

---

Simona Delić

**Strategies of Internationalism in Croatian Ballad Scholarship  
The Balkanic Ballad, Mediterranean Horizons<sup>1</sup>**

---

*Članek skuša orisati težave pri določanju balade kot zvrsti in področij te zvrsti. Razmišlja o vplivu kulturoloških interpretacij baladnega izročila – kot balkanskega ali kot mediteranskega – na določanje zvrsti in temu posveča posebno pozornost, čeprav se ukvarja tudi z drugimi zvrstmi pripovednih pesmi. Članek izpostavlja balkanske in mediteranske interpretacije v raziskovanju folklore pa tudi nekaj metodoloških posledic, ki so nastale ob raziskovanju balade kot zvrsti.*

*This article tries to delineate some problems regarding essentialist definitions of genre and area. Ballad as a genre and Balkan, i.e. Mediterranean, ballad areas are given special attention although other genres of narrative poetry are considered as well. Traces of Balkanist and Mediterraneanist discourse are pointed out in folklore research as well as some of the methodological consequences that have occurred as a result for the study of the ballad genre.*

For quite some time, the ballad as “genre” and the ballad “area” have coexisted in the comparative study of balladry. These analytic notions have been employed to provide scholars with background to the concurrent romantic discovery of “similarities” and “differences” in the oral poetry of different nations. Established as contextual notions, they were used to “put in order” basically the “infinite intertextuality” of the most diversified texts of culture. An “older” notion of genre, being a kind of meta-folklore commonplace, horizontally intersected various criteria and theoretical ap-

---

<sup>1</sup> This is a full version of the paper presented at the 28<sup>th</sup> International Ballad Conference held in Hildesheim (Germany), from 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> 1998. We would like to point out that although this paper is not particularly dedicated to the opus of Dr. Zmaga Kumer, the topic related in it as well as occasion in which it was presented has much to do with Dr. Zmaga Kumer's academic activities. Dr. Zmaga Kumer was among the founders of the respectable *Ballad Commission* in Freiburg in 1966, and since that time the regular meetings of ballad scholars have been held worldwide (twice in Slovenia: in Škofja Loka in 1972 and in Gozd Martuljek in 1997).

proaches, as well as spatially and temporally distant, yet "similar", texts. The division of ballad areas, first proposed by William J. Entwistle, and later modified by Erich Seemann and Rolf Wilhelm Brednich,<sup>2</sup> was analogous to those proposed by other disciplines (linguistics, ethnology, anthropology) and, likewise, aimed to point to genre *similarities* between various ballad traditions. This division, however, which also vertically intersected the histories of particular ballad traditions, implied that in geographically and linguistically divided European areas of narrative songs there were also *differences* in regional features of particular traditions that made ballads distinctive as texts within a certain cultural circle.

Here we would like to take into consideration how the intertwining of definition of genre and area became interiorized and reflected in Croatian folkloristics, primarily in the texts of Croatian scholars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, even before recent geopolitical changes. We recognize an areal antinomy *Balkanic/Western*, and we find it crucial to comprehend Croatian comparative studies on Croatian balladry - which, as one of several Southern Slavic traditions in Seemann's division, was attached to the Balkanic Ballad area together with Albanian, Greek, Romanian and Hungarian traditions. While Croatian authors have tried to establish a dialogue between the Balkanic and the Western ballad traditions, there appears to be a third area which is, in Croatian texts, represented by so-called *Mediterranean* narrative songs. This paper assumes that such a division of ballad areas, within which ballads and other narrative songs were considered in domestic and international ballad scholarship, have had rather profound methodological consequences for the consideration of "local and regional features" of Croatian balladry as well as for the consideration of the ballad as a genre.

### I. Croatian ballad as Western genre

Particularly in the period of the 1950s and '60s Croatian folklorists began emphatically to focus on the study of *international ballad types*, producing studies that considered these songs within genealogical or historical-literary frameworks. That orientation follows on the "discovery" of the ballad at the turn of the century, when Croatian researchers began to abandon the philologically privileged so-called *junačka pjesma* (heroic epic poems on national historical subject matters). The new shift in interest towards international ballad types led to an *adjustment with international folklorist terminology*. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as at the turn of the century, instead of the term "ballad" some peculiar terms, such as the *women's songs*, *female-to-male songs*, as opposed to *heroic songs*, were used. In the international as well as in the insider

<sup>2</sup> It was William J. Entwistle who methodologically approached the outcome of philological "heroic period of comparative studies" of ballads in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by dividing them into four large areas: Nordic, Romance, Balkanic and Russian (Entwistle the first edition, 1939; 1951), whereas he singled out among them five so called "export" ballad centers: France, Germany, Denmark, Greece, Serbia (*ibid.*: 78). Erich Seemann modified and extended Entwistle's division (from four to seven ballad areas). While he, like Entwistle, failed to distinguish certain traditions within so called "Balkanic ballad" - which includes South Slavic (Slovenian, Macedonian, "Serbo-Croatian", leaving out Muslim), then Albanian, Romanian, Greek and Hungarian tradition - he put into separate areas Scandinavian, Anglo-Scottish and American, and German ballad as "the most important ballad traditions", together with "West Slavic" (1973: 39-44), which, in Entwistle's division, belonged to "Nordic ballad". Seemann's division, supplemented with one more area, that of "Finnish and Estonian ballad", was utilized for the entry "Ballad" in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* (cf. Brednich 1976/1977: 1157-1165).

approaches these terms were also considered "crucial to the comprehension" (Entwistle 1951: 322) of Croatian balladry, which points to a discourse that historian Maria Todorova named *Balkanism* (1996), correlating it to Said's *Orientalism* (1979) and Herzfeld's *Mediterraneanism* (1993). Recently, Renata Jambrešić Kirin, a representative of the new generation of Croatian folklorists, has given a new perspective to the consideration of these exotic terms by viewing them as Balkanic "cultural metafolklore" (1997: 68–69). However, besides the acceptance of the term "ballad" and the "final showdown" with terminology of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Croatian folklorists also accepted the term *romanca*, even though in the international ballad scholarship it had been primarily utilized for the denomination of the Hispanic ballad.<sup>3</sup>

In Croatia, the involvement in international ballad scholarship reactivated the socially and historically antinomy of national/international (cf. Jambrešić *ibid.*: 71). If heroic poems were philologically privileged and, in the discourse of the humanities of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, burdened with a "need to identify and distinguish national literature not only as literary-historical but also cultural-political 'facts'" (Jambrešić 1992/1993: 134), then the recent focus on Croatian balladry meant a revival of consideration of internationalism, which extended not only to historical-literary studies but also to the consideration of ballad as a genre.

The applied folklorist methodology would direct the attention of Croatian authors primarily to spatial and/or dialect-bordered narrative songs, for this methodology corresponded with the folkloristic insight of the local and regional features of folklore. In this respect, when it came to the consideration of the ballad as a genre Croatian folklorists relied particularly on those songs which were registered in the northern part of Croatia where *kajkavian* dialect prevails, but they focused as well on those songs which were registered in the southern Mediterranean part of Croatia (coastline and islands). Yet, in those genealogical studies Croatian folklorists urged pointing to similarities between Croatian ballad as a genre with the Western ballad. Particularly in early texts, Croatian authors compared selected examples of Croatian ballads, which were all recorded (with the exception of the *bugarštica*<sup>4</sup> songs), mostly in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with older ballads from some of the Western traditions. Thus it was acknowledged that "in principle" Croatian ballads with a "touch of the Mediterranean", or those *kajkavian* ones, were "the same" as the Anglo-Scottish or Romance ballads that came to be the favorite Western examples for comparison of Croatian ballads.

Such a Croatian scholarship genre internationalism led to comparisons of a "classic", condensed "epic-lyric" style of Croatian balladry with that of "old English and Scottish ballads". In a similar manner, the "same" Northern "tragic dénouement" and family subject matter were recognized (e.g. Bošković-Stulli 1960: 160). Authors utilized in

<sup>3</sup> One could argue that every national tradition has its own system of "ethnic" genre denominations beside the analytical one (cf. Vidaković Petrov 1990:74). In this respect, *romanca* could be considered as one of those "ethnic" genres, as it derives from the specific direct and indirect reception of Spanish oral poetry during the period of Croatian Romanticism (cf. Petrović 1972: 220–222). Although *romanca* in Croatian written literature is historically reaffirmed for much romances have been written since 19<sup>th</sup> century nowadays, as it has been the case in other European literatures, we consider that it is necessary to reexamine the utility of considering *oral romanca* as a particular genre. Such a need is not only posed by a process of international folkloristic terminological leveling. It is also necessary to question the theoretical utility of a term since the generic features of the ballad, as well as of the so-called novelistic song, seem to cover all the generic "territory" of the term *romanca*.

<sup>4</sup> The Croatian folk narrative song in fifteen or sixteen-syllables.

their comparisons those Croatian ballads which shared "secondary features of genre" (for instance, refrain), while in accordance with the structuralist strategy of their descriptions, "the same" extratextual function of dance was singled out for its resemblance of Croatian ballads to the Western type (cf. Sertić 1965). When domestic authors shifted their focus southward by comparing the Croatian ballad with the Hispanic *romance*, they relied on those Hispanist definitions which had tried to establish romance itself as an European ballad: the same "epic-lyric" style of Hispanic *romances viejos* was to be recognized in Croatian tradition as well as the "dramatic quality" embodied in the important role of dialogue. The fact that Croatian ballads, too, could "fall silent in time", as Ramón Menéndez Pidal picturesquely put it in arguing for the fragmentary quality of Hispanic romances (1927:12), reassured Croatian folklorists that their own balladry, which they even named after the Hispanic, is the same as *romance* (e.g. Delorko 1951: 177; 181).

If we now take a look at these genre discussions almost forty years later, this drift from a purely **genealogical** consideration toward a **culturological** comparison can be seen as an opening of Croatian folkloristics to the anthropology of culture. At the same time, it can also be recognized as a strategy of advocating a heuristic term for the ballad in the Croatian ballad scholarship. Namely, the interest in which oral songs, particularly the epic, is transmitted, did not deteriorate, not even in the 1950s when, due to Milman Parry's and Albert B. Lord's *oralist theory*, South Slavic tradition again came into the focus of international folkloristics. However, it was sometimes pointed out that due to the surviving skill of improvisation in that tradition *there were no real boundaries between the ballad and epic poem*. Or as Erich Seeman put it: "the same balladeer performs the same song, depending on circumstances, first time shortly, and the other time extensively, with inserted episodes, detailed descriptions of characters and their deeds, almost as a small epic" (1955; quot. according to Bošković-Stulli 1960: 105-106). The thesis on the interminable fluidity of a text (which implied how difficult genre discussion was to be established in the South Slavic area) was added another nuance when Ramón Menéndez Pidal juxtaposed the improvisation of so-called long Serbo-Croatian epic poetry, sometimes viewed as typical of oral society, with the "stability" of the mode of transmission of Western ballad (so-called *memorization*) (1980). Those "in principle true assumptions" inspired Croatian authors to further reexamine the ballad genre. They began to point out the co-existence of various modes of transmission of oral song in Croatian society and they affirmed that the South Slavic area was not inconvenient for consideration of the ballad as a particular genre.

In this respect, the *outsider's* ballad studies on Croatian tradition inherited the last century's focus on Balkan narrative song in general or more specifically on epic heroic poetry. However, the ballad remained outside of the focus of interest, or when it was considered, its status as an independent genre came into question. In a way, the Croatian ballad - and the same destiny befell other South Slavic ballad traditions - was implicitly recognized as the **genre's other** of European ballad. The *insider's* look, however, not only recognized ballad as a separate form, comparable to Western ones, but also Croatian folklorists, by trying to define what the ballad "in principle" was *not*, also compared ballads with local epic songs recorded in the Mediterranean part of Croatia or with those from a broader South Slavic context. Guided by their conviction that epic song and ballad were different genres, Croatian folklorists tried to delineate what was sometimes identified as the same phenomenon in international ballad scholarship. Yet as they relied on criteria of style and structure, this approach turned out to

be methodologically imprecise since it also classified "imperfect" and more extensive versions of the same ballad type into *other* genres (epic poem). Applied structuralist methodology was unable to define boundaries between genres and it failed to solve the problem of transitional forms and the complex intertwining of *cantilenas*, ballads and long epic poetry which also existed in modern tradition (cf. Seemann 1955; quot. according to Bošković-Stulli 1960: 105–106).

Still, we have seen that the Mediterranean traditions were singled out in reference to genre *romanca*. We could mention that the Croatian authors have been referring to those traditions even in reconsideration of local and regional genre diversity of the Croatian oral tradition. The differences that existed in the Romance ballad area between "lyric" and "epic" areas (Entwistle 1951) were compared by Croatian folklorists with Alois Schmaus' division of "epic" and "lyric" Croatian regions (1971). As Neo-Latin traditions became a mirror of the Croatian dialectal area, this strategy enabled a new vision of the Balkanic ballad area. The Balkans ceased to be a place which abounded in epic stereotypes but it has been viewed as a kind of "tiny Mediterranean" (Slamnig 1997) in which different generic options mingled. In such a way, a positive evaluation of cultural genre diversity has been made possible.

## II. Joint chronotop and local and regional features

Yet, although Croatian folklorists preferred "perfect" and "condensed" ballads to "imperfect" and elaborate epic-like ballad versions when making genre comparisons to Western balladry, in the consideration of the "history of narration" of European ballads they relied also on Croatian epic songs when they narrated the ballad-like subject matter (so-called novelistic songs).

Abundant international ballad material was used to show that Croatian tradition of narrative songs shares the common history with the Mediterranean balladry as part of the joint chronotop of European balladic narration. Yet the Croatian authors relied particularly on balladry of Western Mediterranean Romance traditions. If Anglo-Scottish tradition was used for the comparison of tragic plots of the same *type* (e.g. fratricide ballads), in the consideration of the ballad history genetic counterparts in Hispanic as well as in some other Romance traditions (Italian, French) have been pointed out.

It is interesting to note, however, that rather distant Hispanic tradition was one of the favorite Western Romance traditions when Croatian authors referred to international ballad types. The long history of historical-typological, genealogical, and cultural-historical comparisons of South Slavic with Hispanic tradition - which originated as early as the work of Jacob Grimm, who recognized the same "oriental touch" in both of them - is a "long-lasting" phenomenon that deserves special attention (cf. Miletich 1981).

When Croatian authors were looking for an explanation for the presence of some pan-European migratory ballads in the Croatian area, they often relied on cultural contacts with the Eastern-Sephardic community in Bosnia or in the coastal part of Croatia to explain the phenomenon. Some authors also noted the possibility of direct contact with the Iberian tradition. However, although historical-geographical studies managed to point to the intertwining of Eastern-Sephardic with Balkanic poetry, particularly in the interpretations of Samuel G. Armistead (1982), Croatian authors still wished to prove that "all Greek to us" is not necessarily "all Greek to them" - this idiom



in Croatian reads "Spanish villages" as something very distant that cannot be fathomed – even in the case when aside from Sephardic influences, other solutions would be equally plausible (for instance, in the case of so-called *Kudrun* or *Warrior maiden* ballads, which are epic novelistic poems, not ballads, in the Croatian tradition). Croatian authors mentioned Hispanic tradition even when in Romance-oriented comparisons it would have been easier to reach out for closer Romance areas (such is the case of the ballad type about adultery, which corresponds with Childe's ballad *Our Goodman*). Even for the interpretation of some pan-European balladic formulas, references to Hispanic tradition were thought necessary. Hispanic tradition, reportedly, directly influenced the domestic tradition during the period of Renaissance trade and maritime contacts between the Republic of Dubrovnik and the kingdoms of the Iberian peninsula. Hispanic tradition has often been utilized in comparisons even when Croatian authors attempted to deny a continental stereotype of the Balkanic ballad zone. In this respect, Croatian folklorists recognize the same so-called *milieu-morphological adaptation* (Honko) to a Mediterranean ecological niche in both traditions ("orange trees", "olives" etc.). The references are the same when domestic authors question the stereotype about the non-existence of "sunk cultural goods" in Croatian tradition, which in Balkanist interpretations was seen to be the result of overall illiteracy following the conquest of the Ottoman Empire. Maja Bošković-Stulli quite often points to the intertwining of Mediterranean rural and urban places – which abound in traces of the "golden" Renaissance period with its rich tradition of interferences between folklore and literature – when she, considering her subject as an "art of words", points out an aesthetic representativeness of ballads (1975: 11). In the interpretations of Olinko Delorko, such views once again find their paradigmatic pattern in the long Hispanic tradition of intertwining of so-called romances *tradicionalas*, *vulgares* and *eruditos* (1951: 175). Generally, Hispanic tradition is utilized in comparisons with Croatian tradition not only in genre consideration but also in reflections of Croatian authors on history as well as on local and regional features of Croatian balladry and longer epic poems on novelistic subject matter.

\* \* \*

If we look back on the briefly presented situation in Croatian folkloristics where the genre of ballad was associated with Western traditions, we hope to have at least partially managed to point to the fact that culturological understanding of oral tradition could have had more profound methodological impact on the consideration of local and regional features of particular tradition as well as on the consideration of ballad as a genre.

The fact that, in Croatia, Western ballad was associated with Mediterranean traditions, particularly with West-Romance traditions, can also be seen as the result of hermeneutic philological reading. Such reading allowed a projection of the glorious past of "Renaissance Mediterranean" onto local modern tradition, by idealizing the Mediterranean as the "cradle of European culture". Our interpretation also allows us to recognize the traces of *Mediterraneanism* in the Croatian folklorist discourse. We believe, however, that Croatian tradition was compared with the Mediterranean also because Croatian authors identified Croatian Balkanic ballad tradition with the *otherness* sometimes implied in the Western discourse on Mediterranean narrative songs (cf. Herzfeld 1993). At the same time, Romance balladry, which Croatian folklorists com-

pared with their own Mediterranean branch of epic novelistic songs, as well as "real" ballads, represented a "bridge" that brought Croatian oral narrative poetry closer to the Western one.

Mediterraneanist reconsideration of Croatian narrative poems did not take into account only the aesthetically representative "epic-lyric" ballads, one of which is the ballad about "three sisters" who, in Istrian versions, as in the widespread Italian lyrical ballad *La pesca dell'anello*, "yearned to sail". The Croatian songs of international subject matter in "local" epic style (novelistic songs), as well as longer elaborate versions of the same ballad type, which differed largely from Western ballad, were also taken into Mediterraneanist comparatist consideration. Such an approach appeared even to be reintegrative of long domestic epic poems into the European tradition of oral narration in verse. Even when it was recognized that maritime motifs did not "successfully become a part of the whole", as was the case with ballads, epic songs still abounded with places such as Venice, or "beautiful and wealthy España" flourishing with "all kinds of trade" and even India. There were also regional Mediterranean metonymies, as for example, in the epic song concerning "the Turks-Catalans" in which chronologically distant but also Mediterranean historical events merged. Croatian authors could find even in the epic songs motifs and themes such as "magic ship" which, if not the balladic "little boat made of silver and gold", still could have provided a successful setting for the luring of a maiden or for the corsair's ransom; what is more, the same authors noticed that these ballad types were narrated in a similar manner as for example the South Italian *Scibilia Nobile* long narrative song (cf. Graves 1986: 82–84).

Geographical and historical-cultural nearness of the Balkans and the Mediterranean, which in the early medieval period enabled a wide exchange of "cultural goods" (for instance, Italian or French chivalrous romances), offered an adequate answer to some historical-literary dilemmas (e.g. the origin of the epic poems – in other traditions ballads – that were associated with the romance *Bovo d'Antona*). Generally, Mediterranean tradition of narrative song itself was most convenient for the connection of the national with the international. Or as Maja Bošković-Stulli puts it: "Maritime traditions are as international as the life of seamen, they are wide open to all winds, unrestrained by the narrow frameworks of domestic telling, so they get adopted and shaped during voyages on distant seas and regions that lasted several centuries, and finally they are adjusted to older domestic legacy to become a part of it" (Bošković-Stulli 1962: 506).

We believe, however, that domestic authors who referred to Hispanic tradition did so by considering Hispanic tradition an extremely familiar addressee for the reflection on local and regional features of Croatian ballad tradition and the tradition of narrative poetry in general. Already in some of the interpretations at the turn of the century, Hispanic tradition was paradigmatic for creative adoption of international subject matter and was seen to be analogous to domestic circumstances. Again, this tradition, which was, according to Ramón Menéndez Pidal "very often the object of admiration on the feasts of cultured poetry" (1968 I: 365), embodied a "bright" side of Mediterranean discourse which often idealized the Mediterranean as the "cradle of European culture" (cf. Herzfeld 1993). In more recent recordings of Croatian songs, so-called *romance*, which were named after Hispanic romances, and which were most often told by women who "daily went to vineyards and olive-groves" but lived "in the vicinity of some famous Renaissance building", described the very same pastoral atmosphere of country life of famous poets from Dubrovnik, or invoked the visions of gardens in which troubadour's amorous chorus reverberates accompanied by lute-playing.

On the other hand, the comparison of Croatian balladry with Hispanic balladry could have been motivated by the fact that in the process of borrowing national subject matter Hispanic romances could have relied on other "sources", such as historical chronicles, apart from medieval chivalrous and Byzantine romances. The fact that the space of *romances* from "harsh España" was peopled by "Spanish Turks" (as the Moors were called by Jakov Armolušić, a Croatian writer of the 17th century) must have influenced the selection of Hispanic tradition. Although it was obvious that the Moorish *Villain* (Propp) deserved a highly stylized description in contrast with the domestic Turks, the *insider's look* recognized the Hispanic ballad as convenient material for the comparison with the Balkanic one which, according to Albert B. Lord, "cannot be imagined without the presence of the Turks" (1974: 65). The Orientalism which pervaded the Mediterraneanist discourse on Spain was similar to the "shadow of Orient" recognized in the Balkans (Todorova 1996: 31).

Besides, the Mediterraneanist discourse on semi-exotic Spain complemented well some commonplaces of Balkanist discourse. This discourse could add an authentic sensual (feminine) overtone to "male attractiveness" of the Balkans (cf. Todorova *ibid.*). Compared to Hispanic romances, even the Croatian *romancas* (with their stories on female infidelity, knights baffled by a maiden, sibling incestual love) turned family subject matter of ballad – which in contrast was previously interpreted as the "socially condoned outlet for hostility within a patriarchal family" (Coote 1977: 338) – into scenarios of "unrestrained love passion" that helped to erase established values. The common ballad repertoire, present for tellers who belong to various confessions – Christian and Jewish in Hispanic tradition and Muslim and Christian in Croatian tradition – could also motivate comparisons of Hispanic with domestic tradition, whose complex intertwining of folklore in the "ethnically mixed regions" was very early pointed out by Maja Bošković-Stulli (1959). Finally, we believe that this picture of, in a European manner, exotic, sensual, culturally-diversified but metaphysically far-projected, ideal Renaissance Mediterranean (the one Croatian authors could identify themselves with) could have expanded the boundaries of the comparatist study when Croatian tradition was compared with Anglo-Scottish ballad. The picture of a Mediterranean bridge between the East and the West, which might extend to the shores of "Eastern Mediterranean", should have established a new area of comparisons with Croatian tradition, which was recognized by the Croatian writer Pavao Pavličić as a chronotop "southward from the north, northward from the south" (1995). Thus Mediterranean ballad, especially the Hispanic one, was Bakhtin's *third* in a dialogue or, an ideal addressee which, in Croatian folklorist communication with Western traditions, should have contributed to the semantic completion of Balkanic narrative song.

Croatian *Mediterraneanism* partially obliterated the stereotypes about the "rattle of spears and arms", continentality, improvisation as the only form of transmission of the song, long epic poetry as the only Balkanic oral narrative in verse and the "confinement" to the Balkanic ballad "area". However, the *Mediterraneanist* discourse also left consequences on genealogical studies of ballad as a specific genre. Namely, Croatian authors, when comparing Hispanic ballads with the Croatian ones, once again identified themselves with *Mediterraneanhood*. Although William J. Entwistle classified Hispanic ballad, along with South Slavic epic poetry and Russian "bylina", into the same group of narratively extensive European poetry (1951: 17–18; 22), Croatian authors accepted those Hispanist "epic-lyric" genre interpretations that, from the very beginning of comparatist studies of the *romancero*, found an ideal addressee in



Western ballad tradition. By interiorizing such an essentialist view of the “mixed form” for the form of *romanca*, as well as for the ballad, Croatian authors failed to solve the problem of numerous transitional forms in their own tradition. If the *outsider's views* did not manage to solve the problem of transitional forms regarding the ballad, by considering epic poems as almost the only Balkanic oral narrative in verse, or by pointing out that the boundaries between epic poetry and ballads do not exist, the *insider's view*, which considers that genre in the context of Mediterranean balladry, failed to encompass the problem of transitional forms *toward epics*. Both approaches chiefly recognized the **genre's other** (what is known as the “real genre” in difference to the “ideal genre” of the scholarly definitions) as the **other genre**: “imperfect” versions of the same ballad type as well as some international ballads which were related more extensively than “prescribed” - had been classified as epic poems or as the ballads depending on the culturological understanding of the Croatian ballad tradition.

Already Miguel de Unamuno, the Spanish writer from the “generation '98”, perceived the similarity of Hispanic historical romances and South Slavic heroic songs (Tomasović 1991: 83–88). The Hispanist Samuel G. Armistead, the author of the first comparison of a larger typological repertoire of Croatian ballads and the *bugaršćicas* with Hispanic, but also with Western ballads in general, argues that these “oldest South Slavic narrative songs” – which were, by domestic authors, considered a paradigm of the genre comparable with Western tradition – are not directly connected with Western ballad repertoire but reveal an “intriguing world whose constitutional elements bear a resemblance to Western ballads” (Armistead *in*: Miletich 1990: 323).

In the end, we believe that certain general methodological problems concerning the relation between the ideal and real genre (of ballad) have only become more acute in Croatian ballad scholarship as a result of the hyperbolic problem of transitional forms in the Croatian oral tradition. First, the ballad as a genre has always presented difficulties in defining its generic fluidity, which are comparable only to the difficult task of defining fluidity of the genre of *Sage* (legend) in the study of folklore narratives. Second, accepting the risk of jumping to conclusions – for this topic would require a separate study – we could point out that not so long ago in the history of the discipline of ballad research, the definition of ballad as a genre was intertwined with the notion of area. True, in the beginning of the reliance on the historical-geographical method in ballad studies (in the age of widespread “comparatist enthusiasm” with the fact that in “all parts of Europe the same old song is sung”), the history of narrative songs was delineated regardless of ballad zone boundaries, therefore pointing to the “softness” of linguistic proximity and the importance of geographically close areas. The very institutional comparative study of balladry, which began in Freiburg in 1966 with the foundation of the *Ballad Commission*, was based on the assumption that ballad belongs to those folklore genres – such as fairy tales – that cross regional and national boundaries, even when its geographical and inter-ethnic dispersion remain in most cases rather narrow (cf. Sirovátka 1974: 245). Theoretical reexamination of the genre pointed out that the historical-geographical method – whose rhetoric of influence distinguished so-called export (original) and import (imitation) areas, following the migration of ballads within the framework of the same ballad zones or by crossing them – actually does not follow the genre but the theme. Yet almost all attempts to define a supracultural notion of ballad, initiated by Western philological tradition – from early historicist to later structuralist, and partially phenomenological-morphological models – relied chiefly on the body of Western ballad

traditions. It is no wonder that traditions which lagged behind the Occidental "heroic age of comparative studies" – among which Layos Vargyas also includes, apart from Hungarian and Slavic, Romance traditions (Vargyas 1967: 7) associated the ballad with Western traditions. Ballad, imbued with the complex epic-lyric dramatic "semanticized structure" of prevailing family subject matter, and in whose "mannerism" historicist approaches sometimes recognized its "cultured" or "semi-cultured" origin, became a symbol of prestige and even a privileged object of study.

Finally, the opening of the comparatist international debate certainly has led to the encounter with the traditions different from Western ones (Porter 1986). It has also meant the encounter with the insights of authors who, like Croatian folklorists, advocated the recognition of the existence of "a wide belt of transitional forms between Western and East-European ballad, which goes from Dalmatia to Lithuania" (Rechnitz 1978: 6). At the same time, in Western traditions, this encounter has led, as James Porter points, to the crisis of the definition of ballad (Porter 1986: 186). On the international level, this resulted not only in the giving up of the essentialist definition of ballad, but also in the abandoning of any definition of genre. For this reason Rolf Wilhelm Brednich criticized certain narrow historicist definitions of ballad that were based on particular national traditions and came finally to specify in the respectable *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* only the conditions that should govern a single, all-inclusive definition of ballad (1976/1977: 1152–1153). Therefore, the notions of ballad and the ballad "area" became intertwined in the postcolonial "crisis of the research subject". If the encounter with other traditions in the comparative study of balladry has shown that Balkanic or Mediterranean position of the *genre's other* is not absolute, at the same time it has made clear that an "ideal genre" of ballad itself is "ambiguous", "anomalous", and even "indeterminable".

At the end of this presentation, the crisis of the subject confronts us with the question: can ballad be defined at all? Still convinced that one should not give up asking such a question, we recognize a recurring thought of anathematization and idealization of the genre present from the beginning of theoretical and historical-literary study of ballad. The concurrence of these contradictory views is a phenomenon which, according to Mary Douglas, is typical for other "mixed forms" that resists usual classification (1976), and which, apart from ballad, include ballad "areas" not only from the Balkans and the Mediterranean, but also those from other regions. Now that the relative position of the *other* (real genre, Balkanic ballad) has been clarified, which also applies to the difficulty of its "positive" determination – the unravelling of the aporia of the *genre* and *ballad area* should perhaps start by overcoming the aspiration for the union of ideal and real genre; Western and Balkanic ballad. The study of the ways in which the stories are told might be one guideline in the answer to the question *where are the boundaries of ballad?* Perhaps we always narrate the story ballad-wise regardless of the vicinity of the "edges of Europe", particularly when we feel an *unrealized* urge to weigh various norms in order to keep us at a distance (for what Max Lüthi called *Selbstdistanzierung*). In any case, from our point of view the study of genre as well as of ballad area seems to be essentially "balladic"!

(Translated by Miroslav Kirin)

## REFERENCES

- Armistead, Samuel G. Silverman, Joseph H. 1982. *En torno al romancero sefardí: Hispanismo y balcanismo de la tradición judeo-española*. Madrid: Seminario Menéndez Pidal.
- Bošković-Stulli, Maja. 1959. "Neka metodološka pitanja u proučavanju folkloru graničnih i etnički mješovitih područja". *Rad kongresa folklorista Jugoslavije u Varaždinu 1957*: 201–211.
- Bošković-Stulli, Maja. 1960. "Neka suvremena mišljenja o baladi", In *Rad kongresa folklorista Jugoslavije u Zaječaru i Negotinu 1958*. M. S. Lalević ur. Beograd, 105–108.
- Bošković-Stulli, Maja. 1962. "Pomorska tematika u našoj narodnoj književnosti". In *Pomorski zbornik povodom 20-godišnjice Dana mornarice i pomorstva Jugoslavije*, I. Grga Novak, Vjekoslav Maštrović eds. Zagreb: Institut za historijske i ekonomske nauke, 504–536.
- Bošković-Stulli, Maja. 1975. *Usmena književnost kao umjetnost riječi*. Zagreb: Mladost.
- Brednich, Rolf, Wilhelm. 1976/1977. "Ballade". In *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* 1/4,5: 1150–1170.
- Coote, Mary P. 1977. "Women's Song in Serbo-Croatian". *Journal of American Folklore* 356: 331–338.
- Delorko, Olinko. 1951. *Hrvatske narodne balade i romance*. Zagreb: Zora.
- Douglas, Mary. 1976. *Purity and Danger: an Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Entwistle, William J. 1951. *European Balladry*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Graves, Alessandra Bonamore. 1986. *Italo-Hispanic Ballad Relationships: The Common Poetic Heritage*. London: Tamesis Books Limited.
- Herzfeld, Michael. 1993. *Anthropology Through the Looking-Glass*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jambrešić, Renata. 1992/1993. "Odjeci Praške škole u hrvatskoj folkloristici". *Croatica* 37/38/39: 133–149.
- Jambrešić Kirin, Renata. 1997. "O višedisciplinarnim uporištima hrvatske folkloristike na rubovima stoljeća". *Narodna umjetnost* 34/2: 45–77.
- Lord, Albert B. 1974. "Utjecaj turskih osvajanja na balkansku epsku tradiciju". In *Narodna književnost Srba, Hrvata, Muslimana i Crnogoraca: izbor kritika*. Denana Buturović, Vlajko Palavestra eds. Sarajevo: Svjetlost.
- Menéndez Pidal, Ramón. 1927. "Romances y baladas". *Bulletin of the Modern Humanities Research Association* 1: 1–17.
- Menéndez Pidal, Ramón. 1968. *Romancero hispánico I (hispano-portugués, americano y sefardí): Teoría e historia*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A.
- Menéndez Pidal, Ramón. 1980. "Jugoslavenski i zapadnoeuropski epski pjevači", *Raskovnik* 23, 24: 81–95; 91–106.
- Miletich, John S. 1981. "Hispanic and South Slavic Traditional Narrative Poetry and Related Forms: a Survey of Comparative Studies (1824–1977)". In *Oral Traditional Literature. A Festschrift for Albert Bates Lord*. John Miles Foley, ed. Columbus, OH: Slavica.
- Miletich, John S. 1990. *The Bugarštica: a Bilingual Anthology of the Earliest Extant South Slavic Folk Narrative Song* (Edition, Verse Translation, Introduction, and Bibliography John S. Miletich; Foreword Albert B. Lord; Afterword Samuel G. Armistead). Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

- Pavličić, Pavao. 1995. "Južno od sjevera, sjeverno od juga". *Dubrovnik* 6: 15–19.
- Petrović, Svetozar. 1972. *Priroda kritike*. Zagreb: Liber (Izdanja Instituta za znanost o književnosti).
- Porter, James. 1986. "Problems of Ballad Terminology Scholars' Explanations and Singer's Epistemics". In *Ballad Research. The Stranger in Ballad Narrative and Other Topics*. Hugh Shields ed. Dublin: Folk Music of Ireland, 185–194.
- Rechnitz, Florette Marie. 1978. *Hispano-Romanian Ballad Relationships: A Comparative Study with an Annotated Translation of Al. I. Amzulescu's "Index of Romanian Ballads"*, (Ph. D. dissertation). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- Said, Edward. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Schmaus, Alois. 1971. "Vrste i stil u narodnom pjesništvu". In *Usmena književnost*. Maja Bošković-Stulli ed. Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 59–63.
- Schirmunski, Viktor. 1961. *Vergleichende Epenforschung*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.
- Seemann, Erich. 1973. "Die Europäische Volksballade". In *Handbuch des Volksliedes*. Rolf Wilhelm Brednich et al. ed. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 37–54.
- Sertić, Mira. 1965. "Forma i funkcija narodne balade". *Rad JAZU*, 338: 307–373.
- Sirovátka, Oldrich. 1974. "O uporednom izučavanju narodnih balada: slovenske i nemačke varijante balade o nesrečnoj svadbi". In *Naučni sastanak slavista u Vukove dane: referati i saopštenja, Beograd - Tršić - Novi Sad (12–18. IX. 1974)*, IV/1. Beograd: Međunarodni slavistički centar SR Srbije, 245–252.
- Slamnić, Ivan. 1997. *Stih i prijevod: Članci i rasprave*. Dubrovnik: Matica hrvatska.
- Todorova, Maria. 1996. "Konstrukcija zapadnog diskurza o Balkanu". *Etnološka tribina* 19: 25–41.
- Todorova, Maria. 1997. *Imagining the Balkans*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tomasović, Mirko. 1991. *Poeti i začinjavci: studije i eseji o hrvatskim pjesnicima*. Dubrovnik: Matica hrvatska.
- Vargyas, Lajos. 1967. *Researches into the Mediaeval History*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.
- Vidaković-Petrov, Krinka. 1990. *Ogledi o usmenoj književnosti*. Beograd: Institut za književnost i umetnost.

#### Povzetek

#### Strategije internacionalizma med hrvaškimi raziskovalci balad. Balkanska balada, Mediteransko obzorje

Prispevek skuša pokazati na negativne posledice, ki jih morejo imeti pogloblitve zvrsti in kulturnega območja na teoretično razmišljanje o baladi. Razmišlja tudi o vplivu kulturoloških interpretacij baladnega izročila – kot *balkanskega* ali kot *mediteranskega* – na določanje zvrsti. V delih hrvaških in tujih folkloristov iz tega stoletja je opaziti svojevrstno »zgrešitev« v poskusu določanja zvrsti balade. Tuji folkloristi poskušajo dejstvo spremenljivosti zvrsti balade razrešiti tako, da hrvaški baladi ne priznavajo statusa neodvisne zvrsti, ampak imajo balado za eno od možnih inačic izvedbe epske pesmi. V takem gledanju na hrvaško izročilo kot tudi v poudarjenem soočanju oblik izvedbe (*improvizacija* hrvaške balade nasproti *memorizaciji* zahodne balade) in zanemarjanju mednarodnih baladnih tipov, da bi se poudarilo »avtohtono-pokrajinsko balkansko izročilo, se prepoznavao tudi sledi *balkanističnega* razpravljanja. Če se tujim avtorjem ne posreči rešiti problema prehodnih oblik do balade, pa hrvaškim avtorjem ne uspeva na zadovoljiv način rešiti problema prehodnih oblik do epske pesmi: »nepopolne« baladne

verzije pripisujejo drugi zvrsti (epski pesmi). Hkrati pa različnost zvrsti hrvaškega izročila vzporejajo z zahodnosredozemskimi (romanskimi) izročili. Na sorodnosti s temi izročili, posebno s španskim, opozarjajo tudi v literarnozgodovinskih študijah. Ker se pri tem sredozemska dediščina idealizira, se more tako stanje v domačih študjah o hrvaški baladi, ki izvirajo iz tega stoletja, pripisati tudi *mediteranističnemu* razpravljanju. Teza tega prispevka je, da bi morale take primerjave domače izročilo, vse doslej prikazovano kot epsko in kontinentalno, približati zahodnoevropskemu. Tako se zdi nujno znova pregledati dosedanje gledanje na zvrst. Eden od načinov obvladovanja (postkolonialne) krize v opredeljevanju balade je sprejemanje spremenljivosti baladne zvrsti in razmišljanje o potrebnosti, zaradi katere se balada pripoveduje (poje), a brez poskusov združitve *nepopolne »stvarne«* zvrsti z *»idealno«* zvrstjo.