DOI: 10.11649/sm.3255

Slavia Meridionalis 24, 2024
Article No.: 3255

Citation:
Kordos, P. (2024). Supernatural, folksong and human sacrifice. *Slavia Meridionalis*, *24*, Article 3255. https://doi.org/10.11649/sm.3255

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Supernatural, Folksong and Human Sacrifice

> O wieśni gminna! Ty arko przymierza //
> między dawnymi a młodszymi laty…
> O native song! between the elder day, //
> Ark of the Covenant, and younger times.
>
> (Adam Mickiewicz, *Konrad Wallenrod*, verses 835–836, trans. by Maud Ashurst Biggs; Mickiewicz, 2015)

Modern Greek folk song is a rare but well-researched phenomenon. It became the basis for the emergence and development of indigenous Modern Greek ethnography and has been incorporated into the national literary canon. It is not only a subject of interest for scholars but is taught, reproduced, reconstructed, and original versions are employed for many contemporary works. It is genuinely the ark to which Mickiewicz alluded; now, unlike in Poland, it is not simply an essentially dead tradition but is regarded as a valid and contemporary national treasure.

This work was supported by a grant "The topos of an immured woman in the cultures of Southeastern Europe and Hungary" from the National Science Centre, Poland (2020/37/B/HS2/00152).

Competing interests: no competing interests have been declared.

Publisher: Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences.

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This is not the place to deliberate on why the situation is as it is; suffice to say that Modern Greek culture has strong and ever-present rural roots (although every four in ten Greeks live either in Athens or Thessaloniki), and folk songs are a predominant display of preserved rural tradition, along with folk dances and costumes. The world of the Modern Greek folk song is also a multifaceted universe of genres, themes, and styles – a vast corpus with thousands of preserved texts, a thesaurus with plots, dilemmas, imaginative figures and local language varieties.

What interests me here most is how this universe of meaning and creative acumen lives on today: how it is employed to produce inspirations and adaptations; what is played out most; what is literally quoted, and what is truncated, omitted or muted. So, in order to take such a cursory look, I chose one element of these songs, namely elements of the supernatural and the fantastic as these will serve as a litmus test of change. I will concentrate on one of the chief kinds of Modern Greek folk songs: ballads[1] (*paraloges*[2]). This specific type is free of occasion – these songs are not performed for a pre-defined time of the year or a given occasion. They do not evoke historical or mythical facts or figures and are free of most formal constraints.

Furthermore, in contrast to almost all other folk song types, these songs are most developed as far as the poets' ingeniousness is concerned. The anonymous author that stands behind these creations does not take under consideration such restraints as holiday type, the audience's expectations, nor the decency or solemnity of the moment, but instead employs their imagination fully to tell various stories, often wondrous or frightening. These are stories of love and murder, betrayal and punishment, sudden changes in the tides of Fortune (or Fate, *Moira*), cheating gods (God) and death (that is Charos, a Modern Greek combination and portmanteau of features represented by the ancient personas of Hades and Charon) (Bzinkowski, 2017, pp. 9–12). These stories abound in rare, improbable or supernatural elements: incest, cannibalism, rising from the dead, prophesies and the unavoidability of fate, talking animals, and fantastic creatures. It is a repository that resembles Grimm and

[1] *Gminna pieśń Greków: antologia* [Folks songs of Greeks – anthology], series "Arcydzieła literatury nowogreckiej" [Masterpieces of Modern Greek literature], v. II, Warsaw 2004 (*Gminna pieśń Greków: Antologia*, 2004, pp. 21–22, 237); *paraloges* that will be summarized later in the text, here are translated in pp. 247–249 and 251–253.

[2] I decided to render Modern Greek in Latin characters, for readers' comfort. In the bibliography I will switch to the Greek alphabet.

Andersen combined, many years before they were published and widely read, and to the same purpose they were trying to achieve: to evoke awe, thrill, and shock. It is no surprise that the fantastic element is vital here and is easy to locate and analyse. Probably the most famous song of this kind, "Of the Dead Brother" (*Tou Nekrou Adelfou*), tells the story of a once-happy family, a mother surrounded by her many children. One girl is to be married abroad in faraway Babylonia, but her mother is against it because it would be difficult for the girl to return in times of need. Nevertheless, one of the brothers, Kostas, convinces his mother to let the girl go and promises to bring her back, against all odds if such a need arises. The daughter leaves and soon all but the mother perish in a plague. The mother curses Kostas's grave, so he rises at night and goes to faraway lands to fetch his sister – as promised. The journey itself is quite unreal, as – according to some versions – he travels on a flying horse made of clouds. He reaches his sister and persuades her to come back with him. They arduously travel back; she is not suspicious of anything at first, but the whole of nature they encounter (birds, trees) are aware that she is traveling with a dead man. Their attempts to communicate this to her are futile. Only by their home, in a local chapel, does she understand what is not right about her brother; she runs home, embraces her mother, and they both fall dead.

The story is abundant in supernatural themes with a (speaking in a modern way) zombie in the centre, but it features fairly-tale-like elements of talking animals. However, the construction is more intricate as it is built on two oppositions: nature–culture and life–death. Both these pairs contribute to building dramatic tension in the story, evoking awe and setting up a set of fantastic revelations toward the story's cathartic end. The ballad was widely adapted for various forms of texts and still brings its audience joy and thrills. However, I will consider yet another story that has even more layered supernatural tropes. I would like to look at the second most famous ballad, "The Bridge in Arta" (*To Giofyri tis Artas*), probably the most researched and discussed song, which has been adapted to many other forms.[3] It has often been treated as an example for genetic research on traveling motifs within the Balkans and beyond. It has become the paragon for studies on the structural approach, establishing its

[3] Walter Puchner showed the broad Balkan context for the three examples (Dead Brother, Bridge of Arta and the Return of the Husband), arguably the three most popular, well-known, widely adapted stories. For me only the first two have distinct fantastic elements. See W. Puchner (2016, pp. 67–90).

plot knots and variants, most notably by Dorian Jurić for the Serbo-Croatian-Bosnian contexts, and by Georgios Megas for the Greek one (Jurić, 2020, pp. 3–43; Μέγας, 1971, pp. 22–212). I will come back to Megas's ideas later.

Builders in Arta were tasked with building a stone bridge on the river Arachthos.[4] Their toils were, however, nullified every night and the river kept destroying the bridge. However, a strange voice proposed a solution to them: a human must be sacrificed for the bridge construction to succeed. Moreover, it must not be any random person, but specifically the young wife of the master builder (*protomastoras*). Nobody opposes. Instead, they send a messenger to the builder's home in order for the wife to come swiftly. Thus, she comes, unaware of the ploy but ready to help. She is tricked into going down to one of the bridge pillars, and there she is buried (immured) alive. With her dying breath, she curses the bridge and professes the sorry fate of those who cross it but is reminded that she has a brother who might also do so; therefore, with her last breath, she reverses the curse.

There are four points at which the ballad resorts to the fantastic. This is also the exact number of moments quoted by Efi Daskagianni, who researched the existence and functions of the supernatural in folk songs (Ντασκαγιάννη, 2016, pp. 100–102). The initial voice from heaven (sometimes played out in different ways); a go-between that fetches the wife; the power of the curse, and – the very elephant in the room – an unbeatable conviction that human sacrifice is necessary.

One of the chief researchers of these songs, Georgios Megas, wrote his fundamental text on the "Bridge in Arta". He analysed several dozen variations of the text, which allowed him to produce a structural table with the motifs and variations he encountered (Μέγας, 1971, pp. 41–43). Many songs he collected were highly imperfect, lacked in parts, were abbreviated, and ended abruptly without any bottom line. However, with the strength of this amassed data, he nevertheless succeeded in showing the story in its variety. There, one may find different approaches to all fantastic elements. For one, the voice that puts events in motion can be heard in a dream and can come from a river or a dragon (*drakos*, which may also mean 'giant'). A second fantastic element is a go-between: in some variations, it is simply a boy (a runner); in others, it is a talking bird with a bad memory because it twists a message. The idea of the *protomastoras* is simple: to

[4] The bridge in question really exists: one of the main sight-seeing highlights of the Byzantine town of Arta in Epirus, and one of the most important of many Greek stone bridges.

tell his wife not to be too quick to postpone her meeting with fate, but the bird mishears or misrepeats the words it was supposed to quote, and here she comes to the bridge, as quick as she can. The third moment, that of a curse, is rarely played out differently, while the central motif, that of a sacrifice, the very engine of the song, is left untouched, being a universal baseline for the whole song.

Out of these fantastic moments, everyone has a different dynamic. The fairy tale of a talking animal, the ritual belief in the performative power of the word ushered as a curse or promise, and the ancient confidence in the effectiveness of a human sacrifice, the supreme sacrifice of all. My attention is drawn though to this first moment: first contact with the supernatural is when the voice orders the builders what to do. Megas shows that it can be a bird, a spectre or a set of them, or even a formless voice from above (a New Testament idea). The message is swift, precise and irrefutable. And indeed, nobody protests, nobody even responds in any way, but they all immediately set to work.

In order to come closer to a systematic look at the fantastic, it will be helpful to adapt an existing concept of what the fantastic is and can be. Paradoxically this is not an easy task as speculative and fantastic literature grew more popular and eventually respected; in recent decades, there have been many theoretical endeavours to define this phenomenon: its grasp on reality (or lack thereof), its relation to other fictional worlds. There have been attempts to put in order and categorise its various aspects of functioning, of genres, of modes. There is a wide choice now from the pondering of various literary theoreticians, such as Darco Suvin, Frederic Jameson or Stanisław Lem.[5] But, as it seems, most of them look to the future and try to make sense of the literary overproduction in the field of the fantastic. Moreover, constant failures to establish ground values for the genre have lately resulted in rejecting once-established concepts promoting genre-oriented classifications and moving towards other approaches, such as mode-centred, where modern fantastic in a science-fiction or fantasy shape can be incorporated seamlessly into the mainstream literature (Hollinger, 2014, pp. 139–153). Another way to walk away from this impasse is to come back to yet older concepts that still stood halfway between folk tradition and modern speculative literature. One intriguing literary theory that

[5] Polish literary tradition offers the word 'fantastyka', with no immediate equivalent in Anglo-Saxon thought. As a contemporary researcher of this genre puts it: "An influential dictionary of literary terms published in the late period of the Polish People's Republic defines 'fantastic' elements of fiction as those which 'do not correspond to the criteria of reality assumed in a given culture'" (Głowiński, 1998, pp. 137–138). See S. Krawczyk (2023, pp. 199–216).

has captured the attention of scholars and readers alike is that of the fantastic, as was meticulously formulated by the eminent literary theorist Tzvetan Todorov (1973, pp. 41–54). This theory posits that the fantastic occupies a liminal space, a delicate and intricate balance between other forms of literature, specifically the uncanny and the marvellous. The fantastic can be best defined and recognised by its inherent hesitation and ambiguity, especially regarding the underlying explanations or justifications for seemingly supernatural or extraordinary events or phenomena. Todorov's theory invites readers to engage with the text on a deeper level, prompting them to question and consider the nature of the fantastic elements. If, upon further exploration, the reader can find a rational, logical, or scientific explanation for the seemingly bizarre occurrences, the text gradually transforms and becomes part of the uncanny genre. In this realm, the events are strange and unsettling, yet they can be ultimately justified within the confines of a rational, natural world.

On the other hand, if fantastic elements are shown to be genuinely supernatural, transcending the boundaries of the natural world and defying any rational explanation, the reader is then thrust into the world of the marvellous. Here, the extraordinary occurrences are accepted as genuinely magical or supernatural, and the text celebrates the power of imagination and the wonders that lie beyond the ordinary.

The fantastic, therefore, can be seen as a literary state of flux, with its very existence dependent upon the duration and outcome of the reader's hesitation and uncertainty. In this sense, the fantastic can be compared to the uncertainty principle in modern physics: its essence is preserved only as long as it remains undefined and concealed. Once a solution, or rather a resolution, is reached, and the reader makes a definitive decision about the nature of the fantastic elements, this ultimately causes the text loses its fantastic quality and slip into either the uncanny or the marvellous.

The Todorov idea may prove helpful in commenting on modern adaptations of the song about the bridge and the unfortunate immured woman. Such a relatively short text abounds in various fantastic elements that probably belong to different orders. Though outdated in a modern sense, Todorov's concept will prove helpful while analysing the reception of an older text, where the fantastic clearly functions in a very different way. These ways change in modern adaptations of the song, which emphasise or ignore different aspects. For this paper, I chose three such texts to show the diversity of the reception within the folk song tradition.

The first one is a play by Nikos Kazantzakis.[6] While it is not the earliest text destined for the stage that was written on this specific song at the turn of the century, I decided to comment specifically on it due to the following fame of the author and his general significance for Modern Greek literature. It is an early Kazantzakis attempt at writing, composed during his studies in Paris and published in 1910 in Greece under the pseudonym Petros Psiloreitis when the author was 25 years old. It is a short, two-act play with few scenes and few protagonists (but with two choruses). The plot follows the one from the song but introduces another dimension to the story – a tragic one. The Builder is employed by a Noble who promises a reward if he finishes the job. The Builder declares his future reward: he wants to marry a woman he loves. But, unknown to the Noble, this woman is Smaragda, his daughter, who is already in love with the Builder. The masonry work goes smoothly until the river starts to demolish the Bridge. The Mother, the older woman, appears and starts prophesising. She blames the Builder, who, against customs, has consummated already his love with Smaragda – and she is the one who has to be sacrificed in order for the bridge to stand. After a complex clash between the Noble, the Builder, Smaragda and the Singer, who also loves the girl, she decides to sacrifice herself, while the others make it possible. The story's emphasis has moved clearly towards its tragic potential, strengthened by ancient-like choirs that accompany the protagonists and bring forth Fate, but also by a curious fairy-tale, though these are by no means magical structures that distance the text from its audience – in both time and space. The fantastic element is all but present (not counting the very meaning of the sacrifice, which remains the story's baseline): only the visions of the Mother come to fulfilment, and only in her correct deciphering of the future can one observe supernaturality. It is downplayed, secondary to other more-pressing and dramatic issues. It is a story of guilt and punishment, of obligation to family and society, and of love that does not conquer everything after all.

Kyriaki Petrakou, who specialises in Kazantzakis's theatre, devoted one whole chapter of her study on theatrical Kazantzakis to this play. She downplays the fantastic element, only alluding to the mystical ramblings of the Mother and to the personification of angry nature, which (who) aims to destroy the bridge. However, her primary focus, and the focus of the text itself, is directed towards

[6] Π. Ψηλορείτης [= Ν. Καζαντζάκης], *Ο Πρωτομάστορας. Τραγωδία* [Master builder. Tragedy] (Ψηλορείτης, 1910).

building a foundation for future Kazantzakis tragedies. It is the intertext with the ancient tragic authors that matters most here, and the available plot of the folk song is just a pretext to analyse the universal dilemma and – at the same time – to show the skills of a successful playwright *in spe*. This was precisely the case with adapting the myth for the ancient scene: the story was well-known; what mattered was the distribution of emphases and the linguistic and poetic genius of the creator (Πετράκου, 2005, pp. 187–212, chapter "Η Θυσία ή μάλλον ο Πρωτομάστορας: ο θεμέλιος λίθος των τραγωδιών" [The Sacrifice or rather the Master Builder: the cornerstone of tragedies]).

The play is entirely forgotten, as numerous others later eclipsed it that were probably more successful and indeed are more established with the Greek literary tradition: plays with Ancient and Byzantine motifs, plays on great people, such as Columbus or Buddha, later suited much better the general appeal of Kazantzakis's creation. But at the time the play had some impact: the influential composer Manolis Kalomiris wrote a musical work based on its text soon after its original publication.[7]

The second adaption of the song is a true *rara avis*, an early comic book issued anonymously sometime in the 1960s. The "Bridge in Arta" is the 314th part (!) of the Greek comic series "Klassika eikonografimena", a series that started in 1951 as a translation of the American "Classics Illustrated".[8] And indeed, in the beginning, these were, as in the American original, straightforward adaptations of the world's literary classics, such as novels by Dickens or Dumas, but soon the Greeks added their flavour to the series. They started telling and drawing stories first from Greek mythology, Ancient and Byzantine literature, and then moved on to historical themes and events and various Modern texts (Βατόπουλος, 2021). One of them was the famous folk song about a particular bridge.

As with all series, this issue (*tefchos*) is mainly anonymous and poorly described regarding its publishing specifics. The work itself consists of an introduction, a drawn story, and a formative part dubbed "encyclopaedic pages" on the Modern Greek folk song.

[7] Μ. Καλομοίρης, *Ο Πρωτομάστορας. Μουσική τραγωδία σε τρία μέρη και ιντερμέδιο. Διασκευή από την ομώνυμη τραγωδία του Πέτρου Ψηλορείτη* [Master builder. Musical tragedy in three parts and with intermedio. Adaptation from the tragedy by Petros Psiloreitis, bearing the same title] (Καλομοίρης, 1916).

[8] *Το γεφύρι της Άρτας* [The Bridge in Arta], series "Κλασσικά εικονογραφημένα" [Classics illustrated], αρ. 314 (*Το γεφύρι της Άρτας*, n.d.).

The story is simplified, drawn in a style not unlike the rest of the series, coloured but with a basic colour palette. The comic combines pictures (frames) with descriptive text and dialogues and does not quote the song often: instead, most text is put into prose. Compared to the plot that is known from the original text, here the plot is much more elaborate, with new plot threads and protagonists. As for the fantastic element, it is represented by a night vision of two princess-like figures that appear to the master builder one night at the bridge. They reveal they are sisters of the wife (here named Ligeri, literally Flexible, i.e., beautiful), and both of them were victims of immuration under two other bridges. Now they want their youngest sister to join them. This motif is canonical as in the original text, the wife, just before she throws curses, confesses that she indeed had sisters who were sacrificed in the same manner and for the same purpose.

In the comic, Ligeri is immured, and it is her mother who, when she learns of her daughter's fate, curses the bridge – and is also convinced to reverse the curse. In the end, in the last frame, the master builder sees the vision again – and now there are three girls, not two.

The last example is also the most recent: the play was performed in the summer of 2022 by the same bridge. While the play participants were, for the most part, amateurs, mainly local teachers, the whole endeavour was coordinated and directed by a professional, an actress Elli Mantha, who also has experience in writing scenarios and directing. Mantha based the play on the "classical" version of the song, quoted by Nikolaos Politis (the same version that children read at school), and on the play by Giorgos Theotokas entitled *To gefyri tis Artas* (1942). Mantha entitled her adaptation *I thysia tou protomastora* [The Sacrifice of the Master Builder] and, following Theotokas's text, concentrated on the husband of the would- be victim. The play is cosy: we observe only several scenes that happen in the evening and at night, by the bridge and in the master builder's house. The main concern is the builder's conviction that he must sacrifice his wife: first, he needs to convince himself, then his fellow workers, and then lure his unsuspecting wife to the bridge to fulfil the ritual. The woman dies, and her mother – just like in the comic – throws curses and then reverses them.

The fantastic element is explicit only in one element: in the Shadow (Skia) who haunts the master builder when he desperately tries to understand how to mend his ever-crumbling bridge. Is it a touch of the supernatural, or is it a dream, an illusion, or maybe a manifestation of the subconscious? It is up to the audience to decide. Mantha downplays this element as Skia looks like any

other member of the playing troupe. The whole style of the play is generally downplayed and minimalistic. The actors are alike, and even their gender is not exposed. They wear simple clothes and no accessories but mask-like makeup. They often speak in unison, just like an ancient chorus.[9] Other means of scenic expression are also scarce: a touch of light here and there, and a playback of discrete music tracks. The only exception is the live drummer who stands not with other performers (who play on a small square in front of the bridge) but beneath one of the arches of the bridge.

The fantastic in this work is virtually non-existent as Skia is marginalised. Instead, at the centre of the plot and the attention is a plethora of moral dilemmas, most connected to the master builder. The audience witnesses a deep psychological dispute, an analysis of impossible choices, and then the justification of human sacrifice for the sake of the collective interest.

The popularity of the folk song, and especially its wondrous preservation through modern times, is a phenomenon worth thorough research. One hypothesis refers to the persistence of the folk frame of mind, which – even in the face of the spread of Christianity since Ancient times – has been untouched by ideology in several elements of life. One example is funeral folk songs (*moirologia*) and generally the so-called songs of the "Down-World" (*tragoudia tou Kato Kosmou*). Here, even now, the imagination that revolves around the other world, the world of the dead, resembles much more faithfully what one can find in Ancient Greek mythology than in the promises of the New Testament (see Bzinkowski, 2017, esp. pp. 31–36).

On the other hand, the fantastic and supernatural element is being reduced in the modern adaptation of folk songs. It is reserved for immature readers because such would be a model audience of the 1950s and 1960s comic books. For adults, the story is shifted towards the dramatic and psychological aspects. In the case of the song analysed here, themes such as betrayal, personal sacrifice, the persistence of love, the unavoidability of death, and the existence of free will against a prescribed fate are discussed, played out and treated from various angles. The fantastic is gone.

Applying Todorov's concept clearly shows that the fantastic, the ambivalent in original folk texts is resolved towards the uncanny. Its existence is of only symbolic value, and the fantastic intrusions are nothing more than a convenient

[9] In personal communication, E. Mantha confessed to being strongly inspired by Ancient Greek tragedies.

trope. The "miraculous", as Todorov calls it, is served here only in a versions for immature readers – for an audience still developing its literary genius. The present "miraculous" is not unlike the one in a fairy tale, where a story is a make-believe told for educational reasons, sprinkled with fun.

One compelling argument that further supports the concept of the fantastic and its position within literary genres can be found in the work of renowned sociologist and philosopher Max Weber.[10] In his examination of modernity, Weber identified a vital characteristic of the modern world: its capacity for disenchantment. This disenchantment refers to the process by which the world has been stripped of its inherent wonder, magic, and mystery due to humanity's relentless pursuit of rationality, scientific inquiry, and utilitarian objectives. Weber argued that the world's disenchantment has profoundly transformed human experience and perception, rendering the world more predictable, calculable, and controllable. This shift towards a rational and efficiently purposeful worldview has led to the gradual erosion of traditional belief systems, superstitions, and the enchanting elements that once imbued our lives with awe and wonder.

In light of Weber's observations, it is possible to argue that the fantastic occupies a unique and vital position within the literary landscape as it offers a counterpoint to the prevailing disenchantment with the modern world. The fantastic allows readers to suspend their rational, disenchanted perspectives – at least momentarily, as Todorov would want – and engage with a text in a way that allows them to embrace the magical, the mysterious, and the unknown. In doing so, the fantastic serves as a reminder of the enchanting qualities the modern world has lost. It can be seen as an act of resistance against the pervasive rationality and dominant utilitarianism that characterise contemporary society.

Therefore, the fantastic can be seen as a literary genre that occupies a liminal space between the uncanny and the marvellous and serves as a vital bridge between the disenchanted modern world and the enchanting magical realms that lie beyond the confines of rationality and scientific understanding. Through the fantastic, readers can reconnect with the wonder, mystery, and enchantment that has been lost in modernisation, and it offers them a chance to reclaim and rekindle the rich, imaginative aspects of human experience, which are nowadays so often neglected.

Folk songs somewhat resist disenchantment and prefer to stay within the miraculous and not uncanny. However, even if they escape the constrains of modern

[10] See M. Weber, *Scholar's Work* (in Weber, 2020, loc. 590–593 and 900).

language (in this case, the standard Modern Greek variety) and some dialectal, old-fashioned touch is left within them, surely their message suits the needs of the modern audience. I have an irresistible feeling that many adapting creators, writers, playwrights, and directors treat the fantastic as a phase of literary growing up. It belongs to children, but adults do not need these tools anymore; they can move on to serious matters – in the creators' eyes – to social issues, psychological dilemmas, and uncovering the truth about the human character and the human condition.

What remains, however, an unaddressed element of the song and its receptions – taken for granted – is the very sacrifice. Nobody doubts its effectiveness, and all the texts I have come across – both variants of the songs and an assorted set of adaptations – leave this element unchanged and show its power: the sacrifice works, and the bridge stands. This supernatural aspect is undisputed and constant: to understand its persistence in a disenchanted world and uncanny texts, one may reach the Greek understanding of fate, which – just like the concepts mentioned above on the afterworld – takes less from Christianity and more from the ancient understanding of Moira. It is often perceived as a force with no position, and what awaits a human is already set and written down (see the meaning of *pepragmeno*, one of the synonyms for fate). It is mechanically deterministic and, therefore, beyond discussion, implying no need to dispute it even in artistic texts. The sacrifice has to happen, and it will work. And there is nothing to add at this point.

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To, co nadprzyrodzone, pieśń ludowa i ofiara ludzka

W artykule zostały przeanalizowane elementy fantastyczne w pieśni gminnej *Most w Arta*. Ballada ta jest częstym przedmiotem badań, przede wszystkim genetycznych i strukturalnych, i to w kontekstach bałkańskich. Autor skupia się na innym jej aspekcie: wielości i wielopoziomowości elementów nadprzyrodzonych (fantastycznych) pojawiających się w jej różnych wersjach, i wykorzystuje współczesne koncepcje myślenia o tekstach spekulatywnych.

Słowa kluczowe: pieśń gminna; to, co nadprzyrodzone; ofiara zakładzinowa; to, co fantastyczne

Supernatural, folksong and human sacrifice

This article analyses the fantastic elements in the demotic song "Bridge in Arta". This ballad is a frequent object of research, but mainly genetic and structural, in Balkan contexts. The author focuses on another aspect of it: the multiplicity and multi-levelness of the supernatural (fantastical) elements appearing in its versions, but using contemporary conceptions of thinking about speculative texts.

Keywords: demotic song; supernatural; construction sacrifice; fantastic

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POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
1954-2024

Publication History: Received: 2024-04-07; Accepted: 2024-07-23; Published: 2024-12-31