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VOICES OF THE PEOPLE IN LETTERS. THE ROMANTIC CONCEPT OF FOLKLORE AS CULTURAL TRANSFER EUROPE-SERBIA/SERBIA-EUROPE*

Abstract: While folklore studies emerged in Romanticism through deep changes in the history of ideas, the networks built by intellectuals interested in new views substantially helped in the formation of a new field, above all, the network created by J. Grimm. This framework helps us better understand the transfer between Europe and Serbia. Folklore material was transferred from Serbian culture to Europe, and (Central) European concepts of *Volksgeist*, folklore etc., to Serbian intellectuals. Closer study of this two-way transfer shows some of its under-researched aspects (the impact of personal experience on adopting the new concepts, for example). The correspondence of Vuk Karadžić is a corpus that shows both his participation in a European network and the making of his own. Following the «mods» in them, we can follow the transfer of a new image of folklore between people and their adoption of such concepts.

Keywords: folklore, Romanticism, network, correspondence

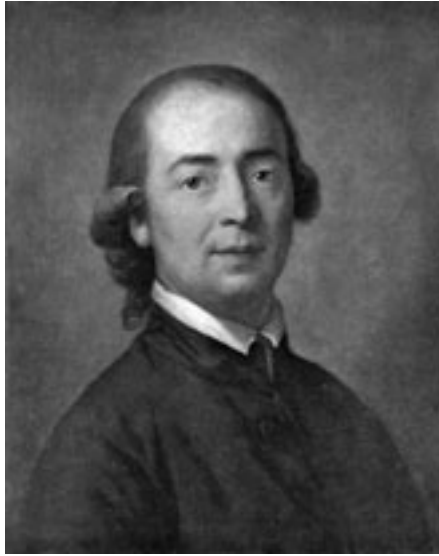
1. European transfers and the emergence of folklore studies

One of the best illustrations of cultural transfer between Serbian and other European cultures is the Preromantic and Romantic adoption of the concept of folklore.¹ Moreover, it is an excellent example of a two-way transfer. In that sense, we can also speak of the joint European formation of the idea of folklore as a result of cultural transfer.

Literary history has already explored the reception of the ideas of J. G. Herder in Serbian culture.² The central figure in the conceptualization of folklore and language under Herderian influence was Vuk St. Karadžić

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- 1 For the purpose of this paper, we will leave aside the differences between Preromantic and Romantic ideas of folklore (such as between Herder's and J. Grimm's understanding of *Volksgeist*) and discussions about the chronology of Serbian literary history (when Romanticism started in earnest), and we will focus on continuity.
- 2 Dragiša Živković, *Evropski okviri srpske književnosti* (Belgrade: SKZ, 2004), 96-98; Milorad Pavić, "Die serbische Vorromantik und Herder", in Wilfried Potthoff (ed.), *Vuk Karadžić im europäischen Kontext* (Heidelberg: Carl Vinter; Universitätsverlag, 1990), 80-85.



Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), painting by Anton Graff (1785), Gleimhaus in Halberstadt.

(1787–1864).³ But when young Karadžić came to Austria, the Serbian intellectual milieu was already familiar with such ideas. The learned monk and poet Lukijan Mušicki, a supporter of Vuk's, is a famous example. Vuk himself testifies (in the introduction to his first collection of folk songs, 1814) that when in 1806 Mušicki asked him and other boys from Serbia to write down the songs they knew, they thought the *poeta doctus* was making fun of them – it was inconceivable to them that a person of Mušicki's stature could be seriously interested in the songs of those “who grew up alongside goats”. Only later, upon becoming acquainted with published European collections, did Vuk understand that Mušicki – who quotes from Herder and who created his own collection of folk songs – had been serious in his request. But even figures today popularly remembered for their opposition to Karadžić were actually Herderians. As early as 1800, when Karadžić was 13 years old, Metropolitan Stefan Stratimirović used the term “folk soul” and called for collecting folk songs; around the same time, he compiled a collection of folk songs, and in 1802 sent it to A. L.

3 Miodrag Popović, *Romantizam* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 1985), Vol. 1, 53-54, 82; Dragiša Živković, op. cit., 93-96; Marija Kleut, *Iz Vukove senke. Ogledi o narodnom pesništvu* (Belgrade: Društvo za srpski jezik i književnost Srbije), 2012), 117-134. Some authors (Josip Babić, *J. G. Herder i njegove ideje u južnoslavenskome književnom i kulturno-političkom kontekstu 19. stoljeća* (Osijek: Sveučilište J. J. Strossmayera, 2008), 232-237) opine that Herder's influence on Vuk was second-hand. But even if this were correct, it only goes to show how widespread Herder's ideas were.



Therese Robinson
sic von Jacob.

Takvj – Therese Albertine Luise von Jacob
Robinson (1797–1870).

von Schlözer, recommending the creations of blind singers.⁴ In the later period, the Classicist poet Jovan Hadžić, who had many debates with Karadžić on language and history, was one of the most ardent Herderians among Serbs and a translator of Herder; besides using Classical forms, he also wrote in the style of folk songs. Herder's works entered Serbian school libraries.⁵

Transfer in the other direction, from Serbia, has been researched primarily in terms of the reception of Serbian oral poetry in Preromantic and Romantic European literature. Serbian folklore could soothe Europe's longing for the authentic and "natural" (as proof of *Naturdichtung*), helping to articulate the poetics of European writers and confirm the conceptualization of intellectuals' ideas.

The transfer should be understood as a two-way exchange. Herder included South Slavic songs⁶ in his famous anthology *Folk Songs* (1778–1779), and then his idea of folk poetry resonated back among Serbs in Austria. In 1841, Adam Mickiewicz gave lectures on Serbian epic poetry at the Collège de France, at the newly established department of Slavic literature. Mick-

4 Teodora Petrović, "Mitropolit Stevan Stratimirović i naša narodna pesma", *Prilozi proučavanju narodne poezije*, Vol. 1, No. 1-2 (1934), 165-168; Milorad Pavić, *Radjanje srpske književnosti* (Belgrade: SKZ, 1983), 536.

5 Dragan Prole, *Unutrašnje inostranstvo* (Novi Sad: Sremski Karlovci, IKZS, 2013).

6 While one (*Hasanaginica*) is a folk song, but the others are imitations of folk poetry that Herder mistook for genuine products.

iewicz didn't lecture entirely as an academic: his interpretation of Serbian epic songs was merged with his political program and the underlying mystical national messianism.⁷ At the same time, Mickiewicz pondered – albeit with reservations – the possibility that a Serbian poet could unite all those songs into one epos (like it happened with Homeric songs, as the new understanding of Homer taught since the late 18th century). The Serbian translation of Mickiewicz's lectures, which followed soon, gave impetus to such attempts: throughout the 19th century and even in the 20th, there were attempts to create a long *epos* or epic poem about the Battle of Kosovo. Although largely forgotten today, they were popular back then. It is worth comparing these attempts with the efforts of Elias Lönnrot, who undertook such a task with Finnish songs, creating the *Kalevala* (which has caused debates in contemporary folkloristics about the character of the work). While the *Kalevala* became part of the Finnish cultural canon – the date of its publication is celebrated as a national holiday – in Serbian culture, that place was taken by Karadžić's collection of stand-alone songs, not by a long, composite work in the vein of Homer's epics.

Although the study of the European reception of Serbian culture tends to focus on literature, there were other forms too, like music (e.g. musical renditions of the texts of folk songs, not about using Serbian folk music as such). “The intensity of the reception of a literary work is shown at its best when it steps out of the art of words and appears in the domain of some other art”.⁸ German translations of Serbian folk songs done in the period of Romanticism found their way into the works of Brahms, Reger,⁹ and young Richard Wagner.¹⁰ Through German, Russian and Czech translations, the same songs arrived to Slavic composers, like Tchaikovsky, Dvořák, Janaček and Anton Rubinshtein (who met Vuk personally).¹¹ The study of musical reception has so far failed to notice, to my knowledge, that even Alban Berg, in 1903, used the famous ballad *Hasanaginica* in Goethe's translation (*Klagegesang von der edlen Frauen des Asan-Aga*) for a piano and voice piece described as “melodrama”. Obviously, the canonical status of poets who had translated these texts was often crucial for composers, for instance, Goethe for Berg or Pushkin for Tchaikovsky.

Literary historians tended to concentrate on source research, biographical connections, intertextual relations, borrowings and influences

7 Dorota Gil, “Latinsko/poljski lik' srpske kulturne tradicije”, *Naučni sastanak slavista u Vukove dane*, Vol. 36/2 (2007), 197-204.

8 Vera Bojić. “Talyjs Uebersetzungen der serbischen Volkslieder und ihre Vertonungen”, in Gabriella Schubert and Friedhilde Krause (eds.), *Talyj. Aus Liebe zu Goethe: Mittlerin der Balkanslawen* (Weimar: VDG, 2001), 24.

9 Vera Bojić, *Vukovo nasleđe u evropskoj muzici*, vol. I (Belgrade-Munich: SANU-Otto Sagner, 1987).

10 Jevto Milović, *Studije, rasprave i članci* (Nikšić: Univerzitetaska riječ, 1987), 217.

11 Bojić, *Vukovo nasleđe*.



Title page of the second edition of *Volkslieder der Serben* (Serbian Folk Poems), published in Halle and Leipzig in 1833.

and translation issues or the role of Serbian folklore in the individual poetics of authors such as Prosper Mérimée or Alexander Pushkin or Giosuè Carducci, who invokes the Serbian epic tradition when writing of Sicily and revolution. But the list of those who were intrigued by Serbian folk songs includes more names than the most researched canonical figures like Goethe. To limit our survey to German Romanticism only (because it was crucial for bilateral transfer), we find Clemens Brentano, Wilhelm Müller (the author of *Die schöne Müllerin* and father of Friedrich Max Müller), who described Serbian songs as “pure and great natural beauty of poetry”,¹² Ludwig Uhland,¹³ Adelbert von Chamisso,¹⁴ Frie-

12 Milan Ćurčin, *Srpska narodna pesma u nemačkoj književnosti* [translation of: *Das serbische Volkslied in der deutschen Literatur*] (Belgrade-Pančevo: Narodna biblioteka, 1987), 98, 137. Petra Himštet-Faid, “Recepcija srpskih narodnih pesama i njihovih prevoda u nemačkoj štampi u prvoj polovini 19. v.,” in Vesna Matović and Gabrijela Šubert (eds.), *Talij i srpska književnost i kultura* (Belgrade: IKUM, 2008), 233; Miljan Mojašević, *Jakob Grim i srpska narodna književnost* (Belgrade: SANU, 1983), 379.

13 Mojašević, *Jakob Grim*, 509.

14 Olga Elermajer-Životić, *Iz nemačko-jugoslovenskih književnih veza: Hajnrih Štiglic (1801-1849)* (Belgrade: SANU, 1991), 78-79.

drich de la Motte Fouqué¹⁵ and the historian Niebuhr.¹⁶ It seems that Annette von Droste-Hülshoff wrote a mystification titled “Serbian Songs” (lost today).¹⁷ An ardent translator of Serbian songs, Talvj (Therese Albertine Louise von Jacob) introduced the Swedish writer Magdalena (Malla) Montgomery Silfverstolpe to the Serbian material at the time when they were both friends with the Tieck brothers.¹⁸ Careful research, traditional in the best meaning of the word, discovered influences of Serbian folk poetry in Goethe, Chamisso and Hoffmann von Fallersleben (who met Vuk personally).¹⁹ The “Serbian trochee” became part of German 19th-century meter, and Hungarian, too (including Mihály Vörösmarty),²⁰ and we will find an example in Latvian poetry, as well (infra). The last glimmer of German Romantic enthusiasm for Serbian folklore was probably the reworking of Talvj’s translation of six songs done by Friedrich Nietzsche, then a sixteen-year-old *Gymnasium* student.²¹ Even in terms of traditional source research, materials give more insight than published literary texts. Giacomo Leopardi carefully followed information about Serbian folk songs, although, admittedly, he never used it in his poetry.²² Nevertheless, his interest in them helps us better understand the atmosphere.

However, when we speak of cultural transfer, there is much more beyond *literary* history and texts intervoven with each other. Recent research extracted from memoirs of contemporaries how *live readings* of translations at gatherings in Berlin salons was an important factor in popular-

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- 15 Fridhilde Krauze, “Duhovno-književno okruženje Talfj u Berlinu prilikom njenih prvih čitanja narodnih pesama Srba 1826 i 1827“, in Vesna Matović and Gabrijele Šubert (eds.), *Talfj i srpska književnost i kultura* (Belgrade: IKUM, 2008), 26, 30.
 - 16 Kopitar to Vuk (16.7.1822), *VP* [VP – Correspondence of Vuk Karadžić], II.
 - 17 Vera Bojić, *Vukovo nasleđe*, 7.
 - 18 Fridhilde Krauze, „Duhovno-književno okruženje Talfj u Berlinu prilikom njenih prvih čitanja narodnih pesama Srba 1826 i 1827“, in Vesna Matović, Gabrijele Šubert (eds.), *Talfj i srpska književnost i kultura* (Belgrade: IKUM, 2008), 35.
 - 19 Milović, op. cit., 221-223; 228-229, Momčilo Selesković, “Kopitar i Hofman fon Falersleben“, *Prilozi proučavanju narodne poezije*, Vol. VI, No. 1 (1939), 45-47.
 - 20 Ištvan Pot, “Srpskohrvatska narodna poezija kod Mađara“, in Viktor Novak (ed.), *Vukov zbornik* (Belgrade: naučno delo, 1966), 365.
 - 21 Golub Dobrašinović, “Tereza fon Jakob Robinson i Vuk Karadžić“, in Vesna Matović, Gabrijele Šubert (eds.), *Talfj i srpska književnost i kultura* (Belgrade: IKUM, 2008), 63-64. Miljan Mojašević, “Talfj u istraživanju i predstavama Južnih Slovena“, in Vesna Matović and Gabrijele Šubert (eds.), *Talfj i srpska književnost i kultura* (Belgrade: IKUM, 2008), 192.
 - 22 Mirjana Drndarski, “Pomeni naše narodne poezije u Leopardijevom *Zibaldone*-u u kontekstu njegove poetike“, in *Uporedna istraživanja* 2 (Belgrade: IKUM, 1982), 247-255; Sergio Bonazza, “Recepcija Vuka S. Karadžića u Italiji“, in *Naučni sastanak slavista u Vukove dane*, Vol 17/5. *Vuk Karadžić i njegovo delo u svome vremenu i danas* (1988), 488-491.

izing this material and met with enthusiasm.²³ Reports that Clemens Brentano not only published the songs but also copied them for his own pleasure (and probably gave the manuscript to others) tell us something about the formation of a new taste on a personal level.²⁴ When Grimm informs Kopitar (who informs Vuk) that Serbian songs enthralled Savigny and young men,²⁵ Savigny's name catches our eye. But information about *young* people's enthusiasm – something that Talvj noticed, too²⁶ – is equally important as a testimony of a generational sensibility, a change in sensibility. When Kopitar informs Karadžić how the most recent vogue among high-class Viennese ladies is the Serbian *libade* (part of the traditional female costume), we get a glimpse into the history of fashion and cultural transfer in everyday life.²⁷

The reception of folk poetry collected by Vuk was only a part of transfer from Serbia to Europe. Not only Serbian poetry as a “raw” material of “natural” poetry, but the very activity of Karadžić as a folklorist influenced other cultures, mostly in Eastern Europe. His work was an example for other Slavic folklorists, finding “great resonance in all Slavic countries”.²⁸ And it was not only folklorists and not only Slavs that followed in Vuk's footsteps. The Czech philologist Vaclav Hanka, who was Karadžić's friend for decades, was inspired by Karadžić's first collection (1814) to create his famous Ossianic mystifications (“die böhmischen Chattertoniana”, as Kopitar called them)²⁹ of old Czech manuscripts, even using the style of Serbian oral poetics.^{30,31} That influence can be discerned among other nations that used folklore as a tool for national emancipation. It gave impulse to Hungarian literature's interest in folklore.³² Swedish translations of songs from Karadžić's collection

23 Krauze, op. cit.

24 Ćurčin, op. cit., 98.

25 Kopitar to Vuk (13.6.1826), *VP*, vol. III.

26 Ćurčin, op.cit., 138. Krauze, op. cit., 48.

27 Kopitar to Vuk (16.7.1822), *VP*, vol. II.

28 Mark Azadovsky, *Istoriya russkoy fol'kloristiki* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe uchebno-pedagogicheskoe izdatel'stvo Ministerstva prosveteniya, 1958), 300 ff. Azadovsky even opines that a new period in the history of general European folkloristics started with Vuk (Ibid, 298).

29 Letter to Grimm (20.4.1841), Max Vasmer, *B. Kopitars Briefwechsel mit Jakob Grimm* (Köln-Wien: Böau Verlag, 1987), 195.

30 Nada Djordjević, *Srpskohrvatska narodna književnost kod Čeha* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1985), 36-60.

31 For that reason, Vuk's folkloric work and Hanka's mystifications were described as counterparts of “national integration”- Rihard Georg Plaška, “Počeci nacionalne integracije. Dva modela na potezu Beograd-Beč-Prag”, *Žbornik Matice srpske za istoriju* Vol. 42 (1990), 27-37.

32 Ištvan Frid, “Recepcija srpskohrvatske narodne poezije u mađarskoj književnosti u prvoj polovini XIX veka”, in *Uporedna istraživanja* 2 (Belgrade: IKUM, 1982), 46-47.

by the poet Johann Runeberg (1830) became the “model” and “inspiration” for Lönnrot.³³ (Karadžić’s classification of songs into “male” and “female” – that is to say, epic and lyric seem to have influenced the Finnish folklorist to apply the same principle). Karadžić’s influence can be discerned even in Latvian culture. Andrejs Pumpurs, the national bard of Latvia, created the national epic *Lāčplēsis* inspired by what Karadžić did (even using the decasyllable of Serbian heroic poetry in one canto).³⁴

In this context, we will endeavour to provide a new look at the transfer of concepts of *Volkgeist*, folklore, and language, taking Karadžić as the central figure and his network of collaborators, friends, followers and admirers as a “pool”. We will trace how ideas were exchanged (“horizontally”) between Karadžić and his European counterparts and other Serbian intellectuals. In another (“vertical”) perspective, we will see how those concepts trickled down, expanding to Karadžić’s field informers or those who knew him as a public figure through his books. The main source is Vuk’s correspondence. It has been heavily used, of course, for historical and biographical research. But letters (unlike programmatic texts) can also reveal how new concepts were adopted and how they grew in intellectual exchange. At the same time, such a source can elucidate the transfer from a new point of view, revealing how the transferred themes became included in personal experience or self-identification. As observed by Robert Darnton a long time ago, the research of the period shows how ideas were “filtered down” to the “lowest levels of literacy” and neglected sources, like private materials.³⁵

For example, attempts to compare Serbian poetry with the Ossianic corpus span from the very beginning of its reception, with Fortis and his British friends, to Vuk’s contemporaries like Johann Severin Vater. That was an early attempt of the comparative typological approach to identify “primitive” or “natural” poetry” in different milieus. Researching the reception of Ossian in Serbian culture in terms of literary history would mean finding translations in journals and quotes in poetry. But when we read in a personal letter that poet Sima Milutinović was nicknamed the “Serbian Ossian” by a close friend of Vuk’s,³⁶ we have insight not only

33 Michael Branch, “Finnish Oral Poetry, *Kalevala* and *Kanteletar*“, in George C. Schoolfield (ed.), *A History of Finland’s Literature* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 5, 20-21.

34 Sava Peñčić, “Letonski epos i srpsko narodno stvaralaštvo“, *Slovenske komparativne teme* (Niš: Prosveta, 1998), 27-32. Pumpurs even came to Serbia to fight in the Serbian-Turkish war of 1876 and proposed to the Serbian government to create a Latvian colony.

35 Robert Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (Cambridge MA, London: Harvard, 1968), p. vii.

36 Sima Milutinović to Vuk (24.11.1825), *VP*, vol. II; Cf. Josif Milovuk to Vuk (6.5.1833), *VP*, vol. V, also testifies to Ossian used as a nickname. In this context, it is even immaterial to what extent the correspondents read Ossian.

into an early trace of reception but into a much livelier and personal history, where the bard's name served in personal communication (and probably self-placement in national literature).³⁷

2. Vuk's network(s)

The sheer number of people that Vuk was in contact with is impressive, even by modern standards. With his vast network of contacts, he was probably the most well-connected figure in Serbian culture. While he closely collaborated with some of them – like Leopold Ranke – the others he met (which is still worth mentioning), like poet Vassily Zhukovsky or anthropologist Blumenbach. The modern edition of his correspondence consists of 13 volumes with 700 to 1,100 pages in each volume – but even letters do not reveal the size and intricacy of his network. Some contacts went through intermediaries or were confined to correspondence. Vuk sent books to the Prussian king through Alexander von Humboldt, who was given the books by Grimm (another Humboldt, Wilhelm, heard about Vuk much earlier, while he was learning Slavic languages with Kopitar in Vienna). Božena Němcová never met Vuk but corresponded with him and thanked Vuk for permission to translate tales from his collection via the poet Milica Stojadinović. Some contacts are found in other sources, like the diaries and memoirs of others, and it seems that some names mentioned *en passant* point to much more history behind them. It has been noted long ago that, although Vuk spent fifty years in Vienna, it is still not known enough with whom he was acquainted from Viennese intellectual circles.³⁸ (But we do know that he had close academic contacts with the orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall).³⁹

37 Ossianism in France in the late 18th century included the vogue of naming children Oscar or Malvina, after characters from Macpherson's poems. The most famous Oscar was the son of Napoleon's marshal Bernadotte, whose godfather was the First Consul himself, an avid reader of Macpherson's mystification (Paul van Tieghem, *Ossian en France. Tome seconde* (Paris: F. Rieder & Cie, 1917), 28-30). Little Oscar later brought his name into the list of Swedish kings and Swedish royal family.

38 Rudolf Jagoditsch, "Vuk in Wien", *Anali Filološkog fakulteta* Vol. 4 (1964), 167-176. Zoran Konstantinović, "Vuk Karadžić u Austriji", *Anali Filološkog fakulteta* Vol. 4 (1964), 215-228. Konstantinović concludes that Vienna resisted Romanticism, while Herder's ideas and Romanticism were primarily accepted by Slavic cultures in the Empire. Vienna was important as a growing centre of Slavic studies, but also a hub for spreading news about Slavic folk poetry. Zoran Konstantinović, "Wiens Bedeutung für die Verbreitung slawischer Volkslieder", in *Bracia Grimm i folklor narodów słowiańskich* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Polskiej akademii nauk, 1989), 163-174.

39 Zoran Konstantinović, "Vuk Karadžić u Austriji", 224-225.

Vuk belonged to the networks of Jernej (Bartholomeus) Kopitar and Jacob Grimm. The concept of network helps us better understand their activity.⁴⁰ Both scholars' networks were Europe-wide and (expectedly) intersected (for example, Kopitar helped Grimm to make contacts in Italy).⁴¹ Through them, Vuk was introduced to many a name of science and literature. At the same time, Vuk developed a network of his own. It had branches in societies other than Serbian, too; it has been noted that, besides academic collaboration, Vuk had among Czechs "an entire network (*mreža*) of friends. They helped him to disseminate his books, make connections, send all kinds of parcels and so on."⁴² Even Hanka, nowadays remembered as the Czech Macpherson, had a different position back then: "In that time, although neither a great poet nor a great scholar, he was a central figure in the Slavic world. He connected those from the North and West and South, helped everyone visiting Prague and, in some way, made Prague a centre of Slavic studies".⁴³ This shows another source of Vuk's contacts and background of his work: the emergence of common interest in Slavic studies in Slavic cultures themselves. Following nods from one network to another enables us to retrace how news about Serbian folklore spread in far wider circles than those who actively wrote on the topic. For example, Talvj – one of the "multipliers" of that knowledge⁴⁴ – sent one of three copies of her translation to famous Egyptologist Richard Lepsius, Grimm's friend (the other two went to Vuk and Grimm).⁴⁵

Karadžić's network was essentially part of Central European culture,⁴⁶ more precisely, the area of German and Slavic languages and cultures or, in terms of states, of Austria, Russia and German countries.

40 A recent study puts Kopitar on the European intellectual map in a frame much wider than Slavic studies, relying on the idea of network: "Kopitar emerges as the centrally important point of contact for the new European world of literary learning, comparable to Jacob Grimm." Ingrid Merchiers, *Cultural Nationalism in the South Slav Habsburg Lands in the Early Nineteenth Century. The Scholarly network of Jernej Kopitar (1780-1844)* (München: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2007), 7. The author noticed the interaction of Slovenian and Serbian networks, too (op. cit., 223), but is wrong in relegating Vuk to a mere "disciple" of Kopitar, especially when it comes to Vuk's later period.

41 Sergio Bonazza, "Kopitar als Vermittler zwischen Jacob Grimm und Italien", in *O dvestagodišnjici Jakoba Grima* (Belgrade: SANU, 1988), 215-232.

42 Milada Černa, "Vukovo delo u češkoj književnosti", in Viktor Novak (ed.), *Vukov zbornik* (Beograd: Naučno delo, 1966), p. 342.

43 Nada Djordjević, op. cit., 29.

44 Term used by O. Elermajer-Životić, op. cit.

45 Friedhilde Krause, "Die Bedeutung Jacob Grimms", 415.

46 Cf. Margerita Arnautović, "Vukovo interesovanje za Francuze", *Analni Filološkog fakulteta* Vol. 4 (1964), 33.

In academic terms, one shouldn't forget that Russian academia of that period had a strong German presence (Vuk met Adelung and Rask in Russia and kept in contact with Peter Koeppen); at the same time Slavic studies started both in Austria and Russia. His contacts with the French, Italians or the British cannot match this – although persons like Silvestre de Sacy learnt about him (through Kopitar),⁴⁷ and he corresponded with Ami Boué (who belongs much more to the German space). Through Talvj, this European network can perhaps be extended to the USA.⁴⁸

There are some central and, at the same time, overlapping themes that constitute the intellectual content of the network. One is, of course, the rise of Slavic studies (philology) through Vuk's contact with numerous pioneers in the field, which is known well enough in research. But Slavic philology should be seen in the broader context of comparative linguistics of the early 19th century,⁴⁹ which we can take as a second topic. It was the period of the formation of “new philology”, i.e. comparative Indo-European linguistics. Although Vuk's language concerns didn't go that far and he did not have the necessary philological knowledge, he was fully aware of new insights and Slavic philologists around him, like Šafarik, needless to say, were interested in these issues and contributed to the field. It was the period when Friedrich von Schlegel (Kopitar's acquaintance and influence), one of the pioneers of Sanskrit studies, in his popular *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians* (1808), excluded Slavic languages from the family we today call Indo-European. It was thanks to F. Bopp's comparative grammar that Slavic languages were recognized as such. Sanskrit was seen as the master key for such comparisons (Kopitar, too, tried to study it). Vuk was, as mentioned above, in contact with Rasmus Christian Rask, one of the pioneers of this field – they met and exchanged letters and publications. Friedrich Adelung, Vuk's Russian correspondent, published a study comparing Sanskrit and Russian (1811) and the first Sanskrit bibliography (*Bibliotheca sanscrita*, 2. edition 1837). In Poland, Vuk met Valentin Majewski, the first Polish Sanskrit scholar (self-taught) and

47 Miodrag Ibrovac, “Vuk i Francuzi”, in *Vukov zbornik*, 428-429.

48 Talvj spent a large part of her life in the USA, where she continued her literary activity, meeting literary figures like Washington Irving and Margaret Fuller. There she took an interest in Native American languages and translated one study about them in German; she also published a study about the folk poetry of Slavic peoples in an American journal. For that reason, some studies describe her as a cultural mediator (*Vermittlerin*) between Europe and the USA: Rado Pribić, “Beiträge zur Folkloristik auf zwei Kontinenten”, *Talvj. Aus Liebe zu Goethe*, 207-212; Martha Kaarsberg Wallach, “Talvj und ihre Mittlerrolle in Amerika”, *Talvj. Aus Liebe zu Goethe*, 247-265.

49 As explained both by older and recent studies. Cf. Milan Ćurčin, op. cit., 95; Merchiers, op. cit., 309-311.

the author of a Sanskrit grammar (1828), who compared Slavic languages with ancient Indian. Vuk describes Majewski as someone who proved “the Indianity of Slavs” (adding to Kopitar: “you should see how he is of our party!”), while Majewski in an article about Vuk describes how they compared Polish and Serbian with Sanskrit.⁵⁰ In 1853, Sreznyevsky recommended to Vuk a young scholar Aleksandr Gil’ferding (who had just published a treatise about Slavic languages and Sanskrit) as a “young Sanskritist of whom a lot is expected”.⁵¹ Friedrich Müller, professor of Sanskrit at the University of Vienna and the creator of the Hamito-Semitic family concept, had in his youth learned Serbian from Vuk personally; during the classes he liked to make etymological parallels with Indo-Iranian languages, to Vuk’s interest.⁵² Vuk knew Bernhard Jülg (1825–1886), who studied comparatively Indo-European and Turkic languages and oral traditions (he translated the original *Siddhi kur* (*Tales of the Bewitched Corpse*), the Mongolian variant of the Indian story collection *The Twenty Five Tales Of The Vetala*). Jülg informed Vuk about his work on comparing Polish and Church Slavonic with Sanskrit, said that he was looking forward to Vuk’s help with Bulgarian editions and shows an interest in the forthcoming collection of tales collected by Vuk. They met in person in Vienna, and Vuk later sent him the collection of Serbian folk tales, which Jülg reviewed, and his work on the old Serbian language, which Jülg promised to review.⁵³ It is telling of Vuk’s status and image that young Jülg addresses him as the “Nestor of Slavic scholars”, hoping that Vuk would be able to help with his “branched connections”. Among the subscribers to Vuk’s 1852 dictionary was also the notable Indo-Europeanist August Schleicher, at that time a professor in Prague. Among South Slavs, Vuk’s supporter Bishop Platon Atanacković was the first among Serbs to publish a treatise comparing Serbian and Sanskrit (1843). Some of Vuk’s younger followers, like the Croat Imbro Tkalac and Catholic Serb from Dubrovnik Pero Budmani, also studied Sanskrit (and later even translated *Shakuntala*).⁵⁴

50 Vuk to Kopitar (18. 2. 1819), *VP*, vol. I; Valentin Skorohod Majevski, “O delima g. Vuka Stefanovića Karadžića”, in Golub Dobrašinović, Borivoje Marinković (eds.), *Susreti s Vukom* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1964), 35-37 (originally an article from 1819). Majewski read passages from Sanskrit works and Vuk “to the bewilderment of both” found similarities with many words archaic in Polish, but used in spoken Serbian – illustrative not so much of linguistic methodology as of the enthusiastic atmosphere.

51 Sreznyevsky to Vuk (25.11.1853), *VP*, vol. X.

52 Fridrih Kraus, “Doktor Kraussa u Beču“, *Karadžić*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1900), 3-5.

53 Jülg to Vuk (24.9. 1853); 6.6. 1852, *VP*, vol. IX; 10.3.1857, *VP*, vol. XI.

54 The section about Vuk’s contact with Sanskritists is from my forthcoming book *Gde ruža i lotos cveta. Slika Indije u srpskoj književnosti 19. i 20. veka* (Where rose and lotus bloom. The image of India in Serbian literature of the 19th and 20th centuries).

Vuk's European Admirers



Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), oil-on-canvas by Władysław Wańkowicz from 1828–29, National Museum, Warsaw.



Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), painting by Joseph Karl Stieler, 1828, Neue Pinakothek, Munich.



Jacob Grimm (1785–1863).



Vaclav Hanka (1791–1861).

The example of Jülg's multiple activities points to folklore, as another topic, but also to interconnections of all these fields in that period (F. Müller also crossed over into ethnography from philology). The birth of Indo-European linguistics (and Indology) went hand in hand with the emergence of folklore studies, and both were marked by a deeply comparative approach. Folkloristics adopted the philological model of new linguistics as a paradigm and stuck to it deep into the 20th century. In the early days of folklore studies, when collections of oral texts could be counted on the fingers of one hand, scholars interested in folklore felt like part of one community and exchanged data. All above-mentioned topics from Vuk's network converge in Grimm's activity. Grimm's famous circular letter from 1815, where he calls for collecting folklore, is the cornerstone of the folklore studies network. The very first sentence announces the creation of a European society (with Grimm as its leader). As is well known, the letter reached Vuk soon through Kopitar, although he would not meet Grimm in person until 1823. When John Bowring – who wasn't a scholar like Grimm or a collector like Vuk but an influential disseminator of the growing interest in folk poetry⁵⁵ – sent his publication (“translation”) of Finnish songs to the Slavic scholar Šafarik via Vuk, we can follow nod after nod in this network. Another good example is an indirect connection between Vuk and Elias Lönnrot. Although the two never met in person, their work is linked through Grimm's network and his underlying theoretical approach. In his influential lecture on Finnish epic poetry (1845), Grimm talks about Serbian songs, too.⁵⁶ He speaks not only of Lönnrot⁵⁷ but Vuk, too.⁵⁸ Such switching from the North epic to the Balkans is not as surprising as it might seem. It is the core of Grimm's method: comparison and looking for the elemental, original, universal, trying, at the same time, to find the source of German poetry. (Some scholars even opine that, given Grimm's contribution to the world renown of the *Kalevala* and the influence of his lecture on Lönnrot's later reworkings, Grimm can be seen as Lönnrot's collaborator.⁵⁹ Although the term collaborator is used here in a rather broad sense – there were different levels of Grimm's collaboration – it describes well his position as the kernel of

55 And, after all, a prominent political figure in Britain.

56 For Grimm's comparison of the two oral traditions see Miljan Mojašević, *Jakob Grim*, 221 ff; 498 ff. Väinö Kaukonen, “Jacob Grimm und das Kalevala-Epos“, *Deutsches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde*, Vol. 9 (1963), 229-239.

57 Kaukonen, op. cit., 235.

58 Grimm to Vuk (29.05.1845), *VP*, vol. VII.

59 Kaukonen, op. cit., p 235 ff. Grimm left Lönnrot's letter unanswered. Lönnrot wrote in Finnish, assuming Grimm knew the language, but Grimm read the *Kalevala* in the Swedish translation (Mojašević, *Jakob Grim*, 500).

the folklore studies network). Five years later, both Serbian and Finnish collectors were elected as correspondent members of the Berlin academy at Grimm's proposal,⁶⁰ as Grimm writes to Vuk,⁶¹ which was a symbolical confirmation of Grimm's network. Just as his approach connected different traditions, so this method is reflected on a personal level. Some other names found in the correspondence can be better understood in a folkloric perspective. Vuk was visited by Johann Georg von Hahn (and was later informed through intermediaries about Han's travels).⁶² Hahn is mentioned in the letters as the writer of a travelogue through Serbia and cartographer, but he was also an important folklorist. While in diplomatic service in Greece, he published Greek and Albanian folk tales, anticipating some ideas of 20th-century folkloristics. He is mentioned as visiting Vuk before travelling to the Albanians; given Vuk's contribution to collecting Albanian songs, too, this meeting of the two scholars adds a small piece to the mosaic of the history of Balkan studies as well. The Finnish folklorist Karl Collan visited Vuk twice. Collan, who was also a composer and collector of Finnish folk melodies, defended his thesis on Serbian epic songs in Swedish (1860).⁶³ This meeting became known only in the 1930s when parts of his diary were published.⁶⁴ Jülg and Collan were young people when they met Vuk (Jülg stresses that he, as a young person, was received by Vuk as a "veteran"), and their visits to Vuk show the status he had acquired in many fields.

All these names are only the "hardware" of the network, which has already been known and used in studies. But what is important for our topic is the "software": tracing how ideas of the folk soul, embodied in language, folk customs and folk poetry, became adopted both among the elites and on very broadly, both as the articulation of an intellectual concept and a personal emotion.

3. The adoption of new ideas

Not only Herderian ideas but Herder's very name is present in the letters. Mušicki asks Vuk (a teacher asks his pupil) about the purchase of all of Herder's works, especially his history of humankind;⁶⁵ poet and

60 Grimm became a member of Society of Serbian Letters (1849), the precursor of the Serbian Academy, and a correspondent member of the Finnish Literature Society.

61 25.4.1850 *VP*, vol. VIII.

62 Jovan Gavrilović to Vuk 26.10.1858, *VP*, vol. XI.

63 His father-in-law was Pacius, who composed the Finnish national anthem.

64 Ivan Šajković, "Vukove veze sa Finskom", *Politika* (12 March 1934), 5.

65 Mušicki to Vuk (22.11.1816) *VP*, vol. I.



Lithography of Vuk Karadžić made by Joseph Kriehuber (1865). Collection and photo Peter Geymayer.

philologist Pavle Solarić asks Vuk for the same title.⁶⁶ Vuk is called to translate something from Herder.⁶⁷ It testifies to the status the German author had among educated Serbs.

As early as 1806, Stratimirović scolded an officer for writing in German instead of his native Serbian.⁶⁸ “I [Stratimirović] have written in the Serbian language, our natural, sweet, sincere mother tongue...” Since the nation (*rod*) consists of language only, Stratimirović urges his correspondent to reply in Serbian, “simply” (*prosto*) and purely. The Preromantic idealization of simplicity and nature is identified here with the core of nationality. (This letter was copied by Mušicki and enclosed in his letter to Vuk; at that time, Stratimirović was Vuk’s enemy, and Mušicki wanted to prove that the Metropolitan had, not that long ago, thought the same as Vuk). The teacher Adam Dragosavljević wrote to Vuk (whom he did not know personally) about protecting the language, adding that he preferred simple old words preserved from the ancient days by mothers to the new learned words used by the best writers; a man that does not know any other language but his own keeps the original pronunciation of yore.⁶⁹

66 Solarić to Vuk (11.5.1817), Pavle Solarić, *Sabrana dela* (Belgrade: Dositejeva zadužbina, 2019).

67 Isidor Stojanović to Vuk (28.10.1833) *VPV* (Since Stojanović mentions Wieland, Gessner and Herder together, he most probably thinks of Herder as a poet).

68 Mušicki to Vuk (12.6.1818), *VP*, vol. I.

69 Adam Dragosavljević to Vuk (5.10.1825), *VP*, vol. II.

(Dragosavljević also reported to Vuk that he had given a copy of Grimm's grammar to an acquaintance distrustful of their ideas).⁷⁰ In this sense, a letter by a certain Matija Đurić from Zadar (where the Italian culture was dominant) is telling. He recognizes Vuk's "national love to our nation and language" and then confesses that, being raised in Italy until he was twenty years old, he hadn't had an idea even of "A" and "B", but sympathy for his own nation and language led him learn to read Serbian books.⁷¹ The personal tone of this letter is striking. In a similar vein, 25 years later, a certain Velimir Barbarić wrote to Vuk about the importance of simple language, its sweetness and that the youth appreciated Vuk's work on it.⁷² The Slovenian poet Stanko Vraz told Vuk – who "saved" the Serbian language – that he first read Vuk's collection (in German!) and how that experience motivated him to pursue Slavic studies. He taught himself to read the original, "by morning and evening", putting the book "under the pillow like a bewitched girl puts a letter from her lover". Vuk's works are "the well of true folk life of South Slavs".⁷³ (Vraz abandoned his native Slovenian dialect to become a poet of Croatian literature). A year before he died, Vuk was greeted by students of a Catholic seminary since he "nurtures the language as a mother her favourite child", sowing pure wheat on that field.⁷⁴ On a more programmatic and "higher" level, the famous Italian-Serbian writer, folk song collector and dictionary author, Nikola Tomazeo (or Niccolò Tommaseo), wrote that the nation would be united by the golden alliance of language. Vuk's simple speech should be a model for writers, but also the common people (*puk*) should be our leader instead of books.⁷⁵ The theme of youth recurs. It corresponds to the historical reality, where young Serbs supported Vuk, and to the deeper Europe-wide change of sensibility, as German examples of young Romanticism above show. But it is also a strong image carrying the meaning of source and strength, close to the organic metaphors crucial for Romantic (and later) folkloristics.⁷⁶ Other recurring themes were simplicity, naturality and authenticity. While they are expected in this time frame, it is interesting to see them adopted as part of self-identification.

We can track the adoption of the famous term *Volksgeist* in the same way. One correspondent praises Vuk because only his work contains "real

70 Adam Dragosavljević to Vuk (3.11.1826), *VP*, vol. III.

71 Matija Đurić to Vuk (23.10.1825), *VP*, vol. II.

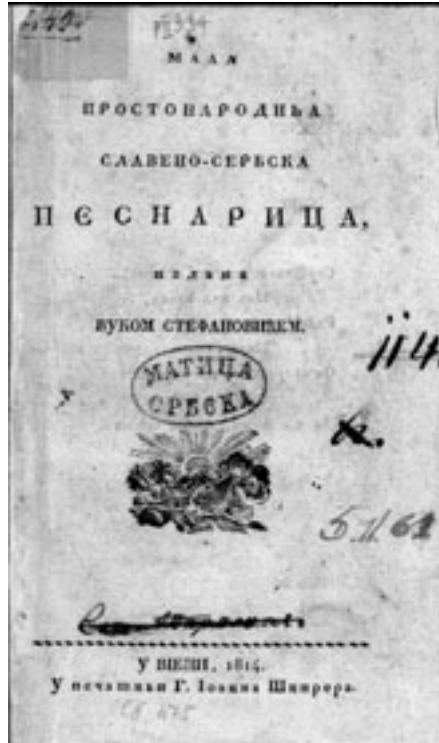
72 Velimir Barbarić to Vuk (14.3.1849) *VP*, vol. VIII.

73 Vraz Vuku (8.3.1839), *VP*, vol. VI.

74 Blaž Modrožić Vuku (28.1.1863), *VP*, vol. XIII.

75 Tomazeo to Vuk, (18.10.1845) *VP*, vol. VII.

76 Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, "Biological Metaphors in Folklore Theory. An essay in the history of ideas", in Alan Dundes (ed.), *Folklore. Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 407-435.



Cover page of the first Song-book (*Pesnarica*) by Vuk Karadžić, published in Vienna in 1814.

folk spirit and language”.⁷⁷ Miloje Lešjanin (a high government official) also used the term, arguing that writers would be able to create new words in “the spirit of the folk language”.⁷⁸ That is an entirely Herderian idea: writers should take inspiration from folk poetry (for Herder, folk poetry is not only oral or popular, but also includes individual creative production in the style of popular poetry). The final stage in the journey of this term is a 1859 letter by none other than the ruling prince Miloš, himself an unlettered man.⁷⁹ Miloš had returned from exile and retaken power when he wrote this letter, and he used the term precisely to describe his regaining of position.

Another epiphany of the *Volksggeist* is folk songs, tales, etc. Vuk calls them the “songs of old”;⁸⁰ his general view of national old history is that it is “covered by darkness”.⁸¹ But folk poetry can give us glimpses into

77 Antun Vakanović to Vuk (17.3.1849) *VP*, vol. VIII.

78 Miloje Lešjanin to Vuk (1852, no date, p. 843) *VP*, vol. IX.

79 Miloš Obrenović to Vuk (3.1.1859), *VP*, vol. XII.

80 Vuk to Mušicki (21.8.1815), *VP*, vol. I.

81 Vuk to Hristofor Obrenović (6.2.1822), *VP*, vol. II.



An illustration of a rural idyll from the first Song-book (Pesnarica) by Vuk Karadžić, published in Vienna in 1814.

that past. Such views are expressed in his comments on epic poetry, too. The implication is that songs can tell us more about old periods of history. Others accepted such views, but besides preserving antiquity, a consciousness of their contemporary function began to emerge. Songs serve to awaken the youth; they safeguard our nationality (*nacionalitet*), and contain the most truthful history of the ancient periods of our nation and the courage of our ancestors.⁸² Another correspondent hoped that Vuk, on his field trip, collected thousands of antiquities in the land where the original character of “our forefathers” still endured.⁸³ Vuk was praised for kindling “the fire of Serbism” so that the youth would sing the songs of their ancestors.⁸⁴

Among Vuk’s counterparts, the ruler of Montenegro, bishop and poet Petar II Petrović Njegoš summarizes this sentiment, saying that the Serbian Homer is in folk poetry for those who want to understand and to

82 Petar Ristić to Vuk (1.9.1821), *VP* I – it is his commentary with Vuk’s *Objavljenje*.

83 Djorđe Kuljančić to Vuk (19.11.1835) *VP*, vol. V.

84 Pavle Adamović to Vuk (20.4.1838) *VP*, vol. VI.

whom the Serbian nationality (*srpskost*) is dear.⁸⁵ Poet Milica Stojadinović said: “every Serb knows that many a valuable memory of Nationality without Vuk would have been lost to oblivion, since Serbian heroic songs could be heard only in common huts..., but the patriotic Vuk made an effort to introduce them into noble courts and, by doing so, he enflamed Serbian hearts for our dear nationality...”⁸⁶

Romanticism re-evaluated the folk customs despised by the Enlightenment, seeing them as another manifestation of the national character. This change of attitude happened simultaneously with the Romantic re-evaluation of myth and new views became intertwined. Contemporary folklore is, for J. Grimm, one of the sources for the study of myth. Songs, tales, and rituals are fragments of a once great but now lost whole (myth). Its original look can be reconstructed through careful study. The model for this approach came from Indo-European linguistics, which used living and dead languages to reconstruct this ancient common language. A synthesis of the Romantic idealization of the organic golden age and the scholarly, philological study of folklore marks Grimm’s work. Grimm inaugurated one of the most influential approaches to folklore, as a remnant of myth; he heavily contributed to the idea of folklore as a process of devolution, which will remain influential for generations of folklorists.⁸⁷

Grimm sent his monumental *Teutonic Mythology*⁸⁸ to Vuk soon after it was published, and he expected Vuk (if anyone) to find “some fragments of Serbian mythology”.⁸⁹ After the Serbian writers of 18th century, who attacked folk beliefs and customs either from a Christian or from an Enlightenment standpoint, we now see the adoption of a new concept of mythology. A small yet significant detail, caught by the editors of his letters, is when Vuk starts writing “superstition”, and then crossing out the word and replacing it with “mythology”.⁹⁰ His collaborator from the Montenegrin coast, Vuk Vrčević, was perplexed by Karadžić’s interest in “superstitions”. Publishing them, he says, wouldn’t do an honour to our nation, since some of those deserve to be laughed at and mocked (adding that it’d be woe to him as a collector if people learned who had sent such material to Vuk). “What do you use them for”, he wondered.⁹¹ Three years later, Vrčević obediently reported that he had sent the “superstitions” for a “Serbian my-

85 Njegoš to Vuk (end of July 1833, p. 172) *VP*, vol. V.

86 Milica Stojadinović to Vuk (13.11.1849) *VP*, vol. VIII.

87 See: Alan Dundes, *The Meaning of Folklore. Analytical Essays of Alan Dundes* (Logan UT: Utah State University Press 2007), 164-176.

88 As *Deutsche Mythologie* was (with reason) translated into English.

89 Grimm to Vuk (1.3.1837), *VP*, vol. VI.

90 Vuk to Pantelejmon Živković (23.10.1842), *VP*, vol. VI.

91 Vrčević to Vuk (16.1.1837; 13.4.1837), *VP*, vol. VI.



*Title page of *Deutsche Mythologie* by Jacob Grimm published in Göttingen in 1835. Later published in English as *Teutonic Mythology* in four volumes (1880–1888).*

thology” Vuk was writing⁹². Karadžić formulated his view on mythology in his comments accompanying the publication of folk songs, but also in his official or semi-official letters – to Alexander Shishkov, to the ministry of education, to Prince Miloš. He explained his plan to publish a description of folk customs and life, that is to say, customs, superstitions or beliefs and mythology.⁹³ It may be mentioned that the statesman Ilija Garašanin did not find it below his rank to send Vuk one local legend about a fly.⁹⁴ However, such a synthesis appeared only after Vuk’s death (unfinished) as a book titled *Life and Customs of the Serbian People*. It differs from Grimm’s contribution in that Vuk did not attempt to reconstruct the pre-Christian mythological system and instead offered ethnographic descriptions of the folk lifestyle, especially the rites belonging to the life cycle.

92 Vršević to Vuk (24.2.1840), *VP*, vol. VI.

93 Vuk to Shishkov (18.12.1838, *VP*, vol. VI); to Miloš Obrenović (24.4.1841, *VP*, vol. VI); to the Ministry of Education (3.5.1852, *VP*, vol. IX). The term superstition was not entirely discarded.

94 Garašanin to Vuk (4.11.1851), *VP*, vol. IX.

As early as 1821, Mušicki encouraged Vuk to describe folk customs. Such a book, he argued, would sustain nationality more than the catechism – and he even adds: “I’d rather give that to children than the catechism”.⁹⁵ That was a radically new, unexpected view for a member of the clergy. The theme of youth reappeared in Mušicki: “The Serbian youth is my diocese, the greatest, the most glorious of all dioceses.”⁹⁶ While this passage can be interpreted in the context of Mušicki’s conflict with his superiors, the image of youth reminds us of the broader intellectual climate, especially because he contrasts (in the same letter) this “diocese” with the “monks who despise the people and folk language”. Mušicki’s call to Vuk should be seen in the context of the Serbian clergy’s attitude toward folk customs. Mušicki’s tone is one of change. And such a new attitude is to be found in many other places in Vuk’s correspondence. It’d be easy to say that Mušicki wasn’t a typical priest – but he was not a lone example. Already while compiling his first collection (1814), Vuk got some *ritual* songs from Metropolitan Stratimirović himself, i.e., the very same material that the clergy condemned.⁹⁷ Abbot Jerotej Kovačević sent Vuk a description of the rite of *propruše*⁹⁸ and the accompanying song.⁹⁹ Another priest, Vuk Popović, sent him “magical” texts against the evil eye and mentioned priests and monks who summoned devils through special prayers.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, priests and monks collected *obscene* folklore: riddles, songs, especially dancing ones (*poskočice*), and proverbs.¹⁰¹ All the material suppressed, made invisible and rejected for centuries now became an object of interest and was collected as something precious.

Let us mention that, although research tends to stress the conflict between Karadžić and the Church, he organized the subscription to his books (song collections, dictionary) through the Church network. Priests, abbots and bishops were willing to help him, as they helped other Serbian authors of the period, too, but one of them even informed Vuk that he had done for Vuk what he hadn’t done for any other writer by sending circular letter to priests to read to people.¹⁰²

95 Mušicki to Vuk (13.12.1821), *VP*, vol. I.

96 Mušicki to Vuk (10.1.1822), *VP*, vol. II.

97 At that time they still maintained good relations.

98 Young men performing a rainmaking dance in times of drought.

99 Vuk to Jerotej Kovačević (6.9.1845); Kovčević to Vuk 27.12.1845)

100 Vuk Popović to Vuk (6.10.1849).

101 Samuilo Ilić to Vuk (8.9.1824, *VP*, vol. II) Stefan Teodorović to Vuk (26.10.1825, *VP*, vol. II) Vuk Popović to Vuk (19.2.1836), *VP*, vol. V (13.11.1836, V); Avram Panić to Vuk (24.5.1836), *VP*, vol. V.

102 Pantelejmmon Živković to Vuk (9.3.1841), *VP*, vol. VI.

Finally, we notice the institutionalisation of these ideas, as already apparent in Vuk's letters about his mythology project. One example shows the creation of the cult of folk singers in Serbian civil society. Vuk was informed about the idea to mark the grave of Filip Višnjić, one of Vuk's most famous singers.¹⁰³ His correspondent notified Vuk that, for this task, a committee had been set up, including one lawyer and one *solgabirow* (prefect), adding that they were even planning a call in the newspapers. But the idea, as stated in a letter, got bigger: perhaps it should be monument in the town? And perhaps it should not be dedicated to one singer only, but to other singers, too, to all of them? From the tomb of one singer, the idea grew to a pantheon. The creation of the cult of the folk singer, or bard, developed in the 19th and 20th centuries in national culture.¹⁰⁴

Another example can be found in a letter of the Romantic artist Uroš Knežević.¹⁰⁵ Knežević let Vuk know that the young and well-educated Prince Mihailo had taken him on a journey with a mission. Knežević's task was to paint old men and women in costumes from the previous period: "He [prince] has all this painted especially because folk costumes started disappearing so that it may stay in memory". Mihailo – who told Vuk, as a contribution to his collection, a fairytale he had heard in childhood from a nanny – was beset with the typically Romantic idea that contemporary folklore was on the brink of disappearing and that was high time to "save" it. This notion would exercise its influence on folkloristic and popular conceptions of folklore for a long time. This example is important because it shows how this preoccupation could become a kind of semi-official project. Similar impulses in other countries gave rise to ethnographic collections and museums.

4. Final remarks

In this type of research, personages like Vuk Karadžić might appear reduced to mere transmitters. This apparent distortion is only a matter of the point of view. Vuk's differences from Grimm are well known in the history of folklore studies, to take that example, which show his original insights into folklore, foreshadowing in some aspects the scholarship of the 20th century. But since this is not a history of the discipline or a case study of Vuk's views, circulation through his network puts the very content of that process in the front.

103 Mojsije Georgijević to Vuk (31.1.1847), *VP VII*; see also the letter of April 15, 1847.

104 See Smiljana Djordjević-Belić, *Figura guslara. Heroizirana biografija i nevidljiva tradicija* (Belgrade: IKUM, 2017), 55-61.

105 Knežević to Vuk (5.2.1852) *VP IX*

Cultural history has noted that Herderian ideas became commonplaces in the European cultural space, even becoming anonymous, in the early 19th century.¹⁰⁶ Grimm's ideas had a similar destiny to become widespread. The Serbian culture of the 19th century is marked by this intellectual cluster, from Romantic theatre and poetry to popular ideas of language or folklore. But the very process of the spread of such ideas can still be a subject of research and yield new insights. It is cultural transfer as a process broader than the history of literary influences and deeper than intellectual history, since it often concerns persons invisible to “big” history and their emotions. Moving from published texts to more personal communications, we can see how this cluster came to life on a personal level, then on the level of interpersonal communication and how, finally, they reached an official position.

Abbreviations:

VP = *Vukova prepiska I-XIII* [Correspondence of Vuk Karadžić], *Sabrana dela Vuka Karadžića* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1987–2014).

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