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# Between the lines

## Designing conversational folklore based on the Vodice celebrations in Macedonia

### Summary

The monograph, on the basis of which I commence the habilitation degree procedure, presents the results of 10 years of research (2007–2017) focused on two goals: 1. Finding the way out of the ontic impasse of folklore as a science created by dominating narratives, i.e., philology and ethnology (anthropology), functioning on the periphery of scientific trends, to which the methods, tools and arrangements of other disciplines refer only occasionally and which is at risk of loss of continuity; 2. A critical presentation of the way in which images of the past and knowledge of the past are maintained and transmitted by ritual practices. In other words, this means the rediscovery of the ceremony by placing it in the proper (initial for creating foundation history) historical context.

The synergistic effect of combining both goals is to design methods for folklore research, called “folkloristic conversation”, based on the conversational potential of this field and which implement unique folklore inter- and transdisciplinarity characteristic for folklore studies. Having discovered it through listing contradictions in discourses that discuss, directly and indirectly, issues of folkloric sources, I apply the conversational potential of folklore to the source material of living folklore that is still being written, reproduced and recorded (written and recorded) in today’s Macedonia (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – FYROM), on one of the most media-covered calendar days in Macedonia, known as the Epiphany of the Lord, the Baptism of Christ in Jordan, Epiphany, Vodice.

The basis of research is its source material: 1. existing material, i.e. printed, manuscripts of decrypted recordings, manuscripts, audio and audio-video records, photographic documentation consisting of verbal rituals and ethnographic descriptions; 2. produced, i.e. the results of field research, mainly in-depth interviews and participant observation, conducted in Macedonia from February 2011 to January 2014.

Both the selection of the main goals and the sources for their implementation show the effect of research oriented towards small narration, overlooked, silenced, reluctantly noticed and undertaken primarily due to its inconvenient relationship with the dominant story. The initial assumption is that the characteristics of folklore research should be sought in the

beginnings of literature's formation, in the case of Slavonic literature with the adoption of Christianity, and thus the "moment" in which Slavic oral transmissions were given the characteristics of the Other, located below, and according to the dogmatic message, less valuable than the word of God. The reading of Slavic literature that I propose, which first and foremost reaches back to Mickiewicz's discourse of memory and the specificity of oral narrative related to it, and then interpreting sources in the methodological network of oral-literary references by Walter Ong, Grzegorz Godlewski, Paul Zumthor, Mark Prejs among others, results in the following: a departure from the dominant story (great narration) about science (literary studies [Slavic]) and the subject of its research; the inclusion, based on the principle of equality (assumed, although we do not know if it is achieved) of research on texts in the field of small narration, i.e. oral literature ; the restoration of a verified voice, subjected to critical reflection and a legibly rejected romantic memory of the word, and the location of historico-literary and problematic studies at the opposite pole. In this way, I pave the way to the explication of the contemporary *à rebours* perception of the relations between Slavic oral and literary messages. I construct the notion of an 'inalienable word of the living present' as a subjectified view on the subject of folklore research, eliminating the contradiction between the gaze of the field researcher who produces the sources and the 'armchair' academic that uses such previously generated sources.

This paper shows that the subjectivity of folkloric subject of research stems from the sender (verbalizing)-supplemental indivisibility. It is therefore founded on man as an individual who is part of a social group, and his corporeality. The subjectivity of the source of folklore research provides folklore and the science that studies it with the ability to survive even in the changing conditions of modern times. The change that took place after the adoption of writing and its continuation and development under the scientific and social conditions of lower valuation did not lead to the disappearance of 'oral literature', but to its active participation in social life in chameleon-like forms tailored to the circumstances and group needs.

The viewpoint of an empowered source of folklore research "imposes" a participant perspective, which cannot at the moment be attributed to the executed *verbum* past moment, although of course it can speak, for example, about its content relationships with messages previously recorded. In this way, the question of researching the source's perception, its production and acceptance co-existence, and motility and maneuverability is set in motion to be discussed in the next chapter. A source is treated as being composed of information denoted in knowledge in the research process (of the group that produces it), and generating the question of exploratory participation. This source does not imply any obligation to participate directly in the oral transmission being analyzed, but renders the issues of the bodily experience of production motivated.