

Man Versus Demon: Interconnections between Incantations and Belief Narratives

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Abstract: The present paper examines the relationship between incantations and belief narratives, two types of oral genres based on human contact with the supernatural. Such contact attests to a dangerous disruption of the boundary between the human and demonic worlds and to the intensive efforts to reinforce it so that participants may return to the space they belong in. For this purpose, various verbal and nonverbal tools are used in belief narratives (gestures, objects, plants, sound or light signals, certain activities – such as walking backwards, placing a cap over the forehead, etc.). In contrast, incantations, an inseparable part of vernacular magical practices, rely solely on verbal communication with impure forces.

This paper will analyse the following aspects of interconnection between these oral genres: 1) the display of a genre within a genre – the presence of incantations in belief narratives, e.g., about dispersing hailstorm clouds; 2) the types of verbal communication with the supernatural in belief narratives (swearing, cursing, command, reproach) and their equivalents in incantations; 3) various motifs of protection from demons (counting the uncountable, using bodily fluids; thorn, fire, metal, broom, etc.). The consideration of shared elements in these genres that preserve the relationship with the mythological narrative include elements of the ceremonial context in which incantations are performed. I argue that some of these elements appear also in belief narratives, where they undergo a transformation.

Keywords: incantations, belief narratives, verbal charms, folk belief, demonology

One of the characteristics of oral literature, determined by the way it exists (its creation and performance), alongside the presence of variants, formulaicity, anonymous authorship, pragmatic usage, etc., is also the permeation of folklore genres. This complex phenomenon implies the existence of common elements that are adapted to the poetics of individual genres and their functions. In addition to themes, motifs, formulas, stylistic means, and procedures, common beliefs are also considered to be the shared elements of oral genres, although they themselves can have the status of a genre.

Numerous traditional beliefs¹ about the otherworld that exists in parallel with the human world, as well as the representations of otherworldly beings that live there, form the foundation of several genres of oral literature. Verbal charms, as “traditional verbal forms intended by their effect on supernature to bring about change in the world in which we live” (ROPER 2003:8), and belief narratives, as stories about supernatural phenomena and beings/humans with supernatural powers (MILOŠEVIĆ ĐORĐEVIĆ 2000:174; DE BLÉCOURT 2013:364), are connected through a complex system of belief in the existence of a powerful magical force that can have an effect on humans.

Incantations and belief narratives are particularly focused on the contact between humans² and demons, the consequence of which is the harming of humans,³ the endangering of their safety as well as identity. Besides the encounter, these incantations and belief narratives also refer to the need for and methods of defence, at the core of which is an awareness of the dangerous disturbance of the boundary between the two worlds,⁴ and various actions aimed at returning the protagonists to the ones where they belong. A strong belief system about the existence of a world inhabited by otherworldly beings is based precisely on the depiction of this boundary that separates it from the one humans live in. Every otherworldly being's crossing into the human space is a real danger for its residents, and because of that, these beliefs contain a great variety of protective actions. Research, the results of which are presented in this paper,⁵ is based on the hypothesis that such beliefs shape the thought and verbal expression of belief narratives⁶ and incantations, also defining their mutual components. This research is based on materials collected in the Serbian territory (from the writings of Vuk S. Karadžić until the present days), including about 700 incantations (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1982; ZLATANOVIĆ 2007; TIMOTIJEVIĆ 1978) and around 800 belief narratives (KARADŽIĆ 1972; ZLATKOVIĆ 2007; RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991; MARKOVIĆ 2004; PETROVIĆ 1999).

Even though incantations could be influenced by literary sources to a great extent (TOPOROV 1993:3–4), they belong to the folklore genres. Previous research pointed out that incantation permeates other forms of oral literature: ritual song, toast, curse

¹ By belief, I mean the most basic substance of a unique, collective understanding of the world, the meaning of which we do not debate, nor do we need to interpret or prove it (SAMARDŽIJA 2011:346), although it is a system that could be considered in its various parts or forms (“from customary actions or behaviours that bring about a desired outcome” to “fundamental concepts... that we learn through verbal narratives such as myths or through observation and interaction within our particular communities”, SIMS – STEPHENS 2005:56–57; see also: MULLEN 1997:89–98).

² More precisely, in verbal charms, it is not only the contact between a human and a demon but also between a demon and a possessor of “higher” and specific knowledge.

³ In healing rituals, injury is the initial impulse, in legends it is the final, the result of the encounter.

⁴ Physically close to human, different demons “inhabit a world of their own, and human beings encounter them as the wholly other” (LITI 1994:13).

⁵ This paper presents only the most frequent examples of interconnections between belief narratives and incantations, at all levels of analysis.

⁶ “When an exciting description of a supernatural experience spreads from one district to another, it becomes schematic (unnecessary details are dropped and new details are added), and the spirits’ activities, for example, become concrete and graphic. Although this product is no longer close to the original experience, it may nevertheless remain in harmony with the memorate tradition and a belief tradition of locality. Then it can be called a belief legend (*Glaubenssage*); its value as a reflector of folk belief is quite considerable” (HONKO 1964:12). About belief as the foundation of belief narratives and superstition that turns a narrative into a fabulate, see: MULLEN 1971.

(RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:68, 72), riddle, children's song, myth, epic poetry (VUKELIĆ 2014:245), and that there are elements that link a belief narrative to other prose genres (e.g., MILOSEVIĆ ĐORĐEVIĆ 2000; RADULOVIĆ 2012).

Taking into consideration the specifics of belief narratives and incantations (poetic/prose form, purpose, manner and circumstances of performance), I observed a few basic parameters that would help us establish their potential similarities and differences. We analysed chronotope, protagonists, relations between human and demon (the motif of encounter and the actions of demons, the way their activity manifests on humans, the motif of tragic mistake and defense: types of communication, action, and similar). I also observed the occurrence of one genre's existence in the other (adjustment, transformation, topic), as well as its permeation through other genres (swearword, curse).

CHRONOTOPE

The formulaic nature of the chronotope of belief narratives about demons implies a clear polarization of human and otherworldly times and spaces. Water, mountain, forest, rock, as undoubtedly marked *loci* of belief narratives, belong to demonic beings which usually reside there, and this is where men encounter them.⁷ In incantations, there are, among other things, spaces into which demons are chased by charms, since their translocation to human spaces and contact with people cause sickness and other misfortunes. In narrative beliefs, the demons can be found in streams, around watermills, everywhere near water (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:19), under stones (ZLATKOVIĆ 2007:490), in rocks, in a stone (fixed stone), in stone cities, in gorges (ZLATKOVIĆ 2007:537, 505, 546, 550); at crossroads, in willows (ZLATKOVIĆ 2007:495, 499, 529; for weeping willow, see: MENCEJ 1996). Example of incantation: "He scattered them on the water in the mount of Galilea, let them go to the fixed stone" (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:80, 81), "Go to the mount... there you will find a green meadow, and in the meadow a maple tree" (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:86), "in the blurred water, in the dark mount" (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:198), "he sent them to Kamen-gora (Stone Mount)" (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:93).

The spaces where encounters of man and demon happen in belief narratives and incantations are roads and crossroads,⁸ fields, brooks, and such. Bridges are also seen as meeting points: in belief narratives, the souls of the drowned would appear on bridges (ZLATKOVIĆ 2007:539), and as *omaja* (apparition, folklore demon that could cast an illusion on man), midday apparitions (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:26), and demons in animal shape – rabbit, goat kid, etc. (ZLATKOVIĆ 2007:546, 547). In incantations, the demon of sickness (named after the sickness it causes) also appears on a bridge:

⁷ It should be mentioned that in some narratives the space in which the demons reside coincides with human territory. The existence and operation of a witch, for example, is registered within the social area (town, houses), as is detection and inhibition (see: DE BLECOURT 2013; MENCEJ 2005:179); KARADŽIĆ 1972:301–305, s. v. *vještica, vukodlak ili vampir, vjedogonja ili jedogonja, mora*.

⁸ "...tradition notions about the crossroads obtain semantic and poetic features of the road, the way of life, life's destiny. In folk imagination, the road at the crossing is interpreted as a border between two worlds: the world of the dead and the world of the living" (BRITSYNA – GOLOVAKHA-HICKS 2007:271).

“Probodi are coming from here,
 Odovi are coming from there.
 They have met each other on the bridge,
 Odovi have come,
 Probodi have drowned” (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:205).

Departure for “no return” (incantations) (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:151; “no return field”, RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:70) semantically resembles the departure for the world of the dead, which is determined, for example in dirges, as a space of no return (*puti nedohodi*), and in belief narratives as the frequent locus of burial ground.

As an opposition to the human-like, there is also a geographical locality, usually the one which the community, for various reasons, considers as other and different (Germany, Bulgaria, etc.).

The time of the demon’s appearance and performance, the so called anti-time, is in traditional culture predominantly at night, but the transition from day to night (late afternoon, night, dawn), as well as noon, and certain calendar times (holiday, season, etc.), are also marked within this time. In belief narratives, we can see all the forms mentioned above, as well as the time defined by some historical event, such as war (POPOVIĆ 2012). An incantation also follows these encoded times of the appearance of demons and insists on the same time sequences as points at which they disappear:

“At what time you came,
 at that time you should go.
 If you came before dawn,
 ou should go before dawn... at dawn,
 at daybreak, after daybreak,
 before noon, after noon,
 before sunset, after sunset,
 before dark, in the dark, after dark,
 before midnight, at midnight, after midnight,
 before roosters, with roosters,
 before dawn, after dawn” (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:136–137).⁹

THE INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN MAN AND DEMON. ACTORS. CONTACT. ACTS

Like human beings, also witches, dragons, wind, plague, black cow, black calf, black hen sitting with black chicks can be protagonists both in belief narratives and incantations. Some of them literally appear as opponents (witches, dragons, plague), some function as helpers (rooster, black hen sitting with black chicks), while some have ambivalent characteristics (dog, wolf). Humans and demons are in opposition and their contact is a threat. Even though the effect of this demonic force basically means binding a man,

⁹ There is a specific, isolated, coded time for uttering the verbal magic (day, week, month, and year) (ROPER 2003:34; RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:160–176).

causing sickness, harm, or even death, the variety of manifestations in incantations is very wide and a little less so in belief narratives. What they share are the motifs of clouded consciousness, paralysis, blindness, unconscious wanderings, and fear. Examples of these are (in belief narratives): “She didn’t know where she went” (MARKOVIĆ 2004:117); “As he went home, he immediately got sick from it, because they can pierce a man” (MARKOVIĆ 2004:119);

“And he came to Jasenak and there he got caught in a wedding feast, a turmoil, a crowd, and couldn’t reach his home. He walked! And yet he couldn’t reach his home. And on he went, and when the day broke, he cleared his head a little, looked around – and realized he went all the way to Manastirak, that stream, he never went to his home, and he got sick and never recovered” (MARKOVIĆ 2004:141);

“He couldn’t find rest all day, he was all exhausted and ravaged, dead beaten and tired as if trampled” (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:29); “At the stream, *osenje* got on his back (...) forced him up the stream, down the stream, up the stream, down the stream – he was all scratched and beaten” (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:90).

In incantations:

“He has the head but no reason,
he has the eyes but no sight,
he has the tongue but no speech,
he has the hands but no deeds,
he has the heart but no strength,
he has the legs but no walk” (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:101).

Meeting of man and demon often appear in relation to the motif of a tragic mistake, that is, the different shapes of disturbance to the demonic chronotope (night, water, fairies’ circle) and the disturbance of demons (VINOGRADOVA 2015): “On the road to Županjevac, there is a grove, and every year there is a circle around it. The fairies are said to dance around it. Everywhere the grass is nice, and there – it simply withers and shrivels, and is not to be treaded on. It is a fairies’ kolo (dance)” (MARKOVIĆ 2004:114); “She treaded on the fairies’ kolo, she said” (MARKOVIĆ 2004:117); “He left and danced with them and later got sick and remained so for a long time” (MARKOVIĆ 2004:114); “If he stirred the water / did it smash the dining table, did it beat the children / did it ruin the poems, did it break the circle dance” (ZLATANOVIĆ 2007:514). Both genres in an almost identical way define the human responsibility for disturbing the norms:

“The fairies forbade the water,
you couldn’t water the cattle,
you couldn’t wash the cloth,
and I didn’t know, so I watered the cattle,
I washed the cloth,
and encountered the fairies” (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:102).

In a belief narrative, a grandmother explains to her grandchild why they had an encounter with a demon – “You are young, and you couldn’t have known” (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:26).

DEFENCE (MOTIFS: VERBAL COMMUNICATION, VOICE AND SOUNDS, EXCLAMATIONS, THREATS, ETC.)

Since it represents the defence itself, as a verbal part of a ritual complex where protection and healing are one of the basic functions (TOPOROV 1993:11), an incantation very often contains either images or expressions that attest to an encounter and defence of a man against an otherworldly being. Many actions performed in folk medicine belong to a system of protection from evil *per se*: from personified natural phenomena (wind, storm) to mythological creatures (USATCHEVA 2000:59).¹⁰ In belief narratives, there are also apotropaic actions in situations where the alienation and destruction of a demon is necessary. Such actions can be non-verbal, such as using bodily fluids (urine, faeces, or saliva), ignition, piercing with various objects, pulling a cap down, emitting sound and light signals, walking backwards,¹¹ using certain herbs (see: LEVSKIEVSKAIA 1999:51–52; POPOVIĆ NIKOLIĆ 2016:76), sprinkling holy water (KROPEJ 2003:66), etc. In its own way, the incantation’s text tells a story about this as well. Verbal forms, that is, the forms of communication with a demonic being, confirm the archaic perception of human voice as a substance that marks the space of this world (LEVSKIEVSKAIA 1999).

By its existence, as well as its amplified/weakened intensity, voice protects humans by banishing demons into a world where there are no human voices (such as a baby crying, a priest preaching, etc.), nor other sounds which characterize the human environment (MOROZ 1995). Narratives about encounters with demons, as well as incantations, which are themselves a form of immediate verbal communication, show the use of human voice in a protective role. In belief narratives, speaking and keeping silence are seen as ways of protection, but also as the breaking of rules that causes human suffering (because of a human’s ambivalent status at the boundary) (USATCHEVA 2000:65). Speaking defends human territory, while being silent allows a human to protect himself in these demonic spaces, such as a tree with a treasure buried under it, a forest, or a cemetery (speaking taboo). At the same time, voice is mostly amplified in belief narratives, for example by shouting: “And then I shouted ‘Milunija, I will pierce you with a poker!’” (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:25); “He remembered that it was Vasa Drpnjin, the one who died, and shouted ‘Go away, Vasa, let fire get you!’” (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:32); “I shouted: ‘What are you doing here?’” (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:78); “He shouted out loud: ‘You, vampire, move away from my oxen!’ When he uttered the last word, the oxen moved by themselves and

¹⁰ As the foundation of the mythopoetic system, such understanding of evil and otherworldly appears in different folk genres as well. In fairy tales and epic poems, the boundaries between this and the other world, between human beings and demons, their acts and chronotopes, are also more or less clearly established. Instead the elements of such boundaries in verbal charms and belief narratives are directly related to practical action (in incantations for the purpose of healing and protection, in belief narratives as prophylaxis or direct, immediate protection).

¹¹ “And then I got scared, and backwards, and backwards, and failed to turn around (it is bad to turn around, you may find yourself under the spell) and so I entered the court backwards” (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:28); “You go backwards not to turn your back” (MARKOVIĆ 2004:123).

didn't stop" (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:106). This use of human voice is also indicated by the narrators' comments, the ones that represent a belief at the basis of the protagonists' actions in a narrative. These comments usually emphasize a certain norm and how it should be followed. It is about traditional knowledge put into practice: "When a man becomes a vampire, they should shout at him, shame him" (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:62); "The Evil One (vampire) will vanish if you mention the wolf. You say: 'Go away, let the wolves get you!'" (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:82–83).

An incantation requires different kinds of immediate communication with a demon; in most cases, it is whispered. This can be related to the fact that incantation is commonly used in so-called rehabilitative situations (LEVSKIEVSKAIA 2002), where there is a need to communicate with a demon that had already hurt a human (e.g., sickness demon). However, there are examples where incantation is used as a current apotropaic form and is pronounced loudly, in a shouting voice, as in belief narratives: verbal magic against hail clouds are characterized by pronouncing the content with amplified intensity (ZLATKOVIĆ 2007:480, 481).

The content transmitted to the otherworldly being, in both genres, can take the form of a command: (incantations) "This is not a place for you!" (ZLATANOVIĆ 2007:504); "You are not wanted here!" (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:134); (belief narrative) "Milica turned on the light and began to scold the vampire: 'Shame on you... run where you came from!'" (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:62).

The command mostly asks for the dislocation of a demon, directing it to a place where the demon started its journey towards people: Let him go where he came from (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:23). In incantations, this form is also used when the demon is prohibited from manifesting the symptoms of its actions: Don't use force!"; "Go, don't stay / go, don't hesitate!"; "Don't hurt, drink, don't fester, don't turn red, don't use force" (ZLATANOVIĆ 2007:508, 504, 509).

These types of commands are sometimes followed by a threat with actions that cause the breach of a demon's integrity or even its destruction:

"Run away! There goes a fearful old woman
carrying a hot scoop! Run! She will burn your eyes
she will burn your teeth
she will burn your hands
she will burn your back" (ZLATANOVIĆ 2007:509),

"I give you time 'till lunch / then I will send you fearful dogs: they will rend you to pieces" (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:78), "The knife will strike you, the hawthorn will pierce you, the broom will sweep you. In belief narratives: I will pierce you with a poker, I am going to burn you!" (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:62); for this purpose, fire and sharp objects are used as apotropaions (black leather-covered knife, axe, hoe, sword, needle, etc.), as are herbs (hawthorn), rattle bullets, etc.: "He will strike with nine rifles / he will kill with nine bullets / he will cut with nine sabres / he will stab with nine knives" (ZLATANOVIĆ 2007:492), "Borko came and brought the basil, the God's arrow, the light broom, the hot poker, the sharp razor, and what he found, he cut it" (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:88).

In belief narratives and incantations, what is also commonly seen is the use of bodily fluids (urine, faeces, saliva) as substances that have either defensive or destructive

effects (a demonic being, *živak*, a creature that resembles mercury, is destroyed by urination): “Then it struck me it had to be *živak*. I remembered, my grandmother told me about them, and she would squat down and wet the thing... As she did it, it didn’t shine anymore, it was extinguished, as if the embers were put out. These *živak*, the damn things, you can only piss or shit on them to defend yourself” (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:32; For incantations, see also: RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:89, 113). “‘Nikonija, the dragon, chooses the finest woman, the purest, full-blooded. You should take pig’s dung and rub yourself: chest, breasts, crotch, you stink everywhere...’ As I did that, the dragon stopped coming to me” (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:21). Some of them, such as saliva, are marked by the use of verbal invective followed by pronouncing the incantation (*pu-pu*).¹²

Parallel to commands, we can find pleas, as well as an emphasis on the spiritual relationship between human and demon:¹³ “Fairies (vile *samovile*), / my sweet sisters” (ZLATANOVIĆ 2007:498), “Dear fairies (vile *samovile*), if you are old, may you be mothers, if younger, may you be aunts, even younger, may you be sisters” (ZLATANOVIĆ 2007:514), “‘If you are female, good gracious sisters, good gracious daughters, bring my daughter remedy, I beg you, bring her remedy’. I repeat three times and put it down(...)” (MARKOVIĆ 2004:123). Similar expressions of polite behaviour can be seen in legends about expelling a vampire from a village (by deceitfully inviting him to be the best man or attend a wedding).

As Levskievskaja noted,¹⁴ along with human voice as the strongest mark of this world, sounds from the immediate human environment have a similar function of marking human territory (sounds emitted by domestic animals – rooster, dog, cat, lamb, goat; or a bell and such). Belief narratives frequently use a rooster’s crow, which marks a temporal border where human time begins (similarly to light signals, such as the appearance of sun at sunrise, which marks the time opposite to night, the anti-time that belongs to demons). In incantations, a rooster’s crow is one of the segments of the formula which defines the space an otherworldly being is banished to:¹⁵

“where dogs do not bark
where cats do not meow
where roosters do not crow
where sheep do not bleat
where goats do not bleat

¹² In a legend about St. Paul (Serbian variant), the devil king punishes the devil that brought the disease to the man. The king speaks words that are marked by disgust, and destroys the disobedient devil: “Ugh, you dirty bastard!” (ČAJKANOVIĆ 1999:258).

¹³ Sikimić sets a hypothesis about polite form in Bayash prayer for the fairies as a sacral text: “Magical power has the effect of ordering only lower class demons, on whom the person doing the incantation imposes his/her own imperative will and orders them to withdraw. Higher category demons and deities are addressed only by way of supplication and prayers” (SIKIMIĆ 2007:176).

¹⁴ (LEVSKIEVSKAJA 1999:51–52)

¹⁵ In this type of formula, space is also determined by other parameters, not only by the absence of sounds: they include olfactory parameters (“where incense does not have scent”), action parameters (“where girls do not comb their hair,/where brides do not knead,/where ploughman does not plough,/where digger does not dig,/where people do not cross with a cross”), spatial or other determiners (“under the peel of a tree, places where live people similar to demon in age, character and name”).

where pigs do not oink
 where horses do not neigh
 where cows do not moo
 where crows do not caw" (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:69).

The motif of counting the uncountable, very frequent in incantation formulas ("She counted the leaves in the mount, and sand in the deep water, and she was not to come back until she did all that" (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:108), "Whoever counted / the horse's coat / and the sheep's fleece / the mount's forests / and the sky's stars / that one should put a spell on Bora" (ZLATANOVIĆ 2007:487), also appears in belief narratives, mostly in the ones that discuss vampires and the prevention of their return among people: "When the grandfather died, we put poppy seeds in his sock, and when we buried him, the grandmother placed the sock by the coffin and said: 'When you gather these poppy seeds, then you come home!' How could he, spilt seeds. No chance" (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:98), "Then, they took a sieve of beans and let the grains from the grave to the river. The dead soul followed the beans and drowned in Krunimir's whirlpool" (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:99).

In incantations and belief narratives, a dog appears both as a defender and as an aggressor. A charm announces an attack on a demonic being: "I will send the angry dogs/ they will tear you apart/ they will destroy you" (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:78). In incantations, the same function is fulfilled by a wolf as well ("there come wolves the newborns, tearing usov apart" (*usov* is a demon of sickness that causes mastitis in human beings and animals) (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:119). In belief narratives, a dog can feel the presence of an otherworldly being, signalling this by barking or by exhibiting unusual behaviour, and it attacks or destroys the demon. This type of activity is also seen in the context of its relation to swear words, a verbal genre also sometimes seen in belief narratives. By interpreting the semantics of the verb "bark", Boris Uspenski shows the connection between barking and swearing – barking is equivalent to swearing (USPENSKI 1994:88–89). Barking, biting, and swearing take the same position in the narrative structure and function – they chase away or destroy the demon: "The dogs were barking at a shadow and when they reached it, the shadow turned into aspic" (Serb. *pihtije*, 'pork jelly'); "Delča said the swear words and a woman turned into aspic"; "And the dogs tore him apart and what is left now shakes like aspic" (ZLATKOVIĆ 2007:587, 491, 590). A dog behaves as a part of human surroundings, although sometimes it also appears as a demonic being. All of this points to the ambivalence of its status.¹⁶ In belief narratives, this kind of a position is mostly seen in the storyline about a vampire that comes back to his family in a human-like shape (going to the meadow where they collect hay, a woman goes for water and is attacked by a dog that tears a part of her clothes, she comes back and tells her husband about it, he laughs and she can see the strings of her clothes stuck between his teeth (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:54–55, see also: 51–52). In incantations, the demon of sickness is usually a rabid dog (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:258; ZLATANOVIĆ 2007:504).

What is also included in some narratives is a reference to the ritual chasing away evil otherworldly beings that threaten or have already done harm to humans. Those types of segments usually appear as narrations about a ritual, which includes the incantation, but

¹⁶ This animal is very close to the chthonic world, and to chthonic deities (as are the wolf and rooster) (see: ČAJKANOVIĆ 1994:102, 126).

also as narratives about the charm itself. This first form is especially characteristic of narratives with the motif of defence from hail or of the ones about an encounter with a fairy (ZLATKOVIĆ 2007:480–481; MARKOVIĆ 2004:123). The second form characterizes belief narratives where the narrative core (encounter–conflict–consequences) is enriched by a segment that includes an attempt to remove the conflict. In these examples, the narrator talks about the intentions of banning or at least weakening the demonic forces: “When her third child was born, aunt went to some old woman and told her how the Evil One set his mind on her children. The old woman told her to sit by her newborn for three nights in a row and swing a huge knife to chase the devil away from the bed. So she did, and her children didn’t die” (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:86).

“Ow, I’m not well, grandmother Ikonija. I feel sick.” “What’s the matter, Raka?” “I don’t know!” She quickly grabbed the grains, forty-two of them, threw the corn in the sieve and looked: “Alas, Raka, when you went there, the mare wouldn’t move, and you wanted to go through by force!” He said: “It’s true! The mare just neighed and moved backwards and kicked with its fore legs and I tried to pull onwards!” “Well, Raka, if you had gone through where you had wanted, you would have been dead! That was a fairies’ kolo, and if you had stepped on it, you would have been dead, and the mare would have sensed it and stopped!” And she used her charms on him and cast the spell. And he felt relief (...) (MARKOVIĆ 2004:117).

It has been noted that, in some narrative sequences, incantations preserve the basic structural elements of belief narratives, sometimes even the entire structure. For example a man abandons his space, goes to pick up water during a forbidden time and in a forbidden place, gets in contact with an evil being and awakens the aggression aimed at humans and their environment:

“The fairies forbade the water,
you couldn’t water the cattle,
you couldn’t wash the cloth,
and I didn’t know, so I watered the cattle,
I washed the cloth, / and encountered the fairies.
And the fairies burst with anger,
and put my cattle to flight,
and smeared my white cloth
and tore it to shreds.
I don’t regret the cloth,
but they hit me in the head,
and struck me down,
they took everything from me,
and now I don’t see my house,
I don’t recognize the people,
that’s why I cry and stumble in the river” (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:102).

There are even examples of incantations in which this scenario is realized in both types of narration that define the belief narrative – as a memorate and a fabulate (“I didn’t know / Mara didn’t know”) (RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:102).

INTERRELATIONS WITH OTHER GENRES

The features belief narratives and incantations share can also be found in other oral genres, in this case, in swearing and cursing. Just like barking, swearing functions both as a defence and an attack. This can be achieved by the way the swearing is uttered (with amplified intensity), but mostly by the content of the verbal utterance and its semantics (POPOVIĆ NIKOLIĆ 2016:77). A frequent form of swearing uses an obscene verb that indicates sexual intercourse. In previous works, some researchers interpret the basic meaning of this verb as relating to the verb “to hit” (MOKIENKO 1994:60), and in this sense, the relationship between swearing and hurting a demonic being is logical (piercing, tissue destruction, and alike). There is a narrative in which we can witness the murder of an otherworldly being (the tendons below the knees are cut by a black leather-covered knife, KARADŽIĆ 1972:304). This is similar to the content of the traditional swearing that directs the action toward the knee of a demon: “May the old woman f.k you in the devil’s knee” (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:60), “I go outside and I shout: ‘Hey, I f.k you in the devil’s knee!’” (RADENKOVIĆ, R. 1991:81). Swearing results in the disappearance or destruction of a demon, and it is also registered as part of an incantation uttered at the moment of healing (BAJBURIN – TOPORKOV 1990:106). In incantations, we can see other forms of obscenities, mostly in images of enlarged genital organs, at the sight of which demons disappear, or, for example, in storm defence rituals (showing the naked body, exposing the genital area, see: AGAPKINA – TOPORKOV 2001:8, 11).

Cursing also has a simultaneous attacking and protective function, and thus it is sometimes considered in traditional culture as an alternative to swearing or other protective actions (making the sign of the cross, see: ČAJKANOVIĆ 1999:391): “You can defend yourself only if you make the sign of the cross, or swear, or curse” (PETROVIĆ 1999:78). In a belief narrative, by cursing, a man defends himself and puts a boundary between himself and a demon (devil: “I hope his home is far from ours”, KARANOVIĆ 1989). On the other hand, in incantations, a curse is usually directed at the total disappearance of the demonic being (“Drain from the top, dry from the roots, I hope you disappear without a trace”, RADENKOVIĆ, L. 1996:114).

CONCLUSION

The intertwining of incantations and belief narratives can be found on different levels of organization and in different structural elements of oral “discourse”. Since both genres are based on the representation of the parallel existence of two worlds whose overlapping is seen as a disturbance endangering harmony and order (the existence and life of human beings), mutual protagonists and their interrelationships are aligned with traditional beliefs. Their basic motifs, predominantly the ones referring to a wide variety of defences of the human world, are considered as more or less compatible (content, position in discourse, verbal organization). What sets these two genres apart is their form (prose/rhythmic structure), the context they belong to and where they happen (a ritual organized by collective or individual reason), and their basic functions.

The presence of various elements that function as a defence of human existence in different ritual manifestations and the oral forms they contain, as well as ones that do not

represent verbal segments of a ritual, witness the relicts of distant relations between oral-artistic forms and magico-religious activities (MELETINSKI 2009). Mainly aimed at the defence of everything related to the existence of humans (birth, life, dying, flora, fauna), these elements have survived in various genres to a larger or smaller extent, depending on different factors. The genres themselves, to a different extent when compared to old or new writings, refer to the existence of a mutual model as their starting point – a belief in the existence of the otherworld, where beings hostile to humans live. The strong influence of this starting point has resulted not only in the preservation of the concept as such but also in various inter-textual connections between independent folklore genres.

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