сохранившимися традициями, существует в Зебаке; в этой стране и поныне удержалось деление на арбобства, существовавшее ранее в Ишкашине. По этой административной системе, на семь арбобств приходится одно, называемое *ġokar*, и хотя селения, входящие в состав его, разбросаны между другими населенными пунктами Зебака, принадлежащими к другим арбобствам, они, тем не менее, составляют одно арбобство; очевидно, этот пережиток старого строя указывает на прежний порядок, по которому каждая каста имела свое отдельное управление» (Андреев, Половцов 1911, 9). В значении ‘раб, холоп, дворовой слуга, челядь, вольноотступник’ иранский термин «чагар» распространился в различных языках Северного Кавказа, Дагестана и Центральной Азии.

На древность этого слова указывают персидское (у Фирдоуси) *ġakar* ‘слуга’, пехлевийское *ġakar*, хорезмийское *j’kug*, согдийское *ġ’ug*, скифское собственное имя *Θιαγαρος* (Танаис). Усматривают его и в роксоланском племенном названии сагадари, упомянутом императором Юлианом. Это производное от удвоенной индоиранской основы *ka-* ‘делать’. Скифская и осетинская форма близки согдийской (Абаев 1958, 286; Стеблин-Каменский 1999, 128; Туаллагов 2001, 144; Зураев 2014, 98). Именно так называлась охрана богатых согдийских купцов, которую они оставляли у себя дома, уезжая в далёкие торговые экспедиции (Frye 1998, 81). Китайские источники передают это слово как *che-chieh* (Golden 2006, 21).

Однако в поэме речь идет о женщинах зависимого сословия. Действительно, в сасанидском судебнике *zan-i ġakar* – ‘наложница’. Сожительство с ней соединяло конкубинат с правами младших жен. Этот термин часто встречается в персидских текстах в форме *ġakar* и означает, по крайней мере, в диалекте гебров, конкубину, наложницу. Согласно позднейшим персидским взглядам, только дети мужского пола от брака с *ġakar* должны быть приняты в семью. По мнению исследователей, термин восходит к древним североиранским языкам (Иностранцев 1917, 29–31). Новоперсидская форма, кроме обозначения слуги, подмастерья, имела значение ‘горничная’ (Чёнг 2008, 244). У нуристанцев Гиндукуша это слово (в английской транскрипции *jukog*) употреблялось именно в значении ‘женщина’ (Robertson 1896, 180; Стеблин-Каменский 1999, 128). Таким образом, чага действительно вполне

могла означать женщину-невольницу, а словообразовательное соотношение между киеворусским чага и осетинским сагаг соответствует малоизученному соотношению между славянским хата и осетинским хædzæg (Абаев 1989, 160–161; Бубенок 1997, 163). Характерна в данном славянском заимствовании и начальная аффриката ч. При фонетической адаптации сармато-аланских и осетинских слов с начальным ц этот звук в славянских языках последовательно заменяется на ч: с'амтаг – чамра, сæррæг – чапурок, чапарка, сугv, сiгwæ, сiгwæ – чапра, суbug, cubug – чупырка, чубурок, сугхун, сугхун – чурок, сyt, сiтæ – почёт, чтить, честь, сухт, сiгd – чигит и т.д. (Абаев 1958, 301, 317, 319–320, 326–330; Абаев 1965, 31).

Уже историк и филолог Пётр Бутков, изучая сословную систему народов Кавказа, не сомневался, «что половецкие чаги суть те же чагары...» (Бутков 1821, 38–39). Позже князь Павел Вяземский точно так же пришёл к выводу, что кощей и чаги – это пленные рабы, а «чага» напомнила ему об одном из крепостных сословий Кабарды, и он отождествил её с чагарами – крепостными в Кабарде, Осетии и Ингушетии (Вяземский 1873, 100, 271). Вяземский уверенно объяснял, что «чага – пленница, кощей – пленник и раб» (Вяземский 1873, 287). К сожалению, их наблюдения не были ни замечены, ни оценены.

Очень схоже сложилась ситуация с кощеем. Это слово упоминается в поэме ещё два раза: «Ту Игорь князь высъдъ изъ сѣдла злата, а въ сѣдло кощиево»; «Стрѣляй, господине, Кончака, поганого кощея, за землю Рускую, за раны Игоревы, буего Святславича!» (Слово о полку Игореве 1950, 19, 22, 22, 30, 42, 44). В Ипатьевской летописи под 1170 годом кощей упомянуты рядом с седельниками – конюхами, седлавшими коней: «...Пусти на воропъ сѣдельники своѣ и кощѣѣ» (ПСРЛ 1871, 369–370). Другие случаи употребления слова кощей в Ипатьевской летописи, в Новгородской летописи и Пискаревском летописце тоже указывают на их принадлежность к зависимому населению, пленникам, которым нельзя было доверять: «бысть вѣсть половцемъ отъ кощѣя отъ Гаврилкова отъ Иславича, оже идуць на нѣ князи Русьтии» (ПСРЛ 1871, 369); «Убиша Володимири князя Андрея..., бяше съ нимъ одинъ кощей малъ» (ПСРЛ 1843, 16; ПСРЛ 1978, 78).

В первом издании поэмы кощей фигурирует как имя собственное половца. Ошибочность этой трактовки сразу стала очевидна. Филолог Яков Пожарский отметил, что кощеями назывались отроки, которые окружали князей (Пожарский 1819, 68). По мнению литературоведа Дмитрия Дубенского, «так называли младших княжеских отроков, пленников и рабов» (Дубенский, 1844, 112). Такой авторитетный исследователь, как Елпидифор Барсов, тщательно проанализировал употребление слова кощей в киеворусских летописях и, следом за своими предшественниками, предположил, что оно означало «пленника-раба» и просто «человека низкого, коварного, неблагодарного» (Барсов 1889, 397–399). Данная трактовка вполне обоснована.

Вместе с тем, некоторые исследователи сделали попытку произвести слово кощей от тюркского термина кошчы. Последний имеет целый ряд значений, но в смысле пленника или раба никогда не используется. Это значение ему без особых оснований пытаются придать тюркологи. Владимир Каллаш с опорой на

узбекский язык доказывал, что кощей – «годовой работник, имеющий от хозяина землю, семена, и волов, а... кроме того, ещё и пищу; на обязанности кошчи (кощи?) лежат все вообще работы по посеву и уборке хлеба, за исключением лишь жнитва» (Каллаш 1890, 112–113). Мелиоранский пробовал реконструировать слово кошчы «состоящий при кочевом поезде, обозный» (Мелиоранский 1902, 19). Его этимологию повторил Эрих Бернекер (Berneker 1908-1913, 586). Митрополит Илларион (Огиенко), исходя из тюркских языков, видел в кошее 'работника на поле' (Илларион 1967, 183). Печально известный Олжас Сулейменов возводил это слово к вымышленному им древнеказахскому кощчи 'кочевник' (Сулейменов 1975, 16–18). Макс Фасмер в своём этимологическом словаре, сославшись на Мелиоранского, выводил кощей от нигде не засвидетельствованного, несуществующего тюркского кошчи 'невольник' (Фасмер 1986, 362). Елизавета Шипова указала на казахское косшы 'прислуга во время путешествия' (Шипова 1976, 202). Менгес, помимо узбекского кошчи 'пахарь, земледелец, крестьянин', облюбовал казахское слово кошшу – 'погонщик вьючных лошадей' (Менгес, 1979, 113). Баскаков предложил каракалпакские слова косшы 'сопровождающий в пути', ат косшы 'сопровождающий лошадей (на обязанности которого лежит уход за лошадьми в пути)', 'свита', 'пахарь', откуда и позднее косшы уймы 'союз бедноты' (Баскаков 1976, 229; Баскаков 1985, 158). Значение узника они не имеют, да и возникли уже с переходом тюркских народов к земледелию. Гипотетические построения Менгеса и Баскакова закрепились в исторических и этимологических словарях (Словарь 1980, 398; Этимологічний 1989, 70). Согласно археологу Светлане Плетнёвой, кощей и вовсе был не пленным, не рабом, а, напротив, главой Половецкого клана, якобы называвшегося кош (Плетнева 1990, 129, 133). Но такое Половецкое слово вообще не засвидетельствовано в источниках.

На фоне этих неудачных этимологий можно выдвинуть предположение о родстве термина кощей с осетинским хаст 'плен', 'ссылка', 'ссылный'. Это лексикализованное прошедшее причастие от хæссун 'уносить', которое, в свою очередь, восходит к иранскому \*kaš-, \*kař-, как и сходные основы в хорезмийском, согдийском, ягнобском, персидском, пуштунском, мунджанском, ишканинском и других иранских языках (Абаев 1989, 143, 189; Эдельман 2011, 299–300, 304). От этого же корня происходят хорезмийское *prk'sy-* 'заточить в тюрьму' (от *-paikāšja-*), согдийское *prk'* 'заточение', согдийское буддийское и манихейское *prkuš-*, манихейское и христианское *prquš-* 'арестовывать, заточать, запирать', согдийское христианское *prquš-* 'ограничивать, заточать в тюрьму, прятать', бактрийское *лдоҳарл-* 'сдерживать, удерживать; арестовывать' (от *-pati-karda-*) (Эдельман 2011, 304). Поэтому и кощей как обозначение пленника вполне может быть производным от иранского корня \*kaš-, при контаминации со славянской лексикой типа \*košь(jь), киеворусского и русско-церковнославянского кощъ, кощии, \*koščanь(jь), \*koščavь(jь) (Этимологический 1984, 186–187).

На шерешеры, с которыми автор поэмы метафорически сравнивает пять сыновей рязанского князя Глеба Ростиславича – Романа, Игоря, Владимира и Святослава, особенно часто обращают внимание неоскептики (Брайчевский 2005, 178–179).

Впрочем, понятно, что это специальная военная терминология и не орудие, из которого стреляли, а то, чем стреляли. Создаётся впечатление, что «шереширами» названы какие-то экзотические снаряды, о которых на Руси знали, но на вооружении их не было, иначе это слово часто употреблялось бы в киеворусских памятниках (Скляренко 2003, 68).

Действительно, уже первые издатели поэмы сопоставили их упоминание с летописным сообщением, как в 1184 году половецкий хан Кончак собирался «грады рускыѣ ...пожеши огньмъ, бяше бо обрѣль мужа такового бесурменина, иже стрѣляше живымъ огньмъ, бяху же у нихъ луци тузи самострѣльнии, одва 50 мужъ можашеть напращи». Согласно дополнениям Василия Татищева, каждый «укрѣпленъ быть на возу великомъ». В битве на Хороле половецкое войско было разгромлено, понеся большие потери, и не успело воспользоваться своим техническим превосходством, применив свои метательные машины. Кончак бежал, но Владимиру Глебовичу Рязанскому и Мстиславу Романовичу Смоленскому удалось захватить в плен младшую жену Кончака, «и оного бесурменина яша, у него же бяшетъ живой огонь, то и того ко Святославу приведоша со устроенымъ» (ПСРЛ 1871, 428–429; Татищев 1774, 259). Таким образом, именно благодаря доблести одного из сыновей Глеба Ростиславича страшные самострелы были обезврежены.

Истолкованию из славянских языков слово не поддаётся, разве что в сказке из Архангельской губернии присутствует «ящерка-шерошерочка» (Афанасьев 1863, 92). Но Платон Мелиоранский обратил внимание на то, что искусник, умевший стрелять живым огнём, попал на службу к Кончаку с мусульманского Востока, где в то время действительно существовали огромные катапульты и самострелы-баллисты, называвшиеся по-персидски чарх, то есть «колесо», – из-за блока, натягивавшего их тетиву. Колесо (чарх) натягивало скрученные жилы или веревку, которыми выбрасывалась стрела (тир). Существовали баллисты, которые выбрасывали сразу до 10 и более стрел. Именно такие, видимо, и приобрёл Кончак, наняв в придачу военного специалиста-мусульманина, умеющего из них стрелять. Зажигательный снаряд такого громадного самострела именовался тир-и-чарх. Он был известен и у арабов в XII веке. Горючим материалом для него служила нефть. Именно этот термин употребляется у персидских хронистов Джувейни, Рашид ад-Дина и Мирхонда. В частности, Джувейни, описывая взятие монголами Самарканда в 1220 году, указывает, что укрепившиеся в мечети защитники города применяли нефть и тир-и-чархи, но когда сосудами с нефтью завладели монголы, то сожгли мечеть и находящихся там людей. Рашид ад-Дин использует это слово для обозначения огромной стрелы. Оно ещё долго продолжало сохранять значение снаряда с горючим составом, ракеты. Именно такими снарядами стрелял из своих самострелов «бесурменин» Кончака (Мелиоранский 1902, 25–28).

По замечанию Бориса Алборова, метательные машины были известны древним ассирийцам, грекам, персам ещё задолго до н.э. Древнейший метательный снаряд-лук, при помощи которого выбрасывались стрелы на дальнее расстояние, употреблялся и для охоты. Кроме лука со стрелами, ассирийцам были известны катапульты, которыми метались камни до 10 кг на дистанцию до 500 м и более



(до 1000 м), осадные башни, с помощью которых можно было перебросить воинов на стены неприятельской крепости. Греки и римляне позаимствовали эти машины у ассирийцев и усовершенствовали их. У них существовали даже специальные катапульты и баллисты не только для метания камней, но и стрел. Бытовали также ящичные ворота для подъема воинов на боевую башню противника. Не отставали в этом отношении и древние персы. Так, в войне царя Кира с лидийцами под Сардами армия Кира имела боевые башни высотой до 5,5 м, которые перевозились восемью парами волов и поднимали до 20 лучников. Персы также имели метательные машины (Алборов 1979, 249–250). Это были предшественники чархов. Горючие вещества, загоравшиеся при падении, на Востоке метали и из ручных самострелов (Мелиоранский 1902, 26; Плетнева 1990, 136; Плаутин 2000, 153–154). В отличие от «греческого» огня византийцев (Менгес 1979, 180–181; Прицак 2007, 94–97), такой «живой» огонь применялся не на море, а как раз на суше, «посуху».

Мусульмане вправду часто привлекались как специалисты по осадным машинам. Вспоминается указ арагонского короля Хайме II Справедливого от 1298 года, согласно которому сарацины Эльче должны были послать «для осады замка Альхамы всех баллистариев, какие есть в названных долинах и городках, с баллистами и прочими их осадными машинами...» (Варьяш 2016, 309). «Бесурменина» на службе у Кончака Емельян Прицак считает хорезмийцем (Прицак 2007, 92–94), а Светлана Плетнёва – азербайджанцем (Плетнева 1990, 136). Таким образом, становится понятно, что, по выражению автора поэмы, Всеволод может стрелять вассальными князьями-воинами, сыновьями Глеба Ростиславича, как живыми зажигательными снарядами из передвижного орудия для обстрела городов в виде огромного лука на телеге.

Аналогов этой метафоры нет. Единственная параллель такого необычного мифологического образа прослеживается в нартовском эпосе осетин, а именно в цикле Батраза. Нарт Батраз, как убедительно доказал Жорж Дюмезиль (Дюмезиль 1990, 14–22), – персонаж, восходящий к древнеиранскому богу грозы, известному ещё у скифов.

В нескольких вариантах сказания о Батразе описывается, как герой пользуется при случае своим металлическим телом как снарядом. Изначально речь шла о стреле (фат) – она сохранилась в нескольких вариантах. В одном из сказаний Батраз требует, чтобы его положили на лук и выстрелили им в направлении Чёрного моря. Там он закаляет своё булатное тело (Пфаф 1871, 168). Так же Батраз заставляет привязать себя к стреле, и она доставляет его к неприятельскому городу или войску. В некоторых вариантах нартовский витязь сам велит изготовить для этого такой лук, что двенадцать быков с трудом его потащат (Шифнер 1868, 54). Чаще же речь идет об оружии, которое в эпосе называется пушкой и которую Батраз велит зарядить собой как ядром. Он падает, как огненная глыба, плава и сжигая все на своем пути, и разрушает неприступную твердыню. Существуют также многочисленные варианты, в которых Батраз просит нартов поставить его как стрелу на лук и выстрелить им в неприступную крепость Уарп, Гур, Хыз. В итоге герой, оставшись невредимым, пробивает своим телом брешь в стене крепости. В более поздних записях этого сюжета вместо лука и стрелы фигурирует большая пушка рода Бората, которую

Батраз просит привезти (Шанаев 1871, 34–35; Памятники 1925, 90; Нарты 1989, 253; Нарты 2005, 390, 404, 552). В пушку Бората впрягают шестнадцать пар быков, которых погоняют самые именитые нарты (Памятники 1925, 90). Иногда Батразу приходится самому принести на спине пушку на место битвы (Миллер 1881, 44–45). Герой заставляет вложить себя в ствол согнутым наподобие ядра, чтобы ноги и голова вылетели одновременно (Памятники 1925, 90–91). Пушку заряжают и выстреливают в ту же крепость. Батраз здесь выступает в роли живой стрелы и метательного снаряда. Вытянув вперед руки, он пробивает стены и изгоняет из крепости её демонический гарнизон, освободив пленённую жену другого из прославленных нартов – Сослана (Созырыко), имеющего солярную природу. «Батраз действует преимущественно как метательный снаряд, он одновременно – и герой, и оружие» (Дюмезиль 1990, 17–18, 38, 42, 62; Дюмезиль 1976, 59, 62–63; Абаев 1990, 185, 248; Дзищойты 2003, 92–93). Подобные орудия явно были очень редки, так как им владел только самый богатый род нартов (Алборов 1979, 242; Дюмезиль 2003, 92–93).

Порой Батраз требует зарядить собой гигантскую пушку и выстрелить ним в неприступную крепость Уарп-алдара, делавшего нартам много вреда и всячески их унижавшего. Пробив крепость, Батраз побеждает Уарп-алдара и делает его навсегда покорным нартам (Шанаев 1876, 19–20; Грисвар 2003, 40). Выстреленный из пушки, Батраз сокрушает крепость Хыз, принадлежащую уважаемому и могущественному Дауыт-алдару Бурафарныгу, чья дочь является женой Созырыко (Нарты 2005, 390). Двенадцать пар быков тянут пушку (сармадзан), из которой Батраз приказывает выстрелить собой в город Тынт. Очутившись там и разрушив весь город, Батраз карает местного правителя – убийцу его отца (Миллер 1881, 22–23). А в варианте, где Батраз сокрушает крепость народа чинтов и добывает невесту для своего отца Хамыца, пушка (хъæргæнаг), из которой им стреляют, принадлежит громовержцу Уацилла. Она выстреливает так, что земля содрогается (Хуссар 1936, 40–43). С помощью выстрела из большой пушки Батраз пробивает крепость Хыз, чтобы выволить свою невесту, дочь могущественного Сайнаг-алдара, похищенную Челахсартоном (Хуссар 1936, 125–126; Ирон 2007, 220–221). В другом сказании Батраз приказывает положить себя на лук и выстрелить им в направлении крепости Сайнаг-алдара. Там как раз находятся небожители – зэды и дауаги. Они творят суд над душой отца Батраза. Батраз, выпущенный из лука, пробивает крышу здания (или верхушку горы), где они заседают. Приземлившись на скамью, он грозно спрашивает, осмелятся ли они судить Батразова отца. Обнажив свой меч, Батраз убивает нескольких небожителей, а остальные улетают на небо жаловаться Богу (Пфаф 1871, 168). Зэды и дауаги могут злоумышлять и на самого Батраза, но, будучи выстреленным из пушки, которую приволокли двенадцать пар быков, он пробивает крепость Уарпп и начинает истреблять собравшихся на совещание небожителей (Памятники 1928, 25). Собственно, это вообще самый старый зафиксированный сюжет нартовского эпоса осетин. Генрих Юлиус Клапрот в 1814 году, упоминая о притоке Кубани, реке Уруп, писал, что «древняя крепость, названная в преданиях осетин Уарпфидаром, ...была удивительным образом захвачена их героем Бахтеразом,

сыном Шамица, согласившимся быть помещённым в пушку и на снаряде запущенным в город» (Клапрот 2008, 107; Гаглойти 1977, 95).

В некоторых иноэтнических вариантах сказания этот же герой велит запрячь восемь пар самых крепких лошадей, чтобы возили за ним его большую пушку. Он угрожает поставить её на вершине кургана, выстрелить собой из неё, пробить крепость и разрушить восемьсот домов нартов, ослепить их огнем, оглушить их громом (Кабардинский 1936, 60; Дюмезиль 1990, 30). Всё это вполне соответствует его грозовой природе. Случается и упоминание чего-то вроде катапульты (Абаев 1949, 320), но вообще в заимствованных версиях нартовского эпоса есть только пушка, в силу позднего времени усвоения сказаний. Дело в том, что боевое орудие, которым нарты забрасывали Батраза в крепость его противника, представлялось осетинскими сказителями то в виде огромного лука и стрел, то в виде какого-то более сложного передвижного сооружения, которое они могли определить как мортиру (хъумбара), хотя осознавали, что мортиры появились позже лука и стрел. С появлением пороха, при помощи которого из жерла боевого оружия выгалькивалось ядро, у сказителей перемешались представления о метательной машине-баллисте, выбрасывающей снаряд при помощи упругого тела, и пушке, стреляющей при помощи пороха. Орудие, описываемое в данном цикле сказаний, а именно лук со стрелами, было очень большим и тяжёлым: его могли сдвинуть с места только двенадцать или шестнадцать пар быков (Алборов 1979, 240, 242, 247). Оно напоминает самострелы летописного «бесурменина».

Фольклорист Борис Алборов предполагал, что образ булатного нарта Батраза как снаряда для баллисты зародился у причерноморских иранцев задолго до средневековья. У среднеазиатских и европейских скифов и сарматов не были известны эти виды военных машин, так как они по преимуществу были кочевыми конниками. Но предки осетин встречались с войсками персидского царя Кира I и Александра Македонского ещё в Средней Азии. На вооружении войск этих полководцев были все виды оружия того времени, включая и метательные машины. Предки осетин имели дело и с войсками Дария I, персидского царя, в Средней Азии и в Европе, а позже на берегах Черного моря с войсками греков и римлян, которые также имели все виды катапульт, баллист и осадных машин для переброски воинов на стены крепости своего противника. Все эти машины отличались большим весом, как «луки» и «пушки», упоминаемые в нартовских сказаниях (Алборов 1979, 250, 251). То есть мифологема Батраза, которым стреляют из баллисты, скорее всего, сформировалась ещё в скифо-сарматскую эпоху, а затем осовременивалась в соответствии с развитием военно-инженерного дела. Для сравнения с тир-и-чарх важен и другой факт: в осетинских нартовских сказаниях и волшебных сказках фигурирует название загадочной громоздкой военной машины церхъ (цилхъ, цирхъ, цирыхъ, шилхъ), которое восходит к древнеиранскому (авестийскому) чахра «колесо», давшему среднеиранское чарх, новоперсидское черх. Так именовалась одна из главных составных частей персидской баллисты. Чаще всего обладателем оружия с таким названием является Батраз. Он получил это оружие по наследству от отца, и оно неизменно присутствует в сказаниях о том, как он мстил нартам

за смерть своего отца Хамыца (Алборов 1979, 238–239, 247, 249, 254–255). А в сказании о сыне Чандза, маленьком Саууае, упоминается дорогое оружие, за которым охотятся нарты, – «стрелы цырыхъ» (Памятники 1925, 29, 37; Алборов 1979, 244–245). Выражение «фаты цырыхъ» как раз соответствует персидскому тир-и-чарх (Алборов 1979, 255–256).

Это один из мифологических образов поэмы, аналоги которым можно найти в фольклоре ираноязычных народов и который лишней раз доказывает её аутентичность. При этом важно, что для тюрко-монгольского эпоса мотив неуязвимого героя, лично выступающего стрелой или метательным снарядом, абсолютно нехарактерен. Кстати, ввиду возможности непосредственного общения с носителями северо-восточной подгруппы иранских языков в княжеской среде, стоит отметить, что именно суздальский князь Всеволод Юрьевич был женат на аланке, о чем свидетельствует летописное сообщение о событиях 1182 года: «Князь Киевський Святослав Всеволодович ожени 2 сына, за Глѣба поя Рюриковну, а за Мстислава ясыню из Володимира Суждальского, Всеволожно свестъ; бысть же бракъ великъ» (ПСРЛ 1871, 422). Отсюда вытекает, что сын киевского князя Святослава Всеволодовича Мстислав и суздальский князь Всеволод Юрьевич были женаты на двух сёстрах, аланках по происхождению. Как звали жену Мстислава – неизвестно, а вот имя жены Всеволода нетрудно установить. Летопись сообщает, что в 1205 году «в 19 марта преставися великая княгини Марія Всеволожная». В связи с этим «смоленский епискупъ и игумень Михаилъ Отрочьяго монастыря пришли бо бяху ко Всеволоду отъ свата его Мстислава о миру». Есть версия, что речь идет о потомках тех аланов-ясов, которых в 1116 году переяславский князь Ярополк Владимирович переселил с «Дона» (ПСРЛ 1856, 112; Бубенок 1997, 122). Но можно предполагать, что образ отважного витязя, выпущенного из огромного лука в качестве живой стрелы в стан врагов, появился в поэме не в результате этих средневековых межэтнических контактов. Он, как и некоторые другие образы и мотивы, намного древнее и отражает эпическую традицию скифо-сарматов, повлиявшую на славян.

Таким образом, «живые шерешеры» поэмы уподобляют сыновей князя Глеба Ростиславича грозовому герою нартовского эпоса, который поразил врагов, приказав выстрелить собой по ним из огромного передвижного самострела. Поводом к такой метафоре послужил недавний захват одним из этих князей половецких баллист. Даже названия рабов и рабынь, упомянутых там же как будущие трофеи Всеволода Владимирского, цена на которых упадёт, возможно, обязаны появлением иранским, а не тюркским языкам. Скорее всего, это следы этнического субстрата. Тесное переплетение родственных связей русских князей, с одной стороны, и семей аланской аристократии, с другой, разумеется, влекли за собой межкультурные контакты обоих народов, но проникновение элементов североиранского фольклора, с его мифологией, поэтикой, переживанием шаманистических представлений, которое прослеживается на всём протяжении поэмы, восходит к более древнему, скифо-сарматскому периоду.

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## CHAGA, KOSHCHHEY AND LIVING SHERESHYRS

KOSTYANTYN RAKHNO



One of the most difficult episodes to interpret in the *Tale of Igor's Campaign* is the author's address to the Grand Prince of Vladimir, Vsevolod Yuryevich, who held great military power:

Great Prince Vsevolod!  
 Do you not think of flying here from afar  
 to safeguard the paternal golden throne?  
 For you can with your oars  
 scatter in drops the Volga,  
 and with your helmets  
 scoop dry the Don.  
 If you were here,  
 a chaga would fetch  
 one nogata, and a koshchey, one rezana;  
 for you can shoot on land  
 living shereshyrs [these are] the bold sons of Gleb!

According to the poet, Vsevolod could even chastise the Volga and the Don river areas, occupied by the peoples of Steppe, just like the ancient Persian kings had chastised the rivers and seas. It is characteristic that the words used for female and male slave – *chaga* and *koshchey* – are apparently borrowed from the Northeastern Iranian languages, which are close to modern Ossetian.

However, the biggest mystery is the idiomatic expression “living *shereshyr*” – meaning special arrows. The first publishers of the poem compared it with the chronicle about the Polovtsian Khan, Konchak, who had acquired ballistas (huge crossbows on carts) that shot ‘living fire’ and hired a Muslim specialist to operate them for the siege of the Ruthenian cities. This formidable weapon was captured

by the Ruthenian princes. In the poet's words, Vsevolod could shoot the vassal warrior princes (the sons of Gleb Rostislavich) like living fire arrows from the ballista (*tir-i-charkh*).

There are no analogies in this metaphor. The only parallel of such an unusual mythological image can be traced to the Nart epic of the Ossetians, the Batraz cycle. Nart Batraz, as Iranists have proven convincingly, is a character that goes back to the ancient Iranian god of thunder, even known by the Scythians.

In several versions of the legend of Batraz, the hero is sometimes described as using his metal body as a projectile – in several versions, an arrow. In one legend, Batraz demands to be put on a bow and shot towards the Black Sea, where he hardens his Damascus steel body. Batraz also has himself bound to the arrow, which carries him to the enemy city or army. In some versions, the Nart knight orders a bow to be made that is so large that 12 pairs of bulls can hardly pull it. More often, the weapon is called a cannon and Batraz is the cannonball. It falls like a lump of fire, melting and burning everything in its path, and destroys an impregnable stronghold. There is another variant in which Batraz asks the Narts to put him like an arrow in the bow and shoot him at the impregnable fortress of Uarp or Gur or Xiz. The hero, unharmed, breaches the wall of the fortress with his body. In later versions of this story, instead of a bow and arrow, a large cannon of the wealthy Boratæ family appears, which Batraz had asked for. Twelve or sixteen pairs of bulls driven by the most eminent Narts are harnessed to the Boratæ's cannon.

It is believed that these weapons were initially the siege engines encountered by the ancestors of the Ossetians, Scythians and Sarmatians. This means that the Batraz myth, in which he is fired from a ballista, was most likely formed back in the Scythian-Sarmatian era and was then 'modernised' with the development of military engineering.

Thus, the 'living arrows' in the poem liken the sons of Prince Gleb Rostislavich with the hero of the Nart epic, who was fired from a giant wheeled crossbow. The source of this metaphor was the capture of the Polovtsian ballista by one of these princes. Even the terms *chaga* and *koshchey* for a female and male slave (mentioned as potential trophies of Vsevolod of Vladimir), whose price will fall, are due to the appearance of the Iranian, not Turkic, languages. Most likely, these are traces of the ethnic substrate of the Slavs. The close family ties between the Ruthenian princes and the Alanian aristocratic families created cultural contacts between both peoples. However, the elements of North Iranian folklore, with its mythology, poetry and shamanism, throughout the poem date back to the more ancient Scythian-Sarmatian period.



# Folklorne prvine v romanu Marjana Tomšiča *Óštrigéca*

— Vladka Tucovič Sturman —

V prispevku je predstavljeno, katere bajne like oz. bajna bitja in elemente ljudske medicine ter krščanstva je v sodobnem slovenskem romanu *Óštrigéca* (1991) uporabil Marjan Tomšič. Roman se uvršča v pisateljev istrski opus, s katerim je slovensko Istro postavil na slovenski literarni zemljevid, v sodobno slovensko književnost pa vnesel narečne in folklorne prvine. Avtorica se *Óštrigéce* loteva interdisciplinarno, z metodama literarnovedne in folkloristične analize.

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KLJUČNE BESEDE: folklor, bajeslovje, sodobna slovenska književnost, slovenska Istra

The paper discusses the use of folkloric elements, more specifically supernatural beings and elements of folk medicine and Christianity in a contemporary Slovene novel *Óštrigéca* (1991) by Marjan Tomšič. The novel is part of the writer's Istrian opus and is generally considered as the one that placed the region of Slovene Istria on the Slovene literary map and introduced dialectal and folkloric elements into contemporary Slovene literature. The study was conducted using the interdisciplinary approach with the method of literary and folkloric analysis.

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KEYWORDS: folklore, mythology, contemporary Slovene literature, Slovene Istria

Folklorne prvine v književnosti niso redkost, ravno nasprotno, pogosto so ravno folklorni drobci tisti, ki besedilo pomagajo graditi tako vzdušje kot vsebino. Folklorja vstopa v književnost zato, ker je bistvena sestavina življenjske resničnosti (Brown 1998: xxxiv), to pa je bistveni gradnik tudi sodobne slovenske književnosti, kamor sodi literarno delo sodobnega slovenskega pisatelja Marjana Tomšiča (roj. 1939). Leta 1991 je izdal pravljичni roman *Óštrigéca*, ki je nastal na osnovi zadnje novele v njegovi kratkoprozni zbirki *Olive in sol* (1983). Besedilo se uvršča v pisateljev istrski opus, kamor poleg že omenjene kratkoprozne zbirke sodijo še tri zbirke, *Kažuni* (1990), *Glavo gor, uha dol: pravljice iz Istre* (1993) in *Vruja* (1994), ter dva romana, *Šavrinke* (1986) in *Zrno od frmentona* (1993), s katerimi je slovensko Istro, konkretno pokrajino, v kateri je živel in deloval, postavil na slovenski literarni zemljevid. S tem, ko je realna pokrajina kot literarni prostor z vsemi svojimi specifikami, kamor sodi tudi folklorja, vstopila v literarno umetnost, se je slovenska

Istra globlje zasidrila tudi v splošno kulturno zavest. V sodobno slovensko književnost Tomšič s temi deli ni vnesel le narečnih jezikovnih prvin, pač pa na medbesedilni način tudi elemente bajeslovja oz. mitologije in ljudske medicine, zaradi česar njegova besedila niso zanimiva le za literarno vedo, temveč tudi folkloristiko.

Za Tomšiča, ki je na podeželje slovenske Istre, kjer se je srečal z istrsko folkloro, prišel iz Štajerske kot učitelj slovenščine, pozneje pa je deloval tudi kot novinar, velja, da naj bi s svojo istrsko literaturo iz Istre naredil literarno pokrajino in kot mentor v lokalnem okolju deloval literarnospodbudno (Čebtron 2012: 349).<sup>1</sup> Ledino je oral tudi na področju zbiranja slovstvene folklore v slovenski Istri – knjiga *Noč je moja, dan je tvoj: Istrske štorije* (1989) je prva med knjižno objavljenimi istrskimi povedkami in pravljicami; izšla je v zbirki Glasovi.<sup>2</sup> V razpravljanju o sodobni slovenski književnosti v slovenskem delu Istre, kamor uvrščamo Tomšičev opus, ne moremo mimo pojava v 80. letih 20. st., imenovanega »istrska prebujanje« (Cergol Bavčar, Čebtron 2001: 216), »istrska renesansa« (Cergol Bavčar 1991: 5) in »prebujanje istrske zavesti ali identitete« (Baskar 2002: 182). Spodbudil naj bi ga s svojim prosvetnim, mentorskim in pisateljskim delom prav Marjan Tomšič (Cergol Bavčar 1991: 5). Rezultati so se pokazali npr. v dejavnosti glasbenikov (skupina Istranova, Luciano Kleva, Emil Zonta itd.) in ljubiteljski kulturi (ljudske pevke Šavrinke itd.). Povečana literarna produkcija z istrsko tematiko v slovenski Istri je nastala ravno v zadnjih dveh desetletjih prejšnjega stoletja, in tako sovpadla z nastankom drugih kulturnih žarišč. V tem obdobju se je v Kopru osnoval neformalni kulturni krog, sestavljali so ga ustvarjalci in osebni prijatelji (med drugimi Marjan Tomšič in Edelman Jurinčič), centralna osebnost pa je bil gledališnik in performer Vlado Šav, ki je živel in ustvarjal v opuščnem mlinu ob Dragonji. V zvezi s tem je treba omeniti še negativni vidik t. i. »iznajdbe šavrinke identitete« (Baskar 2002) in »šavrinizacije« (Ledinek Lozej, Rogelja 2012), ki naj bi se v slovenskem delu Istre razvila po objavi Tomšičevega romana Šavrinke (1986). »In tudi ni literarna produkcija oblikovala zgolj šavrinskih identifikacij oz. istovetenja, marveč je (pre)oblikovala tudi krajino in siceršnje materialne okoliščine istrskega podeželja.« (Ledinek Lozej, Rogelja 2012: 545)

Z literarnovednega stališča je bil roman *Óštrigeca* obravnavan že večkrat (Virk 2000: 213, Zupan Sosič 2003: 76, Štuhec 2012: 726), pri čemer folklorni motivi niso bili podrobneje raziskani oz. so bili predstavljeni v literarni funkciji, v tem prispevku pa je izpostavljeno raziskovalno vprašanje, kaj točno iz ljudskega izročila je pisatelj medbesedilno uporabil v svojem izvirnem literarnem besedilu. Prispevek se *Óštrigéce* loteva interdisciplinarno, z metodama literarnovedne in folkloristične analize, saj, kot pravi Zmago Šmitek (2004: 5), se za mitološko tematiko živahno zanima marsikatera znanost, tudi slavistika.

<sup>1</sup> Med številnimi ljubiteljskimi literarnimi ustvarjalci, ki jih je spodbujal in napisal spremne besede k njihovim prvcem (največ pri knjižnih izdajah revije *Fontana*), izstopa Marija Franca, nekdanja šavrinca, Tomšičeva stanodajalka in gospodinja v Gračišču, ki je bila njegov model za Katino v *Šavrinkah* in je na njegovo pobudo napisala in objavila svoje spomine *Šavrinke zgodbe* I, II, III. Med ostalimi Jasna Čebtron (2012: 349) izpostavlja pesnike Edelmana Jurinčiča, Ines Cergol, Gašperja Maleja in pisatelja Vanjo Pegana.

<sup>2</sup> Sledile so ji objave zbranega folklornega gradiva Rožane Koštial, Nelde Štok Vojska in drugih ter periodična publikacija študijskega krožka Beseda slovenske Istre, *Brazde s trmuna*. Objavljene povedke, ki so jih zbrali drugi, vsebujejo podobne motive, kot jih je v *Óštrigéci* uporabil Tomšič, npr. *Štorjice od straha* (2010) Nelde Štok Vojska v besedilih *Beli psi*, *Procesija mrličev*, *Maša za mrliče* itd.

Razmerje med folkloro in literaturo je kompleksno (Evans 2005: 99) in obravnava izbranega literarnega dela potrjuje, da miti med drugim »živijo svoje drugo življenje skozi besede poustvarjalcev in pripovedovalcev, ne nazadnje se ohranjajo tudi v umetniških stvaritvah in kulturnih predstavitvah posameznikov in skupnosti« (Kropej (2008: 9). Po besedah Zmaga Šmitka (2012: 7) so miti »ponovljive mentalne strukture, ki se ohranjajo v dolgih časovnih obdobjih«, v kolektivnem podeželskem okolju so se prenašali iz generacije v generacijo, »v njih pa je zgoščena esenca ljudskega pogleda na svet« in so duhovni kapital, iz katerega ob različnih priložnostih črpa med drugim tudi umetnost (Šmitek 2012: 8), torej tudi književnost. Medtem ko je raziskovalni interes za folkloro dokaj nov, star manj kot dve stoletji, ima njeno nastajanje in prerojevanje v variantah neprimerno daljšo zgodovino (Myer 2006). In medtem ko raziskovalce zanima na eni strani, od kod je npr. mitološko izročilo za svoje drame črpal Shakespeare, in po drugi, kakšno je bilo kulturno okolje, v katerem so ustvarjali nekateri avtorji starejših literarnih obdobj, ki so v svoja dela vnašali folklorne prvine (Brown 1998: xxxv), Tomšičeva *Óštrigeca* potrjuje, da je na folklornih prvinah mogoče zgraditi povsem sodobno literarno delo, saj ne nazadnje drži, da imata mit in literatura skupne korenine, posluš za variacije mitoloških tem pa se kaže v vseh zvrsteh književnosti 20. stoletja, še posebej v evropskem romanu (Šmitek 2012: 10, 12).<sup>3</sup>

Istra je v sodobni literaturi »pogosto predstavljena kot čaroben, mističen prostor, v katerem še vedno domujejo magične sile in se dogajajo čudežni pojavi. Tako razumevanje Istre je nadvse uporabno za sodobni urbanizirani svet, ki želi ohranjati romantično prepričanje, da nekeje še vedno obstaja neokrnjeni tradicionalni način življenja« (Lipovec Čebren 2010: 62). Književnosti pa gre za upodabljanje realnosti, ki je lahko samo približna oz. je od avtorjeve odločitve odvisno, kaj in še posebej kako bo realnost predstavil, kaj pa bo tej podobi dodal svojega, avtorskega. Ne nazadnje je večina dogajalnega časa v Tomšičevem istrskem opusu preteklost, ne sedanost, Tomšič torej ne predstavlja sedanje realne Istre, tudi glavni lik Boškin ni sodobna literarna oseba. Fikcijska besedila so literarna besedila, ki svet v nasprotju z besedili, ki reprezentirajo dejanski svet (novice, poročila, komentarji ipd.), sama ustvarjajo in ga oblikujejo (Juvan 2006: 220). Svetovi iz nefikcijskih besedil so vseskozi podvrženi postopkom preverjanja in spodbijanja, besedilni svetovi fikcijskih besedil pa ostajajo neodvisni, ni jih treba spreminjati ali razveljavljati z novimi besedili. Po drugi strani so pisna besedila, kamor sodi tudi umetna književnost, v nasprotju z ustno kulturo izrazito netradicionalistična: »zanje je značilen premik k vzpostavljanju distance med avtorjem in bralcem in analitičnosti ter k pojmu objektivnosti kot neizkrivljene reprezentacije sveta« (Beguš 2014: 113). Tako kot ni folkloristova naloga, da za pojave bajnih bitij išče racionalno razlago (Lozica 1995: 15–16), ni naloga bralca, da ločuje med fikcijo in nefikcijo v literarnem besedilu, pač pa, da se potopi v besedilne svetove, kar mu nudi estetski užitek.

<sup>3</sup> O zelo živahnem medbesedilnem odnosu folklore in sodobne književnosti priča tudi vpeljava folklornih elementov v sodobno fantastično in znanstvenofantastično književnost, še zlasti na primeru anglosaške literature (Sullivan 2001).

## BAJNA BITJA IN BAJNI LIKI

Bajno bitje je po *Slovenskem etnološkem leksikonu* (Stanonik 2004: 20) definirano kot »junak, nosilec dogajanja v bajeslovju. Kot bitje z nadčloveškimi lastnostmi in sposobnostmi nastopa v bajkah in povedkah.« Monika Kropelj (2008: 11) loči med bajeslovnim likom in bajeslovnim bitjem: »Medtem ko je pomen izraza 'bajeslovni lik' širši, saj zaobjema tudi druge like, npr. ljudske junake, antijunake in zgodovinske osebe, ki so jih ljudje mitizirali, je pomen izraza 'bajeslovno bitje' nekoliko ožji in označuje le like verovanjskega in domišljjskega predstavnega sveta.«

Mitološka bitja v slovenski Istri imajo razmeroma malo skupnih lastnosti s podobnimi pojavi v drugih slovenskih regijah in več podobnosti z nekaterimi deli Hrvaške (Kvarner in Dalmacija) ter bližnjimi italijanskimi pokrajinami (Furlanija - Julijska krajina), nekatere sorodnosti je najti tudi z mitološkimi bitji v Bosni, Črni gori, Srbiji in Makedoniji, verovanja v bitja z magičnimi, nadnaravnimi lastnostmi so predstavljala pomemben element v tradicionalnem načinu življenja (Lipovec Čebren 2010: 12, 62).<sup>4</sup>

Na začetku razpravljanja o bajnih bitjih in likih v *Óštrigéci* ni odveč vsaj malo očitati vsebino romana in pokazati, kdo in kakšna sploh je glavna literarna oseba *Óštrigéce*. Boškin je vaški posebnež, ki je nenehno na poti. Pešači med istrskimi vasmí, doživlja realne in irealne dogodke in se bojuje z zlom v podobi babure Štafúre, ki meša točo, pije kri dojenčici Nini, se uteleša v neobvladljivi deklici Albi in Boškina dneve in noči vlačí po brezpotjih. Na začetku je poleg osebne lastnega imena poimenovan še »potepuh in večni popotnik« ter »popotnik« in »berač« (Tomšič 1991: 5, 7, 9). Ko se Boškin predstavi neznanču, zagrobnemu svatu, reče: »Boškin sem. Petljač, popotnik.« (Tomšič 1991: 98) Milja, ki je ena izmed mnogih vaščank oz. ženskih literarnih oseb v romanu, ga ima za »bužca« (Tomšič 1991: 20), kar lahko pomeni 'revež' ali tudi 'posebnež, obrobnež', oz. človeka, »ki ni [...] ko drugi«. Maršičeva žena mu predlaga, da bi lahko pomagal njeni bolni kravi zato, ker je »štrigo«<sup>5</sup> (Tomšič 1991: 14). Tako kot si ljudje niso enotni glede tega, ali je Boškin čudodelnik ali samo navaden potepuh, tako je nasprotujočega mnenja tudi posebljena narava. Boškinov zaveznik veter trdi, »da je Boškin nenačuden človek, povsem drugačen od drugih; in celo tako daleč se je spozabil, da je govoril, kako je Boško ko 'en bogič'« (Tomšič 1991: 21), torej bog ali božji sin (kresnik), medtem ko drevesni listi temu nasprotujejo in se vetrovi trditvi posmehujejo. Tudi volkodlak, ki prileze iz groba, je posmehljiv glede slednjega poimenovanja: »E, se že spominjam: ti si Boško, Boškin, imenovan tudi Boškarin, nekateri pa ti pravijo, hihi, tudi Bogič.« (Tomšič 1991: 41)

<sup>4</sup> Temeljna primerjalna literatura za hrvaški del Istre so seveda dela Maje Bošković Stulli, še zlasti poglavje Hrvatske i slovenske usmene predaje o krsniku kresniku v knjigi *Usmena književnost kao umjetnost riječi* (Bošković Stulli 1975) in članek On the Track of Kresnik and Benandante (Bošković Stulli 2003), ter novejši članek Luke Šeša O krsniku: od tradicijske pojave u predajama do stvarnog iscjelitelja (Šešo 2002), Šmitek pa v svojih izčrpnih študijah *Gospodar gore: Kresnik in Šamanizam na Slovenskem?* (Šmitek 2004: 137–178, 195–216) in *Od staroslovenskega Svarožiča – Radogosta do slovenskega Kresnika in Kresnikova sveta pokrajina* (Šmitek 2012: 111–166) ter *Nočni bojevniki: kmečke herezije in čarovništvo na Slovenskem in v Furlaniji* (Šmitek 2015) izpostavlja še dela Nikolaja Mikhailova (Mihajlov 1996, Mikhailov 1996, 1997a, 1997b).

<sup>5</sup> »V istrskih dialektih se štriga in štrigon pojavljata kot romaniziran sinonim (v italijanščini: *strega, stregone*) za slovensko čarovnico in čarovnika. Poleg omenjenega izraza *štriga* in *štrigon* so na tem ozemlju opaženi tudi izrazi: *comprnica, copernica, štroliga, štruga, štrigun, štrigo*.« (Lipovec Čebren 2002: 68)



Da je neobičajen človek s čudodelnimi sposobnostmi, ki ve več kot drugi, o tem ne dvomita ne Milja: »Ker pa je to vprašal on, njemu pa itak ne moreš nič zameriti in od njega lahko pričakuješ čisto vse [...] Ko bi ti takrat prišel mimo, bi se mogoče zgodil čudež« (Tomšič 1991: 18, 19) ne Jakominka: »Čuj ti, ki dosti hodiš okoli in znaš, kar nam, navadnim smrtnikom ni dano znat.« (Tomšič 1991: 31) V pogovoru z Jakominko o videnju na pokopališču se izkaže celo, da Boškin vsaj približno pozna pomen tretjega očesa: »'Kar si videla ti, Noemi<sup>6</sup> moja, so videle moje oči. Ali ne te oči; to so videle tiste, ki jih imamo v glavi, za čelom, notri ... Razumeš? [...] Pa kaj bi ti to govoril, saj ne zas-topiš. Tudi meni ni čisto jasno. Ali to dobro znam, da se ti ne meša.'« (Tomšič 1991: 32)

Ko se Boškin na začetku romana znajde v Maršičevem hlevu, je videti takole:

Ko je bežal iz drage, je izgubil kapo in zdaj so mu dolgi, posiveli lasje štrleli na vse konce, prav tako razmršena brada. Ponošeni in raztrgani suknjič je na pol visel z njega in hlače, toliko da mu niso odpadle, kajti med begom se je strgala vrvica, s katero so bile privezane. Gumijasti škornji, blatni prav do roba. (Tomšič 1991: 13)

Že to, da je Boškin po svoji zunanosti in obnašanju ter delovanju drugačen od običajnih vaščanov, saj je potepuh, berač in posebnež, govori v prid temu, da bi lahko bil štrigon, saj »sta štriga in štrigon na eni strani osebi, ki odstopata od običajnih norm vaške skupnosti (po starosti, fizični podobi, bogastvu, osebnosti ipd.)« (Lipovec Čebren 2002: 68). Štriga in štrigon kot konkretna človeka sta sopomenki za čarovnico in čarovnika, torej človeka, ki znata čarati, ne pa bajni bitji. Figuri štrige in štrigona zasedata v verovanjih slovenske Istre posebno mesto, njuno delovanje je lahko različno škodljivo in lahko vpliva na vreme, letino, ljudi ali živali. Med najpogostejšimi učinki delovanja štrig in štrigonov je povzročanje glavobola ali bolezni in smrti živine. (Lipovec Čebren 2002: 62–69)

Boškin vsekakor odstopa od večine, saj naj bi bil zelo star (kdaj se je rodil, niti ne ve, Danjeli reče, da je star kakih sto let, mogoče dvesto, tristo; volkodlak, ki je iz prejšnjega stoletja, se Boškina tudi spomni iz nezagrobnega življenja), še zlasti izstopa po zanemarjenosti, torej drugačni fizični podobi, in hkrati s svojo osebnostjo izstopajoče priteguje ljudi.

Toplina je žarela iz njega, mehko posebna; oboje je bilo skrito v glasu, v kretnjah in v pogledu. Mehkobo njegovih rok so najbolj čutile prav ženske. Imel je namreč navado, da jih je prijemal za roke, ko se je šalil z njimi, se navidez norčeval iz njih. Ob dotiku z njegovimi prsti in dlanmi so vztrepetavale, po telesu so jim hiteli prijetni, sladko omamni in tolažilni občutki. Marsikatera se je brezdomcu potožila, mu razodela bolno srce in pričakovala od njega tolažilne besede. (Tomšič 1991: 30)

<sup>6</sup> Pojavitev tega svetopisemskega imena v *Óštrigéci* ni posebej motivirana (v objavi iz leta 1983 ga ni), razen da v hebrejščini pomeni 'prijetna' in da je literarna oseba, ki jo Boškin nagovarja, Jakominka, ena od dobronamernih žensk v romanu. Noemi je tudi ime glavne literarne osebe Tomšičevega romana *Ognjeni žar* (1995).

Štrigi in štrigonu so nadnaravne sposobnosti določene že z rojstvom, saj se lahko rodita z repom (Lipovec Čebtron 2002: 68). Prav rep, ki naj bi ga Boškin imel, a mu ga je čarovnica oz. štriga babura Štafúra ukradla, je gibal celotnega romana: na začetku se Boškin zavé, da ga nima več, zato ga ob srečanjih z baburo Štafúro (simbolom zla, kače oz. zmaja) poskuša dobiti nazaj, na koncu ji odreže njen rep, s tem čarovnica izgubi vso moč.

Če sem jaz Boškin, in mislim, da sem, potem bi moral imeti, kar sem vedno imel, se pravi: rep. Ker ga pa nimam več, to pomeni, da se je moralo nekaj zgoditi, kar mi ga je odpililo, da ga zdaj ni več, kajti resnično ga ni več, o tem ni nobenega dvoma. Bil pa sem pri baburi Štafúri, torej mora biti rep tam in nikjer drugje. [...] Nebo je črno in bliska se. Kadar pa je takšno vreme, imajo štrige preveliko moč. In sploh, kaj mi če! Naj bo, kjer hoče biti. Je že tako prav. Seveda bi bilo bolje ga imeti, kajti zadnje pomagalo je pač zadnje pomagalo. Brez njega se težko razpletajo težave. Oh, kaj bom umrl brez njega? (Tomšič 1991: 6, 16)

Prav zaradi tega, ker se ne ve povsem, ali je Boškin rep res imel ali se mu to samo zdi, čeprav sicer deluje, kot da v to povsem verjame, nismo povsem prepričani, ali je res štrigon (tudi sam se sprašuje, kdo pravzaprav je, odkod in kam je namenjen), saj nima repa. Ali ni ne nazadnje krsnik, saj mu uspe uroke razdirati kljub temu, da repa nima? Potem ko čarovnici odreže rep, si ga ne prisvoji kot nekaj, kar mora nujno imeti. Ko se ponovno rodi, repa tudi nima. Babura Štafúra je vsekakor prava štriga, saj ne nazadnje ima rep (svojega ali prisvojenega), zato z njim tudi dela húdo. Preden ji Boškin odseka rep, se začudi, da ga babura Štafúra sploh ima, tako spozna, da on ni štrigon, saj repa nikoli ni imel, da je to, da je verjel, da ga ima, da je nekdo drug, kot je v resnici (krsnik), bil pravzaprav Štafúrin urok: »Taka je ta reč! A meni je govorila, da ga imam jaz, pa ga je ves čas imela ona! Očitala mi je, da ga imam jaz, in mislil sem, da ga res imam. Zdaj pa vidim, da ga ima ona in zdaj šele vem, da ga je ves čas skrivala in se sprenevedala, me grdo lisičila!« (Tomšič 1991: 150)

Kresnik oz. krsnik (poleg kresnice oz. krsnice, če je ženska) je edini človeku naklonjen lik izmed istrskih bajnih bitij oz. bajnih likov (konkretnih ljudi), ki deluje kot zaščitnik skupnosti ter posameznih oseb in živali, se bojuje z negativnimi in destruktivnimi bitji in liki, predvsem s štrigo, štrigonom in volkodlakom, ki poskušajo vaški skupnosti in njenim prebivalcem škoditi, pogosto je opisan tudi kot zdravitelj in prerokovalec prihodnosti (Lipovec Čebtron 2002: 67) ter mitični čarovnik (Kropej 2008: 305, 307), soroden furlanskim benandantom (Šmitek 2015: 37). Izraza krsnik in krsnica sta v Istri označevala ljudske zdravilce na sploh (Möderndorfer 1964: 8). Poudariti pa je treba, da se v slovenskem izročilu kresnik pojavlja v dveh oblikah oz. beseda kresnik hkrati označuje bajno bitje in konkretnega človeka: na eni strani je kresnik božanstvo, ki je povezano s soncem in ognjem (kres je ogenj), v vlogi boga Peruna ali Perunovega sina, po drugi pa je tudi človek z nadnaravnimi sposobnostmi, od rojstva ali pridobljeno jasnoviden oz. vidovit in zmožen spreminjati podobo – sčasoma je torej privzel vlogo rodovnega

zaščitnika, vrača oz. šamana, ki naj bi se rodil z nekim znamenjem, npr. repkom (Kropej 2008: 58–75, 307). Po mnenju Maje Bošković Stulli (1975, 2003), ki je kresnika raziskovala v ljudskem izročilu hrvaškega dela Istre in ga primerjala s slovenskim v Istri, je vloga kresnika v prvi vrsti zaščitniška, saj se bojuje z negativnimi silami. Kresnik sodi v skupino oseb, ki jih raziskovalci uvrščajo med šamane v širšem smislu ali ostanke nekdanjih šamanov, družijo jih sposobnost komunikacije z onim svetom, to so poleg kresnika še benandanti, taltosi, zduhači ipd. (Mencej 2013: 164). Zaščitniki kmečkih pridelkov pred točo in benandantom sorodni ljudski zdravilci oz. kresniki kot varuhi plodnosti so znani marsikje v Evropi: »hrvaški krsniki in moguti, dalmatinski negromanti, bosanski in črnogorski zduhači, srbski vjedogonje in vjetrovnjaci, bolgarsko-makedonski 'zmajski ljudje', madžarski taltosi, romunski calușari, grški kallikantzari, korziški mazzeri idr.« (Šmitek 2015: 40). V bajeslovju slovenske Istre se kresnik najpogosteje pojavlja kot moška oseba, ki ima zaradi že predhodno omenjenih posebnih znakov ob rojstvu – rodi se v beli placenti, posteljici, kamižeti (redkeje pa kot deseti otrok) – nadnaravne sposobnosti. Kresnika pogosto opazijo v živalski podobi, najpogosteje kot belega psa ali vola. Kresnik ali (redkeje) kresnica delujeta kot zaščitnika skupnosti ter posameznih oseb in živali. Pogosto ju opisujejo kot zdravitelja in prerokovalca prihodnosti. (Lipovec Čebren 2002: 62–69)

Nobenega dvoma ni, da je Boškin krsnik, saj ustreza vsem naštetim lastnostim. Vedno znova ga na pomoč kliče vaška skupnost: vaščanke pred Danjelinim domom, kosci na Jukičevem travniku, ženske v vasi, kjer umira mala Nina; k njemu se obračajo možje, da bi jim dal navodila, kako uničiti volkodlaka; pred močno nevihto in točo z zagovorom in čarnim risom, v katerega vriše vas in njive, reši celotno vas. Kot zdravitelj s postopki ljudske medicine pomaga tako živalim (bolni Maršičevi kravi) kot posameznikom iz vaške skupnosti, ki so bolni, uročeni ali jim štriga ali kodlak pijeta kri (Šavronko ozdravi bolečin v križu, Jukiču pozdravi zvin, iz Albe izžene transformirano štrigo, oživi Danjelo in Nino). Ne nazadnje Beliču napove dobitno loterijsko kombinacijo, Milji pa čas smrti, torej na nek način celo prerokuje.

Izraza krsnik in štrigon sta po terenskih izkušnjah (Lipovec Čebren 2008: 116–117) največkrat prekrivna in lahko označujeta tudi tradicionalnega zdravilca, kar Boškin je. Boškin je očitno dobri štrigon oz. krsnik, saj zna čarati pozitivno, a tudi negativno, vendar so te njegove čarovnije skromne in skupnosti ali posamezniku ne škodijo usodno (uroči Lobarčevega osla, da noče tovoriti soli, ker se je Lobarč iz njega norčeval; seno se na voz nalaga tako, da ga morajo kmetje metati navzdol; Jakominkin fižol je kuhan brez kuhanja, ker je Boškin lačen, čeprav sta ga komaj izluščila; Bertova glava se sname z vratu, z Bertom kljub temu ni nič narobe; s čarnim risom in zagovorom prepreči baburi Štafuri točo).

A četudi je Boškin krsnik, tudi sam včasih potrebuje zaščito in pomoč drugega krsnika, ki se mu pokaže v živalski podobi. Tako ga neke nevarne noči dohiti bel pes; iz brinovja, potem ko ga je babura Štafura tri dni in noči vlačila po brezpotjih, ga komaj živega potegne beli vol – kresnik naj bi prevzemal ravno podobo psa ali vola pa tudi bika in prasca (Kropej 2008: 71), kar izpričuje tudi Uršula Lipovec Čebren (2002: 67).

Boškin tudi ne sluti, da je oslica,<sup>7</sup> ki jo nekega pomladanskega večera zajaha, pravzaprav spoj dveh bajnih bitij, orka in mraka, dveh zelo težko opredeljivih bajnih bitij (Lozica 1995: 15).<sup>8</sup> Mrak in orko, slednji ponavadi transformiran v osla (Lozica 1995: 16), običajno nastopata skupaj, mrak, kot že njegovo ime pove, pridobi moč nad človekom, še zlasti nad otroki (Möderndorfer 1964: 345–348), na začetku noči (Kropej 2008: 300–301).<sup>9</sup> Orka je lažje definirati, saj se najpogosteje pojavlja kot nagajiv duh v podobi osla. Mraka pa je v nasprotju z orkom težje opredeliti, saj lahko označuje osebni ali brezoseben pojav, ki se nanaša na del dneva (čas, ko prehaja dan v noč), v katerem zavladajo negativne magične sile. Za orka in/ali mraka je značilno, da se ponoči nenadoma pojavi pred človekom, in ko ta sede nanj, mu povzroči vrsto nevšečnosti – orko pod njim začne rasti ali ga premesti z enega mesta na drugo, tako da človek izgubi občutek za čas in prostor. (Lipovec Čebren 2002: 62–69) Mrak nastopa tudi v izročilu Istri bližnjega Krasa, stopiti na »mrakovo stopinjo« pomeni izgubiti orientacijo oz. se nehote vrteti v krogu (Hrobat Virloget 2019: 125). Orko ni prisoten le v južnoslovanskem, predvsem hrvaškem in slovenskem,<sup>10</sup> pač pa tudi v germanskem, romanskem in celo skandinavskem izročilu; nagaja predvsem popotnikom, ki jih lahko zvabi nekam, kamor niso bili namenjeni in tistega kraja ne poznajo, zato blodijo, dokler se naslednjega dne ne znajdejo na začetku svoje poti (Kropej 2008: 271). Oslica pod Boškinom začne rasti (značilnost orka), ko se začne mračiti (to je čas delovanja mraka, tj. zlohotnega bitja, ki ima največjo moč ob prehodu dneva v noč, ko zavladajo negativne magične sile (Lipovec Čebren 2002: 65)).<sup>11</sup> Boškini se torej zgodi, kot prej omenjenim furlanskim benandantom, še zlasti benandatkam, ki so se morali »pod prisilo« ponoči klatiti naokoli in na hrbtih živalih nehote prejezditi velike razdalje (Mencej 2013: 164) – značilnost tako benandantov kot kresnikov pa je, da se njihovi boji z zlimi silami dogajajo ravno ponoči (Šmitek 2015: 36).

Tomšič za Boškina nikoli ne zapiše izraza krsnik in naše branje *Óstrigéce* je drugačno, če ne poznamo mitološkega ozadja: pomena belega psa in vola, osla, ki začne rasti, in repa. V slovenski Istri kresnika označujejo (vendar redkeje) tudi z besedo desetinar, tj. deseti otrok ali deseti brat (Lipovec Čebren 2002: 66), kot nam je znan iz siceršnjega slovenskega ljudskega izročila (pripovedne folklore) in še zlasti umetne književnosti. Martinek Spak iz Jurčičevega romana *Deseti brat* (1866) sicer ni bil pravi deseti brat, a se je za desetega brata izdajal – nekatere podobnosti med Martinkom Spakom in Boškinom so očitne: oba

<sup>7</sup> Pojavitev oslice oz. osla, ne pa katere druge živali, izhaja iz dejstva, da so v Istri, podobno kot drugje v sredozemskem prostoru, gojili osle kot vprežno oz. tovorno živino, kar je prešlo celo v leposlovno temo (prim. črtico Ivana Cankarja: *Istrski osel*), mitoškega oz. globljega pomena, kot ga v evropski kulturi za osla dokazuje Monika Kropej Telban (2018: 237–252), pa Tomšič oslu ni namenil.

<sup>8</sup> Kljub pogostosti v zapisanem hrvaškem ljudskem izročilu pa verjetno ravno zaradi težje opredeljivosti npr. nista prešla iz slovstvene folklore v umetno književnost v hrvaškem jeziku, kot se je to zgodilo z vilami in volkodlaki, čeprav naj bi imela močan literarni naboj (Lozica 1995: 12, 13).

<sup>9</sup> Tudi iz naslova ene od knjig iz zbirke Glasovi, *Mrak eno jutrnja: storje iz Slovenske Istre* (2002), ki jo je s pomočjo Špele Pahor uredila Nada Morato, je v primeru mraka mogoče sklepati na protivno razmerje med dnevom in nočjo.

<sup>10</sup> Na Hrvaškem v Istri in Dalmaciji, ne pojavlja pa se npr. v srbskem okolju, najverjetneje je starega romanskega izvora (prim. Lozica 1995: 13).

<sup>11</sup> Tudi v slovenskem delu Istre je bilo znano verovanje, da mrak škodi otroku še zlasti po sončnem zahodu, ko naj bi se, da bi otroke zavarovali pred »mračnino«, zapirala okna (Möderndorfer 1964: 345).

sta potepuha, zanemarjena in opravljata dobra dela.<sup>12</sup> Verovanje v poseben status desetega, devetega ali trinajstega otroka istega spola ni slovenska ali slovanska posebnost, ohranjeno je tudi v izročilu Baltov in Ircev, tak otrok »naj bi bil božanstvo, demonsko bitje ali vrač [...] z desetništvom [pa] so lahko zaznamovani tudi črnošolec, volčji pastir, zeleni Jurij in kresnik« (Kropej 2008: 145). Desetnik in desetnica sta kot Boškin prisiljena v nenehno gibanje, popotovanje od vasi do vasi, enako velja za madžarske taltose in porabske grabancijaše oz. črnošolce, ki so veljali za »potujoče čarovnike« (Mencej 2013: 166, 168, 170).

To, kakšnega vidi Boškina njegov zaveznik, sanjaški veter, ko o tem prepričuje jezikave in posmehljive liste, ki trdijo, da Boškin že ni bogiç, če se pijan plazi po tleh, namesto da bi bil v nebeških višavah, ni povezano z ljudskim verovanjem, temveç je avtorjev domišljjski dodatek, čeprav je po drugi strani kresnik kot sonçno božanstvo povezan tudi s svetlobo (Kropej 2008: 75):

Poglejte njegovo srce in boste videli, da v njem živijo sedmere barve. In pogledajte v globine njegovega srca in boste tam zagledali odsev večnega sonca; drobceno sonce sije v srcu Boškinovem. Če le dobro napnete oçi, vam ne more uiti. Bitje pa, ki ima v svojem srcu sonce, in bitje, ki živi s sedmerimi barvami, ni nihçe drug kot bogiç sam. (Tomšič 1991: 21)

Osrednji ÷arovniški lik oz. štriga v *Óštrigéci* je seveda babura Štafúra, predstavljena kot prototip ÷aravnice: grda, suha, brezzoba starka z redkimi, počrnelim in škrbinastimi zobmi, s hreščèim glasom in smehom ter kremplji namesto nohtov, ki lahko leti, dela toço, povzroça grom, se spremeni v krastaço, moçerada, deklico Albo ali izzivajoço mlado lepotico, s katero se Boškin ljubi. Najbolj natançno je Štafurin videz opisan med plesom v Boškinovih sanjah, malo preden jo uniçi: »Smešno in prav žalostno je bilo videti, kako poskakujejo njene suhe noge, kako ji opletajo okoli pasu in reber posušeni in viseçi ziziçi in kako sršijo okoli njene glave razmršeni lasje, brezzoba usta pa se paçijo v nekakšnem izzivalnem smehljaju.« (Tomšič 1991: 138) Starost in suhost ter splošna neurejenost, ki jih izpostavlja Tomšič, sta najpogostejši oznaki za t. i. vaško ÷aravnico, realno osebo, ki ji vaščani pripišejo vlogo grešnega kozla v primeru nesreç, bolezni itd., medtem ko je t. i. noçna ÷aravnica, ki je pogosto nevidna, nejasna ali se pojavlja zgolj kot svetloba, sinonim za nadnaravni fenomen, ko posameznik v bližini vode, križišça itd. zgreši pot ipd. (Mencej 2006: 114). Pri opisu babure Štafúre je pisatelj očitno podlegel stereotipnemu naçinu opisovanja ÷aravnic, kot se je še pred desetletji kazalo v sodobni otroški literaturi, pa tudi ljudskih pravljicah (Schöck 1978: 116–117 v Mencej 2005: 251).

Drugi dve štrigi, ki se pojavita le enkrat, takrat, ko odletita z omamljenim Boškinom na hrvaško stran,<sup>13</sup> sta Štafurini prijateljici, Škropa in Čunjka ali Ukotiçka. Njun videz

<sup>12</sup> V avtorski pravljici *Vragov dotik* iz Tomšičeve kratkoprozne zbirke *Glavo gor, uha dol: Pravljiçe iz Istre* (1993) Tomšič medbesedilno vplete literarno osebo z imenom iz prve objave *Oštrigeçe v Olivah in soli* in jo poimenuje *desetnik*: »Vsem znani desetnik Marjo jo je enkrat, ko je minilo od vsega že dobro leto, med smehom vprašal: 'Karlina, je vrag, je?' Karlina se je nasmehnila, mu napolnila kozarec in pritrnila.« (Tomšič 2009: 47).

<sup>13</sup> Pojav, da so kresniki ponoçi letali okrog, je izpričan že v Keleminovih *Bajkah in pripovedkah slovenskega ljudstva* (1930) (Šmitek 2004: 201).

ni opisan, zajahata ga čez boke in prsi, da se skoraj zaduši: »Potepuh je stokal; tlačila ga je mora. Skušal se je prebuditi, a se ni mogel, kajti ena od čarovnic mu je tiščala na nos zvarek iz omamnih in strupenih rastlin. Skakali sta po njem in ga mučili na mnogo načinov.« (Tomšič 1991: 115) Očitno se v tem primeru podoba čarovnic oz. štrig prekriva z moro, eno bolj prepoznavnih in poznanih bajnih bitij, ki je lahko človeške, živalske ali nadnaravne podobe, človeka pa poškoduje v spanju, kar sicer medicina razlaga kot fiziološko, psihoanaliza pa psihološko pogojeno (Kropej 2008: 301, 302). V slovenskem delu Istre izraz mora ali muora poleg nočne tesnobe in družabne igre z rokami predstavlja tudi bajno bitje ženskega spola z izrazito negativnimi lastnostmi. Mora kot nosilka negativnih sil povzroča škodo predvsem ljudem, najpogosteje novorojenčkom ali majhnim otrokom. Njeno delovanje je omejeno le na noč, na čas, ko ljudje spijo. Pogosto se za njen nočni obisk ugotovi šele zjutraj, po znakih na telesu (modrice, bule ipd.). Morine ključne dejavnosti so sesanje krvi, grizenje ali zbadanje v različne dele telesa, pri čemer je najbolj izpostavljen prsni del ali pete. Če se je tovrstno morino delovanje pogosto ponavljalo, je pri majhnem otroku lahko povzročilo smrt. (Lipovec Čebren 2002: 62–69) Čeprav sta Boškina tlačili pravzaprav coprnici, in ne mora, ki je druga vrsta bajnega bitja, se tudi v *Óštrigéci* potrjuje, da je štriga pogosto nadpomenka za različna druga bajna bitja in pojave (Lipovec Čebren 2002: 69), v tem primeru za tesnoben spanec ali moro. Tudi to, da babura Štafúra hodi deklici Nini pit kri iz prsi in pet, je značilno za moro, ki se nevidna ponoči loti novorojenčkov in majhnih otrok, da se jim zjutraj poznajo krvaveče rane in lahko shirajo do smrti.

To, kar so gledali pred sabo, je bilo brez dvoma delo kakšne babure. Toda nihče ni vedel, katera bi naj bila, in kar je bilo najhuje: ni jim bilo jasno, kako ji preprečiti vstop. Govorilo se je, da prihaja skozi ključavnico ali pa skozi špranje na oknih in vratih. Ženske, ki so privrele gledat čudo nočne more in morije, so vedele povedati marsikaj zanimivega in nenavadnega. Govorile so, da se čarovnica spremeni v zrak in kot veter ali prepilih sikne v hišo, ko pa je notri, se spet spremeni v žensko, ki pa je še vedno nevidna, in pristopi k postelji ter počenja tiste svoje ogabne stvari. Vaščanke so zmajevale z glavami ter govorile, da je hudobo možno ujeti le, če jo zgrabi kak drug čarovnik. Praviloma le tako, kajti če jo zalezuje druga baba, to nič ne velja in se stvar ne odčara. (Tomšič 1991: 101)

V zadnjih dveh povedih navedka je tudi že navodilo za postopek tradicionalne medicine, ki ga je, kot bomo videli v nadaljevanju, večš tudi Boškin, in sicer z zagovorom zoper urok in z metanjem ogorkov v vodo. V nekaterih situacijah Tomšič Boškinove magične besede zagovora zapiše,<sup>14</sup> vedno pa ne.

Boškin se bori s štrigami (čarovnicami), a je tudi sam štrigo oz. štrigon (čarovnik) ali kot spoznanja nizozemskega antropologa Willema de Blécourta povzema Mirjam Mencej

<sup>14</sup> Dodatno razsežnost raziskave bi prineslo primerjanje besedil Boškinovih zagovorov in realnih, na terenu zbranih zagovorov (v preteklosti in danes).

(2006: 37): »[B]eseda 'čarovnica' lahko pomeni tako osebo, ki je osumljena škodovanja drugim, se pravi 'pravo', zlo čarovnico, kot tudi osebo, ki izvaja dejanja proti čarovnicam, se pravi nasprotnico čarovnic«. Sicer pa Tomšičeva uvedba čarovnice kot literarne osebe v evropski književnosti ni novost, lik čarovnice (različno poimenovan) je namreč prepoznavna značilnost popularne evropske književnosti od antike do današnjih dni (Johnston 2014).

In nazadnje – v *Óstrigéci* nastopa še eno istrsko bajno bitje, tj. volkodlak oz. kodlak. V evropski kulturi ima dolgo tradicijo in je med evropskimi narodi zelo razširjen. Ob tem je zanimivo tudi dejstvo, da volkodlak v izročilu slovenske Istre nima klasično likantrop-skih potez (ne spremeni se v volka, dlakavost ni prisotna kot njegov prepoznavni znak itd.), temveč je po značilnostih bližje vampirju, ki se sicer pojavlja na celotnem ozemlju Balkana, kljub temu je ohranjeno poimenovanje kodlak (iz samostalnika volkodlak, ne iz vampirja), saj sta se obe poimenovanji na Balkanu prepletli; v Dalmaciji je imenovan tudi kudlak (Šešo 2016: 44). Med morinim in volkodlakovim delovanjem obstajajo številne podobnosti: njune potencialne žrtve so ogrožene med spanjem ali v stanju polsna, obe bitji sesata svojim žrtvam kri ali jim otežujeta dihanje, jih dušita. Volkodlaki tako kot mori in kot bomo videli pozneje, tudi štrigi ter štrigonu pripisujejo odgovornost za bolezen in smrt, najpogosteje otrokovo. (Lipovec Čebren 2002: 62–69, Šešo 2016: 54) Že v Valvazorjevih časih so volkodlake in vampirje zamenjevali, širile so se srhljive pripovedi o vračanju povampirjenih umrlih, kar je sicer izraz prastarega verovanja in strahu živih pred mrtvimi (Kropej 2008: 288–289) Volkodlak v *Óstrigéci* ima prav take lastnosti, kot jih je zabeležila Uršula Lipovec Čebren (2002: 67–68), in sicer se ne spremeni v volka in dlakavost ni njegov razpoznavni znak. Bolj je podoben vampirju, svoji žrtvi ponoči sesa kri in jo v spanju duši. Podoba Tomšičevega »kodlaka Tulka«, ki zleze iz groba na pokopališču, kamor se je spravil spat Boškin, je res vampirska. S snežno belima dolgima zobema, oblečen v frak in v krsti z belim pregrinjalom ne deluje prav nič tradicionalno istrsko, kvečjemu spominja na filmske upodobitve vampirskega grofa Drakule.

Zemlja se je potem močno razgrnila in iz temne razpoke je prilezlo čudno bitje: ne mrtvak in ne človek. Nekaj sredinskega. Motovilo je bilo oblečeno po modi prejšnjega stoletja ali morda stoletij, kdo bi to uganil v poltemi. Toliko pa je Boškin le videl, da je imela ta prilika na glavi cilinder, oziroma klobuk, ki je bil na moč podoben cilindru. In dolgi ter ostri škrici so mu štrleli levo ter desno. Oči pa so se žareče in rdeče svetile, tako močno, da ni mogel gledati vanje. Iz čeljusti je molelo dvoje dolgih, snežno belih zob; tudi ta dva čekana sta svetila, kot da bi bila fluorescenčna. [...] Ko so se dovolj približali, so zagledali kodlaka. Ležal je na belem, čistem pregrinjalu in obraz je imel spačen od bolečine. (Tomšič 1991: 41, 47)

Potem ko kodlak Tulko najprej čez streho vrže slamico in ob tem domači pes ne zalaja (to je prepoznavno dejanje vampirja – Kropej 2008: 290), deklici Danjeli izpije kri, nakar se zopet izkaže Boškin kot krsnik. Na pokopališču počaka, da se začne daniti, saj imajo, dokler je noč, še vedno moč volkodlaki in more, ter odide oživit Danjelo in sredi belega dne ubit kodlaka. V oživitvi Danjele in uboju kodlaka se mešajo prvine tradicionalne

medicine oz. ljudskega verovanja in Tomšičevi avtorski, domišljjski elementi: potem ko Boškin namreč izgovori ustrezen zagovor, se hišni zidovi razprejo in Danjelino telo se napije sončnih žarkov. In čeprav ima volkodlak zabita dva ostra akacijeva kola v telo (ne glogova, s katerimi se sicer prebada vampirje – Kropej 2008: 290, Šešo 2016: 55), kodlak še zmeraj ni mrtev – ubije ga šele to, da Boškin nanj zlije prgišče nekakšne nadnaravne, ne sončne svetlobe.

## LJUDSKA MEDICINA IN KRŠČANSKI ELEMENTI

Tudi reprezentacija ljudske oz. tradicionalne medicine je nenadomestljivi del *Óštrigéce*, ki pomembno določa njen istrski pripovedni prostor. Po *Slovenskem etnološkem leksikonu* (Makarovič 2004: 289) je ljudska medicina (etnomedicina, ljudsko zdravlilstvo) »preprosto, nestrokovno, ljudem in živalim namenjeno zdravlilstvo, ki uporablja naravne in čarovne načine zdravljenja« ter »skupek zdravilnih metod in predstav, kakršne je imel naš človek delno še v pradavnini, ki jih je spolnjeval v dolgi dobi svojega razvoja« (Möderndorfer 1964: 7). Etnologi in medicinski antropologi so ljudsko medicino, značilno za evropski ruralni prostor, definirali pretežno z opozicijo do uradne medicine, kar se »kaže predvsem v drugačnem koncipiranju telesa, zdravja in bolezni, posledično tudi v različnem etiološko-diagnostičnem modelu in klasifikatornem sistemu zdravstvenih motenj ter v drugačni terapevtski praksi« (Lipovec Čebren 2010: 93–94). Druga določnica ljudske medicine je prisotnost magijskih in/ali religiozних elementov, iz česar izhaja tudi posledica, da so v ljudski medicini bolezni in vzroki zanjo pojmovani kot zunanji, personalni in metafizični. To pomeni, da je povzročitelj, ki je lahko človeški ali nečloveški, zunanji (npr. urok); bolnik, ki tako tudi ne prevzame odgovornosti za svoje stanje, je njegova žrtev oz. »je imel naš človek v davnini bolezni za delo zlih duhov in se je zato zdravil tudi s preganjanjem zlih duhov z raznimi pripomočki, predvsem z besedo in čarom [...] čarodejna medicina [...] je usedlina davne primitivne dobe, ko je človek še iskal vzroke za obolenje v dejavnosti zlih duhov« (Möderndorfer 1964: 7, 18). »Čaranje ali magijo je človek začel uporabljati že v najstarejših civilizacijah, ko je skušal s pomočjo obredij, zaklinjanj, uročitev ali drugih čarovnih dejanj vplivati na naravo, ljudi, živali in dogajanja okoli sebe.« (Kropej 2008: 305) Izročilo o čaranju in magičnem zdravljenju na Slovenskem je zelo bogato in raznoliko: »Ena najstarejših oblik zdravljenja in poskusa obvladovanja narave je vraštvo. Vračenje združuje uporabo zeliščnih pripravkov, zagovorov in magije.« (Kropej 2000: 77) Verbalna magija oz. zagovori, ki so najverjetneje najbogatejši, najbolj raznolik in poetičen izraz magičnega (Pócs 2019: 7) in starodavni in razlikovalni del naše skupne evropske kulture (Pócs 2019: 10), so poseben del magijske prakse, ki se izvaja tako, da se izgovarjajo povedane ali zapisane besede, ki so najpogosteje skrivnostni, skriti del ustne ali zapisane magijske tradicije v vsaki ljudski kulturi, ustni korpus verbalne magije pa je del kolektivnega spomina, ki se na skrivaj prenaša iz roda v rod (Vukelić 2014: 243). Namen zagovora je, da se bolezni oz. hudič ali hudobni duh preseli iz telesa, ki je pojmovano kot prostor, da torej bolezni zamenja življenjski prostor, se umakne (Babič 2019: 266).



Izvajalke tradicionalnih postopkov zdravljenja v Istri so bile povečini starejše ženske (redkeje moški), ki jih ponavadi niso posebej poimenovali (redko so jih imenovali štrige), zdravile so bolezni, ki jih je povzročala uročenost (naredile so proti uroku, gledale so za urok, načinjale 'delale'), in to z najpogostejšim postopkom – metanjem žerjavice oz. ogorkov v vodo (gašenje) (Lipovec Čebren 2010: 116).

Na prvo dejanje tradicionalne medicine v *Óštrigéci*, zdravljenje z zdravilnimi zelišči, ki v slovenski ljudski medicini obsega uporabo več kot petsto rastlin (Möderndorfer 1964: 15), naletimo, ko se Boškin znajde v Maršičevem hlevu in ugotovi, da krava Vijola že poginja. Čeprav ga ljudje očitno že poznajo kot ljudskega zdravilca, niso povsem prepričani o njegovih sposobnostih ali dvomijo zato, ker mogoče ne zaupajo (več) povsem postopkom ljudske medicine: »'Ti, ki si štrigo, ti bi lahko pomagal,' je rekla Pepa kar tako; ni mislila resno.« (Tomšič 1991: 14) Krava začne jesti, kar je znak, da je rešena, potem ko ji Boškin ob izgovarjanju zagovora z zdravilnimi zelišči natre noge in gospodar nič več ne dvomi, da ima Boškin zdraviteljsko moč. Novica o Boškinovem uspehu pri zdravljenju bolne krave se hitro razširi, nanjo se v pogovoru sklicujeta Milja in Danjela, pa tudi Eljo, eden izmed delavcev v Šavronkinem vinogradu: »'Pravijo, da znaš zdraviti in delat čudeže.'« (Tomšič 1991: 23) V resnici se Boškin očitno ne zaveda povsem svojih zdraviteljskih sposobnosti oz. jih ni navajen, saj se med nabiranjem zdravilnih zelišč za ozdravitev krave z njim, ko se kot v transu premika od ene zdravilne rastline do druge, od gozda do puča, dogaja nekaj, česar ne razume. Boškinovo poklicanost za zdravljenje Tomšič motivira z domišljjskim, ne folklornim motivom, da je Boškin videl ognjenega konja. To samo kravi (Boškinu in drugim pa ne) razloži v kotu hleva stoječi vol: »'Na, zdaj pa te bo ozdravil! Res te bo. Vidim svetlobo okrog njegove glave in srebrno meglico na njegovih prstih. Srečal je ognjenega konja in ta mu je dal nekaj svoje moči.'« (Tomšič 1991: 15) Eksplicitno ni povedano, zakaj je krava bolna oz. uročena. Njen lastnik ne sprejema odgovornosti za njeno bolezen, saj trdi, da nikomur ni storil ničesar hudega, da bi zdaj moral odplačevati dolg s kravino smrtjo. Vdan je v usodo in za kravino bolezen ne išče racionalnega vzroka, temveč dejstvo sprejema kot neizpodbitno, kar je značilno za ljudsko medicino v nasprotju z uradno (Lipovec Čebren 2008: 12). To je natančneje razvidno iz dvogovora z Boškinom, ko o kravi pove: »'Šla bo. Tako je pač. Nekaterim se godi le dobro, drugim slabo.' Boškin je na te besede odgovoril dvoumno: 'No ja, slabo se vrača s slabim, dobro z dobrim.' 'Meni se vedno dobro vrača s slabim. Kaj pa sem komu storil? Vijola bo šla k vragu, to vem.'« (Tomšič 1991: 14)

Jedro tradicionalne medicine je v zunanem vzroku bolezni, bolezen torej nikoli ne nastopi slučajno, pač pa je v njenem ozadju določen namen. Gospodar je pomoč za bolno kravo očitno brezuspešno že iskal, nemara pri uradni veterinarski medicini: »'Je bil zjutraj oni iz Kopra tu in je rekel: Kar zakoljite jo, ne bo preživela.'« (Tomšič 1991: 14) Domnevni veterinar, »oni iz Kopra«, je predstavnik uradne medicine, prihaja iz mesta, je tujec, zato s kmečkim gospodarjem »ne delita istega kulturnega koda in interpretacijskega modela zdravja in bolezni« (Lipovec Čebren 2008: 96) oz. je med zdravnikom (v našem primeru veterinarjem) in ruralnim prebivalcem Istre sociokulturna distanca. To je očitno že iz dejstva, da veterinarja razočarani kmet sploh ne poimenuje konkretno, zadovolji se zgolj z osebnim zaimkom in določilom, od kod prihaja. Da so se Istrani bolj zatekali k ljudski kot uradni medicini, je

očitno tudi v *Óstrigéci*: za nobeno od težav, ki jih odpravi Boškin (razen za kravo), niso vaščani prej poklicali predstavnikov uradne medicine oz. veterine. Tudi ko Boškin pri Urihu ves izčrpan po treh dneh in nočeh tavanja po brezpotjih preleži tri tedne, Urih ne pokliče zdravnika, ampak mu kuha »čaj« in ga maže z »mastjo, za katero je njegova nona trdila, da je božja mast in da pomaga zoper vse težave, tudi zoper smrt samo.« (Tomšič 1991: 83) Ko zaradi opečenosti Boškinovega obraza, ker ga je ožgala ognjena muša, vaščani vseeno tečejo po zdravniku, se Boškin, ko sliši za to, izmuzne iz hiše in odide iz vasi.

Kulturno distanco v razmerju med zdravnikom in bolnikom v Istri so poglobljali družbeno-ekonomski dejavniki (razlike v izobrazbi, družbenem statusu in finančnem položaju), jezikovni dejavniki (odsotnost skupnega jezika komunikacije, ker zdravniki niso razumeli narečja, ruralni prebivalci pa ne znali nobenega od knjižnih jezikov), hierarhija (zdravnik strokovnjak – bolnik laik, ki verjame v »vraževerje«) in ideologija (nacionalistični odnos italijanskih zdravnikov do slovenskega in hrvaškega prebivalstva). Tudi v Istri je najbolj razširjena oblika etiološke razlage nastanka bolezni – urok, ki je lahko zavestno ali celo nezavedno in nenamerno škodovanje, njegova posledica pa niso le zdravstvene težave, temveč je lahko cela vrsta težav od medosebnega nerazumevanja, prometnih nesreč in težav z denarjem (Uršula Lipovec Čebren 2008: 121, 137, 140).

Delavci v Šavronkinem vinogradu želijo Boškina kot štrigona oz. tradicionalnega zdravilca, ki naj bi napovedoval celó prihodnost in poznal vzroke za bolezni, za lastno zabavo preizkusiti. On jim odgovarja pametno, logično in tako na široko, da mu ne morejo dokazati, da si izmišljuje. Boškin namreč ni podoba tipičnega zdravilca, saj je zanemarjen, pogosto pijan potepuh, medtem ko so (bile) ljudske zdravilke običajne vaščanke z urejenim življenjem in (večinoma, vsaj v preteklosti) spoštovane v skupnosti (po terenskih izkušnjah Uršule Lipovec Čebren 2008: 150).

Šavronkine bolečine v križu so Boškiniu jasne, ne da bi gospodinja o njih spregovorila. Gre za dokazovanje magičnih sposobnosti, saj zdravilec še pred zdravljenčevim opisom težav ve, kaj je narobe, in to zdravljenču tudi povepravi (Lipovec Čebren 2010: 157). Šavronka na začetku sicer vsaj na videz, da ne bi izpadla preveč vraževerna, malo dvomi o Boškinovih sposobnostih, zato ga preračunljivo vpraša, kako se bosta pogodila v primeru, če njene bolečine ne izginejo. Boškin ji predlaga, da ga bo lahko pretepla s kolom. Po drugi strani mu Šavronka zaupa zaradi preteklih pozitivnih izkušenj: »In vedela je, da Boškin ne govori kar tako, kajti on je že bil nekoč pri njih v hiši in je takrat ozdravil Bepíno« (Tomšič 1991: 26), zato ga kasneje, da bi jo odrešil tudi pokojnikovega vračanja, za pomoč prosi še enkrat. Šavronka je bogata, a skopa debela vdova brez otrok in z mogočno hišo, delavce slabo plačuje, izkaže se, da se tudi s pokojnim možem ni razumela, zato jo hodi še po smrti vznemirjat s trkanjem. Da jo boli križ, je nekakšna kolektivna kazen. Boškin jo sicer odreši bolečin, vendar tako, da mora pred svojimi delavci leči na gola tla. Na ta način Boškin kot tisti, ki v funkciji poklicane osebe (zdravilec, krsnik) ureja medsebojne odnose, predstavnikom skupnosti (delavcem) ponudi obliko zadoščenja. To potrujeta ugotovitvi Uršule Lipovec Čebren:

Diagnosticiranje ima izjemno pomembno družbeno funkcijo, ki zdravilcu nudi privilegirani položaj usmerjevalca odnosov v skupnosti. [...] [P]

redstave o telesu imajo v istrski tradicionalni medicini še dodatno, družbeno dimenzijo. Odnosi v družbeni skupnosti se namreč neposredno odslikavajo na fizičnem telesu posameznika, pri čemer se konflikti v medosebnih odnosih simbolno prevedejo v simptome bolezni. Gre za specifično vrsto skladnosti oziroma 'pretočnosti' med makro- in mikrokozmosom, na podlagi katere individualno telo eksistira kot družbeno telo. (Lipovec Čebtron 2010: 156, 133)

Boškin z izgovarjanjem magičnih besed, tj. z zagovorom, ki je »najstarejši slovenski način borbe proti boleznim« (Möderndorfer 1964: 7) in »najbolj arhaičen del zakladnice ljudskomedicinskega znanja« (Zupanič Slavec 2000: 85) kot tradicionalni zdravilec deluje v vseh dejanjih tradicionalne medicine (ozdravi kravo, bolečine v križu, izvin, rane od štriginega in volkodlakovega sesanja krvi, izžene hudobnega duha) in krsnik oz. štrigon v preprečitvi toče. Dopolnjuje ga: z zdravilnimi zelišči in ilovnato oblogo (pri kravi in Jukičevem gležnju), dotikanjem obolelega dela telesa (Šavronkin hrbet premeri s palcem in kazalcem, Jukičevo oteklino pogladi), metanjem žerjavice v vodo (pri deklici Nini, ki ji je štriga pila kri, kar je (bil) najbolj razširjen način razdiranja uroka), s čarnim risom (v prah s palico skicira vas in njive) in z močjo pogleda (deklico Albo gleda v oči, ko izganja iz nje transformirano baburo Štafuro; v sanjah baburo Štafuro prisili, da gola pleše, tako da jo gleda globoko v oči). Da se pri Danjeli razprejo zidovi in nanjo posije sonce in da Boškin na kodlaka zlije prgišče tekoče nevidne svetlobe, sta domišljajska elementa, Tomšičev avtorski dodatek, ki s postopki tradicionalne medicine nista v zvezi.

Boškin za svoje zdravljenje nikoli ne zahteva nikakršnega plačila, še celo vneto iskreno zahvaljevanje, ko se mu Ninina mati Marija vrže k nogam ali ko ga Danjela objame, mu je odveč. Ne odreče se ponujenemu vinu (pri Šavronki), pršutu (pri Milji), fižolovi solati (pri Jakominki) in mleku (pri Momjanki). To je v skladu z ugotovitvijo, da se je plačilo tradicionalnemu zdravilcu izvršilo v sistemu blagovne menjave (Lipovec Čebtron 2008: 120), čeprav Möderndorfer (1964: 9) pravi, da so imeli ljudski zdravilci mogočne domove, torej niso bili revni, in je izročilo, da naj bi zdravilec plačilo prejel, samo če so mu ga ljudje sami ponudili, že v preteklosti utonilo v pozabo.

Na kakšen način pa je v *Óštrigéci* prisotna v Istri prevladujoča krščanska vera in katoliška veroizpoved? Omemba krščanske oz. katoliške cerkve, zvonika in pokopališča je nepogrešljivi element istrskega dogajalnega prostora. Ob odhodu iz gostilne Boškin sliši bítí stolpno uro; ko razdira Štafúrin urok v Črnici, zvonovi zvonijo, ne da bi kdo vlekel za vrvi; Šavronka je plačala tri maše, a jo pokojnik še zmeraj prihaja strašit; Momjanka je na pokopališču videvala procesije mrtvih; Boškin na pokopališču sreča volkodlaka in zagrobne svate. Krščanski elementi so del t. i. apotropijskih sredstev, tj. vzklikov in zagovorov, ki naj bi imeli moč, da premagajo urok ali pred njim ščitijo. Mnogi zagovori s krščanskimi elementi so predelani poganski obrazci, ki so ohranili prvotno obliko in vsebino (Zupanič Slavec 2000: 86).<sup>15</sup> Ob transformaciji Kozlovičevega in Juričevega glasu

<sup>15</sup> Npr. več kot polovica poznanih tipov zagovorov na Madžarskem je na tak ali drugačen način povezana z izvirnimi krščanskimi religioznimi besedili (Pócs 2019: 237).

v belega in črnega psička se Boškin prekriža<sup>16</sup> in zdrdra izmišljeno pesmico – molitvico oz. zagovor, ki naj bi pregnal poganski urok. Ko zagleda ognjenega konja, vzklikne: »'Vsi svetniki kontra štrigeriji! [...] Strmel je proti nebu s široko odprtimi očmi in se križal.« (Tomšič 1991: 11) Proti skušnjavam babure Štafúre in proti njenemu mešanju toče – povzročanje toče je ena najpogostejših obtožb v zgodovini čarovništva (Mencej 2000: 88) – se bori z zagovorom:

'Tri frkade levo, / štiri desno, / baba čótasta, / baba štufasta, / križem kražem križ!' [...] Že je Boškin segel po leseni žlici, da bi zajel, ko mu je dobri duh prišepnil odrešilno besedo. In Boškin je zakričal: 'Sveti križ, iš, iš!' [...] Zamahnil je s palico nad risbo in močno govoril: 'Kar je moje, ni tvoje! / V žerjavici taca kosmata; / iz ognja pepel, iz pepela voda, / iz vode žegen!' (Tomšič 1991: 8, 35, 75)<sup>17</sup>

Ko mala Alba zaradi Štafúrine preobrazbe v njeno telo domala ponori, išče njena teta pomoč v katoliški veri: »Momjanka se je križala in na glas molila: 'O vsi svetniki, pomagajte! Jezus, Marija, pomagajte nam, preženite vraga iz nje. O Marija, pomagaj, pomagaj!'« (Tomšič 1991: 54) To, kar počne Boškin z Albo, je eksorcizem, izganjanje hudiča oz. hudobnega duha z močjo pogleda in zagovora:

'Skobca-zlobca! Štafúra-bura! Vija vaja-ven!'<sup>18</sup> je gromozansko divje zakričal in isti hip je začutil v rokah moč. Iztegnil jih je in Alba je kar zaplavala proti njemu, mimo svoje volje, pritegnjena z neznansko silo. Prijel jo je za obe rami, močno jo je stisnil in se ji zagledal globoko v oči. [...] Moč, ki jo je čutil v prstih, je pronicala v Albina ramena, in ogenj, ki mu je sijal iz zenic, je neusmiljeno žgal črni klobčič v dekljini notranjosti. (Tomšič 1991: 55)

Razdiranje uroka je vrsta eksorcizma, kar se opredeljuje kot apotropejski, zaščitni in očiščevalni ritual, ki ima magično naravo (Lipovec Čebtron 2008: 159); mnogi zagovori so nastali ravno na podlagi krščanskih obredov izganjanja zlih duhov (Zupanič Slavec 2000: 86). Poleg tega se tradicionalne zdravilke pogosto identificirajo z duhovnikom, češ da je zdravilkina naloga, da s terapevtskim postopkom, vrsto eksorcizma, iz telesa odstrani zlohotni metafizični element, torej urok. Boškin pomiri oglašanje Miljine vesti, ker je Mariji z Vršiča prevzela fanta, kot bi bil katoliški duhovnik. Kot da bi se mu Milja izpovedala, on pa ji daje odvezo:

<sup>16</sup> Znotraj uradne katoliške vere je »prekrižanje oblika blagoslovitve, ki je v funkciji zaščite in terapevtskega akta odstranitve zlih sil« (Lipovec Čebtron 2008: 158).

<sup>17</sup> Ko se Boškin po strmi poti spušča k reki, se spomni, da se je tam nekje ubila Jukičeva krava Mandola. Tudi do živalske smrti je Boškin spoštljiv in podobno, kot se v katoliški tradiciji, ko se spregovori o pokojniku ali pomisli nanj, doda še misel na njegov mir, ravna tudi Boškin: »Bilo mu je žal zanjo, tudi zdaj. Zato je rekel, ko se je prebijal mimo: 'Naj bo blagega spomina.'« (Tomšič 1991: 155)

<sup>18</sup> Hudiču ali hudemu duhu, ki se je naselil v telo, Boškin s krajevnim prislovom ukazuje, naj iz telesa izstopi (»ven!«), kar je v skladu z ugotovitvijo, da je telo prostor, ki ga mora bolezen (ali hudi duh) zapustiti (Babič 2019: 266).

'Poklekni. Daj mi roko. Ne, levo roko. Tako. Zdaj pa ti povem. In glej me v oči. Povem ti, da si plačala, kar je blo treba plačat. Drugi del daš, ko pride jesen. Takrat te bomo pokopali. Ali ne boj se, zakaj ni bil tvoj greh tako velik, da bi bla pogubljena. Iz ljubezni si kradla, iz ljubezni, zato ti bo odpuščeno.' (Tomšič 1991: 20)

Osrednji del v *Óštrigéci*, povezan s krščanstvom, je prizorišče boja z baburo Štafúro:

Že petnajst let je cerkvice samevala sredi grmovja in nizkih hrastov, okrog in okrog obdana z zapuščenimi travniki in jasami. Povsod se je belilo kraško kamenje; kot koščene kope se je šopirilo: kupi in kupčki belega kamenja.<sup>19</sup> [...] 'Kako prazno in samotno,' je pomislil in si kar ni upal prestopiti praga. Z desnico je potipal kamen, v katerem je bila nekoč žegnana voda.<sup>20</sup> Roka se mu je samodejno pomaknila tja. Vendar ni bilo niti kapljice, da bi si omočil blazinice prstov in se pokrižal. Pa je vendar pokleknil in prebežal s prsti čelo, prsi ter obe rameni. (Tomšič 1991: 140, 141)

Boškin v opusteli in izropani cerkvi posedl, potem zasliši žebranje. Ko hoče prestrašen oditi, se spotakne, pade in v cerkvenih klopeh, ki jih prej ni bilo, zagleda ljudi brez glav, ki molijo nečiste priprošnje k svetnikom, ter spozna, da ga je spet v past ujela babura Štafúra. Ko se skozi napol podrt cerkveni strop prikaže odrešilna svetloba, ki uniči brezglavce, se Boškin zave, da mu je na pomoč, da bi dokončno uničil baburo Štafúro, prihitela njegova izvoljenka Vítica; poslednji boj se odvije pred cerkvijo. Izbor cerkve kot dogajalnega prostora za končni obračun z baburo Štafúro, simbolom slabega, zlega in hudega, ni naključen, saj posvečeni prostor krščanske vere kot vere ljubezni poudari zmago dobrega nad zlim oz. ljubezni nad sovraštvom. Čeprav se Boškin v celotni *Óštrigéci* nič ne sprašuje o krščanskem Bogu, njegovem obstoju in veri vanj, katoliško vero prakticira iz navade: prekriža se in spoštljiv je do posvečene zemlje in sakralnih objektov. V razmišljanju o pomenu njegovega življenja, ki ga spodbudijo drobni znaki prisotnosti nekega njegovega skrivnostnega prijatelja in zaščitnika, »Neznanca«, nevidno prisotnega tudi ob Boškinovi smrtni uri, je aluzija na krščanskega Boga oz. Stvarnika:

Psiček, ki ni imel imena (pravzaprav ga je imel, vendar ga ni bilo možno izgovoriti s človeškim glasom), je povedal: 'Poslal me je tvoj prijatelj in zaščitnik in mi naročil, naj te spremim ta del poti, kajti današnji dan in ta ura sta zate zelo nevarna in utegnilo bi se ti zgoditi kaj hudega.' [...] 'Vidiš, kaj bi, če vas ne bi imel! Pa reci, ali ni prijateljstvo zares lepa stvar. Najboljša, najlepša na svetu.' [...] Tisti, ki je poslal belega psička, je neviden stopal zadaj. Brundal si je pesmico, stalno eno in isto, ki pa je bila

<sup>19</sup> Opis se ujema s podružnično cerkvijo Marije Snežne na Gradiščah v župniji Črnotiče tik nad Kraškim robom (v 90. letih 20. st. obnovljena), mimo katere vodi pot iz Istre na Kras.

<sup>20</sup> Blagoslovljena voda ima, tako kot akt prekrižanja, funkcijo zaščite pred zlimi silami (Lipovec Čebren 2008: 158).

tako prijetna, da je prevzela Boškina in psička in ju navdala s hvaležnostjo in toplino. [...] Ob tej poti, malo za njim, korak nazaj od tam, kjer se je bil predavnimi leti nenadoma pojavil, je stal nekdo, ki ga je Boško dobro poznal, vendar mu ni vedel ne imena ne izvora. Ko se mu je zdaj, v tej zadnji uri tega njegovega življenja, plazil mraz v trebuh, je napel vse moči, da bi prepoznal to skrivnostno bitje, kajti vedel je, da ga je prav on takrat postavil na pot in mu ukazal: 'Hodi!' (Tomšič 1991: 87, 88, 160)

### SKLEP

Prispevek išče odgovore na raziskovalno vprašanje, kaj vse iz folklore je pisatelj Marjan Tomšič medbesedilno uporabil v svojem izvirnem literarnem besedilu, pravljичnem romanu *Óštrigéca* (1991). Tomšič, ki je zbiral in objavil tudi istrsko slovstveno folkloro v knjigi *Noč je moja, dan je tvoj: Istrske štorije* (1989), je z *Óštrigéco* v sodobno slovensko književnost poleg narečnih prvin medbesedilno vnesel še elemente bajeslovja in ljudske medicine, prepletene s krščanstvom. V *Óštrigéci* je prisotnih precej bajeslovnih bitij in likov (mora, orko in mrak, kresnik, volkodlak ter štriga in štrigon), ki postanejo tudi literarne osebe, v literarno besedilo pa so vpleteni še načini ljudske medicine, prepletene s krščanstvom. Že osrednji literarni lik, potepuh Boškin, je krsnik oz. dobri štrigon, ki deluje kot ljudski zdravilec, na svojih popotovanjih pa se srečuje z drugimi bajnimi bitji in bajnimi liki: moro, ki ga v podobi dveh štrig tlači v spanju, orkom in mrakom, ki mu nagajata, ter volkodlakom, katerega pomaga uničiti, in ne nazadnje štrigo baburo Štafúro, ki ga skuša na vse načine onemogočiti v njegovem delovanju. Podoba Boškina kot potepuha, ki se ves čas premika in se trudi delati dobro, aludira na ljudskega desetega brata in Jurčičevega Martinka Spaka iz prvega slovenskega romana *Deseti brat* (1866) – tako kot Boškin, ki ni povsem tipični krsnik, se tudi nezakonski sin Martinek Spak za desetega brata samo izdaja, oba pa se čudežno pojavljata v trenutkih, ko ju druge osebe potrebujejo.

Tomšičev roman je nastal oz. bil objavljen v obdobju, ko sta na literarno prizorišče z romani t. i. pokrajinske fantastike opazno stopila še dva slovenska pisatelja, Vlado Žabot z romani *Stari pil* (1989), *Pastorala* (1994) in *Volčje noči* (1996) ter Feri Lainšček z romanom *Ki jo je megla prinesla* (1993). Z navedenimi literarnimi deli je gotovo mogoče potegniti vzporednice že zaradi njihove umeščenosti v obrobne slovenske pokrajine (Istra, Prekmurje oz. Pomurje) ter poudarjene literarno predelane krščanske ikonografije pri Žabotu, ki se je v kasnejših delih sicer še močneje naslonil na staroslovansko mitologijo,<sup>21</sup> vendar se Tomšičeva *Óštrigéca* od teh del tudi temeljno razlikuje prav po obsežni prisotnosti bajnih bitij, ki postanejo osrednje literarne osebe in nezamenljivi del fabule.

Prav izbrana bajna bitja in liki, posebej značilni za istrsko ljudsko izročilo, in elementi tradicionalne medicine, poleg drugih značilnosti istrskega literarnega prostora,

<sup>21</sup> Npr. v delu *Sveta poroka: epska pesnitev po staroslovanskem mitu* (2013). Ne nazadnje je bil prav Žabot pobudnik ustanovitve nagrade za najboljši slovenski roman, ki se po bajnem bitju imenuje kresnik.

kot so dialektizmi in specifična submediteranska narava, oblikujejo podobo *Óštrigéce*, ki bi ji v angleškem prostoru rekli »local color« (Pimple 1998: 387–388) ali po naše regionalna književnost, vendar ne v smislu drugorazredne, manjvredne književnosti, temveč v smislu izstopajočih regionalnih posebnosti, ki v literarnem besedilu ustvarjajo specifičen estetski učinek. Folklorne prvine v Tomšičevem romanu *Óštrigéca* so tudi nezamenljivi regionalni označevalci literarnega prostora, literarnih oseb in družbenih razmerij med njimi. Prisotnost bajnih bitij in bajnih likov ter prvine ljudske medicine ustvarjajo poseben, regionalno obarvan zgodbeni prostor, ki ga napolnjujejo prostorsko določene literarne osebe. Istrski literarni prostor, kot ga je Tomšič v svojem romanu ustvaril z vpeljavo folklornih prvin, v katerih se odseva »zapleteno tradicijsko zaznavanje prostora, ki temelji na odnosu tostranstvo in onstranstvo ter vrsti pravil, ki uravnavajo prehode med tema dvema svetovoma« (Hrobat Virloget 2019: 9), vpliva na dogajanje, delovanje literarnih oseb in njihove značilnosti. Folklorna podstat besedila vpliva na njegov potek, literarne osebe se ravna v skladu z značilnostmi mitoloških bitij oz. likov. Realna slovenska pokrajina, slovenski del Istre, je pisatelju postala temelj za ustvaritev fiktivnega zgodbenega prostora, zato je jasno, da Tomšičev roman *Óštrigéca* ni objektivno folkloristovo terensko poročilo, temveč umetniško besedilo s folklornimi prvini, ki so v vlogi doseganja estetskega učinka, oz. besedilo z novoizgrajenim, literarnim, ne realnim prostorom in družbo.

V zvezi z umeščenostjo Tomšičeve literarne ustvarjalnosti v evropsko oz. širše svetovno literarno tradicijo velja dodati, da je literarna kritika Tomšičev istrski opus, predvsem roman *Óštrigéca*, tudi zaradi folklornih prvin popularno povezovala s t. i. slogom magičnega realizma Južne Amerike, denimo romanom Gabriela Garcie Marqueza *Sto let samote* in romanom Miaguela Angela Asturiasa *Koruzarji* – slednji se je navezoval na ljudsko izročilo Majeve, vendar je literarna veda to povezavo in umeščanje Tomšičeve književnosti v neko drugo nacionalno književnost oz. postkolonialno latinskoameriško literaturo že zgodaj zavrnila (Zupan Sosič 2003: 80).<sup>22</sup>

Folkloristična obravnava *Óštrigéce* je pokazala, da je Tomšič odličen poznavalec ljudskega izročila, ki ga zna mojstrsko vplesti v literarno delo. Pri tem si sicer privoščijo tudi avtorske domišljajske dodatke, npr. antropomorfizirano naravo v podobi govorečega vola ali ognjenega konja, kar ne sodi med folklorne prvine (čeprav bi besedna zveza ognjeni konj lahko aludirala tudi na boga Peruna, interpretacija je odvisna od bralca), pri tem pa bralcu prepušča, da sam loči med folkloro in avtorsko domišljijo. Z vpeljavo ljudskega izročila v umetno literaturo potrjuje, da je folklor (sporočena posredno iz pisnega ali neposredno iz ustnega vira) s svojimi žanri, strukturami, stili in okoljem pisateljem in drugim umetnikom na voljo kot bogat kulturni vir (Brown 1998: xxxvi), kar ne nazadnje potrjuje tudi slovenska literarna tradicija oz. mitopoetsko izročilo, ki ima v slovenski književnosti nezamenljivo mesto – denimo medbesedilno naslanjanje na slovensko ljudsko pesem od Prešerna do moderne slovenske poezije, npr. Svetlane Makarovič (Golež Kaučič 2003) ali transformacija ljudske pesmi v prozi socialnega realizma (Tucovič

<sup>22</sup> Avtorica spremne besede Eva Vrbnjak (2019: 170) v najnovejši izdaji *Óštrigéce* predlaga nadomestni izraz pravljični realizem.

2009). Tomšič se je, tako kot npr. Prežihov Voranc, ki je zbiral in zapisoval ljudske pesmi in jih uporabil v svoji prozi, izkazal tako kot zbiralec folklorne kakor tudi njen interpret v opusu istrske književnosti. Roman *Óštrigéca* sodi med vrhunski slovenski literarni besedila, istrske folklorne prvine, ki jih je Tomšič vpeljal vanj v estetski funkciji, pa so ustvarile specifičen literarni prostor, dogajanje in literarne osebe ter razmerja med njimi. Raziskava je pokazala, da je besedilo *Óštrigéce* prepleteno z istrsko folkloro, bajnimi bitiji in liki, prvinami tradicionalne medicine ter krščanstvom, ki mu dajejo nezamenljivi, prepoznavni pečat, bralcu pa po eni strani nudijo seznanitev s folklorno tradicijo in po drugi specifičen estetski užitek.

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ELEMENTI FOLCLORISTICI DEL CRISTIANESIMO DAL ROMANZO  
ÓŠTRIGÉCA DI MARJAN TOMŠIČ

VLADKA TUCOVIČ STURMAN



Nel contributo vengono presentati in modo interdisciplinare, con l'applicazione della scienza letteraria e dell'analisi folcloristica, le creature mitologiche e gli elementi di medicina popolare e cristianesimo utilizzati nel romanzo sloveno contemporaneo *Óštrigéca* (1991) di Marjan Tomšič (nato il 1939). Il romanzo appartiene all'insieme di opere che trattano il tema dell'Istria, alle quali oltre alla raccolta di brevi prose *Olive in sol* (1983), appartengono anche altri tre raccolti, *Kožuni* (1990), *Glavo gor, uha dol: pravljice iz Istre* (1993) e *Vruja* (1994), nonché due romanzi, *Šavrinke* (1986) e *Zrno od frmentona* (1993). Con queste opere l'autore introduce nella letteratura slovena contemporanea, dal punto di vista intertestuale, elementi linguistici dialettali, mitologici e di medicina popolare, rendendo così i testi interessanti non solo per gli studi letterari, ma anche per quelli sul folclore. Il principale personaggio letterario di *Óštrigéca* è lo scemo del villaggio Boškin, che assomiglia a Tantadruj di Kosmač perché, come quest'ultimo, è sempre in viaggio. Cammina tra i villaggi istriani, vivendo momenti reali e irreali e combatte il male che si cela nella figura della megera Štafúra, che scatena la grandine, beve il sangue ad una neonata, si incarna in una ragazza indomabile e trascina Boškin in un cammino senza meta, notte e giorno. In *Óštrigéca*, numerose creature mitologiche (gli incubi, l'orco e le tenebre, il Kresnik - che secondo la credenza popolare rappresenterebbe il sole la cui forza raggiunge l'apice con il falò - il lupo mannaro, la strega e lo stregone) diventano personaggi letterari, che si intrecciano con numerosi elementi di medicina popolare e cristianesimo. Dal punto di vista della scienza letteraria, il romanzo *Óštrigéca* è stato esaminato diverse volte, ma senza approfondire i motivi folcloristici oppure presentandoli solo in funzione letteraria; il contributo di cui si tratta, invece, pone principalmente l'attenzione ed evidenza di quali elementi si è servito intertestualmente l'autore, attingendo a piene mani dalla tradizione popolare, per trasporli nel testo letterario originale.

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# Belenus, Cybele and Attis: Echoes of their Cults over the Centuries

==== Marjeta Šašel Kos =====

V članku sta obravnavana dva zanimiva primera čaščenja rimskodobnih božanstev v severovzhodni Italiji, Noriku in Panoniji, ki je, kot se zdi, preživelo skozi srednjeveško obdobje vse do novega veka. Belen, ki so ga kot pomembno keltsko božanstvo častili v Noriku in Akvileji, je bil kot »sveti Belin« še vse do druge polovice 19. stoletja med ljudstvom čaščen na Tolminskem v zaledju Ogleja. V Prekmurju in slovenskem Porabju (ter širše na Madžarskem, Gradiščanskem in avstrijskem Štajerskem) so se po vsej verjetnosti ohranili sledovi kulta Kibebe in Atisa, ki se kažejo v nenavadnem pustnem običaju svatbe z borom (borovo gostüvanje).

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 KLJUČNE BESEDE: Tolminsko, Prekmurje in Porabje, Belin, Kibela, »svatba z borom«

Two interesting examples of worshipping Roman-period deities in the north-eastern Italian and Pannonian regions seem to have survived in one way or another through early medieval to modern times. The first is the cult of Belenus, the well-known Celtic and most notably a Norican and Aquileian god. The second example is that of Cybele and Attis, ‘eastern deities’ whose cult became highly influential in the mentioned areas – and elsewhere – during the second and third centuries AD. Interestingly, a deity called “holy Belin” was documented in the second half of the 19th century in the area of Tolmin in Slovenia (the hinterland of Aquileia) as a traditional folk belief. In Pannonia, traces of the cult of Cybele and Attis appear to have survived from antiquity in Prekmurje and Porabje (Slovenia, Hungary), as reflected in the unusual and ongoing custom of the “wedding with a pine tree”.

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 KEYWORDS: Tolminsko, Prekmurje and Porabje, Belin, Cybele, “wedding with a pine tree”

## BELENUS – BELINUS

Worshipping Belenus, the well-known Celtic and most notably a Norican and Aquileian god,<sup>1</sup> is well attested in Celtiberia, Galliae, and western Alpine regions.<sup>2</sup> However, his cult was especially significant in eastern Venetia and Carnia, primarily in Aquileia and its surroundings, as well as in Noricum where he was regarded as the main god of the Norican kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> Maraspin 1968; Birkhan 1997: 582–585 and *passim*. Šašel Kos 2001; Wojciechowski 2002; Zaccaria 2008 (Beleno); Piccottini 2017; Handy 2018; De Bernardo Stempel, Hainzmann 2020, 1: 151–156; 2: 902–909 and *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Gourvest 1954; Hatt 1976: 358–359; Olmsted 1994: 386; Haeussler 2008: 29–30 and *passim*.

In two passages, Tertullian referred to him as the most important Norican deity, not unlike the goddess Atargatis in Syria, the god Dusares in Arabia, worshipped as the chief deity by the Nabataeans, Caelestis in Africa, and the otherwise unknown Reguli in Mauretania (*Apol.* 24.7: *Unicuique etiam provinciae et civitati suus deus est, ut Syriae Atargatis, ut Arabiae Dusares, ut Noricis Belenus, ut Africae Caelestis, ut Mauretaniae Reguli sui*; cf. *ad nat.* 2.8). In Noricum, from where the worship of Belenus probably spread to Iulium Carnicum (Zuglio) and Aquileia, the god has always been documented as Belinus;<sup>3</sup> dedications to him have mainly come to light in the core of the Norican kingdom in Virunum (Zollfeld near Maria Saal) and Magdalensberg (probably old Virunum: Dobesch 1997, but see Glaser 2003). The otherwise unknown goddess Belestis (possibly the goddess of nature and fertility),<sup>4</sup> who may be associated with Belinus and whose cult has been attested to in the same area (Šašel Kos 1999: 21–22, 25), seems to confirm the local importance of the god.

At Aquileia and in its hinterlands, Belenus was frequently equated with Apollo; in a similar way to Apollo, he was also worshipped as a god of (sun)light and healing powers (Green 1997: 152–164; also see Green 1995: 474) even though, according to a new etymology of the name, Belenus should instead be related to springs of water (De Bernardo Stempel 2004: 212–213; De Bernardo Stempel, Hainzmann 2020, 1: 152–153). His close association with water is confirmed by two dedications to Fons B(eleni)<sup>5</sup> and by an altar in which Belenus is worshipped together with the Nymphs (*Inscr. Aq.* 155 = *EDR117090*); Wojciechowski 2001: 140–141, no. 12). Thermal springs are also attested to at Iulium Carnicum (Zaccaria 2008 [Beleno]). Belenus was regarded as the divine patron of Aquileia (Maraspin 1968; Wojciechowski 2002; Zaccaria 2008 [Beleno]) and, as such, he figures in Herodian's *History after Marcus Aurelius* (8.3.7–8) and in the *Historia Augusta (Vita Maximini duo* 22.1) in quite long narratives in which these authors described the march of Maximinus Thrax and his troops to Italy in AD 238. The emperor died during the siege of Aquileia (Šašel Kos 1986: 412–433) while his army was defeated soon afterwards. These events were ascribed to the divine protection of Belenus Apollo, who – as the city's most prominent god – was regarded as a powerful protector against any enemies, as the *defensor* of the city.<sup>6</sup>

At Iulium Carnicum, a town close to the border with Noricum, Belinus (his name does not appear as Belenus) was undoubtedly worshipped as one of the important gods, possibly under the influence of his cult at Aquileia or in Noricum, or both. The region was inhabited by the Carni, as indicated by the second part of the town's name (which earlier appears to have been a *castellum* or *forum*), while “Iulium” suggests the settlement had been given certain autonomy, very likely by Julius Caesar. At that time, it must have been granted the status of a Roman *vicus*, while eventually, under Augustus, it became a

<sup>3</sup> Scherrer 1984: 175–187; Šašel Kos 1999: 25–27; Zaccaria 2004; Piccottini 2017; Handy 2018.

<sup>4</sup> *ILLPRON* 446 (= *HD042481*); *ILLPRON* 654 (= *HD057853*); De Bernardo Stempel, Hainzmann 2020, 1: 147–150; 2: 800–804.

<sup>5</sup> *Inscr. Aq.* 153 (= *EDR116842*); 152 (= *EDR116841*); Wojciechowski 2001: p. 160, nos. 61, 62; the abbreviation has probably been correctly explained.

<sup>6</sup> Birkhan 1997: 282–285; Olmsted 1994: 386–387, and *passim*. Pascal 1964: 123 ff.; Maraspin 1968: 145–161; Chirassi Colombo 1976: 175–180.

*colonia* (Mainardis 2008: 36–55). The town must have had close links with the Norican kingdom, particularly commercial ones; it was excellently situated midway between the kingdom and north-eastern Italy with Aquileia being the most significant city in the region. The cult of Belinus must have flourished in the town for a long time since his sanctuary had to be repaired as early as in the second half of the first century BC.

Belinus' sanctuary in the town is epigraphically attested to on a large stone monument from the second half of the first century BC, perhaps a stele, erected by two chiefs of the village (*magistri vici*), both freedmen: Publius Erbonius Princeps and Sextus Votticius Argentillus. They commemorated the sanctuary's renovation and its decoration with five gilded disks and two statues, which they themselves financed.<sup>7</sup> An altar dedicated to Belinus has also been discovered at Celeia (Celje), one of the most important Norican towns, where his cult was perhaps introduced from the Virunum territory or, more plausibly, from Aquileia.<sup>8</sup> This may be inferred from the name of the dedicator, Lucius Sentius Forensis; Sentii are well attested to at Aquileia, but not in Noricum (*Inscr. Aq.*, indexes; *OPEL* IV, 68).

Belinus may have been the main god of the Norici and it cannot be excluded that the famous bronze statue of the "Youth of Magdalensberg" (a 16th-century copy of a statue from the first century BC) should actually be associated with Belenus, as suggested by Peter Scherrer (1984: 175–187). This can plausibly be argued on the basis of a small bronze statue of a youth from the early Augustan period found at Concordia, but now missing. The dedication to Belenus was inscribed on the left thigh of the statue in the name of Marcus Porcius Tertius.<sup>9</sup>

A sanctuary of Belinus has also been confirmed at Santicum in the territory of Virunum (present-day Villach, Slovenian Beljak); it is mentioned on one of the two altars dedicated to the god.<sup>10</sup>

#### THE GOD BELIN IN THE TOLMIN AREA (WESTERN SLOVENIA)

It is indeed fascinating that the worship of a deity called Belin, with the epithet "sveti" (meaning "holy" in Slovenian), was documented in the second half of the 19th century in the area of Tolmin (present-day Slovenia, *Fig. 1*) as a traditional folk belief. The local population believed that Belin was a divine healer in possession of a miraculous "key" with which he could cure blindness (Ovsec 1991: 472). This was described by the historian and

<sup>7</sup> Mainardis 2008: 85–88, no. 1 = *CIL* V 1829 + p. 1053 (= *EDR*007048): [---] / et q(ui) s(upra) s(cripti) s(unt), aedem Belini / [su]a pecunia refecere et / [clu]pea inaurata in fastigio V / et signa duo dedere, / [P.] Erbonio P. l. Principe / [Se]x. [V]otticio Sex. l. Argentillo / mag(istris) vic(i). See also Fontana 1997, 153–165.

<sup>8</sup> *Belino* / L. Sentius / Forensis: Lovenjak 2003: 335, fig. 4 (= *HD*045030); he originally published the first line as *Beleno*, thus also in *EDH*.

<sup>9</sup> *CIL* V 1866 = Lettich 1994: no. 1 (= *EDR*097739): M(arcus) Por(cius) Tertius / Bel(eno) Aug(usto) v(otum) s(olvit) Concord(iae). Zaccaria 1995, 184–185; Zaccaria 2008 (Beleno), 382; 384. Also see Mastrocinque 1995, 273–274. I would like to thank Prof. Claudio Zaccaria for having kindly drawn my attention to this statuette.

<sup>10</sup> Leber 1972: 19, no. 15 = *ILLPRON* 685 = Scherrer 1984: no. 26 (= *HD*057524): [---?Be]lin[o ---] / [---templum ve]lusta[te con]labsum ---] / [---?].

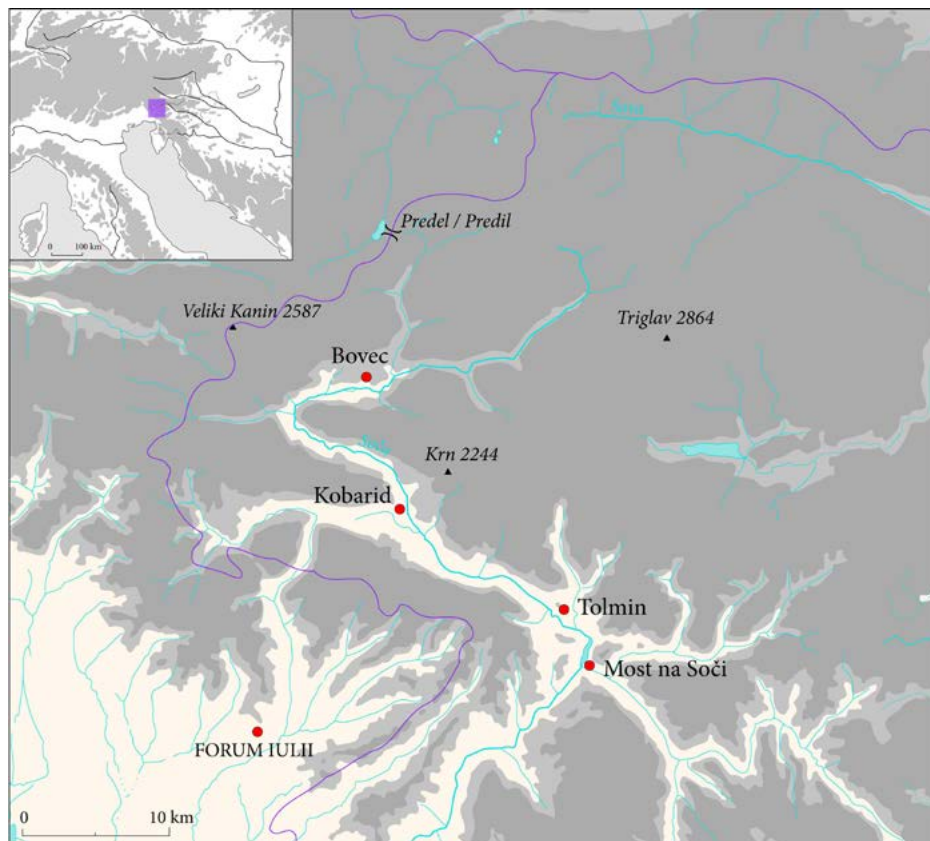


Fig. 1: The region of Tolmin, Slovenia (Computer graphics: Mateja Belak).

ethnologist Simon Rutar in his book about the Tolmin area's history (*Zgodovina Tolmin-skega*, 1882), which is the only testimony to the presence of Belin among the inhabitants of the Tolminsko region. Rutar interpreted this phenomenon as the Slovenian adaptation of the belief in Belinus/Belenus, who was widely venerated during the Roman Republican and imperial periods in eastern Venetia and Noricum as the principal god of the Carni and patron of Aquileia. Rutar regarded him as a deity of sunlight and correctly noted that the god had had several shrines and temples at Aquileia; still, he erroneously ascribed him with an Illyro-Thracian, i.e., an oriental origin, not a Celtic one (Rutar 1882: 21; Rutar 1883). Rutar's misinterpretation of the Celtic Belenus/Belinus and worshipping of him in the Roman period is understandable since towards the end of the 19th century, when he was writing, no adequate scholarly literature concerning Roman and Celtic cults would have been available to him, and not much had been done on these subjects in his time.

How to explain the phenomenon of Belin in the Tolmin region, as described by Rutar? The worship of Belinus at Aquileia and in its hinterlands may or may not shed light on the belief in Belin in the Tolmin area and, indeed, the conclusion that the cult of Belinus/Belenus continued throughout antiquity and has never entirely ceased is far from certain.



Yet, it is certainly true that the adoration of pagan divinities took deep roots in the regions of Tolmin and Kobarid, preventing the advance of Christianity, as well illustrated by an incident in 1331 in Kobarid in the late Middle Ages. The local population must have been considerably pagan since the inhabitants worshipped a sacred tree and a sacred spring. The church in Cividale (*Čedad* in Slovenian) took drastic measures against the “ethnic religion”, engaging the inquisitor Franciscus de Clugia (Francesco di Chioggia), a Franciscan, to be in charge of the regions of Venetia and Friuli, and to act against the heretics. During a punitive expedition to Kobarid, the sacred tree was felled, while the sacred spring was destroyed with large stones being thrown into it (Juvančič 1984, with further citations). Similar pagan traditions may have been alive among the indigenous population of the Tolmin and Kobarid regions during prehistory and the Roman period. The existence of an important pagan sanctuary in the immediate vicinity of Kobarid, at Gradič, is interesting for shedding light on the pre-Roman and Roman cults in this relatively remote area.<sup>11</sup>

Sacred places like caves, unusually shaped stones, sacred trees and springs must have been quite common in this region, living on through centuries and surviving as late as the second half of the 20th century, as recently revealed by the testimony of Pavel Medvešček – Klančar (2015; 3rd edition 2018). Old faith in divine qualities of the surrounding nature has persisted in this area for many centuries and, upon the arrival of the Slavs at the start of the Middle Ages, must have merged with the Slavic forms of paganism. One cannot thus entirely deny that belief in Belinus could have established deep roots in an area outside the main communication routes such as the regions of Tolmin and Kobarid. One may suppose that the veneration of this popular deity, which was no doubt modified over several centuries, persisted among the Romanised indigenous inhabitants until the arrival of the Slavs. They may have come late to this area, where they largely encountered the descendants of the pre-Roman Carni. The god’s name was not modified or linguistically adapted to the Slavic language, probably indicating the local indigenous population was powerful enough to impose its own beliefs on the entire community there.<sup>12</sup>

## CYBELE – GREAT MOTHER

The second interesting example concerns Cybele and Attis, her youthful consort who castrated himself, ‘eastern deities’ whose cult became very influential in the north-eastern Italian, Adriatic and Pannonian regions – and elsewhere – in the second and third centuries AD (Šašel Kos 2010).

The worship of Cybele originated in Phrygia where she had been venerated as the “Mother of the mountains” since early in the first millennium BC (Roller 1999: 124–125, 171).

<sup>11</sup> Osmuk 1987; Osmuk 1998. Several statues of Apollo were discovered, as well as of Hercules, other statues that have been found were of Venus, Mars and Diana; votive tablets, as well as Celtic and Roman coins have come to light as well, also see Osmuk 1997; cf. Horvat 2018: 344.

<sup>12</sup> Celtic culture and cults had exercised some influence on the Slavic world elsewhere, cf. Rosen-Przeworska 1964.

In the Greek-speaking world that saw worshipping of her being introduced in the early 6th century BC (Roller 1999: 119–141), she was known as *Mêter oreia* (the Greek translation of “Mother of the mountains”); in the Roman Empire, she was worshipped as *Magna Mater*, the Great Mother. Most interestingly, in a dedication to *Magna Mater* from Emona (Ljubljana) in the Italian Regio X, the divine name *Oraea* appears, which should almost certainly be explained as *Cybele*’s epithet *oreia*, even though it appears as if this was the name of another goddess on the same altar.<sup>13</sup> At *Salonae* (Solin), where 11 dedications to her have thus far been found, a *dea barbarica* is mentioned in one of them, an epithet that could hardly have referred to any other goddess but *Cybele* since festivities related to worshipping her were regarded as barbaric. In the Dalmatian metropolis, she seems to have been worshipped as early as in the second half of the first century BC (*CIL* III, 14663,2 = *AE* 1994, 1348 = *HD*031710; Šašel Kos 1999, 82, no. 1).

Upon a decision of the Roman Senate, a dark meteorite symbolising the goddess was solemnly transferred from *Pessinus* (Ballihisar in Turkey) to Rome in 204 BC during the war against *Hannibal*, when his army had invaded central Italy. Still, different accounts by ancient writers mean it is not entirely clear what were the exact reasons and initiative for this political and religious mission led by eminent Roman senators (Gruen 1990; Roller 1999, 263–265; Šašel Kos 1994). Rome strove to gain prominence in the East of Greece, not least justifying its ambitions by referring to its legendary Troianic origin (Gruen 1990). A sanctuary was built for *Cybele* on the *Palatine* and her cult became and remained one of the official cults in Rome, generally enjoying favour from the Roman aristocracy despite several of the rites performed in her honour indeed being barbaric.<sup>14</sup>

As the goddess of mountains and wild nature, she was usually accompanied by two lions. She was mostly equated with *Rhea* by the Greeks, her servants having been called “*Couretes*”, such as *Rhea*’s companions, who with their shouting rescued the new-born infant *Zeus* from his father *Kronos*. According to several writers, including *Posidonius* and *Strabo*, *Rhea* was called the Great Mother of the Gods, or *Agdistis*, or the Great Phrygian Goddess, but also *Idaea* (referring to *Mt Ida*), *Dindymene*, *Sipylene*, *Pissinuntis*, *Cybele* or *Cybebe* reflecting various places of her worship (10. 3. 12 C 469; cf. 12. 5. 3 C 567; Van Haeperen 2019: 57–77).

The cult of *Magna Mater* is well documented in the northern Adriatic area (Vermašeren 1989), notably in *Histria* and particularly in a metropolis like *Aquileia*, but also at *Emona*.<sup>15</sup> At *Celeia* or in its territory, the Great Mother was worshipped by a member of the municipal aristocracy, one *Gnaeus Pompeius Iustinus*, as *M(ater) D(eum) M(agna) Blau(n)dia*. *Iustinus* was a town councillor (*decurio*) and one of the town’s two mayors (*duumvir*).<sup>16</sup> The dedication is very interesting because of the epithet of the goddess derived from the Phrygian town of *Blaundus* (Toutain 1911: 75, no. 11; Swoboda 1969: 200,

<sup>13</sup> *RINMS* 21 = *AIJ* 162 (= *EDR*128998 = *lupa* 8871): *Orae(a)e / ex imp(erio) / M(atris?) D(eum?) M(agnae?) / L(ucius) A(---) P(---)*.

<sup>14</sup> Sanders 1981. Also see Thomas 1984; Dubosson-Sbriglione 2018; Van Haeperen 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Jurkić 1975 (*Histria*); *Inscr. Aq.* 284–291; Zaccaria 2008 (*Cibele*); *RINMS* 20 (= *EDR*128997); 22 (= *EDR*129001); *RINMS* 21 = *AIJ* 162 (= *EDR*128998 = *lupa* 8871).

<sup>16</sup> *CIL* III 5194 + p. 1830 (= *HD*067019); Wedenig 1997: 120 C 11; Visočnik 2017: no. 49, with earlier citations.

no. 8). At Poetovio, within an area of minor sanctuaries at Spodnja Hajdina (Ciglencečki 1998: 255), an altar dedicated to Iuno and Magna Mater has been found together with a statue of Cybele (*ILJug* 1138 = *HD016103*; Modrijan – Weber 1981: 95–97).

Cybele possessed all the characteristics of a “divine mother”; Diodorus Siculus, for example, mentioned she could heal children with her purification rites, καθαρμοί (*Bibl. hist.* 3.58). The goddess was worshipped in several towns in Noricum and Pannonia. The great influence of the cult of the Great Mother in these regions, as well as in the Roman Empire generally, is indirectly confirmed by the ‘mourning Attis’ often depicted on Roman-period grave monuments. It may be assumed that his representation on the tombstones symbolises an untimely death (Sanders 1981: 282).

The goddess called Great Mother was worshipped under different names right across the Roman Empire, among various Romanised peoples of the Empire, hence also among the Celts who were pre-Roman inhabitants of the Poetovio region. The cult of Magna Mater often took the place of local goddesses, as seems to have been the case of Adsalluta worshipped in the sanctuary of Savus and Adsalluta at Podkraj near Hrastnik where, in addition to several altars dedicated to Savus and Adsalluta or to Adsalluta alone, a small altar to Magna Mater has also been discovered. Among the Celts, cults of various Mother Goddesses, in plural or singular, enjoyed great popularity, as occurred with the Alounae (Alovnae) at Bedaium (Seebruck im Chiemgau; Hainzmann 2016), the *Nutrices* at Poetovio, the most favoured goddesses in the city (Šašel Kos 2016), or Dea Nutrix who was worshipped in the sanctuary at Frauenberg near Flavia Solva (Schrettle 2016). These were some kind of birth goddesses, nourishers and guardians of children; some aspects of their worship were presumably congenial to Magna Mater. The considerable impact of the cult of Magna Mater throughout antiquity can also be explained by the soteriological aspects of the goddess. It should thus not be surprising that the worshipping of Magna Mater might have been a challenge to the spread of Christianity (Fear 1996; Borgeaud 1996: 169 ff.; Alvar 2008: 383 ff.).

#### “WEDDING WITH A PINE TREE (BOROVO GOSTŪVANJE)” IN PREKMURJE, AND THE CARNIVAL FESTIVAL

It is interesting that traces of the cult of Cybele and Attis seem to have survived from antiquity in Slovenia and outside of its borders, chiefly in Prekmurje (the extreme north-eastern region of Slovenia) as well as in Ptuj (Roman Poetovio) and the surrounding countryside. Poetovio was an important and cosmopolitan Roman town where, as mentioned, the cult of Magna Mater is well attested. The city was transferred from the province of Noricum to Pannonia at the beginning of Roman rule, and came again to Noricum in the late Roman period (Slapšak 2001; Horvat et al. 2003; Šašel Kos 2014).

The most unusual and still existing custom of the “wedding with a pine tree”, which takes place during Carnival time in various, mainly Protestant, villages in Prekmurje (*Fig. 2*), quite likely sheds light on the long tradition of the cult of the once very popular deities Cybele and Attis. The custom is also known in Porabje in north-eastern Hungary



Fig. 2: “Wedding with a pine tree” (Porabje, 2005: photo Slavko Ciglenečki).

that is home to a Slovenian minority, in the nearby regions in Croatia, as well as in Austrian Burgenland and Styria. The ceremony of the “wedding with a pine tree” is performed between Christmas and Shrovetide in villages where there was no wedding in pre-Carnival time (Ciglenečki 1999; Ravnik 2009). There were not as many young people in Protestant villages as in the Catholic communities, meaning that weddings were rarer. Moreover, Catholic priests did not approve of the custom since they regarded it as making fun of church rituals.

The “wedding with a pine tree” is an event involving an entire village and, as suggested by Slavko Ciglenečki, resembles in an interesting way the festival that was celebrated each year on 22 March in various towns of the Roman Empire (Ciglenečki 1999). On this date, “timber workers” (*dendrophori*: “tree-bearers”) ceremoniously performed the act of carrying a pine tree in a procession, having first embellished it with flowers and wrapped it in bandages. The pine tree symbolically represented the dead Attis, the youthful consort of the mother-goddess Cybele.

On Carnival Sunday, the cutting down of a pine tree occurs in the course of elaborate ceremonies in one of the villages in Prekmurje and the regions mentioned above, where nobody got married in the previous year. It is a combination of Carnival and wedding customs (Kuret 1989, I: 24–28). A skilfully decorated pine tree is carried in a procession by male and female adolescents, while one of the performing young people should marry the pine tree. The comparison between the worship of Cybele as celebrated in Rome (Summers 1996) and elsewhere in the Roman Empire, notably also in Pannonia (Tóth 1992), and the “pine tree wedding” in various villages in Prekmurje and Porabje is indeed

striking. Mojca Ravnik described the traditional event as held in 2002 in the village of Predanovci in the Prekmurje municipality of Puconci;<sup>17</sup> there the pine tree personified the ‘bride’, who was sitting on it when it was being brought from the forest to the village. Jelka Pšajd analysed the custom in detail, basing her research on all available (written and oral) sources.<sup>18</sup> The custom is increasingly becoming a tourist event, losing its original meaning of making fun of unmarried young people. However, it seems more likely that the pine tree should represent the bridegroom, not least because the word “pine tree” in Slovenian is masculine in gender (Hari, *op. cit.* in no. 17).

The most outstanding Carnival event in Slovenia is the “Kurentovanje” festival. The masked men involved, generally young adults, are called Kurents (*Kurenti/Koranti*); they are the main performers of the traditional and widely famed Carnival merrymaking at Ptuj and in the Ptuj region, as well as in several other towns and villages in Slovenia and beyond its borders, especially in Dravsko polje, Haloze, and Slovenske gorice (Kuret 1989, I: 11–73). In 2017, Carnival was included on UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list. The masked companions of the Kurents include the “piceki” (“cockerels”), children wearing pointed caps who may be seen as reminiscent of the young Attis.<sup>19</sup> It is interesting that the emasculated attendants of Cybele were called *galli*.<sup>20</sup> *Gallus* is also the Latin word for “cock”; however, in this context this should merely be regarded as a strange coincidence or a misunderstanding. The roots of the “Kurentovanje” festival should be sought in the old beliefs in the spirits of the deceased, as well as in the spirits of nature who were to chase the winter away and restore the fertility of the soil (Kuret 1989, I: 11–73).

The coincidental similarity of the names of Kurents (*Kurenti*) and the Curetes (nature spirits protecting the harvest of the fields) should be noted along with certain similar features associated with their activities. Lucretius’ description of festivities related to the cult of Cybele and Attis may be insightful regarding the role played by the Kurents. The Roman poet and philosopher described the Curetes as armed groups attending to the Great Mother. His passage reads: “Here an armed band, which the Greeks name Curetes, disport themselves randomly among the Phrygian troops, and leap up among their group, joyful in blood, shaking the frightful crests by the nodding of their heads” (2.629–632; translation from Roller 1999: 298).

There are, of course, no “Phrygian” or any other troops during Carnival. Instead, many other maskers are walking around the towns and villages dressed in the most specific attire. However, “joyful in blood” can be compared in one way or another to the behaviour of some of the Kurents before the Second World War, especially if two groups of Kurents met. They were armed with hedgehog clubs, several also with knives

<sup>17</sup> Ravnik 2009. An excellent description of the custom, first noted in Prekmurje already before the First World War and possibly as early as in the 19th century, is found in the “*Wikipedija, prosta enciklopedija*”, written by Brigita Hari (consulted in November 2021).

<sup>18</sup> Pšajd 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Ciglencečki 1999: 27; about the spiritual roots of the Kurents, also see Čelan 2020.

<sup>20</sup> *Galli* were not Cybele’s priests, but her attendants: Van Haepere 2019: 53–54.

and some even with revolvers and it happened that a few were killed during the ensuing skirmishes (Kuret 1989, I: 29–30). The Kurents also make considerable noise and behave quite wildly in recent Carnivals.

The two presented cases of echoes of the pre-Roman and Roman worship of Belinus and Cybele with Attis, and of the festivities related to their cults, are very revealing with respect to the great impact of ancient religious practices. One cannot deny that their traces, albeit having transformed over the passing centuries, have persisted to the modern age.

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##### ABBREVIATIONS

*AE* = L'Année épigraphique.

*AIJ* = V. Hoffiller, B. Saria, Antike Inschriften aus Jugoslavien. Heft I: Noricum und Pannonia Superior. Zagreb 1938 (re-print Amsterdam 1970).

*CIL* = Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum.

*EDH* = Epigraphic Database Heidelberg.

*EDR* = Epigraphic Database Roma.

*ILJug* = A. et J. Šašel, Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Jugoslavia inter annos MCMXL et MCMLX repertae et editae sunt. Situla 5. Ljubljana 1963; iidem, Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Jugoslavia inter annos MCMLX et MCMLXX repertae et editae sunt. Situla 19. Ljubljana 1978; iidem, Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Jugoslavia inter annos MCMII et MCMXL repertae et editae sunt. Situla 25. Ljubljana 1986.

*ILLPRON* = Inscriptionum lapidariarum Latinarum provinciae Norici Indices (compos. M. Hainzmann, P. Schubert). Fasc. I. 1986; II-III. 1987.

*Inscr. Aq.* = J. B. Brusin, Inscriptiones Aquileiae. I–III, Udine 1991–1993.

*lupa* = F. und O. Harl, <http://lupa.at> (Bilddatenbank zu antiken Steindenkmälern).

*OPEL* = B. Lőrincz, Onomasticon provinciarum Europae Latinarum: Vol. I: *Aba – Bysanus*, Budapest 2005<sup>2</sup>; Vol. II: *Cabalicius – Ixus*, Wien 1999; Vol. III: *Labareus – Pythea*, Wien 2000; Vol. IV: *Quadratia – Zures*. Wien 2002.

*RINMS* = Marjeta Šašel Kos, *The Roman Inscriptions in the National Museum of Slovenia / Lapidarij Narodnega muzeja Slovenije*. Situla 35. Ljubljana 1997.

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## BELEN, KIBELA IN ATIS: ODMEV NJIHOVIH KULTOV SKOZI STOLETJA

MARJETA ŠAŠEL KOS



### *Belen – Belin*

Belen, v Noriku znan kot Belin, je bil keltski bog, ki je bil čaščen od Iberije do Galije in območja Alp, njegov kult pa je bil posebej priljubljen zlasti v Noriku in Akvileji (Oglej). Veljal je za najpomembnejše božanstvo Noriškega kraljestva, kar je omenil grški pisec in zagovornik krščanstva s konca 2. in iz 3. stoletja, Tertulijan (*Apol.* 24.7). Iz Norika se je njegov kult zelo verjetno razširil v mesto *Iulium Carnicum* (Zuglio), kjer je stalo njegovo na napisu omenjeno svetišče, in v Akvilejo, kjer je veljal za zaščitnika mesta. V času, ko jo je oblegal rimskih vladar Maksimin Tračan, ki je bil na poti v Rim, da bi kaznoval uzurpatorje, naj bi mesto rešil Belen. V Noriku so častili tudi boginjo *Belestis*, kar po vsej verjetnosti dodatno potrjuje pomembno vlogo Belina. Ni izključeno, da znameniti bronasti kip »mladeniča s Štalenske gore« predstavlja Belina. V Akvileji in njeni soseščini, kjer je stalo več Belenu posvečenih svetišč, so ga pogosto enačili z Apolonom, bil je torej božanstvo (sončne) svetlobe in zdravlilstva, po vsej verjetnosti pa tudi zaščitnik vodnih izvirov, saj so ga častili skupaj z Nimfami. Njegov oltar je bil najden tudi v noriški Celeji (Celje).

### *Bog Belin na Tolminskem*

Zelo zanimivo je, da je bilo čaščenje svetega Belina dokumentirano še v drugi polovici 19. stoletja med staroverskim prebivalstvom na območju Tolmina (*sl.* 1). Ljudje so verjeli, da je Belin božji zdravilec, ki ima čudežen ključ, s katerim lahko pozdravi slepoto. To je v svoji *Zgodovini Tolminskega*, ki je izšla leta 1882, zapisal zgodovinar in etnolog Simon Rutar. Lahko domnevamo, da bi kult Belina

iz Akvileje utegnil preživeti iz antike skozi dolga stoletja do konca 19. stoletja, da torej nikdar ni popolnoma zamrl. Čeprav je staroverstvo na območju Tolmina in Kobarida izpričano v dokumentu iz 14. stoletju, v odročnem področju zahodne Slovenije pa celo vse do 20. stoletja, predvsem v Posočju, je treba vendarle priznati, da ta razlaga ni povsem zanesljiva.

#### *Kibela, velika mati*

Njen kult izvira iz Frigije, v času rimskega imperija je bila ena najvplivnejših boginj, ki je bila v Emoni čaščena kot Velika mati *Oraea* (z gore). Na oltarju iz Salon (*Salonae*, zdaj Solin) pa se, glede na svoje poreklo in nenavaden obred, saj se je njen mladi soprog Atis kastriral, imenuje celo »barbarska«. V Celeji so jo častili kot Veliko blaundijsko mati, boginjo iz frigijskega mesta *Blaundus*. V času vojne proti Hanibalu je rimski senat leta 204 pr. kr. št. sklenil, da temen meteorit, ki naj bi predstavljal boginjo, prenesejo iz Pesinunta (Ballhisar v Turčiji) v Rim. Bila je boginja gora in divje narave, ki sta jo pogosto spremljala dva leva. Imela je vse značilnosti božanske matere, lahko je ozdravljala otroke, o njenem velikem pomenu pa priča tudi »žalujoči Atis«, ki je bil pogosto upodobljen na nagrobnikih. Ko je umrl, naj bi se spremenil v bor.

#### *Poroka z borom (Borovo gostüvanje) v Prekmurju in pustovanje*

Vse kaže, da so sledi čaščenja Kibeles in Atisa preživele iz antike do danes; to je mogoče opazovati predvsem v Prekmurju, Porabju in sosednjih območjih, tudi na Madžarskem, Hrvaškem in v Avstriji. Elementi tega kulta pridejo najbolj nazorno do izraza v običaju »poroke z borom«, ki se je v času pustovanja ohranil predvsem v protestantskih vaseh v Prekmurju (*sl. 2*), kajti katoliški duhovniki ga niso odobraval. Ta slovesni obred je potekal med Božičem in pustnim časom v vaseh, kjer se tisto leto ni nihče poročil. Poroka z borom je bila dogodek, pri katerem je sodelovala vsa vas, in kot je opozoril Slavko Ciglencečki, je v nekatereh podrobnostih zelo zanimivo sovpadala z antičnim praznovanjem, ki se je 22. marca odvijalo po raznih mestih rimskega imperija. Na ta dan so »drvarji« (*dendrophori*: nosilci drevesa) v procesiji slovesno nosili iz gozda bor, ki so ga okrasili s cvetjem in slavnostno povili. Bor je simbolično predstavljal mrtvega Atisa. Običaj »poroke z borom«, ki je do nedavnega še imel simbolični naboj, saj je opozarjal na to, da tistega leta ni bilo poroke, pa, kot ugotavlja Jelka Pšajd, vse bolj postaja turistični dogodek.

Tudi kurentovanje, ki je zlasti odmevno na Ptuj in v širši okolici (Dravsko polje, Haloze, Slovenske gorice) in je vpisano v seznam svetovne nesnovne kulturne dediščine, ima svoje zametke v antiki. Spremljevalci kurentov so »piceki«, in zanimivo je, da so se spremljevalci Kibeles, evnuhi, imenovali *galli*, *gallus* pa je latinsko ime za petelina. Kurenti oz. koranti spominjajo na Kurete (*Curetes*), udeležence pri Kibelinem kultu, duhove narave in zavetnike poljskega pridelka. Izvor kurentov je treba iskati v starem verovanju v duhove umrlih in duhove narave, ki so pregnali zimo in zemljo ponovno napravili rodovitno.

Iz obeh komentiranih primerov je mogoče sklepati, da so sledi kultov Belina, Kibe in Atisa po vsej verjetnosti preživele od predrimskega in rimskega časa vse do polpreteklih oz. celo današnjih dni, kar dokazuje, da je vpliv antičnih verovanj resnično velik in ni nikoli povsem zamrl.

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# Who's Afraid of the Goddess? Leopard's Tale, Menopausal Syndrome: Terms of Debate within Archaeology

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Arianna Carta

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Članek predstavlja vpogled v arheološke diskusije o ženskih neolitskih figurinah in začenja z zgodovinskim pregledom glavnih akademskih interpretacij figurin. Poleg tega uvaja feministične pristope v arheologiji, povezane s figurinami, ter prikazuje, kako je androcentrična pristranskost vplivala na teorije in metodologije. Študija primera Çatalhöyük služi kot primer kontrastnih naracij. Članek trdi, da lahko akademsko razvrednotenje dela Marije Gimbutas v okviru sodobne arheologije štejemo za lakmusov test, ki kaže na razširjenost spolne pristranskosti na tem disciplinarnem področju. Med posebnimi argumenti proti Gimbutasovim teorijam so: sindrom menopavze, ginecentrična agenda in obrnjeni seksizem, ki vsi kažejo, kako so se arheologi osredotočili na osebne napade in ne na resno akademsko razpravo. Na koncu so vse te retorične strategije preusmerile pozornost znanstvenikov z glavnega vprašanja, ki se redko obravnava: zakaj v neolitiku prevladujejo ženske figurine?

KLJUČNE BESEDE: neolitik, ženske figurine, boginje, Gimbutas, feministična arheologija in arheologija spola, arheološke diskusije.

This article presents an insight into archaeological disputes around female Neolithic figurines, starting with a historical overview of main academic interpretations of the figurines. Furthermore, it introduces feminist approaches in archaeology related to figurines, showing how androcentric bias has undermined theories and methodologies. Çatalhöyük case-study serves as an example of contrasting narratives. The article argues that academic devaluation of Marija Gimbutas' work within contemporary archaeology can be considered a litmus test which show the pervasiveness of gender bias in this disciplinary field. Among peculiar arguments against Gimbutas' theories, there are: menopause syndrome, gynocentric agenda, and reverse sexism, all of which show how the archaeologists have focused on personal attacks rather than on serious academic discussion. In the end, all those rhetoric strategies have shifted scholars' attention from the main issue which is rarely addressed: why is it that the Neolithic period is dominated by female figurines?

KEYWORDS: Neolithic, female figurines, goddesses, Gimbutas, feminist and gender archaeology, archaeological disputes.

## INTRODUCTION

The issue of female Neolithic figurines has constituted a controversial debate within the archaeological discipline, especially when related to Goddesses. This paper explores a range of academic positions on this disputed topic. Starting from a historical overview of fundamental hypothesis regarding prehistoric Goddesses, my argument will consist in showing that the acceptance or refusal of the theories of Marija Gimbutas could be understood as a litmus test of charged discussions within the mainstream of the discipline of archaeology but also of their intersections with feminist and gender approaches to archaeology.

The discourse on prehistoric divinities has a long history as it was theorized in different contexts by numerous scholars, predominantly the historians of religion. At the end of the 19th century, historian, lawyer, and anthropologist Johann Jacob Bachofen ([1891] 1988) claimed that the human species had developed in two main phases: prehistory dominated by the cult of female Goddesses, resulting from a matriarchal society (characterized by the rule of women, which he also defined as “gynocracy”), which then progressed towards a (superior) patriarchal society, dominated by male gods. At the turn of the 20th century, during the fifties, there was a growing number of scholars interested in the topic.

The anthropologist and historian of religion James Frazer ([1951] 2014) has elaborated several theories concerning the influence of matriarchy on religions, drawing on various ethnographic cases of rituals devoted to the feminine principle. Bachofen and Frazer shared a view that exalted progress characterized by male superiority. The expert of Greek mythology Robert Graves ([1948] 1992) in his essay *The White Goddess* analyzes numerous historical and mythological resources that testify a strong matriarchal imprint of pre-Christian Europe.

Another important essay, this time in the field of psychology, by Erich Neumann ([1955] 1981), inserts the discourse on mother Goddess into that of psychological archetypes, referring to the archaeological and mythological evidence from Anatolia, especially regarding the cult of Cybele.

The anthropologist and historian of religion E. O. James (1960) dedicates a long chapter of his essay to a discussion of Mother Goddess and her successors, relating the paleolithic “venuses” to the cult of a primigenial Mother Goddess. Following James, the “venuses” would later develop into Middle Eastern goddesses such as Mesopotamian Inanna-Ishtar, Egyptian Isis-Hathor, while in the Syrian and Palestinian regions there would be Astarte-Anat.

Also, the philosopher Bertrand Russel ([1946]1991), in his *History of Western Philosophy*, thinks that at the origins of antique civilizations there had existed a figure of a Mother Goddess that got transformed subsequently into the Goddesses of Asia Minor and of Greece, Ishtar and Artemis.

Furthermore, in the recently republished collective works of the American historian of religion Joseph Campbell, we find an interpretation of protohistoric religiosity that is influenced by Gimbutas, in which Campbell asserts that the figurines of the Paleolithic, in their nudity, represent female Goddesses (Campbell 2013: 10-11).



## THE APPLE OF DISCORD: ÇATALHÖYÜK

Within the discipline of archaeology, up until the first half of the 20th century and for a while afterwards, there had been an implicit agreement around the understanding of the cult of Mother Goddess, according to which the Paleolithic and Neolithic figurines were considered its material proof (Renaud 1929; Evans 1935; Childe 1951; Nilsson 1971; Atzeni 1978; Cauvin 1997; Lilliu 1999). The more common interpretation was the one that related female Goddesses to the cult of fertility, explained through the emphasis given to the representation of breasts and vulva of the figurines. This interpretation reached one of its peaks with the discoveries by James Mellaart in his excavations at the Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük in Anatolia. During the excavations, the archaeologist uncovered dozens of bas-reliefs representing women in the act of giving birth. Among numerous finds at this archaeological site, the one that subsequently became famous as its emblem represents the statue of a woman seated on the throne with two leopards<sup>1</sup> (other figurines, showing sculpted spotted animals, have been identified as “goddesses with leopards” (Mellaart 1967: 141, 182).

According to Mellaart, at the site there used to exist a city devoted to the cult of the Mother Goddess. Several years later, archaeologist Marija Gimbutas not only confirmed Mellaart's hypothesis, but she also conducted multidisciplinary research of female figurines and related symbols. Gimbutas affirmed that during the Neolithic period, in the “Old Europe”, there existed a cult of numerous Goddesses (or alternatively, of one single Great Goddess, presented in many forms). Her theories have generated strong reactions in academia, both positive and negative, especially within the field of archeology.



Fig. 1: Mellaart's Goddess with leopards. The figurine is currently located at the archeological museum of Ankara. (Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seated\\_Woman\\_of\\_Çatalhöyük](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seated_Woman_of_Çatalhöyük), Photos' property: Nevit Dilmen)



Fig. 2: Reconstructed drawing after Mellaart (1967: 138).

<sup>1</sup> Mellaart (1967) describes this figurine as “goddess supported by two felines giving birth to a child” (Mellaart 1967:138).

To comprehend the motivation behind such strong reactions, it is necessary to dissect the controversial points around the discourse of female Goddesses in the field of archaeology, their connection to the female figurines and the link to the women's role in society. After Mellaart, another archaeologist, Ian Hodder, who is considered a founder of the post-processual archaeology, had worked at the archaeological site of Çatalhöyük. In 20 years of further excavations and analysis, he noticed that not only women but also many animals were represented in the remains at the site, especially felines and bulls/cows. Based on this discovery (which was, moreover, highlighted also by Mellaart and Gimbutas who both used the formulation "mistress of animals"), Hodder then refocused his research on the fauna. Reversing the previous interpretations, he published an essay entitled *The Leopard's Tale: Revealing the Mysteries of Çatalhöyük*, in which the focus is on the animals' tales instead on the aspects of the divine feminine. The same archaeologist, consistently negating the strong presence of female symbology, insists to affirm that "we can talk about the violence, sex and death of the imagery at Çatalhöyük simply in terms of male prowess" (Hodder 2006: 203). This argument *curiously* mirrors the claims developed by Peter Ucko in which the scholar complained that "the male figurines are rejected as a Male God of prowess (Ucko 1962: 42)". Similarly, Michael Balter in his essay, *The Goddess and the Bull*, also devoted to the same contested archaeological site, claims that Gimbutas suffers from "nostalgia for a lost egalitarian paradise, where women were empowered rather than trodden underfoot"<sup>2</sup> (Balter 2016: 40). This (recently published) text implies, in a not too subtle way, that the female gender is not only constantly discriminated against and humiliated but also that an egalitarian society is unimaginable, or at least, relegated to the realm of fantasy.

I would argue that the rhetorical discursive moves frequently used in debates in the field of archaeology consist in a certain deliberate denigration and/or rendering invisible of women, counterbalanced by the constant emphasis on presumed male prowess. This phenomenon is so pervasive and evident that even two paleontologists who certainly are not feminists such as Lewis-Williams and Pearce, find it necessary to ask the following: "who saw the process of domestication as a metaphor for the control of women: the people of Çatalhöyük themselves, or the archaeologists who study them?" (Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2005: 138). They also provide a remarkably interesting interpretation of the figurine of a woman seated on/between two leopards. The two paleontologists, experts in the topic of shamanism, state that "around the world, large and physically powerful animals, such as bears and felines, are associated with shamans" (Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2005: 145). In other words, if in mainstream archaeological discourse it seems impossible to admit that this figurine could represent a Goddess, recognizing her status as that of a shaman could represent an important step ahead in the debates in the field. In my opinion, it is important as well to pay attention to the headpiece which the woman seems to be wearing, ascribable to *polos* that is characteristic of the iconography of Middle Eastern Goddesses such as Cybele and Artemis, among others.

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<sup>2</sup> My emphasis.

## FEMINIST ARCHAEOLOGY: AN ONGOING DEBATE

In the meantime, women archaeologists, after decades of a subordinate position within academia<sup>3</sup>, became increasingly articulate in turning their attention to the question of the role of women in the era under research. To understand the context in which Gimbutas and other women archeologists were working, it is useful to recall the analysis advanced by the archaeologist Joan Gero, according to whom it used to be considered common sense that women archaeologists could only work in closed spaces such as laboratories or museums where they could catalogue the materials and finds courageously discovered by their male colleagues. To describe this situation, Gero coined the term “woman-at-home-ideology” (Gero 1985: 342). Indeed, the exceptionality and rarity of the fact that the supervision over the international excavation project was entrusted to Marija Gimbutas, should be noted.

It is also important to acknowledge that Gimbutas was not the only female archaeologist to have reached important position within the academy. In the British context Dorothy Garrod (1892-1968), the first archaeologist to obtain a professorship in Cambridge, was an important point of reference in Neanderthal research, while Kathleen Kenyon (1906-1978) dealt with the Neolithic in the fertile crescent, becoming famous for the excavations in Jericho and Jerusalem, with her work translated in various languages. In the Slovenian context, Tatjana Bregant (1932-2002) is known for her interdisciplinary research on the Neolithic, while the Serbian archaeologist Draga Garašanin (1921-1997) distinguished herself for her study of the Dacian necropolis in the Danube area. These are important examples that unfortunately must be considered as exceptions.

In recent years there have been some major improvements within academia that have made women increasingly visible as members of prehistoric societies. For this reason, in our precise academic cultural moment, there is less of an immediate urgency to argue a case for their presence in prehistory since they have been included in the interpretations of recent decades. However, even as recently as 2020, a book has been published that clarifies how even today we cannot take for granted the need to research the role of women in prehistory. French paleontologist Marylène Patou-Mathis, director of the CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research), authored a book with a provocative but meaningful title: *L'homme préhistorique est aussi une femme: Une histoire de l'invisibilité des femmes* (Prehistoric man is also a woman, a history of women's invisibility). Patou-Mathis (2020) analyzes and denounces androcentric foundations of archaeology as an academic discipline. She shows through various examples how the interpretations of prehistoric finds are still centered around the idea that it is men who are the inventors as well as responsible for technological progress, while women seem to occupy a secondary position, subordinate and without prestige. There are numerous other examples of research by feminist (women) archaeologists that denounce sexism, misogyny and gender-related stereotyping. One “classic”, edited by Frances Dahlberg, titled *Woman the gatherer* (1981) collects several contributions of women anthropologists focusing on the

<sup>3</sup> The difficult position of women scholars in the discipline of archaeology is thoroughly discussed in the essay *Excavating women: a history of women in European archaeology* (Diaz-Andreu and Stig Sorensen 2005).

socio-economic role of women. This volume is thought of as a response to the book *Man the Hunter*, by DeVore and Lee (1968), one more book that celebrates primitive men as brave hunters and tribal leaders. Other important contributions are by Gero and Conkey (1991), as well as by Roberta Gilchrist (1991, 2012), which all deal with the need and urgency to develop a feminist approach to archaeology, given the unequal power relations between men and women in archaeological theory and practice. Despite these scholarly endeavors, it remains necessary nowadays to keep advancing this same egalitarian project.

Furthermore, different examples, much discussed among feminist scholars, help in testifying to the need to include the category of gender as fundamental to the methodology, analysis, and elaboration of theory in the field of archaeology. Of interest here is the work of Bettina Arnold, scholar of the Iron Age, who had frequently criticized the androcentrism of the establishment in the field of archaeology, affirming that the interpretations regarding women in positions of power in prehistory had “ranged from benign neglect to active sabotage, particularly with regard to the interpretation of the wealthy inhumation burials” (Arnold 1991: 366). Omitting here numerous (and futile) discussions on differences between feminist archaeology and gender archaeology, it is more important to emphasize the main schools of thought that insist on taking into account gender as the methodological basis for analysis. The first approach consists in simply insisting on considering the existence of women in the period under analysis, the second focuses on gender as a category of analysis that problematizes gender roles. Both approaches will make it possible to analyze the written work in archaeology that encourages gender stereotyping by reproducing (more or less) unconsciously an androcentric version of the past of human societies.

As already mentioned, numerous women archaeologists had criticized androcentric biases of the discipline, invoking the necessity of a serious re-examination of the finds in the light of gender research (in French context see also Cohen 2003, 2018). At international level, according to Arnold and Wicker, gender theories have had a difficult time to achieve recognition within the discipline of archaeology for various reasons:

one of them is undoubtedly the androcentric nature of the discipline, historically primarily focused on, and practiced by men. Another is the widespread assumption that patriarchal systems like those that dominate the world today have always existed and reflect biological imperatives as much as cultural influences. This has resulted in the naturalization of the male-centered reconstruction of the past that has dominated the discipline since its inception as a profession in the nineteenth century (Arnold and Wicker 2001: vii).

According to Arnold and Wicker, the consequence of such attitudes in archaeology is the ghettoization of gender analysis, as if it did not represent a vital element for the study of the past. A problem encountered also in contemporary archaeology is that even when it dialogues with gender theory, what still seems to be missing is the use of adequate methodological approaches (Arnold and Wicker 2001: vii-viii). The issue of methodological approaches is, as will be explored in detail, a key issue to understand

both the reactions to the theories of Gimbutas, and the particularity of gender approach in post-processual archaeology. As the scholars point out, the results obtained can vary according to the parameters of analysis, especially when the interpretation of the data include the gender variable (Arnold and Wicker 2001: xiii–xiv). Their example is the interpretative context where the weapons are considered of high symbolic value because associated with masculinity, while the value attributed to the activities considered feminine, such as gathering, weaving, pottery-making etc., are given secondary importance. After all, as they affirm, “you find what you look for (or, in the case of gender structures, you don’t find what you don’t look for)” (Arnold and Wicker 2001: xi).

#### GENDER STUDIES AND ARCHAEOLOGY: “ADD GENDER AND STIR”?

Throughout this article, it is important to keep in mind a basic definition of sex and gender: while “sex” refers to genitals with which a person is born, “gender” refers to socially constructed identity of masculine or feminine. Up until 1970s and 1980s, feminist archaeology has been mainly interested in uncovering androcentrism of the discipline that assumed the transparency of the categories of “woman” and “man” without questioning them. In contrast, most men and women scholars using gender approaches as a part of post-processual archaeology emphasize the cultural construction of identities, considered fluid, without clear boundaries, and above all, culturally and socially determined. Thus, on the one hand, there are many feminist scholars dealing with the socio-economic roles, status, and cults regarding women in prehistory, who accuse archeologists such as Gimbutas of essentialism. On the other hand, there are numerous women and men archaeologists, adhering to gender approaches used in post-processualism, who often use a methodology, which Conkey and Tringham efficiently defines as the method of “add gender and stir” (Conkey and Tringham 1995: 204; see also Knapp 2003: 665). Recently several books devoted to this issue have been published, such as *Gender archaeology* by Marie Louise Stig Sørensen (2013), as well as *In pursuit of gender: worldwide archaeological approaches* edited by Sarah Nelson and Myriam Rosen-Ayalon (2001), and *A companion to gender prehistory* edited by Diane Bolger (2012). In general, upon examining the works approaching this topic, it is possible to individuate a certain tension in confronting the problem of defining the categories of man/woman, leading to confusion in reasoning, instead of clarity or increased complexity.

In the first book under consideration, Sørensen (2013)<sup>4</sup> addresses the issue of theoretical and methodological approaches to gender in researching prehistory, in relation to recent theories of philosopher Judith Butler (1996, 2011) that understand gender identity as fluid and constructed through performative acts which literally create bodies. In general, Sørensen’s focus is on the interaction of material culture and gender. In the second book, women archaeologists Nelson e Rosen-Ayalon (2001) start the introduction with a

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<sup>4</sup> Archaeologist who is also the author of the section on “feminist archaeology” in the manual of Renfrew and Bahn (2013).

complaint that gender archaeology suffers due to disagreements and endless debates on definitions, aims and methodologies. After the initial phase in which feminist scholars were “finding women”<sup>5</sup> of past civilizations, fortunately an awareness was reached that women can assume infinite roles and status. On a theoretical level, the outdated concepts informed by essentialism were thus (finally) abandoned (Nelson e Rosen-Ayalon 2001: 1–8). Also Bolger, in the introduction to her chapter, explores the main theories and methods in research on gender in prehistory, underlining the “tensions and debates which at times seem to divide its practitioners into intractable, opposing ‘camps’” (Bolger 2012: 1). According to the scholar, the focus of theory of archaeology shifted from researching monolithic concepts such as society and culture to studying individuals, their personal and social identities. She maintains that while the difficulties in fully accepting gender theories within mainstream archaeology depend both on discrimination against women archaeologists in comparison to their male colleagues and on the fact that “the uncritical acceptance of sex and gender as natural and unchanging phenomena continues to shape much of the research in prehistoric archaeology today” (Bolger 2012: 4). Bolger explains that the passage from the Second Wave to the Third Wave of feminist theory operating within postmodernist framework has allowed the acceptance of “ambiguous and multiple genders” (Bolger 2012: 6).

Despite their differences, the common aspect of all these texts is an approach in which different theories, instead of coexisting, overtake each other in a way in which the “old” ones turn out to be wrong, while new theories turn out to be good. Such an approach paradoxically, although the result of purely humanistic debates, reflects a positivist-scientific approach in which the old is outdated while the latest discoveries would be more truthful. In an epistemological debate biased by such premises, Gimbutas’ work is perceived as not very current and certainly essentialist, because she does not focus on the ambiguity and fluidity of genders. Instead, in assuming a society characterized by a binary division (man/woman), the scholar is perceived as engaged in essentialist hypothesizing that women in the Neolithic period had a fundamental role expressed by the cult of Goddesses. That feminist claims have disavowed this hypothesis to uncritically embrace discourses of gender fluidity that result in queer theory applied to prehistory, seems paradoxical to me.

It is certainly true that gender categories can (and in some cases should) be problematized. On the other hand, what all feminist archaeologists or those involved in gender studies agree upon is that the countless examples of sexist stereotypes that deeply affect methodologies, analyses, and related archaeological theories should be an object of investigation. It follows that it is still necessary and timely to deal with the discourse of femininity in archaeology. Here this task is approached through analyzing the reception of the theories of Gimbutas. Though they should certainly be contextualized by highlighting the inconsistencies (at times methodological, at times theoretical), the contribution of this scholar cannot be deleted, especially by scholars who claim to be feminists. The paradox lies in the fact that while Gimbutas is barely mentioned in texts that deal with feminist or gender archaeology, it is precisely the term feminist that is used as an insult against her.

<sup>5</sup> Point often cited also by Ruth Whitehouse (2002, 2013).

## THE SEX OF FIGURINES AND THE FEMALE DIVINITIES

In archaeology, the link between the sex of the figurines and the recognition of the existence of female divinities is firmly intertwined with issues of power and status of women from prehistoric times until today. Therefore, we are witnessing what I would term continuous academic boycott implemented by scholars who do not want to acknowledge the enormous richness and variety of finds that can be associated with the female sphere during the Neolithic (a period that lasted several millennia), adopting certain rather questionable rhetorical strategies.

At the end of the 1960s, when archaeology was in the process of consolidation as a scientific field, the British archaeologist Peter Ucko, exponent of the “new archaeology”, in an attempt to legitimize the discipline, created a new categorization of the figurines that established that one could define as “female” only those with explicit sexual organs or breast and vulva clearly defined - the others would end up in the category “sexless” (Ucko 1962). This new criterion, assumed by many archeologists even today, has removed from consideration most of the plastic female representations, so that, at the moment, it is virtually impossible to perform an exact count of the figurines based on the category of sex. In fact, if you want to know the number of Neolithic female figurines in Italy, for example, the number varies a lot depending on the source (for an interesting discussion, see Soffer and Adovasio 2000).

The next theoretical phase, post-processual archaeology, turns out to be as against the recognition of an elevated status of figurines as the previous approaches. The main tensions can be illustrated by analyzing the writings of one of its exponents, the archaeologist John Robb whose academic focus is allegedly located within the discipline of gender studies.<sup>6</sup> In a recent publication devoted to Neolithic Europe, he states that the fact that female figurines were found in the Neolithic is *a coincidence*, while in the fourth millennium B.C. it was hunting that was the fundamental activity that can really tell us something useful about gender (Robb 2015). The same scholar is also responsible, several years after that, for the interpretation of prehistoric figurines according to which “they may have provided gendered representations that helped develop women’s subjectivity about their own bodies” (Robb and Harris 2017: 7). Two important implications should be noted:

a) it is assumed, without any archaeological basis, that the figurines were used only by women;

b) it is argued that these figurines were objects that served to confirm and/or strengthen the female identity (which the scholar evidently presumed to had been rather weak). Later the same scholar states that both the “fat ladies” from Malta and “Sardinian volumetric figurines” were considered female only because fat (Robb and Harris 2017: 7),<sup>7</sup> thus erasing decades of archaeological analysis that was based on the comparison of the statuary carried out through iconographic elements.

<sup>6</sup> So much so that most of his articles are found in the gender and archaeology readers.

<sup>7</sup> Consideration shared also by Meskell who, referring to (feminine) Neolithic figurines from Malta, affirms that: “From a purely representational point of view we could be witnessing *obesity* rather than *divinity* (Meskell 1995: 77).

In broader terms, the interpretations of the figurines range from Mother Goddesses, with emphasis on fertility discourse, to erotically charged images, dolls etc.; however, some scholars have denounced the bias of these interpretations and their implicit and unjustified assumptions (Dobres 1992; Soffer 1987; Soffer and Conkey 1997). While the (more or less) bias-laden interpretations can be explained by the great emotional charge that anthropomorphic representations carry (i.e., issues of gender, sexuality, and power), there is no doubt about the enormous numerical difference of female versus male figurines.

As Soffer and Adovasio write, basing their work on the iconographic decipherment work of the Paleolithic “Venus” by Abramova and Gvozdover, the upper Paleolithic figurines of naked or clad women are found all across Eurasia, and “their distribution contrasts sharply with the scarcity of unambiguous depictions of Paleolithic males” (Soffer and Adovasio 2000: 516). In general, according to the scholars, the difference between hundreds of female figurines and few male figurines lies in the richness of detail, hairstyles, or headdresses, so much so that a connection can be made between the high level of elaboration of female statuettes and the value of women (or at least of their work). According to the scholars, in fact, “the exquisite and labor-intensive detailing employed in the depiction of the woven garments worn by one group of Venuses clearly shows that weaving and basket-making skills and their products were valued enough to be transformed into transcendent cultural facts carved into stone, ivory, and bone” (Soffer and Adovasio 2000: 524).

Concerning cultic discourses, Joan Marler and Harald Haarmann (2007), note how after the studies of Gimbutas and Mellart on Neolithic symbolism and ‘religion’, extremely polarized movements have arisen. On the one hand, there are the devotees of Mother Goddess theories. On the other hand, a part of archaeology denies the remotest possibility of inferring any element of spirituality or religiosity from excavations, so much so that even archaeologist Peter Biehl (2007) admits that “many archaeologists react with alarm when their work is associated with alternative religious beliefs”, especially if they mention Gimbutas in their research (in Marler and Haarmann 2007: 50). In fact, based both on my fieldwork and on textual analysis, I have noticed that many women and men archaeologists show rather strong reactions not so much when dealing with religious topics in the traditional sense (read: male), but rather when talking about female gods. Otherwise, we cannot explain the absence of fierce criticism for a paleoethnologist like Leroi-Gourhan who has widely theorized about prehistoric religious practices, without mentioning Goddesses. As well as David Lewis Williams, or the “father” of Sardinian archaeology, Giovanni Lilliu.

Aside from the dispute between proponents and deniers of the divinity of the figurines, one of the most heated archaeological discussions in recent decades, therefore, is establishing the sex of the figurines<sup>8</sup>. Macedonian archaeologist Goce Naumov, on the

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<sup>8</sup> A number of scholars including Nakamura and Meskell (2009), Nanoglou (2006) and Vella Gregory (2007) opt for their asexuality, while the interpretations on their functions are varied and colorful (see Bailey’s sex dolls (Bailey 2005), or Talalay’s childrens’ dolls or educational devices (Talalay 1993) within the American academic discourse). In Italy we have the recent discussions of Borić et al. (2019), Lugliè (2017) Fanni, Sirigu and Soro (2019) that question their cult use. These interpretations will be discussed in detail further ahead.



one hand, confirms that not only “the statistics and ratios of Balkan figurines still confirm the prevalence of female representations” (Naumov 2014: 51), but more importantly he admits that most of the conflicting and varied archaeological theories to date, “still did not offer the most elementary answers to: (i) what and whom the figurines represent; (ii) what was the motive for them to be modeled with definite iconographic features; and finally (iii) what was their actual use” (Naumov 2014: 50).

Another important element that followers of “sexless figurines” approach keep forgetting is the presence of “secondary” gender characteristics such as prominent bellies and hips, the position of arms and hands, as well as a protruding chest (if we don't want to call it breasts), as Naumov (2009, 2014) and Lesure (2011) also point out. According to Naumov in archaeology at the moment, there is neither contrary nor favorable evidence that the figurines were deities (Naumov 2014: 52). In general, after analyzing some ethnographic examples from Macedonia, he repeatedly argues that “figurines did not have singular functions, meanings and purpose” (Naumov 2014: 56), a statement that can certainly be shared but should not prevent one from attempting comparative analyses based on analogies, which many archaeologists avoid.

#### FEMALE REPRESENTATIONS: “NON-RELIGIOUS” INTERPRETATIONS AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

As previously mentioned, within the discipline of archeology there have been various “non-religious” interpretations of the figurines. An influential essay by archaeologist Talalay, entitled *Deities, Dolls & Devices. Neolithic figurines from Franchti Chave, Greece*, analyzes a collection of Neolithic figurines from Greece. Taking a stance against the “Goddess theory” (Talalay 1993: 81–82), and claiming the impossibility to demonstrate their cultic use (*ibid.*: 40), the archaeologist focuses on the figurines production through a series of research questions: who was the creator? Was it a specific group? What were the reasons for choosing a certain material instead of another? Who owned them?, etc. (Talalay 1993: 29). Throughout the research, the scholar admits that the possession and control of these objects must have been related to power and rites of passage. However, in the end, since basing her assumptions on ethnological studies, Talalay asserts their use as educational devises to teach children about pregnancy (the figurines with the belly) or to cure or use as voodoo dolls or simple toys for children (*Ibid.*: 41, 43). The scholar, although exploring various hypotheses, does not explain the reason why the majority of the supposed dolls, voodoo or otherwise, are female, as if the male gender could have been absent from voodoo rituals, cure practices or children's toys.

Another sholarly interpretation that invites critical attention is the comparison of Neolithic figurines with contemporary popular culture advance by Douglass Bailey. Douglass Bailey (2005) analyzes Hamagia and Cucuteni figurines from Romania, and Tesseloniki, Greece, with an aim to “deflate the Mother Goddess readings” (Bailey 2005: 19), and so insisting on the sexual features of the figurines, portraying prehistoric bondage sexual practices (2005: 165) and comparing contemporary spread and usage of Barbie dolls

with the Neolithic massive production of female figurines (2005: 73).<sup>9</sup> Following this line of argument, the archaeologist even discusses the differences between bidimensional or tridimensional representations asserting that the latter can be penetrated: “the doll’s amorous suitor cannot get inside the photograph of the naked women but, literally, he can enter the doll” (Bailey 2005: 40). As a conclusion, the scholar assumes the theories on fertility cults related to figurines as “simpler, safer, more pleasant” (Bailey 2005: 166).

Other scholars’ interpretations referred to figurines as representations of ancestors, especially for those without clear gender features (Naumov 2014: 194; Bernabò Brea and Mazziere 2009: 18).

Similar refusal of acknowledging potential religious status of female figurines is dominant in the discipline at the present moment. Even in the recent and monumental *The Oxford Handbook of Prehistoric Figurines* (Insoll 2017), all archeologists involved in the project, offer various examples of recent archaeological research on figurines which attempt to diversify methodology. All of these scholars, reject the religious interpretations<sup>10</sup>. As most of the previous work though, they not only avoid addressing the predominant presence of female figurines but also, as Naumov clearly states: “other artefacts that represent the entire human body or of only some body parts, such as vessels, house and oven models, or ‘altars’ and stamps” (Naumov 2014: 57), that fall within the feminine sphere. While the hypothesis that the “earrings figurines” could be representations of Astarte goddess in Cyprus, is defined “ambiguous” by Knox (2017: 763), the author is more prone to other interpretations such as: figurines depicting the “third gender” or generic “markers of identity” (2017: 767). Another interesting example is offered by Vella Gregory’s discussion on the agency of figurines (Vella Gregory 2017). Analyzing the well-known Sardinian “volumetric stone figurine” from Cuccurru SArriu archeological site, the scholar goes against the “traditional” archaeological literature, based on iconographic comparison, which indubitably assigned female gender to the statuette (see: Atzeni 1978; Lilliu 1999, 2017). The author instead, questions its gender, with the reason that the sexual characteristics are not clearly defined (Vella Gregory 2017: 781).

Even in a recent exhibition “Donna o Dea: le raffigurazioni femminili nella preistoria e protostoria sarda” (Woman or Goddess: female representations in Sardinian prehistory and protohistory) held in the island’s main archaeological museum, in Carlo Lugliè’s<sup>11</sup> scientific overview, the statuette is defined as an “antropomorphic figure (*female?*)”<sup>12</sup> (Fanni, Sirigu e Soro 2019, 58).

In the end, as Lesure (2017) states, while in the recent archeological literature, the goddess interpretation has been rejected, being “murdered” i.e. rendered unacceptable

<sup>9</sup> The scholar is clearly adopting the discursive strategy of affirming something while denying it, widely used by authors who are aware of stating concepts which could bump sensitivities like racist or sexist statements.

<sup>10</sup> They do this in different ways: by emphasizing form, function, context, and miniaturization issues, by stressing the use of small figurines as “personal objects” (see Morris (2017), Renfrew (2017b), as well as by focusing on gender, and on ethnographic comparison with ritual practices, rites of passage, initiations, and gesture analysis.

<sup>11</sup> Carlo Lugliè is a full professor of prehistory, at the Cagliari University.

<sup>12</sup> My italic.



Fig. 3: Limestone female figurine from the necropolis of Cuccuru S'Arriu, Sardinia, front view. Bonuighinu culture, 4800-4450 B.C. Cagliari, Museo Archeologico Nazionale. (Source: <https://twitter.com/museoarcheoca/status/1127839593259204608>; Photos' property: Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Cagliari).



Fig. 4: Limestone female figurine from the necropolis of Cuccuru S'Arriu, Sardinia, side view. Bonuighinu culture, 4800-4450 B.C. Cagliari, Museo Archeologico Nazionale. (Source: <https://twitter.com/museoarcheoca/status/1127839593259204608>; Photos' property: Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Cagliari).

by most of the scholars<sup>13</sup>, it comes back again and again until prehistorians will be forced to take into serious account a large scale research “open to lively comparison, in which multiple investigators can incrementally contribute to the creation of a new synthesis (Lesure 2017: 58).”

From anthropological perspective, in the first half of the XX century, Margaret Mead (1901-1978), has been one of the first scholars who questioned the assumption that femininity and masculinity were natural and analyzed their cultural construction (Mead 1949). Mary Douglas (1921-2007), in turn, made a great contribution to the study of corporeality in anthropology, differentiating physical and social body, showing how every culture assigns special meanings to body parts and functions. According to Douglas's theories, therefore, the body embodies the culture of the reference society, becoming the terrain on which, the ideas and values of the social structure are negotiated (Douglas [1966] 2003). In the seventies, a groundbreaking work depicting the absence of women's voice within the ethnographic research appeared with Edwin Ardener's essay “Belief and the

<sup>13</sup> In this article, Lesure uses Agata Christie's novel, *Murder on the Orient Express*, as a metaphoric attitude towards Goddess theories.

problem of women” (Ardener 1975). Even though women’s behavior was registered and studied within family relationships, household, etc, their voice was muted, they had no agency, they were “effectively missing in the total analysis or, more precisely, they were there in the same way as were the Nuer’s cows, who were observed but also did not speak” (Ardener 1975:4).

Following Ardeners’ steps, other two studies have been crucial for unraveling sexist biases in academic thought: Rosaldo and Lamphere’s edited collection, *Women, Culture and Society* (1974) and Shirley Ardener’s *Perceiving Women* (1975). These two contributions have shown how women’s exclusion as a topic of study has led to biased anthropological accounts, and clearly stated that it would be necessary to reconsider the theoretical and methodological premises in order to bring back women into the picture. In the same period some anthropologists criticized previous studies trying to correct male biases in ethnographic research. One of them, Annette Weiner, went back to Trobriand islands, focusing on a group previously studied by Bronislaw Malinowski. In her study, paying attention to the role of women in funeral ceremonies and using female informants, that were not accounted for previously, the anthropologist overturned the colleague’s findings and offered a different version of women’s role and position in the funeral ceremony that involved the entire population and lasted several months. In her account women played a vital role within the economic and symbolic exchange (Weiner 1979).

As Busoni (2000) argued, androcentrism in past anthropologic research has been based on two apparently opposite mechanisms: invisibility and over-visibility of women. The first denies the active presence of women due to the fact that all informants are men. Moreover, it testifies to the difficulty in seeing forms of social asymmetries both on the part of the researcher and by the protagonists themselves, lack of attention to women regarding topics and activities considered by researchers to be purely male. Invisibilization therefore operates on two levels: observation/description and theorization, where due to various obstacles and forgetfulness, half of the population is not considered within the social and cultural relations of the society. The second process, that of over-visibility, operates at the level of language and classifies women as “more natural” than men. This determines the emphasis on the female biological dimension, obscuring their social side and all the relationships connected to it. Language becomes a tool that hides women’s role as social actors and links them only to the natural dimension. The female sphere becomes a separate universe, distinct from the male one, which is depicted as cultural and more powerful. Highlighting these processes in anthropological writings shows how gender relations, where man dominates woman in an almost natural way, have been distorted in studies undertaken from the androcentric perspective, which, until the 1970s, were prevalent within anthropological research (Busoni 2000: 104–108).

In the end, anthropological reflection has long insisted that the representations and practices relating to bodies are cultural, social, symbolic and, to a great extent arbitrary instead of “natural”, but consistent with other representations, cosmology, religion, system of social relations and hence, power relationships. Social and cultural practices are necessarily inscribed in the bodies that are to be considered both objects and subjects of such practices, in the sense that they reproduce them at the very moment in which

they are interpreted (Foucault 2019, Connell 2002). It could be argued then that the key issue deciding the mode of representation of female bodies, as exemplified by Neolithic figurines, is power and social relations constructed around it.

### MARIJA GIMBUTAS: ANATOMY OF AN (ACADEMIC) MURDER

In the archaeological debate, the figure of Gimbutas is emblematic precisely because she found herself at the center of a double academic conflict. On the one hand, she was one of the first female archaeologists to conduct important excavations, occupying a position of great importance in a university world dominated by male figures. On the other hand, although she never joined the feminist movement, she found herself embroiled in the disputes between feminist archaeologists and proponents of gender archaeology, who contested her gender essentialism (see Conkey and Tringham 1995; Eller 2000; Navickaitė 2019) at a time when feminist and gender studies theories were merging within the postmodern archaeological academic debate. If, for example, one reads the 2012 edited volume *A Companion to Gender Archaeology*, not only are Gimbutas's studies sharply criticized (see Goodison and Morris, 2012), but even when dealing explicitly with gender and power in prehistory, the concepts of “ambiguity, contradiction, diversity” are celebrated repeatedly (Hutson, Hanks, and Pyburn 2012: 45), even to the point of arriving to Benjamin Alberti's “queer prehistory” (Alberti 2012).

Gimbutas was the first (and remains one of few archaeologists) who, although not belonging to the feminist movement, had tried (in my opinion successfully) to reread and re-analyze much of the archaeological material culture pertaining to “Old Europe”, especially statuary and pottery. She not only searched for “patterns that connect”, analogies, symbolic and cultural links but also found thousands of archetypes semantically connected to the feminine that she declined as attributes of the Goddess. Another great merit of Marija Gimbutas has been that of having divulged studies that normally belong only to insiders, to a vast public, even a non-academic one, so much so that the American anthropologist Joseph Campbell, in the introduction to the essay *The Language of the Goddess*, stated that

As Jean-Francois Champollion, a century and a half ago, through his decipherment of the Rosetta Stone was able to establish a glossary of hieroglyphic signs to serve as keys to the whole great treasury of Egyptian religious thought from c. 3200 B.C. to the period of the Ptolemies, so in her assemblage, classification, and descriptive interpretation of some two thousand symbolic artifacts from the earliest Neolithic village sites of Europe, c. 7000 to 3500 B.C., Marija Gimbutas has been able, not only to prepare a fundamental glossary of pictorial motifs as keys to the mythology of that otherwise undocumented era, but also to establish on the basis of these interpreted signs the main lines and themes of a religion in veneration, both of the universe as the living body of a Goddess-Mother Creator (Campbell 1989: xiii).

What I would like to emphasize is precisely Gimbutas' attempt to analyze more than 2000 symbols, attributable to the cult of the female divinity, carried out through research that represents a unicum in an archaeological field that does not accept collaborations with humanistic disciplines (apparently aimed at not going beyond the safe limits of the excavation context). This was also thanks to her linguistic knowledge that allowed her to access the results of excavations from the entire area of Central Europe that had never been translated and were therefore unknown in the international arena. In this regard, even a scholar opposed to her, such as Cynthia Eller, admits "her tremendous linguistic expertise" and her "encyclopedic knowledge of Central and Eastern European archaeological sites that permitted her to speculate effectively on 'big picture' questions" (in Dashu 2005: 192).

On the other hand, it is important to emphasize her truly multidisciplinary approach that drew on her knowledge of linguistics, mythology and folklore, symbolism, archaeology, and anthropology - based on her doctoral studies in prehistoric archaeology, history of religion and ethnology at the University of Tübingen in 1946. Her academic career, developed at Harvard and UCLA Universities in the United States, includes directing international excavations, 20 academic papers, and more than 200 scientific articles translated into several languages. Yet, even today, naming Gimbutas in archaeology raises strong suspicions and hostile reactions. In turn, I argue, that such strong disciplinary aversions constitute themselves important discursive material necessarily open to cultural criticism, as developed throughout this article.

#### MARIJA GIMBUTAS: A BRIEF EXCURSUS ON HER MAIN THEORIES

Gimbutas' first important essay published in the mid-seventies entitled *The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe: 7000 to 3500 BC. Myths, Legends and Cult images*<sup>14</sup> dealt with the material culture of the Neolithic from a matrilineal point of view, outlining a society in which, before the arrival of the proto-Indo-Europeans, people lived within an egalitarian society, in harmony with nature "governed" by female divinities. This social order, according to the scholar, was then destroyed by the arrival of the Kurgan, a population of warriors and worshippers of male divinities, in a sense, precursors of both our patriarchal system and the monotheisms of Western society. The main characteristic of these people was also a rigidly hierarchical social structure, quite different from that of the indigenous populations of "Old Europe" in which the two sexes coexisted peacefully on the same level.

Thanks to this essay, the archaeologist acquires a certain notoriety, especially within the "Goddess movement" (started in California at the end of the 1980s) that uses her writings as an academic reference to validate an idea of spirituality centered on the feminine. Her revolutionary thesis is confirmed and expanded in the following works,

<sup>14</sup> Then changed in *The Goddesses and the Gods of Old Europe 6500-3500 BC. Myths and Cult Images*, republished in 1974.

listed here in order of publication: *The Language of the Goddess* (1989), *The Civilization of the Goddess: The World of Old Europe* (1991) and in the last *The Living Goddess* (1999), which seek to demonstrate, through a complex and articulated interdisciplinary analysis, that the culture of Old Europe between 7000 and 3500 B.C. was permeated by the “feminine principle” that allowed women to hold positions of power both socially and culturally, ensuring a balanced relationship between the sexes.

#### ARGUMENTS AGAINST GIMBUTAS: FROM MENOPAUSAL SYNDROME TO POLITICAL TRAUMA

As mentioned earlier, in the post-processual arena, even archaeologists who call themselves feminists use rather unprofessional arguments in both tone and content when referring to Gimbutas's work. Below is a brief selection: British women archeologists Goodison and Morris, evidently agreeing with Balter, write: “Gimbutas's work has promoted a moral fable in which humanity deteriorated from the innocence and peace of the Neolithic, a utopian society paralleling the biblical Garden of Eden, except that original sin now lay with men, who spoil the party” (Goodison and Morris 2012: 272). In general terms, Goodison and Morris critique the cult of Goddess mother while promoting Ian Hodder to the status of a grand “destroyer of Goddess theories” (Goodison and Morris 2012: 276).

The argument advanced by Goodison and Morris (2012) that would prove the bad faith of Gimbutas, is the fact that she did not mention in her works the figurine of the “lovers of Ain Sakhri”, for fear of disproving her theories. Given the magnitude of this statement, I looked for information on this find so controversial to overturn the theories on the existence of female gods. It is a stone statuette from 9000 B.C. that shows a couple probably in the process of intercourse. My academic perplexity increases as the article proceeds and mentions the disreputable behavior of the followers of the Goddess in Çatalhöyük who marketed the image of the Goddess (the reference is to the straw products with the seated Goddess image by the members of the movement). In the first case she is accused of not having included in her works a statuette out of hundreds analyzed, for fear that it would have contradicted her theories in which there would be only and exclusively female examples. In fact, Gimbutas, in dealing with the topic of “sacred nuptials,” analyzes this precise statuette “representing the union of man and woman” (Gimbutas 2005: 51).

In the second case, methodological planes are mixed with an enviable *nonchalance*: to use as an academic argument a group of women making drinking straws with the image of a statue is at least as bizarre as to foreground the tales of an animal rather than a woman sitting on a throne.<sup>15</sup>

It would be difficult to continue claiming that this atypical figurine depicting intercourse could somehow overturn Gimbutas' theories.

<sup>15</sup> The second motif is a clear reference to recognized Goddesses such as the Anatolian Cybele often depicted on a throne pulled by large felines.

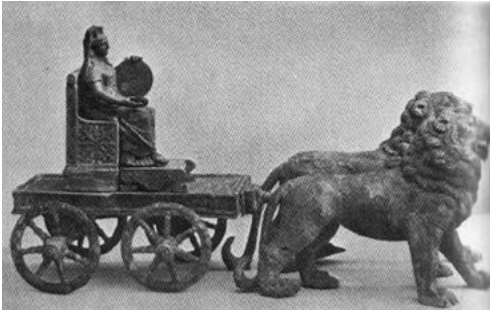


Fig. 5: Cybele with chariot and lions, 2nd century A.D. bronze (Neumann 1981: 55).

As in the post-processual area, there are contemporary archaeologists who try to discredit Gimbutas not through a serious academic debate, discussions of archaeological theories and methodologies, but rather by taking recourse to questionable discursive strategies. The archaeologist Lynn Meskell, in an article with the provocative title *Goddesses, Gimbutas and 'New Age' archaeology*, while admitting “her recognized academic standing and long history of fieldwork in southeast European sites”, states that the theory of Kurgan warriors invading the peaceful society of Old Europe, comes from the traumatic experience of the Soviet invasion of her homeland (Meskell 1995: 74–79). John Chapman, agreeing on the traumas that would have generated in the troubled mind of Gimbutas an imaginary of war-mongering males, finds in menopause the answer to the theories about the Mother Goddess:

The second point is one perhaps not easily discussed by a male prehistorian. It concerns the personal fertility of Gimbutas and its loss at the time of menopause; this latter can be dated to sometime in the 1960s. It may be no more than coincidence that a woman with strong professional interests in the Mother Goddess, regeneration and fertility begins to write most vividly about fertility symbols at a time when her own personal fertility is disappearing, and her own children leave home. Yet this is a factor which I would be loath to omit from my account (Chapman 1998: 300).

Interestingly, Meskell, who calls herself a feminist, critiques Gimbutas’s theories, moving from the generic “pure fantasy” (Meskell 1995: 83) to “political”, “reverse sexism”, “gynocentric agenda”, and “gynocentric narratives” (Meskell 1995: 83, 76, 84). Moreover, the archaeologist, considered one of the most important exponents of post-processualism, was part of Ian Hodder’s working group at the Çatalhöyük site, unconditionally supporting his interpretations.



Fig 6: Cybele with lions, Istanbul Archaeological Museum 3rd century A.D. (Source: <https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/ancient-cybele-statue-returns-to-turkey-42327/>; Photos’ property: Istanbul Archaeological Museum).



In general, the arguments of these two archaeologists, far from any adherence to theories and methods of their academic discipline, are based on discursive attacks. Certainly, one of the most well-founded criticisms from a strictly archaeological point of view, expressed by Meskell and taken up by various scholars, is that Gimbutas has elaborated a univocal theory on figurines that belong to different archaeological contexts, different periods and very distant geographical areas (Meskell 1995: 75). But if we consider this analysis in a broader perspective, not only within the context of a single archaeological excavation, but observing incredible similarities between figurines that actually belong to different periods and different contexts, then Gimbutas's theories appear more plausible. Certainly fallible, as majority of scientific hypotheses and theories that are continuously disproved, remodeled, and discussed. Otherwise, reading these articles, one gets the impression that these criticisms are based on "rumors" rather than on a careful reading of the texts. For example, contrary to what Meskell claims (Meskell 1995: 75), Gimbutas does not speak of Mother Goddess as much as Goddess who encompasses both aspects of life and death (see Gimbutas 1982: 152), just as she does not speak of matriarchy, which is another of the "classic" accusations made against her, but of matrilineal society (Gimbutas 1991, 2005, 2008). Whereas, if we are to take seriously the conclusion of the article in which Meskell states: "emphasis on one sex to the exclusion of the other is not only detrimental to serious gender/feminist studies but threatens the interpretive integrity of archaeology" (Meskell 1995: 84), it becomes difficult to rely on methods of traditional archaeological analysis and interpretations that take into account almost exclusively the male sex.

#### DEBUNKING THE MYTHS: MATRIARCHY, MOTHER-GODDESSES, FEMINISM, AND "SCIENCE"

Reading the numerous criticisms against Gimbutas one has the strong impression that their force is not in the strength of argument but in being constantly repeated. Examples of this are the interpretation that Gimbutas imagined a Neolithic era in which women dominate over men (common lay representation of matriarchy),<sup>16</sup> that this society was legitimized by a cult that exalted motherhood, and that this arose from the desires and imagination of a frustrated feminist with little adherence to "scientific" data (for a detailed list of *ad personam* attacks against Gimbutas, see Dashú 2005; Marler and Haarmann 2007; Rigoglioso 2007; Spretnak 2011; Navickaitė 2019). Of course, the critique against androcentrism in archaeology that implicitly pervades her works has helped create the academic myth of Gimbutas as a feminist, so much so that even Goce Naumov, an archaeologist usually not engaging in academic hearsay, falls into the trap and describes her as "one of the most prominent apostles of second wave feminism, endorsing figurines as Mother Goddesses" (Naumov 2014: 49).

Generally speaking, as philosopher and historian of religions Charlene Spretnak points out: "Even the post-processualists, nominally interested in symbols, disdain metanarratives

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<sup>16</sup> For an extensive and well-documented account of matriarchy see Goettner-Abendroth (2012).

such as a unifying metaphysical perception that informs a culture” (Spretnak 2011: 37). And it is also on this basis that the latter reject Gimbutas’s “unifying” theories, since on the one hand they are interested in symbols, and on the other hand they are also bound to the specific archaeological context to succeed in having a broader horizon. Another peculiar criticism comes from feminist archaeologists Conkey and Tringham, who object to her use of the terms “cult”, “religion”, “temples” etc., that would separate the sacred from the profane in a Western dualistic manner (Conkey and Tringham 1995). In fact, Gimbutas clearly writes that in the Neolithic cultures she studied there was no dualistic conception. Rather, according to her, the concept of the feminine creative Deity is unifying, and multifaceted in its aspects: “The multiple categories, functions, and symbols used by prehistoric peoples to express the Great Mystery are all aspects of the unbroken unity of one deity, a Goddess who is ultimately Nature herself” (Gimbutas 1991: 223). This is the concept that she repeats also in her last essay that resumes, clarifies, and completes her theory on the symbols and the metaphors used during the Neolithic to represent the female divinity, circles, spirals, meanders, sacred animals etc. (Gimbutas 2005). If anything, what is certainly objectionable is the constant emphasis on the feminine, at times unjustified, as when she insists on associating the horns of the bull (bucranio), very present in the symbolism of the Neolithic in Sardinia for example, to the uterus. In some examples, she cites the Venus of Laussel who holds a horn of bison and some other unconvincing data (Gimbutas 2008: 265).

The accusation that her theory on the Kurgans had no scientific basis was retracted after several decades by one of her greatest detractors, the British archaeologist Colin Renfrew. On the one hand, as Spretnak (2011) states, Renfrew’s paper that was supposed to sweep away Gimbutas’s paleolinguistic theories, entitled *Archaeology and Language: The Puzzle of Indo-European Origins*, has been widely refuted by various scholars. For example, Haarmann (1999)<sup>17</sup> presented abundant evidence that renders Renfrew’s counter-hypothesis impossible (in Spretnak 2011: 30). So much so that, according to Spretnak, though initially presented as a theory, it was subsequently degraded to a hypothesis (Spretnak 2011: 30). On the other hand, Renfrew, after years of academic attacks against Gimbutas, in 2017 spoke at a conference dedicated to her with a reading entitled “Marija Rediviva: DNA and Indo-European Origins” (Renfrew 2017a), in which he supports the Kurgan theories that have since been confirmed by several DNA studies (among others, Haak 2015).

The archaeologist Ernestine Elster (2007) also affirms that one of Gimbutas’s greatest merits was that of proposing a coherent analysis concerning the Neolithic of ancient Europe, succeeding in interpreting a fundamental part of the material culture, the figurines, and their symbols, which before her were considered uninterpretable. Furthermore, she did it by combining an exquisitely scientific methodology with the skills of a great popularizer when, “Even though it was about excavation, and she always used hard data (C14 dates, paleozoology, etc.), the prehistoric world was presented in a powerful narrative, complete

<sup>17</sup> Haarmann (1999) noted the colleague’s “relative ignorance of linguistics” that “not only muddles him but dampens his flair for imaginative innovation” (in Spretnak 2011: 30).

and unquestionable” (Elster 2007: 104). Unlike many scholars who contest it, Gimbutas’ areas of *expertise* go far beyond archaeology and have served to enable the elaboration of a theory that, in many ways, remains valid and coherent.

## CONCLUSION

In this article I have analyzed how the theories of archaeologist Marija Gimbutas, in some ways well-grounded in the discipline but in others willing to engage in extensive interdisciplinary work, reveal strong tensions (methodological, interpretative and theoretical) inherent in the discipline of archaeology. On the one hand, the age-old question of the exclusive adherence to the archaeological context can prevent the elaboration of hypotheses and theories that go beyond the single excavation. As the philosopher and anthropologist Martino Doni points out in the introduction to the Italian edition of Gimbutas’s *Living Goddesses*, “the findings should not simply be collected, they should be interpreted, that is, placed side by side to build a coherence” (Doni 2005: 6). While a profound methodological problem that distinguishes archaeological rhetoric,

is to repeat to oneself and to the so-called scientific community that up to here one can arrive, because there is certain evidence, after which it is only conjecture, or worse still, fantasy. There are countless archaeological and paleontological publications that adopt this strategy. But without the hazard of interpretation [...] the accumulation of findings, risks becoming a dogmatic excuse for games of accounting and archival antiquarianism (Doni 2005: 12–13).

Certainly, Gimbutas has dared to go further and has evidently suffered the consequences both by being attacked by the “mainstream” archaeology and by archaeologists who call themselves feminists or adhere to gender archaeology. If we use the concept of gender fluidity and performativity that has characterized the postmodern currents that are often cited in archaeology (especially Judith Butler and Donna Haraway, including the concept of queer),<sup>18</sup> we risk, by distorting the very premises of feminist and gender studies, materially and metaphorically erasing women. And if, as Conkey and Gero argue “feminist scholarship in archaeology, demanding fundamental alterations in basic assumptions, first requires a painstaking retooling of definitions, data sets, textual sources, and functional assignments” (Conkey and Gero 1991: 7), the central issue in archaeology remains the question of the modality of achieving this scope.

Becoming willing, within the discipline, to consider the academic merits of Gimbutas, could be a road that leads in a valid direction, from the scientific point of view, while continuing to wage academic wars damages serious academic discourse and is certainly not useful for the feminist claims.

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<sup>18</sup> In short, fluid identity of those who do not identify with any one gender.

The implicit or explicit accusation of “gender essentialism”, “gynocentric agenda” etc., brought forward by a group of feminist archaeologists, hides the central issue: to admit the androcentric *bias*, to recognize a narrative that still analyzes prehistory in terms of hierarchical relationships in which women occupy subordinate positions.

I think it is more useful and necessary to ask why the European Neolithic is littered with female figurines. Specifically, Sardinian’s Neolithic produced more than half of the female statuettes found throughout Italy, while the male ones predominate in the Bronze Age. This drastic change must have had profound reasons caused by a social and cultural change that is reflected in the creation of (cult) objects. In addition, assuming that the European Neolithic produced thousands of female statuettes, Gimbutas’s hypotheses appear more plausible. I argue that continuing to claim that this phenomenon is just a coincidence could be critiqued as insisting on applying an unscientific and uncritical attitude. The phenomenon of female statuettes is indisputable and has precise characteristics of pervasiveness and longevity (approximately three millennia in most of the European territory) and precisely because of these reasons, it cannot be understood by limiting itself to the single archaeological context. Rather, connecting patterns and linking similarities could allow us to achieve an alternative reconstruction of a history instead of persisting on manipulating or denying material finds.

In conclusion, what would happen if archaeological theories admitted that there was a long period of prehistory dominated by female depictions, many of which were found in cultic settings? Who is afraid of the Goddess? And who is afraid of Gimbutas?

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## CHI HA PAURA DELLA DEA? RACCONTI DI LEOPARDI, SINDROME DA MENOPAUSA: TERMINI DI UN DIBATTITO ARCHEOLOGICO

ARIANNA CARTA



Il presente articolo intende esplorare le controverse ipotesi all'interno del dibattito archeologico sulle statuette neolitiche femminili e le associazioni delle stesse con le divinità. Partendo da un excursus storico sulle principali ipotesi che riguardano statuette e dee preistoriche, ho mostrato come l'accoglienza o l'ostracizzazione delle teorie di Gimbutas, possa essere letta come cartina tornasole delle dispute ideologiche all'interno dell'archeologia mainstream alla quale si intersecano quelle di matrice femminista e di genere. Il discorso delle divinità protostoriche ha radici lontane ed è stato teorizzato in vari ambiti da numerosi studiosi, tra gli altri: Bachofen, Frazer, James, Neumann e Russel. Anche in ambito archeologico, fino alla prima metà del '900, a livello internazionale esisteva un (implicito) accordo sul culto della Dea madre di cui le statuette del Paleolitico e del Neolitico erano considerate la prova materiale di questa divinità. L'interpretazione più comune era quella che collegava la divinità femminile al culto della fertilità, che si esplicava nell'enfasi data a seni e vulva delle statuette. Mentre in campo archeologico si sono susseguite scoperte di statuette femminili che sono state studiate limitandosi allo specifico contesto, gli studi di Gimbutas hanno offerto un lavoro che in ambito archeologico non era mai stato intrapreso: l'analisi comparativa di migliaia

di simboli legati alla sfera femminile e presenti nella cultura materiale di tutta l'Europa antica. Come ho cercato di dimostrare nell'articolo, questo lavoro rivoluzionario ha scatenato una serie di reazioni avverse sia all'interno dell'archeologia mainstream, che, paradossalmente, nell'archeologia femminista e di genere. Le motivazioni sono complesse e varie ma di base riflettono una disciplina che, sia nella teoria che nei metodi, poggia saldamente su pregiudizi androcentrici in cui anche l'approccio di genere si può riassumere nella definizione: "add gender and stir". Nell'articolo offro svariati esempi di bizzarre interpretazioni sulle statuette neolitiche che da un lato sono state considerate asessuate, dall'altro assimilate a bambole gonfiabili attraverso strategie retoriche che le priva del sesso oppure le ipersessualizza. Marija Gimbutas in questo dibattito risulta un prezioso indicatore perché è proprio attraverso gli attacchi che la studiosa subisce nel corso della sua carriera che si possono comprendere alcune strategie denigratorie poco consone ad un dibattito accademico costruttivo. Accusata di soffrire di sindrome da menopausa, traumi psicologici, di essere una "sessista al contrario" o di avere troppa fantasia, sono diversi gli archeologi e le archeologhe che sferrano attacchi *ad personam* piuttosto che muovere critiche costruttive relative alle sue interpretazioni. Nella conclusione, auspico che la portata di un lavoro interdisciplinare come quello che Gimbutas ha svolto sulle divinità femminili venga riconosciuto e che l'archeologia superi il limite angusto del contesto archeologico e abbandoni la pretesa di oggettività, incompatibile con il concetto stesso di interpretazione di culture anche se "materiali".

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**R**azvoj raziskovalnih metod in  
diskusija

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**S**viluppo dei metodi di ricerca  
e discussione

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**D**evelopment of Research  
Methods and Discussion

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# How do We Know the Ancient Slavs also Knew Gnomons?

==== Tomislav Bilić =====

Poskušal bom dokazati, da hipoteze o 'svetih trikotnikih, ki temeljijo na sončnem kotu', ni mogoče šteti za resno znanstveno trditev, ker se zdi, da ni podkrepljena z nobenim trdnim dokazom. Gre bolj za primer krožnega sklepanja, ki vključuje podporo ideji, da so stari Slovani vedeli za nagnjenost ekliptike, tako da kažejo na domnevni obstoj »svetih trikotnikov«, hkrati pa dokazujejo obstoj teh »svetih trikotnikov« z dokazovanjem, da so stari Slovani poznali vrednost poševnice. Izkazalo se je, da so sodobni raziskovalci preveč vneto interpretirali nekatere strukture, ki so bile v staroslovanskem kontekstu prikazane kot gnomoni. To se razkrije v podrobni analizi več teh »gnomonov«. Nazadnje je opaženo, da se študija »svetih trikotnikov« ne ukvarja niti s sodobno zgodovino znanosti niti s sodobnimi študijami mitov, s tistimi disciplinami, ki bi vpletenim raziskovalcem lahko zagotovile boljši pogled na teme, ki so se jim tako strastno predani.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: stari Slovani, starodavna astronomija, sveti trikotniki, sončni kot, gnomon, krožno sklepanje

I will attempt to demonstrate that the 'sacred triangles based on the solar angle' hypothesis cannot be regarded as a serious scientific proposition because it seems uncorroborated by any solid evidence. It is more an example of circular reasoning, which entails supporting the idea that the ancient Slavs knew about the obliquity of the ecliptic by pointing to the purported existence of 'sacred triangles', while also proving the existence of these 'sacred triangles' by demonstrating the ancient Slavs were familiar with the value for the obliquity. Certain structures portrayed as gnomons in ancient Slavic contexts are shown to have been overzealously interpreted by modern scholars. This is revealed in a detailed analysis of several of these 'gnomons'. Finally, it is observed that the 'sacred triangles' scholarship engages with neither the modern history of science nor modern studies of myth, the very disciplines that could provide the scholars involved with a better perspective on the subjects to which they are so passionately committed.

KEYWORDS: ancient Slavs, ancient astronomy, sacred triangles, solar angle, gnomon, circular reasoning

In a truly stimulating yet also admirably civil response to my paper on the 'sacred triangles' hypothesis (Pleterski 2021), Andrej Pleterski raises some interesting points in defence of this intriguing scholarly insight into ancient Slavic cosmological beliefs. In this paper, I seek to show why I believe his attempt is not fully successful, especially as concerns the significant question of how familiar, if at all, the ancient Slavs were with gnomons.

The paper should thus be viewed as a modest contribution to the apparently developing intellectual debate on the set of pertaining issues.

I generally do not see how my main thesis is challenged by Pleterski's response. In short, I have claimed that those adhering to the 'sacred triangles' hypothesis – specifically, those who introduce the notion of a “solar angle” into the discussion – have unwillingly fallen victim to circular reasoning. Indeed, their ‘proof’ the ancient Slavs knew about the obliquity of the ecliptic builds on the allegation that they displayed this knowledge while reifying the ‘sacred triangles’ across the landscape. Yet, at the same time they seek to substantiate the existence of the ‘sacred triangles’ by pointing to the ancient Slavs’ knowledge of the obliquity (Bilić 2020). To add weight to either claim, scholars subscribing to the ‘sacred triangles based on the solar angle’ hypothesis need to present proof that these claims are independent of each other, i.e., to show the ancient Slavs were familiar with the obliquity – with its quite peculiar value, more specifically – beyond the ‘sacred triangles’ framework. To the best of my knowledge, such proof has yet to be offered. For instance, no support can be found in narrative sources for the idea that the ancient Slavs knew about the obliquity, despite the reasonable expectation that such an apparently important feature in their cosmology would have left at least some trace in their narrative tradition.<sup>1</sup> However, Pleterski does not address this crucial issue in his response.

Turning now to more specific, yet still essential points, Pleterski questions my understanding of the difference between ancient and modern science, namely of astronomy (Pleterski 2021: 262). Yet, this is a misinterpretation of the *rigorousness* demanded by the modern history of science that should not be confused with *insensitivity* to the issues with which Pleterski and I are both concerned. The study of ancient science in terms of modern is today treated by majority of scholars in this field of study as an anachronistic approach (see, for example, the writings of Francesca Rochberg) and I am fully aware of the anachronism in approaching the former in terms of the latter.<sup>2</sup> Still, it is true that I did not discuss this question at any length in my paper.

Further, crucially, this familiarity with gnomons is relied on by Pleterski as a strong point in his argument concerning the ancient Slavs’ astronomical knowledge as regards this particular set of issues (Pleterski 2021: 264). In his response, Pleterski stresses the deductive nature of my approach, contrasting it with his own inductive reasoning, based on ‘hard evidence’. While delivering some sort of *coup de grace* to my criticism, he somewhat misleadingly finishes his response (introducing it with “[f]inally: some concreteness”) with the following bold statement:

“We [Pleterski & Mareš 2003] also represented two preserved gnomons and traces of the other two in the ancient Slavs (Pleterski & Mareš 2003: 18–24). In *The Cultural Genome*, I additionally show traces of two gnomons (Pleterski 2014: 205–207, 211), while in my most recent publication I add

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Kale 2012: 388, who raises this objection to the role of Mokoš in the ‘sacred triangles based on the solar angle’ idea.

<sup>2</sup> See Bilić 2021: 5–6 (with literature).

four more gnomons (Pleterski 2020: 267–271). No further accumulation of gnomons seems necessary”.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, if Pleterski is right, we may declare the matter settled (as concerns the ancient Slavs’ use of gnomons, not the entire question of the ‘sacred triangles’). Yet, is he actually correct? One thing that instantly draws the reader’s attention: Pleterski only cites his own papers as corroborating evidence for his own assertion (Pleterski 2014; Pleterski 2020; Pleterski & Mareš 2003). Of course, he might simply be doing this to keep matters concise. Still, he could have supported his claims in the works he published earlier, the very ones that he cites. This is manifestly not the case as anyone making an effort to track these references down will soon discover. The references Pleterski cites are as a rule reports of archaeological excavations to which he adds his own interpretations. Any supporting literature he cites stems from the domains of linguistics and ethnographic studies of Slavic myth, without seeking to engage with modern studies of the history of science, or myth generally.<sup>4</sup> What we basically have here is an author trying to support the existence of ancient Slavic gnomons with his own interpretations of various structures that he believes may be representing the gnomons of the ancient Slavs. This is surely not enough to refute my main complaint concerning the ‘sacred triangles’ hypothesis, i.e., the unwitting use of circular reasoning (Bilić 2020: 50). Quite the contrary, it is yet another example of this fallacy in the ‘solar triangles’ scholarship.

To start with, one should briefly discuss what a gnomon actually is: a multi-purpose, yet simple astronomical instrument whose main component is an upright object that casts a shadow. With a gnomon it is possible to determine the local noon, the north–south line (meridian), the (approximate) date of the solstices and (more controversially in practice) the equinoxes, the (approximate) value for the obliquity of the ecliptic, the latitude of the observer, the solar azimuth (including the solstitial sunrise/sunset azimuths), the time of day (most efficiently achieved when the gnomon of a sundial is placed parallel to the earth’s or celestial axis, i.e., when inclined at an angle equal to the latitude of the observer) (Couprie 2011: 28–41, 79–81). I note that Couprie’s definition of a gnomon’s functions is generously inclusive, and that perhaps many historians of science would not agree with the charitable view he holds of the ancient practitioners of astronomy, including those who actually used gnomons. Moreover, these uses of a gnomon are, naturally, theoretical, given that in practice one can use it in any or all of the ways listed above. Nevertheless, while discussing a particular object or structure that one contends is a gnomon, any author should define this instrument’s function in the context being studied within the framework of gnomon usage. This seems to have never been done with the Slavic ‘gnomons’, as will become clear in the following analysis.

One may ask: in which way are the Slavic ‘gnomons’ actually gnomons? Pleterski, in the first paper he cites, one that he wrote along with Mareš, states that he could recognise

<sup>3</sup> Pleterski 2020: 265. The end of the first sentence is more meaningful in Slovenian: “Prav tako tam predstavlja dva ohranjena gnomona in sledove drugih dveh pri starih Slovanih” (Pleterski 2020: 260).

<sup>4</sup> On this characteristic of the ‘sacred triangles’ scholarship see more below.

a gnomon in what excavators had identified as a baptistery (Pleterski & Mareš 2003: 20), in fact, a funnel-shaped pit less than 1.5 m deep inside the present Church of St Peter and Paul at the Vyšehrad castle in Prague (Pleterski & Mareš 2003: 19–20). The authors believe the excavators are in error (Pleterski & Mareš 2003: 20) and connect the pit with the ‘Devil’s Column’, a three-piece 7-m-tall stone column that currently sits in a nearby park but which, according to our earliest source, stood in 1609 in the cemetery nearby (ca. 250 m away) at the Church of the Beheading of St. John. It was only later placed inside the St Peter and Paul’s Church (Pleterski & Mareš 2003: 21). An earlier hypothesis proposed by an amateur researcher, who saw in the column “eine altslawische Säule zum Zweck des Zeitmessens”, but which has been rejected by modern scholars, was revived by Pleterski and Mareš (2003: 21).<sup>5</sup> With little supporting evidence, they transferred the mentioned column from its attested setting and planted it in the “baptistery” pit (Pleterski & Mareš 2003: 21–23). They interpret this construction as a gnomon, yet not one that forms part of the “sacred solar triangle” they claim exists in the Prague area (Pleterski & Mareš 2003: 25–26), while its actual function is also never explicated.

On pages 23 and 24, they mention certain additional “ancient Slavic cult columns”, presumably the other “gnomons” that Pleterski refers to while responding to my paper. Pleterski subsequently repeats and somewhat updates the compelling story of this “gnomon” (Pleterski 2014: 226–232), but still without discussing the use of this ‘gnomon’ as a *gnomon* at the Vyšehrad castle. In this interpretation, it is merely an upright column serving the same purpose as another landscape point that is now occupied by a church (a rotunda of St Martin), even though previously a completely hypothetical ‘gnomon’ also apparently stood there, whose existence is not supported by any evidence (Pleterski 2014: 232–233). It does not therefore seem justifiable to admit this ‘gnomon’ at St Martin’s as evidence of the ancient Slavs being familiar with the instrument, given that its existence was initially hypothesised in order to support the very interpretation that Pleterski himself advocates.

Pleterski also refers to two further gnomons in his book *Kulturni genom*. The ‘gnomon’ he describes here (Pleterski 2014: 205–207) is a mound found near Cracow (*kopiec Krakusa*) with a pillar at the top – or successive stone pillars/a tree/a wooden cross atop a successive mound of layers – which is interpreted, with little solid evidence, as “[t]ak navpičen steber lahko koristno uporabimo kot orientir in kot gnomon za opazovanje ter merjenje gibanja sonca” (Pleterski 2014: 207). The other ‘gnomon’ mentioned here is presumably a stone pillar on a mound called *kopiec Wandy*, some 9 km in distance from the Cracow mound (Pleterski 2014: 209).<sup>6</sup> However, the extensive archaeoastronomical analysis of the mounds that follows does not discuss these structures’ function as *gnomons* (Pleterski 2014: 212–215). Both ‘gnomons’ are merely points of a “sacred triangle” (apparently defined by an angle of 28.5°, one that does not correlate with the value for the obliquity), with a third point that is not demarcated by any ‘gnomon’ at all.

<sup>5</sup> The author in question is Miloš Josef Pulec, whose biography is quite colourful (see Wagner 2014); his idea was published in a tourist guide (Pulec 1960).

<sup>6</sup> “Lahko da je bil to [kamniti steber] še zgodnjerednjeveški gnomon” (Pleterski 2014: 209). Pleterski eventually hypothesised the existence of another ‘gnomon’ at the *Babki Krakusa* mound next to the *kopiec Krakusa*, also without any supporting evidence (Pleterski 2014: 217–218).



The discrepancy between the angle of the obliquity and the angle that apparently defines the Cracow triangle is recognised by Pleterski: “Zakaj kot med gomilami z vrhom pri Vandini gomili meri kar 28,53°, kar nikakor ni velikost obrednega kota...” (Pleterski 2014: 215). The way in which he addresses this inconsistency is a good example of the overall method often used by those adhering to the ‘sacred triangles’ hypothesis. With the initial ‘sacred triangle’ not fitting with the general postulates of the hypothesis, he advances another set of points that he contends form the desired triangle (Pleterski 2014: 217–218). The fact that one of the points of this new triangle does not quite fit into this alternative set is explained away all too easily: “[t]orej je čisto verjetno, da cerkev sv. Vojteha ne stoji natančno na nekdanjem obrednem mestu, ampak ob njem” (Pleterski 2014: 218). Moreover, another point is also not located where it is supposed to be according to the postulates of the ‘sacred triangles’ hypothesis (the *Babki Krakusa* mound is used in measurements instead of the *kopiec Krakusa*) (Pleterski 2014: 216–217, 219).<sup>7</sup> It seems that we cannot seriously speak of a ‘sacred triangle’ here, let alone a gnomon.

Finally, Pleterski refers to a further four ‘gnomons’ in his latest paper (Pleterski 2020: 267–271). He argues there that a posthole found on the Bled island once housed an upright pillar that served as a gnomon. While it was apparently used to determine (1) the date corresponding to the successive churches’ solar orientation, and (2) the buildings’ actual orientation, Pleterski does not attempt to explain *how* exactly this was accomplished with this hypothetical ‘gnomon’ (Pleterski 2020: 268). Whatever its precise function, this single posthole does not constitute solid evidence of the existence of a gnomon in a medieval Slavic context. The other three gnomons mentioned in this paper are introduced only in captions to the figures, including the Vyšehrad ‘gnomon’ (Pleterski 2020: 269–272, Figs. 10.22–26).

In light of all of this, can it still be maintained that the evidence presented by the scholars working under the ‘sacred triangles’ hypothesis is so robust and convincing to dispel any possible objection that might arise from the deductive standpoint? In my view, the ‘facts’ in this particular case are inadequate to support the conclusions these ‘sacred triangles’ scholars seem inclined to make. This does not mean that I question that the landscape is an important element in the study of our intellectual past, as Pleterski appears to imply (Pleterski 2021: 263) – quite the opposite, this is precisely what lies behind my attempt to question the validity of the ‘sacred triangles based on the solar angle’ hypothesis. I also do not question the presence of upright columns and other objects in the ancient Slavic landscape and/or cultic arrangements, but I do insist on solid proof that these structures may be interpreted as gnomons.

In conclusion, I believe the issue of what the ancient Slavs knew about the obliquity deserves a more studious investigation, primarily, but not exclusively, in dialogue with the modern history of science. In carefully chosen words, Pleterski maintains that I do not truly understand the ancient Slavs’ mind-set and that I have confused it with the Greek (= Western scientific) ‘mentality’ (my paraphrasing of Pleterski’s claims made on p. 262 in Pleterski 2021). This appears as an easy dodge of the difficult questions I

<sup>7</sup> Pleterski is aware of these inconsistencies, but does not seem to address them: “Natančnost umestitve točk, ki sem jih uporabil pri meritvah, *razen* gnomona v Krakovi gomili...” (Pleterski 2014: 218, my italics).

have raised in my assessment of the ‘sacred triangles’ hypothesis.<sup>8</sup> One should always be wary of bold statements like “[s]etting an angle of 23.5° according to the principles of imitative magic ensures a natural balance of the seasons’ proper course” (Pleterski 2021: 262), especially when they are not supported by solid evidence. The reconstruction of the ancient Slavs’ astronomical insights, I strongly believe, demands the same level of scrutiny, epistemological and otherwise, as that of any other ancient tradition, including Greek, with no shortcuts in the form of ‘special insights’.

A related issue urgently in need of addressing concerns the relation of ‘sacred triangles’ idea with the modern study of myth, which is all but ignored by those who adhere to this approach.<sup>9</sup> Pleterski’s assertion that “when quoting, I personally adhere to the principle of *less is more*” (2021: 262, his italics) seems programmatic for this method. Still, using and, where appropriate, quoting the key modern works in this burgeoning field of study might be worthwhile for scholars who study myth with such commitment.

Leaving our comfort zone is sometimes the only way forward. However, seeing faults in a paradigm that one passionately subscribes to, an interpretative framework that one personally helped to develop almost *ex nihilo*, cannot be an easy task.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> “To make clear below that Bilić’s critique is totally mistaken, I must first highlight some of his quiet theoretical assumptions... of which he may not even be aware, but which I can conclude from his method of argument, which is distinctly deductive and neglects empiricism in relation to the ancient Slavs... Bilić emphasises the ancient Greek tradition as the origin of modern astronomy, and as a decisive question, how the supposed knowledge of the ancient Slavs – of the relatively accurate value of the obliquity – fits into the knowledge of the modern history of the science that speaks of the development of comparable knowledge in the Greek tradition... The tenacity of Bilić’s reasoning is only apparent... An angle of 23.5° can be placed in the landscape even if we have no knowledge of the value of the obliquity of the ecliptic... The ancient Slavs did not need to know Eratosthenes, Hipparchus, or how to calculate angles...” (Pleterski 2021: 262, my italics). On the now-abandoned concept of “mentalities”, see Lloyd 1990 (admittedly, Pleterski only implicitly adheres to this concept).

<sup>9</sup> See a selection of modern literature on myth in Bilić 2020: 44 n. 36.

<sup>10</sup> “The older generation is usually unwilling to part with old ideas and views, preferring to continue working, as it were by inertia, within the traditional and therefore more familiar paradigm even when weak and contradictory points of that paradigm become obvious” (Gamkrelidze & Ivanov 1995: 1.857).

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## KAKO ZNAMO JESU LI I DREVNI SLAVENI POZNAVALI GNOMON?

TOMISLAV BILIĆ



Ideja o “svetim trokutima baziranima na solarnom kutu” ne bi se trebala tretirati kao ozbiljna znanstvena hipoteza, jer se ne čini poduprta čvrstim dokazima. Riječ je zapravo o primjeru cirkularne argumentacije, gdje se poznavanje oblikviteta ekliptike kod starih Slavena podupire navodnim postojanjem “svetih trokuta”, dok se istovremeno postojanje “svetih trokuta” dokazuje poznavanjem iznosa oblikviteta od strane starih Slavena. Pokazalo se da su strukture opisane kao gnomoni u staroslavenskom kontekstu zapravo odraz previše gorljivih interpretacija suvremenih istraživača. Taj zaključak izveden je iz detaljne analize određenog broja tih navodnih gnomona. Naposljetku, istraživači koji se bave proučavanjem “svetih trokuta” ne ulaze u dijalog sa suvremenom povijesti znanosti, kao niti sa suvremenim izučavanjima mita, dakle upravo onim disciplinama koje bi im, kao gorljivim istraživačima upravo takvih tema, mogle ponuditi jasniju perspektivu o promatranjoj materiji.



# Kako vemo, da so stari Slovani poznali gnomone?

— Andrej Pleterski —

Pokončni stebri so tudi del mitične pokrajine starih Slovanov. Na dejstvo, da je bil tak steber uporabljen kot gnomon, je mogoče sklepati iz obstoja učinkov njegovega delovanja, ki jih najdemo v pokrajini: smeri neba, datumsko pomembni azimuti sončnega vzhoda in sončnega zahoda, kot, ki ustreza nagibu ekliptike. Domnevni krožni argument, da trikotniki definirajo kot in isti kot definira iste trikotnike, je Bilićev konstrukt in je matematično nemogoč, saj trikotnika ne moremo definirati samo z enim kotom. A tudi če so astronomsko znanje starih Slovanov res utemeljevali v sedanjosti s povsem krožnim dokazom (kar pa niso), to še ne pomeni, da stari Slovani niso imeli astronomskega znanja.

.....  
Ključne besede: stari Slovani, astronomija, gnomon

Upright pillars are also part of the mythical landscape of the ancient Slavs. The fact that a column was used as a gnomon can be inferred from the existence of the effects of its action found in the landscape: the cardinal directions, the azimuths of sunrise and sunset significant for the date, an angle corresponding to the obliquity of the ecliptic. The alleged circular argument that triangles define an angle and the same angle defines the same triangles is a Bilić construct and mathematically impossible, since we cannot define a triangle with only one angle. However, even if the astronomical knowledge of the ancient Slavs in the present were really justified by a purely circular argument (which is not the case), it does not mean that the ancient Slavs had no astronomical knowledge.

.....  
Keywords: ancient Slavs, astronomy, gnomon

Vesel sem, da Tomislav Bilić vztraja v diskusiji o astronomskem znanju starih Slovanov in urejenosti njihove mitične pokrajine. To mi daje upanje, da jo bova pripeljala do konstruktivnega zaključka. V repliki (Bilić 2022) na moj odgovor (Pleterski 2021) na začetek, ki ga je sprožil (Bilić 2020), daje nekaj dobrih iztočnic za bolj osredotočeno razpravo. Opažam namreč, da sva doslej v nemajhni meri govorila eden mimo drugega. Potem, ko je v repliki nekoliko izjasnil svoja stališča, je potrebno, da to storim tudi jaz, ker bo nadaljevanje potem mnogo lažje.

Bilić poudarja, da ne dvomi o pokrajini kot pomembnem elementu naše intelektualne preteklosti. Prav tako ne dvomi o obstoju pokončnih stebrov in drugih objektov v staroslovanski pokrajini ter o kulturnih sestavih. Glede vsega tega se torej strinja. To je dovolj, da omogoča različne nadaljnje interpretacije in zato vsaj meni povsem zadošča. Ker pa je že v naslovu replike zastavil povsem jasno vprašanje, kako vemo, da so tudi stari Slovani poznali gnomone in ker trdi, da moje izpeljave temeljijo na krožnem dokazu, si zasluži tudi povsem konkretna odgovora.

Polovico odgovora na prvo vprašanje je ponudil že Bilić sam s koristno podrobno definicijo gnomona, po kateri je to mnogonamenski astronomski instrument, navpičen predmet, ki meče senco. Z njim je mogoče določiti lokalno poldne, linijo sever–jug (poldnevnik), (približni) datum solsticija in (v praksi bolj sporno) enakonočja, (približno) vrednost naklona ekliptike, zemljepisno širino opazovalca, sončni azimut (vključno s solsticijskimi azimuti sončnega vzhoda/zahoda), čas dneva (Bilić 2022, 277).

Že pri branju te definicije se izpostavi morda temeljni nesporazum med Bilićem in menoj. Gre za vprašanje, kako sta povezana gnomon in naklon ekliptike. Bilić govori o vrednosti naklona ekliptike pri uporabi gnomona in se sklicuje na Dirka Couprieja. Ta o tem pove nekaj več in drugače: »The angle made by the top of the gnomon and the end of its shadow at the time of the solstices can be measured and will show to be about  $47^\circ$ . This angle equals twice the inclination of the ecliptic« (Couprie 2011, 31) – »Kot, ki ga tvorita vrh gnomona in konec njegove sence v času solsticijev, je mogoče izmeriti in pokaže se, da je približno  $47^\circ$ . Ta kot je enak dvakratnemu naklonu ekliptike.« Couprie govori o kotu in o merjenju tega kota., kar sta dve stvari, Bilić govori samo o vrednosti naklona ekliptike, kar pa seveda predpostavlja vednost o obstoju sferičnosti Zemlje. Couprie na istem mestu posebej poudari, da ta vednost, za določitev kota ni potrebna. Gre za to, da vrh gnomona in konec dolžine njegove sence v dveh skrajnih točkah leta – torej tri točke, določajo nek kot. Ta kot je na ta način podan geometrijsko. Merjenje z neko vrednostjo lahko pride na vrsto šele, ko smo ga določili. Bilić govori o vrednosti (v angleškem besedilu *value*, v hrvaškem *iznos*), jaz govorim o določitvi kota. Bilić je prepričan, da stari Slovani vrednosti opisanega kota niso poznali, jaz trdim, da so bili na ta način določiti kot sposobni tudi stari Slovani. Sva zato nesoglasna? Ne. Tudi jaz ne verjamem, da bi Slovani poznali vrednost kota in tudi Bilić dopušča možnost, da bi ga lahko z gnomonom določili (Bilić 2020, 44).

Ostaja torej vprašanje, ali so stari Slovani uporabljali gnomone. Bilić priznava, da so del njihove mitične pokrajine tudi pokončni stebri. Jaz priznavam, da vsak pokončen steber ali podobno telo še ni gnomon. Spomnim pa, da je vendarle vsak gnomon tako telo. In se zavedam, da na noben staroslovanski steber ni pritrjena ploščica z napisom »gnomon«. Oblika stebra tako sicer omogoča funkcijo gnomona, vendar je sama še ne določa. Zdi se mi, da je Bilić želel povedati tudi to. In tudi v tem se z njim strinjam.

Da je bil nek steber uporabljen v funkciji gnomona, lahko sklepamo po obstoju učinkov njegovega delovanja v skladu z zgornjim Bilićevim popisom. Te učinke vidimo kot arheoastronomske strukture v prostoru. Sestavljajo jih ustrezno razporejene, kulturno določene prostorske točke. V primerih, ki jih obravnavam v Kulturnem genomu (Pleterski 2014), te točke med drugim določajo smeri neba in datumske pomembne azimute sončnih

vzhodov in zahodov ter določajo kot, ki je enak nagnjenosti ekliptike. In ponavljam, eden od tehničnih pogojev za to je opazovališče z gnomonom. Zato lahko o obstoju gnomona sklepamo, tudi če ga danes ni več. To je odgovor na prvo Bilićevo vprašanje.

Ker pa si želi tudi zelo oprijemljiv primer, ki ga nisem sestavil jaz, opozarjam na članek Piotra Banasika in Władysława Górala, ki povsem neodvisno od mojih raziskav obravnava arheoastronomski značaj Krakove gomile v Krakovu. Takoj povem, da besede gnomon v članku ne uporabita. Ugotovila pa sta, da imajo nekatere od ravnih črt plotov, ki potekajo radialno od središča gomile z ostanki navpičnega stebra proti obodu gomile, astronomske azimute, ki se ujemajo s koledarsko pomembnimi datumi, tudi z zimskim solsticijem. Nadalje določajo dva kota, katerih simetrala je točno v smeri zahod–vzhod (Banasik, Góral 2016). To komentiram s parafrazo znane retorične uganke o raci. Če je videti kot gnomon, če stoji kot gnomon, če so ob njem sledovi uporabe gnomona, kaj je to?

Sedaj pa še k vprašanju krožnega dokaza, ki mi ga Bilić pripisuje: »the ancient Slavs were familiar with the value of the obliquity of the ecliptic solely by the existence of sacred triangles, simultaneously proving the existence of sacred triangles themselves by the familiarity of the ancient Slavs with the solar angle (i.e., the value of the obliquity of the ecliptic)« – »[Avtorji bi radi dokazali, da so] stari Slovani poznali vrednost poševnosti ekliptike zgolj na podlagi obstoja svetih trikotnikov, hkrati pa dokazujejo obstoj svetih trikotnikov na podlagi staroslovanskega poznavanja sončnega kota (tj. vrednosti poševnosti ekliptike)« (Bilić 2020, 44; Bilić 2022, 278–279).

Bilićeva trditev o obstoju krožnega dokaza in ničnosti vsega, na kar se ta dokaz nanaša, je zmotna v kar treh pogledih: faktografsko, matematično in logično. Naj najprej, vendar pa najmanj pomembno povem, da tehničnih izrazov sončni kot, sveti trikotniki jaz ne uporabljam. Res pa sem sprva uporabljal izraz sveti kot, a sem ga nato zamenjal z izrazom obredni kot, ko sem opazil, da že tradicionalno pomeni tisti kot v hiši, ki je povezan s svetim vidikom življenja v njej (prim. Ränk 1949). In sedaj faktografski vidik. V svoji prvi razpravi o mitični pokrajini starih Slovanov sem najprej določil trojice kulturno pogojenih prostorskih točk. Kot take so določale trikotnike in opazil sem, da se en kot ponavlja (samo to v prvi različici članka: Pleterski 1995). To je bil kot približno 23°. In ko sem razmišljal, kaj v naravi bi ustrezalo temu kotu, sem prišel do nagnjenosti ekliptike (Pleterski 1996). Toda trikotniki in koti so bili že definirani. Nadalje poudarjam, kar sem povedal že zgoraj, menim, da so stari Slovani obredni kot določali geometrijsko in zato nikjer ne govorim, da so poznali vrednost poševnosti ekliptike, kot mi pripisuje Bilić. Trdim pa, da so poznali razliko v višini sonca pozimi in poleti ter bili sposobni to razliko z gnomonom tudi določiti. V tem ni nobene argumentacijske krožnosti. Formulacije in njihova argumentacijska krožnost so Bilićev konstrukt.

Matematična zmotnost. Bilićev krožni dokaz je matematično nevzdržen. S tremi točkami lahko določimo trikotnik in vse kote v njem, tudi obrednega, če tam je. Ne moremo pa z enim samim kotom in četudi je obreden, definirati trikotnika. Tudi če bi želel, krožnega dokaza nisem mogel sestaviti.

Logična zmotnost. Zmotna zmota (znana tudi kot argument iz zmote) je logična zmota, ki se pojavi, ko nekdo domneva, da če argument vsebuje logično zmoto, potem mora biti njegov sklep napačen. Z drugimi besedami, tudi če bi bilo astronomsko znanje

starih Slovanov res v sedanjosti utemeljeno zgolj s krožnim argumentom (a ni), to še ne pomeni, da stari Slovani niso imeli astronomskega znanja.

Ne vem, ali bo Bilić zmogel biti zadovoljen z mojimi odgovori, a to tudi ni moj cilj. Ga pa želim za konec pohvaliti, da mi priznava strastno vztrajanje pri mojih prizadevanjih. Hvala! Upam, da me ta strast nikoli ne bo zapustila.

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## HOW DO WE KNOW THAT THE ANCIENT SLAVS KNEW GNOMONS?

ANDREJ PLETERSKI



I am glad that Tomislav Bilić insists on discussing the astronomical knowledge of the ancient Slavs and the order of their mythical landscape. This gives me hope that we will bring them to a constructive conclusion. In his rejoinder (Bilić 2022) to my reply (Pleterski 2021) to the opening he raised (Bilić 2020), he gives some good pointers for a more focused discussion. I note that we have talked past each other. Having made his views a bit clearer in his rejoinder, it is necessary for me to do the same, because then it is much easier to move on.

Bilić emphasises that he has no doubt about the landscape as an important element of our intellectual past. Nor does he doubt the existence of upright columns and other objects in ancient Slavic landscape and/or cultic arrangements. So we are in agreement on all these points. That is enough to allow for various further interpretations and is therefore, at least for me, quite sufficient. However, since he has already asked a very clear question in the title of his rejoinder as to how we know that the ancient Slavs also knew gnomons, and since he claims that my deductions are based on circular evidence, he also deserves a very concrete answer.

Half of the answer to the first question has already been given by Bilić himself, with a useful, detailed definition of a gnomon, according to which it is a multi-purpose astronomical instrument, a vertical object that casts a shadow. It can be used to determine the local noon, the north-south line (meridian), the (approximate) date of the solstices and (more controversially in practise) equinoxes, the (approximate) value for the obliquity of the ecliptic, the latitude of the observer, the solar azimuth (including the azimuths for sunrise and sunset), and the time of day (Bilić 2022, 277).

Even reading this definition may highlight the fundamental misunderstanding between Bilić and myself. The issue is how the gnomon and the obliquity of the ecliptic are related. Bilić talks about the value of the obliquity of the ecliptic when using a gnomon and refers to Dirk Coupric. »The angle between the tip of the gnomon and the end of its shadow at the time of the solstices can be measured and is about 47°. This angle corresponds to twice the inclination of the ecliptic«



(Couprie 2011, 31). Couprie speaks of the angle and of the measurement of this angle, which are two things; Bilić speaks only of the value of the obliquity of the ecliptic, which of course presupposes knowledge of the existence of the sphericity of the earth. Couprie explicitly points out in the same place that this knowledge is not necessary to determine the angle. The point is that the tip of the gnomon and the end of the length of its shadow at two extreme points of the year - that is, the three points - determine an angle. This angle is therefore given geometrically. A measurement with a value cannot come into play until we have determined it. Bilić speaks of value (in Croatian *iznos*), I speak of determining the angle. Bilić is convinced that the ancient Slavs did not know the value of the angle described, I maintain that the ancient Slavs were also able to determine the angle in this way. So are we in disagreement? No. I also do not believe that the Slavs would have known the value of the angle, and Bilić also allows for the possibility that it could have been determined by a gnomon (Bilić 2020, 44).

The question remains, then, whether the ancient Slavs used gnomons. Bilić admits that upright columns are also part of their mythical landscape. I concede that any upright column or similar body is not yet a gnomon. But I remind that every gnomon is such a body. And I know that there is no plaque on any ancient Slavic column that says 'gnomon'. The shape of the column enables the function of a gnomon, but does not itself define it. It seems to me that this is what Bilić was trying to say as well. And I agree with him there as well.

The fact that a pillar was used as a gnomon can be inferred from the existence of effects of its action according to Bilić's inventory above. These effects are seen as archaeoastronomical structures in the landscape. They consist of appropriately arranged, culturally defined spatial points. In the examples I discuss in *The Cultural Genome* (Pleterski 2014), these points determine, among other things, the cardinal directions and date-relevant azimuths of sunrises and sunsets, as well as an angle corresponding to the obliquity of the ecliptic. And I repeat, one of the technical requirements for this is an observatory with a gnomon. Therefore, we can infer the existence of a gnomon, even if it no longer exists today. This is the answer to Bilić's first question.

Since he also wants a very concrete example, not compiled by me, I would like to point to an article by Piotr Banasik and Władysław Góral, which deals with the archaeoastronomical character of Krak's Mound in Kraków, quite independently of my research. I should note right away that they do not use the word gnomon in their article. However, they have found that some of the straight lines of the fences running radially from the centre of the mound with the remains of the vertical column to the perimeter of the mound have astronomical azimuths that coincide with calendrically important dates, including the winter solstice. They also define two angles whose bisectors lie exactly in the west-east direction (Banasik, Góral 2016). I comment on this by paraphrasing the famous rhetorical conundrum of the duck. If it looks like a gnomon, if it stands like a gnomon, if there are traces of the use of a gnomon beside it, what is it?

Now to the question of the circular proof that Bilić attributes to me: 'the ancient Slavs knew the value of the obliquity of the ecliptic by the existence of sacred triangles alone, and at the same time proved the existence of sacred triangles themselves by the ancient Slavs' familiarity with the angle of the sun (i.e. the value of the obliquity of the ecliptic)' (Bilić 2020, 44; Bilić 2022, 278–279).

Bilić's claim about the existence of the circular proof and the nullity of all that this proof refers to is false in no less than three respects: factually, mathematically, and logically. Let me begin by saying that I do not use the technical terms solar angle and sacred triangles. I did, however, initially use the term sacred angle, but then replaced it with the term ritual angle when I realised that it traditionally meant the angle in a house associated with the sacred aspect of dwelling in that house (cf. Ränk 1949). And now to the factual aspect. In my initial discussion of the mythical landscape of the ancient Slavs, I first identified the triads of culturally conditioned points of space. As such, they defined triangles, and I noticed that one angle was repeated (only this in the first version of the article: Pleterski 1995). This was an angle of about 23°. And when I thought about what would correspond to this angle in nature, I came up with the obliquity of the ecliptic (Pleterski 1996). But triangles and angles had already been defined. To reiterate what I said above: I believe that the ancient Slavs defined the ritual angle geometrically, and therefore nowhere do I say that they knew the value of the obliquity of the ecliptic, as Bilić implies to me. But I do assert that they knew the difference in the altitude of the sun in winter and summer, and were able to determine that difference with a gnomon. There is no argumentative circularity in this. The formulations and their argumentative circularity are a Bilić's construct.

The mathematical fallacy. Bilić's circular proof is mathematically untenable. With three points we can define a triangle and all the angles in it, including the ritual angle if it exists. But we cannot define a triangle with a single angle, even if it is ritual. Even if I wanted to, I could not construct a circular proof.

The logical fallacy. The fallacy fallacy (also known as the argument from fallacy) is a logical fallacy that occurs when someone assumes that if an argument contains a logical fallacy, then its conclusion must also be false. In other words, even if the astronomical knowledge of ancient Slavs were justified in the present by a purely circular argument (but it is not), that does not mean that ancient Slavs had no astronomical knowledge.

I do not know if Bilić will be satisfied with my answers, but that's not my goal either. However, I would like to conclude by thanking him for acknowledging my passionate persistence in my efforts. Thank you. I hope this passion will never leave me.

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**R**ecenzije in  
poročila o knjigah

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**R**ecensioni  
di libri

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**B**ook  
reviews

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**EMILY LYLE (ED.), MYTH AND HISTORY IN CELTIC AND SCANDINAVIAN TRADITION.** — AMSTERDAM: AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2021, 304 PAGES.

*Myth and History in Celtic and Scandinavian Tradition* is an edited volume appearing in the series *The Early Medieval North Atlantic*, all of which gives some good indications of the material, themes, and time periods involved. The book title also hints at the contents, which are analyses of medieval writings which spoke of the past. Situating those writings in a particular medieval moment of composition is the focus of most of the chapters, which helps create a feeling of a fairly unified whole. Of course, there is a rather stark dividing line in the work: one half on Celtic material, and one half of Scandinavian. The utility of this duality seems doubtful: most scholars would work in *either* Norse or Celtic traditions, and so the different halves of the book would likely appeal to different scholars. Scholars interested in the overlap of Norse and Celtic materials will find little, here, either. Still, for either Norse or Celtic scholars, the relevant halves would likely prove very valuable. The various scholarship is, for the most part, first rate, with very little romantic over-generalizing. The “deeper past” is not explored, so much as the ideas *about* the deeper past in the medieval periods evidenced in these writings. The medieval versions are revealed to be situated in specific political, religious, and cultural sentiments of the day, and the chapters in this volume reveal how various characters, stories, and motifs were reworked over time, to fit the shifting demands placed on the past.

In the first (Celtic) half, three of the seven essays deal with aspects in the *Cath Maige Tuired* and the “evolving use of

myth” during the time period of its creation. The essay by John Carey deals with the various written accounts of the Fomoiri, showing how this group appears variously in various texts: the mundane, the monstrous, the semi-divine. This group is taken up again, and contrasted with the Tuatha Dé, in Elizabeth A. Grey’s “Tuatha Dé and the Fomoiri in *Cath Maige Tuired*,” which further documents that the consideration of such earlier peoples was not unified, but rather present in multiple variations, even within one text itself. For Grey, the larger point may be in the relationship between the two people, perhaps especially salient at the time of composition due to the experience with the Norse settlers in Ireland. The next chapter also pays attention to the writing of the *Cath Maige Tuired* in the late Viking age of Ireland, as Iona Tuomala explores this in terms of maintaining cultural identity in the face of increasing hybridity. The Tuatha Dé feature once more in Joseph Falaky Nagy’s “How Time Flies in the *Cath Maige Tuired*,” in which Nagy’s notes that the text shows that “major changes are taking place in the mythic Ireland it has presented, affecting the characters who populate it in the narrative present and in whatever future may follow it.” (111).

Alexandra Bergholm’s essay deals with how medieval Irish literature treated their ancestors’ worship of pagan deities, centering on Crom Cruaich. As the author put it: “the medieval Irish thus crafted an iconography of idolatry that suited their own understanding of Ireland’s historical past: their ancestors may have been misled by the devil to adore false images, but despite their depravity they were not inherently wicked.” (131).

A further chapter investigates the story of Dinn Ríg, as evidenced in multiple texts, and Kevin Murray makes the point that while

the various narratives “did not always agree fully on points of detail” (138), at the same time, quoting Seán Ó Coileáin, a “surprising degree of unity will be seen to emerge from a reconstruction of these often fragmentary sources.” In this case, the central mythic narrative of a defeat of an ancestor figure of the Uí Néill by the Laigin’s ancestor figure, was repurposed for then-present political purposes, and, further, that these increasingly became regarded as historical accounts, as earlier written fragments were used for later historical claims: in this case, the relation between myth and history being a fluid one.

The last Celtic chapter deals with a hagiographical account of Saint Berach, showing how this composition was crucially concerned with property claims of ecclesiastical groups. As the author, Ksenia Kudenko, puts it “Although the twelfth century was characterized by church reform, *Betha Bearaigh* seems to show little interest in contemporary religious discourse. Instead, the main purpose of the text seems to be concern with property, as well as desire to forge or revive connections with secular dynasties.” (p. 151).

In the Norse half, the authors also pay attention to historical detail of the manuscripts themselves, rather than seeing them merely as muddy windows into the mythic past. Karen Bek-Pedersen’s “Baldr’s Achilles’ Heel? About the Scandinavian Three-God B-Bracteates” is a careful reassessment of material items often taken to represent the narrative of the death of Baldr, and the author concludes that this is unlikely, and that they are instead derived from Roman coins, detailing some narrative of which we have no further understanding.

A slightly more reconstructive attempt is featured in Joshua Rood’s chapter “The Cult

of Ódinn in the Early Scandinavian Warrior Aristocracy” as the author considers some of the earlier attestations of Odin, to suggest that the divinity was “under construction” during the early Viking era, and that the deity was formed as part of the warrior Viking aristocracy. Such reconstructions are intriguing, yet difficult to trust. For example, the article relies heavily on the existence of “Odin” placenames in Scandinavia, yet many of these are far from the coast, and far from the maritime Viking culture that the author sees as its crucible. The interpretations of various motifs and artifacts are also difficult to interpret. Still, the author does demonstrate that, by paying close attention to particular time periods, deities will definitely appear in different forms.

Morten Warmind’s “Myth to History in Saxo” compares literary accounts, showing surprising similarities between separately authored versions, suggesting a strong folk tradition in maintaining many of these stories, or perhaps other unknown literary sources. Saxo’s take on relating such past stories is compared to Snorri’s, and the author shows that Saxo was interested in presenting the stories as history, while still mentioning mythic elements. In a similar vein, James Parkhouse’s chapter “Loki the Slandered God? Selective Omission of Skaldic Citations in Snorri Sturluson’s *Edda*” examines how Snorri left out known kennings which presented Loki in a more positive light, assumably to emphasize Snorri’s “demonization” of Loki, possibly due to Snorri’s exposure to Christian mythos, and the role of Loki now being influenced by the role of the Devil. Jonas Wellendorf in his chapter sees Snorri’s work as recrafting older stories in a dramatic fashion: “Like the creation of Odinn and his brothers, Snorri’s creation is not made *ex nihilo*, and like them he



dismembers his source material in order to fashion something which did not exist prior to his creative act” (p. 289). Wellendorf uses this realization to push back against incautious attempts to similarly imagine a unified and cohesive mythological world outside of Snorri’s writings, using two main examples: 1, that Loki as responsible for the slaying of Balder, an integral part of many mythic interpretations, is only present in the *Gylfaginning* source; and that 2, ideas of a theme of kin-slaying spanning the temporal arch—from killing of Ymir to the killing of Baldr, are likewise unlikely to represent anything outside of Snorri’s creation.

There are many valuable essays in this work that will be of great interest to scholars working in either Norse or Irish medieval materials. The authors are for the most part very careful not to over-generalize, and indeed the point of many of the essays seems to be the opposite: to show how the context of the written piece helps understand a great deal of what is being said. The various writings may have used stories of long ago to make their point, but it is their points being made that are their foci, rather than the past itself.

All that said, this reviewer did find a few things to critique along the way. Firstly, as mentioned, the utility of bringing together the Celtic and Norse examples was not particularly evident. Secondly, the “Celtic” in the title is displayed by Irish materials alone, while I would hold that “Norse”, rather than “Scandinavian”, would be a more appropriate appellation for the other half. Lastly, the introduction by Emily Lyle, and even more so her chapter, seem to be an ill fit for the rest of the work. These entries are the only ones to embrace a fanciful reconstructive approach, in stark contrast to

the rest of the submissions. Such outliers, however, should not detract from the real value in the rest of the essays provided. Many of these chapters will be of major interest to scholars of Irish and Norse medieval writings on the past, and perhaps even to scholars working in any field who seeking to understand the how the present continually utilizes the past. Rather than viewing medieval writings as “mistaken” about the deeper past, these essays show how these pieces were constructed according to the needs of their present moments, and they call scholars to study these as products of a particular performance, contextualized in a specific time and place.

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**JUAN ANTONIO ÁLVAREZ-PEDROSA (UR.),**  
**SOURCES OF SLAVIC PRE-CHRISTIAN**  
**RELIGION.** — NUMEN BOOK SERIES. STUDIES  
 IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS 169, LEIDEN —  
 BOSTON, BRILL, 2021, 537 STR.

Opisujem knjigo pisnih virov za slovansko predkrščansko religijo, ki je skupinsko delo španskih jezikoslovcev in ki je najprej izšla v španščini (Juan Antonio Álvarez-Pedrosa Núñez (Ur.), *Fuentes para el estudio de la religión eslava precristiana*. Zaragoza: Libros Pórtico, 2017, 505 str.). V španski izdaji so samo prevodi brez izvirnih besedil, v angleški ta sedaj so, kar je izjemna bogatitev. Običajno knjigo najprej tehnično opišemo, preden obravnavamo njene vsebinske vidike in do njih zavzamemo stališče. Tokrat bom vrstni red spremenil, k čemur me je izzval že prvi stavek uvoda. V njem avtorji knjigo predstavijo kot tisto, ki je prvič zbrala v zahodnoevropskem jeziku objave in prevode vseh srednjeveških besedil, ki se nanašajo na slovansko predkrščansko religijo. V nadaljevanju uvoda povedo, da namen zbirke ni rekonstrukcija slovanske religije pred pokristjanjenjem, ampak na najširši možen način ponuditi vsa besedila, ki omogočajo tako rekonstrukcijo, da jih specialist za stare religije lahko bere, besedila kritično ovrednoti in uporabi v rekonstrukciji.

Knjiga je rezultat treh zaporednih raziskovalnih projektov in povsem razumem, da se mora pohvaliti, kako popoln izdelek je. Hkrati je namen poročila o neki knjigi predvsem obvestilo bralcem, kaj od knjige lahko pričakujejo. Lahko od te knjige res pričakujejo popolnost in možnost rekonstruirati slovansko religijo? Odgovor je seveda nikalen. Zbirka besedil je resnično najobširnejša doslej, a nima vseh virov. In močno dvomim, da bi jih katerakoli zbirka kadarkoli lahko imela. Navajam samo en

primer. Ker je avtorjem znana *Studia mythologica Slavica*, ki je tudi v odprtem spletnem dostopu, bi pričakovali, da vključi pisna vira, ki sta bila že podrobno predstavljena in komentirana (Hans-Dietrich Kahl 2004, *Das erloschene Slawentum des Obermaingebietes und sein vorchristlicher Opferbrauch (trebo) im Spiegel eines mutmaßlich würzburgischen Synodalbeschlusses aus dem 10. Jahrhundert.* — *Studia mythologica Slavica* 7, 11–42; Julijana Visočnik 2010, *Hrenova pridiga ob polaganju temeljnega kamna za kapucinski samostan v Ljubljani. (Hren's Sermon upon Setting of the Foundation Stone for the Capuchin Monastery in Ljubljana).* — *Studia mythologica Slavica* 13, 59–74), a se to ni zgodilo. Toda možnosti s pisnimi viri rekonstruirati slovansko religijo to prav nič ne zmanjšuje. Zanesljivo doslej najbolj popoln poskus take rekonstrukcije dolgujemo Henryku Łowmiańskemu (Henryk Łowmiański, 1979, *Religia Słowian i jej upadek (w. VI–XII).* — Warszawa). In ta prepričljivo kaže, da je sporočilnost pisnih virov zelo omejena. Zgovorni so samo za opisovanje poteka pokristjanjevanja, o tem, kaj krščanstvo zamenja, pa povedo zelo malo. Danes je že povsem očitno, da brez povezovanja pisnih virov z jezikovnimi, etnološkimi, arheološkimi viri ni mogoč noben resnejši vpogled v preteklost slovanske religije. Tega se zavedajo tudi avtorji knjige. Verjetno po lastni izkušnji, kajti njihov tretji projekt je imel naslov *Rekonstrukcija predkrščanske slovanske religije*.

Da so se sami preizkusili v tej vlogi, je pomembno vedeti. Gre za vprašanje objektivnosti kateregakoli izbora besedil. Trdim, da objektivnost pri tem ni mogoča. Vsak izbor namreč predpostavlja merila izbora, ki so lahko samo subjektivna in predvsem zelo odvisna od poznavanja tistega, kar iščemo. Tu in tam avtorji povedo, zakaj so se

odločili za posamezen odlomek, večinoma pa ne. Utemeljitev naj bi bila pač samoumevno očitna. Saj taka v glavnem tudi res je, vendar je problem drugače. Nikjer namreč ni utemeljitve, zakaj se za neke dele besedil niso odločili. Ker teh besedil ne vidimo, tudi ne vidimo samoumevnosti.

Avtorji so se naslonili na dva starejša izbora Mansikke (Viljo Johannes Mansikka 1922, *Die Religion der Ostslaven. I Quellen*. – FF Communications, N:o 43, Vol. X, Helsinki) in Meyerja (Karl Heinrich Meyer, *Fontes historiae religionis slavicae*. Berlini 1931). Prvi je osredotočen na vzhodne Slovane in starocerkvenoslovanska besedila, drugi prvenstveno na latinska. In medtem ko španska zbirka daleč presega Meyerja, vsaj pri komentarjih ne dosega Mansikke. Pri tem je hkrati vsekakor treba priznati, da so komentarji zgodba brez konca. V stoletjih so se ob omejenem številu pisnih virov nabrali že v povsem nepregledno množico. Izbor, ki ga nudijo španski avtorji, je zato lahko samo podoba njihovega nujno omejenega poznavanja problematike.

Zdi se, da avtorji svojega dela od 2017 do 2021 niso več dopolnjevali, če odmislimo prevajanje in vstavljanje originalnih besedil. Tako sta njihovi pozornosti ušli tudi dve pomembni izdaji virov na temo slovanske religije (Jiří Dynda 2017, *Slovanské pohanství ve středověkých latinských pramenech*. – v Praze; Jiří Dynda 2019, *Slovanské pohanství ve středověkých ruských kázáních*. – Praha). Prva obsega izbor odlomkov iz tistih latinskih virov, ki ne obstajajo v češčini kot celotna besedila. Podani so tako v latinščini kot tudi v češkem prevodu ter z več komentarjev kot španska zbirka. Toda še pomembneje je, da so španski odlomki mnogo krajši in zato luknjasti kot bohinjski sir. S tem prehajam do verjetno odločilnega vprašanja. Koliko je študij slovanske religije samo s pomočjo

nekih odlomkov sploh smiselno. Tega se je nedvomno zavedel tudi Jiří Dynda, ki je svojo drugo knjigo, zbirko vzhodnoslovanskih pridig zasnoval povsem drugače. Ni se odločil za vsa besedila, zato pa tista, ki jih je objavil, objavlja v celoti in izdaje vseh variantnih rokopisov istega besedila. Španski avtorji so problem različnih rokopisov delno skušali reševati z objavo posameznih odlomkov v opombah, kar pa nikakor ne omogoča pravega konteksta, ki se kaže kot zelo pomemben. Dynda je zato lahko napisal obširno spremno študijo, ki je nekaj opomb španske izdaje niti približno ne more nadomestiti.

In ker se odpira vprašanje kontekstov, postane še bolj očitno, da kakršenkoli prevod ne more nadomestiti originala. Verjetno je problem najbolj izrazit pri latinskih besedilih. Piscem latinščina ni bila materinščina. Vsak je latinske besede uporabljal nekoliko po svoje. Kako, lahko ugotovimo samo iz pripadajočih sobesedil. Možnost konkordančnih analiz je zato za bralca zelo pomembna. Hitro naraščajoče število digitalnih objav virov to sedaj omogoča. Svoje misli so srednjeveški pisci prevajali v latinščino. Prevod iz latinščine v živ jezik pomeni ustvarjanje še enega novega konteksta in s tem novih pomenov. Če pa potem naredimo še tretji prevod, kar se je pri prevodu iz španščine v angleščino zgodilo, je sprememb še več. Zato so angleški prevodi mestoma že zelo svobodni in nikakor ne nadomeščajo branja v originalnem jeziku. Res pa je, da je med evropskimi bralci le malo takih, ki bi bili usposobljeni brati arabščino, kajti španska zbirka poleg starogrških, latinskih, staročeških, staroislandskih, starocerkvenoslovanskih besedil obsega tudi arabske. V tem je nedvomno izjemen dosežek zbirke in celoten avtorski podvig lahko samo občudujemo.

Kaj nam torej prikazana zbirka virov za slovansko predkrščansko religijo res omogoča? Vsekakor predstavlja hiter pregled večine pisnih virov, ki jih trenutno poznamo. Seveda ne virov v njihovi celotnosti, ampak samo odlomkov. Prevod v en skupni jezik omogoča intuitivna iskanja nekaterih pojmov in njihovih kontekstov. Tako iskanje je vsekakor omejeno, ker gledamo skozi izkrivljene leče prevodov in močno zožan obseg besedil. Kljub vsem naštetim omejitvam knjiga vendarle predstavlja mogočno interpretativno orodje, ki pa ga je treba znati uporabljati. In za uporabo je potrebno mnogo domišljije. Vendar če je kdo nima, ne sme kriviti knjige.

*Andrej Pleterski, Ljubljana*

**NEMANJA RADULOVIĆ IN SMILJANA ĐORĐEVIĆ BELIĆ (UR.), DISENCHANTMENT, RE-ENCHANTMENT, AND FOLKLORE GENRES.** — BEOGRAD: INŠTITUT ZA KNJIŽEVNOST IN UMETNOST, 2022, 286 STR.

Čeprav se sprva zdi, da zbornik, ki sta ga uredila Nemanja Radulović in Smiljana Đorđević Belić z uporabo weberjanskih konceptov začaranja, razčaranja in ponovnega začaranja pogreva stara akademska vprašanja, ta v svojih prispevkih ne ponudi le teoretičnih diskusij. Kot zapiše ena izmed avtoric, je Webrova teorija relevantna in uporabna tudi na drugih področjih humanistike, njegovi znameniti koncepti pa se lahko uporabljajo kot metafore na različnih raziskovalnih področjih (Mladenović-Mitrović 2022: 89–90). Zbornik prikaže relevantnost Webrove teorije v različnih vsebinskih in kulturnih kontekstih, interdisciplinarnih ter tudi folklorističnih raziskavah.

Kot v uvodniku zbornika zapišeta urednika, je avtorje vodila želja po raziskovanju, ali lahko razprave o Weberjevih konceptih prispevajo k učinkovitejšemu postavljanju vprašanj znotraj folkloristike, pa tudi k bolj celovitemu razumevanju lastnih raziskovalnih orodij (Radulović in Đorđević-Belić 2022: 13). V trinajstih prispevkih strokovnjaki obravnavajo različna tematska, geografska in kulturna področja znotraj discipline. Prispevki so razdeljeni v tri vsebinske sklope, vsakega pa sestavljajo štiri prispevki. Prvi sklop je naslovljen *Začaran svet in njegov zaton*, drugi *Vrste začaranja v preteklosti in sedanjosti*, tretji pa *Soočenje z razčaranjem: Pojav ponovnega začaranja*. Besedila so večinoma izvorno napisana v angleškem jeziku, nekatera pa so prevedena iz srbsčine in hrvaščine.

Prvi sklop besedil sestavljajo prispevki na temo tradicijske folklore. Izhodišče Francisca

Vaz da Silva v prispevku *Pravljlična začaranja* je, da je bistvo pravljice čarovnija. Avtor pri obravnavi metafor v pravljicah izpostavi pomen uporabe alomotivov in osnovne vzorce simbolov začaranja, ki so bistvo pravljic. S tem trditev Vladimirja Proppa, da najbolj celovito pravljico sestavlja »herojsko iskanje«, nadgradi z mislijo, da je potek pravljice še dodatno pogojen z zrelostjo protagonistke. Pravljice, ki vsebujejo tematiko obredov polnoletnosti, so odvisne od cikličnih procesov, v katerih razpad napoveduje obnovo.

Ker se je zbiranje ljudskih pravljic pričelo v Grčiji v času modernega grškega razsvetljenstva, Marianthi Kaplanoglou v prispevku *Postopno začaranje: Od utopične ljudske pripovedke do generične hibridnosti sodobnih grških ljudskih pripovedi* preučuje procese teh zbiranj. Tega se loteva iz dveh zornih kotov: zunanjega (razsvetljenega zbiratelja) in notranjega (kmečke skupnosti same, pripovedovalcev in njihove publike). Iz zunanjega vidika so bila začarana področja ljudske pravljice uporabljena za komentiranje družbenih navad urbane družbe, ki je bila tačas v procesu ustvarjanja. Iz notranjega vidika pa je ljudska pravljlična domišljija obravnavala napetosti glede ohranjanja odnosov v skupnosti in družbene kohezije. Prispevek nazadnje obravnava tudi sodobno pripoved v grških vaseh in ugotavlja, da so nove variacije ljudskih pravljic del vsakdanje komunikacije. Pravljice niso izginile, le spremenile so podobo. Po avtoričinem mnenju to nakazuje na dolg proces preoblikovanja ljudske pravljice – od utopije do generične hibridnosti, ki spremembam navkljub v vsakdanjem jeziku ohranja delček začaranja.

Kot piše Romina Werth v prispevku »Kaj je v imenu?« *Metaforična začaranja plemiških otrok v stari islandski književnosti*, je v zadnjem desetletju prišlo do povratka k

uporabi folklorističnih metod v raziskovanjih sag, kar je vodilo v osredinjenost na fantastične in nadnaravne elemente v srednjeveški islandski literaturi. Avtorica to prikaže na primeru pripovedi o izgubljenih plemiških otrocih. Slednje v sagah najpogosteje ali ugrabijo ali zamenjajo, nato pa jih vzgojijo grdi in revni kmetje. Otroci morajo ravno tako trpeti zaničevanje, mnogokrat spremeniti zunanji videz, tudi ime, kar dodatno poudari njihov nov, nizek status, tj. njihovo ničvrednost. Po težkem otroštvu ti junaki in junakinje premagajo ovire in zasedejo svoj ob rojstvu pripisan družbeni položaj. Glavni argument njenega prispevka je, da je takšna začasna izguba statusa plemiških otrok v islandski literaturi najboljši prikaz začaranja in razčaranja.

Marina Mladenović Mitrović v prispevku *Oblikovanje etnografske zbirke arhiva Srbske akademije znanosti in umetnosti med začaranjem in razčaranjem* prikaže, kako je znanstvena elita ustvarila idejo o folklori in tradicionalni kulturi skozi koncepte, ki so pomensko blizu razčaranju. Avtorica preslika Webrove ideje na določeno točko v zgodovini srbske folkloristike, čas oblikovanja Etnografske zbirke Arhivov Srbske akademije znanosti in umetnosti in vpliv Stojana Novakovića, t. i. predstavnika omenjene znanstvene elite. Avtorica opiše načine zbiranja folklore po Novakovičevi pobudi, ki je bila predstavljena kot zadnji poskus rešitve sveta pred razčaranjem, ki bi sledil kot posledica izgube folklorističnega gradiva. Z romantičnega stališča, da je folklor prežitek mitske preteklosti, se je slednja preobrazila v artefakt, ki ga je treba pridobiti, preučiti, razvrstiti in ohraniti. Oblikovanje Etnografske zbirke arhivov Srbske akademije znanosti in umetnosti je bilo tako ujeto med začaranjem in razčaranjem, izginjanjem in cvetenjem pripovedne

kulture, s čimer se je razkrila vsa kompleksnost družbenih, političnih, kulturnih in znanstvenih procesov, ki so se dogajali na območju tedanje Srbije na križišču stoletij.

Drugi tematski sklop je usmerjen v sodobno življenje žanrov, ki pripoveduje o začaranem svetu. Suzana Marjanić v svojem prispevku *Žanri (in) interpretacije* raziskuje različne možne pristope (totemistične, psihoanalitične, feministične in ekofeministične) v hrvaških različicah arhetipa živalskega ženina in neveste. Na podlagi navedenih interpretativnih smeri raziskuje navedbe o enačenju človeka in živali v obliki mitskih kiborgov v znanstveni fantastiki (z izbranimi primeri) in v antropocenu v okviru globalnega ekocida. Besedilo je prevedla Mirta Jurilj.

Lidija Delić in Danijela Mitrović v prispevku *Čudež na razprodaji: Fenomen čudeža v novih medijih* skozi primere spletnih oglasov problematizirata stanje ali naravo čudeža v sodobnih medijih v t.i. Zahodni civilizaciji. Sodobne pripovedi se bistveno razlikujejo od tradicionalnih v odpravi transcendentnosti in preoblikovanju čudeža v neko tržno vrednost. V današnji internetni kulturi se čudež ne razume le kot izrazita sprememba v posameznikovem zdravstvenem stanju, temveč v skoraj vsem: lepoti, (spolni) potenci, dolgem življenju, večni mladosti, učenju različnih veščin, zaslužku brez dela itd. Paleta ponujenih instantnih čudežev v oglasih in mnogih »receptov za srečo« zagotavljata gradivo za rekonstrukcijo vrednostnega sistema sodobne »zahodne družbe«; študija čudežev se lahko pri tem osredotoči na etsko, namesto na emsko perspektivo.

Maria Palleiro v prispevku *Lisica, osel in magični lonec: Začaranja in razčaranja v argentinskih ljudskih pravljicah* preučuje več tradicionalnih motivov sodobne argentinske ustne folklore, parodije pa predstavi

kot obliko razčaranja. Medbesedilni dialog med ljudskimi pripovedmi in oglaševanji ne kaže le na pomen ljudskih matric v sodobni medijski kulturi, ampak tudi na njeno vlogo pri manipuliranju s tradicionalnimi kolektivnimi identitetami. Zdi se, da je takšna manipulacija ena od značilnosti sodobnih potrošniških skupnosti. Avtorica dodaja še, da lahko isti motivi v načinih oglaševanja določajo ponovno začaranje. Koncept razčaranja v povedkah in ponovnega začaranja v oglaševalskih prikazih odražata ne le preoblikovanje tradicionalnih žanrov, ampak tudi oblikovanje novih v dinamični napetosti med tradicijo in inovacijami. Slednje se izkaže kot posebnost sodobne kulture.

Smiljana Đorđević Belić v prispevku *Sanje o umrlih kot oblika komunikacije z nezemeljskim* zapiše, da »sanje o mrtvih pravzaprav veliko povedo tudi o živih« (2022: 209). Avtorica izpostavlja mnoge načine razumevanja sanj s sodobnega kota raziskovanja – kot nevrofiziološki proces ali psihološko manifestacijo; avtorica v svojem prispevku na podlagi terenskih podatkov iz Srbije in srbske manjšine v Romuniji pokaže tudi živahnost mistično-verskih sanjskih svetovnih izkušenj. V tem okviru in z nanašanjem na doslej izvedene folkloristične in psihološke raziskave obravnava vprašanje razmerja med čustvenim doživljanjem sanj in njihovo potencialno folklorizacijo skozi družbeno interakcijo. Prispevek je prevedla Danijela Mitrović.

Zadnji, tretji sklop, sestavlja zbirka prispevkov, ki se posvečajo vprašanju, kako so se folklorne zvrsti soočile s procesi razčaranja, v ospredje pa prihaja tudi nasproten proces ponovnega začaranja. Eymeric Manzinali v »*Sindrom sivkinega mesta*« *Creepypasta: Racionalna pripoved o nadnaravnem* skozi primere grozljivih urbanih legend, do katerih lahko dostopa vsak posameznik z internetno

povezavo, pokaže na kakšne načine kreatorji *creepypaste* ustvarjajo zaupanje pri bralcih, kako jih prepričajo v verjetje v nenavadne dogodke ali stvari, kako ustvarjajo zgodbe, v katerih se raziskujejo in izkoristijo pomanjkljivosti video iger in družbenih medijev, ki ustvarjajo mite v oblikah *memov* (slo. prev. jazjazov), ki so kolektivno preoblikovani. Eden izmed primerov, ki jih obravnava avtorica, je zgodba *Sindrom sivkinega mesta* in govori o povečanem številu otroških samomorov v povezavi z glasbo iz iger *Pokemon Green* in *Red*.

Meret Fehlmann v prispevku *Ljudska grozljivka kot ponovno začaranje razčarane-ga sveta* izpostavi Phila Rickmana in njegovo serijo knjig o izganjalcu hudiča Merrilyju Watkinsu kot primer ljudske grozljivke, v kateri se pojavi povratak k začaranemu svetu. Kot ugotavlja Fehlmann, se grozljivka take vrste ukvarja z »metafizičnimi entitetami« in okultnimi nevarnostmi, ki izvirajo iz daljne, poganske preteklosti. Pogosto se grozljivka osredotoča na kmečke običaje in rituale. V seriji, ki jo Fehlmann vzame kot primer, pa se pokaže še en pomemben vidik – meja med tradicijsko in moderno Anglijo. Predstavitev življenja na podeželju uteleša kmet in je polna predsodkov. V času romantike je bila podoba podeželskega prebivalca pred drugačena – če je bil do tedaj prikazan kot neveden in zaostal, je od sredine 19. stoletja naprej poosebljenje tradicije in modrosti.

Študija Elene Gogiasvili *Novo življenje pravljice v sodobnih telenovelah* je usmerjena v popularno kulturo z analizo telenovel, katerih vsebina (z vsemi mogočimi zapletmi) temelji na shemi začaranega pravljичnega sveta. Iz vidika folkloristike so TV serije, predvsem telenovele, novi epitomi kontinuitete ustne pripovedne tradicije. Telenovele imajo tako kot ljudske pripovedi

novе različice, ki predstavljajo družbene odnose časa, v katerem so bile ustvarjene. Avtorica trdi, da v tem tiči razlog, zakaj imajo televizijske serije boljše in bolj plodne rezultate v številu ogledov v Kavkazu, na Bližnjem vzhodu in na Balkanu v uporabi tradicionalnih tem pripovedovanja zgodb.

V zadnjem prispevku zbornika, Nemanja Radulović v *Novo življenje Knjige Velesa: Preoblikovanje mistifikacije v mit*. Knjigo Velesa vzame kot izjemen primer mistifikacije v 20. stoletju. Slednja se je skozi čas spremenila v sveto knjigo slovanskih neopoganskih praks. Ena od tem prispevka je vprašanje: katera plast omenjene knjige omogoča branje knjige kot svetega besedila? Popoln odgovor na to vprašanje bi nedvomno zahteval terensko delo v več rodnoverskih skupnostih različnih držav; vendar pa to ni osrednja tema prispevka. Delni sklepi avtorja na omenjeno vprašanje so narejeni predvsem na podlagi analize besedil in razlag sodobnih avtorjev/akterjev rodnoverstva. V besedilu avtor ravno tako raziskuje, kako lahko razumem branje takšnih besedil v sodobnem svetu, znotraj konceptov razčaranja in ponovnega začaranja. Besedilo je prevedla Danijela Mitrović.

Kot v zaključku zapišeta urednika, raziskave, zbrane v tem zborniku, so seveda le del različnih problemskih področij, povezanih s postopki začaranja in razčaranja v folkloristiki. Raznolikost obsežnih tem pa hkrati kaže na polivalentno naravo terminov, medtem ko interpretacije nakazujejo na potencialno vključitev konceptov v področje folkloristike. Urednika ravno tako izpostavi potencial folklornega gradiva in folklornih analiz izven okvira te discipline, ki bi lahko prispevali k iskanju odgovorov na več vprašanj: ali obstaja razlika med zahodnim protestantskim svetom, o katerem, kot se zdi, govori Weber, in katoliškim svetom

južne Evrope ali južne Amerike, kot tudi svetom pravoslavnega vzhoda in Balkana? Kaj se dogaja v družbah, ki so stopile iz »dolgega 19. stoletja« v nenadne procese modernizacije, v katerih je komunizem v poznih 20. stoletju spodbujal razčaranje? Kaj se dogaja s prostorom zunaj Evrope? Ali obstajajo kulturne razlike v razčaranju ali je neizbežno evrocentričen? Z iskanjem odgovorov na ta vprašanja bi se folkloristika opredelila do konceptov iz drugih disciplin, ki si jih je nenazadnje »izposodila«. Zbornik se uspešno potruzi odgovoriti na zastavljena vprašanja z vključitvijo prispevkov iz različnih geografskih in kulturnih okolij, kot tudi tematskih področij, ter skuša zapolniti vrzel, ki še vztraja v folklorističnih raziskavah.

*Manca Račič, Bratislava*

**MONIKA KROPEJ TELBAN, PRIPOVEDNO IZROČILO: RAZVOJ IN RAZISKOVANJE.** — LJUBLJANA: ZALOŽBA ZRC, ZRC SAZU 2021, 190 STR.

3. knjigo zbirke efka lahko slikovito označimo za sprehod po izbranih zgodovinskih poglavjih slovstvene folkloristike – od prvih poskusov zbiranja pripovednega izročila do raziskovalnih vprašanj sodobnega časa. Sprehod teče gladko, brez daljših postankov, kar najverjetneje odraža avtoričino željo ponuditi bralcu zgoščen, a berljiv tekst, v katerem se nekoliko dlje pomudi le pri tistih vsebinah, ki so bile ali posebnega pomena za vedo in njene zgodovinske različke ali pa ima avtorica o njih izdatnejše znanje zaradi osebnih raziskovalnih izkušenj. Avtorica uvodoma zapiše, da je namen knjige »približati bralcem značilnosti in razvoj kakor tudi različne teorije in metode raziskovanja pripovednega izročila v preteklosti in danes« (8) – tekst je bil torej izhodiščno zasnovan pregledno. Rezultat predstavlja pomembno pridobitev za slovensko folkloristiko; vsak pregled namreč pomeni vsaj kratko vrnitev h ključnim konceptom iz zgodovine vede, ki segajo v njeno predznanstveno dobo. Ob tem se nemara velja vprašati, kakšna je vrednost tovrstnih preglednih monografij in kako se kosajo z domnevno vse hitrejšim in zanesljivejšim dostopom do partikularnih podatkov z danega raziskovalnega področja. Na tem mestu se z vprašanjem podrobneje ne moremo ukvarjati, a na primeru predstavljene knjige lahko zapišemo, da bralcem tovrstna dela pomagajo vzpostaviti povezan, sledljiv in preverjen znanstveni referenčni okvir vede, ki s preišljeno razmestitvijo ključnih podatkov omogoča spoznavanje osnovnih gradnikov vede in njenih dominantnih raziskovalnih interesov. V dotični knjigi se je avtorica odločila ta izjemno



širok okvir zapolniti s podatki o značilnostih predmeta preučevanja, raziskovalcev, teorij, terminologije in metodologije – vsako v ločenem poglavju ali podpoglavju, ter premišljenim izborom virov in literature. Urejevalno načelo njenega pregleda v veliki meri predstavlja kronologija, tako da si opisana snov znotraj zaključenih tematskih celot sledi od najstarejše do najmlajše.

Avtorica je na prvo mesto med poglavji (11) postavila predmet preučevanja, pri čemer svojo pozornost najprej usmeri v terminologijo. Znanstveno izrazje slovstvene folkloristike je v minulih desetletjih prešlo nemalo sprememb, zato so podani razločki med posameznimi krovnimi poimenovanji predmeta preučevanja (*pripovedno izročilo, ustno slovstvo, slovstvena folklor in besedna umetnost*). Dodani so jim tujejezični ustrezniki s kratkimi epizodami iz poimenovalnih tradicij folkloristične vede v tujini, tem pa sledi zbir pojmov, katerim je bilo v preteklosti namenjenih kar nekaj etnoloških, folklorističnih in kulturnoantropoloških razprav, in sicer gre za pojme *narodno, ljudsko, folklorno in vernakularno*. Omembe vreden je tudi pregled razprav o terminu *folklor* in njenem odnosu do *folklorizma* znotraj slovstvene folklore, kar je bilo več desetletij vir številnih polemik v širšem evropskem prostoru. Vsi ti izrazi tvorijo del temeljnega izraznega nabora, h kateremu se veda vselej znova vrača, ko preizprašuje svoja teoretična izhodišča in prilagaja metodologijo za raziskovanje novih pojavov.

V drugem poglavju (28) najdemo izrazito jedrnat pregled pripovednih žanrov, pri katerih avtorica izpostavi, da so razvrstitve istih besedil v en sam žanr razmeroma redke in da je zato med primerjanjem obstoječih žanrskih oznak pomembno upoštevati različna merila, ki so jih raziskovalci postavljali

med zbiranjem in razvrščanjem folklornega gradiva. Pomemben del tega poglavja predstavlja terminološko soočenje, saj so predstavljena tako emska kot etska žanrska poimenovanja ter njihovo spreminjanje skozi čas – od mita in bajke do sodobnih povedk in govoric. Kot piše avtorica, so se slednje v rabi pojavile najkasneje in sprožile nova metodološka vprašanja o pristopih k obravnavi gradiva, ki se ne prenaša več zgolj ustno, temveč v spletni obliki oz. na več načinov hkrati, pretežno s pomočjo novih medijev, zaradi česar nastajajo »drugačni obrisi kulture pripovedovanja« (49).

V tretjem poglavju (50) so pred bralcem razgrnjene teorije, ki so v največji meri zaznamovale raziskovanje pripovedništva. V njem avtorica neposredno sooči (ali so postavi) glasove tujih teoretikov in jim, kar je najpomembnejše, doda podatek, kako je posamezna teoretična usmeritev vplivala na slovenske raziskovalce. Pregled teorij zajema obdobje od vzpostavitve mitološke šole z začetka 19. stoletja do mnoštva perspektiv sodobne folkloristike v tem tisočletju. Ponekod bi bilo poleg okoliščin uveljavitve koncepta dobrodošlo ovrednotenje dometa in aktualnosti posameznega koncepta za sodobno znanstvenoraziskovalno delo (npr. *mitologema* pri von Franz, 69, ali *preproste oblike* pri Jollesu, 65), kar bi predvsem mlajšim bralcem olajšalo umestitev koncepta v okvir konkretnih raziskav, vendar je takih primerov malo. Avtorica pri večini primerov predstavi kritična stališča ali nasprotnikov ali nadaljevalcev teoretične usmeritve, pa tudi lastno vrednotenje, ki je utemeljeno na osebnih izkušnjah, npr. pri vlogi kulturnozgodovinskih metod za študij starejšega pripovednega izročila (67) ali še izraziteje pri pomenu in uporabnosti tipnih indeksov pravljic (59–60), kar je še posebej dragoceno. Najobsežnejša sta sklopa teorij

o izviru in razširjenosti pripovedi (52) ter o njihovi formi in pomenu (61), ki jima sledijo opisi mlajših pristopov zlasti druge polovice 20. stoletja, pri čemer je eden večjih poudarkov na performančni teoriji, ki je v mednarodno in slovensko folkloristiko vnesla nemalo sprememb in prispevala k bolj središčni vlogi pripovedovalskega konteksta. Poglavje je sklenjeno s pristopi sodobnih raziskav, v katerih so strnjeni: ontološki in epistemološki disciplinarni premiki pod vplivom ontološkega obrata, razvoj zoopoetičnih raziskav, prenos pozornosti na nove medije, kjer avtorica izpostavi pretežno spletno folkloristiko, ter raziskave pripovednega izročila kot dela nesnovne kulturne dediščine. V besedilu pride večkrat do izraza podrobnost, ki je ne gre zanemariti – avtorica namreč termine ali naslove del navede v jeziku izvornika, literaturo pa opremi z morebitnim prevodom v slovenščino in podatki o izdaji, s čimer pomembno kontekstualizira in razširi uporabnost podatkov, s tem pa vsaj delno olajša sledljivost in prenosljivost konceptov v prostoru, kamor so ti podatki posredovani. To nas napeljuje na misel, da bi bil v tovrstnih preglednih delih z večjo terminološko razvejenostjo izjemno koristen večjezični glosar, ki bi tvoril del znanstvenega aparata. Z njim bi bilo mogoče učinkovito prispevati k poenotenju razmejitev med uveljavljenimi terminološkimi poimenovanji danega jezika in njihovimi tujejezičnimi ustrezniki. Uporabnost glosarja bi denimo postala očitna v primerih tistih terminov, ki se jim je znanstvena skupnost odločila nadeti novo podobo in jo napolniti s podobno, a ne nujno povsem prekrivno vsebino (to je lahko npr. posledica več prevodov in izdaj pomembnih teoretičnih del v nekem jezikovnem prostoru). To ne bi le zmanjšalo možnosti za nesporazume, temveč bi celotno znanstveno skupnost posredno

spodbudilo k neposrednemu soočanju s prevzetimi koncepti in poimenovanji zanje ter njihovi dosledni umestitvi v znanstveni diskurz prostora, v katerem se uporabljajo.

Predstavitvi teorij in zgodovinskih raziskovalnih smeri sledi četrto poglavje o razvoju pripovednega izročila (81). V tem poglavju avtorica smiselno poveže pripovedne tekste in osebnosti, ki so bile s teksti povezane na najrazličnejše načine: od zapisovalcev in prevajalcev (npr. 83) do pripovedovalcev in literatov (npr. 87), ki so iz folklornih pripovedi črpali navdih za lastna avtorska dela. Bralca, ki nima predznanja s tega področja, velja opozoriti, da je pregled vplivov na razvoj pripovedništva v tem poglavju izrazito reduciran – gre za nekakšen reprezentativni »izbor izbora« avtorice. V njem je uspela stkati veliko število medbesedilnih povezav, ki omogočajo z dokazi podprto ugotavljanje mere sovplivanja besedil in njihovo vsaj delno rekonstrukcijo, in jih smiselno nanizati po okvirni kronologiji, ne glede na njihov kontekst, kar bralcu lahko pomaga premagati »izključno ljudski« okvir širjenja pripovednih tekstov in spoznanje, kako prepleteni so biografski, religijski, poučno-vzgojni, zgodovinopisni in drugi dejavniki, ki so omogočili ali spodbudili prenos najrazličnejših sestavin pripovednih tekstov – od motivov do zunanje strukture. O obstoju nekaterih tekstov, ki so kasneje burili domišljijo raziskovalcev in poganjali zbiralne (če ne že kar iskalne) akcije, imamo ohranjena le pričevanja (npr. 84, 99), ki poudarijo pomen kritičnega branja virov za historično folkloristiko. Fragmenti iz najbolj oddaljenih obdobj se nahajajo pod naslovoma Zgodnji viri in odsevi v slovenskem pripovedništvu ter Srednjeveški viri in odsevi v slovenskem pripovedništvu, za temi pa avtorica navede posameznike in dela, pri katerih je bila zaradi dostopnosti virov načeloma mogoča

natančnejša historična kontekstualizacija; bralec se tako seznanja s pripovedništvom v obdobjih renesanse, reformacije, baroka in katoliške obnove, daljši postanek pa je namenjen razcvetu pravljичnih zbirk od 16. do 18. stoletja. Obdobji razsvetljenstva in romantike skleneta poglavje ter z ugotovljeno tedanjo rastjo raziskovalnega zanimanja za pripovedništvo (in t. i. narodno blago nasploh) naznanjata prelomnost 19. stoletja za poznejšo konstitucijo znanstvenih ved, kot jih poznamo danes.

Od različnih zgodovinskih pojavnih oblik pripovedništva avtorica v petem poglavju (101) preide k vznikanju najrazličnejših oblik zanimanja za raziskovanje slovenskega pripovedništva, torej svojo pozornost usmeri k zbiralcem in raziskovalcem. Kot na številnih področjih je tudi v odnosu do raziskovanja tu za mejnik postavljena letnica 1848; pred tem mejnikom so popisani dosežki raziskovalcev iz obdobja razsvetljenstva, začenši z Markom Pohlinom in njegovim učencem Valentinom Vodnikom. Po pomladi narodov so prizadevanja, povezana z zapisovanjem in ohranjanjem slovstvene folklorne dediščine, dobila nov zalet. Avtorica poseben razdelek posveti doprinosu Matije Valjavca – Kračmanovega, čigar delo poveže z izjemnimi dosežki Franca Miklošiča in Karla Štreklja. Slednjemu je skupaj z Jernejem Kopitarjem namenjeno ločeno poglavje v zadnjem delu knjige, v katerem sta ovrednoteni in izdatno pojasnjeni širina in teža daljnosežnega pomena obeh raziskovalcev za slovensko slovstveno folkloristiko. Pri Kopitarju avtorica v ospredje postavi njegov stik z Jacobom Grimmom in Vukom Karadžićem, pri Štreklju pa napravi poudarek na njegovi neobjavljeni zbirki slovenskih pravljic. Poleg temeljnih značilnosti posameznega obdobja, ohranjenih virov, besedil ali izpričanih prizadevanj slovensko govorečih izobražencev, avtorica v petem

poglavju nevpadljivo vnese opise razmerij med pesemskim in pripovednim izročilom. Bralec tako izve, da je bilo v razsvetljenstvu več pozornosti deležno pesemsko, po pomladi narodov pa pripovedno. Razlike med gradivom, ko se je določeni zvrsti namenilo večjo težo, nemalokrat na račun druge, so se načeloma začele zabrisovati z vsesplošnimi pobudami za zbiranje »narodnega blaga«. Krajšim slovstvenofolklornim žanrom se je v slovenskem prostoru začelo namenjati več pozornosti proti koncu 19. stoletja, denimo v okviru omenjenih pobud, in razveseljivo je, da jih avtorica v delu kljub naslovni temi ne zanemari, ampak jih celo omeni v več poglavjih. Najobsežnejše je podpoglavje o realizmu, v katerem je predstavljeno obdobje, ko se je proti koncu 19. stoletja mitološki usmeritvi začela po robu postavljati mlajša generacija narodopisno usmerjenih filologov (110). Med temi se bralec seznanja zlasti s Karlom Štrekljem in njegovim doprinosom vedi ter navsezadnje s pomembnimi dosežki številnih drugih posameznikov, npr. Števana Küharja, Ivana Koštičala in Matije Murka. Naštetemu sledi predstavitev raziskav sodelavcev Inštituta za slovensko narodopisje, ki ga je v zgodnjih inštitutskih letih predstavljalo predvsem delo Ivana Grafenauerja (112–113). Po prelomu stoletja je v povejnem obdobju poudarjen prenos zanimanja k raziskavam konteksta ter vloge pripovedovalca, pri čemer so se začeli upoštevati družbeni kontekst in miselni svet pripovedovalca. Avtorica v tem delu posebej izpostavi doprinos Milka Matičetovega, s čigar dosežki vzpostavi postopen prehod v podpoglavje o sodobnih raziskavah slovstvene folklorne dediščine, v katerem predstavi trenutno ali do pred kratkim dejavne raziskovalce (116). Na tem mestu avtorica dobrodošlo razširi pozornost tudi na posamezne folkloriste, ki se ne ukvarjajo izključno s preučevanjem

pripovednega izročila, temveč širše z raziskavami slovstvene folkloristike.

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Težava pregledov, kakršen je dotični, je nemalokrat v izvedbi osnovne ideje, ki je inherentna njihovi strukturi, in sicer da mora avtor hkrati zagotoviti preglednost in zgoščenost vsebine, pri čemer naj bi bilo branje obvladljivo in dostopno, da bi se bralec rad vrnil. Gre za lovljenje vedno izmikajočega se ravnotežja. Pri vsem tem ima nenadomestljivo vlogo vrednotenjski odnos avtorja kot poznavalca, ki bralcu denimo pomaga ustvariti celovitejšo predstavo o stanju raziskav s pomočjo komentarjev – in prav ti igrajo ključno vlogo. Povedo nam, da je nekaj že raziskano, da o nečem ni dostopnih podatkov ali da je nekaj preprosto izpuščeno zavoljo učinkovitega upravljanja s prostorom, ki je avtorju na razpolago. Zapišemo lahko, da avtorica ta pričakovanja izpolni z dobro umerjenim ravnotežjem med informativnostjo dela in njegovim obsegom.

Težišče knjige je, kot gre pričakovati iz naslova, na zgodovinskih zametkih raziskovanja, ki so se začeli po kvantiteti in kvaliteti zgoščevati v 18. stoletju in so pozneje pripomogli h konstituciji vede in kontinuuma raziskav, ki se še vedno nadaljuje. Bralec bo v knjigi morda pogrešil bolj podrobno razdelane sodobne pristope, ki se komaj vzpostavljajo, pri čemer ciljamo predvsem na mednarodni prostor, na podlagi katerih bi lahko avtorica izkoristila potencial za razmislek o prihodnjih izzivih vede pri nas. Tega se delno dotakne v uvodu z omembo »nove ustvarjalnosti« v času pospešenega razvoja informacijske tehnologije (9) in novih načinov prenosa motivov v digitalni dobi. A tak obrat pozornosti bi imel svoje prednosti in slabosti – ob vznemirjenju med spoprijemanjem s sveže vzniklimi

raziskovalnimi vprašanji lahko namreč pozabimo in spregledamo bodisi pomembne teoretske razmisleke bodisi starejše folklorno gradivo, ki nam ima ob preudranem vračanju vselej kaj ponuditi. Knjiga bralca popelje k izboru temeljnih elementov vede, izmed katerih mnogi kljub časovni oddaljenosti niso preživeli in ne smejo postati pozabljeni. Avtorica tudi z dostopnim slogom pisanja poskrbi, da je obravnavana snov dostopna vsem, ki želijo izvedeti več o pripovedništvu. Posebno uporabno vrednost bo delo lahko uresničilo v študijskem okolju, saj omogoča študentom, da na enem mestu hitro dostopajo do temeljnega pregleda raziskav pripovednega izročila in se karseda učinkovito prebijajo skozi sorazmerno dolgotrajen in občasno razburkan ter interdisciplinarno prepleten historiat vede.

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**ЖИЗНЕОПИСАНИЯ ОТТОНА  
БАМБЕРГСКОГО В ЦЕРКОВНЫХ  
СОЧИНЕНИЯХ И ПРЕДАНИЯХ** / ПЕР. С ЛАТ.,  
ИССЛЕД. И КОММЕНТ. А.С. ДОСАЕВА И О.В.  
КУТАРЕВА. — САНКТ-ПЕТЕРБУРГ: ДМИТРИЙ  
БУЛАНИН, 2021, 912 С., 16 С. ЦВ. ВКЛ.  
(**THE LIVES OF OTTO OF BAMBERG  
IN CLERICAL TEXTS AND LEGENDS** /  
TRANSLATED FROM LATIN, RESEARCH AND  
COMMENTARIES BY ANDREY S. DOSAEV AND  
OLEG V. KUTAREV. SAINT-PETERSBURG:  
DMITRY BULANIN, 2021, 912 PAGES, 16  
PAGES OF COLOURED ILLUSTRATIONS.)

Russian Slavistics may be considered relatively advanced in researching Slavic paganism: in the over more than 250 years since Vasily N. Tatishchev and Mikhail V. Lomonosov, many authors from different spheres from history and archaeology through to ethnography and linguistics have studied various aspects of this major topic. Yet, while this is true of the ancient paganism of the Eastern Slavs, the traditions of Southern and Western Slavs have received less attention.

During the 1850s to 1880s, Russia saw the rise of paganism-related studies on the Western Slavs, especially the culture of the Polabian and Baltic Slavs, entailing the work of Izmail I. Sreznevsky, Alexander F. Hilferding, Alexander A. Kotlyarevsky etc. However, after then and throughout the entire 20th century only a handful of major studies focused primarily on the history and social organisation of the Baltic Slavs. The case of the translation of sources was pitiful and paradoxical. Despite the Soviet school of translating ancient sources being on a high level, only a single translation of Helmold of Bosau's "Chronica Slavorum" was released (in 1963).

Still, the beginning of the 21st century has seen a new wave of interest in this

topic in Russia. Since 2005, new editions have emerged of important sources like the chronicles of Thietmar of Merseburg, Adam of Bremen (two different editions at once), Saxo Grammaticus and a number of other German chronicles and annals as well as Scandinavian sagas. Russian translations of classic foreign research have also been released, e.g. those by Henryk Łowmiański and Aleksander Gieysztor. Alexander F. Hilferding's "History of Baltic Slavs" was reissued. Of new noteworthy works, we must mention Andrey Paul's book on the Baltic Slavs on the mediaeval lands of modern Germany. Yet, a lack of new works is felt, especially considering all of the latest findings and research about the heritage of the Baltic Slavs in Poland and Germany.

The mentioned literature has now been enriched with a new major work, "The Lives of Otto of Bamberg", that combines the academic translation of sources with interdisciplinary research. The book was written by two individuals. Andrey S. Dosaev, who in 2017 released a translation of "Gesta Danorum" of Saxo Grammaticus, introduces a fresh translation of a set of Latin sources from the middle and second half of the 12th century. The second author, the religious scholar Oleg V. Kutarev, writes about a set of topics such as the life of Otto of Bamberg, the history of German-Slavic relations during the early and high Middle Ages, the missionary work of the Catholic Church, the hagiography of Mediaeval saints and, of course, the culture and paganism of the Baltic Slavs. Both authors provide extensive comments and indexes.

A short summary of the sources follows: Otto, the Bishop of Bamberg, was invited as a missionary to baptise Pomerania (today, a large territory covering north-western Poland and north-eastern Germany) in 1120s

after those once free pagan lands had been conquered by Poland. During his two visits, Otto managed to baptise the Pomeranians and not only created the basis for a church structure in the region, but assisted with future Germanisation of the local culture. The work includes all the Lives of Otto written by his younger contemporaries and their students. It is interesting that the hagiographic tradition shows a growing number of miraculous elements in each subsequent text, slowly turning a historical character into a semi-mythological saint, with healing powers (Otto was canonised as a saint by the Catholic Church in 1189, half a century following his death in 1139). Information about the Pomeranian customs, pagan belief and rituals is even more valuable. A lot of unique data is contained in those texts only (e.g. a detailed description of the god Triglav or the term «contina» used to describe Slavic pagan temples). It is also important to keep in mind that this data comes from those who actually came in close contact with the Slavic pre-Christian culture.

The book's Applications section includes the translation of a few other small texts, e.g. the Papal bull, adding more political context to Otto's activities. The political aspect is hard to read in the hagiography text as the latter is naturally more concerned with the virtue of the saint and baptism. Nevertheless, "it would be neither a mistake, nor an exaggeration to call Otto of Bamberg during the period of at least the 1100–1120s a politician among other things" (pp. 488).

The translation of sources consumes about half the book (pp. 10–469), including 12 texts: Lives, stories of Otto-related miracles, and Applications. These texts have never been available before in a full Russian translation. Another one-third of the book is devoted to Oleg V. Kutarev's text «The Lives

of saint Otto of Bamberg» as source material for mediaeval culture" (pp. 470–750). The book has 10 chapters, each dedicated to a certain topic. For example, one chapter presents analysis of Otto's biography using the Lives as well as other known sources (Ch. 2), while another chapter considers textual studies of Lives and their authors (Ch. 7). Some chapters are connected (ch. 3–6) and present a narrative about the history and culture of the Baltic Slavs, especially the Pomeranians, from them settling in the region after the Migration period to them vanishing following fighting and assimilating with the Germans and Poles. Here Otto's baptism is presented as a natural part of the entire history of the Baltic Slavs. Readers are provided with a broad context for the information given by the Lives. A separate chapter (Ch. 9) is dedicated to the presence of Otto of Bamberg in Russian literature over the centuries. The analysis of the early stage is quite interesting by showing how the data from the sources became mixed with later speculation that led to many odd curiosities such as Triglava, a female deity who has outshined the source-accurate male counterpart in terms of popularity, being created. In Chapter 10, an innovative idea concerning the textual effect of Otto's Lives on Saxo's "Gesta Danorum" is introduced as part of analysis of the influence held by the Lives on the subsequent culture and literature.

Oleg Kutarev's text qualifies as a large afterword not just for the Lives of Otto but also for all of the translations of sources mentioned above that previously lacked proper scholarly analysis: the text "is seen as a necessary foreword for the topic of the history and paganism of the Polabian-Baltic Slavs today" (pp. 742). It is worth noting that the author includes the leading research

of modern foreign historiography, even though many facts have long deserved a place in Russian literature. For instance, he provides illustrations and descriptions of a wooden Pomeranian idol from a Szczecin city: “the idol was found in 1995 and, as far as we know, has never been mentioned in Russian literature before” (pp. 565–566, pictures 14–15). The book contains over 20 coloured illustrations, chiefly of archaeological findings related to Slavic paganism in Pomerania and a few monochrome paintings mostly dedicated to mythological themes. Some geographical maps are also included. Both the monography and the detailed commentaries contain quotes in fragments (at times quite large) from never-before-translated sources.

The small article by Andrey S. Dosaev (pp. 751–759) considers the ever-topical question of the origin of the Rus people and might seem unrelated to the rest of the book, although the sources do touch on the topic, even if only briefly. One author of the *Lives*, Herbord “calls both Rujanie and Russians by the same name «Rutheni»”. The authors reach a logical conclusion and explain that “Herbord probably just confused the two due to the similarly sounding names” (pp. 527 ft. 4, pp. 824 comment, pp. 723).

Detailed and nuanced commentaries on the sources (more than 820) make up a significant share of the book (pp. 760–834) and are followed by several indexes and a Reference list. The book is well designed and equipped with an elaborate page header, which allows for quick orientation hence and reduces the need to constantly return to the Contents page. The overall number of copies is just 530 books, with the book having been available since early December 2021 and popular among readers and it is hoped that it will not be the last one.

We also hope that, first, the authors will in the future present new works on this still underexplored topic in Russian Slavistics and, second, that this magnificent book will revive interest in this fascinating topic (given that out of all the ancient Slavs the Polabian-Baltic and the Ancient Rus are the two we know the most about, but other Slavic pagan ancient traditions considerably less!) and will also encourage new works, translations and grateful admirers.

*Ivan F. Obraztsov, Moscow*

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