

JANEZ TRDINA AND WASHINGTON IRVING: ON THE GENESIS OF FICTION IN THEIR SHORT NARRATIVES THROUGH A COMPARATIVIST LENS¹

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Abstract

Following a short overview of Slovenian literary historians' views on Trdina's folk tales, the article offers a comparative analysis of two short stories, Washington Irving's "Rip van Winkle" and Janez Trdina's "Rajska ptica" (The Bird of Paradise, in the collection *Bajke in povesti o Gorjancih* [*Tales from the Gorjanci Hills*]), including aspects of fictionalization in the respective narratives. This is the first time attention has been drawn to Trdina's transformation of the folk tradition of Kralj Matjaž (King Matthias), which is compared to Irving's reworking and expansion of the folk tale, indicating their common basis in a long tradition. Finally, the article treats the values and ideology, the socio-historical, ethic, and socio-cultural traits of both works and their literary historical positions.

Key words

Fiction, folkloristic prose, Rajska ptica (bird of paradise), Rip van Winkle, kralj Matjaž (King Matthias)

Trdina's role in the development of Slovenian short prose narratives, literary life of the second half of the nineteenth century, and in Slovenian literature in general has been studied by a number of Slovenian literary historians, from Ivan Grafenauer, Ivan Prijatelj, Anton Slodnjak, Janez Logar, Boris Paternu, and Jože Pogačnik to Matjaž Kmecl and Gregor Kocijan. They confirm his prominence among the writers of folkloristic prose (Paternu), or among the representatives of folkloric realism (Slodnjak). Such writers were the pioneers and practitioners of a humble tradition of artistic prose in Slovenian. They took their inspiration from the emancipatory initiatives of the Enlightenment, Herder's philosophy of culture, and a romantic cultural nationalism, which led them to write down or imitate oral folk narratives. From approximately the 1850s their writing filled the newly established Slovenian newspapers and magazines, born of the revolutionary atmosphere of 1848. However, since the second half of the nineteenth century was a period of growing realism in both foreign and Slovenian literature, and Trdina presented his masterpiece of folkloristic prose *Tales from the Gorjanci Hills* to the public in the early 1880s, thirty years after the first wave of folkloristic prose, literary historians eventually

¹ Translated by Luka Rejec and the author.

focused their attention elsewhere. They found the peaks of realism particularly in Jenko's, Jurčič's, and Kersnik's short stories, while Trdina's narratives and their didactic elements were connected to a belated Enlightenment (Kos 2001: 118–22).

However, the canonization of Trdina's opus was not complete with these literary historians' treatments. Already with Logar and Paternu, one notices a shift in focus from Trdina's folkloristic prose to his longer works.² Recently, younger literary historians have expanded the corpus to include posthumously published works, including those that Trdina did not write for publication, and they have emphasized the realistic and naturalistic elements in them (Štabi and Kramberger 1987; Schmidt 2003; Dolgan 2005). A number of writers have also drawn attention to Trdina's works; for example, Ivan Cankar was an enthusiastic reader of *Tales from the Gorjanci Hills*, and despite reservations regarding Trdina's pedagogic intents, he also expressed admiration for Trdina's autobiography, *Moje življenje (My Life)* (Zadravec 1981: 35–45). Another factor leading to Trdina's canonization in Slovenian literature is the praise often lavished upon his works by Lojze Kovačič, one of the most, if not indeed the most important Slovenian writer of the second half of the twentieth century.³

² As the editor of Trdina's *Collected Works*, Logar avoided chronological ordering and foregrounded the *Spomini* (Memoirs) by publishing them in the first two books. Paternu (1957: 52–56), on the other hand, paid close attention to the realistic elements of Trdina's prose in *Obrazi in značaji* (Faces and characters, the title is Logar's), *Memoirs, Bachovi huzarji in Iliri* (Bach's hussars and the Illyrians), and the ethnographic *Kranjci na Hrvaškem* (Carniolans in Croatia).

³ In his essay "Deset knjig za samotni otok" (Ten books for a desert island), Kovačič (1998: 271–73), for instance, wrote: "Imagine somebody who comes, not yet ten years old, from the bustle of the big city into an unknown rural area, that lies at the other end of the world for him. [...] The only thing he begins to understand are the folk songs – first only their vocal themes, as if he were listening to birds, then also the words, which bring this world closer to him, and finally, when he understands the language, it is the turn of the stories and tales. It was this role of a guide into a new environment that Janez Trdina had for me. First, as though the tales were nothing more than local superstition and customs, it was only later that I broke through their false pretence of ignorance and discovered that they hold within themselves universal meanings.

I could cite all seven Trdina's books of tales and stories in the *Collected Works of Slovenian Poets and Writers*, as well as his Mengeš memoirs, autobiographical writings, *Moje življenje* (My life), images of a Sunday carnival in Letterman's avenue ... but I would rather stop for a moment at *Podobe prednikov* (Images of ancestors), which could not be included among the *Collected Works* due to their rough and unfinished subject matter, which is why this book was published only in 1987 at Krt publishing."

Nevertheless, the transferal and dynamic ranking of Trdina's works in the Slovenian literary canon is not simply a function of the varied views of different literary historians, changing times and tastes, social conditions, and theories of literary development. His fuzzy position is also a result of doubts regarding the esthetic value of Trdina's literature in general. Logar (1957/58: 202, 204) believed it quite reasonable to doubt whether Trdina even saw himself as a literary author in his essays from 1870 to 1880, contained in books VIII–XI of his *Zbrana dela* (Collected works), including the text *Sprehod v Belo krajino* (A walk to Bela Krajina) and thirteen other stories, comprising a first, early version of "Rajska ptica" (The bird of paradise).⁴ It is quite obvious that a united canonization of Trdina's works was made difficult by his generic syncretism, swings between folklore, ethnographic notes, and fiction, his nationalist cultural stance and moralistic and didactic discourses.

The same factors, on the other hand, bothered ethnologists who wanted to use the collected folkloristic material for scholarly purposes. While attentive to folk creativity, Trdina was not a scholarly field worker and did not mark his own additions and reworkings, nor did he add dialectic or phonetic notes. Nonetheless, most ethnologists believe that a precise reading and analysis of his manuscripts allows one to distinguish between folk elements and what he added (Novak 1986: 205–207). This was, for example, Marija Stanonik's goal. When she analyzed the text "Pri pastirjih na Žabjeku" (With shepherds at Žabjek), she found numerous examples of folklorisms⁵ and thus complemented the "literature-centric" view of Paternu, Slodnjak, and other literary historians—whence she herself came—with an ethnological perspective. Nevertheless, she also discovered elements, in addition to the social and political views and events of Trdina's time, that a treatment of Trdina's literary model as based in folklorism could not fully explain (Stanonik 2005: 126).

In the following I will reopen the consideration of the early canonized tales, which have, in a way, recently been scholarly disregarded, and bring to focus the elements that turn Trdina's folk tales into fiction. I use the term fiction here to indicate invented, imaginative elements of the world in a *literary* narrative. This means that in the example I have chosen, "The Bird of Paradise," one of the tales that Trdina, at the editor's insistence, prepared for publication in the journal *Ljubljanski zvon*

⁴ Both Schmidt (2003: 311) and Dović (2005a: 76) also mention their doubts in specific contexts.

⁵ Folklorism (or falsified folk literature) is according to Stanonik (2005: 121) defined by a phenomenon or text being ripped out of context, generalized, picked over for certain individual elements, or by the reworking and changing of the original role of the phenomenon.

(Ljubljana Bell), I am interested above all in aspects of Trdina's literary realization.

In a global research process that has been ongoing since the start of the last century, literary theoreticians have applied close reading and a sensitive awareness of the linguistic traits of literary texts to discover, step-by-step, certain pragmatic identifying criteria that allow us to recognize fiction (cf. Herman et al. 2005: 166–67). Fictional texts are, accordingly, those which include characteristic paratextual markers (i.e., novel, short story, etc.) and which allow one to distinguish the narrator from the author. Other signposts of fictionality are: an extended use of dialog, reported speech and interior monologue, the use of *metalepsis*, violation of narrative levels according to Genette, such as the entry of an extradiegetic narrator or narratee (narrated reader) into the story world or the world of an inserted story and vice versa; further, the anaphoric use of pronouns without previously introduced referents to characters or objects, a present time effect in the use of verbal tenses and shifters that mark the origin of the narrator's speech, and finally, the use of deictics and spatial adverbs with references only within the bounds of the narrated world (e.g., Here to the right ended the city and began the marsh...).

Despite well-known discursive and other conventional characteristics, the fictional is not an independent, objectively existing characteristic of a literary text; rather, it comes into being in a dynamic communicational process of writing and reading. Therefore, a comparative analysis of "The Bird of Paradise" and Washington Irving's "Rip van Winkle," subtitled "A Posthumous Writing of Diedrich Knickerbocker," from *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1819–20) should above all be a careful reading of both texts in order to reach a better understanding of their actual charm within and beyond the framework of the respective national literatures. It might be inferred that comparing texts from Slovenian and American literature typologically cannot be a self-evident procedure, as it may give an impression of asymmetric incommensurability of phenomena—a comparison between a fly and an elephant. From a global perspective, the first obviously belongs to a small, peripheral, marginal literature, while the second—at least today—is part of a hegemonic, metropolitan, central, dominant, "colonizing" literature and culture. But precisely this is the perspective that is close and familiar to comparative literature: the comparativist lens, mentioned in the subtitle of the article, indicates a borderline, marginal, and yet creative and responsible insight of a border crossing discipline that transcends the limits of national literary studies, cultural history, ethnology, and literary sociology; it strives for the careful interrogation and close reading of texts, which is always an interactive process of communication, to answer questions regarding the specific singularity of the phenomena in question and their traditional, literary-historical, social, and cultural positions.

Yves Chevrel has emphasized that comparative literature characteristically tests a hypothesis by juxtaposing texts, which are products of human consciousness, in turn an integral part of a culture, with another work or works, which are the expression of some other culture (Claudon and Haddad-Wotling 2001: 13). The crucial procedures of comparative literature are comparison and the search for parallels and common denominators, which can be extremely varied: genres, subjects, themes or myths, dominants, organizing principles, complex ideas, and ideological interdiscursive configurations. Technically, one kind of research deals with relations of dependence, influences and sources between two texts, while the other with multi-directional, triangular relations between different types of discourses, where the intervention of a third text, to polarize the texts in the original comparison, is very important (Claudon and Haddad-Wotling 2001: 13–34). Daniel-Henri Pageaux (1998: 292–93, 302–307) and others he refers to in his treatise provide a good summary: the modern comparativist approach is neither a separate field nor a particular method, which could be the exclusive domain of this specialty, rather it is a heuristic procedure. It is based on the Piercean abduction and deals with researching analogies, equivalencies, filiations, and invariants, as well as structural and systemic relations of literatures and cultures in contact. Contact can also be set up subjectively, with affiliations and inattentively to historical process as befits the professional competences of the researcher. It must be directed towards uncovering and setting up a dialogue with the “Other,” towards self-reflection, and also to recognizing and acknowledging points of meeting and divergences.

Despite the fact that I have found no evidence of actual contact, of *rapport de fait*—such as was beloved by, if not even essential to older comparative literature—between Trdina and the story of Rip van Winkle, an observation through the modern comparativist lens offers sufficient grounds for discussion. Both texts are based in European folk traditions and on the motif of long sleep of an individual faced with enormous changes upon his return. This thematic invariant (archetype) has an obvious mythic source: the (temporary) departure of the protagonist to the “other world,” the afterlife, or the underworld, and a return home after a lengthy absence. In addition to their common denominator, it is worth taking note of some facts that supplement, and at the same time specifically contextualize, the initially only intuitively perceived similarity between the texts.

It is well known that Washington Irving (1783–1859) started as a writer of satirical, social, and socially critical texts, such as the pseudo-chronicle *A History of New York* (1809), that his later stature was consolidated with an extensive biography of Columbus (1828), historical books about Spain, books about travels in the American West, and other works, and finally a romantic biography of George Washington (1855–59). Over time he developed and changed greatly as an author, however, he was

also the first American writer to achieve international renown; in Europe he became famous with his collection *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*⁶ To the best of my knowledge, Irving has thus far never been connected with Trdina's tales, and Trdina himself never mentions him, not even in his exhaustive commentary, in *Spomini* (Memoirs), on the books he had read. Likewise, in Trdina's case we cannot speak of any kind of systematic knowledge of American history, literature, or culture⁷ comparable, for example, to his many years' of interest in everything Russian. Yet Trdina's literary publications in Slovenian newspapers of the second half of the nineteenth century temporally intertwined with the relatively rare mentions of Irving and his texts, and with publications of translations of his works or fragments of them that nevertheless testify to Irving's reception in the Slovenian cultural sphere already in Trdina's lifetime.⁸ "Rip van Winkle" was first published in Slovenian in 1885, as a

⁶ The surname *Crayon* literally indicates a graphite or color pencil, or rather a pastel.

⁷ Despite this, Trdina was not completely unmoved by all things American; for example, in his *Memoirs* he wrote that he read the books of the Slovenian missionary Baraga about the lives of the North American Indians, that he did not like James F. Cooper, that he sent a text to the Ljubljana newspaper *Novice* (News) regarding the "secession of the North-American States from the English crown," which the editor, Janez Bleiweis, chose not to publish (cf. Trdina 1946: 120, 138, 203), and that he read critically and with great interest of pedagogic topics, for example, ".../ in what spirit the youth is being brought up in France, Prussia, North America etc." (Trdina 1948: 61). He also worked on collecting material on Slovenian emigrants in America. It may be coincidental, yet he dealt with precisely this question in *A Walk to Bela Krajina*, which he first entitled *Slovenci in Amerika* (Slovenians and America) (Logar 1958: 413), where he initially included as tenth, among other stories, "The Bird of Paradise."

⁸ I found most of my data on responses to Irving's writings in the Card Catalogue of Foreign Authors in Slovenian Periodicals at the Institute of Slovenian Literature and Literary Studies at the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The first published translation is a story of fabulous sightings of the Muslim prophet entitled "Muhamedov vhod v sedmera nebesa" (Mohammed's entry into the seven heavens), adapted after a publication in the Viennese "Beilage zur Morgenblatt der Wienerzeitung" and published in the 1850 (no. 56) literary supplement of the *Ljubljanski časnik* (Ljubljana Newspaper), where Trdina also published regularly. Three brief mentions in Bleiweis' *Novice* from 1853 and 1854 are only reports of a translation of Irving's "Life of Mohammed" (*Življenje Mohameda*) into Czech. In 1860 the *Novice* published a set of two translations, adaptations of two texts from Irving's famous *Sketchbook*: "Kako nekateri spisujejo bukve" (How some people write books; nos. 11, 12) and "John Bull" (nos. 27, 28, 31); simultaneously with the last part of "John Bull," Trdina's essay "Kranjci na Hrvaškem" (Carniolans in Croatia) was also published. Three mentions of Irving in *Zvon* (The Bell, 1878), *Slovenski narod* (Slovenian Nation 1880), and in *Ljubljanski zvon* (1881) refer only to the

feuilleton in the newspaper *Slovenski narod* (Slovenian Nation, nos. 258–64),⁹ which is perfectly in accordance with the genre of the short story, which owes its rise and popularity precisely to the possibilities of publication brought about by the expansion of dailies. However, this translation came only three years after the first publication of Trdina's "The Bird of Paradise," in the literary magazine *Ljubljanski zvon* (1882). Besides, the slight possibility that Trdina might have read the story in a German translation, without mentioning it anywhere whatsoever, remains impossible to prove.

The treatment of the mythical pattern in both stories varies both in complexity and scope. "Rip van Winkle" is the story of a good-natured, lazy villager, the descendant of Dutch immigrants from a village at the foot of the Catskill Mountains, not far from the Hudson River, before the beginning of the American War of Independence. Rip avoids his angry, sharp-tongued and domineering wife in the company of elder men or by hunting, and one day, while hunting squirrels high in the mountains, he comes across a man in old-fashioned clothes who calls him by name. Rip helps him deliver a keg of spirits to a company of bearded, similarly dressed, stone-faced men playing nine-pins in silence. He serves them drinks, secretly pours himself a hefty dose, and then falls fast asleep. When he awakens and returns to his village, he notices numerous changes. At first he recognizes nobody, and nobody recognizes him; he discovers that his wife has died, that he has been asleep for twenty years, and in the meantime America has become independent. The village historian also reveals to him that he had met Hudson and the crew of his ship, the discoverers of the river and land around it.

Irving's narrative inspiration is also well known: it is reckoned to be "Peter Klaus" from Otmar's collection *Volkssagen*.¹⁰ A comparison of

publication of a Croatian translation of Irving's *Izabranih črtic* (Selected novelettes) by the Matica hrvatska. A selection of quotations from Irving as the mottoes of two chapters in Jurčič and Kersnik's *Rokovnjači* (The bandits) in the *Ljubljanski zvon* 1881 (p. 139, 390) may indicate a wider reading of this author in the region than the number of publications would indicate, since educated people had access to translations of Irving in German (1826; 1875). In the *Slovenian Nation* of 1889 (nos. 296 and 297) an adaptation of "Božič na Angleškem" (Christmas in England) from the *Sketch Book* was published. A translation of the same story also appeared in 1893 in *Edinost* (The Concord, nos. 6–31). I thank Martin Grum for this information. There is only one other brief mention of Irving before Trdina's death, in the literary magazine *Slovan* (*Slav*) of 1904/5 (p. 188).

⁹ For this piece of information I also thank my colleague Martin Grum. The next translation was made by Jan Baukart and published in 1922 in the collection *Šest angleških povesti* (Six English stories).

¹⁰ Otmar is the pseudonym of Johan C. C. Nachtigal (1753–1819).

“Peter Klaus” (Nachtigal 2000) with Irving’s story does indeed demonstrate a stunning similarity, above all with its central part, from Rip’s encounter with a stranger to his realization of the changes that have come to pass upon his return home; this even led to public suspicions that his story was plagiarized (Reitz 2005). The use of Dutch-American colonial beliefs and customs in the text demonstrates, however, that besides German sources, Irving also borrowed material from Dutch literary and folk tradition (cf. Funk 1986) and, as more detailed research has shown (Zlogar 1982), even from Dutch genre painting. Additionally, Irving offered another version, or rather a reworking, of the Rip van Winkle story in the paratext “Poscript,” which points to the folk traditions of Native Americans, where he also “explains” how the river got its name. The extensive and varied paratexts, the introduction of the fictional author Diedrich Knickerbocker (one of Irving’s personas and the fictive author of *A History of New York*), among whose legacy was discovered the story of Rip, the reworking of the mythical scheme and the expansion of the plot with numerous details resulting from the setting in a stylized Dutch-American environment, the playful allusions to Irving’s *History of New York*, the ironically commented return of Rip into a time of democracy—all these may be regarded as the result of a cluster of acts of fictionalization. In the “Note” that is added to the end of the story, the fictive author D.K., who initialed the work, playfully alludes to its similarity with a German folk tale about Frederick Redbeard, who sleeps in a cave in the Kyffhäuser mountains in central Germany,¹¹ and humorously concludes with an ambiguous and ironic fictional frame that places the entire account “beyond any doubt” by representing the relation between Rip as the speaker and himself as the reliable recorder who swears to the authenticity of the miraculous events and fantastic apparitions, saying that he saw a certificate taken before a country justice and signed with a cross (as illiterate people would do) in the justice’s own handwriting.

Trdina’s tale¹² is much shorter and narratively more elementary. The good count goes hunting with his companions and while tracking a bear wanders into a wondrous grove in which a single bird with a golden beak is singing. In a trance, he listens for what he thinks is half an hour, and then sets off for home. However, upon his return he notices that much has changed. Peasants tell him of injustices under their new lord, ever since the last one was torn apart by a bear in the Gorjanci Hills. The count realizes

¹¹ When Frederick’s red beard has grown thrice around the table upon which he sleeps, he will awaken and make Germany the greatest country in the world. The tale relays an international subject, similar to Slovenian folk tales of king Matthias (Matjaž), something that has already been attested to by ethnologists (Matičičetov 1958: 104).

¹² Trdina uses the term *bajka* ‘tale’ inconsistently and regardless of genre (Stanonik 2005: 122).

from his conversations that he has been gone for thirty years; he reveals his identity to the peasants and leads their rebellion, as they mercilessly take revenge against the cruel successor.

This story evidently merges two similar motifs. The titular motif or myth of the bird of paradise and its seductive singing, which causes years to seem as moments to the listener, is known also from the legend of the monk who wandered into the Garden of Eden. It is widespread in folk heritage and in South Slavic literatures (Logar 1954: 379), but also elsewhere in Europe. However, in the second part of his tale, Trdina also varied, transformed, and by derivation expanded the myth of king Matthias (kralj Matjaž), without explicitly marking his affiliation to this narrative tradition. As far as I know, Trdina's intervention in the tradition of the Matthias tales (*matjaževk*) has remained unnoticed. Through rearrangement and adaptation, concretely the replacement and elevation of the social status of the main protagonist from a monk (who listened to a bird singing) to a count (though not to a sleeping king) who wakens after many years "of being out of time" and leads his (peasant) army into victorious battle for "the old rights" (*stara pravda*), he simply carried out his typical stitching together of folk motifs.¹³ He himself has described such merging with complete equanimity (quoted from Novak 1986: 207): "I have often developed only fragments of folk tales, later expanding on them according to other tales or at least in a national spirit and according to folk manners. Some tales I have extended with my own additions."

Trdina frequently turned to the King Matthias tradition—for example, in his early work "Pripovedka od Glasan Boga ali Poskus narodne epopeje Slovencev" (The tale of loud God or An attempt at a national epic of the Slovenians, 1850) and in the thirty-first story in *Tales from the Gorjanci Hills*, as well as in parts of his notebooks from 1877.¹⁴ As regards

¹³ A similar, only more parodic, stitching together of motifs may be found in the "Pripovedka od mrtvaške kosti" (Tale of the deathly bone), which has already been noted by Logar (1948: 379) as another example of Trdina's use of the motif of the rapid passage of time in heaven; however, the order is inverted in a way that the "temporal" motif from the beginning of "The Bird of Paradise" is introduced only in the conclusion and the main protagonist, who is the "victim" of the deathly bone, is linked to the opening motif found in the title. In *A Walk to Bela Krajina* there are also summaries of several varieties of the myth of crown prince Marko, who sleeps beneath Klek: soon he will awaken and chase away all enemies, including Napoleon, or rather he has already awoken, but has not let people recognize him, or he may even be Napoleon himself (cf. Trdina 1958: 334).

¹⁴ Trdina wrote, for example (cited in Matičetov 1958: 107, 140): "Before 1848 people spoke: King Matthias will do away with statute labor and tithes, and ruin the nobles. Now: King Matthias will destroy the Antichrist and those who will support him." Or: "They talk of king Matthias, how he will beat ruthless lords, as a woman said: This 'story' was certainly made up by serfs, who

the latter, Milko Matičetov has pointed out that, save for one, they were all arbitrary reworkings, since nowhere in known folk tradition does king Matthias punish his counts, nor do they ever revolt with rage and fury (cf. Matičetov 1958: 107, 120, 140). On the other hand, these fragments are an interesting “missing link” in the transformation of folk tradition in “The Bird of Paradise,” because in the very same element that Matičetov states is certainly Trdina’s own invention—the ruler’s alliance with his peasants against his counts and noblemen—is preserved the ruler’s original name: king Matthias. Somewhat unusually, and going counter to this connection, is the fact that these notes were written later than the variant of “The Bird of Paradise” in *A Walk to Bela Krajina* dating to the years 1873 and 1874. However, if we are satisfied with assumptions, it may be quite possible that his notebooks are transcripts of his own earlier writings, which were not preserved.

We may easily compare the stories on the basis of their common elements, but it is also necessary carefully to detail the specificities that divide them. The texts speak of the miraculous or fantastic experiences of their main protagonists, both of whom question their identity. They are placed in a partly concretized, yet heavily stylized natural surrounding and a village or village-castle social environment, place, and time (the latter being the most undefined element in Trdina’s tale). The invariant with the central motif of long sleep, a twenty- or thirty-year long “falling out” of time and confrontation with great political and social changes upon return, probably has its sources already in ancient times.¹⁵ We only have to recall Odysseus’s departure for another world, the wonderful singing of strange birds (Sirens) and his return home after twenty years, his hiding and demonstration of identity and his revenge. In the denouement of both author’s texts, however, we find differences already at the basic level of plot, that determine the

suffered so in their days.” Further: “Then all will be well in the world, when the emperor, peasant and soldier will join together. The peasant will live best under King Matthias, Emperor Joseph, and Napoleon. King Matthias will come back to save the peasants from the lords. It will be best in the world when there will be one flock, one shepherd, that is, when the world will be all one land with one emperor; all wars will end and taxes will be so low that each and everyone will live like a lord.” Also: “Emperors would help peasants more if they weren’t scared that the lords would strangle them. The lords ruined king Matthias, emperor Joseph and Napoleon and every king who stood by the peasants. The lords threw emperor Joseph and Napoleon in jail and fettered them with golden shackles, they would have done the same to king Matthias, had not God in his strange way protected him, hiding him in the mountain, where he sleeps upon a stone table, until the allotted time arrives, when he will awaken and rise to revenge.”

¹⁵ One of the oldest examples of this myth is the seventy-five year sleep of Epimenides, reported by Diogenes Laertius (Reitz 2005).

works' meaning, ideological values, socio-historical, ethical, and cultural specificities.

The differences are very noticeable even in the formal, poetological, and stylistic features of the works and their relation to their folk generic sources. In Trdina's case, an explicit folkloristic stylization and imitation of the poetics of folk narratives dominate. This is quite obvious in his somewhat robust tone, without irony and dark humor. His style is economical, sparing in its ornament, and forms a simple narration from an external perspective, without the narrative elements typical of fiction, such as deictics indicating the spatial and temporal location of the narrator within the fictional world, and without psychological insights, but with quick alternations of events and states, the use of typical narrative formula, simple parallel repetitions of narrative actions, and self-evident transitions into the fantastic.¹⁶ In tune with the introduction of the narrative conventions of realism in Slovenian literature of the 1880s, there seem to be only the following elements: a relatively comprehensive, though not realistic, stylized reporting of social injustices with the aid of folk sayings and hyperbole, an actualist allusion to the baron of Hmeljnik,¹⁷ and a comparatively "intact" illusion of the possible world, which is not disclosed as a fiction or a play upon it within the text.

In contrast, Irving's style is subjective, sometimes expressly poetic; it tends towards irony, parody, and satire,¹⁸ and distances itself from its folk sources in favor of a "polished" elegance reminiscent of Walter Scott (Hedges 1988: x–xi; Gray 2004: 106), thus swinging between sentimentality and humorously pointed aphorisms. Irving's narration is generally leisurely. Details are worked over with a varied selection of literary, folk, and even visual art sources and spiced up with allusions to historical characters and revolutionary events from American and European history, which assume symbolic meaning (Blakemore 2000), but his psychological characterization is quite stereotypical. Compared to Trdina's tale, the teleology of Irving's story and its causal links are more complex and narratively refined: whereas, for example, in "The Bird of Paradise" the count's unexplainable experience in the grove is in what follows completely

¹⁶ Marko Juvan (1998) wrote in greater detail of the relation between folk tales and artistic stories in his analysis of Cankar's tale "Potepuh Marko in kralj Matjaž" (The tramp Marko and King Matthias).

¹⁷ In the first version the violent lord was still named rather abstractly: Baron Hudič (Baron Devil). In the modified version, published in *Tales from the Gorjanci Hills*, the baron had become an obvious reference to the actual, nearby living German noble landowner Wambolt Umstadt, known to the contemporary readers for his miserly ways and poor treatment of commoners (Logar 1954: 380).

¹⁸ More on Irving's rhetorical strategies and specific usage of humor can be found in Sutherland (2003: 15–56).

glossed over, it is precisely the mythical “rational interpretation” of the contents of Rip’s experience in the mountains, whose effect is (lightly) ironic,¹⁹ that significantly changes his role in the community in the conclusion.

Along with the combinations already mentioned, which are far more complex in Irving than in Trdina, the self-disclosure of text as fictional is also more skillful. The same is true of the reach of experientiality and other signs of fictionality, which are scarcely utilized by Trdina. The distinction between author and narrator, for example, is barely indicated, whereas in Irving it is linked into a sophisticated game of hiding behind the supposed narrative instances of the speaker, the writer, and the editor of the legacy. Of the remaining signposts of fictionality, it is worth dwelling especially on dialogue. In Trdina’s tale we find more a case of recounted speech rather than a true dialogic structure. However, Trdina’s adoption of fictional characteristics remains in its infancy, and the tale maintains obvious connections with oral literature. Much the same applies to the approximately first dozen tales in the cycle. In comparison, the interplay of narrative, fictional, and stylistic conventions in Irving indicates a move away from the folk tale to the new genre of the short story.

Both stories form parts of broader narrative wholes. In Irving’s case this is a collection of heterogeneous texts, essays, travel sketches, novelettes, and stories bound by the interconnected values, opinions, and esthetic choices of the author’s persona and represented by the character of the melancholy, single American antique dealer and anglophile, Geoffrey Crayon, a traveler of England and a conservative, backward looking worshipper of her heritage. Among over thirty texts in the collection, “Rip van Winkle” is one of the few even to deal with American topics or have an American setting; it has something of the role of Crayon’s recollection of his birth country, though it can also “stand” on its own (Hedges 1988: xvii). And as I already mentioned, “The Bird of Paradise” was first included in *A Walk to Bela Krajina*, an ethnographic writing with educational tendencies that forms a cycle, intended to, as it is stated in the frame story, encompass folk imagination, a part of the “wealth of tales” of the lonely area of the Gorjanci Hills. They were recounted to the traveler, writer, and also narrator of the *Walk* by a certain woman from Podgorje over several meetings.²⁰

¹⁹ On mythopoetic elements in the literary production of collective memory in “Rip van Winkle,” see Horowitz (2004) and Scraba (2006).

²⁰ Already Slodnjak considered this Podgorje a literary character and Trdina’s roguish cover. The somehow awkward excuse, that “the purpose of my book demands that I announce them [the tales, A.K.] simply and briefly, without the charm of the poetic word or the verbosity of which some are undoubtedly worthy” (Trdina 1958: 69), may be read as an example of self-irony, authorial humbleness and discrete self-congratulation all in one, and part of the play in

When reworking his text for publication in the *Ljubljanski zvon*, Trdina left out the frame story, while his decision to include “The Bird of Paradise” as the fifth text in *Tales from the Gorjanci Hills* nevertheless contributed to cyclization of the set, as it amplified the central idea of the cycle, in previous tales only hinted at—namely, a radical critique of landed nobility, their followers and supporters, as well as their cruel and unfair treatment of their subjects. The creation of a cycle of stories hence intensified the emotional effect on readers (Chepelevskaia 2004).²¹

In general, neither Irving nor Trdina touched upon metaphysical questions in their literature; however, in establishing their relation to the profane social problems of their time they held quite different positions. This can be observed in the meanings, values, and symbolic reach of their plots and in their broader ideological, socio-historical, and socio-cultural implications. Rip van Winkle, for example, finds in his village a different, democratic, and contentious America, such as it became after the War of Independence (1776–83), but his outline of hasty new times is ironic and shot through with a nostalgia for the tranquility of the days gone by under the distant rule of the British king.²² Upon his return, Rip turns to a kind of producer of collective memory, with his stories he becomes the living link of younger generations with the past, history, and imagination, which is not far from Irving’s understanding of his own role as author (Springer 1988: 236). In the story we can sense the reflection of ideas that were usually understood as representative of Irving: political moderation and social conservatism, a bias towards the aristocracy, tradition, stability, order, and harmony in a rural environment. According to mainstream interpretations, all this was closer to the author than values such as progress, democracy, and urban modernity.

Trdina’s case was quite the opposite. Melancholy at the passage of time and a passive idealization of the past were rather foreign to him. His engagement was predominantly with the present and national progress, which he felt, despite his liberal stance, depended on the economically secure position of the peasant and a just monarchy. He was committed to the national awakening, to constructing national institutions, and

the self-disclosure of fiction within the framework of the heterogeneous travelogue-ethnography of the narrative whole.

²¹ Aside from cyclization, Chepelevskaia (2004) also foregrounded in her typological comparative analysis of Trdina’s *Tales from the Gorjanci Hills* and Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin’s *Skazki* (Tales) their implementation of satirical and fantastic elements.

²² In contrast to the usual explanation, that Irving’s and Scott’s works demonstrate a bent for nostalgia as a form of compensation for endorsing mercantile modernity, Scraba (2006) offered a wholly different reading: he argues that Scott and Irving are researching the politics of nostalgia, to expose the modern ironies of historical time and space.

enlightening the people, and was a staunch critic of everybody he saw as obstacles to these goals: the Germanized landowners, the bureaucrats, and part of the clergy. His commitment is in evidence in the construction of his texts and the poetics of his narrative, while Irving's aesthetics were not so directly colored by the author's firm political and other beliefs. Imitating folk poetics in Trdina's case may be considered a sort of contribution to the national demands that would project a proper national self-image; however, it is not merely a simple mask for his political opinions and beliefs, as can be also perceived in "The Bird of Paradise." For example, upon his return the Count encounters a situation which may be read as an image of intensive rural progress (Trdina 2005: 80): "Where before there had been woods, wine growers now strolled around their vineyards and where shepherds used to herd small cattle, hard working farmers now ploughed the land." At least in folk tales, however, this kind of flourishing and modernization seems somehow incompatible with inhuman exploitation of peasants, violence, and terror spread by the cruel successor; rather, we can read it as a concession to the conventions of realist writing, which were making inroads into modern Slovenian literary production at the time. The count's active response to the perverse behavior of the current rulers, the successful uprising, and brutal reprisals may indeed be explained ambiguously: on the one hand, eschatologically, as a program of social and political revolt to return to the "golden age," a vision of peasant democracy, and the just action of revenge justified despite external indicators of prosperity. But the improbability of these messianic and emancipatorial actions may also simply be read as fiction and as the author's vitalistic compensation for the subordination, the difficult conditions, and lack of legal protection of the peasant population under feudal rule; and also as a social and political engagement, which resonates with the revolutionary ideas of the March revolution, as well as a cultural and nationalistic symbolic compensation for the then prevalent position of the Slovenian nation under German overlordship, and a symbolic repudiation of the status of victim.²³ That kind of symbolization is not very distant from the literary representations of stalwartness in the style of Fran Levstik's *Martin Krpan* and notions of the constitution and rise of (Slovenian) national identity with the support of a just ruler, the Habsburg monarch, as were popular at the time among the Young Slovenian intelligentsia and politicians. But at the same time the discretely marginal, subjective "extension" that rounds out the tale and attaches it to the Slovenian tradition of Matthias tales about a

²³ Here one must not forget the utterly personal context of the count's thirty year leap through time: Trdina himself was, due to his forced retirement and distance from the principal centers of Slovenian culture, in a sense "out of time," only when Slovenian story-telling began to develop in the early 1880s, did he re-enter the Slovenian literary scene after a nearly thirty year absence.

heroic sovereign who unexpectedly helps his people in the struggle against “invaders,” also conveys upon it a more universal value.

The texts are sufficiently representative examples of their authors' encounter with a deficit in their own cultural heritage and literary tradition: the American, who was without proper specifics and was then battling feelings of inferiority because of English cultural hegemony, and the Slovenian, who had to deal with German cultural hegemony and was still in the process of a systemic formation. Irving's text responded to a need for the formation of an American myth and the transformation of American history into myth, while Trdina's text was without a serious grounding in the tradition of artistic narration. It converted into myth an allegorical image of current social reality, seen colored by the author's social criticism, which found itself an indirect expression—doubtlessly also in light of the ever present threat of censorship. Although even in the case of the somehow milder Irving we cannot overlook his criticism of contemporary American society (Blakemore 2000: 6–17), neither of them showed explicitly analytic tendency in fictionalizing the actual social problems of their times; while Irving fostered a light and entertaining narration, Trdina was in fact manufacturing folklore and often fell back on striking simplification, clichés and schemes.

Both writers are transitional personalities in their national literatures; they parted from the Enlightenment, tending towards Romanticism in Irving's case, even though Irving's early, satirical works still have an Enlightenment cast. In Trdina, Enlightenment proclivities can clearly be perceived in the values inspiring *A Walk to Bela Krajina*, the original ethnographic-traveler's diary frame story of “The Bird of Paradise.” Irving, in following the tastes of broader circles of readers and with an eye to the market success found in the *Sketch Book* a way to a mild, harmless form of Romanticism, that was in accordance with pathos, sentimentality, and imagination (Hedges 1988: x). But he also drew on something that has been called the “ethnographic imagination” and that represented a novelty in American literature of the time (Evans 1998). This recourse is precisely what makes his work comparable to the development of national cultures and literatures among the European nations, not least the Slovenian. He also strove primarily for an entertaining function for literature and thus discovered popular culture to American literature, which together with financial independence²⁴ also brought him international fame. Judging by the relatively numerous translations of his texts published in Slovenian newspapers of the second half of the nineteenth century, Irving obviously also struck a chord with the anticipated broad preferences of Slovenian readers.

²⁴ Irving was one of the first American professional writers.

Even Trdina, a teacher who was retired in his thirties because of his political opinions but kept a modest if reliable pension and wrote for prestige, so to speak, perhaps imitated folk tales in order to emulate the communicative success of folk literature;²⁵ however, more than to light-hearted entertainment, he was drawn to instruction and education. In “The Bird of Paradise” his instructive tendencies were still muted, which is also one of the reasons for its balanced aesthetics. His link with Romanticism remained the occasional sentimental idealization, imagination, and especially fantasy, yet he spliced them with a critique of current society and its anomalies, which may have blocked their free development; thus he responded in his own way to then current realist tendencies. It is quite probable that in this he showed himself more “a man of his time than a man of all times,” much as was Irving (Springer 1988: 239). As a founding father²⁶ of Slovenian fiction, however, Trdina will probably continue to evoke significant cultural and literary interest, if Slovenian literature will prevail.

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²⁵ Chepelevskaia (2004) also assumed that Trdina’s authorial choices (just like Saltykov-Shchedrin’s) were aiming at the artistically nondemanding common readers of his time.

²⁶ Here I allude to the conclusion of Goran Schmidt (2003: 311) that Trdina is the “father of our language and our identity.”

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POVZETEK

JANEZ TRDINA IN WASHINGTON IRVING: O GENEZI FIKCIJE V NJUNIH KRATKIH PRIPOVEDIH SKOZI KOMPARATIVISTIČNA OČALA

V članku analiziram in primerjam kratko zgodbo Washingtona Irvinga *Rip van Winkle* iz zbirke *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (Skicirka gospodiča Geoffreya Crayona, 1918-20) in *Rajsko ptico* (1882) Janeza Trdine iz zbirke *Bajke in povesti o Gorjancih*. Teoretsko se opiram na naravno naratologijo Monike Fludernik in teorije fikcije, iz katerih sem prevzela ugotovitve o pragmatičnih znamenjih fikcionalnosti. Primerjani besedili se navezujeta na evropski folklorni motiv dolgega spanja in soočenje protagonista s spremembami ob njegovi vrnitvi po dolgotrajni odsotnosti. Irvingov neposredni vir, ki naj bi bil Peter Klaus iz Otmarjevih *Volkssagen*, variira legendo o Frideriku Rdečebradcu, medtem ko je Trdina za svojo zgodbo uporabil folklorni motiv zlate ptice in motiv Kralja

Matjaža, čeprav je pri tem spremenil slovensko ustno izročilo in ime glavne osebe v splošnejše poimenovanje: Grof.

V komparativistični interpretaciji besedil obravnavam poetološke razlike, s katerimi se nakazuje geneza fikcije v obeh besedilih. Trdina je predvsem posnemal izročilo ljudskega pripovedništva in rezultat je bil precej rudimentarna oblika fikcije. V Irvingovi zgodbi pa je fikcionalizacija bolj kompleksna in pripovedno izdelana, kar prispeva k vzpostavitvi kratke zgodbe kot posebnega žanra. Tudi simbolne, ideološke, sociohistorične, etične in kulturne implikacije besedil so precej specifične. Irvingov družbeni konservativizem, politična zmernost in vzdrževanje distance do družbenih problemov njegovega časa so v nasprotju s Trdinovimi progresističnimi idejami, radikalnim kulturnim nacionalizmom in liberalno mladoslovensko politično miselnostjo druge polovice 19. stoletja. Avtorja se v besedilih soočata z mankom nacionalnega kulturnega izročila oziroma lastne literarne tradicije. Medtem ko se je Irving odzval potrebi po ameriškem mitu in transformiral pomemben del ameriške zgodovine v mit, je Trdina modificiral mit o Kralju Matjažu v alegorično reprezentacijo dejavne, vitalistične reakcije na tedanje družbene razmere, uzrte iz njegovega kulturnonacionalističnega in družbeno kritičnega zornega kota. Čeprav sta oba avtorja črpala iz razsvetljenstva, je Rip van Winkle uspel z zabavno, popularno funkcijo literature in uveljavil prehod v blago obliko romantike. Nasprotno pa ohranja Trdina v Rajski ptici in ostalih pripovedih iz Bajk in povesti o Gorjancih didaktično naravnost, medtem ko elementi fantastike kažejo na romantiko, dopolnjeno s prizadevanji za kritiko družbe, kar je značilna poteza slovenske realistične literature tistega časa.