Case Study

THE MOTIF OF SALT IN FAIRY TALES: A CASE STUDY OF LEVSTIK'S *KRPAN Z VRHA*



Literature

Keywords: Martin Krpan; Fran Levstik; ATU 1651A; salt; national hero; authorial fairy tale; H. C. Andersen; youth literature.

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Abstract

This paper examines the motif of salt in Fran Levstik's narrative about Martin Krpan, focusing on the lesser-known, longer manuscript version Krpan z Vrha (Krpan from Vrh, c. 1855) and its relationship to the better-known tale Martin Krpan z Vrha, first published in Slovenski glasnik in 1858. Previous scholarship (Košuta, 1996; Hladnik, 2009) has discussed Krpan as a national hero and the meaning of his trade in "English salt", while early twentieth-century debates centred on Krpan's mare and on Hinko Smrekar's illustrations. Using a comparative motif-based approach that draws on the tale-type indexes of Thompson (1997) and Uther (2011), Lüthi's (2012) theory of the European folk tale, von Franz's (2000) psychological reading of fairy tales and Zipes's (2006, 2012) theory of fairy-tale memes, the paper argues that the first part of the manuscript can be read as an authorial tale and the second as an authorial fairy tale, dominated by magic helpers and magic objects. Salt functions both literally, as a commodity related to tale type ATU 1651A (fortune in salt), and metaphorically, as a sign of wisdom, wit and national self-assertion. The motif is further traced in Slovenian youth literature (Milčinski, Makarovič, Rozman Roza) and compared with H. C. Andersen's The Tinderbox. The paper concludes that Krpan is a "national-human" character whose two journeys, the first national and the second personal, form an archetypal hero's journey and a durable cultural meme.

1. Introduction

Numerous literary-historical studies have addressed the motif and meaning of food and of mineralised food, in particular salt. Miroslav Košuta discussed Martin Krpan, the motif of (English) salt and the national hero in *Krpanova sol* (Krpan's Salt, 1996), as did Miran Hladnik in *Slovenski zgodovinski roman* (The Slovenian Historical Novel, 2009). At the beginning of the twentieth century, discussion focused instead on Krpan's mare (Ivan Cankar, *Krpanova kobila*, 1907) and on its illustrations (Hinko Smrekar, *Krpanova kobila*, 1907).

The aim of this paper is to examine the salt motif in both versions of Levstik's text, with particular attention to the manuscript *Krpan z Vrha*, whose second, fairy-tale part has received little critical attention. The paper addresses three questions: (1) how the two parts of the manuscript differ in genre; (2) what literal and metaphorical meanings salt carries in the text and in related tale types; and (3) how the motif continues in Slovenian youth literature.

2. Materials and Method

The primary material consists of Levstik's manuscript *Krpan z Vrha* (Levstik, 1855), published by Anton Slodnjak in Levstik's collected works (Levstik, 1931), and the 1858 *Slovenski glasnik* version (Levstik, 1858). Secondary material comprises Slovenian youth literature in which salt appears as a central or secondary motif (Milčinski, 2017; Makarovič, 2008; Rozman, 2010).

The method is a qualitative, comparative motif analysis: motifs are identified with reference to the indexes of Thompson (1997) and Uther (2011) and interpreted through Lüthi's (2012) theory of the folk tale, von Franz's (2000) psychological approach and Zipes's (2006, 2012) theory of memetics and cultural evolution. English translations of Slovene quotations are the author's own.

3. Martin Krpan as a National Hero

Hladnik (2009, p. 254) describes *Martin Krpan* as a non-historical story because it is too short (approximately 5,700 words) and because its fairy-tale features are too closely intertwined with its historical ones. Fairy-tale characteristics, such as magic objects, even dominate the second part of the manuscript version, *Krpan z Vrha*. Nevertheless, Martin Krpan holds the status of the first Slovene literary hero, one who has performed, and still performs, a historically and nationally important role, which is why Hladnik places the text close to historical storytelling (2009, p. 254).

3.1 Martin Krpan as reading for young people

Martin Krpan z Vrha (Martin Krpan from Vrh), first published in *Slovenski glasnik* in 1858, is a typical example of a text written for adults that, through literary reception, became reading for young people and therefore an object of study in children's and youth literature research. It was published as a picture book with illustrations by Hinko Smrekar in 1917, by Tone Kralj in 1954 and by Suzi Bricelj in 1999, each followed by reprints.

3.2 The "national-human" aspect

Martin Krpan is also a sublime literary character with an essentially timeless "national-human" quality. The word "national-human" occurs in the Freising Manuscripts (*Brižinski spomeniki* II/11); the critical transcription reads "to the human nation", which in modern Slovene is understood as "to the human race", but also as an original coinage that has acquired new connotations over the millennium.[1] Krpan can express a desire for a national state, yet he remains human: he embodies the Slovene character of an honest and capable peasant who is also a smuggler, although the emphasis falls on the legalisation of his activity, his nation and his territory. As portrayed in *Martin Krpan z Vrha*, he has all the attributes of a national and human hero and at the same time embodies the aspiration to a national-human character for the Slovene nation.

In the second part of Levstik's manuscript, Krpan's honesty is even more pronounced, because Emperor John himself, Empress Conrada, the ministers and others are portrayed in a Machiavellian manner, as people for whom the end justifies the means. The emperor is portrayed critically: he forgets that Krpan helped him, revokes his charter and orders him to be tracked, drugged, imprisoned behind three doors and hanged. It is notable that in the second part Krpan does not turn to God, who

is often mentioned, but that supernatural beings appear in moments of archetypal fantasy, when his position seems hopeless.

In myths and fairy tales this is a typical starting point: a man gets lost in the woods and meets a dwarf (here, the dwarf Jegovec). Von Franz calls this an archetypal fantasy, a psychological situation in which the conscious personality reaches the limits of its resources (von Franz, 2000, pp. 17–18). This turning point, which turns the story into a fairy tale, can also be read as Krpan turning to mythical tradition rather than to God (Christianity). In interpreting fairy tales, von Franz notes that such situations "on the edge of sanity" can also be explained by the animus invoking the anima and vice versa.

Accordingly, in the first part Krpan resolves problems through physical strength (animus), and in the second through emotional and social strength (anima). He must stay alert and trust the dwarf despite his rational doubts about the power of the ball of thread. Chained in a dungeon behind a triple door, he escapes from the labyrinth, or prison, by means of a thread (an "Ariadne's thread") in a magic flight. Unlike myths that end tragically, such as that of Icarus, Krpan remains modest. This is his final test: to overcome himself and not to be greedy or presumptuous:

> "Then he takes as much money as he can into his bag and leaves the rest." (Levstik, 1931, p. 101)

Had Krpan taken more money than he needed, or more than his bag could hold, he would have remained a hero who failed to achieve individuation; through this act he becomes a positive subject. The subsequent episodes, in which Krpan shows that he is also skilled with his hands and a strategist, reveal that he "has wit too". He is no longer impulsive, as in the first part, where he defeats Brdavs quickly and physically, but reflective: "he thought all day"; "unspeakably happy, he almost shouted out loud (…), but he reminded himself that he was a prisoner". Levstik describes Krpan's magic flight from prison almost cinematically:

> "If he felt but a bit dizzy, his hands would become numb and he would lie on the ground in small pieces. He managed to get to the ground safely, though." (Levstik, 1931, p. 101)

This sentence suggests that Krpan is transformed from a hero-victim into a hero-seeker and achieves an integration of head and arm, that is, of cognitive and emotional abilities: he masters himself and matures as an individual and as a national hero. There follow non-fairy-tale details of how Krpan defeats his enemies with a hatchet and a club while escaping. Before confronting the antiheroes physically, he reveals that he knows of their conspiracy and their wrongdoing (e.g. stealing apples). Notably, Krpan returns to the dungeon and unlocks it with keys rather than by force, comes back "for the bag and gold" (Levstik, 1931, p. 102) and, once outside, says:

> "He runs quickly back to the room, takes the bag and the gold and goes towards the door, where the guards are still lying tied up. He takes the key from the nail where it hangs, opens the door and goes outside. When he is outside, he says: 'Glory to God, the hardest part of the work is done,

> God willing! Wall, you never saw me before this year; God forbid you should ever see me again.'
> He says this and runs through the city, always forward." (Levstik, 1931, p. 102)

The text has a title character (Martin Krpan) and a precise setting (Vrh pri Sveti Trojici), and the character has all the attributes of a national hero (good and brave) who fights the antihero, the giant Brdavs. There is also a nation-building element: Krpan helps the Viennese Emperor John, who could not have defeated Brdavs without the Slovene peasant. In interpretations of *Martin Krpan*, the first part of the text emphasises the hero's wish to legalise his activity. It also expresses a desire for autonomy and independence, and for a charter that would legalise the activity, its holder and the land.

4. Martin Krpan: Tale and Fairy Tale

Levstik wrote the text about Martin Krpan twice. The older, less well-known and longer text, *Krpan z Vrha* (Krpan from Vrh), was published from the manuscript by Anton Slodnjak in *Zbrano delo III* (Collected Works III, 1931).[2] The better-known authorial tale was first published in *Slovenski glasnik* in 1858 under the title *Martin Krpan z Vrha*, and this second version came to be regarded as the first.

A comparison of the manuscript version, which according to Slodnjak was written around 1855, with the shorter 1858 version shows that in 1858 Levstik published only the first part of *Krpan z Vrha*, the part known in literary history as an authorial tale. Setting aside minor changes in the first part, the manuscript's second part is a fairy-tale sequel and, on the basis of its immanent properties, can be defined as an authorial fairy tale. It contains explicit fairy-tale elements: magic helpers (the emperor of the dwarf land and the dwarf Jegovec) and magic objects (a thin thread and a file that cuts through any iron).

Whereas in the folk-tale model events take place on a single plane (Lüthi, 2012, p. 4), the events in the authorial fairy tale *Krpan z Vrha* take place on two planes, which is an essential feature of the authorial fairy tale. Krpan moves through real space, but after three drops of a magic potion he meets fairy-tale creatures (a talking dwarf), falls asleep, wakes up chained in a dungeon and, after many vicissitudes and with the help of magic objects (a file and a thread), cuts through the bars and escapes. Escape from a dungeon (magic flight) is a common fairy-tale motif in which heroes are rescued by magic helpers (a bird, a dwarf, a fairy): Rapunzel (*Motovilka*) is rescued from the tower by means of her hair, the female principle, which is comparable to Ariadne's thread and to the flight of Icarus from the Minotaur's labyrinth.

The fairy tale begins where the tale ends. Emperor John gives Krpan a "letter with a seal" so that he can transport English salt without harassment. In the first part, therefore, Krpan succeeds in legalising his activity and sets off from Vienna on the road to Vrh. In the second, independent fairy-tale part, however, the emperor changes his mind, prompted by Empress Conrada's prejudice and by the felled linden tree, an external rather than an internal motivation.

Emperor John breaks his word, a morally questionable act, and sends a servant after Krpan, who gives him an enchanted drink. The emperor writes a new order instructing the hunter Andrej, disguised as a Roma traveller, to put Krpan to sleep with three drops of the drink, bind him and bring him back in chains to a prison in Vienna behind three doors. There he sentences him to death on the gallows, a medieval motif.

5. The Motif of Food and Salt

5.1 Salt in the first part

The first part, the authorial tale, is dominated by the salt motif, which appears several times in the international tale-type index: ATU 923 (*Love like salt*), ATU 1200 (*Sowing salt*) and ATU 1328A (*Oversalting the soup*). The type most closely related to *Martin Krpan*, however, is ATU 1651A (*Fortune in salt*): a man (a merchant or a young man) finds a land where salt is unknown, sells salt there at a high price and becomes wealthy (Uther, 2011). The type corresponds to motif N411.4 in Thompson's index.[3] It is known in many cultures, including Belarusian, Bulgarian, Egyptian, Estonian, Finnish, Georgian, Indian, Iraqi, Italian, Jewish, Latvian, Russian, Serbian and Sudanese traditions.

In the first part, Krpan also shows that he has a "grain of salt in his head" when he answers Emperor John's question about what he is hiding in his bag with the witty reply that he carries a flint and a whetstone. Literally and metaphorically, then, he has salt both in his bag and in his head; he is clever, which reflects the fairy-tale play between literal and figurative meaning. Krpan carries English salt from Trieste to the Notranjska region and takes grapes from Vrh pri Sveti Trojici to Trieste, so his trade runs in both directions.

5.2 Food and abundance

Besides the expressive salt motif, food is frequently mentioned in the text in terms of abundance and overeating: two lambs and wine to satiety, "How much do you need to be full?", "Have you seen my head? Eight such piles of cooked food, and even that is not always enough" (Levstik, 1931, p. 64). A characteristic of the folk tale, which is structured as a journey with the hero as traveller, is mineralisation and metallisation (Lüthi, 2012, p. 4), and these are also present in *Krpan z Vrha*.

5.3 Salt in the international index

In Uther's (2011) index the salt motif occurs frequently, either independently (the saltless land, ATU 1651A; sowing salt, ATU 1200) or as a motif within a type (the oversalted soup, ATU 1328A). One salt motif deserves special research because it is remotely associated with incest: ATU 923 (*Love like salt*), which appears in many tales about a father and daughter (e.g. *Love Like Salt* and Cinderella variants) and in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, which is linked to the English tale *Love Like Salt*.

In the national sense, with Krpan as the archetype of a warrior in the Habsburg context, the salt motif can be understood both literally and metaphorically. Krpan literally wants to grow rich through salt, but he also wants to improve the (peasant) palate and to preserve quality and national identity. In addition, he wants to legalise his (illegal) activity, which places him, as a subject, on a higher level:

> "The emperor was quite willing, but Minister Gregor, who had the keys to his silver, said little, remarking only that it would be a great loss to the state if this were done. Emperor John, however, did not listen to Gregor, but wrote a letter and stamped it with his seal, granting Krpan the right to carry salt into the country until his death, and he gave him a purse full of yellow gold, saying: 'Krpan, take the letter and the purse, and may God be with you wherever you go.'" (Levstik, 1931, p. 75)

It is noteworthy that in the manuscript the emperor breaks his word, a dishonourable act, and with the help of (negative) assistants has Krpan drugged and chained in prison. Although writing fairy-tale content, Levstik foregrounds the question of absolute rights: the emperor held a privilege and conferred it on Krpan, but he is also capricious. He violated Krpan's rights by taking away his "imperial letter" (Levstik, 1931, p. 99) unlawfully, by deception. Today we would call this an inadmissible, unconstitutional encroachment on Krpan's acquired rights. Combined with the symbols of the whetstone and the flint, the salt motif has also been interpreted as a motif of gunpowder, weapons, revolution and rebellion against the Habsburg monarchy.

It is precisely metallisation (a golden pear, apple or fish) and mineralisation (a pearl, stone or salt) in the folk-tale model that give living organisms their final form as metal or mineral (Lüthi, 2012, p. 43). According to Lüthi, the fairy tale characteristically metallises and mineralises objects and living beings (2012, p. 28), and their metal or mineral composition ensures permanent solidity (p. 43). Salt is important not only for people but also for animals, as shown in Rosa Bonheur's painting *Shepherd of the Pyrenees Giving Salt to His Sheep* (1864). The fairy-tale corpus contains many tales with titles such as *White Gold*, *Magic Salt*, *Love Like Salt*, *The Salt Mill*, *Unsalted Bread*, *The Salt Prince*, *Sowing Salt*, *Sugar and Salt* and *Why the Sea Is Salty*, as well as tales about salt as hospitality, as protection against witches and spilt salt as a bringer of misfortune.

5.4 The symbolism of salt

Salt has great symbolic value across cultures, both positive and negative, although positive meanings predominate. In the Bible, salt already has healing properties: "Then he went to the spring of water and threw salt in it and said, 'Thus says the LORD, I have healed this water; from now on neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it'" (2 Kings 2:21).[4] In Roman times, to be without "salt" meant to lack anything essential, and according to a widely repeated tradition soldiers were paid in salt (Latin *salarium*), from which the English word *salary* derives; the Latin *salus* (health, greeting) is also often linked to it (Ritz, 1996).[5] In the Middle Ages, Venice held a monopoly on the sale of salt, known as "white gold", and salt production has been described as one of the beginnings of modern industry and capitalism.

5.5 The amber, salt, silk, herb and saffron roads

Literary theory distinguishes between monogenetic and polygenetic theories of the fairy tale (the anthropological, Indo-European and migration theories). According to polygenetic explanations, people on all continents have similar needs (water, food, shelter), which is the basis of the anthropological theory, and they travelled and traded by caravan, by ship and on foot, which is the basis of the migration theory. Just as tea, amber, salt, silk, spices and other valuables travelled, so too did tale types and motifs, from the Far East and the Middle East to the Mediterranean and Italy, and via Slovenia to north-western Europe. Valvasor often mentions such traders, calling them salt carriers or salt merchants:

> "All the locals here are salt carriers; in the Carniolan expression, these are people who go to the sea to fetch it and then carry it on horseback all over the country for money or in exchange for grain." (Rupel, 1969, p. 59)

In *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre* (2012), Jack Zipes builds on the theory of memetics and cultural evolution that he set out in *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre* (2006). He argues that only some fairy tales or fairy-tale memes, in his view 50 to 75 of them, are able to survive cultural evolution, namely those relevant memes that are repeatable and memorable. Zipes defines the fairy-tale meme as a unit of cultural transmission, which may be a simple idea, story, phrase or essential piece of information related to the fairy tale.

Such memes (e.g. Hansel and Gretel, Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, The Frog King) remain relevant across cultures because they address universal issues in individualised form. The story of the Slovenised Martin Krpan is likewise, at its core, an archetypal hero's journey. This process allows a specific cultural meme to become universal because it adapts to particular cultural settings (a Slovene hero, Vrh pri Sveti Trojici, Vienna, enrichment through salt, silk, amber, herbs, gold or precious stones) more successfully than other, less relevant memes.

Zipes holds that tale types and motifs are basic and simple (*Martin Krpan* is structurally similar to *Peter Klepec*, *Pegam and Lambergar* and David and Goliath), but that their interaction is complex (peasant – emperor – minister; Vrh pri Sveti Trojici – Trieste – Vienna; national – international – local). Mutations of fairy-tale memes are creative (as in *Pegam and Lambergar*) because they open up new possibilities and combinations. The essential condition for the spread of a fairy-tale meme, or a combination of memes, is its relevance, followed by its repeatability and memorability (Zipes, 2012, pp. 19–20).

6. The Motif of Salt in Slovenian Youth Literature

Salt appears as a central or secondary motif in Slovenian youth literature. In *Butalci* (The People of Butale), the Butalci set off in search of salt because salt symbolises wisdom, and they also sow salt (ATU 1200); in the legend of King Matjaž, the hero searches for a hill made entirely of salt.

> "The Butalci ran out of salt, and this was awkward not only for cooking and baking but also for their wisdom, for they no longer knew what it meant when someone told them to go and salt themselves [i.e. 'get lost'], and this was not uncommon." (Milčinski, 2017)

The contemporary Slovenian author Svetlana Makarovič also uses the salt motif frequently in *Svetlanine pravljice* (Svetlana's Fairy Tales, 2008):

> "Grey mice scurried around the hall, bringing white flour, black flour, yeast, salt and water; they gathered at the edge of the trough and in a flash – tifiti-taf, tifiti-taf – kneaded a semi-white dough, covered it with a tablecloth and withdrew to the wall." (Makarovič, 2008, p. 19)

> "'I have it, but I won't give it away! Go and salt yourself [i.e. 'get lost']!' Sapra shrieked furiously and ran away. The squirrel shrugged and began to sharpen his claws again." (Makarovič, 2008, p. 29)

> "'You can all go and salt yourselves!' cried the mouse." (Makarovič, 2008, p. 39)

> "'Fox, fox, dog's potica! What is that fox doing? Fox the thief can go and salt herself!'" (Makarovič, 2008, p. 74)

With the phrase "Go and salt yourself" (Makarovič, 2008, p. 261), Makarovič uses the expressive meaning subversively: in her texts it expresses not only resentment and rejection but also a new, advisory nuance, namely "become wise". She also uses the expressive idiom "to salt someone a slap", meaning to slap or hit:

> "'Not much of a mother, that I can say for certain,' the fox grumbled behind her back, thinking that her mother could no longer hear her. But the vixen heard her, salted her daughter a slap [i.e. slapped her] – and really did leave." (Makarovič, 2008, p. 280)

In Levstik's *Martin Krpan*, Krpan's victory over Brdavs can likewise be read as a hard, moral slap "salted" to the emperor. Krpan's last words before the emperor are:

> "If Brdavs or anyone else should come again – you know where Vrh pri Sveti Trojici is. I will give your greetings to the people of Vrh and to the mayor's mother. Stay healthy!" – "Safe journey!" said the Emperor, but Minister Gregor did not say a word. (Levstik, 1954, pp. 52–53)

In Andrej Rozman Roza's poem *Uvod v Martina Krpana* (Introduction to Martin Krpan, 2010), the salt motif is not emphasised and appears only in an expressive use:

> "The TV broadcast was guaranteed, the advertising block was suitably salted, the largest stadium was packed, and the infamous foreigner was strong and cunning. He knew everything that the pious audience believed was impossible." (Rozman, 2010, p. 40)

7. Andersen and Levstik: The Tinderbox and Martin Krpan

In the second part of *Krpan z Vrha*, the emperor breaks his word and fails to honour what was agreed, promised, signed and sealed in the imperial letter, which amounts to an even sharper criticism of the emperor and of absolutist rulers. Besides the literal conflict between two giants, Krpan and Brdavs, there is also a conflict between two nations, cultures and classes: the peasant keeps his word, while the emperor does not and instead order a pursuer to drug Krpan, tie him up, imprison him and sentence him to death.

It may be hypothesised that Levstik was familiar with Andersen's *The Tinderbox*, although direct evidence of this has yet to be established: the "worn-out" Krpan relates intertextually to the discharged soldier in Andersen's tale. In Andersen, the old woman is the magic helper and the tinderbox (the light of reason, enlightenment, Promethean fire) is the magic object, whereas in *Krpan z Vrha* the dwarf king is the helper and a magic thread and file are the objects. The imprisoned Krpan is motivically similar to the chained Prometheus:

> "When, however, the clock has struck twelve several times, he listens to hear whether all is quiet, takes the file again and files off all the iron on his hands and feet." (Levstik, 1931, p. 100)

His fire may therefore also be a metaphor for Promethean light (mind, reason, cognition), even though Krpan uses a thread and a file to free himself, just as Andersen's soldier, about to be hanged, asks to smoke a pipe, which he lights with the magic tinderbox. The motif of a Christianised Last Supper is also present in *Krpan z Vrha*:

> "'Now choose what you want to eat and drink; that is our custom.' 'Then bring me a roast lamb and as much wine as befits someone like me, so that I do not leave this world hungry and thirsty.' He immediately starts filing through the thick iron grating on the window. Soon all of it was gone; he left only one large iron bar to tie the thread to." (Levstik, 1931, p. 101)

8. The Motif of the Giant and the Homunculus

In addition to the many structural and motif analogies between *Martin Krpan* and *Pegam and Lambergar* and *Peter Klepec* in Slovene literature, there are references to giants in world literature, e.g. the clash of the titans; F. Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*; J. Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (giants and homunculi); H. C. Andersen, *Thumbelina* (enlargement and diminution); L. Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*; O. Wilde, *The Selfish Giant*; and, for dwarfs, M. Valjavec and F. Hubad, *Pedenjčlovek laketbrada*; S. Kosovel, *Škrat Dobrošin* (The Dwarf Dobrošin); N. Grafenauer, *Pedenjped* and *Majhnica*; and S. Makarovič, *Škrat Kuzma*. The dwarf Jegovec is a forest dwarf who

intertextually resembles the figures in Garner's *Elidor*, or the grateful helper – a dwarf, little man or homunculus.

Krpan relates intertextually to the giant motif in world and youth literature, but he is a good-hearted, honest and resourceful giant: Brdavs resembles the Cyclops, while Krpan resembles Odysseus. The story recalls David and Goliath, Peter Klepec and the Turks and, in children's literature, the great benevolent giant who protects weak and vulnerable children, as in Roald Dahl. *Martin Krpan* is a nationally affirmative text, as Levstik himself stated:

> "Now I want to paint the Slovene people, a Carniolan peasant, so that the world can see what a stalwart he is! [...] If we look for the source of this idea, we may believe that he found it in the famous poem 'Pegam and Lambergar' [...] Krpan can be a representative – and not a bad one at that! – of our peasant." (Slodnjak, 1956, p. 497)

In the folk song, Pegam is a counterpart of Brdavs and also a giant, so the story is a clash of giants or titans. Brdavs is a big, strong, cruel and violent man, and his name has become a common noun that can be written with a lower-case initial, as *brdavs*.

9. Discussion and Conclusion

Levstik's *Krpan z Vrha* is the first version of the Krpan story and consists of two parts. It is of interest for interpretation because the second part is dominated by fairy-tale elements (fantastic elements impossible in real life) and because it relates to the literary-historical tradition of the fairy tale. It supports the hypothesis that *Martin Krpan*, the struggle of a good national hero against a harsh foreign antihero, is essentially a meme, or archetypal journey.

The text is built on the principle of the journey. In the first part, Krpan travels between Trieste and Vrh pri Sveti Trojici, then to Vienna and back home. The second part begins as a journey home, which is in essence the beginning of a new journey. The first journey has a national significance (Krpan obtains a seal and legalises his activity, his nation and his territory), and the second a human one: Krpan grows personally and achieves the integration expressed in the Freising Manuscripts as "national-human".

The first part of *Krpan z Vrha* can be interpreted as an authorial tale and the second as an authorial fairy tale, because magic helpers and objects dominate. These can also be understood as the materialised inner strength of a man imprisoned at point zero, who is able to help himself. In the language of fairy tales, this appears as a dream in which a magic helper comes to him, and with the help of magic objects (a file and a thread) he is rescued from prison.

Dreams can be interpreted as an inner voice, intuition or the anima: Krpan listens and realises that he must cut (with the file) his previous way of life, that he is trapped in the dungeon of purely

physical solutions, and so he weaves a new solution from a thin thread. At first he does not trust the thread, because until then he has believed only in physical strength, but now he must believe in a "thin thread" that he cannot break, although he could break every weapon before. Some ties that appear thin cannot in fact be broken. This can be read not only as the continuous thread of life but also as a national-human thread that represents national destiny through the individual destiny of a human hero: the small (dwarfs) and the great (Krpans) should help each other out of the dungeon of intrigue and the labyrinth of the emperor's absolute power, which deprived Krpan of his rights.

Levstik presented his sharp criticism of the court in the form of a fairy tale. Krpan is saved by means of a metaphor, a file and a ball of thread: the national-human individual can be saved only by cutting through the Habsburg bars of the "prison of nations", with the help of a continuous bond with the nation. Krpan is bound to Vrh pri Sveti Trojici and to his Slovene identity by thin but unbroken threads, a ball of tradition that seems fragile yet which even a giant like him cannot break. In the first part Krpan literally smuggles salt; in the second he proves that he has "a grain of salt in his head", even though the absolute monarch first grants him the charter and then takes it away, a question that merits further research. Despite its fairy-tale features, Martin Krpan remains a national-human character.

Notes

1. Freising Manuscripts, electronic critical edition: http://nl.ijs.si/e-zrc/bs/html/bsTR.html#bsTR-slv.2.028
2. Manuscript available at http://www.dedi.si/virtualna-knjiga/16945
3. In Thompson's index the motif appears under "lucky accidents": N411.4 "A merchant's son sells salt in a saltless land for a fortune" (Thompson, 1997, Vol. 5, p. 105).
4. Bible quotation from Biblija.net, http://www.biblija.net
5. On the cultural and economic history of salt, see Ritz (1996).

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