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**Suzana Marjanić**

*Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb*

## **GENRE (AND) INTERPRETATIONS: FABLES, TALES OF ANIMAL BRIDEGROOMS (*THE BEAUTY AND THE BEAST* ARCHETYPE) AND ANIMAL WIVES, AND THE INTERPRETATIONS THEREOF**

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**Abstract:** Along the lines of the fable *Baba's Bilka* (*Babina Bilka*, recorded by Maja Bošković-Stulli in Gorjani near Đakovo in 1957, as narrated by Stipan Lović, b. 1894), its possible interpretations will be considered—the totemic (e.g., Boria Sax), psychoanalytic (e.g., Bruno Bettelheim), feminist (e.g., Heide Göttner-Abendroth), and ecofeminist interpretations, as well as the context of mythic zoophilia (e.g., Midas Dekkers). Based on the aforementioned interpretative niches, the indications of the return of the human-animal unification in the form of mythic cyborgs in science fantasy (using selected examples) and in the Anthropocene within the framework of global ecocide will be sought.

**Keywords:** *Baba's Bilka*, Gorjani, tales of animal wives, zoomorphism, mythic cyborg

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In folklore tales,<sup>1</sup> people often turn into animals and vice versa, hence anthropomorphism and zoomorphism are quite frequent, which proves similarity to mythical worlds. In his structural myth analysis, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966) determined that, in the world of myths, the difference between human and animal is not clearly defined, as is ultimately also the case with the shamanic structure of the world. The same goes for the fable *Baba's Bilka* (recorded by Maja Bošković-Stulli in Gorjani near Đakovo in 1957, as narrated by Stipan Lović, b. 1894; the aforementioned folklorist classified

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the aforementioned tale/fable under AaTh 409A)<sup>2</sup> (cf. Bošković-Stulli (ed.) 1983: 212). In the tale, the difference between the supernatural fairy being and the pig itself is not clearly defined—we do not know whether Bilka is a pig or a supernatural woman (a young girl with golden hair and comb), since she appears to be a kind of mythic cyborg. Or, as noted by the feminist theoretician Donna J. Haraway in *A Cyborg Manifesto*, “The cyborg appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed” (Haraway 1991: 149). Bilka the fairy sow figures both as a fairy and a pig, and can change forms, which makes her a shape-shifter in terms of the science fantasy genre. Thereby the open question for Bilka in the fable genre remains whether she becomes human, i.e. a woman once married, since everybody admired her as if she was the Virgin Mary. Here we could mention a fairy-porcine proverb—“Comes a fairy among swine, the fairy is as good as swine; comes a fairy among folk, the fairy is as good as folk” (Skarpa 1909: 66; *proverb*). Despite being traditionally marked as a so-called impure animal “with her own pigsty,” she is “as clean as if using soap” (Bošković-Stulli (ed.) 1983: 59).

The context of tales/fables of animal husbands and wives<sup>3</sup> also includes, e.g. our fables of the snake bridegroom, the fairy boar,<sup>4</sup> and the hedgehog bridegroom. As regards the fairy boar, a kind of counterpart to *Baba's Bilka*, there exists a tale from Konavle, known as *The Fairy Gift* (*Dar vilinski*, MS IEF 189, no. 1, 45–47), recorded by Katina Casilari in Bogišić's *Manuscript Collection of Oral Narratives from Cavtat*. A brief summary is as follows: The fairy gift consisted of a fairy fulfilling a wish of a barren woman to have a son, even if he was a piglet. However, unlike Bilka (a nonspeaking animal, a

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<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that Maja Bošković-Stulli interviewed Stipan Lović (cf. the photograph provided at the end of this text) while he himself was watching over pigs, which corresponds to the mythical worlds of the tale *Baba's Bilka*.

<sup>3</sup> For the aforementioned type of tales, one of which is also *Baba's Bilka*, the folklorist Fumihiko Kobayashi (2007) uses the term animal wife rather than animal bride, since the marriage takes place in animal form, thereby interpreting the aforementioned tales/fables in the context of a “forbidden love in nature,” which he addressed in more detail in the book *Japanese Animal-Wife Tales: Narrating Gender Reality in Japanese Folktale Tradition* (2014).

<sup>4</sup> The oldest variant of the fairy boar was recorded by Giovanni Francesco Straparola in the collection *The Pleasant Nights* in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (*Le piacevoli notti*; 1550–1555), under the title *The Pig-King* (*Il re porco*) and grouped as AaTh 441 “Hans My Hedgehog”. It is exactly along these lines that the tale *The Golden-Haired Hero in Pig's Skin*, included in Čajkanović's collection of tales (Čajkanović (ed.) 1929), was written (cf. Radulović 2009: 209).

pig), this fairy boar possessed the ability to speak. As he grew up, he wished to marry. Then, he slaughtered two of the king's daughters for chasing him away from the *dining table*, since he was "dirty out of the mud," while to the youngest girl, who accepted him as a "handsome beast" and was not afraid of him, but rather laughed at him—which means this laughter had a benevolent role—who fed him by hand and let him get her dirty ("fully soiled by that boar"), a handsome young man revealed himself. It is only the third girl—as the youngest and, according to the logic of the fable structure, also the most deserving—who let the fairy boar, the future bridegroom, *get her muddy*, as the narrator herself put it. When the youngest girl sat at the table with him, she saw in him—to quote the narrator—a *handsome beast*. The fable produced a countereffect in the culmination point of the *sujet*: if the young man-boar is a victim of his mother's sin, the transmutation will occur in love. Hence, it was only to the human virtue—which accepts him as the *other*, as the mythic cyborg—that the boar revealed himself as a handsome young man, as is always the case in this type of tales/fables (cf. Marjanić 1998). Thereby the burning of the pig's skin—as in the case of the mytheme of snakeskin burning in the fable of *Cupid and Psyche* (AaTh 425)<sup>5</sup> from Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* (*Metamorphoseon libri XI*) (cf. Milošević-Dorđević 1971: 425)—does not occur, since the girl immediately demonstrated a kind of biophilia towards this borderline character; she did not let the fairy boar be chased away from the table and, at the same time, she let him eat out of her hand.<sup>6</sup> It is evident that in these variants, as highlighted by Nada Milošević-Dorđević (1971: 80–81), similarly to the story type of *Beauty and the Beast*, there exists a certain sensibility in the relationship between the animal and the bride, as well as in the tale of *Baba's Bilka* since Jozo, a young man, fell in love with Bilka, the fairy sow, at first sight.<sup>7</sup> "When sleeping, the swineherd's face would usually be turned towards Bilka. One day, when he woke up, he opened his eyes and, lo and behold, a girl was sitting in that bush, combing her golden hair with a golden comb" (Bošković-Stulli (ed.) 1983: 57–58).

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<sup>5</sup> On the aforementioned fable type in more detail, cf. Swahn's comprehensive book *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche* (Aarne-Thompson 425 and 428) (1955).

<sup>6</sup> In the fable *The Golden-Haired Hero in Pig's Skin* from Čajkanović's collection, there occurs the burning of the pig's skin, since the aforementioned fable does not feature a humanitarian strategy towards the boar bridegroom.

<sup>7</sup> "However, according to the set of its motifs and the overall content, they cannot be isolated from the series of other fables of marrying a magical creature (AaTh 425 and AaTh 441), which do not end with this burning, but indeed exhibit it in the plot's zenith" (Milošević-Dorđević 1971: 82).

Let us examine for a moment the determinant-type AaTh 409A that was used by Maja Bošković-Stulli to classify the tale/fable from Gorjani. This is the fable/tale type of *Girl as Snake* (initially *Snake Princess is Disenchanted*), in which a snake that is pulled out of a fire turns into a woman and marries her rescuer. The husband promises never to call his wife a snake. When he breaks this promise, the woman turns back into a snake and disappears, and is once again rescued by her son-in-law (the Aarne-Thompson-Uther folklore classification) (Uther 2004, 1<sup>st</sup> volume: 244). However, compared to the aforementioned type of tale, Baba's Bilka does not disappear; after the burning of pigskin, she stays with her lover—Jozo, the young man, the swineherd who, after all, is not ashamed of her porcine nature.

### TOTEMISM: THE PIG BRIDE

Along the lines of the tales of animal wives and husbands—within the framework of which should be brought to mind, e.g. South Slavic fables of the fairy boar, the hedgehog, and lizard bridegrooms, as well as the poems and narratives of the snake bridegroom—Bruno Bettelheim (1979: 310) detects that these mythical matrices not only have properties of fables but also of totemism (cf. Radulović 2009: 132, 141). Bettelheim indicates the close connection between the fable of the animal bridegroom and sexual intercourse, highlighting that the actualization of a happy unification requires the woman to overcome her own concept of sexuality as something repulsive and allegedly bestial, and, along the lines of psychoanalytic interpretations of this mytheme, he determines that the man is perceived as the more bestial partner due to his more aggressive role in sexual intercourse. Or, as Krleža ironically put it—*all swains are swine*.<sup>8</sup> The folklorist and culturologist Boria Sax determines that the narratives of the animal bride and animal bridegroom are the same, albeit told from different gender perspectives; the tales of the

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<sup>8</sup> Hence, the animal partner can also appear as a bull. The remnants of the Dawn's zoo-personifications as a (celestial) cow (the fair cow of celestial ambrosia), as iconographically portrayed by *Rigveda*, and the Sun (*at times*, as Nodilo points out) as a *bull*, are found by Nodilo in a Kajkavian tale (Krauss 1884 II: 89) with the *animal bridegroom* mytheme and, in the aforementioned case, the zoo-figuration of the *bull* who is anthropomorphized into a young man, “as fair as the sun,” when he catches the sight of his beloved (the *third* one, naturally) (Nodilo 1981: 184). Nodilo elaborates that the aforementioned Kajkavian tale partially preserved the Rigvedic myth of the Dawn that is often portrayed iconographically as a cow—the *fair cow of celestial ambrosia*, while the young Sun “is at times depicted as a bull” (ibid.: 184), and relates this Kajkavian fable to the Greek myth of Zeus and Europa, with rape featured in the background.

animal bridegroom were told by women and the tales of the animal bride by men. The aforementioned presupposes that, in these tales, animals indicate gender. Thereby it is interesting to note that the fable *Baba's Bilka* was narrated to Maja Bošković-Stulli by a male storyteller/narrator Stipan Lović, while Bilka's clothes, worn in the marginal state—pigskin as “relevant context” (Leach 1983: 82)—is shed, the mother-in-law burns the skin and the neophyte enters the everyday social status. All of these tales of the animal bridegroom and animal wife thematize an encounter with someone who is entirely different. Jozo from *Baba's Bilka* therefore uncovered the other gender in a double aspect, in the supernatural forms of woman and pig, with the latter—the supernatural and bestial—being entirely different from the former (cf. Sax 2001: 22). Jozo watched over Bilka “for a couple of years” and “the pig grew up into a large hog.” The young man notices that “this hog never went to wallow in the mud puddle with his other pigs,” and discovers it to be a girl with golden hair and comb, which is a characteristic of a supernatural woman, a fairy (Bošković-Stulli (ed.)1983: 57–58). In the documentary drama movie *Baba's Bilka* by Petar Orešković (folklore television programme, 2012), featuring the members of the Cultural Artistic Ensemble “Gorjanac,” one of the storytellers also notes variants featuring the narrational woman bride together with a fish and a frog bride, and points out that this combination is more appropriate, since the aforementioned animals are bound to water, while a pig cannot hide—it belongs to rural everyday life. Another storyteller (both women remain uncredited during the broadcast) explains why the tale from Gorjani features a pig rather than, e.g. a cat, and stresses that the pig, as a domestic animal, was also a house animal at the time (and, considering their worth, they also had first names), unlike the cats, which remained nameless regardless of their worth for the rural household (hunting mice, rats, equally as in Egypt considering the economic matrix of religion, as Marvin Harris would put it).<sup>9</sup> This serves as evidence that the so-called livestock lived

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<sup>9</sup> Elizabeta Molnar from Gorjani also notes a variant in which a fish girl revealed herself to a poor herder as a girl—“[...] The fish came out of the water, shed herself into a girl, and sat beside him. And they wooed one another. It went on for a few days, then he [...] the music and went home, and told his mother and father that he wanted to marry, that he wanted to marry a fish. She told him that she could not go like that, you know, she had to go as a fish. And when she bathed, she took off her skin and turned into a girl, and would be as such, said the girl. Then she turned into a fish and got in the water, and he went home, you know. And he said that he would like to marry her now, and they did not let him. What to do ... The last time they came here and bathed, the wind started blowing, there was a storm, rain, and her dress was blown away. What to do ... And he said to her, ‘Come now, come home with me

together with humans in the past, while cats and dogs were kept outside, unlike the present situation that is reversed in relation to domestic animals and pets (cf. Malamud 2010).

The zoo-metaphors of the so-called cute little animals—e.g., pigeon, dove, squirrel, cat—dominate the intimacy, while the symbolism of sexuality (i.e., corporeal love) uses the so-called stout animals; the pig, for example, in this case usually symbolically *denotes* female sexuality, (i.e., fertility), while the stud, naturally, denotes male eroticism. Thereby a piece of nutritional data states that an abundance of pork protein enkindles sexual desire (Visković 1996: 91).

Furthermore, some theoreticians point out that the tales of animal husbands and wives belong to the totemism cycle (Sax 2001: 29). Specifically, totemism in its broader sense denotes a continuity between the human and animal worlds; same as a wedding, totemism denotes the fusion of different beings that become One and, in this case, the unification of the human and bestial or, perhaps, of the supernatural or fairy-like, nonetheless: of Jozo and his swine-fairy, Bilka the fairy pig, who is ultimately still anthropomorphic in this unification between Nature and Culture. Moreover, it is well-known that, in the concept of totemism, the weddings between humans and animals often led to the founding of tribes. In totemist tales, a certain animal is always present as the mythic ancestor of a certain group. Perhaps it can even be claimed that totemism, in the form of zoolatry—which is applied in the *free play of meaning* according Middas Dekkers implying zoolatry to Christianity (cf. Dekkers 2000: 8-9)—is also present in the world's major religions, e.g. Buddhism. The interpretation of Queen Maya's puerperal case is that she conceived Buddha with a white elephant (i.e., a somewhat milder version of the zoophilic birth) tells us that, at the moment of Gautama Buddha's conception, she dreamed of a small white elephant with a white lotus in its trunk entering her right side; after *certain* time, Maya gave birth to Buddha from her right side while holding onto a tree (Storm 2002: 166). Or, as determined by Midas Dekkers—who, *inter alia*, studied zoophilia in all cultures—Christianity is also established upon supposed zoophilia, whereby he notes that Christ was also born from the *unification* of the Virgin and a dove, i.e. the Holy Spirit (cf. Dekkers 2000: 115–130).

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now'. So, he decided to bring her home. And they waited for the nightfall, when the night came, he brought her home. And the mother, the grandmother made her a lovely dress, and they dressed her nicely, and the two of them got married, and they lived happily ever after." Cf. Suzana Marjanić: "Baba's Bilka: Interview with Elizabeta Molnar". Digital Repository of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, shelf mark 2359 (2020).

## ANIMAL BRIDE AND ANIMAL BRIDEGROOM

Alongside the oral, folklore totemist narratives—i.e., mythic lore, fables of various peoples on the conception of a certain tribe by a certain animal—it is usually noted that the oldest recorded version of the fairy-tale animal woman is the fable of the cat bride that was probably recorded by Aesop in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. The fable entitled *The Cat Maiden* depicts

a triumph of feminine wiles over masculine power. The gods and goddesses were arguing about whether it was possible for a thing to change its nature. “For me, nothing is impossible,” said Zeus, the god of thunder. “Watch, and I will prove it.” With that, he picked up a mangy alley cat, changed it into a lovely young girl, had her dressed in fine clothes, instructed her in manners, and arranged for her to be married the next day. The gods and goddesses looked on invisibly at the wedding feast. “See how beautiful she is, how appropriately she behaves,” said Zeus proudly. ‘Who could ever guess that only yesterday she was a cat!’ “Just a moment,” said Aphrodite, the goddess of love. With that, she let loose a mouse. The maiden immediately pounced on the mouse and began tearing it apart with her teeth. This fable has been written down in many versions, some of which date back to the fifth century B.C. in Greece. Perhaps in some still earlier version, the cat was Aphrodite herself. (Sax 1998: 59)

This may be one of the oldest recorded versions of the motif/mytheme of the animal bride, the mythical matrix of which is also found in the tale of *Baba’s Bilka*.

On the other hand, the tale of the animal bridegroom, known under the popular name *Beauty and the Beast*, was evidently first recorded in the collection of cautionary tales and fables of classic Indian literature *Panchatantra or Five Treatises* (written between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries),<sup>10</sup> in the tale entitled *The Enchanted Brahman’s Son*. In brief, it tells the story of a Brahman and his wife in a childless marriage, who get a snake son. When he reaches young adulthood, he is given the hand of a beautiful girl in marriage. However, the snake takes off its skin at night and becomes a handsome young man. And finally, his father—who found him the bride in the first place—burns the snakeskin, and the snake bridegroom continues to

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<sup>10</sup> Reference should be made to the English translation of the aforementioned tale, *The Girl Who Married a Snake* (Tatar 2017: 17–20). The philologist and sanskritologist Theodor Benfey noticed that the mytheme of the snake bridegroom is found in *Panchatantra* (Radulović 2009: 209).

live in the anthropomorphic form. The mytheme of the childless marriage of an aging couple (in gerontologic terms, today they would not be classified as senior citizens) is also found at the beginning of the tale *Baba's Bilka*: "There once lived an old man and woman, folk of around fifty years of age," followed by a prayer to God for a child, even a bestial one: "God, let me deliver a child, even if it is a piglet, so that we could raise a family" (Bošković-Stulli (ed.): 65).<sup>11</sup>

As the source of the motif of the animal bridegroom, some note Apuleius' novel *Metamorphoses or The Golden Ass* from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (i.e., the story of Cupid and Psyche) which is inserted in chapters 4–6 of the novel. Specifically, due to Venus' curse, Psyche was condemned to live with Cupid only at night, when he would come to her bed. According to Venus' curse, Psyche was not allowed to see him and was not allowed to violate this prohibition. Psyche believed a prophecy which foretold that he was a dragon—a winged serpent. This is an allegoric story of Amor—Cupid—hence, of love and Psyche, whereby the Greek word *psyche* denotes the soul, but also a butterfly; it is an allegory of the unification of *love and soul*.<sup>12</sup> In a nutshell, at the end of the fable, Psyche, the human soul, is merged with Cupid himself, the divine love; Psyche herself thereby becomes immortal and enters the order of goddesses (Sax 1998: 78).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The mytheme of the childless marriage and the desire to have a child, "even if it is an animal," is found in all the tales on this subject; hence, Čajkanović's collection features the tale of the pig bridegroom entitled *The Golden-Haired Hero in Pig's Skin*, interpreted by Nemanja Radulović (2009: 189–190), who highlights that the fable corresponds to the traditional folk perception of a childless marriage as grave misfortune. The author points out that, on the animal-human axis, the transformations are commonly applied to an animal bridegroom/bride—snake as bridegroom and bride, pig bridegroom, hedgehog bridegroom, turtle bride, mouse bridegroom, and fox turning into a human, bird turning into a girl (Ibid.: 204–205), and in the case of *Baba's Bilka*, the fairy sow bride.

<sup>12</sup> Marina Warner (1995: 278) states that the ancient fable of Cupid and Psyche has become secular and could be used when explaining the idea of choice, or of Eros, modern love and romance. Therefore, the first Beast of the West was Eros, god of love (ibid.: 273).

<sup>13</sup> In the context of Jungian psychology, Erich Neumann (2015: 215) interprets the myth of Cupid and Psyche with the development of female personality through phases characterized by particular archetypal phenomena. In the context of depth psychology, Neumann therefore interprets, e.g. the fourth and final task—descending into the Netherworld and returning to this world—as the task of bringing out that which is hidden underground, as the self-awareness of the content that is found in the unconscious material. This is the most important stage of the individuation process, of the maturation of female psyche in romantic encounter with Eros and through Eros,



This type of fable, which thematizes the animal bridegroom mytheme as it can be observed in the example of the fable *Hedgehog Bridegroom* from Strohal's collection (AaTh 441), which also features the category of sensibility towards the borderline character, up to the burning of the hedgehog's hide (Milošević-Đorđević 1971: 78), and is in accordance with the paradigm from Apuleius' fable of Cupid and Psyche. At her mother's urging, the girl burns the hedgehog's *repulsive* hide; due to this violent act, the hedgehog bridegroom rebukes her with the following constative: "[...] had you only endured a bit longer, happiness would have been all mine!" (qtd. in Strohal 1886: 127). Here the fable abruptly ends, implying the death of the star-crossed hedgehog bridegroom. A detailed study on the aforementioned mytheme was written by the fable theoretician Ernst Tegethoff (*Studien zum Märchentypus von Amor und Psyche*, 1922), who thinks that, apart from Italy, Apuleius' or anyone else's literary adaptation did not influence oral creation, and therefore we can consider the latter to be original and independent from the literary source (Antonijević 1991: 122). Bruno Bettelheim nevertheless believes that the myth of Cupid and Psyche influenced all other subsequent tales of the animal bridegroom type in the Western world: he points out that Apuleius relied on older sources (Bettelheim 1979: 317–319). Hence, this classic version does not represent the initial form out of which the many variants have emerged, but certainly contributes to the understanding of the elementary *sujet* (Antonijević 1991: 122). Thereby it is important to note that some scholars who studied this fable (e.g., Propp and Meletinsky) glossed over the mytheme and concluded that these are the relics of totemist mythology. In his *Historical Roots of the Wonder Tale*, Propp admitted that he could not adequately explain the snake bridegroom mytheme (ibid.: 124).

When studying this mytheme, in lieu of the totemist interpretation, Nodilo applies the allegoric interpretation, with which he finds the source of the animal bridegroom mytheme—in this specific case, of the snake bridegroom—in the Rigvedic mytheme of Agni; thereby he apostrophizes that the birth, wedding, and death (the trimorphic stations of mythical heroes, or *monomyth*, as defined by Campbell) of the serpentine young man are most appropriately thematized by the song *The Snake Bridegroom* from the second collection of folk songs by Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (*Zmija mladoženja*, Karadžić 1988, no. 12). This is a birth induced by a gynomorphic

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through the love she has for him. Psyche develops not only in relation to him but also in relation to herself.

fish; this is the mytheme *the right wing of the golden-winged fish*, fished out of the depths of the Danube with a golden mesh, intended to be eaten by a barren queen with the aim of gynomorphic induction. Within the framework of allegoric interpretation, in the context of the mythology of nature and along the lines of Friedrich Max Müller's solarism, Nodilo interprets this snake bridegroom as "the young Flame who gets married" (1981: 440).<sup>14</sup> Nodilo compares the aforementioned myth to the Rigvedic myth of Agni, who is also born out of water, thereby emphasizing that the fish possesses phallic symbolism in Indo-European religion. The previously mentioned song is mythologically interpreted by Nodilo with celestial hierogamy; in the heights above, the wedding between Flame (in Nodilo's interpretation, in the context of Indo-European mythology, *Flame* figures as the Rigvedic *Agni*) and Dawn takes place, whereby at the moment of the wedding (Dawn—Ushas as the goddess of dawn in Rigvedic hymns), the nightly Flame disappears in the same manner as the snake bridegroom, after his bride burns the snakeskin, which evidently functions as placenta or *casing*, since its burning simultaneously induces the death of the snake bridegroom.<sup>15</sup> Hence, interestingly, Nodilo does not relate the mytheme of the snake bridegroom to Apuleius's fable of Cupid and Psyche (*The Golden Ass*) (which was subsequently also determined by the folklorist Maja Bošković-Stulli), but rather places it in parallel with the Rigvedic concepts of Agni (1981: 440).<sup>16</sup> Unlike the songs, in the tales of the *snake bridegroom*

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<sup>14</sup> This is a person with *borderline attributes*, between animal and man, he only possesses the ability to speak, as regards human attributes. "A mediator, be it a 'real' human being (e.g., a shaman) or a mythological god-man, who then assumes borderline attributes – he is *both mortal and immortal, both human and bestial, both tame and feral*" (Leach 1983: 110). In the context of the animal bridegroom and animal bride, a new hierarchy is established, which "sets *zoe* over *bios*, instinct over intellect, social life over brute animal existence, rational consciousness over intuitive know-how" (Tatar 2017: X).

<sup>15</sup> Here, the mother threw the snake's skin into the fire and thus annulled his life—the snakeskin has the role of the placenta. Since a snake periodically changes its skin (the process of moulting)—the *material* body represents life and resurrection. "The fiery serpent is solar, purification, the transmuting and transcending of the earthly state" (Cooper 1986: 194). According to Nodilo's (1981: 441) interpretation, in the aforementioned mytheme, the king and queen in Buda figure as Vid and Vida, who marry *the young Flame*, i.e. as god Svantevit and the dyadic goddess Živa/Vida both in the context of Slavic comparative mythology and in Nodilo's interpretation.

<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to note Nodilo's interpretation of one part of the *tale* that indicates events with the young snake man after his snakeskin was burned, and after he left his wife due to the act of burning (of his skin, which may also be interpreted as his *placenta*): "It seems that, in the tale, the myth is conceived as follows: pursuant

(Karadžić 1969, no. 10), the bride in search of the *snake bridegroom* reaches the Moon and the Moon's mother, who gives her a *golden hen* with chickens. Thus, Maja Bošković-Stulli (1975: 109) believes that the burning of the snake bridegroom's snakeskin in epic songs is not related to fables of the Cupid and Psyche type (AaTh 425), since the songs never proceed in the manner of the aforementioned fable: with the husband's disappearance/departure and the wife's search for him (cf. Milošević-Đorđević 1971: 78). Specifically, type AaTh 433 ends with the burning of the skin, same as the epic song. The aforementioned folklorist noticed the contamination with this fable, albeit a quite *curtailed* one, in only one of the song's texts.<sup>17</sup> As is the case with the snake bridegroom and the burning of his skin, in the case of Bilka, her pigskin is burned by the bridegroom's (Jozo's) mother out of ignorance. "The mother entered the bridegroom's quarters to see if it was warm enough. She noticed pigskin on a bench by the bed, picked it up, took it outside and threw it into the furnace that was stoked from the kitchen" (Bošković-Stulli (ed.) 1983: 60).

Let us briefly return to Bettelheim's interpretation of the mytheme. Specifically, Bruno Bettelheim (1979: 319) points out that the fable/myth of Cupid and Psyche has influenced all other subsequent tales of the *animal bridegroom* type, and that Apuleius relied on older sources. Thereby it is interesting to note that, according to *the law of genre*, the dragon hero in epic songs dies (after his *skin is destroyed*) and enters (an)other world in narratives (this is the other code of separation by departing to another, the other, the sepulchral world).<sup>18</sup> Since this logic of genre is different, it is obvious that the influences of individual fable types indeed cannot be separated so *strictly* (Milošević-Đorđević 1971: 78).<sup>19</sup>

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to the nocturnal light and intensity, Flame weakens at daytime; besotted, he then resides with another woman in another kingdom" (1981: 447). This corresponds to a recent reconstruction by Vitomir Belaj and Radoslav Katičić, who determine that Mokoš, Perun's celestial wife, resides with her lover Veles for half a year (Belaj V. and J. Belaj 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Neither in this case does the wife embark on a distant journey to find her lost husband, as in the AaTh 425 type fable.

<sup>18</sup> Contemporary scholars study in particular the aforementioned fables of the animal bridegroom (the *Beauty and the Beast* type) in relation to myths: while Psyche's search for Cupid from Apuleius' story is reminiscent of the degrees of initiation, the ending of fables is marked by the disappearance of magic (cf. Stephens 2000: 330–334).

<sup>19</sup> South Slavic fables in verse are profoundly austere and end tragically, which can be ascribed to the influence of heroic epicism (Latković 1991: 243).

In the context of the aforementioned, the interpretation of the zoo-symbol of the pig in the tale/fable *Baba's Bilka* will be noted. The pig had a significant role in certain fertility rituals. Therefore, in the cult of Demeter, piglets were thought to bring fertility. Specifically, piglets were offered as a zoo-sacrifice to Demeter and her daughter Persephone, as well as to other European deities of the Earth's fertility. At the three-day festival of Thesmophoria, held during the autumnal sowing in October, in the honour of Demeter, the participants of the ritual ceremony would throw piglets into an underground cave and leave them to rot for three months prior to the ceremony itself. Then, they placed the decomposed body parts on the altar and combined them with pinecones and wheat bread, forming a phallic shape out of the mixture, after which everything was mixed with seeds and used for sowing. Apart from the pig's significant role in Demeter's cult as a fertility bringer—specifically, it was believed that the piglets' remains can improve seed growth (Gimbutas 1991: 147)<sup>20</sup>—in Ancient Greece, the pig was brought into relation with marital life (Propp 1990: 149).<sup>21</sup>

As regards the genre of fable, in the context of the category of time, we can add that Jozo bears witness to the transformation (anthropomorphism) of Bilka the pig at noon, during his capacity as the herder/swineherd on a pasture, while the final and ultimate transformation takes place after the wedding (as the final re-compensation) as a ritualized matrix, when the mother-in-law burns Bilka's pigskin. Thereby the ritualization of the wedding at the church itself is described in detail in this case, which is not typical of the genre of fable (the wedding is usually merely mentioned as a rite of passage); however, due to the specificity of the wedding ceremony with Bilka the pig, segments of the wedding are singled out in a humoristic, albeit not parodic manner, e.g. "The young man knelt, and the sow sat on her behind" (Bošković-Stulli (ed.) 1983: 59).

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<sup>20</sup> Thereby the word *porca* also had a sexual connotation, since it also introduced the connection of the pig with Bauba's gesture, which made Demeter laugh (Propp 1990: 140–150).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. the zoomorphic mask of the pig (c. 4500–4000 BC, Macedonia), presumed by Marija Gimbutas (1991: 146) to have been used in the rituals of the cult of the *pregnant Goddess* and of her sacral animal—the *pig/sow* that symbolizes fertility with her *voluminous* body.

## TOWARDS A CONCLUSION: THE ECO/FEMINIST AND PSYCHOANALYTIC INTERPRETATION OF THE *FAIRY SOW*

It is notable that feminist critique was more engaged in the tales of the animal bridegroom type than in the animal wife one, thereby highlighting that the tales of the animal bridegroom ensue from patriarchy. Theoretician Heide Göttner-Abendroth (1991), who is particularly engaged in matriarchal societies, points out that the man is manifested as a wild beast in the aforementioned tales. From the aspect of patriarchy, the woman must tame and domesticate him.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that both the early feminist critique and psychoanalysis were initially, in terms of fable interpretation, interested in the animal bridegroom. The fable from Konavle, *The Fairy Gift*—a kind of counterpart to *Baba's Bilka*, since it thematizes a boar bridegroom, as is the case with the version from Čajkanović's collection—can thus be psychoanalytically interpreted in the context of the sequence in which the youngest girl lets the boar *get her muddy*, i.e. in her experiencing sexuality. Specifically, the boar's metamorphosis into a handsome young man takes place when he enters the girl's bed. Hence, the transmutation ensues from love, while the burning of pigskin does not occur since the young girl disenchanted him with her love. Briefly put, Bettelheim states that the bestial attributes of animal brides are lovable, as is the case, for example, with sea women, while in the case of men, they are feral animals that are meant to be tamed. Indeed, this difference in the intensity of bestiality is evident in the case of the Fairy Hog, who is dirty with mud and slime, while *Baba's Bilka* is exceptionally clean in the context of the structuralist opposition of clean vs. dirty, since she never went *to wallow in the mud puddle* (Bošković-Stulli (ed.) 1983: 57). *Baba's Bilka* thereby differs from the tales of the animal bride type, since the motifs in these narratives are bound to the animal wife/bride as the victim of kidnapping/forced marriage until she herself finds a way to free herself (e.g., sealskin, feathers) (Silver 2016: 40); in that sense, Kobayashi's (2007) term animal wife can be applied to the tale/fable from Gorjani in lieu of the term animal bride.

It is the author's personal opinion that this type of fable can also be interpreted ecofeministically; specifically, unlike the mainstream feminism, ecofeminism equally observes Nature as a degraded phenomenon—in patriarchy and in the neoliberal paradigm of today—alongside women. An ecofeminist interpretation of the aforementioned fables may be followed as the quest for the unification of animal and human nature into One, i.e. in the

sense that we as human beings must remain connected to our animal nature, since the last trace of naturalness in us will disappear if we accept merely the unsparing aestheticism that is imposed on us by the society of corporeal aestheticism, the society of plastic aestheticism, in which plastic beauty gains increasing traction; the more we transmute into plastic beings, as well as into mechanical cyborgs bound to digital technology, the more we surely distance ourselves from nature, from naturalness, which also includes sensibility. It is exactly what Freud called the discomfort in culture back in the year of 1930.<sup>22</sup> However, the aforementioned fables of animal bridegrooms and animal wives are also anthropocentric—i.e., classic fables possess a human mindset—“an animal must become a complete, proper human” (Radulović 2009: 206, 141). In that sense, the folklorist Nemanja Radulović notes that animal bridegrooms/animal brides possess the attributes of impure animals; e.g., frogs and snakes are crawlers, while the pig from Čajkanović’s collection (no. 35, *The Golden-Haired Hero in Pig’s Skin*) is considered an impure, demonic, dangerous animal (208).<sup>23</sup> Maria Tatar argues that the stunning variety of animals, ranging from snakes to warthogs to cranes and pigs, can prove Claude Lévi-Strauss’s remark that “animals are good to think with,” and concludes that the *Beauty and the Beast* tales “are, then, not just about marriage, but also about our relationship and connection to the social world we share with other living beings” (2017: X–XI).

And while Midas Dekkers states in the final chapter of his book, as one of the conclusions, that love towards animals “must not obscure love of human beings, otherwise our human society will disintegrate, creaking

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<sup>22</sup> In the documentary drama movie *Baba’s Bilka* by Petar Orešković (folklore television programme, 2012), featuring the members of the Cultural Artistic Ensemble “Gorjanac” the church wedding scene was filmed in a church in Gorjani. The movie featured theoreticians Prof. Dr. Ljiljana Marks and Prof. Dr. Marijana Hameršak from the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research. Ljiljana Marks highlights, *inter alia*, that the tale *Baba’s Bilka* has achieved great popularity and is found in all of the most relevant anthologies of oral tales and lore edited by Maja Bošković-Stulli; it has also been translated into German (cf. Marks 1981) and Japanese languages for the purpose of featuring in the respective anthologies. Furthermore, she points out that *Baba’s Bilka* does not correspond to the standard and refined Grimms’ fairy tales; that it is completely immersed in the space from which it ensues, while its episodes are lined up one after another as in a documentary, in which this theoretician of oral narrative detects its merit. In this paper, the author’s brief lecture is used for the documentary drama movie, on the subject of the mythical matrix of the aforementioned tale.

<sup>23</sup> Nemanja Radulović (2009: 209) stresses that the historical-geographical studies by Stith Thompson or Waldemar Liungman confirm that the most common forms of the bridegroom/bride are frog, mouse, and snake.

in its joints” (2000: 190–191), it is the author’s belief that interspeciesist love and friendship, as well as trans-speciesism (just as the negations of racism and sexism, as well as of other monstrous *-isms*, resulted solely from the categories of good) could annul the numerous monstrous acts done by humans against all the living creatures. Not all acts, of course, since it is evident that monstrosity is part of humanity, as is also proven by history. As noted by Elaine Graham, the cyborg (a cybernetically enhanced organism) is a well-known figure in contemporary science fiction and has also gained considerable reputation in feminist theory. “As a hybrid of the biological and the technological, the cyborg has also become a metaphor for western posthuman identity, but it also articulates important political, ecological and ethical issues” (cf. Graham 2002: 216). In that sense, “life in a posthuman era has intensified our anxieties about machines while reducing our fears about beasts”; hence, in the new genre of science fantasy, the aforementioned animal bridegrooms and animal brides may appear more in the context of mechanical cyborgs, androids, robots (cf. Tatar 2017: XVI–XVII), which equally correspond to both laws of the genre and the posthuman reality.<sup>24</sup> Finally, reference will be made to the interspeciesist love between Hellboy, a “demonic” cyborg who acts for the benefit of humanity, and Liz Sherman, Hellboy’s sweetheart, pyrokineticist (a person who possesses the mental ability to control fire) and later his wife, whereby Hellboy, the romantic hero, is marked by his passionate love of cats. Him being surrounded by cats seems to subversively undermine the superhero’s “macho” dimension, in which the English term *puss* or *puss gentleman*, as noted by Rogers, refers to a feminized man or, in this case, to a supernatural cyborg.

Translated by Mirta Jurilj

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<sup>24</sup> The two characteristics of mythic cyborgs—animal attributes on a human body, close to South Slavic fairies with theriomorphic legs, or instances of zoo-psychonavigation (typical, e.g. of nightmares and witches), i.e. navigations of the soul in animal form, are equally present in the fantasy genre. This can serve as proof that the fantasy genre of today may be considered a kind of contemporary mythology by a portion of readers, with which the latter escape the ruling repression and depression, but also as modification of the science fiction genre, since the fantasy genre opens up space to mythic cyborgs who are oriented towards the category of nature rather than the category of machine. It is exactly with this distrust in the mechanical cyborg—even though certain predictions foretell profound domination of robots by the year 2040—that the fantasy genre may also manifest itself as the subversion of all programmes of the Great Trinity of neoliberal capitalism, consisting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) (cf. Marjanić 2011).



Photo 1: The documentary drama movie *Baba's Bilka* by Petar Orešković (folklore television programme, 2012), featuring members of the Cultural Artistic Ensemble "Gorjanac"; available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szTJNBBI5N4>



Photo 2: Stipan Lović, the storyteller who narrated to Maja Bošković-Stulli the story *Baba's Bilka* in 1957 in Gorjani near Đakovo. Photo credit: Maja Bošković-Stulli, Documentation of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, shelf marks 2026, 2027, 2028, 2034.



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