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## **The Evolution of the Genre in Marko Cepenkov's Stories**

Trajce Stameski

Ss Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, Macedonia

In his famous "Autobiography" Marko Cepenkov is writing about one visit of Dimitrija Miladinov in their home, where the most famous cultural and ideological figure of the Macedonian revival in front of his father Costa pronounced the words " I collect them (the stories) to remain for time immemorial, when there will be no more such things. " This sentence remained permanently engraved in the mind of the young Cepenkov and these words made a huge impact on his future collecting and writing activities. After this point, his life was devoted to tirelessly collecting and writing down the folklore wisdom of all kinds. In the Macedonian folklore, Cepenkov has the status of an atypical collector of folk wisdom, who undoubtedly not only left us a lasting legacy of numerous folk materials, but also their quality exceeded the records of our other collectors. Today his collecting oeuvre could be seen in ten volumes of Macedonian folklore

Keywords: Marko Cepenkov, Macedonian folklore, atypical collector, Siljan stork, folk tales

### 1. The archive

In his famous "Autobiography" Marko Cepenkov is writing about one visit of Dimitrija Miladinov in their home, where the most famous cultural and ideological figure of the Macedonian revival in front of his father Costa pronounced the words " I collect them (the stories) to remain for time immemorial, when there will be no more such things. " This sentence remained permanently engraved in the mind of the young Cepenkov and these words made a huge impact on his future collecting and writing activities. After this point, his life was devoted to tirelessly collecting and writing down the folklore wisdom of all kinds. In the Macedonian folklore, Cepenkov has the status of

an atypical collector of folk wisdom, who undoubtedly not only left us a lasting legacy of numerous folk materials, but also their quality exceeded the records of our other collectors. Today his collecting oeuvre could be seen in ten volumes of Macedonian folklore. Vasil Iljoski distinguishes Cepenkov from other collectors-writers of folk tales in the Macedonian cultural environment indicating that his stories have "deeply impressed the stamp of his strong and original creative personality, which makes them easily recognizable among a multitude of folk tales, even with the same motives, but recorded by others. "(Iljoski 1981: 85) The reason for the specificity of his prose, which according to him is "antonyms in comparison with folkprose whose essential feature is the collectivity and the literal recording, "he is recognizing it in the personal creative part of Cepenkov and his impact on the procedure, not only in the writing it down but also in the writing itself, which is especially revealed in the folk stories, in which it can be felt that he is not only a collector or writer but also a creator" (Iljoski 1981: 84). In a similar position is the folklorist Dimche Najceski, who determines Cepenkov as a "collector-artist who has worked on the folklore with his own language, in his own style, and with his own composition." According to him Cepenkov "followed aesthetic norms of the folk tradition and as much as possible he followed the folk character of the folk wisdom, "but on the other side comes to the fore its author's personality as a creative impulse to become separate from the folklore matrix" (Najceski 1981: 141). In his structuralistic interpretations of the stories of Cepenkov, the theorist Atanas Vangelov points out the creative interventions of Cepenkov, which according to him "had meaning of something natural that, as the final result should give them certain artistic effects and stylistic forms of the folk wisdoms." It seems that these views of Vangelov are close to the ones of Blaze Koneski who as a first explorer of the work of Cepenkov claimed that "the most proper way to determine the attitude towards him, is if we talk about -the prose of Cepenkov, understanding it as something different from ordinary writing work ... he is enriching the internal core of the story with improvements, that already indicate the nearing to the methods of modern prose "(Koneski: 1954). According to some theoreticians, the advantage of the tale before other folk genres (e.g. fable or legend) consists in its' openness/incompleteness, which favors the possibility of additional interventions in motive and content wise sense. When talking about the tale, we are facing it's solid, stable and almost unchanging genre configuration, and on the other hand it is always open for additional new contents through the process

of contextualization in the different time periods and cultures. A second important factor in content enrichments of the tale is the role of the narrator and his choice: either to apply passive transmission of traditional norms, values and ideas without serious creative interventions in the narrative or to consciously modify and redesign the "original" material. The second case means unification of multiple factors, such as selection of topics, pre configuration of the standard motifs, improvisation, resemanticization, stylization and a step further for creative re-creation of a traditional tale and nearing the author's tale. Of course that we do not neglect the influence of the oral transmission and the role of the audience in the process of creating the tale, because often the "primary" form of the story varied depending on the wishes of the audience, or on the effect that the narrator wanted to achieve in the auditorium. Alexander Prokoviev believes that the main "culprits for the topic richness of the tale are exactly the anonymous transmitters and their creative talent and flair for artistic upgrading/grooming, and social, religious, and even ethical condition to which he belonged" (Prokoviev: 70 ). In general the openness of the tale for new themes and contents" is a necessary prerequisite leading to modernization of the genre. From a historical perspective, it means finally leaving the archaic concept of so-called discursive communities about which Michel Foucault talked, in which knowledge was protected and guarded within the community, based on the exceptional capabilities for memorizing and which was a privilege only to those rhapsody/storytellers who possessed knowledge of the epics (and other genres) that should be recited or eventually varied or to transformed. If we look from the perspective of the creative interventions of Cепенков, they generally do not disrupt the characteristic composite of the tale, rather his natural narrative talent, his knowledge of stylistic and expressive, theme and motif funds, as well as the established system of genre norms, which sometimes permitted him to intuitively intervene and cheat the existing rules and styles. If we add to this also his ability for hybridization of local cultural codes and new content from other cultures, then we can easily explain the unique look of his narratives. It is in the context of the last statement in this article we want to take a look at those key aspects of his narrative process, with which his narratives differ from the poetic norms of the classic tale. For that purpose we will present some of his paradigmatic tales, in which the intervention of the registrar directly contributes to the evolution of the genre. From theoretical discourses it is known that one of the essential terms for analysis of the narrative text

is the narrative instance, of whose identity greatly depends the specific layout of the narrative. In the narratology, the narrative instance (narrative voice) is defined as a position from which we recount and it is usually associated with two practices: first, when the narrative instance does not explicitly suggest itself anywhere in the text then we talk about the so-called external (omniscient) narrator; and second, when the narrative instance is identical to any of the characters of the story then we talk about protagonist-narrator (personal). The main distinction between the narrator who tells about someone else and the narrator who tells about himself or herself, is usually their intention to fictitiousness or the reliability of the narrated events. On the other hand, the concept of the narrative voice relates to the problem of narrative levels. And this can be especially seen in the narratives known as a story within a story where usually the difference between primary and secondary levels of narration is a result of the change of narrative instances. From the experience we have with the stories of Cепенков, the position of the external narrator is mainly maintained, and he is the one who introduces us with the story with the traditional genre indication "Once upon a time, there was...". But his longest and best-known story "Siljan the Stork" from the beginning shows several explicit indications of deviation from the traditional system of folk tale. Indicative in it is that the omniscient narrative instance leaves the voice to some of the other characters, so they take the narrative and through the stories that they tell make the integral composition of the story more complex. In the first story, the role of narrator belongs to the father of Siljan. The primary narrative level "Siljan stork" tells the story of pampered Siljan, who indulging in a hedonistic lifestyle (he wants to spend money but without country work) consciously refuses to adjust to the existential code in his environment. In this sense, the views of Siljan and his unusual behavior, visibly deviate from traditional values and cultural norms of the community, therefore it perceives him as excommunicated from it. The problem of impaired dialogicality between the subject and the collective (I vs. we), the narrator tries to overcome with the inclusion of the father in the story. The moment Siljan is disposed of, the father starts telling him the story of the two birds Sive and Chule. It is a tendentious story with educational character, a sign for character who through identifying with the unfortunate and sad fate of the two birds should correct its atypical behavior. However, the inserted story not only serves its pedagogical purpose, but rather proves as contra effective: it strengthens the disobedience of the character and motivates him to run away from home. In general

this mini-story fits the classic function: One character is warning another character according to the Propov typology of functions in the tale. But the fact that in the traditional story (especially in the Macedonian verbal literature) the narrative space appointed to this feature is often minimal, apart from the narrative of Cepenkov in which it is raised to the equal level with the genre, indicates his creative intervention and the ability to create more complex functional narrative structure (narrative into narrative). The second important aspect of this story can be seen in its ability to enter the second voice (the voice of the father), whose main intention is in fact an attempt to reconstruct the dialogue between the subjects. Cepenkov is actually articulating the famous cultural phenomenon about the Voice of the elder one, who in a traditional, patriarchal sense corresponds to the discourse of truth and conveys the idea of a voice that is always right and that should be respected. Also, insisting on the second voice of the father is an important concept in this story, because thus interference of opposite voices in social, ideological and cultural sense is achieved. And from narratological point of view, the insistence on a second voice in the story of Cepenkov means conceptualizing an innovative method of redesigning the omniscient matrix of narration which also represents visible enrichment of the genre. In the creation of the semantic aspects of the character Siljan especially at the beginning of the story, as someone who is separated / alienated from the environment, Cepenkov sets a solid foundation for a modern fairy tale in the spirit of the current European and even South Slavic democratic processes for liberation from the patriarchy and modernization of the topics. And the second inserted story in which the narrator is a man-stork-Adzi Kljak further enriches the arguments for the specific narrative procedure of Cepenkov. It tells about the unfortunate fate of the inhabitants of the barren island, for the fatalistic power of the curse from the ancestors, which is the main reason for their fantastic transformation from people into storks. In that sense this inserted story has not only a legendary character, but is also an unusual and rare example of metafiction. With that start the attempts to motivate the fantastic transformation of the characters, in assistance with other genres close to fiction. In terms of the composition, this procedure is a hybridization of fable and legend, which once again proves the creative principle of Cepenkov while writing the stories. Therefore, the fact that both of these aspects of the narrative procedure of Cepenkov are seen as a significant contribution to the evolution of the genre tale in the experience of the Macedonian verbal literature is not disputed. In

regards to the concept of the character, the story "Siljan the Stork" is a paradigmatic example also for determination of the character Siljan as someone different from the traditional model of the tale-hero. For the character in the traditional tale, we rarely talk about semantic "blooded" character, mainly because of the dominance of one major feature and the absence of basic psychology. Also, in these tales, the actions of the character are usually motivated by some mythological depth matrix and usually the narrative character doesn't experience serious transformation till the very end. Unlike the traditional model, from the very beginning of the story "Siljan the Stork" we can talk about individualization of character which then follows the process of its transformation. If at the beginning of the story Siljan is presented as an individualized character who fiercely opposes the traditional community norms and thus differs from them, the further course of the narration follows conceived in terms of taking Siljan back on the "right path", and that is the path of respecting the traditional values and norms. That is why Siljan regrets his own delusion. Although the conceptual level of the story prefers patriarchal code of values and beliefs (in their narratives Cepenkov hardly deviates from monological matrix of that culture), the explicit transformation of the character Siljan is an important step in creating a character who with his characteristics is closer to the author than to the traditional tale. In this text we devote special attention to the story, "Dunja Gjuzeli and the king's son," because it indicates the narrative flair and ability that Cepenkov has in creating a developed composition of the tale, and thus approaching "the methods of modern prose" as spoken by Blaze Koneski. "Dunja Gjuzeli and the king's son" is the story of the king's son, who after several failures and troubles will eventually marry the most beautiful girl from another kingdom. Its composition can be summarized as follows: The king keeps in the secret room a portrait of the beautiful girl named Dunja Gjuzeli. According to him, the girl possessed fatal beauty (once she looked them in the eyes she would burn them like a bright sun, like with the hottest boiling water). After the king's son sees the picture of the girl he falls in love with her madly, so the father subtly sends his son to look for her. However, at the first encounter the fatalistic force of the girl is not destructive for the king's son, on the contrary it is the factor of surprise that is determining because the girl falls in love with him as well. In the classic structure of the tale this epilogue usually means a necessary prerequisite for the completion of the happy ending of the story. But at the very moment when the characters are on the pedestal of happiness, the narrator introduces a new dynamic

motif twist articulated by the dragon who suddenly grabs Dunja Gjuzeli. In fact with this the narrator begins a new narrative cycle in which he assigns the main role to the assistant of the king's son, Patentlija. Using his exceptional capabilities he manages to free the girl from the slavery of the dragon and help her return back to the king's son. Once it appears that all the vicissitudes are over (the king's son and Dunja Gjuzeli are returning back to the kingdom), the narrator starts a new episode, so that he revives the forgotten king from the beginning of the story. Namely, after the king finds out that his son is returning back home, together with a girl, whose portrait he kept in the forbidden room, he tries to kill him. But, the king is prevented in his intentions by Patentlija, and that is how the king's son escapes twice from the death. Then the son finds out the truth about his father who tried to kill him. At the end, the king commits a suicide and the king's son marries Dunja Gjuzeli and takes over the throne. As we can see one of the key strategies of this story is the constant extension of episodes that drag the end late and set the reader in the position of permanent uncertainty about the fortune of the protagonist. In the Macedonian writing practice of the 19th century, this procedure is a rare example of what is called evolution of the stories or adhesion of more rounded narratives in a composition that leads to the kind of novelistic narrative. And in some other stories Cepenkov applies similar narrative strategy of grouping the episodes so that in his narratives exists a gallery of characters and they are full of twists, rotation of roles, repetitions and other narrative techniques. According to our own perspective, this creative shaping of the stories is one of the key arguments for the thesis that the narratives of Cepenkov are an important step forward in terms of the evolution of the genre and closer to more developed prose works of art.

## 2. Conclusion

In the end of everything said, we can separate several key theoretical arguments according to which, the prose of Cepenkov is different from the ethical and poetical terms of the classical story. In his narration, you can see change of narration levels, from external to personal narrator: the omniscient narrator leaves the narration to some of the characters. That leads to multiplication of inserted stories in the margins of the integral writing. This kind of narration enriches the composition of the story, affects the uncertainty to the reader, prolonging the end of the story. The complex

composition of the story, Cepenkov isn't constructing it only on the principle "story in story", he connects multiple rounded narrations in some of his stories. This system is called "chain of stories" We percept the artistic effect of this method like one of the key aspects for evolution towards novel kind of narration.

Regarding the imagination elements, the story of "Siljan the stork" is especially significant, because in it there is an uncommon interference between the realistic, imaginative and the genres close to him: the phenomenal and the weird in the same time. You can see similar mixtures in some parts of his other stories, because of which we often say that they belong to the so called miraculously "imperfect". In regards to the characters in the Cepenkov stories, regarding the quantity of collected stories, the multiplicity is evidently here. But when it comes to their nearing to the artistic character like in an author's tale, the example of "Siljan the Stork" is unique because he has indicators for a psychological determination. Regardless of the fact that his behavior and actions are motivated from a deep mythological matrix, still this character reaches some level of individualization. The iniquity of the character is detected along the story in which you can feel the transformation through the narration. Also in some Cepenkov stories you can see clear tendency to naming the characters with symbolic names ( Dunja Gjuzeli, Patentaliija etc.). If we consider the diachronic perspective of the story of the Macedonian experience, then all these establishments are going towards the thesis that Cepenkov's narrating experience had the biggest influence in evolving the genre. But on the other side we still cannot talk about true modern art story even though there are present inductions for modernization of characters and subjects. In the Cepenkov narrations, there is still that classic separation good/evil, stereotype and non-acceptance of different identities, strong patriarch influence and denouncement when deviating from the traditional community codex. When we talk about whether Cepenkov is the first author of an author's story in the Macedonian literature, we can establish that: on a composition plan, he manages to create complex narrative structures (stories in stories, narration chain), into his stories there is an attempt for individualization of characters, on a linguistically and stylistic level, his stories are none the less unique experience. Still, ideas wise, Cepenkov remains true to the patriarchal believes. That's why in some parts of his stories we have the didactic as a result of the patriarchal view of the world. That's why we can talk about the evolution of the genre story, i.e. getting closer to the effects of artistic forms



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