

Generic Lacuna in the Epic Poems Using the Fog Formula

Abstract: This article is about the modellative potential of a genre, i.e. about one of the main theoretical questions connected with the poetics of oral literature. This is exemplified here by Serbian oral decasyllabic epic poetry, more precisely by the modelling of the epic formula the “appearance of the horseman/hero from/in the fog”.

Keywords: formula, epics, small forms of folklore, fog, horseman, hero

One of the most attractive theoretical questions connected with the modellative theory of literary genres¹ poetics is the question of the relationship between a literary text and its cultural environment or, to be more precise, the relationship between the modellative potential of a literary procedure and the material which is being processed. In oral tradition, the material can come both from the mundane reality itself and from the so called “non-literary models” of a given culture, i.e. from its rituals (wedding, burial, building), cults (of the saints, for example), magic practices etc. As they themselves are – by definition – modellative systems of the second degree, the literary procedure itself gets an extra potential, which upgrades it to the third degree of modelling (the first-degree modellative system being the language itself).² Thus the literary work appears to be a model of a model.

The literary modelling – especially in the case of formulas – usually begins from many nuclei which differ in origin, generic preferences and measure of abstraction. In the special case of the formula “horseman/hero in/from the fog”, some of them proved to be so strong that they failed to adapt to the new literary surroundings and remained intact even as a part of a completely new (i.e. epic) genre. Recognizing these intrusions as a material much older and more important (from the standpoint of traditional culture) than literature in general, the “epicity” of the poem withdraws, thereby making room for an alien content. In that sense, from the perspective of the epic poem, we can speak about a *generic lacuna*, which is the subject of this paper.

¹ Russian semiotics is taken here as a referential theory; cf. the works of Lotman, Neklyudov, Ivanov, Toporov and others.

² In that case gradation goes as follows: spoken language (first), ritual language (second), literary language (third) degree modellative systems.

All through the presentation of the proposed research, two basic definitions important for the theory of the formula should be kept in mind: 1) the epic formula itself is a text whose position in the poem is marked by its form and function; and 2) within the epic as a genre, formulas simultaneously exist on many different levels of fixity.

As it is the case, the formula “a horseman-hero in/from the fog” never occurs in the liminary positions in a poem (at the beginning or at the end), but always somewhere within it, which makes it the so-called “inner formula”. Its pointed variant (hero in the fog) is only one of the six types of the formulaic appearances of fog in the epics and we shall pay some attention to all of them. Those are: (1) natural fog³ (Vuk IV, 62; VII, 9; SANU III, 25, 75); (2) gun smoke (Vuk IV, 2, 28, 33; VIII, 11; SANU III, 10, 56; SM 12); (3) steam “from horses and warriors” (Vuk III, 42; VI, 20; VII, 14, 22; SANU III, 6; ER 131; SM 32, 62); (4) the appearance of a horseman from the fog (Vuk II, 39; III, 39; IV, 8; VI, 10; VII, 3; SANU, II, 71, 85, 86; MH IX, 5, 20, 25; SM 79, 145, 148); (5) an army appearing as a fog in a prophetic dream with interpretation (Vuk VIII, 36; SANU III, 74; MH I, 60, 78; ER 116); (6) and the fog seen in a prophetic dream without interpretation, i.e. appearing as its own self (Vuk II, 25, 62). For example:

Appearances (1) – (3):

Natural fog	Gun smoke	Horses and warriors
Srbima je sreća pomagala, Kukutnicu magla pritisnula Pa ne znadu niti vide Turci, Otkud Srbi biju iz pušaka, (Vuk IV, 62)	Pade magla od neba do zemlje, Nit' se vidi neba ni oblaka, Viš' njih jarko pomrčalo sunce Od pušcanog praha i olova: (Vuk IV, 28)	Pramen magle polje pritiskao, Ne bijaše magla od daždica, No od pare konjske i junačke: (Vuk III, 42)

³ There is only one word for fog in Serbian, which – compared to the English range of words: mist, haze, vapour, steam, etc. – is a very narrow choice indeed. Here, and wherever possible in the text, we tried to make a distinction, to define as nearly as possible the kind of phenomenon we are dealing with. The readers are invited to use their imagination in this matter because: 1) in Serbian folklore, fog is a demon (the same as smoke); and 2) consistent with the local climate, the Serbian language does not make a distinction between that which goes up from the earth and that which comes down from the sky. There is only one folkloric expression for it: A fog fell from the sky to the earth.

Luck was on the Serbian side Upon Mount Kukutnica a fog lay So Turks can neither see nor know Whence Serbian guns are firing	The fog fell sky to earth, Neither sky nor clouds could be seen, Above them the bright sun is darkened By gun smoke.	A wisp of fog fell on the field, It was not a natural fog, But the steam from the horses and warriors
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Appearances (4) – (6):

Hero in the fog	Army as a fog	Fog in a dream
Livadu je magla pritislula, Iz magle se junak namolio Na njegova golema labuda, Po imenu Alaj-beg-Čengijću, (Vuk IV, 8)	Što je magla pala do Drežnika, To je vojska Mamul- kapetana; (Vuk VIII, 36)	U magli se, ljubo, rastadosmo, Rastadosmo, pak se ne sastasmo; (Vuk II, 25)
The fog lay on a meadow, From the fog a hero appeared On his giant horse, His name was Alaj-bey-Cengic.	This fog that lay around Dreznik, This is the army of Captain Mamul.	In fog, my beloved, we parted, We parted, and never met again.

The usual function of inner formulas is to connect two neighbouring narrative segments of a poem when one of them signifies the end of the previous and the other the beginning of the next part of the plot. Thus division between the segments opens to what is coming, and the fog, neutral in itself, becomes either static or dynamic, depending on what is being announced. Accordingly, if it marks the transition from idleness to action, the formula appears at the beginning of a sequence where it needs additional fixing (usually a temporal formula) because it heralds change:

Ciglu jednu noću konačili <i>Pa u jutru svati uraniše,</i> <i>Nešto im se dade pogledati,</i> <i>De se polje maglom pretvorilo,</i> A kroz maglu sijevaju munje, Konji vrište, pjevaju junaci, A viju se po polju barjaci. <i>Punu vjetar, magla se razgali,</i> <i>Ugledaše kitu i svatove,</i> <i>Među njima na konju devojkju</i> (Vuk VII, 22: 295–306)	They spent one night there <i>And in the morning they got up early</i> Something caught their eye, <i>The field turned into fog,</i> And through this fog lightning was flashing, Horses neighed, warriors sang, Banners fluttered all over the field. <i>The wind blew up, the fog cleared,</i> <i>They spotted the bedecked wedding guests,</i> <i>And among them the mounted bride</i>
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In the opposite case, naturally, no addition is needed because the formula is the ending of the previous segment, whence the function of the beginning of a new sequence goes to the plot itself:⁴

Nož sijeva, krv se proljeva,	The dagger flashes, the blood is spilt,
Ne vidi se od mene do tebe,	Nothing can be seen from me to you,
<i>Po podrumu magla uvatila</i>	<i>The cellar is filled with fog.</i>
Boga moli Plavša arambaša:	Plavsa, the arambaša, ⁴ prays to God:
“Daj mi, Bože, vetra sa planina	“Give me, o God, a wind from the mountains
Da rastera maglu po podrumu,	To dispel this fog from the cellar,
Da ja vidu ko je zadobio,	So that I can see who won,
Ali Turci ali odmetnici!”	Whether Turks or outlaws!”
Bog mu dade, sreća donijela,	And God gave him, his luck was strong,
<i>Vetar punu posred Sarajeva,</i>	<i>The wind flew through Sarajevo,</i>
<i>Te isčera maglu iz podruma.</i>	<i>And dispelled the fog from the cellar.</i>
(SANU III, 10: 230–240)	

As long as it “works” this way, the fog will not tend to take the final, unchangeable form to which we are accustomed whenever a cliché is involved. At this stage, its function is subordinate to the fabulation and composition of the epic poem, which means that the formula itself merely has the significance of a shifter.⁵ The information it conveys is only relational, so the form of its appearance is usually very simple: “pramak se je magle zadjenuo” (a wisp of fog passed); “sve jednako magla od pušaka” (the fog from rifles, i.e. gunpowder smoke, keeps rising); “al’ se ravno polje zamaglilo” (the flat field is full of fog); “sve je polje magla pritisnula” (the whole field is sunk in fog); “Kukutnicu magla pritisnula” (Kukutnica is immersed in fog); “pade magla od neba do zemlje” (the fog fell from sky to earth); “al’ se diže magla iz oblaka” (the fog from clouds suddenly lifted); “od Budima magla se podigla” (the fog lifted off the city of Buda), etc. Every narrative genre, especially if it is oral, has a need for simple expressions like these. Their significance is always equal to their own meaning, and so they should be accepted like this, as a different way to say: it dawned, it rains, the evening came, and the like. Relational information of these formulas is a structural element of a poem in its own right, and its true significance is formed within that context.

⁴ Arambaša, a Turkicisms (from *harami başı*) meaning the leader of a band of outlaws or brigands.

⁵ The term “shifter” has been introduced to Serbian literary theory by Novica Petković, especially in his book *Ogledi iz srpske poetike* [Essays on Serbian Poetics (Belgrade 1990)]. Shifters, as well as everything else belonging to the Lotmanian “aesthetics of identity” (Lotman 1970), bring to the surface generic norm(ativity), i.e. data about the literary genre, while the individual, the author’s, characteristics (his voice) recede into the background. This type of informativeness (which provides information about the type of event and not about its individual characteristics) is termed *relational informativeness*.

Except for the inevitable influence of versification, in this phase modelling is neutral and inconspicuous, even if form is a little more sophisticated, as in:

Pramen magle polje pritiskao; Ne bijaše magla od daždica, No od pare konjske i junačke. (Vuk VI, 20: 25–26)	A wisp of fog fell on the field; It was not a drizzly fog, But the steam of the horses and their riders.
Nije magla da bi magla bila Nego para konjska i junačka. (Vuk III, 42: 135–136)	It was not a fog as God made it But the steam of the horses and their riders.

The first step towards stabilizing form is made when the fog enters the system of equivalences basic to the frame formulas such as the Slavic antithesis, for example, and a prophetic dream, where it always signifies the same: “the conquering army”:

SLOVENSKA ANTITEZA Sinule su do dvi magle sinje: Jedna pala kraj mora sinjega, Druga pala kraj vode Sitnice. To ne bile do dvi magle sinje, Već to bile do dvi vojske silne: Jedno turska, drugo je kauska. (MH I, 60: 1–6)	SLAVIC ANTITHESIS Two grey fogs flashed: One fell by the side of the grey sea, The other fell beside the river Sitnica. Those were not two grey fogs, But those were two mighty armies: One Turkish, and the other Christian.
PROROČANSKI SAN Što je magla do Drežnika pala, To je pala česareva vojska; Što kroz maglu gora prolitala, Ono su ti krstati barjaci; Što iz magle tri košute riču, Ono su ti ubojni topovi. (SANU III, 74:15–20)	PROPHETIC DREAM The fog that fell near Dreznik, That is the emperor’s army; The trees coming into leaf in that fog, Those are the Christian flags; Three does that roar from that fog, These are deadly cannons.

The next (and final) step begins when the formula gets fixed to the action and the actant,⁶ and becomes stable. After that, it is always recognized as the “appearance of a horseman-hero in/from the fog”. This formula is self-sustainable in any context and independent of the aforementioned frame formulas. The image from which it originates, though, does not come ex nihilo, but derives from the previous forms. This makes the epiphany of a horseman-hero naturally connected with the “fog/steam of horses and warriors”, although he is actually a new figure in the formula:

⁶ The bearer of action, the active agent.

<p>Pramen se je magle zadenuo Preko polja od Sijenja bela, Pravo ide moru na zakuke. Ta se magla primaknula blizu; <i>Tek iz magle junak iskoćio,</i> Baš na vrancu mladi Marijane. (Vuk III, 29: 78–93)</p>	<p>A wisp of fog flew Over the field from the white city of Senj, Straight to the sea. This fog came near; <i>And a hero popped out of this fog,</i> Young Marijan on a black horse.</p>
<p>Nešto im se dade pogledati, Pogledati poljem niz primorje – Dok se pramen magle zapodio, <i>A iz magle junak iskoćio!</i> (SANU II, 85: 35–38)</p>	<p>They happened to look, To look over the field by the seashore – And then a wisp of fog came, <i>And out of the fog a hero popped!</i></p>
<p>Malo bilo dugo netrajalo, Pramakse je magle zađenuo, Po pržini po kraj mora slana; <i>Iz magle je junak izletio</i> Na vrančiću konju velikome. (SM 145: 21–26)</p>	<p>It did not take long Before a wisp of fog fell Over the sandy shore by the salty sea; <i>From the fog a hero rushed</i> On a big black horse.</p>
<p>Dok se magla bliže primicaše, <i>Dok iz magle junak izletio</i> Na kulašu na belogrivašu – A kakav je Banović Sekula, Golu sablju u visinu tura, U bijele dočekuje ruke! (SANU II, 71: 110–115)</p>	<p>While the fog was drawing near, <i>From the fog a hero rushed</i> On his white-maned red horse – And what he is like, Banovic Sekula: His naked sabre he hurls up in the air, And catches it with his white hands!</p>
<p>Taman oni u riječi bili, Al' se mala magla zapođede Uz Kosovo od belog Mramora, <i>A iz magle junak izletio</i> Na doratu ko na gorskoj vili. (SANU II, 86: 20–24)</p>	<p>And as they were talking, A wisp of fog fell Along the Kosovo field, from the white Marmor, <i>And from the fog a hero rushed</i> On his brown horse like on a forest fairy.</p>
<p>Kad se polje maglom zamaglilo, <i>A iz magle junak ispanuo</i> Na malinu, konju od megdana, A to bješe Osman barjaktare. (MH IX, 5: 126–129)</p>	<p>When the field got blurred by fog, <i>And from that fog a hero fell out</i> On his battle horse, And that was Osman, the standard-bearer.</p>

As soon as the epic fog gets in touch with a mounted warrior (a horseman-hero), it starts to condense and to emit signals strange to the earlier, simple examples. First indications of the kind come:

(1) from the context itself

<p>Livada se maglom zamaglila, Od brzine konja i junaka, Strah je mene, neće dobro biti. (MH IX, 25: 100–102)</p>	<p>The meadow gets immersed in fog, The fog of fast horses and riders, I fear the worst.</p>
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<p>Tako Vuče u riječi bio, Kad kroz maglu junak ispanuo, Vas u krvi crnoj ogreznuo: Nosi desnu u lijevoj ruku. (MH IX, 20: 31–34)</p>	<p>While Vuk was talking, A horseman fell out from the fog, All covered in blood: Carrying his right arm in his left hand.</p>
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(2) from the demonic epiphany of a horseman in the fog⁷

<p>Čudan junak, a na čudna konja:⁷ Iz oči mu živi oganj sipa, Iz nozdrva modar plamen suče, Sve se polje jednak zamaglilo Od njihove sile i brzine. (Vuk VI, 10: 77–82)</p>	<p>Wondrous hero, on a wondrous horse: Raging fire bursting from its eyes, Livid flame shooting out of its nostrils, The whole field gets foggy at once Because of their mightiness and speed.</p>
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<p>Iz magle je Turčin ispanuo, Na Dundulu konju velikome, Sieda mu brada do pojasa, U glavi mu zuba đavoljega, Krvave mu oči obadvije, Golu sablju nosi u rukama, Pod njime se crna zemlja trese. (SM 79: 85–92)</p>	<p>A Turkish warrior fell out of the fog, On Dundul, his very big horse, His white beard down to his waist, Not a tooth in his head, Both of his eyes bloody, Unsheathed sabre in his hand, The black earth is trembling under him.</p>
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and finally

(3) from the doing of the fog itself which – identified with the darkness and coloured in black – swallows horses and men, covers them, and brings about an unknown danger.⁸

<p>U magli se, ljubo, rastadosmo, Rastadosmo, pak se ne sastasmo. (Vuk II, 25)</p> <p>Lov lovio Banović Sekule, Pored Save i krajem Dunava, Al' Sekulu loša sreća bila,⁸ Pala magla od neba do zemlje, Gusta magla kano oblačina, Da nevidi on pod sobom đoga, Anekmoli da ulovi lova. Al' iz magle dobar junak viče. (SM 148)</p>	<p>In the fog, my beloved, we parted, We parted, and never met again.</p> <p>Banovic Sekula went hunting, By the Sava river and the river Danube, But his luck was bad. A fog fell from sky to earth, Thick fog like a cloud, So he could not even see his horse under him, Let alone catch anything. And from that fog a worthy hero shouts.</p>
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⁷ On demonic connotations of wonder, miracle / wondrous, miraculous, cf. Loma 2000.

⁸ On bad luck in the epic hunt, see Detelić 1992; 1996.

Although it might not seem so, this is not the same formula any more. First of all, the desired model is no longer iconic but metaphorical: the image of dust, steam, general mayhem, which was part of the action producing the effect *similar to a fog*, withdraws now before the *image of a fog* which draws its meaning from some other, non-iconic source placed without the poem. The influence of many different connotations of such an image is no more linear, spread over the surface of poetic communication. Its source is now deep down in the layers of tradition we know so little about. The text itself allows some secondary readings, such as a suggestion of death, sorrow, danger, punishment, enmity, revenge and the like. Nevertheless, all these denotations belong to the poem and its plot and therefore are not enough to provide an answer to the main question: why the fog came and where it came from.

The associative field of the “appearance of a horseman-hero in/from the fog” is both too narrow and too wide at the same time. As far as we know, no mythical tradition (Slavic or other) is fixed to a person, an event or a performance pictured as a horseman in/from the fog in any relevant way: by attribution, epiphany, transposition, whichever. Fog as such, an indefinable state of latency (neither light nor darkness), carries quite a few connotations even without all possible contexts. Even its traditional image is always the same: the fog is that something in which nothing can be heard or seen,⁹ a blurry shadow enveloping the netherworld,¹⁰ a phenomenon whose abode is in hell, which means in the farthest north,¹¹ etc. Like the uroboros, this line of research always comes back to where it started, so it seems best to abandon it.

There is yet another path rarely used in epic studies, a kind of intergeneric analysis which seems promising in this respect. It is all about the so-called “short forms of folklore”, which usually means the folkloric texts for children (tongue twisters, quiz questions, counting rhymes), for enchanting, the occasional (often formulaic) texts (e.g. road/travelling songs, songs for lighting a fire, beside-the-fire songs etc.) and similar forms that can hardly be classified properly.¹² The common characteristic of all these texts is their antiquity, especially in the case of charms and enchanting, from

⁹ Cf. Sikimić 1996: 90, 221.

¹⁰ Cf. Benoist 1976: 72. Nodilo (1981: 523) thinks that fog and hell are one and the same.

¹¹ Graves & Patai 1969: 32. Cooper (1986: s.v. Fog) adds: “The state of delusion and chaos. Mystery religions use the symbolism of fog for initiation; a soul must come from darkness and chaos to the clear light of brightness.” It is clear now why we cannot use this kind of interpretation.

¹² They should not be confused with the “simple forms” of Joles, although some similarities inevitably exist.

which derives the general hypothesis about their archaic and magic origin. It is possible to extricate a group of texts in some way connected to the fog as a lesser demon, whether they are used to drive the fog away (examples 1–4 below), or they depict the fog as either a passive (example 5) or an active (examples 6 and 7) element of enchanting:

1	Bježi magla s magličima, eto popa s popićima, nosi žigu na ožegu, đe te stignu da ožegu, đe počineš, da pogineš. ¹³	Run, fog, with your spawn, Here comes the priest with his children, He brings weevils on fire tongues, Where they catch you, they will scorch you, Where you rest, you will perish.
2	Bježi maglo s magličima! Eto popa s pakličići. Đe te stigne, tu šine. Đe paneš, tu oстанеš. ¹⁴	Run, fog, with your spawn! Here comes the priest with hell children. Where they catch you, there they strike you. Where you fall, there you stay.
3	Bježi maglo s magličima, Eto popa s nožićima, Đe te stigne Tu te žigne. ¹⁵	Run, fog, with your spawn, Here comes the priest with little knives, Where they catch you There they sting you.
4	Bježi maglo s magličim' eto babe s kabličim', pobiće ti magličice, strpat' ih u kabličice. ¹⁶	Run, fog, with your spawn, Here comes granny with buckets, She will kill your fog children, She will put them in the buckets.
5	M'gle biju na nebo, petli poju na zemlju. Dojde glas, da sečemo ras. ¹⁷	Fogs fly to the sky, Roosters sing on earth. Word came We should cut the ras.
6	Razvi se po gori, Ka' riba po vodi; Razvi se po vodi, Ka' magla po gori. ¹⁸	Spread over the forest Like the fish in water. Spread over the water Like fog in the forest.
7	Adama zbolela glava: Adam dade Jevi, Jeva dade moru, More dade magli, Magla dade suncu, Sunce magle isušići. ¹⁹	Adam got a headache: Adam gave it to Eve, Eve gave it to sea, Sea gave it to fog, Fog gave it to sun, The Sun dried the fog away.

¹³ Momir 1890: 268.

¹⁴ Riddle on the cleg; Simić (fieldwork).

¹⁵ Gagović, S. – Piva: s.v. *žignuti*, “boćnuti” (to poke, to sting).

¹⁶ Zovko 1898: 743; Sarajevo.

¹⁷ Radenković (1981: 273): a charm against the illness called ras.

¹⁸ Ibid. (477): against any illness.

¹⁹ Ibid. (512): against spells.

Lots of information are offered by these verses: on the quantity and position of the fog; on the general tendency of demons to make family connections (fog, fogs, fog with fog children); on the person who is able to cast it out (with the same tendency of familial connecting: priest with priest/hell children, grandfather with grandchildren,²⁰ grandmother/granny; in an example below, a she-bear with her cub); on the instruments of attack that one needs (tongs, live coals, knife, stake; or, in other examples: sabre, needle, trident/harpoon); on the purpose of the noted actions (to kill you, to make you stay, to slaughter, to poke, to dry away). The repertoire of the means of casting out a demon, basically coming down to three – wood, fire and metal – may be enlarged with examples from similar texts for casting out a smoke (and a lesser demon), adding bone to the first three (8–11):

8	Tamo, dime, karadime, tamo su ti vrata, i pečena jaja, i s maslom pogača, i dedove kosti, čim ćemo te bosti. ²¹	There, smoke, black smoke, There's the door, And fried eggs, And a loaf of bread made with butter, And grandfather's bones, With which we shall poke you.
9	Biži, dimi, karadimi, tamo su ti vrata i pečena jajca. Doći će ti gosti, pa će tebe bosti iglicom, bumbaricom, boc, boc. (to obično dica govore) ²²	Go away, smoke, black smoke, there's the door And fried eggs. Guests will come, they will Poke you with the needle, poke, poke. (this is usually said by children)
10	Idi gore, dime, kostantine, tamo su ti vrata, kuda valja proći, ovamo su kosti, pa ćemo te probosti, buf! ²³	Go up, smoke, Kostantine, There's the door, For you to pass through; Here, here are bones With which we shall stab you, puff!
11	Tamo dime, karadime! Tamo su ti vrata i šarena jaja; tamo su ti kosti, čim ćemo te bosti! ²⁴	Go there, smoke, black smoke! There's the door and coloured eggs; There are bones, With which we shall poke you!

²⁰ This example is not given in the table, but it exists (as many others) in folklore (Zovko 1898: 742 – Sarajevo). *Grandfather's child* here is a special term for a grandfather's favourite grandchild.

²¹ Radenković (1981: 625): against smoke.

²² Lovretić 1902: 185; Otok, ZNŽOJS VII.

²³ Miodragović 1914: 167.

²⁴ Momir 1896: 201.

As far as spatial references are concerned, the charms observe fog in heights (in the sky, over the mountains),²⁵ and the children's charm downwards (in meadows). This does not matter much, however, because neither of them names the place where the fog is supposed to go. That place appears in the following examples:

12	Biži, biži, maglina, Jakov teče z Pazina sa šakami soli, s pikastimi konji, da će te nabosti na jelove osti; da će te ponesti v onu črnu jamu. Kade je ta jama? s trnjem zagračana! ²⁶	Run, run, fog Jacob comes from Pazin With handfuls of salt, With his skewbald horses, He will impale you On his fir leister; He will take you To that black hole. Where is that hole Fenced with thorns?
13	Oj ti maglo, maglenice beži, maglo, uz potok, niz potok eto mečka s mečičima za tobom. Svako meče po iglicu da te bode u guzicu da te guči, da te muči da te sturi u rupčinu, da ti sipa suručinu.	Oh you, fog, little fog, Run away, fog, up the stream, down the stream Here comes she bear with her cubs after you. Each cub has a needle To poke you in the buttocks To squeeze you, to torment you, To put you in the hole, To pour the whey over you.

Chasing the fog “up the stream, down the stream” (which is a motion characteristic of demonic beings), and into “a black hole”, finally is a relevant information because it fixes the place the fog should permanently stay in. This is also a definition of its domain which is common to demons of illnesses and impure forces in general — as can be seen from the examples of enchanting against disease:

²⁵ This is regular in enchantments. In the anthology compiled by Ljubinko Radenković, fog is always in heights: on the hills (422, 123, 191, 542, 181, 505), down the hills (563), up the mountain (168, 368, 557), on mountain tops (175, 189). This fits the general image of demonic “up and down” movements.

²⁶ Istarske 1924: 180–181; to a lazy child.

14	<p>Pogana poganice! Balava balavice! Napratna napratnice! Kojim si putem došla, onim se putem i vrati; jer je, evo, došla baka bajalica, koja će te travom prebacit', riječima prebrojit', i nožem preporit', i iglom zbot', a vatrom pregorit';</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Tu ti više nije mjesto! Eno tebi 'tice vrapca, pa neka te jami pod desno kriošce, nek te nosi nebu pod oblake, nek te vjetar raznese na sve četiri strane, pa da padneš u duboke jame, u mutne vode.²⁷</p>	<p>You impure poganica! [folklore name for a disease] You snivelling snivel! You violent napratnica! [same as the above] The same way you came Go back; Because the granny enchantress is here, And she will throw grass over you, She will count you out with words And she will rip you open with a knife And poke you with a needle, And scorch you with fire.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>There is no place for you here! Here is a sparrow bird for you, So let it take you under its right wing, Let it take you to the sky, Let the wind cast you To all four corners of the world, So that you fall in deep holes, In murky waters.</p>
15	<p>Ovden ti mjesta nije, nego u goru pustinju, u jamu bezdanu, đe se glas zvona ne čuje, đe kokot ne poje, đe munje sijevaju, đe gromovi udaraju, đe vukovi zavijaju, i zle duše urlakaju.²⁸</p>	<p>There is no place for you here, But in a deserted forest, In a bottomless hole, Where bells cannot be heard, Where no rooster sings, Where lightning flashes, Where thunders clap, Where wolves howl And evil souls roar.</p>

It is obvious, therefore, that to burn, poke, and cut with pointed objects (ritual or ordinary knives and needles, bones, leisters and stakes) are regular actions for casting off the demons of illnesses, and that the procedure for fog and smoke is quite the same. Within the same context, they even receive the same offerings and are threatened with the same animals, as can be seen from the following examples (16 and 17 are incantations against an illness, and 18 and 19 for casting smoke away):

²⁷ Radenković (1981: 343): against the illness called "poganica".

²⁸ Ibid. (451): against a wound of any kind.

16	Izlazite iz srce u kosti, iz kosti na vlakno, iz vlakno na Stambol kapiju, tamo vas čekaju mladi pilići, meki dušeci i mlaka kafa. Nožem ću vas izbosti, sekirom iseći, a metlom izgrebati. ²⁹	Go out of the heart to the bones, From the bones to the thread, From the thread to the Istanbul Gate, There young chickens wait for you, Soft pillows and warm coffee. I will stab you with a knife, Cut you with a hatchet, And scrub you with a broom.
17	Beži, Elo, Eliko! Iz Niš idu osamdeset i os'm bivolice, s jezik će te odmetu, s kopite će te ubiju, s rozi će te ubodu. ³⁰	Run Ela, Elika! From Nis there come Eighty-eight she-buffalos, They will sweep you with tongues, With hoofs they will kill you, With horns they will poke you.
18	Tamo, dime kadime; tamo su ti vrata, tamo su ti jaja, tamo ti je kvočka sa piladima, i tamo se niti vamo ću te biti. ³¹	There, smoke, black smoke; There is the door, There are eggs, There is the hen with chickens, There you stay Here I will beat you.
19	Salih kola od olova, Pa upregnuh sto volova: Ća, Galeša, ća, Rameša! Stade vola riknjavina, Stade kola škripnjavina. ³²	I cast a cart of lead, And yoked a hundred oxen to it: Ha, Galesa, ha, Ramesa! The oxen started to roar, And the cart to squeak.

It is generally plausible, then, to consider fog, as well as smoke, a demonic being. It is not yet clear which particular demon it is, or to what type of demons it belongs. In Bulgarian folklore there are some examples which may be useful in that respect:

Паднала е гъста мъгла	A thick fog fell
На Софийско равно поле.	On the field in front of Sofia.
Не е било гъста мъгла,	It was not a thick fog,
Но е било сурá ламя	It was a grey dragon
Да си аде бяла пшеница	Who came to eat white wheat
И да зобе бяло грозде. ³³	And to pick the white grapes.

²⁹ Ibid. (67): against the illness called “izdat”.

³⁰ Ibid. (112): against the illness called “wind”.

³¹ Ibid. (623): against smoke.

³² Ibid. (624): against smoke.

³³ Marinov 1994: 60. According to Marinov, in Bulgarian folklore fog could also appear as a shepherd (“Нойко овчар”) with a big flock of grey sheep, followed by a ram (“Югич”) with a golden bell around the neck.

Пропеднала тъмна мъгла,	A dark fog fell,
Не е била тъмна мъгла,	But it was not a dark fog,
Но је била лоша ламіа	It was a bad dragon,
Лоша ламіа с девет глави,	A bad dragon with nine heads,
Диха, диха, мъгла издава. ³⁴	It breathes and breathes, and gives out a fog.

But they cannot be found anywhere else in the short forms of folklore in the Balkans. In the fairy stories, though, the dragon appears as a demon, one of whose manifestations can also be a fog.³⁵ Without any concern for their origin, the context in which fog appears here is closer to the epic than to anything mentioned before. The breath of a nine-headed dragon is not too far away from the “steam of horsemen and horses”, especially if it comes from the horse with livid eyes and fiery breath, and from the hero “with no devil’s tooth in his head”, with bloody eyes and under whom the earth is trembling. This really provides a good opportunity to point to one of the most important issues in epic poetics: the way the epic influences and changes the material in order to give it a new, adaptable form.

Let us suppose, then, that the epic fog also has its roots in the magical image of the world where its characteristics are understood as demonic, and its being (“fog with infant fogs”) enters the broad field of “impure forces”. Of all different elements that perform such a profile of fog, in the process of literary modelling, *the epic does not take any one of them alone*. What really enters that process is the totality of them all, the general picture of the evil force which can change its shape at will, while never abandoning the original one, and thus has many faces at the same time. Abiding by this logic, the epic genre itself accepts reduplication as a method of choice, and to a demonic being in its original form, it adds an image from its own repertory, that of a horseman which – from the perspective of the poetics of the genre – overpowers everything else. Given that epic modelling is not an evolutive process, so it is not possible to talk about development and progress (from lower to higher and from older to newer forms) in that context, the demonic appearance of a horseman in/from a fog is not the only acceptable solution for epic poetry. On the contrary, depending on what it sings about, at whom it is aimed and for what purpose, a song is free to choose from among the formulas the one that fits best, no matter how complicated and in which phase of fixity it may be. This is why the fog formula in epics has all three of its forms (neutral, iconic and metaphoric) equally operative and equally unamenable to any kind of aesthetic or poetic evaluation. What lends itself

³⁴ Popov 1889 (10–16): 12.

³⁵ Čajkanović SEZ, 366–368; *Bulgarski folklorni prikazki* [Bulgarian Folklore Stories], 226.

to such an evaluation is only the appropriateness of its use, which brings quite new parameters into discussion.

On the other hand, a horseman – as an equivalent to the demonic being of fog – is not only a suitable invention, but also a generic *sine qua non*. The epic, more than other narrative oral genres, is subordinate to a hero, and this marks its attitude towards the most important constants: space, time, event, etc. In choosing from among the beings suitable to be the opponents of a hero, the epic has to correlate their appearances only as much as it takes to make their encounter (when it takes place) seem heroic. In modelling such an antagonist, the epic is free to choose from among many different originals. Which one will be chosen depends on many elements, but one thing is certain: whenever it is possible, whenever the circumstances permit, the choice will fall on an already existing model, on a ready-made form which will take most, if not all, of its own, recognizable connotations to a new environment. In the epic context, they will be more or less changed, because they will have to adapt to different functions and needs, but they will never be lost completely. Sometimes they can even prevail, and then generic lacunae emerge, the rare and tiny but effective manoeuvring spaces where the “material” communicates with the audience directly, without a go-between. From such a lacuna emerges even a fourth type of the epic fog which, in its purest demonic character, “swallows horses and men”, the same as the dragon, or death itself, does on another occasion. It is surprising that, of all examples we have already given, fog only appears in this form in a prophetic dream, consequently in the poems about the duke Momčilo (type “Wedding of king Vukašin”):

<p>Ja sam noćas čudan san usnio, “Đe se povi jedan pramen magle “Od proklete zemlje Vasojeve, “Pak se savi oko Durmitora, “Ja udarih kroz taj pramen magle “Sa mojijeh devet mile braće “I dvanaest prvo-bratućeda “I četrest od grada levera, U magli se, ljubo, rastadosmo, Rastadosmo, pak se ne sastasmo. (Vuk II, 25:138–147)</p>	<p>Last night I had a strange dream, That a wisp of fog arced From the cursed lands of Vasoje, And wrapped around Durmitor mountain, I set off through this wisp of fog With my dear nine brothers And my twelve cousins And my forty soldiers from the town, In the fog, my beloved, we parted, We parted, and never met again.</p>
<p>Ja sam noćas zločest sanak usanjao, Poteže se silan oblak magle, Iz dubljine iz sinjega mora I odnese devet braće moje, Ja ih u snu potražiti pođo. (Kordunaš)</p>	<p>Last night I had a bad dream, That there was a mighty cloud of fog, Coming from the deeps of the grey sea And it took away my nine brothers, And in my dream I set out to look for them.</p>

San sanjao vojvoda Momčilo, San sanjao, ljubi kazivao: “Gdje se povi jedan pramen magle Sa onijeh zelenih jezerah I savi se na dvore njegove: Čini mi se, dobra biti neće.” (Herdvigov, VII)	The duke Momcilo dreamt a dream, Dreamt a dream, and said to his beloved: “A wisp of fog arced From these green lakes And wrapped around his ³⁶ castle: Seems to me, nothing good will come out of it.”
Тежка ме е дремка одремала и у дремка санак си санувах. Излезнал съм на Разбой планина, се планина магла нападнало и ви сички низ магау изгубих. (SbNU 53, p. 487)	I fell into a deep sleep And I dreamt a dream. I went to Razboj mountain, The whole mountain was immersed in fog And in that fog I lost you all.

“Seems to me, nothing good will come out of it” [Čini mi se, dobra biti neće], an evil imposing formula which³⁶ – although cited only once – occurs in all examples, makes a balance to the famous epic formula: “The dream is a lie, the truth is with God only [“San je laža, a bog je istina”],³⁷ a statement that in our corpus has no connotations other than either a deliberate or an unconscious fraud, treason, lie. In that (and so darkly defined) frame comes a prophetic dream without interpretation, which largely diverges from the epic norm. It is usually incorporated into a song only to enable a developed and symbolic comparison to depict some trivial (non) historical event. The absence of interpretation, from the perspective of epic poetics, can mean one of two things: either the song has nothing to draw a comparison with, or the picture in the dream does not need any comparison.

In the case of the songs about the duke Momčilo’s death, both options are viable. The songs have something to draw a comparison with, although not in the place where the dream is mentioned, but towards the very end of the plot, when the hero loses his retinue while hunting in the mountains,

³⁶ The interchanging of speaking persons is not a mistake here. Whenever an epic singer has to cite someone’s direct speech and to use a possessive pronoun in the first person (*moj* “my”), he shifts to the third (*njegov* “his”) to avoid inactivating (unwillingly) the spell of the word. Here, Momčilo should say “my castle”, but the change into safe “his” should prevent a bad luck catching with the singer himself.

³⁷ San je klapnja, sam Bog je istina, / U san nigda nije vjerovati [The dream is a lie, only God knows the truth, / One should never believe a dream] (Bogišić); Al’ govori ljuba Vidosava: / “San je laža a Bog je istina” [And then spoke lady Vidosava: / “A dream is a lie and only God knows the truth”] (Herdvigov; Vidosava is the name of Momcilo’s treacherous wife); San je laža, a Bog je istina / Sve san laže, bog istinu kaže [The dream is a lie, only God knows the truth, / the dream lies about everything, God says the truth] (Kordunaš); Dobar junak dobar san usnio; / San je laža, a Bog je istina [A good hero had a good dream; / The dream is a lie, only God knows the truth] (Vuk).

and his life at the gates of his city (due to his wife's betrayal). Then, and only then, is the death of his cousins/friends compared with their perishing in the fog and the dream proves to be right. The fog still remains equal to its own self, without any epic substitution or embodiment. This procedure is not usual, but it is regular.

As far as the other option is concerned, the fog really does not need any interpretation. It comes from the surroundings which is not epic but demonic, it does not belong to the real world from which epic modelling usually starts (the city of Pirlitor/Periteorion, hunting party, seigniorial feud, the looks and origin of the hero's adversary etc.), and it functions as a superior category in the epic world, as it really belongs to numinous manifestations and beings of whatever class. The epic norm withdraws before it, it goes to the backstage (thence a generic lacuna), which is the epic method of choice whenever numinous chronotopes are of great importance for the plot (forest + word charm in "The Wedding of Milić the Standard-Bearer", forest + curse in "The Bride of Lazo Radanović", a road through the forest + black lamb/child in "The Godfathering of Manojlo the Greek", etc.). Stronger and older, the ancient basis of these interventions truly does not need any explaining to anyone. But, if it is used improperly or mischievously, it could lead to nothing but a bad or wrong poem, as may be seen in this example from Bogišić's collection:

<p>“Moja braćo, čudan sanak viđoh, Ā se povi jedna sinja magla Od Njemačke od bogate zemlje, A iz magle ljuta zmija pade, Te se meni savi oko srca Ljubi zovem, da me oslobodi Od ljutice od zmije proklete, Moja ljuba za me i ne haje.”</p>	<p>“Oh my brothers, I had a strange dream, A grey fog arched From Germany, the wealthy country, And from this fog a fierce snake fell, And it coiled around my heart. I cried for my lady, to rid me Of this fierce and cursed snake, But my lady cares not for me.”</p>
<p>(Bogišić 97)</p>	

Compared to other examples – where the fog comes from where it should: from the cursed country, from the deeps of the grey sea, from the green lakes and from the mountain – in Bogišić's collection its origin is a wealthy country (Germany), and the fog is embodied in the snake that falls from it. Wrapping around the hero's neck (very well known in the songs of quite a different kind – cf. "Prince Marko and Holy Sunday" MH I, 40) and the wife's wrong reaction are actually a reduplication of the standard transcending of fog from numinous to material being (snake). Thus also the indefinable threat with the impure force is degraded into a concrete treason (wife), which disintegrates its demonic nature, and the formula loses the strength it derived from the numen. Damaging the song, of course.

Information about the corpus (with abbreviations)

The epic corpus presented here is composed of both Muslim and Christian classical printed collections, published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (during the last wave of romantic revival of interest in the national oral tradition). In making that choice, I obeyed only the linguistic criteria, which is the same language, and for that reason I set aside other South Slav epic songs (Macedonian and Bulgarian). The corpus consists of 1357 poems (from eight major collections in twenty-two volumes), sung and recorded in what now are four independent countries: Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro. The oldest records of “pevanja na srpsku” [singing in the Serbian way] are published in the collection of Valtazar Bogišić in the late nineteenth century, and in the *Erlangen Manuscript* dated to the beginning of the eighteenth century. All other sources are various collections of children, occasional, and ritual folklore of different genres (Sikimić, Momir, Simić, Zovko, Gagović, Lovretić, etc.).

Bogišić, Valtazar, *Narodne pjesme iz starijih, najviše primorskih zapisa*, sabrao i na svijet izdao — — —, knjiga prva sa raspravom o “bugaršticama” i s rječnikom, Glasnik Srpskog učenog društva, drugo odeljenje, knjiga deseta. Biograd [Belgrade] 1878. (in Cyrillic)

EH – *Muslimanske narodne junačke pjesme*, sakupio Esad Hadžiomerspahić, u Banjoj Luci, 1909.

ER – *Erlangenski rukopis*, new reading at: <http://www.branatomic.com/er/>

Herdvigov – Rikardo Ferdinando Plohl-Herdvigov, *Hrvatske narodne pjesme*, u hrvatskom domu sakupio i rodu i svijetu predao Hrvat — — —, sada slušatelj filosofije i prirodnoznanstva na Universiteti u Greču, hrvatskoga narodnoga blaga svezka II, u Varaždinu 1869.

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.

Kordunaš – Manojlo Kordunaš, *Zbirka srpskih narodnih umotvorina iz Gornje krajine*, knj. II, *Srpske narodne pjesme slijepca Rade Rapajića*, vjerno pobilježio i za štampu priredio — — —, izdanje i štampa A. Pajevića, u Novome Sadu 1892. (in Cyrillic)

MH I–IX: *Hrvatske narodne pjesme*, skupila i izdala Matica hrvatska. Odio prvi. Junačke pjesme. Zagreb 1890–1940.

SANU II–IV: *Srpske narodne pjesme iz neobjavljenih rukopisa Vuka Stef. Karadžića*, Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, Odeljenje jezika i književnosti, Beograd 1974. (in Cyrillic)

SbNU – *Sbornik za narodni umotvorenia nauka i knizhnina*, ot. kn. 27. *Sbornik za narodni umotvoernia i narodopis*, MNP (ot kn. XIX izd. B’lgarskoto knizhovno druzhestvo, a ot kn. XXVII – BAN). Sofia 1889. (in Cyrillic)

SM – Sima Milutinović Sarajlija, *Pjevanija crnogorska i hercegovačka*, priredio Dobri- lo Aranitović, Nikšić, 1990. [*Pjevanija cernogorska i hercegovačka, sabrana Čubrom Čojkovićem Cernogorcem*. Pa njim izdana istim, u Lajpcigu, 1837.] (in Cyrillic)

Vuk II–IV: *Sabrana dela Vuka Karadžića, Srpske narodne pjesme*, izdanje o stogodišnjici smrti Vuka Stefanovića Karadžića 1864–1964 i dvestogodišnjici njegova rođenja 1787–1987. Belgrade: Prosveta, 1986–1988. (in Cyrillic)

Vuk VI–IX : *Srpske narodne pjesme* 1–9, skupio ih Vuk Stef. Karadžić, državno izdanje. Belgrade 1899–1902. (in Cyrillic)

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