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VALUABLE ANCIENT REMNANTS AND SUPERSTITIOUS  
FOOLISHNESS: RELIGIOSITY, NATIONALISM, AND  
ENCHANTMENT IN 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SLOVENIAN FOLKLORE

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**ABSTRACT**

*Based on Slovenian folklore from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the paper addresses the unexplored topic of the intermixing of folklore with Catholicism and the role of this folklore in the process of Slovenian nation building. Based on an analysis of articles published in the newspaper Kmetijske in rokodelske novice, the author of the paper reveals an inconsistent discourse with regard to the vernacular Slovenian religiosity: everything associated with Christianity is praised, while non-Christian folklore elements are either praised (“Pagan remnants”) or condemned (“superstition”). In the search for enchantment, which is seemingly disappearing due to modernisation, Slovenian intellectuals projected the wondrous into the past and the lower levels of society. Vernacular religiosity in 19<sup>th</sup> century Slovenian lands is distinctly multilayered and eludes moral evaluations and any attempts to control it. The original contribution of the article is an analysis of the use and reinterpretation of folklore with religious elements in the process of Slovenian nation building and the role of the concept of „enchantment“ in the perception of folklore at that time.*

*Keywords: religiosity, nationalism, enchantment, Slovenian folklore, 19<sup>th</sup> century*

RESTI PREZIOSI DEL PASSATO E SCIOCCHESSE SUPERSTIZIOSE:  
RELIGIOSITÀ, NAZIONALISMO E INCANTO NEL FOLKLORE SLOVENO  
DELL'OTTOCENTO

**SINTESI**

*Partendo da un esempio del folclore sloveno della seconda metà dell'Ottocento, il contributo affronta il tema ancora poco esplorato della mescolanza del folclore con il cattolicesimo e del ruolo di questo folclore nel processo della costruzione nazionale slovena. Basandosi su analisi di testi pubblicati dal periodico Kmetijske in rokodelske novice, l'autrice rileva l'esistenza di un discorso inconsistente nei confronti della*

*religiosità vernacolare slovena: tutti gli elementi cristiani venivano valutati in modo positivo, quelli non cristiani invece erano o molto stimati (come «resti pagani») oppure deprecati (come «superstizione»). Alla ricerca dell'incanto, che si presumeva in via di scomparsa per colpa della modernizzazione, gli intellettuali sloveni proiettavano lo stesso nel passato e negli strati più bassi della società. Nonostante i tentativi di assoggettarla alla valutazione morale o disciplinamento, la religiosità vernacolare ottocentesca nei territori sloveni si presenta straordinariamente pluralistica. Il contributo originale di questo articolo è l'analisi dell'uso e della reinterpretazione del folclore contenente elementi religiosi ai fini della nation-building slovena e il ruolo del concetto de «l'incanto» nella percezione del folclore di quell'epoca.*

*Parole chiave: religiosità, nazionalismo, incanto (ingl. enchantment), folclore sloveno, Ottocento*

## INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, whilst doing research about some of the earliest collections and publications of Slovenian folklore as presented in the Slovenian newspaper *Kmetijske in rokodelske novice* (=Novice), I came across a particularly puzzling phenomenon regarding the perception of different practices and beliefs that can be encompassed within the concept of religiosity.<sup>1</sup> The *Novice* newspaper was published primarily in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and played an important role in the Slovenian nation building process. Folklore (primarily Slovenian, but also of other nations) was frequently published in the newspaper (at least in its first decades of publication). This was because folklore was an important element in the construction of the nation's imagined past as a part of the nation building process. Amongst other things, folklore with religious content was published in *Novice* and the focus of this paper is precisely those examples of folklore which contained religious elements. While everything to do with Christianity was seen as correct, the attitude towards elements of Slovenian folklore that were seen as “remnants” of pre-Christian beliefs were ambiguous: if they did not clash with the moral code of the day they were praised as a relic of the more noble, glorious past of the nation; however, if they did not match up to the image of a “true Slovenian” they were despised and were thus encouraged to disappear. This was a characteristic of beliefs and practices often described with terms such as “superstitions”.

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1 This paper is the result of research carried out in the research project "Political Functions of Folktales" (ARRS N6-0268) and in the research program "The Practices of Conflict Resolution between Customary and Statutory Law in the Area of Today's Slovenia and Neighboring Countries" (ARRS, P6-0435), funded by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS).

At first glance, it seems quite straightforward: Christianity = good, not Christianity = still good if the content was not morally wrong / offensive; considered bad if the content was seen as morally wrong.

However, further research, as disclosed in this paper, reveals a much more complex story that cannot be sufficiently explained under such simplistic classifications of the religious beliefs and practices among the peasantry which were witnessed by the collectors of folklore. Namely, religious beliefs and practices are always a mixture of numerous elements containing religious orthodoxy (in this case Catholicism) and other practices that could be seen as, for example, magic, that have coexisted more or less peacefully for centuries among the population of the Slovenian lands (something similar can also be seen in Polish folklore, cf. Brzozowska-Krajka, 2006). We can imagine that the collectors of such beliefs and practices witnessed this peaceful coexistence of what at first glance were incompatible elements. Later, in the process of nation building they had to classify these beliefs and practices as “good” or “bad”. This contribution will attempt to explain such occurrences within the cultural and ideological backgrounds and the discourses about religiosity from that time.

Through the example of such confusing meanings of folklore, particularly folklore that could be considered “religious”, this contribution will, on one hand, explore the social and political context of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the territory of Slovenia regarding the perception of folklore and religiosity. On the other hand, this paper will also shed light on a topic of vernacular religiosity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the territory of Slovenia (especially connected to the concept of enchantment) that has not yet been of significant scholarly interest.

## THE CONTEXT OF FOLKLORE COLLECTING IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

The newspaper *Novice* edited by Janez Bleiweis was a typical representation of Slovenian publications in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Fikfak, 1999, 42). Influenced by nationalist ideology this newspaper presented a canvas for representing and creating specific discourses that formed the building blocks of the Slovenian nation. As was characteristic for other European nations of the time (Noyes, 2012, 21; cf. also Porter, 1999, 262), Slovenian intellectuals also saw folklore as a historical remnant that was only barely kept alive in the lower social strata – i.e., in the peasantry that in some way embodied the essence of the nation, however without themselves having any political or cultural capital. Folklore did not have value per se, rather it only had value through the lens of emerging nationalism. Additionally, it was not valued as a whole (cf. Mladenivić Mitrović, 2021, 108), but was subjected to evaluation by Slovenian intellectuals who ascribed it with value based on its content – or rather: based on its “usefulness” to serve the agenda of nationalism. At this time, vernacular mythologies were being (re)discovered and (re)imagined and were utilised as a political tool in shaping Europe; in this process, vernacular mythologies were appropriated and actualised and, together with vernacular languages (especially in parts of Europe where the languages of the common people were marginalised in relation to the lan-



guage spoken by the elite class; McLeod, 2015, 9), became one of the building blocks for new national communities (Bønding, Kølle Martinsen & Stahl, 2021, 16, 20). The consequence of this ideologically selective approach was that certain forms of folklore were perceived to be highly valuable, praised, and romanticised, while other forms were despised and seen as a sign of backwardness (cf. Rogelj Škafar, 2011, 50). The peasants were seen as the carriers of a tradition that was destined to go extinct, therefore the preservation of folklore was seen as essential. This prompted the first ever systematic collection of Slovenian folklore<sup>2</sup>. However, due to being heavily burdened by a national ideology, the aim of which was to project a very specific image of the Slovenian nation, the existing folklore was not seen in its entirety but instead was viewed as a mass of different beliefs and practices which were taken out of that original, organic context and subjected to moral evaluation on a case-by-case basis. Nevertheless, despite the popular notion of folklore being on the verge of extinction, folklorists were met with a wide array of folkloric expressions, including some which contained Christian elements, as well as those that diverged from Christian teaching and were often labelled “Pagan remnants” or “superstitions”.

In the context of Western or rather European modernity and civilisation, the cultural otherness (the temporal prerequisite for the construction of the concept of modernity) of the non-modern was manifested in several ways: one of them was the past<sup>3</sup> (Anttonen, 2005, 28). Also, the relationship between the intellectual collecting the folklore and the carriers of this folklore (i.e., the peasants) presents another form of otherness: in the eyes of the collector, the peasant was “the Other”, an intimate stranger living within the border of the nation’s territory and in the emotional memory of modern man (Noyes, 2012, 16). In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in the manner of the concept of cultural evolution, the antiquarians perceived religious folk customs as survivals from the stage of savagery or barbarism – they believed they could understand the past by collecting such beliefs (Mullen, 2005, 3143). “The Other” is thus not only someone from a geographically distant place, but they can also be situated historically, as inhabiting the past. In the eyes of these early folklore collectors and folklorists, the peasants were both: “the Other” in space, living in rural areas as opposed to the urban settings of these intellectuals, and “the Other” in time, as

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- 2 Early encouragements to collect Slovenian folklore were made during the Enlightenment era. Marko Pohlin, for example, emphasised folk poetry and following his encouragement the first collection of folksongs was completed by Jožef Zakotnik (this collection has not, however, been preserved) and similar was the case of the collection of proverbs written by Janez Mihelič. Other noteworthy collectors and folklore enthusiasts from these initial stages of folklore collecting include Anton Rudež, Valentin Vodnik, Emil Korytko, Matevž Ravnikar-Poženčan, Janez Nepomuk Primic in Jernej Kopitar. Already at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Anton Janez Zupančič published a call for collecting folksongs and other ethnographic materials in the newspaper *Laibacher Wochenblatt* (*Krojej Telban*, 2021, 101).
  - 3 According to Anttonen (2005, 28–29) in addition to the past, at least three more domains of knowledge have been projected to the cultural otherness of the non-modern in the context of European modernity: the non- or semi-Christian socio-cultural formations, beliefs, and practices; the non-Western societies and cultures outside of Christian Europe and in North America; and human childhood, making the mental and cultural development from childhood to adulthood seem like a process of modernisation.

they were perceived as carriers of traditions seen as “survivals” from ancient times, often erroneously and overly simplified as “Pagan” traditions and beliefs. What they were, in fact, observing were practices and beliefs that differed from those of the urban, educated elite who had been set as the default moral, religious and cultural representative. Even though these collectors and researchers of folklore were part of the same complex society as the folk whose religious practices and beliefs they were observing, there was a presupposition that they did not share the same traditions with them. While they mostly came from a Judeo-Christian religious background, their religiosity was inevitably more learned and literary than that of the peasants, which gave them a certain social distance as well as a bias that is very observable in their collection process (Magliocco, 2012, 136). However, even if the collectors themselves originated from the peasant social strata (and some did – as *Novice* actively encouraged those with a peasant background to take advantage of their origins when collecting folklore as it would narrow the social and educational distance between the peasants and the collector.

In the historical process of making a modern Europe, the cultures of selected marginalised groups that included material objects, rituals, and the “lore” of those who were called “the folk” received new meaning as an object of discovery. These objectified cultural practices and products that were deemed to belong to “the Other” thus played a part in the construction of the very category of “the modern”. Conceptualised as modernity’s otherness, the cultures of the people and pre-industrial societies in Europe had become the most important source for the discourse on difference (Anttonen, 2005, 32–33).

Therefore, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, along with emerging nationalism, different folklore practices and beliefs started to become associated with words such as “ancient”, “relic”, “Pagan”, to be followed with terms such as “authentic” and “tradition”. What was later gathered under the term “cultural heritage” became a political and ideological tool. During these processes, these practices and beliefs acquired new meanings and their interpretations reflected not only scholarly efforts to understand their origins and diversity, but also the wider processes in society in the search for identity and meaning. Nostalgia for “the good old days”, times of purity and longing for the untainted authenticity of life and belief so inevitably linked with the 19<sup>th</sup> century approach towards the past existed ever since the nationalistic sentiment began gaining greater meaning and more followers. For example, in Slovenian newspapers from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were frequent expressions of longing for the past, especially linked with the pre-industrial peasant way of life which was seen as unspoiled by progress and a loss of enchantment. This imaginary ideal past became a depository for purity and harmony that was lost in modern times. The folklorists themselves thus influenced the perception of folklore as in the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was the tendency to romanticise the folk and certain beliefs and practices associated with folk culture. They cultivated the image of these beliefs as representing a spiritual connection to nature that civilised people have lost and seeing the peasants as leading a more sacred life

than urbanised people. Confusingly enough, such romanticised images of folk beliefs existed simultaneously with the opposite academic construction of folk beliefs as pathological and wrong (Mullen, 2005, 3141–3142).

Needless to say, however, images of the purity and harmony of the past were simplifications and idealisations that did not reflect the reality of life in pre-modernity. These simplifications ranged from imagining idealised ways of life (being connected to the land), idealised relations between people, idealised morality, and also idealised beliefs systems. This was due to the processes of homogenisation and stereotyping that created an image of a unified and representative culture of the Slovenian nation (Pisk, 2013, 113; cf. Rogelj Škafar, 2011, 50).

While some types of folklore such as legends about local history and difficult, yet heroic parts of the community's past (such as the legends about Turkish raids) were common and more desirable, as they contained national traditions, myths, and values suitable for national consolidation (cf. Mladenović Mitrović, 2021, 107), others that might spoil the image of the nation were discouraged from being collected. As the analysis of the contributions in *Novice* has shown the collectors and researchers of folklore were especially fascinated by (what they considered to be) pre-Christian beliefs and practices that were highly valued, but on the other hand some non-Christian beliefs and practices such as magic and divination were harshly criticised and condemned as superstition and backwardness. One thing to keep in mind, however, is that terms such as “superstition” did not have a codified meaning and could mean different things. Therefore, even examples of “folk medicine” could be considered superstition. Even instances that from today's perspective do not seem to be religious (for example, how to handle snake bites<sup>4</sup>) were often described with this term – especially if they relied on folk interpretations of Christian elements and their usage (such as crosses or invocations to the saints<sup>5</sup> for help) as magical remedies.

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- 4 As Janez Bleiweis wrote in *Novice* (15. 9. 1847, 147): “How many had died of a snake bite because of foolish superstitious beliefs that a quack pretending to have the ability to heal people and cattle can help them instead of actual remedies? Not long ago another accident occurred in Upper Carniola. A quack called Mataja pretended to heal a little girl from a snake bite, and she died the next day. The healing went like this: ‘On a holy mountain there is a golden chair upon which a holy man sits, Saint Šempas. The Holy Mother came to him and brought the merciful Jesus with her. [...] Now breathe into the bread three times, make a cross upon this bread and then on yourself and the poison will leave you in the name of the Saint Šempas, of Saint Ulrich and through the three Holy Persons, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Then say: I believe in God the Father, I believe in God the Son, I believe in God the Holy Spirit. Then say the Lord's Prayer and Hail Mary's three times and Credo.’ [...] What is a good Christian supposed to do with such superstitious things? Under the threat of capital sin, they should not advise the usage of such things, not to write about them and distribute the writing and by doing so sow weeds on the field of the Catholic Church. As it was determined by the holy bishops in Rome under the pope all such deceitful things should burn in fire and be destroyed, or else sin is committed. If one stubbornly holds on to such superstitions, they will be judged by God! [...]”.
- 5 Under the influence of the archaic pre-Christian world view Christian saints in folklore underwent a process of mythologisation, they were separated from the higher divine sphere, relegated to the realm of “lower mythology” (together with ancestors and dead relatives) and were endowed with supernatural abilities that gave them power over natural phenomena (such as rain or hail) and human life (Tolstaya, 2021, 7).

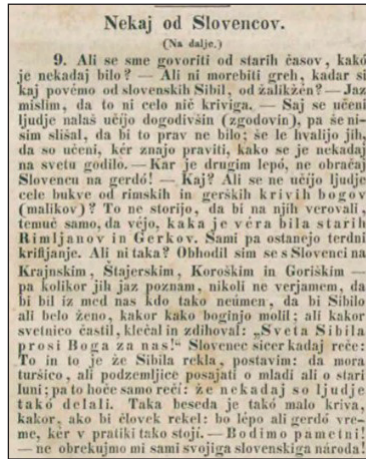


Fig. 1: Majer (1844, 172)<sup>6</sup>.

Similar tensions were experienced in British folklore studies of the time: what was considered “superstition” was seen as an obstacle to modernisation and in that sense the folklorists were actually working to demolish their own subject matter. On the other hand, folklorists tried to preserve local traditions vanishing due to modernisation (Josephson-Storm, 2017, 129). This multi-layered understanding of pre-Christian beliefs raging from foolishness to “noble remnants” can be witnessed in the following article by Matija Majer from *Novice*:<sup>6</sup>

In Slovenian public discourse, Christianity, or more precisely Catholicism, was still highly valued and was not seen as being in opposition to the renowned Pagan belief systems and mythologies, but rather as their upgrade. Even more: Slovenian national identity was (as was also the case in other nations; cf. Isnart, 2020, 40) closely associated with Christianity. Therefore, the discourse was rather inconsistent

6 Translation: Are we supposed to talk about the olden days, how it was back then? Is it a sin to talk about the Slovenian Sibyl and the “žalik žene” (i.e., fates or fairies – cf. Kropelj, 2012, 106)? I think this cannot be considered bad. It is even the learned people who inquire about such stories that they haven’t heard before and no one says that is wrong. Quite the contrary: they are praised that they can tell others of how the world used to be! And what is good should not be blamed on Slovenians! Do people not learn about the Roman and Greek deities (idols)? They do not do it with the intention to believe in them, but rather to learn about the ancient religions of the Romans and the Greeks. Is that not so? And they stay good Christians. I have known Slovenian people in different lands, in Kranjska, Štajerska, Koroška and Goriška – and as far as I know, no one believes that someone could be foolish enough to worship Sibyl or the White Woman (a fairy – cf. Kropelj, 2012, 146) as a goddess, to kneel and pray: “Saint Sibyl, pray for us!” Slovenian might sometimes say: “Sibyl would say this or that, she would say to sow crops, or she would talk about the young or old moon. What they mean to say with this is: “People have done so and so since forever.” There is little blame in such sayings such things, it would be similar to saying: “The weather is nice, or the weather is bad.” Let us be smart about it! Let us not talk bad about our own nation!

as it simultaneously mourned the noble Pagan past and praised Christian beliefs. The field of folklore studies was still developing and there was not yet much scholarly consensus regarding what constituted folklore. Consequently, there were serious debates among researchers about what aspects of folklore were “worthy” of being collected and researched and which beliefs and practices should be condemned and forgotten as they “spoil” the purity of the nation’s culture and heritage. However, this had an unintended consequence: folklore deemed unfit to be collected or even to exist is lost to modern scholars. The policy of collecting, however, does reveal a lot about the mindset of the collectors and the general discourses of the time, which is also valuable information in itself. Folklore was not seen as an organic whole coexisting with other parts of life and the texts that we do have from the 19<sup>th</sup> century do not reflect the reality of the manifestations of folklore in everyday life (cf. Pisk, 2013).

Additionally, the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a time when nostalgia blossomed in Europe. Sweeping societal changes, industrialisation, urbanisation, and the French Revolution introduced the notion of “history as decline” and the desire to recapture life as it once had been. This sense of temporal acceleration caused by unprecedented social and economic changes caused a sense of loss and distance from the past in the minds of European elites and prompted the need for patrimonialisation and musealisation of the past (Angé & Berliner, 2015, 2–3). Nostalgia<sup>7</sup> can be considered one of the modes of memory. Its significance with regard to research is in the fact that it can become a useful explanatory resource with which to understand the characteristics of mass consciousness and national identity (Romanovska, 2020, 127–128). Cultural memory plays an important role in the formation of collective identities and interpretations of cultural memory help a group to form a self-image and awareness of its own past (cf. Assmann, 2012), as sharing a common past is one of the building blocks of a shared identity. Folklore was a fertile ground for nostalgia as it offered almost limitless possibilities for the imagination.

## RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS IN FOLKLORE THROUGHOUT HISTORY IN THE TERRITORY OF SLOVENIA

As mentioned, this paper focuses on the religious elements in folklore. Religiosity has been a topic of interest for folklorists since the beginning of the discipline itself in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although in the early days folklorists often perceived different beliefs

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7 Nostalgia is a form of rejection of or dissatisfaction with the current time and reflects a desire to return to an earlier time and to recapture a coherence unavailable in the present; the uncertainty and insecurity of the present thus creates a fertile ground for sentimental longing for the past, or rather, for selectively idealised features of the past (Pickering & Keightley, 2006, 922–923, 925). Nostalgia is primarily occupied with the sense of loss and over time the community, under the influence of different cultural and historical events, selects the most important events to construct its collective identity. Nostalgia is thus one of the ways of re-remembering (Pickering & Keightley, 2006, 923; Romanovska, 2020, 128–129). Central to experiencing nostalgia is a sense of spatiality and temporality of loss, a distance between then and now that cannot be bridged. Oscillating between the feelings of distance (irretrievability of the past) and proximity (the sensations felt in the present), nostalgia is a desire for something that is unreachable, momentarily present in fleeting fragments (Kitson & McHugh, 2015, 490).



and practices (that can be summed up by the term vernacular religion – more about that term further on) not as religion, but rather as “superstition”<sup>8</sup> or “magic” (Mullen, 2005, 3141). Other interests folklorists had included a broad array of topics, from saints’ day celebrations to non-mainstream spiritual beliefs (Magliocco, 2012, 136).

However, even before the scientific deliberations of vernacular religiosity in Slovenian lands, elements of it in the form of folktales with mythological content or pre-Christian ritual practices were noted in different historical sources. For example, a document from 1331 mentions Pagan worship of a sacred tree and spring in Kobarid and their eventual obliteration by the Church (Kropej, 2012, 84). During the Middle Ages different apocryphal legends about saints were known in Slovenian lands (Kropej Telban, 2021, 89). In later centuries various clergymen mentioned elements of vernacular religiosity in their writings. For example, in his collection of sermons *Sacrum Promptuarium* (1691–1707) Janez Svetokriški mentions legends about saints to whom people prayed when facing trouble and disease, especially the plague (Kropej Telban, 2021, 91–92). The famous 18<sup>th</sup> century polyhistor Janez Vajkard Valvasor also includes mentions of different beliefs in his writings. During the Enlightenment era Anton Tomaž Linhart, Carniolan playwright and historian, also wrote about pre-Christian Slavic beliefs, Slavic gods, and some lower mythological beings in his *Essay on the History of Carniola and other Lands of the Southern Austrian Slavs I* (1788) and *II* (1791) (Kropej Telban, 2021, 91–93, 96–97). Nevertheless, it was the time of Romanticism that saw a meteoric rise in the interest in folklore. The collection of fairy tales by the Grimm brothers in their *Children’s and Household Tales*, first published in 1812, inspired folklore collectors throughout Europe, including Slovenian linguist Jernej Kopitar who actively encouraged his compatriots to collect Slovenian folktales and folksongs. The rise in interest also manifested in the publication of Slovenian folklore in books and newspapers (Kropej Telban, 2021, 98, 103). At first, the emphasis was on Slovenian folksongs, however, in the era of Slovenian nation-building there was a rise in interest in other types of folklore, including fairy tales, legends, proverbs, riddles etc. Rich collections of folkloric texts started to appear in publications, including *Novice* (Kropej Telban, 2021, 103–104). These publications also frequently included folklore with religious content.

#### (SCHOLARLY) PERCEPTIONS OF RELIGIOSITY AND THEIR RELATION TO FOLKLORE

As far as the perception of religion throughout history is concerned, prior to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, according to Randall Styers (2004, 4), the term “religion” referred primarily to the dutiful performance of ritual obligations. The emergence

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8 The binary distinction between superstition and religion has also entered the academic field of religion studies. A consequence of defining religion in terms of monolithic essences, such as transcendence or the sacred, is a rejection of concepts not seen as “religion” and are therefore outside the field of research. What was labelled “superstition” was relegated to the fields of folklore or anthropology and the legacy of such distinctions lingers to this day (Josephson-Storm, 2017, 124).

of religion as an analytical category started in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when in several instances of describing non-Western social practices, a cross-cultural and potentially universal consideration of systems of ritual practice was starting to emerge (Styers, 2004, 4–5). However, as pointed out by van der Veer (2010, 608–609), some of the problems of universalist, ahistorical definitions of religion are that they ignore the genealogy of modern Western understanding of religion. The universalisation of the concept of religion is associated with emerging modernity in Europe. While the boundary between the religious and the secular has constantly been drawn in Christianity, a change occurred in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the Church lost its all-encompassing authority to enforce those boundaries. Thus “religion” became a universal and broad category. Every society could therefore have their own (“natural”) religion. Additionally, non-modern forms of religion, especially when they were not forms of Christianity, came to stand for irrationality (van der Veer, 2010, 609). Moreover, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, due to the changes sparked by the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, emphasis on what constitutes religion were placed from outward forms of religiosity (i.e., religious practices) to the inward state of belief or faith (Styers, 2004, 5). This emphasis on defining religion based on belief rather than practice became predominant in European intellectual circles and served as the basis for understanding other cultures, as well as the lower classes. However, for the non- or semi-literate peasants within Western cultures, the written and codified religious texts were inaccessible and much of the understanding of the world and cosmology was rooted in pre-Christian practices covered by a layer of Christianity (Magliocco, 2012, 138). These worldviews were intermixed and often produced new forms of folklore<sup>9</sup>.

What is very obvious about folklore in general, as seen in the collections of Slovenian folklore in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is the concept of “remnants” or “survivals”. This was not an isolated way of thinking. In Britain at that time, for example, it was believed that folktales, myths, and rituals were “antiques” and that they represented the remnants of prehistoric cultural systems (Josephson-Storm, 2017, 130). Aligned with the theory of cultural evolution that claims societies develop over time from simple to more complex ones, the anthropologist Edward B. Tylor proposed the “doctrine of survivals” in religion. According to him, all cultures start at the “primitive” stage of development characterised by an animistic belief and that animism is the childish, primitive, lower origin of all “higher” religions (Bailey, 2010, 68). The next stage of development is “barbarism”, which is characterised by polytheistic beliefs, while the culmination of religious beliefs was manifested in monotheistic religions. The elements of earlier belief systems evident in the higher stages of cultural evolution were characterised as “survivals” and thought to be on the verge of disappearance. These cultural leftovers fascinated early European scholars of religiosity and in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early

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9 For example, hagiographies were sometimes based on oral legends, or, on the other hand, oral legends could be reinterpretations or re-embellishments of written texts (cf. Moroz, 2014, 222, 225).

20<sup>th</sup> century folklorists applied Tylor's approach to peasant (and also indigenous) religious practices and beliefs and interpreted them as survivals of ancient pagan beliefs (Magliocco, 2012, 139).

In a similar manner, Sir James Frazer developed an evolutionary scheme of religion with magic representing the earliest form of religious practice which aimed to make sense of and control the world around them (Magliocco, 2012, 139). According to the scholarly standard of the time, he too simultaneously romanticised and disparaged the rural European populations (Josephson-Storm, 2017, 132). Frazer posits that magic, religion, and science belong to three successive stages of human evolution, which go from the most primitive to the present, modern and enlightened stage. This was in contrast to Taylor's perception of magic who did not see it as an equal religious expression (Magliocco, 2012, 139). Frazer saw magic and religion as a precocious, but premature attempt at scientific reasoning (Porter, 1999, 265–266). The next developmental stage was religion as a more systematic attempt at understanding and functioning in the world through rituals and prayers to deities. However, the climax of this system was represented by Western science as the only valid means of understanding the natural laws. Another important aspect of Frazer's perception of religion was seeing all seasonal rites as an enactment of a pattern based upon the life cycle of a dying and reborn deity. This idea had a marked influence on generations of scholars (Josephson-Storm, 2017, 127) and until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and sometimes even today!) folklorists interpreted seasonal celebrations almost exclusively in the context of death and rebirth, the purpose of which was to stimulate fertility in the agricultural cycle. This idea still held an important place in the development of modern Pagan religions in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Magliocco, 2012, 139–140).

Sociologist Émile Durkheim also stayed within the bounds of evolutionary development of religion and Christian normativity. He claimed that totemism presents the earliest form of religion (Magliocco, 2012, 140). Durkheim made society the subject of science that can be understood in terms of laws and functions. The question for him was no longer if magic or the supernatural were true, but rather what functions they served within society (Porter, 1999, 264). While seeing religion as a unifying factor in society, he separated it from magic which he saw as anti-social and individualistic, ignoring the many magical traits within religions such as Christianity (Magliocco, 2012, 140).

Such sociological and anthropological theories proposed by scholars such as Taylor, Frazer and Durkheim were the product of the 19<sup>th</sup> century mindset. Their collective significance lies in the transformation of the critique and fight against the supernatural proposed by thinkers of the Enlightenment into academic orthodoxy. They established a naturalistic study of humankind and consequently, superstition, the supernatural and other (unwanted) expressions of religiosity were to be studied and understood within the categories of natural and social sciences (Porter, 1999, 266).

## INTERMIXING DIFFERENT BELIEF SYSTEMS AND HOW IT WAS PERCEIVED IN 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SLOVENIAN FOLKLORE

Nineteenth century folklorists defined their own subject of research (i.e., religiosity as expressed in folk life and folklore) in contrast to the dominant religion (Christianity). European scholars associated folk with uneducated peasants and differentiated “folk religion” from other forms of religion – they saw “folk religion” as simpler, contaminated with superstition and often at odds with official church dogma (Mullen, 2005, 3142). Additionally, most folklorists made the differentiation between religion and superstition, even though the evidence implied a close connection between beliefs and practices assigned to such categories (idem). Thus, witnessing the complexities of everyday human behaviour amongst the peasants (some of the collectors and researchers also originated from that social strata) the Slovenian collectors were very much aware of the difficulties of separating religion and magic as the people did not make such distinctions or simply saw practices or beliefs designated as “magic” as a part of religious expression<sup>10</sup>. Research (cf. Tolstaya, 2021) has shown that the relationship between official religion (in our case Christianity) and folk tradition is complex and bilateral and that a simple division between “orthodox” and “Pagan”/“non-Christian” are often impossible. The complexity of different types of beliefs in the form of what we now label as “vernacular religion” was also noticed by the famous historian of religions Mircea Eliade who observed that “the innumerable forms and variants of the pagan heritage have been articulated in the same outwardly Christianised mythico-ritual corpus« (Eliade, 1988, 221). As pointed out by Tolstaya (2021, 2) many areas of folk culture continued to preserve the traditional pre-Christian world view into the 19<sup>th</sup> century and even till today in the form of Christian ritual forms, images, motifs, characters, and concepts being subjected to mythological reinterpretations and adaptations in accordance with this world view. However, the influence went both ways and folk culture was also influenced by Christian tradition (idem). Mircea Eliade (1963, 171) even claimed (by looking through the prism of “survivals”) that the folklore of the rural populations at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century still contains surviving figures, myths, and rituals<sup>11</sup> from far back in the past.

However, folklorists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw this coexistence of non-Christian elements and Christianity as an expression of a lack of education, as is also attested in the article by Simon Šubic from *Novice*:

10 A typical example of that are palms and olive fonds blessed during the Palm Sunday church ceremonies that were believed to hold apotropaic qualities (Magliocco, 2012, 141).

11 For example, numerous dragon-slaying heroes became St. George, storm gods transformed into St. Elias and many fertility goddesses were assimilated with the Virgin Mary or female saints (Eliade, 1963, 171).

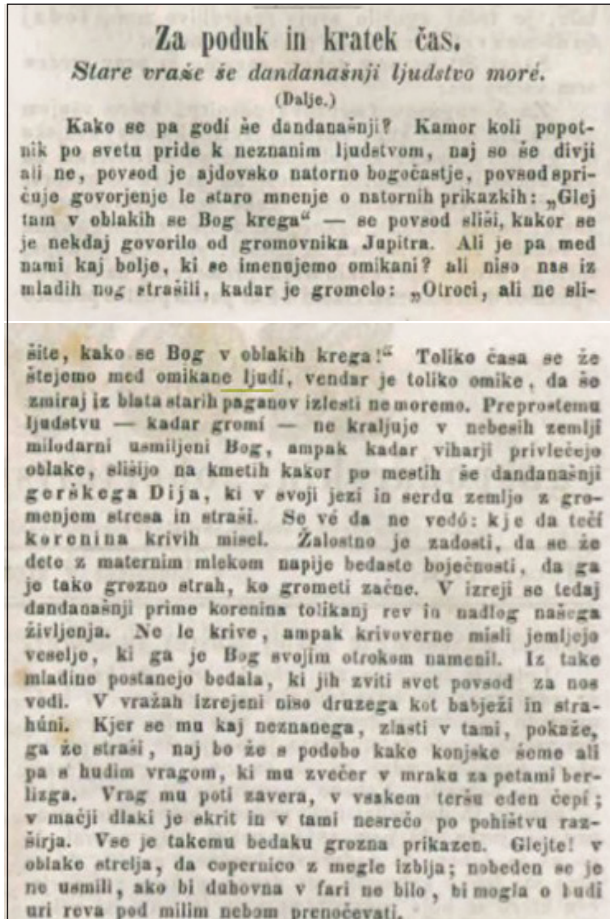


Figure 2: Šubic (1855, 138)<sup>12</sup>.

- 12 Translation: For education and entertainment: old superstitions still haunt today. What is happening even today in our world? Wherever a traveller comes to unknown peoples, be them wild or not any more, everywhere they encounter pagan worship and pagan beliefs: “Look, God is raging in the clouds!” And you hear everywhere that in the olden days people talked about the thunder god Jupiter. Are we not more learned? Did our parents not scare us with these words during thunderstorms when we were children: “Children, don’t you hear God raging in the clouds?” No matter how long we have considered ourselves learned, we still can not seem to crawl out of the mud of paganism. For the simple people during thunderstorms the merciful God ceases to exist for them; instead they see a raging god that shakes and frightens with thunder. Of course they are not aware of the origins of such thoughts. It is sad to see even babies drinking such foolish beliefs with their mothers milk and being afraid of thunder from then on. [...] Such false beliefs are taking away the joy that God intended for his children. From such misled children fools grow up that can be taken advantage of by any crook. [...]”



It was thought that once science would be able to formulate laws governing Nature and society, magic and superstitious beliefs would cease to exist and that once the bearers of such traditions were better educated, the magical aspects of their religiosity would disappear (similar to other nations of the time; Porter, 1999, 264; Magliocco, 2012, 141).

There is, however, another point of view with which one might address such incompatibility of perceiving non-Christian beliefs and practices. It expresses a completely different way of thinking when compared to the scientific one. Frankfort (1977) describes the world of the mythical mode of cognition in ancient times as not being based on the distinction between objective and subjective as modern thought is, and myth not only being solely allegory. Man did not stand in opposition to nature and did not seek the “how”, but rather for “who” when looking for a cause (Frankfort, 1977, 3–15). When modern researchers tried to understand myth, they often valued it through their own lens of scientific thought and in a way saw it as naïve and of lower intellectual value. In so doing, they fundamentally misunderstood the mythical way of understanding and acting in the world. This is not to say that 19<sup>th</sup> century Slovenian peasants could, in this sense, be equated with adherents of ancient religions; however, they did seem to retain some traditions and beliefs that expressed an understanding of the universe and their place in it, which differed radically from the view of educated elites who valued scientific knowledge and progress.

There is another level of understanding the mixture of different beliefs and practices belonging to seemingly incompatible belief systems and plurality of beliefs, as shown to coexist in folklore. It can be summed up by a term proposed by Leonardo Primiano (1995) who coined the term “vernacular religion”. Vernacular religion is sometimes described with terms such as “folk religion”, “popular religion” or “unofficial religion”. Primiano (1995) expressed his criticism regarding these terms as he sees them as derogatory and challenged the assumption of the folk as inferior. He also problematises the opposite of these terms, i.e., “official religion” as religious beliefs and practices cannot be so clearly divided between this dualistic system – this dichotomy is a scholarly invention (with “official religion”<sup>13</sup> being a standard against which variations of religious expressions are measured). Instead, he proposes the term “vernacular religion” and defines it as religion as it is lived and as people understand, interpret, and practice it (Primiano, 1995, 44). This approach avoids the condescending attitude of the elite/folk dichotomy and attempts to treat religious beliefs and practices with respect by focusing on the experiential aspects of religion (Mullen, 2005, 3143). It is also worth considering that the characteristic of “vernacular” may be completely scholarly in nature and does not reflect the way practitioners or believers consider

13 Eliade (1988, 228) uses the term “popular theology” that contains reinterpreted and Christianised archaic traditions and emphasises that in the “total” history of Christianity it should deserve a treatment equal to the official Christian theology.

their beliefs and practices. This is not to say that they are never aware of the difference their beliefs and practices have from the official ones; they perhaps do not place them in such categories.

The Catholic Church had a very strong influence on the beliefs, identities and conduct in the Slovenian territory. Yet this did not mean that all the psychological needs of the community were met by the official Church teachings<sup>14</sup>. Among the lay people these teachings were adapted, transformed, new elements were added along with pre-Christian beliefs that received a Christian makeover.

In the minds of the carriers of this folklore, these elements were likely not considered to have deviated from Church teachings and the contradictory nature in regard to them might not be recognised. This is very typical for vernacular religion. Mircea Eliade, while writing within a different scholarly paradigm, also recognised this in “popular theology” that is, as he puts it, neither a new form of paganism, neither a pagan-Christian syncretism, but rather an original religious creation. Within such a mindset, for example, there is no contradiction between Christ’s image in the Gospels and the Christ found in folklore. He can remain the God of the Holy Scripture and come down to Earth to visit the peasants just as was done by a Supreme Being in pre-Christian belief systems (Eliade, 1963, 172–173).

Therefore, while in scholarly discourses a sharp divide between the “official religion”<sup>15</sup> and the “folk religion” was determined, this does not exist in everyday life. Many different vernacular beliefs and practices, although often highly criticised by the authorities or the Church, coexisted peacefully alongside official Church teachings<sup>16</sup>. In Slavic vernacular beliefs and practices, for example, several folk traditions did not disappear under the Christian culture. Many Christian concepts, symbols and texts

14 Newer scholarship on religiosity since the Medieval times has started questioning the meaning of the concept of successful “Christianisation” with some scholars claiming that despite this process among many European inhabitants (especially in the rural class) paganism (a troubled term in itself) never really disappeared and that the beliefs and practices defined under this term served to satisfy universal and transhistorical human needs not addressed by Christianity (Caldwell Ames, 2012, 337).

15 However, not even the importance that the Church had for the people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century could prevent it from being a subject of interesting folk beliefs. For example: in folklore, priests could play the role of the folk hero or a demonic figure. They were said to hold power to summon storms and direct winds (Porter, 1999, 261). Much like the priests, physicians could also be seen as healers or as sorcerers or as ministers of death (idem).

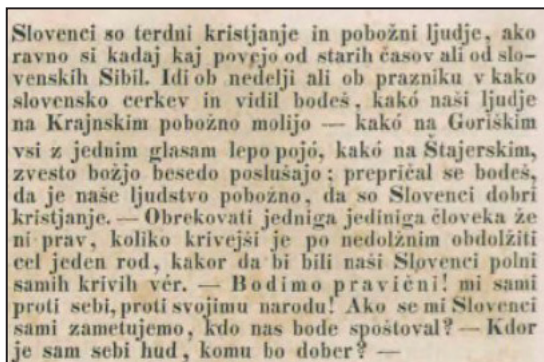
16 For example, in Biesnau in Burgundy a fountain was situated that was supposed to have miraculous qualities, such as curing every disease. In 1827, in the desire to put a stop to this “nonsense”, the authorities prosecuted a woman called Petrouille who made use of the fountain’s powers. However, the locals testifying of her behalf denounced against the notions of her guilt by testifying that she was a good Christian who lived her life according to the Christian faith (Porter, 1999, 259). As Tolstaya (2021, 9) also noticed in the case of Slavic folk traditions, certain aspects of vernacular religiosity, such as associated with life-cycle rites and everyday practical activities, were noticeably less influenced by Christianity. In these cases, Christian elements were primarily a way of sacralising ritual acts of a magical nature and rarely affected their mythological content. An example would be priests leading processions with icons around fields, saying prayers, sprinkling water to bring rain and assure a good harvest (Tolstaya, 2021).

were transformed in such a way that they continued to express older worldviews<sup>17</sup> (Tolstaya, 2021, 13), as well as new vernacular expressions appearing to express the needs of the people in their current historical and cultural context.

This mixing of different beliefs and their adjustments, however, is not limited to the past. Today the plurality of beliefs is more accessible than ever, and new forms of religiosity exist. Religious expression, despite seeming quite rigid (especially regarding institutional religions such as Christianity) is always in flux and adapting to the contemporary needs of society and the individual.

### THE ROLE OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY IN THE TERRITORY OF SLOVENIA IN THE CONTEXT OF FOLKLORE

Nineteenth century Slovenian folklore therefore combined Christian and non-Christian elements without much hesitation. However, from the point of view of identity, Catholicism prevailed. In the construction or rather “invention” of an ideal Slovenian, Christianity played an extremely important role. Being seen as a good Christian was at the core of the emerging Slovenian identity as it is clear from this article by Matija Majer from *Novice*:



Slovinci so terdni kristjanje in pobožni ljudje, ako ravno si kadaj kaj povejo od starih časov ali od slovenskih Sibil. Idi ob nedelji ali ob prazniku v kako slovensko cerkev in vidil bodeš, kakó naši ljudje na Krajskim pobožno molijo — kakó na Goriškim vsi z jednim glasam lepo pojó, kakó na Štajerskim, zvesto božjo besedo poslušajo; prepričan se bodeš, da je naše ljudstvo pobožno, da so Slovenci dobri kristjanje. — Obrekovati jedniga jedniga človeka že ni prav, koliko krivejši je po nedolžnim obdolžiti cel jeden rod, kakor da bi bili naši Slovenci polni samih krivih vér. — Bodimo pravični! mi sami proti sebi, proti svojimu narodu! Ako se mi Slovenci sami zametujemo, kdo nas bode spoštoval? — Kdor je sam sebi hud, komu bo dober? —

Fig. 3: Majer (1844, 172)<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> This is, for example, expressed in the calendar that in folk culture often only superficially accepted Christian content and reinterpreted according with traditional mythological notions of calendar time related to magical elements of agricultural practices (Tolstaya, 2021, 2; cf. Eliade, 1963, 171–172).

<sup>18</sup> Translation: Slovenians are avid Christians and pious people, even though they occasionally share stories of “the olden days”. One can see every Sunday or on a holiday the people praying piously in Slovenian churches. How they uniformly sing beautiful songs in Goriška, how they attentively listen to God’s word in Štajerska; you can rest assure that our people are pious, and that Slovenians are good Christians [...].

Morality and »correct« beliefs and attitudes as defined by the Catholic Church became inexplicably linked with the new national ideology that permeated all aspects of life – from acceptable social behaviours, reading materials, expressions of sexuality (cf. Polajnar, 2008; Remec, 2016) to practicing religiosity and folklore beliefs and practices (cf. Mlakar, 2021, 216). Having the “right” folklore was a reflection of the nation’s character. As folklore collector Ozvald Dular (*Novice*, 18. 1. 1865, 29) expressed: “Among the younger and more cultured people the stupid superstitions are, thank God, disappearing; we can only wish that they vanish completely.” Folklore that did not suit this type of criteria was not systematically collected and studied but subjected to criticism. The collectors did not accept folklore as a whole, it was not accepted as an organically diverse system of religious imagery and folk perceptions, but rather as individual narratives or practices that must first be subjected to moral evaluation, before being considered worth researching and preserving. Therefore, the folklore materials published in the newspapers and other media should not be taken at face value, as they often express more about the mindsets of the collectors themselves than about the realities of the folk (similarly in other parts of Europe of the time; cf. Porter, 1999, 256). The sources of folklore that included (unwanted) religious motives are thus lacking. A similar consequence can, for example, be observed in 19<sup>th</sup> century Polish folklore. Due to factors such as the religious intolerance of Polish folklore collectors, religiously (and morally – in the sense of obscene) inappropriate folkloric materials were not recorded as they were considered “heresies spread by the Calvinists” (Brzozowska-Krajka, 2006, 17). The actual peasants, however, were much more religiously tolerant and did not make such black and white religious distinctions nor did they condemn them (Brzozowska-Krajka, 2006, 17).

This created a confusing relationship and discourse of Christianity in relation to non-Christian and pre-Christian beliefs and practices as witnessed in *Novice*. While Christianity was seen as the only “right” religion and way of life, there was simultaneously great admiration and enchantment over what were seen as “pagan remnants”. They were seen as highly valuable and their preservation in written form was seen as essential. As the poet and politician Anastazij Grün wrote:

*The Slovenian songs, especially the folk ones, reveal an internal bond between the nation and its past. There are a few songs from pagan times that have survived. During the fight against idolatry the Christian priests fought fiercely to its detriment; however, they should be praised for that, as the compensation and blessing of Christianity was bountiful. I cannot, however, justify the efforts of the clergy who, after Christianity was already victorious, still continued their fight against innocent people by coercion to only allow liturgical songs to be sung* (*Novice*, 6. 11. 1850, 188).

Similar attitudes were observed in 19<sup>th</sup> century England where collectors simultaneously condemned the brutish customs of the lower classes and in the same breath lamented the “olden days” of imagined “merrie England” (Porter, 1999, 256). Much

like in Slovenian lands, their folklore was praised (when considered to be a Pagan remnant) or condemned (when the noble quality of the supposed “pagan remnant” was replaced by the notion of “superstition”) (cf. Porter, 1999, 258).

## ENCHANTMENT IN 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SLOVENIAN FOLKLORE

In order to fully understand the fascination that Slovenian folklore collectors and 19<sup>th</sup> century researchers had for “Pagan remnants”, we need to take into account the concept of “enchantment”. From the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the understanding of modernity has been incompatible with enchantment. The term “modernity” has usually been associated with concepts such as rationality, secularism, democracy, urbanisation, industrialisation, and bureaucratisation which left little room for enchantment, which is associated with things such as astonishment with wonders, magic, and mysteries that are almost intrinsically seen as part of the pre-modern world view (Saler, 2004, 137–138). In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the German sociologist Max Weber proposed the concept of the “disenchantment of the world”. Weber and likeminded scholars suggested that rationalisation that accompanied capitalism replaced mythical beliefs, spirituality, belief in supernatural forces and religiosity with secularism. Weber understood disenchantment as a long historical process, originating in the rise of Western monotheism in ancient Israel; the process was further boosted by the Protestant Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that, as perceived by Weber, drove the sacred from the world that was then devoid of mystery and magic. According to him, the process of disenchantment had its origins not in the scientific, but in the religious realm<sup>19</sup> (Houtman, 2020, 664).

Weber, however, did not develop a consistent disenchantment theory, therefore, his views are interpreted in various ways. To complicate matters even further, the concept of disenchantment is often accompanied by other terms that are difficult to uniformly define, such as magic or rationalisation (Radulović & Đorđević Belić, 2021, 9).

In the context of this paper, the concept of disenchantment is interpreted (in a similar way to Mladenović Mitrović, 2021, 90) as the idea of vanishing folklore due to the rise of rationality and modernisation in the modern world very much present in *Novice*, especially when referring to “desirable” forms of folklore. In this sense, disenchantment with the world is not strictly linked to the sacral any longer, but also with a wider array of the fantastic, irrational, and the supernatural (Mladenović Mitrović, 2021, 90).

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19 The concept of disenchantment as proposed by Weber has, however, inevitably been the subject of criticism. One of the critiques is that Weber did not notice that Protestants held a belief in the existence of magic (as manifested in the banishment of witches) or that he failed to recognise religion’s capacity to survive and adapt to modern times (Radulović & Đorđević Belić, 2021, 10).



Enchantment is considered to be a normal part of the human condition<sup>20</sup> and can be invoked in many ways, such as participating in immersive-entertainment experiences, watching a film, reading a book, encountering art or nature or meeting a religious or social leader or a favourite celebrity (Drinkwater et al., 2020, 196). Enchantment is often linked with religion<sup>21</sup>, but is, in my opinion, a broader concept than the sacred, the secular and the religious.

How was the disenchantment thesis reflected in folklore and folklore studies? As proposed by Radulović and Đorđević Belić (2012, 14), the great disruption in the nature of European folklore is the consequence of Christianisation that greatly affected the old beliefs. The second big change was connected with the modern age and the subsequent disappearance of folklore regarded as “traditional”; the latter also coincided with attempts to preserve and canonise (especially national) folklore (Radulović & Đorđević Belić, 2012, 14). What modernisation also brought was the disappearance and transformation of traditional cultures, including the loss of the so-called “classical” genres such as fairy tales or oral tales and the disappearance of genres that are more closely related to traditional ritual or at least their dislocation to the margins of the genre system. This was also accompanied by the marginalisation of the position of traditional customs. What also occurred was the fragmentation process (i.e., that certain examples of folklore survived in very small groups), the change of carriers of folklore (e.g., the ritual text transformation into children’s folklore) or the crossing over from the domain of active usage to the sphere of passive knowledge. Thus, the folkloristic conceptualisations can be understood in the context of the belief in disenchantment, of trying to save the remnants of the old world, not altered or corrupted by the Enlightenment or modernisation (Radulović & Đorđević Belić, 2012, 20).

As far as religion is concerned: representatives of 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanticism saw religion in all its manifestations – in traditional forms, in its mystical or heretical manifestations – as an important means of re-enchantment. However,

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20 From a psychological point of view, enchantment could be characterised as a complex and malleable psychological state regulated by a blend of perceptual, attentional, and interpretational mechanisms. Drinkwater et al. (2020, 201) give this description of enchantment: “Taken altogether, we propose that “enchantment” is best characterized as a special *arousal* (or altered) *state* that occurs when a person becomes engrossed within a cognitive- affective melee of “pleasant” ideations and emotions like excitement, surprise, awe, and wonder, *simultaneously mixed* with more “unpleasant” ideations and emotions such as uneasiness, dislocation, tension, and unpredictability. This juxtaposition is the embodiment of dis-ease or dissonance, which ostensibly results from a “person ↔ environment” enaction that disrupts an individual’s normal experience (and state of “ease”) with a sudden, unexpected, or profound awareness. In turn, this awareness fosters a transformative experience of presence or oneness with “a transcendent power, agency, or Other.” Such occurrences are net positive for most people, but there can be negatives.”

21 Enchantment can, as mentioned, be linked with the religious, but there are also “secular” forms of enchantment. It can also demonstrate the fluidity that is encompassed in this concept – for example: religion can easily lose its identity as “religion” and turn into something else, like entertainment; or entertainment can in some cases be taken as sacred or “religious” (Utriainen, 2016, 50). It is generally very hard to judge what religiosity means to an individual or rather where they experience it.

in addition to the other sources of enchantment, they turned to magic, alchemy, esoteric arts, or astrology; they also rediscovered pagan myths and folklore (Saye & Löwy, 2005, 436).

We could see the aforementioned fear of disappearing folklore as a form of disenchantment, the loss of magic, the mysterious, an idea that is also deeply rooted in Romanticism, that is one of the possible influences on Weber's theoretical work<sup>22</sup> (Mladenović Mitrović, 2021, 91; cf. also Saler, 2004; Asprem, 2018, 17). Actually, long before Weber's time the Romantics sensed the disenchantment of the world that was a result of processes such as industrialisation and urbanisation. They lamented the disappearance of the sense of community and the growth of modern technology as they saw it as turning nature into a machine, taking away the beauty, mystery and magic it once possessed (Coudert, 2017, 732–733). Nostalgia, in a sense, can be seen as "enchantment with distance" (Kitson & McHugh, 2015, 488).

After the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the concept of disenchantment has been used for different scholarly endeavours, such as a historical analysis of the decline of magic, the study of revival of magic through re-enchantment or the emergence of new religious movements and spiritualities (Asprem, 2018, 18). As Partridge (2016, 316) puts it, alternative spiritualities are a by-product of secularisation with the privatisation of belief and the decline of religious monopolies creating a thriving context for both this secularisation and privatisation. The process of disenchantment, as understood by Weber, thus, does not lead to secularity (*idem*), but rather to different expressions of enchantment that, enabled by our information-rich and self-oriented societies, facilitate the construction of new identities and the re-enchantment of our lives (Partridge, 2006, 320, 327).

## VERNACULAR RELIGIOSITY AND ENCHANTMENT – THEN AND NOW

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the territory of Slovenia, the concerns regarding folklore with religious elements were contextualised within the broader frame of nation-building and Christian values. While vernacular religion has always displayed a mixture of pre-Christian and Christian worldviews, this was the first time that it was subject to a broader moral evaluation with large scale political implications. As demonstrated in this contribution, while searching for the noble building blocks of the emerging Slovenian nation, the collectors and folklorists studying this material were faced with

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22 Actually, there are several points linking Romanticism and Weber's theory, such as viewing the traditional values of the lower strata of society in opposition to modernity, and the understanding of the 19<sup>th</sup> century socio-economic dynamics as driven towards the modernisation and rationalisation (Mladenović Mitrović, 2021, 91–92). While Weber did not use typically Romantic terms to describe the enchanted world as pure, authentic, uncorrupted, he did, however, see traditionalism as "magically motivated" and agreed with the Romantic idea of the peasants being strongly tied to nature. He also attributed "magical means" to "the savage" that was also attributed to archaic societies in the past; this is also one of the fundamental ideas in Romanticism: that before modernity man was uncorrupted by civilisation (Mladenović Mitrović, 2021, 92). This is in accordance with the evolutionist view of religion as previously described.

the unnerving realities of vernacular beliefs and practices among the common people that did not fit the imagined (and desired) dualistic system of noble remnants of “Pagan” beliefs and “advanced”, “truth-based” Christian beliefs and practices. What they actually encountered (besides orthodox beliefs and practices) was a messy mixture of religious orthodoxy mingled with undesirable non-Christian elements deemed “superstitions” and “tainted” Christian beliefs and practices that unapologetically reinterpreted and utilised Christian teachings.

Time and time again, folklore has been proven to be a living thing: one of its fundamental characteristics is its flexibility and adaptability. Even though there seems to be no room for motifs that are characteristic for “traditional” folklore in the modern world, a closer look reveals a surprising amount of motif continuity – although in different forms, adapted for the contemporary folklore carrier. For example, legends of ritual murder from pre-modern times were transformed into stories about kidnappings and mutilation in shopping malls or to stories about the thefts of bodily organs. In the 1980s and 1990s there was a reoccurring topic of ritual satanic murders, which is one such example of reoccurring and modernised examples of the ritual context return (Radulović & Đorđević Belić, 2021, 18).

In addition, the human mind is quite capable of accommodating diametrically opposed concepts – it can simultaneously believe in intelligent design and evolution, God and chance, destiny, and fortune (Morgan, 2009, 11–12). Such contradictory elements are also seen in 19<sup>th</sup> century Slovenian folklore, mostly collected among the peasants, however, on a day-to-day level their coexistence did not seem to pose a problem.

Since the beginning of the discipline, folklore studies have dealt with what can be described as enchantment, as this is the core of folklore, however, this sentiment was also enhanced by romantic and nationalist discourses of the time that saw folklore on the brink of extinction and as the last echo of a bygone past permeated by uncorrupted morality and a traditional way of life that needed to be cherished and saved from being completely forgotten. Such a view was a reflection of the exoticisation of traditional cultures (Radulović & Đorđević Belić, 2021, 14–15). In a way, it is quite ironic that modernity, thought to carry the blame for tradition dying out, in an epistemological sense actually created tradition and made it a modern product (Anttonen, 2005, 13).

Collecting 19<sup>th</sup> century Slovenian folklore can thus be seen as an attempt to save the last traces of enchantment in the world, however, this also contributed to its institutionalisation which is, paradoxically, a sign of rationalisation. Seeing folklore as “remnants” also made it an artefact that needed to be obtained, studied, and preserved (Mladenović Mitrović, 2021, 113). This was even more true for folklore that had, as they assumed, Pagan remnants that evoked a powerful sense of enchantment and thus fascinated the collectors. Folklore has, however, proven to have a remarkable potential for survival and adaptation – stories can adjust their content to new social, political, or other contexts; characters can change, or supernatural elements can even be replaced with seemingly rational ones giving the impression of disenchantment

(cf. Radulović & Đorđević Belić, 2021, 18). As argued by Coudert (2017, 707–708) there have been periods of disenchantment throughout Western history, and that they occurred every time anyone envisioned a previous age as being, unlike their own, enchanted<sup>23</sup>; however, new forms of enchantment arose each time to fill the gap.

Despite the often-claimed assertions of disenchantment of the world (cf. Thomas, 1991; Weber, 1993) and superstition and magic being replaced by rational thought, enchantment never really went away. Enchantment seems to be an inherent part of the human condition (Drinkwater et al. 2020, 196).

In the time of emerging modernity, enchantment became associated with marginalised groups within the Western elites, with the “primitives”, with children, women, and the lower classes (Saler, 2006, 696). The boundaries between concepts such as religion, superstition and magic have been in a perpetual process of being readjusted and redefined (cf. Walsham, 2008). The need for enchantment is powerful – it can defy rational alternatives and evidence that point to the contrary, as attested to in folklore, religious miracles, theatre, art etc. As far as the more “standard” religious expression is concerned, different expressions currently exist and are constantly emerging: from personalisation of religious expression to fundamentalism, creating new “alternative” religious expressions, all the way to ideologies of which some hold a quasi-religious potential. Even the confidence in science has its counterpart in movements undermining scientific authority (e.g., medicine) as well as in different social phenomena (such as conspiracy theories, environmental movements etc.) (Radulović & Đorđević Belić, 2012, 11). Additionally, as the scholar Alessandro Testa (2017a, 26; 2020b, 9) recognises, another form of religiosity has formed in recent decades: forms of vernacular or “folk” religion that are re-appropriations of popular beliefs and practices that existed before modernisation, along with emerging religious aspects of cultural heritage (especially intangible heritage) production and consumption. However, as pointed out by Martín (2009, 282), we should not consider these other phenomena as lower forms of religiosity or as pseudo-religiosity as all of them are, in their own way, sacred and “the sacred exceeds religion”. This raises the question of folklorism (i.e., the invention and adaptation of folklore, including using it outside the cultural context within which it was created) and the usage of certain enchanting folklore elements in cultural heritage construction and as tourist attractions.

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23 The first mention of an old and widespread motif of the departure of fairies (claiming that there used to be fairies everywhere, but that they have since left our world) in British history is in Geoffrey Chaucer's, *Tale of the Wyf of Bathe* at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Josephson-Storm, 2017, 137). This could be a sign of disenchantment in the folkloric sense, however, this obviously occurred centuries before processes associated with the later concept of disenchantment, such as modernisation and urbanisation. The fairies, nonetheless, continued to be mentioned up to this day and in the next centuries new forms of their departure from our world have appeared (Josephson-Storm, 2017, 138). Stories about the departures of certain folklore characters are also known in Slovenian folklore, however, to my knowledge there has been no systematic research done on them. Nonetheless it would be an interesting topic for further research.

People (at least the educated elites) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century recognised the every-day enchantment, magic, and irrationality in the pre-modern times (Partridge, 2006, 321) and made them a source to fulfil their need to be enchanted. They saw themselves on the verge of a disappearing world full of wonder and magic. While they saw themselves as representatives of the modern, rationality-based, and Christian future, they longed for the imagined world of the past, free of the constraints of their own society. While they were unable to recognise the enchanting, magical, wonder-filled elements of their own world, they projected the need for wonder into the past and into the lower levels of society. The very beginning of the discipline of folklore studies can actually be seen as a search for enchantment, for the lost world and the wonder-filled past (Radulović & Đorđević Belić, 2021, 21). This need for enchantment, the “lure effect” is, as Partridge (2006, 321) puts it, embodied in the term “occulture” that, similarly to pre-modern times, thrives beyond the specialist theologies and rituals of the official religions. It is part of the culture that “belongs to the people” (*idem*) and is in that sense closely connected with the notion of vernacular religion. While today we are freer to express the need for enchantment, be it in neo-Pagan religiosity, in nature, participating in immersive-entertainment experiences, in meeting a socio-religious leader, in fantasy films or cultural heritage (cf. Drinkwater et al., 2020, 196), we often still look to the past as a source of magic and awe that we feel are being suffocated and are lacking due to the demands of everyday life.

## DRAGOCENI OSTANKI PRETEKLOSTI IN VRAŽEVERNE NEUMNOSTI: RELIGIOZNOST, NACIONALIZEM IN OČARANOST V SLOVENSKI FOLKLORI IZ 19. STOLETJA

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### POVZETEK

*Prispevek na primeru slovenske folklore druge polovice 19. st. predstavlja do sedaj še neraziskano tematiko prepletanja folklore, vsebujoče religiozne elemente, z na Slovenskem dominantno katoliško religijo ter vlogo te folklore v izgradnji slovenskega naroda. Avtorica na podlagi analize objav v Kmetijskih in rokodelskih novicah ugotavlja obstoj nekonsistentnega diskurza o vernakularni religioznosti, na katero so zbiralci naleteli med kmeti: vse, kar je bilo povezano s krščanstvom, je bilo vrednoteno pozitivno, nekrščanski elementi v folklori pa so bili ali visoko cenjeni (če so bili dojeti kot »poganski ostanki«) ali pa ostro obsojani (če so bili dojeti kot »vraževerje«). Folklorja je morala odražati karakter »pravega Slovenca«, zato je bila podvržena moralnemu ocenjevanju in selekciji, vrednotilo se jo je na podlagi njene »uporabnosti« v procesu razvijajočega se slovenskega nacionalizma, s katerim je bilo tesno povezano tudi krščanstvo. Slednje je predstavljalo merilo za vrednotenje vseh drugih verovanj in praks, s katerimi so se zbiralci srečali med kmečkim prebivalstvom. Pri interpretaciji dojemanja folklorja v 19. st. se avtorica prispevka nasloni tudi na koncept »očaranosti« (angl. »enchantment«), ki mu slovenski folkloristiki še nismo posvečali veliko pozornosti. V iskanju zaradi modernizacije domnevno izginjajoče očaranosti so namreč slovenski intelektualci projicirali čarobnost in skrivnostnost v preteklost in v nižje sloje družbe. Vernakularna religioznost 19. st. na Slovenskem se kljub poskusom moralnega vrednotenja in discipliniranja spodbujanega s strani graditeljev slovenskega naroda in katoliške Cerkve kaže kot izrazito pluralna, hkrati pa članek osvetljuje ideološke reinterpretacije folklorja z religioznimi elementi v nacionalne namene. Izvirni doprinos članka predstavljata analiza uporabe in reinterpretacije folklorja z religioznimi elementi v nacionalne namene ter vloga koncepta »očaranosti« pri dojemanju tedanje folklorje.*

*Ključne besede: religioznost, nacionalizem, očaranost (angl. enchantment), slovenska folklorja, 19. stoletje*



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