

## Poetic Grounds of Epic Formulae

**Abstract:** The study of oral formulae in the twentieth century had several phases. After the initial – very stimulating and influential – research by M. Parry and A. B. Lord, who focused on the technique of composing the poem and the mnemotechnic function of formulae, the focus at first shifted to the concept of *performance* (J. M. Foley), and then to the *mental text* (L. Honko), which introduced into research horizons social, ideological, psychological and mental conditions of improvisation, interaction between the singer and the audience, collective and individual factors of memorising, cultural representation, and the like. Although all the abovementioned aspects undoubtedly determine the structure of a specific variant, it should be kept in mind that formulae transcend concrete improvisations and connect different epic zones, different local traditions and different times. The formula precedes verbal improvisation both chronologically and logically. Therefore – before explaining the repeating of formulae by the needs and nature of improvisation (composition-in-performance) or the generating of formulae in specific variants by textualisation of mental text – we must explain the existence of the formula in the first place. This paper seeks to point out the complex system of factors that determine the genesis of formulae. Formulae are regarded as cultural codes, which combine elements from different spheres (the conceptualization of space, time, colour and so on, elements of rituals, customary norms, historical experience, life realities, ethics, etc.). Therefore, their structure is described in terms of *hidden knowledge*, *hidden complexity*, *frame semantics*, *the tip of the iceberg*, *compressed meanings*. Meanings “compressed” in the formulae are upgraded with new “income” in every new/concrete realisation (i.e. poem) and this is the area where aesthetics rivals poetics.

**Keywords:** oral formulae, oral epics, poetics, conceptualization of space and time, South Slavic tradition, folklore

Although the theory of formulae may be said broadly to go back to Antiquity (more securely it is linked to the rhetoric of the Neoplatonist Hermogenes; Mal'tsev 1989: 24), and although, in a narrower sense – as the study of specifics of oral poetry – it dates back at least to the first decades of the twentieth century (A. van Gennep, *La Question d'Homer*, Paris 1909), its founders are with good reason considered to be M. Parry and A. Lord. Their work and papers connected homerology with living oral tradition, putting on a broader basis both the study of ancient epics and the study of oral folklore. However, the specified analytic position had its disadvantages. Contact with live oral performance focused the attention of researchers on the *technique* of composing the poem, whose importance has been made absolute at the cost of marginalising all other aspects of oral epics and oral formulae:

...it must have been for some good reason that the poet ... kept to the formulas even when he ... had to use some of them very frequently. What was this constraint? ... The answer is not only the desire for an easy way to make verses, *but the complete need of it* ... There is only one need of this sort which can even be suggested — the necessity of making verses by the spoken word ... The necessity shows its force most clearly ... in the simple numbers of formulas. (M. Parry; cf. Sale 1996: 379–380; italics mine)

Formulaity is, however, not just a feature of oral folklore, but of a whole range of arts, both linguistic and non-linguistic, which is a serious argument in favour of the thesis that the essence of formula does not lie in its mnemotechnic function – which, of course, cannot be denied, but which cannot be considered as a starting point of formula and formulaity:

Formulaity is not specific only to lyric poetry, nor even to folklore in general, but to the multitude of canonical systems of art, both literary and other (e.g. folklore painting and visual arts, medieval literature and iconography), where neither orality nor mnemotechnics can be spoken of. (Mal'tsev 1989: 18)<sup>1</sup>

The other extreme was the reaction to the Parry-Lord positions which led to the expansion of studies that observed/considered formula only as a *means* of compositional technique and narrowed the field of research to the formal/mechanical and statistical aspects. The focus was shifted to the concept of *performance* (“from composition as the central element of the theory of oral poetry toward the notion of performance”, Bakker & Kahane 1997: 3) and *mental text*,<sup>2</sup> which introduced into the scope of research social, ideological, psychological and mental conditions of improvisation, interaction between the singer and the audience, collective and individual factors of memorizing, cultural representation, and the like. In this case too – as in the studies by M. Perry, A. Lord and their “harder” followers – the fact was overlooked that the formula, both chronologically and logically, precedes verbal improvisation (because singers learn formulae before they use them in performance) and the constituting/structuring of a mental text (the latter being based upon already existing formulae). This further means that before we explain the repeating of formulae by the needs and nature of improvisation (composition-in-performance) or the generating of formulae

<sup>1</sup> „Формульность является спецификой не только лирики, не только фольклора в целом, но целого ряда канонических художественных систем, как словесных, так и несловесных (например, народное изобразительное и прикладное искусство, средневековая литература и живопись), где ни о какой устности и хранении в памяти не может быть и речи.“

<sup>2</sup> “The last few years have seen a dramatic and gratifying upsurge of interest in the Homeric formula. This new interest has gradually come to focus on the real nature of the formula as a mental template in the mind of the oral poet, rather than on statistical aspects of ‘repetition’ found among phrases in the text” (Nagler 1967: 269).

in specific variants by textualization of mental text (L. Honko), we must first explain the existence of formula at all.

Lauri Honko criticized the “classical” approach to oral epics for putting texts that do not belong to the same segments of tradition on the same level:

The days are past when a scholar sought for a “master form” by combining elements from different singers of epics, sometimes from different areas, too. Such composite texts were in danger of gliding outside the local poetic system. Their connection to sung performance was lost or skewed.  
(Honko 2000a: vii)

Yet, formulae do connect poems of various epic singers and texts that belong to different epic zones, different local traditions and different times (in Serbian/South Slavic tradition there are records from the late fifteenth century to the present day). If we all agree with L. Honko (and many other researchers of similar methodological orientation) that better insight into the meaning of specific variants cannot be established if we neglect the performative situation, and that the semantic potential of oral presentation exceeds the semantic potential of records,<sup>3</sup> there still remains the fact that

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<sup>3</sup> “Yet the performance paradigm has made it perfectly clear that the oral performance is as medium totally different from the printed text. Its spectrum of expressive means is much wider than that of print, and if effectively utilizes contextual, allusive understanding of the verbal message, often supported by the invisible presence of traditions not expressed verbally but influencing the processing of meaning. What we have here, in fact, requires intersemiotic translation, i.e. ‘the transference of a message from one kind of symbolic system to another’ (Nida 1964)” (Honko 2000b: 13). L. Honko and theorists of similar provenance neglect, however, the fact that meaning is always established in individual consciousness (which automatically means that it is not something fixed, something that can be completely and accurately described). That fact, however, makes the distinction between the *text* and the *recorded performance* based on the scope of detected meaning — less based. The idea that all factors that influence an improvisation can be “collected” is especially problematic: “If we are able to gather information on all the factors which influence the performance, we may order our knowledge in a processual profile of the textualization of a particular story. In so doing we must critically assess — and fight against — such stereotypes as ‘one story’, ‘variant’ and ‘fixed form’. The story may be modulated in ways for which we possess no textual evidence. ‘Variant’ raises the question of inertia, continuity and invariant in oral poetry (what is the ‘thing’ that varies?); to avoid the problem we may try to use such terms as ‘telling’, ‘rendition or ‘performance’ instead of ‘variant’” (Honko 2000b: 16). One possible answer to the question “What varies?” the author gives in the sentence that precedes it — *the story* varies: “The *story may be modulated* in ways for which we possess no textual evidence” (Honko 2000b: 16). It is not possible to speak of inertia and continuity as of some “thing” that is transmitted from one performative situation to the other, because in that case we would have to argue that not even the same man ever improvises twice (which even Heraclitus knew, when he stated that a man can never step in *the same river twice*).

formulae (except the simplest types, such as adjective + noun) cannot even be detected on the basis of one performance (no matter how meticulously recorded and no matter how minutely described), or based on the corpus of a single singer. The existence and meaning of formulae can be discussed only in the much broader context of a local (epic) tradition.

Hence, if we want to explain the nature of the phenomenon, the origin, meaning and sense of formulae and their survival in an extremely long, often immeasurable period of time, despite variations in every new improvisation and the opportunities for singers to distort the canon (which they most certainly often did!), we must turn to poetics (broadly understood), which is what even some proponents of the idea of a mental text plead for:

Furthermore, it is an unfortunate fact that, despite many suggestions and some preliminary attempts, no coherent aesthetic theory has as yet emerged which would equip us to understand or appreciate the special nature of oral poetry as poetry. Unlike Parry himself, some students of the formula have tended to regard it as a “phrase type” or “metrical type”, without complicating the issue with meaningfulness or aesthetic value – a simplification which, as I shall try to show, throws the baby out with the bath water. (Nagler 1967: 273)

Although M. Nagler has not gone far in constituting a coherent aesthetic and poetic theory of oral epic poetry, this statement can certainly be the *credo* of any similar attempt. Insisting on meaningfulness and aesthetic value turns us back, however, to one important distinction made (without the pomp and echoes that follow Homeric studies, and in a language much less known than English) between *formula* and *formulaity*:<sup>4</sup>

...the epic formula is a tool resulting from the “working” of formulaity within the framework of the secondary linguistic system of epic poetry; the relation between them is a generic one, formulaity being only one of the conditions necessary for creating formulas and not identical with them. (Detelić 1996a: 220)

Formulaity is not characteristic of epic language only, but of verbal communication in general (Vinogradov 1938;<sup>5</sup> cf. Kravar 1978), because

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<sup>4</sup> Albert Lord (2000: 47) also noticed that difference: “There’s nothing in the song that is not formulaic”. However, he is not terminologically (or logically) consistent, and in the first sentence that follows the one just quoted, “formulaic” starts to mean the same as “formula” by his definition: “Moreover, the lines and half lines that we call ‘formulaic’ (because they follow the basic patterns of rhythm and syntax and have at least one word in the same position in the line in common with other lines or half lines) not only illustrate the patterns themselves but also show us examples of the systems of the poetry”.

<sup>5</sup> “В системе русского языка слова, по большей части, функционируют не как произвольно и неожиданно сталкиваемые и сцепляемые компоненты речи, а занимая устойчивые места в традиционных формулах. Большинство людей говорит и пишет с помощью готовых формул, клише” (Vinogradov 1938: 121; cf. Mal’sev 1989: 6).

it is “a paradigmatic element of every primary linguistic system” (Detelić 1996a: 220). Syntactic norms/structures inherent in language are a basis of formulaity even before epic modelling starts. Metric form is an additional, and the first, poetic factor of restrictions: “Oral verse created a syntax within a syntax: within it occurred a particular phraseologization, the fixing of a separate set of syntactic patterns” (Petković 1990: 201). Even A. Lord fell into the trap of not distinguishing between two levels of formulaity – linguistic and epic/poetic – singling out as formulae groups of words linked only by morpho-syntactic form (a *three-syllable noun in the dative* followed by the reflexive, for example):

dogatu se  
junaku se (Lord 2000: 47)

In an attempt to draw a distinction between the two aforementioned types of formulaity, M. Detelić introduced the term “real formulae”, referring to the formulae generated by the epic system, and not by the language (and verse) itself:

...therefore it is necessary to discern between formulas coming from everyday speech (and necessarily going through changes while adjusting to metric-syntactic pattern of asymmetric decasyllabic verse) and the formulas as an important element of technique, style, and composition in traditional epic versemaking. (Detelić 1996a: 219)

To some extent (but not quite!) the distinction is compatible with the difference between formulae derived from the plot/sujet of the poem (imposed by the logic of narration/story development) and those generated from non-sujet and non-epic context. The latter can lead to a collision of layers of different origins (sujet and non-sujet), from which appear situations recognized as paradoxes/oxymorons (the “white throat” of a Black Arab; the attribution of an unfaithful wife as a “faithful one”, a burnt tower as “white”, and so on; for examples in Homer cf. Combellack 1965).

Although in the quotation above “technique, style, and composition in traditional epic versemaking” are especially accentuated, the generic system (of formulae) is predominantly based on the complex semantics whose origins are in the depths of folk memory, the type of culture and imperatives/norms of the genre. The “right formulae” are points/hubs that connect different genre systems and different levels/layers of epic tradition and tradition in general (Detelić 1996b: 104–106). They have a high semantic density and hold cultural information of the first degree (cf. Mal'tsev 1998: 6), which – by definition – cannot be transmitted directly. Therefore, formulae are elements that mediate basic social stratification, basic ethical and ritual-customary norms and the structures of thinking, as well as sublime experience of traditional communities. Repeatability is the most striking feature of formula, but repeatability, as G. Mal'tsev noticed, is not the essence of it:

We cannot agree with J. Hainsworth (and his school of thinking) that “the essence of a formula is its repetition”; repetition is only an outcome, a result of the formula’s “essence”, i.e. of the inner liability of the given representation, of the given meaning as a traditional idea.<sup>6</sup> (Mal'tsev 1989: 43)

## 1 *Space conceptualization*

### 1.1 *Semantization and structuring of spatial oppositions*

Among three main categories of symbolic thinking (space, time and number) space is the only one that is perceived by senses. This fact has made spatial orientation a basic human orientation and set apart the mentioned category as a basis of conceptualizing:

- (1) time and number (which are non-perceptible categories)<sup>7</sup> and
- (2) a series of social/cultural categories.

Conceptualization of time by spatial determinants is, however, characteristic of human thinking as such and it is embedded into the very foundations of the linguistic and phraseological system. We speak of “*getting closer to Thanksgiving, approaching (or coming up on) the weekend, passing the deadline, arriving in a minute, leaving some unhappy event far behind, reaching Saturday, and being halfway through the month*” (Johnson 2007: 8).<sup>8</sup> In oral epics it resulted in formulaic attribution of time (and some categories that imply time, such as the length of a particular condition or the duration of

<sup>6</sup> “Нельзя согласиться с положением Дж. Хайнсворта (и представляемой им школой) о том, что ‘сущность формулы в ее повторяемости’ (‘The essence of a formula is its repetition’); повторяемость – только следствие, результат ‘сущности’ формулы, т.е. внутренней обязательности данного представления, данного смысла как традиционной идеи.”

<sup>7</sup> Time metaphors are mainly based upon spatial categories (cf. Lakoff & Johnson 1999: 139–161; Johnson 2007: 6–12), as well as the concept of number, which can be illustrated by elementary arithmetic operations. If it is tasked to specify the sum of 7 and 5 or the difference between 7 and 5, it just means that one should start from 7 and count 5 steps *forward* or *backward*. Number 7 becomes the starting point of a new series and assumes the role of zero (cf. Cassirer III 1985: 219).

<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, space is conceptualized by time determinants – hours and days. Here again we are not speaking about “true” epic formulae, but the formulae taken from linguistic/phraseological system: “How big is the field in front of Novin? / It is wide four hours [of walking/riding], / It is long twelve hours [of walking/riding], / And it is all covered by Vlachs” [Koliko je polje pod Novinom, / U širinu četiri sahata, / U duljinu dvanaest sahata, / Sve je vlaški tabor pritisnuo] (Vuk III, 33:300–303). “When Ivo Crnojević decided to marry / He requested a girl from afar / Three days’ walk through the flat fields / Four days walking over the black mountains / One month sailing over the grey sea / From that ban of a maritime state” [Kad se ženi Crnojević Ivo / daleko je prosio djevojku / tri dni hoda priko ravna polja / četir’ danah priko crne gore / misec danah priko sinja mora / u onoga bana primorskoga] (ER 188).

some action) – as “long” (Serb. “dugo”): “It was not for a long time” [“To vrijeme za *dugo* ne bilo”] (SM 5); “Sister Heike, stay miserable for a long time” [“Seko Hajke, *dugo* jedna bila!”] (SANU III, 50); “This promise – not for a long time” [“Ova vjera ne za *dugo* vrijeme”] (MH II, 20); “It’s been long and time has passed, / And for a long time the *ban* stayed” [“*Dugo* bilo i vrijeme prođe, / I *zadugo* bane začamao”] (Vuk II, 44) and so on.

This aspect of formulaity – taken from the linguistic system – has to be differentiated from formulaity generated within the epic genre. Such is, for example, the formula in which the length of time that the hero was bed-ridden relates to the length/width of the bed in which he lay (space) (although in a particular case correlation is, to some extent, based on realities):

Brzo trči dvoru bijelome, Pa mi steri mekanu postelju, <i>Ni dugačku, ni vrlo široku,</i> <i>Jer ti <i>dugo</i> bolovati ne ću.</i> (Vuk III, 78: 235–238)	Run quickly to the white court, And make a soft bed for me, <i>Neither long nor very wide,</i> <i>Because I will not ail for a long time.</i>
Steri meni mekanu ložnicu, <i>Ne steri je <i>dugu</i> ni široku,</i> <i>Jer ti neću <i>dugo</i> bolovati.</i> (Rajković, p. 242)	“Make me a soft chamber, <sup>9</sup> Make it neither long nor wide, Because I will not ail for a long time.”

More often it is, however, activated tendency of mythic thinking to stratify physical space and make it heterogeneous by a specific type of semantization.<sup>10</sup> Not a single pair of spatial relations stayed immune to this action of mythic thinking: “near” became “our”, “far” – “strange”, “in front of” – “life”, “behind” – “death”;<sup>11</sup> “right” and “left” became positively or negatively connotated in local variants of traditional culture. Although all previously mentioned pairs are multiply semantized (pure : impure, human : inhumane/demonic, etc.), the opposition *up* : *down* is by far the most generatively productive. (Reason for that could be found in the fact that this opposition, among other things, constitutes the vertical [Axis Mundi], which is – due to gravity and human perception – favoured direction [in vacuum or mathematical space there are neither preferred directions, nor

<sup>9</sup> *Ložnica* (chamber) is not quite the same as *postelja* (bed), but it also can be soft: in the houses of the Muslim upper class, there were no beds in the western style. It was more like a Japanese concept of space where bedclothes were kept in wardrobes during the day, and pulled out for the night. In that sense, a chamber can be soft if necessary.

<sup>10</sup> Mythic thinking tends to alter differences of all sort into the spatial differences, and to present them directly in that (spatial) form (cf. Cassirer II 1985: 101).

<sup>11</sup> In folk legends and folk beliefs some demonic beings have been presented with no back (Radenković 2008: 103). Prohibition of looking back is based on the same symbolic structure: space behind belongs to the demons, and looking back can open a channel between the world of the dead and the world of the living.

spatial categories like up : down, left : right, in front of : behind, etc.) Although polymorphic (phytomorphic/tree, anthropomorphic/Odin/Christ/Virgin Mary, pole/stick/Axial rod, ladders, etc.), this spatial axis is universal in all traditional cultures. In South Slavic oral epics this characteristic of spatial cognition generated an entire system of formulae:

- 1) *Dolje* leže, *gore* ne ustade [He lay *down*, and did not get *up* again.]  
(Vuk II, 74:121)  
*Dolje* pade, *gore* ne ustade [He fell *down*, and did not get *up* again.]  
(Vuk III, 88:149;  
Vuk IV, 30:188)  
*Dolje* pade, više ne ustade [He fell *down*, and never got *up* again.]  
(Vuk VI, 10:189)  
(up/vertical = life : down/horizontal = death);
- 2) Vodi konje u *donje* *podrume*, [He takes horses to the cellars *bellow*,  
A delije na *gornje* *čardake* And the heroes to the *upper* tower]  
(MH IX, 14)  
Konje vodi *dolje* u *podrume*, [He takes horses *down* to the cellars,  
A Ivana *gore* u *čardake* And Ivan *up* to the tower]  
(SANU III, 27)  
Konje vodi u *abare* *donje*, [He takes horses to the cellars *bellow*,  
Bega vodi na *gornje* *čardake* He takes Bey to the *upper* tower]  
(Vuk II, 75)  
(cf. Vuk II 92; MX I, 66)  
(down/bellow = inhuman/animal: up/upper = human/socialized)
- 3) Ono su ti *pod* *kamenom* *guje* (Vuk III, 24:304, 314)  
Ljuta, brate, *pod* *kamenom* *guja* (Vuk III, 24:380)  
Kako ljuta *guja* *pod* *kamenom* (Vuk IV, 33:224)  
Kao ljuta *guja* *pod* *kamenu* (Vuk VI, 67:326)  
Ali tuži ko *pod* *kamenom* *guja* (KH III, 4:1573)  
i šarena *pod* *kamenom* *guja* (KH III, 6:148)  
kako ljute *zmije* *pod* *kamenom* (SM 37:146)  
[All quotes refer to the “snake(s) *under* the stone”, mainly through comparison.]

In the last examples, the bottom of the Cosmic Axis (“*under* the stone”) is symbolically marked by the creature that is steadily related to it – snake/serpent/adder.<sup>12</sup> Complete Vertical axis is established in the Slavic

<sup>12</sup> Snakes are really associated with stones and rocks (as their habitats), but not exclusively. It is indicative, however, that nowhere in the corpus an adder is positioned *on* a stone/rock, but always *under* it (there is just one exception: “Like angry [dangerous] snakes *in* the rock” [“Kao ljute *u* kamenu *guje*”]; Vuk II, 70:44).



antithesis that involves the same formula (down = snake : up<sup>13</sup> = fairy [Serb. “vila”]):

<p>Bože mili: čuda velikoga!          Što procvilje u Banjane gornje?          Da l' je vila, da li guja ljuta?          Da je <i>vila</i>, <i>na više</i> bi bila,          Da je <i>guja</i>, <i>pod kamen</i> bi bila;          Nit' je vila, niti guja ljuta,          Već to cvili Perović-Batriću          U rukama Čorović-Osmana.          (Vuk IV, 1:1–8; cf. Vuk VI, 78:1–8)</p>	<p>Dear God, what a great wonder!          What is whining in Upper Banjane?          Is it a fairy, or a bitter snake?          If it were a <i>fairy</i>, she'd be <i>up</i> in the sky,          If it were a <i>snake</i>, it'd be <i>under</i> the rock;          It's neither a fairy nor a bitter snake,          But it's Perović Batrić whining,          In the hands of Čorović Osman.</p>
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<p>Što procvili u Zadru kamenu          U tavnici mlad' zadarskog bana?          Al je vila, al je zmija ljuta?          Nit je vila, nit je zmija ljuta.          Da je <i>vila</i>, <i>u gori</i> bi bila,          Da je <i>zmija</i>, <i>u stini</i> bi bila,          Već to cvile sužnji u tamnici.          (MH III, 23:1–7; cf. Vuk VIII, 35:1–6)</p>	<p>What is whining in the stony Zadar,          In the dungeon of Zadar's young ban?          Is it a fairy, or a bitter snake?          It's neither a fairy nor a bitter snake.          If it were a <i>fairy</i>, she'd be in the <i>forest</i>,          If it were a <i>snake</i>, it'd be in the <i>rocks</i>.          It's the whining of captives in the dungeon.</p>
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In these examples the fairy (as a winged creature) figures instead of a bird – which in mythology and folklore is universally and consistently connected to the top of the Axis Mundi (whether this Axis is imagined as the World Tree, Caduceus, Uraeon/Uraeus or some similar model; cf. Delić 2012). Although the fairy is nowhere in South Slavic folklore described as a bird,<sup>14</sup> in another type of (introductory) formulae she alternates with it. It is a formula in which a “voice” (news about an event) reaches the addressed person from a great distance, or from the future. In these cases, the mediators are:

<sup>13</sup> Forest/mountain [Serb. *gora/planina*] figures as a point away from house/court/city [Serb. *kuća/dvor/grad*] both on horizontal and vertical levels: as far and as high.

<sup>14</sup> Fairies are typically imagined as young, beautiful, slender girls with long golden hair, sometimes also with animal attributes (goat, donkey, horse, cow's feet, etc.) (Sl. M: 80). Some of them are called “oblakinje” (from Serb. “oblak” – cloud); they have the power to influence the rain (“I'm neither crazy, nor too wise, / Nor a fairy to lead the clouds” [Serb. “Nit' sam luda, nit' odviše mudra, / Nit' sam vila, da zbijam oblake”]; Vuk I, 599) and some sort of flying equipment – “krila” (wings) and “okrilje” (the word derived from the word *krila*, but it is not known what it is exactly or how it looks like). Although called “wings”, they are not parts of the body: they can be taken off or given as a present (cf. MH I, 75:15–30). In one type of *sujet* (group of poems/variants), the hero has to steal the fairy's wings before he can marry her. In Bulgarian folklore fairies sometimes wear dresses decorated with bird feathers (Sl. M: 80), which may also be a relic of the ornitomorph image of fairies.

(1) a bird, as in Bulgarian folklore (Blg. “pile [пиле]”):

Пилѣ пѣе всрѣдѣ морѣ,	[The bird sings in the middle of the see]
каино пѣе, дума дума:	[As it sings, it speaks]
по турци щѣ мор да станѣ,	[The sea will retreat for the Turks]
по християнѣ пилѣн щѣ пилѣни	[And they will plunder the Christians]

(SbNU<sub>34</sub>, p. 17) –

(2) *birds* – two black ravens (Serb. “dva vrana gavrana”), or –

(3) a *fairy* (it is particularly significant that it is only in this type of formulae that the fairy produces/emits a sound like the falcon (Serb. “klikati”)).<sup>15</sup>

In all cases, the “voice” [news] is bad – it reports about the accident that already happened or foretells an accident that will happen soon – which posits messengers between life and death:

#### GAVRAN GLASONOŠA

Polećela dva vrana gavrana,  
Sa Mišara polja širokoga  
A od Šapca grada bijeloga,  
Krvavijeh kljuna do očiju,  
I krvavih nogu do koljena...  
(Vuk IV, 30:1–5)

Polećela dva vrana gavrana  
(Vuk III, 88:1; Vuk IV, 45:1; Vuk IX,  
25:4; similar in: Vuk VI, 54:59; Vuk VII,  
56:1; Vuk VIII, 2:1; SANU IV, 23:1;  
Vuk VI, 54:1; Vuk IV, 2:1; 26:1; SANU  
III, 19:1; Vuk VIII, 28:1; Vuk VIII,  
65:1; Vuk IX, 6:63; MH VIII, 18:13,  
26; SANU III, 52:10; SM 24:1; Vuk  
IV, 59:1–2; Vuk II, 45:119–120; Vuk II,  
48:57–58)

#### RAVEN THE NEWS-BEARER

Flying there come two coal-black ravens,  
From afar, from the plain of Mišar,  
From the white fortress of Šabac.  
Bloody are their beaks to the very eyes,  
Bloody are their claws to the very  
knees...<sup>16</sup>

Flying there come two coal-black ravens...

<sup>15</sup> In oral epics, this kind of announcing is transferred to the hero too [Serb. “*Kliče* Stojan tanko glasovito”, “*Kliče* Iva kroz lug popevati”, “*Kliče* Nikac grlom bijelijem” etc., with meaning: “Stojan/Iva/Nikac... starts to sing”), which correlates with their attribution [Serb. “Ban udade sestricu Jelicu ... *Za sokola* Brđanina Pavla”, “Strahin-bane, ti *sokole* srpski”, “Jo Kaica, moj *sokole* sivi” etc.; in these examples heroes are metaphorically named as *falcons*).

<sup>16</sup> Translated from Serbian by John Matthias and Vladeta Vuckovic. ([http://www.kosovo.net/history/battle\\_of\\_kosovo.html](http://www.kosovo.net/history/battle_of_kosovo.html); 19/7/2013).

KLIKOVANJE VILE	FAIRY'S ACCLAMATION (CALL)
<p>Kliče vila s Urvine planine, Te doziva Kraljevića Marka: “Pobratime, Kraljeviću Marko! Znađeš, brate, što ti konj posrće? Žali Šarac tebe gospodara, Jer ćete se brzo rastanuti.” (Vuk II, 74:19–24)</p>	<p>A fairy cries from Urvina mountain And she calls Marko the Prince: “My blood-brother, oh, Prince Marko! Do you know, brother, why your horse stumbles? He mourns you, his master, Because you will be parting soon.”</p>
<p>Kliče vila prije jarkog sunca (Vuk IV, 34:98; similar in: Vuk IV, 43:4; Vuk VI, 67:80; Vuk VIII, 42:3; Vuk IX, 26:671; 27:1; SM 8:1; Vuk IV, 21:1; Vuk VIII, 23:49; 54:1; Vuk IV, 49:1; Vuk VIII, 17:73; 47:1; Vuk IX, 4:1; KH II, 72:1; MH IX, 19:1; SM 49:1; Vuk IX, 2:135; EH 12:165; SANU IV, 44:1; SM 134:13; SM 174:1; Vuk II, 95:3; Vuk IV, 31:430; Vuk IV, 56:142; Vuk VIII, 52:1; SANU IV, 37:1; KH II, 48:1; MH I, 68:292; SM 27:55; SM 134:3)</p>	<p>A fairy cries before the rising sun...</p>

Although ravens could be incorporated in this formula on the basis of realities – as the last participants in battles (they were scavengers that fell on the bodies of dead warriors, which made them associated with the god of death, and – also – they could easily be taught to talk) – the very jagged mythological background indicates a more complex and deeper origin of the formula. However, even if we establish a parallel with:

(1) Odin’s two birds (ravens Huginn and Muninn [Thought and Memory]), which leave Odin at dawn and fly around the world to bring him news of what is happening (Loma 2003: 121), or –

(2) shamanic practice (North Eurasia) “in which the raven plays such an important role of pre-shaman, cult hero and demiurge” (Loma 2003: 125), or –

(3) Mesopotamian myth of the Great Flood, where the raven that does not return (analogous to the biblical dove) indicates the end of the flood (Loma 2003: 110) – there still remains the fact that the archetype of mediation is steadily associated with this bird, and that it goes beyond specific myths and specific folklore traditions. In this respect, the “report of ravens” (the pattern that G. Gesemann and A. Schmaus named “raven the news-bearer”; Gezeman 2002 [1926], Šmaus 1937) is not different from the “fairy’s acclamation/prophecy” [Serb. “klikovanje vile”].

Becoming tied to underlying cultural codes – such as the basic structure of spatial axis – the archaic image of a fairy–bird in the epic formula becomes ossified, deformed and barely recognizable. Out of this formula, and

in other folk genres, this notion is practically forgotten and almost completely suppressed by other layers of tradition. Extremely rare and hardly noticeable signals confirm our findings. One of such comes from a ritual poem the purpose of which is to call down rain (Serb. “dodolske pesme”), where the ritual situation has contributed to its conservation. In that lyric poem the fairy is positioned on the top of the fir, high “up to the sky”, as well as a bird on the top of the World Tree in mythologies and their folklore derivatives:

<i>Nasred sela</i> vita jela, Oj dodo, oj dodole! <i>Vita jela čak do neba.</i> <i>Na vr' jele b'jela vila,</i> U krilu joj ogledalo; Okreće ga, prevrće ga. Prevrnu se vedro nebo I udari rosna kiša. Oj dodo, oj dodole! (AnL 132)	In the middle of the village – a thin fir, Oh, dodo, oh, dodole! A thin fir up to the sky. On the top of the fir – a white fairy, With a mirror in her lap; She's turning it over and over. The clear sky turns over, And a dewy rain sets in. Oh, dodo, oh, dodole!
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### 1.2 Segmentation and semantisation of physical space

Different segments of physical space carry the same system of connotations as the aforementioned spatial relations (up : down, left : right, in front of : behind, etc.). Among them, as particularly accentuated, stand out *house/tower/court* and *city* (as closed, safe human spaces), on one hand, and *mountain*, *water* (sea, lake) and *road* (as open, demonic/chthonic, dangerous locations), on the other (Detelić 1992). The logic of systemic oppositions determined – among other things – formulaic epic attribution: mountain (forest) became *black*, sea – *grey*, tower/court and city – *white* (Detelić & Ilić 2006; Detelić & Delić 2013).<sup>17</sup> Similarly, the typical epic antagonist is the Black Arab (from the Turkish perspective: Black George [Serb. Karadorđe, Turkish “kara” = black]), while the attribution of the hero<sup>18</sup> inclines toward the op-

<sup>17</sup> Origins of attribution are not the same (*white city* [Serb. “beli grad”] carries the traces of sacredness, as well as *white church* [Serb. “bela crkva”], for example), nor is the symbolic of colours monolithic and uncontroversial (both *white* and *black* can carry different, mutually contradictory symbolic values); cf. Detelić & Ilić 2006; with a bibliography.

<sup>18</sup> This refers not (only) to the character that is perceived as “our” from the author’s position (perspective of a singer), but to the hero as an eponym of a genre, with the following structural elements: parts of the body, clothes, horse, weapon (as private/personal), and family, court/tower and city (as public). Therefore, the second type of attribution – imposed by the rules and the imperatives of a heroic genre – sets apart formulaic description of body parts, weapons and duels as *heroic* (cf. Detelić 2008).

posite semantic field: his throat and arms are formulaically described as *white* (Serb. “*belo grlo*”, “*bele ruke*”), his cheek – as *bright* (Serb. “*svetli obraz*”), his weapons – as *shiny* (Serb. “*svijetlo oružje*”) (Detelić & Delić 2013).

The described segmentation of space has generated a whole range of formulae based upon characteristics of chthonic zones and taboos related to them. Correlation *voice = human* : *silence = inhuman* generated the formula “singing through the mountain”, which figures as a typical sign of violating the chthonic space. In entire circles of variants (different models of *sujet/story/plot*), singing through a mountain initiates a conflict between hero and demon (fairy) or some isomorphic figure (rebel/rebels [Serb. “*hajduk*”/“*hajduci*”] / mountain wolfs [Serb. “*gorski vuci*”]). This formula usually includes the motif of an extraordinary/destructive power of the voice, inherited from mythic layers.<sup>19</sup> The origin of the motif (in narrative terms) – as supposed by Lj. Radenković – could be found in the myth of Thunder God and his family (cf. Sudnik & Tsivian 1980: 242; Radenković 1988):

<p>Kad ugleda mlada Anđelija, Zapiva mu grlom debelijem. Kako piva, kuja je rodila:     <i>S gorice je lišće poletilo</i>     <i>Po planini trava pokleknula.</i> To začuo Malen harambaša, Pijuć vino s trideset hajduka.     (MH VIII, 16:24–30)</p>	<p>When young Anđelija saw it, She started to sing in a loud voice. How does she sing! Bitch gave her birth! <i>The leaves flew from the trees,</i> <i>The grass flattened in the mountain.</i> Harambasha Malen heard it, while drinking wine with his thirty hajduks.</p>
<p>Като окне Елена невеста на гората шумки отпаднале, по полето трева повејнала, у извори вода пресъхнала. Дочул я е Лалош из горица [...]     (SbNU 53, no. 532, p. 647)</p>	<p>As Elena the bride began to sing, <i>The leaves fell from the trees,</i> <i>The grass withered in the mountain,</i> <i>The springs dried up.</i> Laloš from the mountain heard it [...]</p>

Similarly, the correlation between the oppositions *pure dead* : *impure dead* and *graveyard* (consecrated space) : *mountain* (chthonic space) generated a very complex formula – “burial in the mountain”, which sublimated a number of key elements of the cult of the dead. Those who die in an impure place – even if it is through no fault of their own – assume the characteristics of the space itself and have to be buried where they died (Detelić 1996b: 99). Therefore, such persons are not carried to the cemetery. The grave is dug on the spot (in the mountain or some other impure place – by the road,

<sup>19</sup> The symbolic aspect of that voice partly overlaps with the notion of the (cosmic) vertical: “The strength of the voice is usually expressed through two elements: the leaves fall from the trees (= up – down) and the grass flies up from the ground (= down – up), creating a symbolic axis Heaven – Earth” (Radenković 1998: 240).

near the crossroads and the like), and arranged in a way that incorporates elements of ritual/cult (water, appropriate plants, funeral gifts – small coins and gold coins [Serb. “groši i dukati”] etc.; cf. Detelić 2008; Detelić 2013). This case shows as evident the distinctive tendency of mythical thinking toward tautology – i.e. multiplication and accumulation of details from the same semantic field:

- (1) *mountain* is a liminal space (entrance to the other world);
- (2) *water* is “strong” border (between the worlds of the living and the dead);
- (3) *tree* and *liana* (grapevine, rose) as mediators between the upper and nether worlds (analogous to the world of the living and the world of the dead);
- (4) *sitting in the forest* – as an absence of movement – is a metaphor for death.

THE GRAVE OF LJEPOSAVA,  
THE BRIDE OF MILIĆ THE STANDARD-BEARER  
(in the mountain)

Sastaše se kićeni svatovi,	The wedding guests came together,
Sabljama joj sanduk satesaše,	They made her casket with sabres,
Nadžacima raku iskopaše,	They dug her grave with hatchets,
Saraniše lijepu devojkju	They buried the beautiful girl
Otkuda se jasno sunce rađa;	Where the bright sun rises;
Posuše je grošim' i dukatim';	They threw groats and ducats on her;
Čelo glave vodu izvedoše,	They brought water to the head of the grave,
Oko vode klupe pogradiše,	And made benches around the water,
Posadiše ružu s obje strane:	And planted a rose on either side:
Ko j' umoran, neka se odmara;	For him who is tired – to get rest;
Ko je mlađan, nek se kiti cv'jećem;	Who is young – to spruce himself with flowers;
Ko je žedan, neka vodu pije	Who is thirsty – to drink water,
Za dušicu lijepe devojkje.	For the soul of the beautiful girl.
(Vuk III, 78:189–201)	

THE GRAVE OF IVAN SENJANIN'S NEPHEW  
(by the road)

Lepo ga je uja saranio,	His uncle buried him nicely,
Javor-sanduk lep mu satesao,	He made him a maple-wood casket,
Šaren sanduk k'o šareno jaje	Colourful casket like a colourful egg,
S leve strane te šarene grane,	On the left side – those colourful branches,
S desne strane sitne knjige male.	On the right side – tiny little letters.
Jošt na lepšem mestu ukopa ga,	He buried him in an even nicer place,
Raku kopa kraj drumu careva,	He dug the pit by the emperor's road,
Oko groba stole pometao,	Around the grave he put tables,

Čelo glave ružu usadio, A do nogu jelu usadio.	And planted a rose at the head of the grave, And a fir at his feet.
Do te jele bunar iskopao	By this fir – he dug a well,
I za jelu dobra konja svez'o:	And to the fir he tied a good horse:
Koji prođe tud drumom carevim	For him who passes by the emperor's road,
Ko j' umoran, neka otpočine,	Who is tired – to get rest,
Ko je mlađan, pa je za kićenje,	Who is young and fit for bedecking –
Nek' se kiti ružicom rumenom,	let him bedight with the red rose,
A koga je obrvala žećca,	And who is overwhelmed by thirst –
Bunar ima, nek' utoli žećcu,	There's the well – to quench his thirst,
Ko je junak vredan za konjica,	Who is a hero worthy of a horse –
Nek' ga dreši, pa nek drumom jezdi	Let him untie it, and ride along the road,
Sve za zdravlje Ive Senjanina	All for the health of Ivan Senjanin,
I za dušu nejaka nećaka	And for the soul of the young nephew.
(SANU III, 40:93–114)	

In this case the epic is indifferent not only to the sex of the diseased (male/female), but also to the formal (confessional) differences between the Orthodox and Catholic funeral rites. The graves of both Christians and Muslims are treated in an analogous way:

THE GRAVE OF AHMED THE STANDARD-BEARER  
AND BEJZA FROM VARAD

(in the field)

Otalen se Turci povratili,	The Turks returned from there,
Mrtvu oni Bejzu ponesoše.	And took dead Bejza with them.
Kad su sišli u polje kaniško	When they reached the field of Kaniža,
Do sokola Ahmed-bajraktara,	And the falcon, Ahmed the standard-bearer,
Tu su konje dobre razjahali,	They dismounted their good horses,
A Ahmedu kuću načinili	And made a house for Ahmed,
I kod njega Bejzi Varatkinji.	And near him one for Bejza from Varad.
Više bajre turbe načinili,	They made a türbe <sup>19</sup> above the standard-bearer,
Oko njega bašču ogradili,	Enclosed the garden around it,
A po bašči voće posadili,	And planted fruit trees in the garden,
A u bašču vodu navratili,	And brought water to the garden,
Oko vode klupe pogradili,	They made benches around the water,
Kraj turbeta džadu načinili:	And a road by the türbe:
Ko je žedan, neka vode pije,	Who is thirsty – to drink water,
Ko je gladan, neka voće jide,	Who is hungry – to eat fruits,
Ko je susto, neka otpočine,	Who is tired – to get rest,
A spominje Ahmed-bajraktara	And to mention Ahmed the standard-bearer
I divojku Bejzu Varatkinju.	And Bejza the girl from Varad.
(MH IV, 44:430–447)	

<sup>20</sup> Türbe is a Muslim tomb similar to a chapel or a mausoleum, usually built for noblemen.

## 2 *Conceptualization of time*

Unlike space, time does not have the “character of being” (cf. Cassirer 1985 III: 144) and, as noted above, cannot be perceived by senses. Therefore, the language itself is forced (before the epic modelling even starts) to denote temporal dimensions and relations by spatial determinants (cf. the examples in section 1.1). Even the exact sciences have not been able to avoid this type of figurative representation: time is imagined as an infinite *line*, as a *spiral* or *circle*, or – in non-standard topologies of time – as a *ray* (*half-line*) without beginning or end, as a *line segment*, or as a *branching* time (cf. Arsenijević 2003: 59–73). In folklore, time is predominantly conceptualized through cosmic and biological rhythms, which are perceived as fundamental. As the categories of physical space are defined in relation to the human body in a gravitational field,<sup>21</sup> the experience of time flow is mediated through phases of human life, as they are biologically and socially defined and segmented. Hence, oral formulae are often associated with key rites of passage (birth, marriage, death) or daily and annual cycles. The first mentioned can be found in different positions in the text – initial (like in the *bugarštica*<sup>22</sup> about the death of Vuk Grgurević Branković, written down in the mid-seventeenth century) or final (like in a Macedonian lyric poem):

### INITIAL POSITION

Što mi graka postoja u gradu u Kupjenomu,  
   Kupjenomu gradu,  
 Ali mi se djetić ženi, ali mlado čedo krsti?  
 Ah, ni mi se djetić ženi, niti mlado čedo krsti  
   Za Boga da vam sam,  
 Nego mi se Vuk despot s grešnom dušom razdjeljuje.  
   (Pantić 2002: 75)

What’s that noise in the town of Kupjenovo,  
   The town of Kupjenovo,  
 Is it a young man *getting married*, or a *child* being *baptized*?  
 Oh, neither is a young man getting married, nor a child baptized,  
   For God’s sake,  
 But Despot Vuk *is parting with his sinful soul* (= dies).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> In traditional societies space was even measured by parts of the body – foot, span, cubit, etc.

<sup>22</sup> *Bugarštica* is a special type of oral poem, sung in long verses (15 or 16 syllables), mostly in urban areas. They were mainly recorded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the Adriatic coast.

<sup>23</sup> Vuk Grgurević Branković – in oral epics known also as Vuk the Fiery Dragon [Serb. “Zmaj Ognjeni Vuk”; the name “Vuk” means “wolf”] – was a member of the Branković



## FINAL POSITION

<p>[...] Ми го дочу крива лоза винена:          – Шо се фалиш, трендафилу окапнику!          Јас ке родам многу грозје в година,          ке оженам многу млади юнаци,          ке омъжам многу млади девојки,          ке закопам триста стари старици,          ке си крџстам триста луди дечина.          (Miladinovci 21)</p>	<p>[...] Curved grapevine has heard it:          “Why do you boast, oh rose on the window!          I’ll bear a lot of grapes this year,          I will <i>marry</i> many young heroes,          I will <i>marry</i> many young girls,          I will <i>bury</i> three hundred old elders,          I will <i>baptize</i> three hundred crazy kids.”</p>
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The same formulaic nucleus is identified in a group of poems in which three kings/nobles of another religion or nation invite the hero to baptism (= birth), to wedding (= marriage), or to war (= death). This formula is as a rule in the initial position:

<p>Ali Marku tri knjige dodoše:          Jedna knjiga od Stambola grada,          Od onoga cara Pojazeta;          Druga knjiga od Budima grada,          Od onoga kralja Budimskog;          Treća knjiga od Sibirja grada,          Od vojvode Sibirjanin-Janka.          Koja knjiga od Stambola grada,          Car ga u njoj <i>na vojsku poziva</i>,          Na Arapsku ljutu pokrajinu;          Koja knjiga od Budima grada,          Kralj ga u njoj <i>u svatove zove</i>,          U svatove na kumstvo vjenčano,          Da ga vjenča s gospođom kraljicom;          Koja knjiga od Sibirja grada,          Janko u njoj na kumstvo zaziva,  <i>Da mu krsti dva nejaka sina</i>.          (Vuk II, 62:3–19)</p>	<p>Three letters came to Marko,          One letter – from the city of Istanbul,          From that emperor Bayezid;          The second one – from the city of Buda,          From that king of Buda;          The third one – from the city of Sibiu,          From Captain Janos of Sibiu,          In the letter from the city of Istanbul,          The emperor invites him to join the <i>army</i>,          In the bitter province of Arabia;          In the letter from the city of Buda,          The king invites him to the <i>wedding</i>,          To be his best man,          To marry the king to the queen;          In the letter from the city of Sibinj,          Janko asks him to be the godfather,          To <i>baptize</i> his two young sons.</p>
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In traditional cultures, the daily cycle was measured primarily by the motion of celestial bodies (planets, Moon, Sun). In many ancient religions, and in South Slavic folklore, a key role was played by Venus [Serb. “Danica”, both a female name and the name for the morning star, daystar]. It assumed this role probably because of the correlation between its movement and the sunrise/sunset, which generated a system of formulae, mainly introductory, both in lyric and in epic poetry:

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family “of Srem” [Serb. “sremski Brankovići”] and a famous fighter against the Ottomans. They were the last medieval rulers of Serbia before it was finally conquered by the Ottomans after the fall of Smederevo in 1459.

## LYRICS

<p>Falila se <i>Danica zvezjeda</i>          Da je prose troji prosioци:          Jedni prose za žareno sunce,          Drugi prose za sjajna mjeseca,          Treći prose za sedam vlašića.          [...]</p> <p>Al' govori žareno sunaše:          "Pođi za me, Danice zvezjedo!  <i>Svu noćicu za sunašcem ajde,</i>  <i>A u danu pred sunašcem ajde.</i>"          (Rajković 185)</p> <p><i>Jarko sunce ide na konake,</i>  <i>Pred njim ide Danica zvezjdica,</i>          Pa je njemu tiho govorila:          "Jarko sunce, jesi l' s' umorilo?"          (Ristić 11)</p>	<p>The Morning Star bragged          That three suitors ask her hand in marriage:          The first asks her for the bright Sun,          The second asks her for the shiny Moon,          The third asks her for the seven Pleiades.<sup>24</sup>          [...]</p> <p>And the bright Sun says:          "Marry me, the Morning Star!          All night long you'll follow the Sun,          All day long – go in front of the Sun."</p> <p>Bright Sun goes to its residence (= to sleep),          The Morning Star goes ahead of him,          And she quietly speaks to it:          "Bright Sun, are you tired?"</p>
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## EPICS

<p>Kad <i>Danica</i> na istok izađe,  <i>Mesec</i> jasan nad zaodom beše,          Milošu obadva dođoše,          Pak Milošu govorit' počeše...          (SANU II, 30:1425-1428)</p> <p>Još zorica ne zabijelila,          Ni <i>danica</i> pomolila lica,          I od dana ni spomena nema,          Dok poklikta sa Javora vila          (Vuk IV, 38:1-4; cf.: Vuk II, 95; Vuk III,          10, 39, 47; Vuk IV, 38, 43, 46; Vuk VIII,          42; Vuk IX, 25; KH I, 25; KH II, 43, 57;          KH III, 8, 10; MH II, 45; MH VIII, 6;          SANU II, 31; SM 11, 134)</p> <p>Kad u jutru zora zab'jeljela,          I <i>danica</i> pero pomolila          (KH I, 2; cf.: KH II, 50; MH IV, 50;          MH IX, 23)</p> <p>Još zorica ne zabijelila,          ni <i>Danica</i> pomolila krilca          (SM 85)</p>	<p>When the Morning Star rose in the east,          Clear Moon was setting down,          Both [heroes] came to Miloš,          And began to talk to Miloš...</p> <p>The dawn has not broken yet,          Nor has the Morning Star showed her face,          And there's still no sign of daylight,          But the fairy [vila] cries from Javor moun-          tain.</p> <p>When the dawn broke in the morning,          And the Morning Star showed her feather.</p> <p>The dawn has not broken yet,          Nor has the Morning Star showed her wings.</p>
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<sup>24</sup> In Serbian, the nouns Sun (neutrum), Moon and Pleiades (Serb. "Vlašići") are masculine nouns, so they can marry the "morning star" *Danica* (Venus), which is a feminine noun.

Such position in oral formulae and such importance in time conceptualization leads to the conclusion that Danica, the Morning Star (Venus) could be a folklore counterpart of the primordial deity of Time, which in ancient myths and philosophy precedes cosmogony (cf. Šćepanović 2012: 19–25 with relevant bibliography). This symbolic and ontological dimension, inherited from the most ancient cultural layers, could explain quite stable figuring of the “star” Danica in the initial oral formulae:

## EPICS

Mjesec kara zvijezdu danicu: “De si bila, zvijezdo danice? De si bila, de si dangubila? Dangubila tri bijela dana?”	The Moon scolds the Morning Star: “Where’ve you been, Morning Star? Where’ve you been, wasting your time? Wasting your time for three white days?”
Danica se njemu odgovara: “Ja sam bila, ja sam dangubila Više b’jela grada Bijograda, Gledajući čuda velikoga, De dijele braća očevinu, Jakšić Dmtar i Jakšić Bogdane...” (Vuk II, 98:1–10)	The Morning Star replies: “I’ve been, I’ve wasted my time, Above the white city of Bijograd, Watching a great wonder, Brothers dividing their patrimony, Jakšić Dmtar and Jakšić Bogdan...”

## LYRICS

Sjajna zv’jzdo, de si sinoć sjala? “Ja sam sjala više Biograda, Osvitala više Carigrada, Te gledala šta se tamo radi...” (Bašić 94)	Shiny star, where did you shine last night? “I shined above Biograd, Rose above Constantinople, And watched what’s happening there...”
Dve se zvezde na nebu skaraše, Preodnica i zvezda Danica. Preodnica Danici besedi: “Oj Danice, lena ležavkinjo, Ti preleža od večer’ do sveta, Ja obido’ zemlju i gradove...” (SANU I, 275)	The two stars quarreled in the sky, The Forerunner and the Morning Star. The Forerunner tells to the Morning Star: “Oh Morning Star, lazy slacker, You were lying from evening to morning, While I circled the country and the cities...”

The aforementioned ancient philosophical concept (time as primordial deity which precedes cosmogony) is based upon the distinction between mythical time (which is an absolute past) and historical time (within which each item points to another that lies further behind, so recourse to the past becomes *regressus in infinitum*; cf. Cassirer II 1985: 112). Mythical past – as the time of the “origin” of things both natural and cultural – is replicated in ritual situations and intervals that carry the quality of mythic/holy time through the logic of a “beginning”. Like the mythical experience of space and its conceptualization in traditional cultures, mythical perception of time separates homogeneous physical continuum and validates its segments differently. As G. Mal’tsev showed in a broad comparative context,

it highlights *early morning/dawn* as the densest and the most productive formulaic nucleus:

In the daily cycle, the “dawn”, the appearance of the sun – that is the time of the “beginning”, the time of birth and of rebirth, the time associated with destiny. The magic of sunrise is caused by these notions. As every “beginning”, the morning is sacralized and mythologized ... It is on the morning – the beginning – that depends the development, the destiny of the coming day. (Maľtsev 1989: 79–80)<sup>25</sup>

The given complex of notions (“magic of the morning”) and the given logic of thinking founded one of the most widespread oral formulae. It has many stylizations (cf. tables below), occurs in a broad cultural areal (Panslavic context) and in a wide range of genres:

(1) in proverbs with the meaning “The *early* bird catches the worm” [Serb. “Ko *rano* rani – dve sreće grabi”; “Who gets up *early* – doubles his luck”], [Rus. “Кто *рано* встает, тому бог подает”, “Who gets up *early* – God gives him luck/goods”]

(2) lyric poems (especially ritual)

(3) epic poems

(4) phrases (such as “Good *morning!*”)

(5) legends/narratives, etc.

The formula shows a slightly higher lexical fixation in the initial position, but not a higher frequency, because every change or the beginning of an action can be linked to early morning/dawn/sunrise in the medial stages as well:

#### INITIAL POSITION (EPICS)

Rano rani <sup>26</sup> đakone Stevane (Vuk II, 3:1)	Deacon Stephen gets up early...
Rano rani Turkinja devojka (Vuk II, 57:1)	Turkish girl gets up early...
Rano rani Kraljeviću Marko, Rano rani do ishoda sunca (MH II, 7:1–2)	Prince Marko gets up early, He gets up before sunrise...

<sup>25</sup> “В суточном цикле ‘рассвет’ появление солнца – это время ‘начала’, время рождения, возрождения, время, связанное с судьбой. Магия рассвета обусловлена именно этими представлениями. Как святое ‘начало’ утро сакрализуется и мифологизируется [...] От утра – начала – зависит течение, судьба грядущего дня.”

<sup>26</sup> In Serbian both the adverb *early* (Serb. “rano”) and the verbs with the meaning “to get up early in the morning”, “to do/start something early in the morning” (Serb. “rani”, “poranio”, “uranio”) are derived from the same root (*figura etymologica*).

Podranio Kraljeviću Marko, Podranio u nedjelju svetu Prije zore i bijela dana, Podranio u lov u planine (MH I, 40:1-4)	Prince Marko got up early, He got up early on Holy Sunday, Before dawn and daylight, He got up early to hunt in the mountains...
Uranila Kosovka djevojka, Uranila rano u nedelju (Vuk II, 51:1-2)	The Maiden from Kosovo got up early, She got up early on Sunday...
Zoran junak rano podranio (Vuk IX, 7:1)	Brave hero got up early...
Sitna knjiga rano podranila (Vuk VIII, 72:1)	The small book [letter] arrived early...

## MEDIAL POSITION (EPICS)

Rano rani ljuba Prijezdina, Rano rani na sam Đurđev danak, Rano rani na vodicu ladnu (SANU II, 78:43-45)	The wife of Prijezda got up early, She got up early on St. George's day, She went early to the water...
Poranio beže Milan-beže (Vuk II, 10:63)	Milan-bey got up early...
Prije beže bješe poranio (Vuk VI, 6:56)	Bey got up early, before...
Dobro ti si jutro poranio (EH 1:396)	You got up early on a good morning...
Na Ilinj-dan bijah poranila (KH III, 4:135)	I got up early on St. Elias' day...
Uranio slavan car Lazare (Vuk II, 43:106)	Glorious emperor Lazar got up early...
Noć noćio, rano podranio (MH III, 4:134)	He stayed overnight, and got up early...

In lyric poems, the variational field of formula (the scope of variation) is slightly larger (among other things, because of the existence of multiple metric forms), but semantics is the same:

Podranila Đurđevića Jela, Prije Đura u gorici došla, Nabrala je cmilja i bosilja, A najviše đurđeva cvijeća (SANU I, 95)	Helen, the wife of George, got up early, She came to the woods before George, She picked some immortelle and basil, But most of all she picked St. George's flowers [lily of the valley].
Porani, Belo, porani Porani, Belo, na vodu (Vuk V, 554)	Get up early, Bela, get up early Get up early, Bela, to fetch the water.

Ranila rano, oj, i, Nedelja, i! U njojne nove gradine Da bere rosan tr'ndavil (AnL 148)	Got up early, oh-e, the Sunday, eeee! To go to her new vineyards To pick dewy roses.
Uranila, koledo, stara majka, koledo! Svetoj crkvi na jutrenju, Susrete je sveti Petar Na jelenu zlatorogu (Vuk I, 191)	The old mother, koledo, got up early, koledo! To go to holy church to the morning service. She met St. Peter Riding on a golden-horned deer.

Another type of qualitative distinction is observed in the division into *good* and *bad* moments,<sup>27</sup> which chronological series makes discrete on the basis of the nature (features) of time intervals or moments:

#### GOOD MOMENT

To vi, Bože, u <i>čas dobar</i> bilo! (Vuk II, 27)	O God, may it be in a good moment for them!
Id'te deco, pošli u <i>dobri čas</i> ! (Vuk II, 82)	Go, children, may the moment of your depart be good!
U <i>čas dobar</i> , Osman-bajraktare! (KH III, 7)	In a good moment, Osman the standard-bearer!
Jer se ženim, u <i>dobar čas</i> bilo! (SANU III, 21)	Cause I'm getting married, let it be in a good moment!
Hajd' dorate u <i>sto dobrih časa</i> ! (KH I, 8)	Go ahead, my bay, in hundred good moments!

#### BAD MOMENT<sup>28</sup>

Dobro jutro, beže Ljuboviću! U <i>zao čas</i> po me ili po te. (Vuk III, 70)	Good morning, Ljubović bey, In bad moment either for you, or for me!
Simeune, dugo jadan bio! U <i>z'ò čas</i> ga roda potražio! (Vuk II, 14)	Simeon, stay miserable for a long time! In bad moment you went to search for ancestors!
U <i>z'ò čas</i> si zemlju zamutio, A u gori Kosovo razbio. (SM 62)	In bad moment you stirred the country, And in worse one – destroyed Kosovo.

<sup>27</sup> Analogy with the notion of *kairos* in ancient and medieval cultures is imposed. In ancient traditions noun *kairos* (καίρός) was sometimes used as a synonym for *chronos* (χρόνος). *Chronos* is, however, often associated with eternity (Šćepanović 2012), which make it the basic term in the area of philosophical categories (Radić 2012: 35). On the other hand, *kairos* has a more specified meaning and generally is determined as time suitable for some action, both in antiquity (Aristotle) and in the middle ages (cf. Radić 2012: 35, 42).

<sup>28</sup> About beliefs in *bad moment* in Slavic traditions cf. Radenković 2011.

\* \* \*

Even this reduced and incomplete review indicates extreme complexity of codes that fund oral formulae and complexity of meanings generated or transferred by them. In this paper, the focus was on the conceptualization of space and time – and even that only partially. Among other things, a whole system of formulae which structures annual cycle (speaking in cultural categories) was neglected, as well as some other means of conceptualizing, like Church calendar (“From St. George’s to St. Demetrius’ Day” [Serb. “Od Đurđeva do Mitrova dana”]) or seasonal changes. For the latter, the most beautiful example is the famous Slavic antithesis at the beginning of the *Hasanaginica*:

What is whitening there, in the green hills?  
                               Is it snow, or is it the swans?  
 If it were snow, it would have melted long ago,           MELTING OF SNOW = SPRING  
 If it were swans, they would have flown away.           BIRDS FLYING TO THE SOUTH =  
                               It is neither snow nor swans,           AUTUMN  
                               But the tent of aga Hasan-aga.  
   (Vuk III, 80: 1–6)

Out of our focus stayed the much wider area – actually quite a few segments of culture:

(1) ritual and ethical models: marriage to a maiden from a far away place, for example [Serb. *ženidba* “na daleko”]; establishing of loyalty or heroism, which generated a number of crucial “stable” epithets (*faithful* wife [Serb. “*verna ljubav*”], *heroic* head/shoulders/chest/duel [Serb. “*glava/pleća/prsa junačka*”, “*megdan junački*”]) (cf. Detelić 2008), and so on;

(2) elements of social stratification (social hierarchy and etiquette, entitling),

(3) whole areas where cultural codes (Indo-European heritage) converge with distinctive types of conceptualization; the best example of that sort is category of colour, especially domains of black and white and corresponding formulaic attribution.<sup>29</sup>

Besides, a sublime life and historical experience also participate in constitution of oral formulae, which is, for example, obvious in attribution of:

<sup>29</sup> Linguistic literature on the subject is quite extensive, especially studies based on the cognitive approach (basic study in this field is Berlin & Kay 1969, which initiated further investigations and theories, *prototype theory*, for example). About the semantics of white colour in South Slavic oral epics, mainly in relation to the formulae *white town*, *white tower* and *white hall* see Detelić & Ilić 2006 (with bibliography of linguistic provenance that covers the Slavic cultural area) and Detelić & Delić 2013.

(1) arms (after the origin: sabre from Damascus/Sham or Germany [Serb. “sablja dimiščija/alamanka/šamljanka”], rifle from Italy [Serb. “puška latinka/talijanka”] or from Germany [“danickinja”]),

(2) cities (as capitals [Serb. “stojni Beograd/Carigrad/Prizren”, from “prestoni” = capital]), or –

(3) typical characters (Latins are described as *wise* [Serb. “*premudri Latini*”, “*mudra Latinija*”] and as *tricksters* [Serb. “*Latini su stare varalice*”, “*Latini su mudre varalice*”], which are folk stereotypes based upon political skills and flexibility of the Venetian Republic).

Formulae can also contain information about the genre or the type of sujet (plot) which follows, usually the initial ones. In such cases, they can serve as specific “switchers” too (they send information about the change of discourse, i.e. about the transition from vernacular to poetic discourse; cf. Petković 1990; Detelić 1996: 23–25). Furthermore, formulae have specific intertextual disposition, for which J. M. Foley introduces the term *traditional referentiality* (Foley 1995).

All the mentioned aspects – together or in some combination – determine the genesis and the structure of formulae. It allows us to regard each of them as the “tip of the iceberg”, whose underwater massif constitutes of traditional system as a whole (whereby that whole must include categories of thinking, genre norms and other factors that common concept of traditional system does not involve). Therefore, the survival of formulae should be linked not only (and perhaps not even primarily) to their mnemotechnic function, but also to the fact that tradition reproduces, defines and maintains itself by them:

Tradition – it is primarily semantic, evaluative category. So, we investigated the formula – a kind of overwater part of an iceberg. “Underwater” part – most substantial and probably the most significant – does not express itself directly in specific ways [...]. A deep layer of tradition with its own parameters, trends and connections can be observed as comprehensive and potentially inexhaustible centre that ‘irradiates’ meanings. Tradition – it is a generating category, and formulae act as canonical fixations of certain areas of the traditional semantics.<sup>30</sup> (Mal'tsev 1989: 68–69)

<sup>30</sup> “Традиция – это прежде всего смысловая, ценностная категория. Так, исследуемые нами формулы – это своего рода надводная часть айсберга. А часть ‘подводная’ – нечто наиболее содержательное и, пожалуй, зачастую наиболее существенное – непосредственно не выражается особыми путями [...] Глубинный уровень традиции со своими собственными параметрами, тенденциями и связями может рассматриваться как содержательный и потенциально неисчерпаемый центр, ‘иррадирующий’ значения. Традиция – это порождающая категория, и формулы выступают как каноническая фиксация определенных зон традиционной семантики.”



Therefore, the analogy that has been established lately between folkloristic approach to the formulae and cognitive-linguistic approach to speech (metaphor),<sup>31</sup> except at the level of creation (composition-in-performance) – and before at the level of creation – should be recognized at the level of semantic structures. Semantic structure of formulae and semantic structure of metaphor and linguistic units in general could be equally well described in terms of both scientific disciplines: *iceberg* (“iceberg” – Mal'tsev 1989, “the tip of the iceberg” – Fauconnier & Turner 2002), *hidden knowledge*, *hidden complexity*, *frame semantics*, or perhaps most accurately – *compressed meanings*. The meanings that are “compressed” and modelled originate, as we have seen, in the system of traditional culture – which has absorbed elements from extremely diverse spheres (conceptualization, rituals, life realities, historical experience, common law, ethics, etc.). Those meanings are, however, upgraded with new “income” in every new/concrete realization (i.e. poem) (cf. Detelić 1996: 106–107) and this is the area where aesthetics rivals poetics.

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821.163-13.0  
398(=163)

### Corpus

Collections available at: <http://www.mirjanadetelic.com/e-baze.php>:

- AnL – *Antologija srpske lirske usmene poezije*. Zoja Karanović (prir.). Novi Sad 1996. (in Cyrillic)
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- ER – *Erlangenski rukopis starih srpskohrvatskih narodnih pesama*. Gerhard Gezeman (prir.). Sr. Karlovci 1925. (in Cyrillic) Available at: <http://www.branatomic.com/erl/>
- KH I–II – *Narodne pjesme muslimana u Bosni i Hercegovini*. Sabrao Kosta Hörmann 1888–1889. Knj. I–II, drugo izdanje. Sarajevo 1933.
- KH III – *Narodne pjesme muslimana u Bosni i Hercegovini*. Iz rukopisne ostavštine Koste Hörmanna. Redakcija, uvod i komentari Đenana Buturović. Sarajevo 1966.
- MH I–IX: *Hrvatske narodne pjesme*. Skupila i izdala Matica hrvatska. Odio prvi. Junačke pjesme. Zagreb 1890–1940.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. presentations at the conference *Oral Poetics and Cognitive Science* (The School of Language and Literature at the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS), Freiburg, January 24–26, 2013; conference website: <https://sites.google.com/site/oral-poetcoisci/>).

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- Vuk II: *Srpske narodne pjesme*, skupio ih i na svijet izdao Vuk Stef. Karadžić. *Knjiga druga u kojoj su pjesme junačke najstarije*, u Beču, u štampariji jermenskoga manastira, 1845. Sabrana dela Vuka Karadžića, knjiga peta. Radmila Pešić (prir.). Belgrade 1988. (in Cyrillic)
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