

The Acritans of Europe



***Heroes of the frontiers
in European Literature,
History and Ethnography:
The contribution of ACRINET***

European Acritic Heritage Network



Culture 2000

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The present publication, under the general title Acritans of Europe has been realised in the context of the transnational project ACRINET, co-funded by the European Commission as part of the CULTURE 2000 Programme. The publication includes a total of six volumes that contain the proceedings of all the conferences and meetings held in the participating countries, and represents the most important part of the academic work produced by the ACRINET research team.

- ◇ Volume I: *Ευρωπαϊκή Ακριτική Παράδοση: Από το Μεγαλέξαντρο στον Διγενή Ακρίτα (Athens 2002 & 2004, Ioannina 2004, Karpathos 2004, Thessalonika 2004)*
- ◇ Volume II: *Les Mythes et les légendes que partagent les peuples de l' Europe (Paris 2003)*
- ◇ Volume III: *Ressons èpics en les literatures i el folklore hispànic (Barcelona 2003)*
- ◇ Volume IV: *La Commedia dell'arte nella sua dimensione europea (Venice 2003)*
- ◇ Volume V: *Κραλί Μάρκο - ο ήρωας υπερασπιστής των συνόρων (Sofia 2004)*
- ◇ Volume VI: *Heroes of the Frontiers in European Literature, History and Ethnography: the contribution of ACRINET*

The present volume contains summary reports of all the presentations made in the conferences and scholarly meetings organised during the course of the project. The full texts of the original presentations are contained in the prior volumes.

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PREFACE: THE EUROPEAN ACRITIC HERITAGE NETWORK “ACRINET”

The European Acritic Heritage Network or “ACRINET” has embarked on a comprehensive, interdisciplinary study of the acritic tradition and the symbolism conveyed by such notions as “frontier guard-acritan”, “edge”, “boundary”, “otherness”, “identity” or “diversity”, in older and contemporary societies. The present edition is the result of an initiative taken by ACRINET, whose various activities have been co-funded by the European Commission.

The ambition of ACRINET is to demonstrate to the general European public the virtues of peaceful coexistence in a multicultural environment, as well as to emphasise the continuing legacy of the themes to be found in acritic songs and texts. Within this context, the ACRINET partners investigate the evolution, transformation, and surviving documents of the acritic tradition in Europe. Researchers from the participating institutions apply a wide range of methodologies, including historical, literary and ethnographic ones. At the same time, they observe and record cultural elements belonging to the acritic tradition that continue to exist in our time in spontaneous collective art forms, rituals and customs.

ACRINET concentrates on that particular trait of Europe's cultural heritage that attaches value to cooperation, mutual respect and understanding between different religions, languages and cultures. The acritic tradition teaches peaceful coexistence in times of tense international developments. By analysing the past, ACRINET seeks to identify and establish the common elements of a European identity, which is so vital to the process of European integration. To achieve this objective, participating institutions adopted an intensive, rich programme of activities, enabling the general public to become acquainted with the acritic tradition through tangible and visible results.

The publication “Acritans of Europe” includes the proceedings of the academic workshops and conferences that were organised by the European Acritic Heritage Network, and constitutes one of the project's most noteworthy achievements. Ten academic workshops and two conferences were organised, all of which involved trans-national participation. In nine of the meetings, original presentations concerning various aspects of the acritic tradition were discussed by participating scholars from all over Europe. The proceedings are presented in six volumes, five of which correspond to the respective country of each organising institution (Greece, Italy, Spain, France and Bulgaria) while



the present, “reference” volume contains general conclusions and summaries of every paper presented in the course of the project.

A variety of cultural events were organised in addition to the academic workshops and conferences. These events included the performance of dances and songs that were inspired by the folk acritic tradition and by the scholarly tradition centred on the acritan heroes.

A travelling exhibition, titled “The Acritans of Europe” was also organised, based on the academic research carried out by the ACRINET team, including a collection of primary and published material documenting Europe's common acritic heritage. This exhibition travelled across Greece, France and Spain, while smaller scale exhibitions, covering the national acritic traditions and heroes, were organised in Italy and Bulgaria. The Greek version of the exhibition “The Acritans of Europe”, comprising 64 placards and a significant number of objects, found a permanent home in Paleochora, Crete, in the Museum of European Acritic Heritage, following a tour of four locations throughout Greece. The museum benefits from the patronage of the Ministry of Culture and the Academy of Athens.

Participating institutions that contributed through their tireless efforts, their academic excellence and their enthusiasm to the successful implementation of the activities of ACRINET, come from five European countries, as follows:

Project Promoter

- PRISMA-Centre for Development Studies, Athens, Greece

Academic Coordinator

- Academy of Athens, Centre for Ethnographic Research, Greece

Project Partners

- Hellenic Ministry of Culture, Department of Popular Culture, Greece
- University of Europe, Paris, France
- University Paris I, Sorbonne-Panthéon, France
- Supreme Council for Scientific Research, Institute of Philology, Department of Byzantine and Neohellenic Studies, Madrid, Spain
- Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies of Venice, Italy
- University of St. Clement of Ohrid in Sofia, Department of Slavic Philology, Ethnology and Byzantine Literature, Bulgaria

We wish to express our gratitude to the General Directorate “Education and Culture” of the European Commission, which co-funded ACRINET in the framework of the CULTURE 2000 programme, thus contributing decisively to the realisation of the important work that is presented in this edition.

Fouli Papageorgiou
ACRINET Project Leader

Managing Director, Centre for Development Studies-PRISMA



INTRODUCTION

It is a commonplace that no culture is self-contained. Contacts, exchanges and conflicts between elements and bearers of foreign interests, other forms of expression, and different customs are all essential to the development of cultural identity - to the formulation of the specific presence (style, as we would say today) that makes every achievement of a particular culture unique and immediately recognisable and identifiable as its own creation, as an expression of its own spirit.

Let us recall that culture is a living intellectual and spiritual achievement. It is never static in time but dynamic, constantly enriched by the contribution of foreign factors capable of inspiring in it new orientations, though without altering its fundamental - one might even say unique - character.

I have, by way of introduction, defined the primary factor in cultural development, irrespective of time and place (I refer to constant intercourse with other cultures) in order to emphasise from the outset what is obvious: that encounters between cultural currents are more likely to occur in border zones, in areas to which rival intellectual camps lay claim openly or surreptitiously, and, of course, particularly at historical junctures that permit, if not continuous peaceful coexistence, then at least frequent exchanges of goods. That is to say, trade, which is an essential condition for the exchange of both material and intellectual goods.

Question: Is United Europe a political structure imposed from above, or is it a genuine world view and way of life that the politicians have been slow to discover?

It should be stated at once that, despite the human, and perhaps even super-human, efforts of inspired politicians and visionaries, no form of unification of the European continent would be possible, were it not for the existence of the seed of a collective crop, the roots of the tree which, despite its intricate branches and side shoots, always produces the same cognitive fruit. This in order to stress that, whatever the origins of the peoples that now comprise Europe and despite the antagonisms and conflicts that have for years now bathed every corner of its land in blood, intercourse and osmosis, common living conditions, the related response by all to adversity and moments of happiness, to a turbulent historical existence, have created suitable ground for common experiences, for joint exchanges, for mutual dedication to the experiences of others: experiences, indeed, that the bolder innovators have not hesitated to embrace and share.



This sharing, like every distribution of cultural experience, invariably enriches those bold enough to venture it. And this boldness, which leads to recognition of the achievements of the Other, to the point where the achievement is assimilated and brought within your own compass (that is, given a form readable by your own group), is a precondition for the creation of culture. Culture defined here as a preeminently dynamic phenomenon, a characteristic, or rather a fundamental feature of which is to prepare for the future. A future which, though based properly on the certainties of the past, must always expand its horizons and continually conquer new dimensions, new lands, even utopia. Over and above every form of globalisation experienced by European history (e.g. colonialism), the future invariably aspires, in practice, to the universal exercise of virtue, to the leading of the good life on an ecumenical scale. This future, and this future alone, should be the aim of our culture.

If, given this rationale, one wishes to investigate and trace the experiences which, albeit in latent form, are inscribed historically in this cultural progress, one should undoubtedly dwell on the exchanges and related experiences characteristic of the everyday life of peoples of different origins, beliefs, faith and language, whose leaders, of course, have different political and military objectives; peoples and groups which, though separated by real or symbolical boundaries, do not cease (and not only in times of peaceful coexistence) to assimilate aspects of the tradition of the other, the foreigner. Who also behaves in the same way, to the extent that it is possible today to speak of a common progress by different traditions towards the creation of new forms of culture, recognisable by peoples of different origins (what sociologists call acculturation). Or to state, more specifically and directly, that modern scholars frequently find it difficult to recognise the parentage of cultural achievements which, in different forms, belong to peoples who live near or straddle the borders of the nation states of modern Europe.

To give a literary example, it has been said, and seems accurate enough, that European culture is the common acceptance of a series of heroes (real or literary), who characterise common European experiences. The type of the hero-horseman, either as Saint George or as Digenis Akrites, or as a medieval knight and "stradioti", is a pan-European figure with different names, who pervades the history of the continent and who, from one end of it to the other, performs his great deeds, always at the service of the good and of the general interest.

Bestriding borders, cultures and art-forms, the heroes bequeathed to us mainly by the European Middle Ages are to this very day the subject of all kinds of artistic reference and output. Particularly poetry and music, as can be seen from the variations and new compositions that appear from time to time based on related themes: Siegfried, and Tristan and Isolde are perhaps the most



representative examples. It is certainly symptomatic that heroism (physical, erotic, existential and undoubtedly supernatural) is the main feature of the model figures of the group: this alone, with its wonderful achievements, is sufficient for the collective creation of the conditions for identity, and for a common identity. The elaboration of identity is certainly connected with the fundamental heroic figures of the group, and so much the better if these figures are also respected by the neighbour and foreigner who is transformed from treacherous enemy into friend who shares one's experience of life.

The study of the heroic figures who are held up as popular models to follow and admire is thus a fertile field for investigating the latent, involuntary, one might say, establishing of a common political experience, if not course, shared by the peoples of Europe. Figures whose activity (irrespective of the historicity of their achievements) has become not only a model way of life (invariably heroic, if not always peaceful and virtuous), but also the condensation, a kind of synopsis, one might say, of events that constitute landmarks in the creation of national consciousness and identity of a group of people with common concerns and ambitions, irrespective of the borders that divide them. Such as, for example, the war against the infidels (that is, against Islam) in the case of all the European populations of the South (the model hero being El Cid), or the quest for complete purity of soul in love and the undefeated victory against evil, this time according to Saxon-German myths, like those of Siegfried, Tristan and Isolde, Graal, Ogier the Terrible, and King Arthur - all of these being works and fabrications concerned with existence or the blameless Christian life. This initial geographical distinction between the European North and the European South, dictated by the main themes of the Medieval legends and myths, delineates cultural borders that have nothing to do with political borders, and certainly emphasises the distinctive historical features of each region.

The next object of study of researchers, then, apart, of course from problems relating to themes and morphology, is the geographical dispersal of each heroic and epic figure and narrative that is found exclusively on European soil, as well as any variations that may be noted from place to place and from time to time, serving as examples of the smooth evolution of a vital mythical, literary and historical formation. These encounters are, reasonably enough, more common and more intense in regions remote from the centre (political, religious or cultural), regions in which the experiences of the other, who is also far removed from his own centre, are tangible and understandable, due to proximity, and in which resistance of the centripetal forces is weaker, or, to put it in another way, in which the prestige and influence of the establishment (intellectual or artistic, or, more simply, social) is blunted by distance and by the special circumstances that are of primary concern in the life of the periphery. The



decentralisation of epic and mythological narratives is perhaps the most eloquent example of difference in the life of ethnic groups, despite the fact that all authority wishes these groups to be solid and undivided. Often examples of anti-authoritarian if not revolutionary behaviour, the myths and legends of popular inspiration rapidly become the objects of an unfamiliar almost illegitimate assimilation by the establishment, which, in this attempt, advances from the simple heroic song of popular bards to literary epic, the creation of a centre resisting the centrifugal tendencies of the peripheral, and usually neglected, regions.

These are some of the lessons offered by a study of the acritic literary and non-literary phenomena. The ACRINET project has attempted to trace some of the aspects of the complex phenomenon of acritism which has given European literature and thought figures who are reference points in the cultural achievement of peoples. It is characteristic that the achievements of acritism are set in the Middle Ages, when the ethnic mosaic of Europe was under construction and when all the peoples who form the modern continent, were, without exception, already on stage, in areas that, in time, would acquire the same characteristics: the tesserae, one might say, of a unified European culture, or, better put, of the expression of a common cultural quest. Although the dictum attributed to Jean Monnet, the father of the European Union, “if I were to start again, I would start with culture” is apocryphal (I happen, unwittingly, to be the originator of the saying), it is beyond doubt that Europe, even though it began with the economy, must end with culture, that is, with the recognition of common values. These common values, in the form of practical virtues and gallantry, are expressed by common heroes who were elevated from being acritic, border figures to central points of reference, to sources of pride in their noble deeds and intense emotion at their sufferings on behalf of the Europeans of yesterday and today. The study of the acritans is thus a bridge between peoples, and also a connecting link between the periods of historical time in which they are active. Secret memories of primeval rituals (such as dragon-slaying), survivals of traditions (such as those relating to magic), steadfast devotion to values (such as those relating to the gallantry handed down from father to son) make the medieval acritic epics (both popular and literary) always relevant. Their presence throughout time in the cultural space of Europe is enough to justify the choice and implementation of the ACRINET project, which I have had the pleasure of participating in as academic head.

Hélène Ahrweiler

President of the University of Europe



VOLUME I

EUROPEAN ACRITIC HERITAGE: FROM ALEXANDER THE GREAT TO DIGENIS AKRITAS

BYZANTIUM AND ITS NEIGHBOURS

Hélène Ahrweiler

The Byzantine political and military frontiers followed the Empire's steady course of territorial diminishment over the course of its thousand year long existence. Byzantium's "cultural frontiers", on the other hand, were widened by virtue of the acritans' capacity for peaceful coexistence in turbulent regions along with the spread of Orthodoxy that was tied to the Church of Constantinople's missionary work. The customs and folk traditions that flourished in the frontier regions, known as acritic, continue to be a way of life to this day, preserving the memory of the Byzantine Commonwealth along with that of the neighbouring peoples. After all, the neighbours were not always inimical towards Byzantium.

This form of acritic acculturation is a subject for further study for it constituted a factor of peaceful coexistence, even though it was used for spying purposes in time of war, and a foundation for mutual respect among warring factions, by virtue of the mediating role played by the frontier populations.

Byzantium's political choices were at times dictated by the problem posed by the existence, the numbers and importance of the neighbouring peoples surrounding the Empire. These peoples used their own traits to paint the lives of the indigenous Byzantine populations, moulding in this way mixed cultures that often secured mutual solidarity for both sides sharing the frontier. This is precisely what is signified by a common folk and artistic tradition, an eloquent example of which is the acritic cycle.



THE ACRITIC TRADITION IN CYPRUS

Nikolaos Konomis

Cyprus hosts a number of acritic songs that are of extreme interest to ethnographers. In some of the island's remote villages there are several such songs that are still remembered by the elderly, whereas in other parts of Greece



they seem to have been erased from memory altogether. This presentation undertakes a survey of the songs that are part of the long, uninterrupted Cypriot acritic tradition, and compares them with those of other territories where such tradition also exists, such as Rhodes, the Pontus region, Crete, etc.



“STRADIOTI” THE FRONTIER GUARDSMEN

Chryssa Maltezou

The Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies of Venice hosts a collection of Icons which includes the “Icon of Deisis” (deisis means prayer in Greek), which, is found in the Greek Church of Saint George in Venice. At the lower part of the Icon, there is a distinct frame with an inscription that reads 1546, along with a portrait of the Icon's two donors, the stradioti brothers John and George Manesi.

Following the death of the Byzantine empire, just as the learned Greeks sought refuge in the West, the Greek stradioti (deriving from the Greek word for soldier) likewise scattered throughout the West, in order to guard the frontiers of the Christian world from invaders. Just as the acritans of the Byzantine times guarded the Empire's frontiers, the stradioti of the post-Byzantine times also were charged with protecting frontier regions.

Poems whose central heroes are the stradioti, regardless of their limited literary value, constitute the last link of the medieval acritic epic and folk song chain.



DIGENIS ACRITAS IN MODERN GREEK DRAMATURGY

Aikaterini Polymerou-Kamilaki

The paper assesses the dramatic approach contained in Greek demotic (folk) songs, in which the symbolically-laden figure of Digenis Acritas was procured for literary and ideological reasons. The figure of Digenis, whose positive traits tend to be overstressed, has perpetually signified the quintessential qualities of the Romios, or Greek. Digenis, as a symbol, is to be found in the poems of Palamas, as the bearer of the eternal Greek ethos, in the works of Sikelianos, representing antiauthoritarianism, and even in the dramaturgical incarnation of the notion of the frontier between East and West during the decades 1980-1990.



BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM, THE SPANISH LINK

Pedro Bádenas de la Peña

The consecutive waves of Moslem raids during the 8th century (Berbers, Arabs and Syrians), were almost exclusively of a military nature, and cannot be compared - from the point of view of their frequency and intensity - with those of the Asian peoples (Avars, Huns, Bulgarians, Magyars) against the Byzantine world. The Moslems of Al Andalus were mostly Islamised Spaniards and descendants of an African or oriental father and a slave mother from the Iberian peninsula. That explains why El Cid (11th century) was tolerant towards the Hispanic Islam, but inflexible with the rigorous and fundamentalist Africanisation that the Almoravids were intending to impose. The Almoravids' incursions against Spain are coeval with those of the Seljuks against the Byzantine Asia Minor. The epic and historical figure of El Cid represents a hero completely different from those of the French and German epics. In contrast with Siegfried, Gunther, or Roland, El Cid of the poems is a historical figure with a sense of justice that always goes together with a sense of honour, generosity and bravery. The leitmotif of the poem *My Cid* (*Mio Cid*) is not revenge, so common a motif in other epic poems. The entire poem is about the struggle to establish justice: before his king and lord (Alfonse VI) or before the Moslems of Valencia. El Cid wants to coexist with the Moslem Spaniards on the basis of equal rights. This is why he makes the effort honestly to respect their religion, property, laws and habits. The principedom established by El Cid in Valencia was threatened by the huge Almoravid Empire of Yusuf, which by that time extended from Algeciras to Sudan. The interaction between the Moslem and Christian cultures in medieval Spain was very intensive, large and fruitful, because it was based on Spanish-Moslem foundations. Toledo and Sicily are the best examples of this interactive coexistence, which was not free of tensions and violence. From this aspect, the Islamic factor is inseparable from the other components of the European identity that was taking shape during the Middle Ages, especially in Spain, which is a real link between the two cultures. And the best example, in literature, is the character of El Cid.



BELISARIUS: BYZANTINE GENERAL, EUROPEAN HERO

Anne-Sophie Barrovecchio

The figure of Belisarius appears to have been forgotten today. The Byzantine general, whose actual existence has been confirmed, was a great conqueror and lived in Constantinople during the 6th century during the



reign of Justinian. Belisarius owes his fame, however, less to his military exploits than to a Greek legend that holds him to be a blind mendicant. This legend became widespread throughout the West, inspiring a number of writers and artists to the present day. The story of Belisarius, from its creation to its mature stages, thus demonstrates that its presence in the imagination of an entire civilisation is far from being something anecdotal. On this account, the hero has been able gradually to acquire the status of a literary myth. In particular, his life helps us better to understand the significance of ancient motifs in a modern age, by refreshing the way in which we view Byzantine topics in literature. Such topics are not merely limited to Theodora, magic, and orientalism.

It is this exceptional secular adventure of Belisarius found in literature and the arts that I propose to reexamine through my presentation, in order to restore to our memory and to our collective common culture the actual story of the blind and mendicant Byzantine general.



THE POETIC MYTH OF KRALI MARKO AS THE PROTECTOR OF FREEDOM BOUNDARIES IN THE WORK OF BULGARIAN POETS OF 19th CENTURY

Cyril Topalov

The poetic myth of Krali Marko, who is depicted as the protector of freedom, the faith, the nation, and his compatriots' dignity, was very much alive in the folk songs of the 19th century, inspiring many poets of that period. The presentation focuses on the works of two poets: Grigor Parlicev and Nikola Kozlev. The first, a Hellenist and a lifelong teacher of the Greek and Bulgarian languages, won the "Ralis" poetry contest as a student in Athens, with the poem, "Man-at-arms" (O Armatolos). The protagonist of the poem, Kuzman Kapitan, along with his men, resists the bandit bands from the Albanian mountains, and finally dies heroically, bringing to mind Homer's heroes and Krali Marko. The other poet, Nikola Kozlev, wrote the poem "Black Ducky and Haiduk Sinter" which is an imitation of the folk songs about the legendary hero Krali Marko. Thus, we have an interesting phenomenon very typical of that specific period: a type of work that is to be located between folklore and literature, that is no longer folklore, but is as yet not literature.





THE ACRITIC CYCLE IN THE SLAVIC WORLD

Hélène Kaplan

The surprise caused by the upheavals that occurred in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (especially those of the former Soviet Union) at the end of the 20th century, along with unexpected conflicts and explosions - for which there seems to be no explanation- caused by these upheavals, have impelled historians to investigate latent tendencies hidden throughout the centuries, which nonetheless, burn like a fire beneath the embers.

The study of the acritic heritage falls within the framework of such research. While the surviving epics studied by historiography generally constitute sources of antagonism, the tradition of Digenis reveals certain elements of rapprochement. This tradition, under this heading, appears to be a privileged theme at the time of European construction.

The University of Europe, working together with the Network of Information and Documentation for Countries of Central and Eastern Europe (RIDECO), heads a multidisciplinary and multiregional investigation on the diffusion of the legacy of Digenis Akritas in different countries. This investigation focuses on countries in western Europe, including northern Europe, the Balkans and Russia, and equally covers the East, including the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Of all the countries under scrutiny, it is in the Russian regions that the presence of the "Digenis tradition" is most evident. In Russian literary heritage, the name of Digenis was transformed to Deugenios and carried the title of "Devgenievo de ianie" - "The Geste of Deugenios" or retained the original Digenis or Akritas title. Certain elements from the Digenis epic penetrated Russian folklore; and the songs describing the confrontation with death, greatly resemble the field covered by the acritic heritage.

Further research reveals the surviving elements of this tradition to be found in modern society.



KRALI MARCO: HOSTILITY AND THE LIMIT OF HIS UNIVERSE

Valery Stefanov

The presentation deals with the manner in which the world of the hero-protector is composed in folk songs. Krali Marko's world is one of absolute chaos, in which the nation, faith, and human life are in utter disarray, without any value. Hope, however, is the last thing that dies; hence, the birth of the figure of Krali Marko. In such a world, the enslaved Balkan peoples, under the leadership of Krali Marko, must once again learn how to live honourably and



respect values such as glory.

Characteristic traits of the folk song cycle are also examined, such as the symbolism of the blocked road, stolen water supplies, illegitimate marriage, the motif of compassion, honour, fury, sin, change of identity, the undermining of trust, the hidden weapon, etc. The study concludes that the divide between good and evil, between the familiar and the other, does not only separate different nationalities, religious groups, and countries. Divides like these exist in each and every person's heart. These are the precise frontiers that are projected in the South Slav folk songs, through the heroic figure of Krali Marko.



GREEK INFLUENCE ON CATALAN EPIC FOLK SONGS

Eusebi Ayensa

Besides the influence exerted by French and Spanish folk songs on Catalan folk literary tradition -influences which have already been recorded by numerous researchers, and which, allow us to portray Catalonia as a bridge between Spain and France- there have been other, more distant literary traditions whose own influences, though far from insignificant, have failed to attract significant interest from researchers. Today for example, studies on the relationship between Catalan, or Spanish folk songs and the Anglo-Saxon and Balkan worlds are practically non-existent. In this study, I attempt to undertake such a task by investigating the influence exerted on the epic folk songs of Catalonia by Greek folk (demotic) poetry. The epic song, "The Lady of Aragon" (*La dama d' Aragó*) forms the starting point for the study. As a result of historical changes, the modern version of this song, like many of its Spanish and Catalan folk-song counterparts, has lost the most authentic elements of an epic: sobriety, temperance and belief in heroic values. Hence, the epic under examination has become much more mythical and sentimental, resembling more and more the literary genre of the absurd.

In conclusion to the study, I insist on the need to undertake further efforts in this direction, especially with the help of the Balearic tradition. By virtue of its strong archaic character, such a tradition has the potential to make an invaluable contribution to the field of Greek and Catalan mutual influences on folk songs.





INFLUENCES ON POPULAR ALBANIAN LITERATURE

Aida Karatza

The question of the Albanian folk poetry of southern Italy raises from the outset serious questions regarding the sources. Our aim within the framework of this conference is to refer critically to the problems that enter into the definition of our research field. As with other ethnographic traditions shaped during the 19th century, the case of the Albanian folk traditions of southern Italy is likewise often distorted through the prism of the “national tradition.” Our research assumes a double character: on the one hand it must include the collective prism that processes the songs, so as to offer a critique of the categories that were devised in order to contain the “national folk tradition,” while on the other, it must observe the actual conditions in which folk songs were produced, to the extent that we can approach them today using modern tools.



OLD SONGS, OLD HEROES - NEW LIMITS AND MARGINS

Miranda Terzopoulou

Cultural anthropology, historiography and psychoanalysis have posed new questions regarding the process of reproduction and transmission of “tradition.” Part of the problematic under scrutiny involves the manner by which folk songs, especially the Acritic ones that are classified according to a very “charged” ideological category, are engaged and employed by an audience at the geographical and ideological confines of a given country.

The author holds that academic politics of classification have condemned many acritic songs that deviated from traditional “acritic” archetypes, to a state of “voicelessness”. It is therefore important to ask what the terms acritic, confines, margins, acritans, or acritic songs signify today, and also to try to understand what exactly do groups of people living in the confines actually “hear” in these songs. In other words, how and why do these social groupings chose to include in their repertoire certain songs, what are these values that are expressed when these songs are performed collectively and in rituals, how does the social gathering adopt the songs to suit the changing social needs without shedding transhistorical and universal traits?

Communication through song is not a phenomenon outside space and time, lacking a social context and a subject. The term acritic could be used to include songs sung by individuals or groups that live in the confines of society, songs which take on the necessary social meaning in order to diffuse national, social, or psychological pressures.



THE ACRITIC SONGS AS INITIATION RITUAL - THE CASE OF THE "SOLDIER" GROOM

Helen Psychogiou

The Greek medieval epic tradition, part of the larger European tradition and also part of the tradition of a the wider cultural area of the Southeastern Mediterranean (which includes the hinterland), is thought to take two forms: written and oral. The first form concerns the autonomous learned piece of work, "The epic of Digenis Acritas", while, the second includes a rich and diverse number of folk songs, which are labelled as acritic, and constitute an inseparable part of the Greek oral, musical and poetic traditions.

Nevertheless, I believe that the acritic songs and "The Epic of Digenis Acritas" belong to two completely different, incommensurable cultural experiences. While ritual songs are thought to be by and large identical with the religious, secular, and political organisation of a given society, as it manifests itself collectively and through time, the learned tradition of epic poetry, on the other hand, constitutes a distinct literary manifestation, created by particular individuals and by the literary and historical conditions of the Middle Ages.

The present work does not analyse the acritic songs in the conventional manner, based on the semantics of war and the history/chronology of the Middle Ages and Byzantium, hitherto exclusively employed by the historical-philological approach. Acritic songs are rather approached as secular and religious songs within the framework of the diverse, vital "extremes": that is, extremes of the symbolic social and local frontier-ness that retain and at the same time transmit, through a particular historical, local, and cultural framework, elements from the corresponding religious and secular rituals, wherever these are performed in the Greek world.

More specifically, the Acritan hero is studied during a crucial phase, that of marrying and coming of age, which includes a study of the role of the bridegroom and of the framework of the passage to manhood during the ritual of the traditional marriage, as it emerges dialectically in song-verse and wedding activities.



ACRITIC POLYPHONY

Hélène Ahrweiler

The fundamental form of polyphony deals with a type of cultural creation that is inspired by diverse voices and traditions, and proceeds to project its own, novel multidimensional forms of expression. This is precisely the primary characteristic of every cross-border artistic or literary activity that



naturally blooms when peoples in the opposite sides of a frontier find themselves in times of peace. In fact, this is the case even when the thematic content of such artistic and literary activity celebrates victory of one people over the other in times of conflict.

Research on Digenis Acrites and on the acritic cycle is conducted within the framework of a more general study on cultural polyphony. Artistic creations of such mixed origins, especially during the past (in the Middle Ages for example), find expression in diverse forms of artistic creativity. That is, epics become songs (rhapsodies) and songs become dance and movement. This sheds light on the existence of a connection between the acritic cycle and the artistic experience of the ancient Greeks (the Homeric cycle for example). This form of polyphony, labeled diachronic, becomes evident.

For example, the war dances of the Pontus region have a clear connection to the heroic cycle (Pontus and Cappadocia are the cradles of medieval acritic poetry), just as the ancient war dances were tied to representations of heroic deeds. From this angle, one can safely say that the epic cycles, in our case the acritic cycle, constitute nuclei of inter-artistic forms of expression, in other words another type of polyphony, based on artistic pluralism.



EXHIBITION: THE ACRITANS OF EUROPE

Louiza Karapidakis

The basic aim of the exhibition, “The Acritans of Europe”, is twofold: to demonstrate that the acritic tradition is a pan-European, maybe even universal, cultural and historic phenomenon, and also to reveal the double-sided symbolic character of the acritans. On the one hand these acritans represent the hostility and clashes that take place in the frontier regions; on the other hand, their character traits embody the communication, that is, intercultural exchange, that takes place across the two sides of the border. Songs, dances, festivals, art, love and marriage, commerce, and other forms of cultural exchange, all contribute to the establishment of communication bridges. The weight of the scenario developed for the exhibition falls on the mutual impact and fertile interchange that take place between peoples, moulding the standards for societal attitudes and behaviours.

The exhibition knits together a historical introduction on the subject, references to modern expressions of acritic culture (in folk songs, the theatre, visual arts, etc.), and the acritic legends' sources in antiquity. The exhibition also spins around the figure of Digenis Akritas, hero of the Byzantine national epic and a



living legend that survives in our days.

The historical context expands from the middle period of Byzantium to our days, while the cultural context includes Europe and the Mediterranean, East and West, namely, the Greeks, Franks, Venetians, Slavs, Saracens, Ottomans, Christians -Orthodox, Catholics- Moslems, pagans.

The exhibition includes a variety of documentary material, oral, written, visual, audio and audiovisual, all of which attest to different places and time periods. Our starting point was the oral and musical tradition (acritic songs, traditions, legends, fairy tails, testimonies, biographies, recordings), we continued with the written, learned tradition (the epic of Digenis Acritas as it appears in publications and other texts), and we included a collected bibliography of the texts. Furthermore, our exhibition hosted a number of objects (sculpture, paintings, both secular and religious, gold and silversmithery, pottery, embroidery, woodcarvings, musical instruments and weapons) representations of folk rituals (religious and popular, carnival, shadow-puppet theatre, etc.), a film on contemporary drama and cinema workes inspired by acritans and other testimonies and sources (documents, photos, maps, etc.).

The material used in the exhibition confirms a common European background, the mutual influence exerted on the culture of various peoples, and the common link between different national or religious cultures.



EPIRUS, BYZANTIUM'S OUTERMOST FRONTIER

Hélène Ahrweiler

The primary role of Epirus as a communication bridge between Italy and the Balkans becomes obvious for Byzantine policy and diplomacy, especially after the decline of Constantinople's dominance over the western borders, in other words, following the fall of Byzantine Italy (1071).

To understand the strategic importance that Epirus holds for the Byzantines, one must bear in mind that the Adriatic is a world marked by divisions. These divisions are most clearly distinguished by the inhabitants' different cultural heritage, followed by their adherence to different religious convictions within the outline of a shared Christian faith. To the east of the Adriatic sits Orthodoxy and to the west lies the heart of Catholicism. On top of the spiritual division between the eastern and western parts of the Adriatic, one must add a further division that is dictated by the economic and political sway of Venice on the one side, and of the byzantine commercial interests on the other. Through these claims, the territories of Corfu and Epirus, that stretches to Dyrrachium, are



intimately connected to those of Southern Italy, stretching to the port of Ancona.

The separating lines loom over the Adriatic in the shape of a cross, the edges of which mark zones of contrasting traditions and interests. These crossroads are dissected into east and west, north and south, or, Byzantine and Latin, Byzantine and Venetian in political terms. In this schema, Epirus holds a strategic position, hence, Byzantium's concern regarding the area's defense role and organisation, with special weight placed on naval consolidation, the port of Dyrrachium serving as the hub.

Byzantine Epirus has obviously acquired a salient position when it comes to defending Byzantine interests, especially when those get mingled in such a way as to draw in the various Italian powers, or the neighbouring peoples of Byzantium.



THE PORTRAITS OF THE HEROES OF THE BYZANTINE EPOS IN CAPPADOCIA

Nicole Thierry

The campaigns for the re-conquest of Byzantium's easternmost territories reached their peak in the second half of the 10th century. The Asian Corps was headed by the Cappadocian family of Phocas, first by Bardas, and later by his sons Nicephorus, Leon and Constantine. Nicephorus became emperor (963-969) by marrying the widow empress Theophano, mother of the crown princes, Basil and Constantine. During the Syrian Wars, Nicephorus' cousin and successor, John Tsimiskis (969-976) and the emperor Basil II distinguished themselves through their accomplishments.



DIGENIS ACRITAS AND BYZANTINE HAGIOGRAPHY

Erich Trapp

There are several Lives and Legends of Byzantine saints which reveal parallels with the epic of Digenes Akrites. First of all let us quote the legendary life of the holy Theoktiste of Lesbos, written by the orator Niketas Magistros in the tenth century. One passage reminds us of the situation, when Digenes meets the daughter of Haplorabdes, abandoned in the desert. Other, still more important similarities are to be found in several lives of the holy Theodore (the recruit who was later promoted to a general and thus doubled): the fight with a dragon and a letter from the emperor who wants to meet the hero.



What about Lazaros from Galesios (a mountain near Ephesos)? He, like, Digenes had left his parents, then met a weeping girl in the desert and brought her back. And besides that we may refer to lions, a bear and last but not least to building-activity (a monastery as opposed to a castle in the epic).

But still more examples can be found. From the *Life of Theophanes and Pansemne*, probably written during the sixth century, we may quote the situation, in which the lady looked out from the window and thus became acquainted with the hero, with the result that both moved to the desert afterwards, where at last they died and were lamented. And in the *Life of Martinian* we read the passage in which the saint was tempted first by the devil, disguised as a dragon respectively in a youth, and afterwards by a harlot. Of course, the main difference between hagiography and epic lies in the fact, that the saint withstands every temptation. However, there exists a strange tale of an arrogant monk who desired to become like Isaac, but under the influence of the devil rapes, murders, robs and gets hanged at the end. As to Digenes, in one version he also murders the Amazon Maximo.

All these examples perhaps demonstrate that some of the subjects of epics and Hagiography consist of similar elements, although the world of the hero and the world of the saint are different as to the aim of their life. In addition some parallels are given illustrating the similar use of vocabulary in hagiographic texts and the three main redactions of the epic of Digenes Akrites.



PIRACY AND NAVAL AFFAIRS PERTAINING TO KARPATIOS

Hélène Ahrweiler

Karpatios is the last frontier as far as Greek naval territory is concerned. The isle's history is indissolubly linked to naval affairs. It is no accident that what is probably the only mention of the word "sea" in an acritic song, is to be found in a Karpathiote version of the famous acritic song of Constantis. Further proof of the island's link with the sea concerns an extremely important stage of Byzantine naval history, that of the occupation of Crete by the Arabs (824). The Byzantine navy was dispatched from Constantinople in order to retake Crete, however, it was unable to find its way, ending up docking in Asia Minor. It was only after a Karpathiote ship arrived there that the Byzantine fleet was finally able to find the sea-route to its destination. Using these and other examples drawn from the island's rich naval history, including its age-old intimate affair with piracy, the author establishes the importance of the sea as a cultural frontier, part of the acritic heritage of Karpatios.



THE ACRITIC HERITAGE OF KARPATHOS

Aikaterini Polymerou-Kamilaki

Ethnologists and musicologists have repeatedly emphasised the island of Karpathos's rich musical tradition. Few places in Greece can boast of such an active relationship between dance and song with the daily affairs of the inhabitants. In fact, music can be said to define the identity of the community, which, has undertaken tremendous efforts to preserve such a unique form of cultural identity.

Songs that accompany the various aspects of Karpathiote life belong to an extremely wide range of musical genres. One such genre comprises of acritic songs along with their variations that continue to be sung today in family and social gatherings (folk festivals, weddings, etc.). The present study undertakes an exploration of this type of song as it pertains to the life of this remote island of Greece.



ACRITIC SONGS IN KARPATHOS

Minas Al. Alexiadis

The island of Karpathos, as is well-known, has a rich folk culture with many traditions preserved intact. This is clearly reflected in the extensive bibliography dealing with the island's ethnography.

Many of the folk (demotic) songs sung in the island hold an important place in the rich traditional folk culture of Karpathos. The acritic songs are among the oldest songs, many of which have been recorded from 1891 to the present in compilations containing demotic songs of Karpathos.

The study analyses such issues as compilations and specific themes of the demotic songs, the first acritic song along with its various versions, recorded in 1896, the study of which has occupied scholars and researchers, the Karpathian versions of the heroic Byzantine song of Armouri and, finally, the origins of the acritic songs of Karpathos.

In addition, this study suggests the theory that population movements between Karpathos, Asia Minor, and Crete may offer sufficient grounds to account for the presence of the acritic songs in the island's poetic tradition.





FROM KARPATOS TO CASTILE: COMMON MOTIFS IN SPANISH AND GREEK EPIC POETRY

Eusebi Ayensa

This study analyses the similarities between the epic tradition of Greece (more specifically, that of Karpathos) and Castile. These may be purely coincidental, but are by no means uninteresting for that reason.

At this point, we should not forget that the birth of both Byzantine and Spanish medieval epic poetry is explained by similar premises. The Almoravid Arab raids in Spain, conducted under the banner of a strict religious fundamentalism, were undertaken at the same period as those of the Seljuks in Byzantine Asia Minor. Similar social conditions thus give birth to similar phenomena and our task is to highlight some of these phenomena, such as, the common motifs that bring the epic traditions of the two ends of the Mediterranean together. Hence, the topics of abduction, horses (the “black ones”), weapons and symposia, all of which play such an important role in the lives of the acritans, are shared by the Greek and Spanish medieval tradition. Further similarities which might readily be noted in the focus of our study include the notion of the frontier as a zone of both danger and mutual cultural exchange, the natural death of the Cid and Digenis that are contrasted with the death of Roland in the clangour of battle, and a series of similar military techniques. These confirm the words of K. Krumbacher, who, at the end of the 19th century declared that El Cid, the greatest hero of the West, the most famous Castilian, found his counterpart at the easternmost extreme of European medieval culture



THESSALONICA: THE CROSSROADS OF EUROPE

Hélène Ahrweiler

Thessalonica is the first city that embodies the characteristics of Europe. The city is born during antiquity, it shares a glorious roman past (something that is attested by the presence of numerous monuments), and is the first city to receive the Gospel of Christianity directly from Paul's teachings.

After all, Europe is the place in which the name of Aristotle and Plato, Cicero and Horace, Paul and Moses carry significant weight and importance. This definition is not provided by someone who is either Greek or some scholar focusing on Greece, but by Paul Valéry who wants to put forward a functional and cultural definition of “Europe”.

Thessalonica is possibly the only city of Greece that demonstrates throughout



the entire length of its history a dynamic vigour, a progression, even during the harshest years of the Slavic raids and Ottoman subjugation. The existence of the city resonates vibrantly, almost without pause, in economic and spiritual affairs, reaching territories outside Macedonia and Thrace, almost to the entire Balkans.

The decline of antiquity in Greece, as is well known, is identified with the disappearance of urban centers and also with the destruction of numerous ancient cultural manifestations. The shift in the axis of political power from Rome to Constantinople, with the founding of the so-called Byzantine empire, marginalised many Greek territories that remained outside Constantinople's sphere of interest. Thessalonica along with its immediate surroundings constitute an exception to this trend. The port-city was able to maintain the status of capital city of the territory of Illyrium (today we would say Roman Balkans), while it also served as a station strategically located between the two imperial capitals, New Rome or Constantinople and Rome, which always shared the status of co-capital. In addition, Thessalonica's importance was augmented by the fact that the city supplied the only port to which the medieval states of the Balkan Peninsula had access. It is also well-known that Thessalonica was the only station for the headquarters of the Byzantine military forces in European territory and as a result, the frequent gathering of mercenary forces added to the city's rich multicultural character already visible by the presence of foreign merchants and commodities.



ALEXANDER THE GREAT IN CATALAN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

Eusebi Ayensa

This study, as indicated by the title, examines the tradition of Alexander the Great in the Catalan Medieval Literature. It traces the manner by which it arrived in Catalonia, the similarities with similar literary traditions of other European cultures (Castile, France, Italy, Germany), and its gradual development in time. The study points out that the first mention of Alexander in Catalan literature appears in medieval chronicles of the period 1283-1288. These chronicles describe the heroic deeds of the Catalan king Pierre le Catholique, who is compared to Alexander the Great. Until the end of the 15th century, Alexander is cited in many literary pieces, always as an exemplary figure of lordship. The only biography of Alexander in the Catalan language, is the work of Lluís de Fenollet which was published in Barcelona on July 16th, 1481. It is not an original work but a translation of the well-known Biography of Alexander that was written in



the Tuscan dialect by Pier Candido Decembrio, published in Milan on April 21st, 1438. The work is a testimony Alexander's renown in medieval Catalan literature.



“HISTORIA OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT” (ALEXANDRÍA), IN BULGARIAN LITERATURE AND THE NOTION OF THE DEFENDER

Kyрил Topalov, Veska Berova Topalova

The presentation focused on the Bulgarian translations of the “Biography of Alexander the Macedon,” that were completed in Bulgarian from the 10th till the 13th centuries. Interest on the work continued down to the period of the Bulgarian Renaissance (18th-19th centuries). More specifically, from 1810 to 1843 there are 15 known manuscripts that include the novel, and for the first time in 1844, the story appears in a printed book. The second edition in Bulgarian appears in 1851 (Constantinople) and the third in 1867 (Bucharest). In 1870 there is another edition that is printed in Constantinople, and in 1905 there is one in Sofia. Emphasis was placed on the fact that during the evolution of the story, from a sophisticated novel to a work of popular resonance, various motifs were added to the figure of Alexander, including Christian traits, and also characteristics of the frontier hero. Alexander hence underwent a transformation into an acritan hero.



THE SUBJECT OF ALEXANDER IN MEDIEVAL CASTILIAN POETRY

Pedro Bádenas de la Peña

This study undertakes an analysis of the content and structure of the Medieval Castilian poem, “Libro di Alexandre”. The poem contains 2675 stanzas each composed of four Alexandrian verses. Only two manuscripts of this poem are saved, one is located in the National Library of Madrid, and the other one in the National Library of Paris. The story's central hero, Alexander, is a perfect king and embodies the traits of a veritable 13th century knight: trained in philosophy, experienced warrior having undertaken important conquests, yet chivalrous towards women, and never resentful towards his enemies. The story of Alexander demonstrates the ideals of glory and power. It is also an illustration of the pessimism that pervades worldly affairs: despite the great accomplishments, the hero must die in the end, and his glory is what keeps his memory alive. The poem presents a perfect example of the best that western literature has to offer, concerning the legendary and universal figure of Alexander the Macedonian.



VOLUME II

MYTHS AND LEGENDS SHARED AMONG THE PEOPLES OF EUROPE

THE TCHILOLI: A EUROPEAN MEDIEVAL MYTH IN AFRICA

Francoise Gründ

This paper examined the imaginary usage of the "frontier", as it relates to a community's identity. The author carried out her research in the island of Sao Thome, a Portuguese colony in the Atlantic Ocean. She recorded the tchiloli, a theatrical ritual dating from the 16th Century AD. The natives, through the ritual, forge their native identity in contrast to that of the Portuguese colonisers.



THE EUROPEAN OCCIDENT AND THE SHARING OF MYTHS

Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet

Myths and legends are transmuted across time and space as far as the storyline and the protagonists are concerned. This is the case with Alexander the Great, Arthur, and Charlemagne.

Alexander the Great in the East, Charlemagne in the West, and Arthur in England, are all symbolic representations of the "epic dream" in the collective unconscious of a given people. Each of these characters brings forward a number of heroic myths of political significance: in the West special attention is given to Arthur and Charlemagne, while Alexander the Great retains his position as an important point of reference.

Throughout these legends, the frontier, whether it is delimited by the sea, by a river or by landmass, appears both as a point of division and as a point of communication. Strange creatures guard not only the gates of hell but of paradise as well, while they also appear in volcanic craters, caves, and various magical places which the imagination assigns to these frontier areas.

Themes and motifs found in these malleable legends leave their mark on the heritage of various traditions. Besides common elements detected in the texts from one language to another, the legends also demonstrate parallel beliefs at the level of imagination.



The various traditions usually come into contact with one another through marriage. The legend of Melouzina confirms such a theory regarding the circulation of legends: in this, the geography of the whole of Europe is construed through the sexual union between a witch and a mortal man.



PARCIFAL IN THE ORIGIN OF A LEGEND

Josef Häußling

The enigmatic figure of Parsifal appears at the beginning of the 12th century in an incomplete novel by the Frenchman Chrétien de Troyes. This initial literary impression influenced the poetic output of the whole of 12th - 13th century - Europe. Hence, in the 13th century, Parsifal appears in Germany in the manuscripts of Wolfram von Eschenbach.

Chrétien de Troyes, basing himself on previous works and on the service held on Good Friday, brings to life the mystifying world of King Arthur, the Knights of the Round Table, and of the Holy Grail. His protagonists include Goven, the ideal knight of the Round Table, and Parsifal himself, whose divine task involves retrieving the Holy Grail for the future king. The two knights embody different types of knightly behaviour and successive time-periods (the 12th and 13th centuries). The ideals and standards of each period shift according to the heroic figure. Finally, Chrétien de Troyes, conveys to us the religious fanaticism and Christian mythology that pervades the entire thinking, behaviour and social reality of the period of the Crusades.

Wolfram von Eschenbach, creating a historical account rather than a myth, takes us to 13th century Europe, which, with greater maturity, accepted cultural expressions that are not Christian. Contact between the Christian and Arabo-Hebrew civilisations can be seen in Parsifal's meeting with his Saracen half-brother.

Parsifal's voyage did not come to end during the Middle Ages. Even at the present day it continues symbolically to challenge creators, to inspire various works of arts, and to touch the general public.



TRISTAN AND ISOLDE IN ITALY: THE ROUND TABLE

Jacqueline Risset

One of the most common legends in the West, appearing in a number of versions from country to country, concerns the indissoluble bond between Love and Death. More specifically, the legend tells the story of the kind of



love that fatefully leads to death. Tristan and Isolde are poetic figures whose adventures embody the epic version of the legend.

The legend, which belongs to the wider “Epic Cycle of Britain,” begins its voyage in the 12th century. It first appears in verse in the French language, while the first version of Tristan to be written in prose makes its appearance in France approximately one century later. The legend was not only translated into many other European languages, but also inspired other branches of the arts, as demonstrated by architectural sculpture remains in Italy, which date from the 12th century. In addition, many parents named their children after famous epic heroes during that period.

At the end of the 13th century, the Tuscan version of *Tristano Riccardiano* made its appearance. In this version we can detect many old parts of the story, but also many new, hitherto unknown, episodes. The historical dimensions of the legend are already apparent: every hero represents a particular city-state. The story of tragic love is no longer at the heart of the legend. Love acquires meaning only through the qualities of knightly perfection and prudence. It is “The Round Table” that forms the ideals by which to abide.

During the middle of the 14th century, a version of *La Tavola Ritonda* richer in literary means and lacking the simplicity of the more archaic forms, was created by an anonymous Italian narrator. This particular version was clearly influenced by *Tristano Riccardiano* and by its 12th and 13th century Tristan counterparts. It is in this instance, however, that, for the very first time, the adventures of Arthur cross with those of Tristan, only to end in an anti-heroic manner, with love and duty clashing with each other. The protagonists fight for their affection and are thus able to justify their rebellion.

The Round Table of the 14th century, takes us to a world that was undergoing transformation; the historical authenticity not only of this particular version, but of acritic literature in general, is on trial.



THE GRAVITY OF WORDS: APROPOS THE TRANSLATIONS OF DIGENIS ACRITAS

Paolo Odorico

Up to 1970 translations and editions of acritic songs were rare, whereas today the publication of such works is clearly on the increase. The term acritic is almost always connected with the term epic. The misapprehensions and arbitrary usages begotten by the term acritic are not phenomena restricted to the present. Already from the mid-19th century, at the beginning of ethnographic



and philological research and recording, the acritan became a vehicle for the illustration of the Byzantine period and for linking it to the culture of modern Greece.

At the beginning of the 20th century, acritic songs increase in numbers, as they are commonly associated with ordinary folk (demotic) songs: the name Constantine suffices to characterise a song as acritic.

The term denotes with precision songs in which the hero is either Vasilios Digenis or certain other heroes that belong to an elite group drawn from the ranks of the provincial aristocracy, or songs that were more or less created in frontier regions. Under no circumstance can we label each and every demotic (folk) song about inhabitants or acritan-soldiers as acritic. Acritic songs were composed by professional bards, called *agrytai*. Whether these songs are considered a popular creation or a specific specialised literary production depends on the kind of definition that is adopted. The *Komneneia Digenida* is considered nonetheless to be the basis and former point of reference of variants of acritic songs. Another point of view holds it to be an amalgamation of different translated songs.

As to the historical accuracy of these songs regarding the acritans of the Byzantine period, there are reservations. We do not know the precise social conditions surrounding the acritan, his system of values or behaviour, nor can we be sure of acritans' direct descent from the Roman institution of frontiersmen, called *limitanei*. Constantine Porphyrogennitos labels as acritan the armies that are stationed in frontier areas, that is along the borders, especially deserted areas, and that accompany the emperor. Kekaumenos contrasts the acritans with the provincial governors, that is governors that exercise power at a local level, often having interests that conflict with the Empire. The acritans, maintain armies, reside in a *kastron*, that is in a fortified settlement, and operate in these areas on behalf of the Emperor. Based on evidence from the chrysobull of Basil the Macedonian for Digenis Acritas, the acritans were responsible for maintaining control in the frontier regions.

As a result, acritic songs possibly constitute a source of information on Digenis, though this cannot be considered unquestionable, just as no legendary narrative is unquestionable.



THE EPIC HERO IN THE SLAVIC WORLD

Pierre Arrignon

The frontier, the limit, and the Other are fundamental terms for the Slavic world. The Russian empire of Kiev delimits the imaginary frontier between



the sedentary populations in towns and villages and the nomads of the steppe.

This is the concept characterised by the bylines, metrical poetic texts that narrate historical achievements, legends and myths. This type of poetry is sung, and is connected directly to the oral tradition. The music is as old as prose itself. The stories all take place in the Russian dominion, especially in the northern parts with their dreamlike, humid climate. Every place, including actual cities like Kiev, acquires a supernatural dimension and becomes connected with the presence of heroes and courageous figures that are able successfully to challenge otherworldly powers. It is on the verge between the forested steppe and that of the under-bush that the battle for the frontier rages between settled farmers and nomads, creating a space in which their identities confront each other. The courageous figures of the bylines struggle for Russia, even though researchers believe them to be fictitious characters. Despite this, the bylines are not considered to pertain exclusively to Russian folklore as they have influenced the neighbouring Slav peoples at the level of expressing the imaginary.

The Slavic version of Digenis, created possibly in the 14th century, from which the adventures of Digenis in the Arabic-Byzantine frontiers were translated into Russian, is to be assigned to a period following the bylines. The Slavic version aims to highlight the Christian identity of the Slavs, during a period in which conversions to Christianity in the Russian countryside and amongst the distant tribes were intensifying. The Russians henceforth shared common legends with the Byzantines through identical epic poetry.

Naturally, there are differences between the Slavic Digenis and the Greek acritic version. The Slavic Digenis is proud, a natural winner, and is concerned with his own posthumous fame and the renown of those around him. He enjoys all God's help. He is able to overcome evil in all of its manifestations, earthly or divine. Finally, God is glorified through Digenis, who is a Christian. Courage becomes the characteristic of a people which was slow to become Christian, but received God's grace through a totally Christian form of literature. The Russians were the bearers of both an ancient and a Christian culture at the same time.

The battles that are described in the bylines and in the Slavic acritic epic are cultural frontier conflicts. The difference is that the enemies of the Slavic acritans are no longer supernatural monsters but non-Christian populations. The battle becomes a way in which man communicates with God. This is achieved by subjecting men to the sign of the Cross. This message of Byzantine universalism of the Greek Digenis was passed by the Byzantines to the converted Russians.





PERSONAGES IN EPIC POETRY

Guy Saunier

Folk songs throughout Europe share not only thematic elements, but also motifs and isolated verses. There are two thematic categories for classifying narrative songs: one that includes songs that tell a story which can be classified as an actual event, and one that deals with legends. The latter category includes heroic narrative songs some of which are called “acritic”, since they echo some episode from the life of Digenis Acrites and Byzantine battles against the Saracens. In this case, the acritic character is secondary to the heroic.

The most important characters in the acritic songs contain rich symbolism and heighten the songs' already important function of initiation.

Hence, Digenis appears to be Alexander the Great's descendent, whose lineage derives from two different races, and who has been twice-born, or, reborn. Both in the Cypriot and in the Black Sea (Pontus) version of the acritic epic, the relationship of Digenis with Charon (Death) is one of both enmity and correspondence. Digenis initially refuses to surrender to Charon and a fight ensues resulting in Digenis' death. The correspondences between the two are so great that Digenis must not be viewed as a morally good version of Charon.

In the Tsamadou version, the motif of which is used as a model for Digenis' death, the central theme concerns the battle between father and son. Generally, this confrontation is an archetype that signifies coming of age, which, in one sense, presupposes confrontation in order to be completed.

Another figure is the daughter that pretends to be a man in order to fight the Saracens. When her female identity is unveiled she takes shelter in the Church of Saint George, where she is betrayed by the Saint himself. There are other, later versions, some of which end in either a forced marriage or the girl punishing herself (by committing suicide, by becoming a nun, etc.). The girl's betrayal by fate and by Saint George, symbolises the betrayal of the Greek nation by the foreign powers.

Finally, Porphyros, with his particular lineage, emerges as the main representative of heterogeneity and functions as a bridge between East and West: his father is unknown and his mother is either a Jewish or an Armenian nun. A number of legendary elements are concentrated on his figure: he is bulimic and at the same time able to produce food in huge quantities, his bravery is evident from an extremely young age, etc. His position in the development of the plot brings him close to Christ and also to Gargantua. This story is clearly a mixture of symbols, parallels and differences from other stories.





THE POEM OF DIGENIS WITHIN THE SONG OF ROLAND AND THE POEM OF CID (REFLECTIONS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GREEK, CASTILLIAN AND FRENCH EPIC POETRY, BASED ON AN UNPUBLISHED TEXT BY ALEXIS SOLÁ)

Eusebi Ayensa

The French Song of Roland and the Castilian Epic of El Cid present a series of morphological, phraseological, and more general similarities. These are mainly thought to be the outcome of the warm relations that prevailed between the French and the Castilian thrones during the 11th-12th century, and also to the close religious affinities of these two during this time period. Furthermore, during this time, one can observe the Carolinian Ballads, the sole Castilian epic-lyric of its type, come into being. This clearly demonstrates the Castilians' interest in songs composed across the Pyrenees. Despite the similarities, there are also significant differences between the two, both in metric style and in the degree by which they report the actual events of the time, in other words, the historicity of the narrated stories. The Castilian epic preserves more traditional elements, which have survived in tact in South America and also among the Spanish Jews. This older epic heroic element is deeply rooted in the literary sentiment and the national consciousness of those peoples.

Comparing the Eastern with the Western medieval epic, we observe a series of changes, principally in the figures of the various heroes, which affects the entire structure of the epic. Digenis fights for himself, while El Cid submits himself to his king. In addition, the Eastern epic is distinguished by doses of sensuality, with affectionate love scenes, while the Western epics have an obvious military character and assign less importance to the theme of love. Finally, there are numerous important differentiations between them that can be based on aesthetics.

There has never been a systematic scholarly comparison of the relationship between the Castilian with the Greek epic, other than the research conducted by Alexis Eudald Sola. Differences between the two epics that have been observed include the thematic incompatibility, and identity alterations of the two heroes, Digenis and El Cid. There are, however, great similarities not only at the stylistic and phraseological levels, but also regarding the content, for example: the magical attributes, for example, which are also indicated by his name, and honest affection towards ones partners. There are many fields that need to be researched more extensively, from the structure of the epics to the temporality of the narrative.





MYTHS AND LEGENDS IN THE ART OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Emmanuel Utwiller

In our day, the terms “myth” and “legend” are often confused, while in reality they signify completely different things. Myth, on the one hand, poses mankind's questions and provides allegorical answers to them, often proposing exemplary acts of heroism during this process. Furthermore, myth explains the inexplicable and that which is unknown, maintains links with the sacred, and can be used as an exemplary case, a point of reference, and a guide. Legend, on the other hand, makes reality enchanting and lends lustre to the existence of a hero who may actually have existed, is recorded in popular culture, and vitalises the sentiment of the community.

Art, more so than metaphysics, is deeply concerned with European myths and legends, given that myth, as an admirable popular narrative, personifies natural phenomena. The question that arises however, is: why should myth appear so much in music and especially in opera? First of all, music plays with the imaginary and reflects tensions and passions. In addition, music provides and structures temporality. The art of opera stands in direct relation to the spoken word, and myths and legends belong to this spoken word. Speech that becomes song condenses an immense magical and religious power. Rhythm and melody often support the poem's content. In our day the lyric arts are a substitute for the medieval bard. Wagner believed that opera was an inseparable part of the actuality of myth, and by its very nature, opera is a form of art that proposes a depiction of the world.

Every age prefers different myths, for reasons of its own. Hence, the 17th century was the era of Greek myths, while in the 18th century legends abounded, thereby exciting the society's creative fantasy. The 19th century led to a bourgeois dramaturgy, and at the beginning of the 20th century, the famous historical legends inspired opera.

Opera, myths, and legends complete each other. This completion however is not mutual: music has a duty to reveal, to expose, and to bring myths to life.



BETWEEN BYZANTIUM AND BAGHDAD: GAGIC I, KING OF VASPURAKAN (908-938)

Nicole Thierry

Gagic I, sovereign of a prosperous Armenian kingdom in the confines of Mesopotamia is the hero par excellence of the acritic lands. Recognised as king by the Arabs, and titled archon by the Byzantines, he revived a kingdom



with a multicultural civilisation.

The personality of this prince, warrior and at the same time patron of the arts, is known to us thanks to the chronicle of Thomas Ardzrouni and to the church of his palace, preserved on the isle of Afitamar. The church (915-921) is known for its original sculptures on the facades, and also for the interior paintings.



VOLUME III

THE ECHO OF ACRITIC EPOS IN THE SPANISH LITERATURE AND ETHNOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION TO THE EPIC OF FRONTIERS (ROMAN, BYZANTINE-SLAVIC AND ISLAMIC TRADITIONS)

Alberto Montaner Frutos

The author attempts to delineate possible interpretations for "the Epic of the Frontier". This task is undertaken by setting out features peculiar to frontier, or acritic epics, and then juxtaposing them with features found in different epic genres, such as epics that celebrate the Crusades (holy wars). Whereas both epic genres describe conflict, the frontier epic lacks the religious zealotry preached in other genres such as those commemorating the Crusades. As we have already seen, fighting in the first case is not necessarily carried out along religious lines. In fact, there are many cases in the acritic epics in which admiration and friendship may be forged with the "other". In addition to juxtaposing different genres of epics, the author also identifies motifs that correspond to Romance, Byzantine-Slavic, and Islamic acritic epics. The running theme in all of the above-mentioned acritic epics is as follows: the half-breed hero whose love is abducted and taken to the other side of the frontier is helped by a former adversary to face a treacherous friend. Such striking commonality can hardly be coincidental. The purpose of this study is not to produce an exhaustive list of similarities, but rather, to initiate deeper investigation on Epic Studies and Comparative Literature.



SPANISH EPIC AND THE EPOS OF DIGENIS

Pedro Bádenas de la Peña

The author draws parallels between the frontier situation of medieval Spain and that of Byzantium. The hero defending the border -the principal hero of the acritic epic- also exhibits identical traits in both places. More specifically, he has a sense of adventure, he is unconstrained, and is independent in his thoughts and actions. Nonetheless, the author warns that the literary recreation



of the real world, in this case, the circumstances and personages of the frontier region, presupposes a filter of literary rules subjected to particular properties. It is important, therefore, to conduct an in-depth study of the border as a literary tool and the way in which it uses various structures, as seen in the specific cases of Digenis and El Cid.



THE ROMANCES OF THE BORDERS AND THE BORDERS OF THE ROMANCE

Paloma Díaz-Mas

The author investigates two aspects of the Iberian Romance as far as frontiers, or, borders are concerned. First, she studies the existence of romances that describe medieval border battles between Christians and Moslems, the manner in which the romances were preserved, and how they were able finally to reach the modern age. Second, she examines the way in which such romances are transmitted, how they tend to cross geographical and political frontiers and manage to survive in places where the cultural environment may be connected only remotely to the original, Iberian source.



EPOS, EPICS AND LEGENDS. LEGENDS OF THE HISTORY AND LEGENDS OF THE CRITIQUE

Stefano Maria Cingolani

The aim of this paper is to examine the concept of epic literature and expose the contradiction that "epic literature" stems more typically from ideological, anthropological or psychological orientations than from cultural or literary ones. The term "heroic literature", by contrast, appears not only less contradictory, but has more in common with ancient, medieval and Renaissance literary theory and practice. In addition, this paper concentrates less on the work of anonymous poets and lost poems, but rather examines reflectively the creative role of historians as contributing authors to the legends that they study.





ORAL NARRATION AS AN ARGUMENT FOR RESEARCH: THE CONTEXT OF CATALAN MEDIEVAL EPIC

Antoni Rossell

The author examines oral allusions to the Romantic Epics that are contained in Catalan narrative poetry and Catalan Troubadour lyrics. An analysis focusing on the oral tradition allows us to uncover the relationship between these texts and the epic ideal. This will help prove whether a pure Catalan epic genre really existed or not. Furthermore, such an analysis will also illuminate the cultural context in which Romantic Epic was elaborated through oral performances (text - music).



CATALAN EPIC IN THE LATIN LANGUAGE

Miquel Sitjar I Serra

The author analyses the relationship between Catalan epic and antiquity. It is a well-known fact that narratives in antiquity were principally transmitted in the form of epic poetry. The theme and contents found in the epic formed a basis on which the community would forge its identity. In medieval Catalonia, however, knowledge of epic poetry was restricted to a small circle of people. Works in Latin of Homer, Lucan and Virgil would be studied, copied and translated in the monasteries. This paper focuses on a scholarly centre, the Ripoll Monastery, and follows the development of the use of Latin texts, such as the prose passages *Gesta Comitum Barchinonensium* and the *Carmen Campidoctoris*, in Catalan Epic up to the modern era. The influence of Humanism during this development is closely examined in this paper.



THE VERSION OF “LES ENFANCES GODEFROI” THAT RUNS THROUGH “LA GRAN CONQUISTA DE ULTRAMAR”

Rafael Ramos

The author focuses on a specific piece of medieval Castilian literature, *La Gran Conquista de Ultramar*, compiled during the reign of Sancho IV (1284-1295). Ramos aimed at understanding how and why such texts undergo transformation. Important texts such as *L'Estoire Eracles Empereur* (a translation of the *Historia*, written by William of Tyre), *Les Gestes des Chiprois*, *La Chanson de Jerusalem*, and *La Chanson d'Antioch* (both of which are epic



works concerning the First Crusade), and finally, *La Chanson du Chevalier au Cygne*, make up this huge compilation. Ramos pays special attention to one such text, the poem *Les Enfances Godefroi* (originally written ca. 1150-1180), that was altered when translated from French by the Castilian compilers. Important alterations include the insertion of rigorous historical details that were extracted from other sources. In addition, the Castilian compilers corrected a number of inaccuracies concerning the Islamic religion and even developed certain traits of the main character, Geoffrey of Bouillon, into the knightly behaviour characteristic of that age. As a result of these changes, a text that is essentially literary, a *chanson de geste*, was shaped into a valuable text beneficial to the study of the history of that period.



THE GREEK-BASED CATALANS IN GREEK AND CATALAN LITERATURE OF THE 19th CENTURY: A LONG WAY TOWARDS THE CREATION OF A NATIONAL EPIC

Eusebi Ayensa

The author compares the use of *Almogaver*-thematic poetry in Greek and Catalan nationalist epic literature of the late 19th-early 20th centuries. After introducing the Greek writings that fall under this category, especially *The Last Count of Salona* by Spiridon L. Lampros, the author turns his attention to epic Catalan poems describing the Catalan presence in Greece during the 14th Century. These poems acquired importance for the emerging nationalist literature of the time due to the scientific work of Antoni Rubio I Lluch, and to the 1859-1860 African military campaign. Among the poems, attention is concentrated on *Roudor de Llobregat* by Joaquim Rubio I Ors and *L'Orientada* by Francesco Pelagi Briz.



THE ECHO OF THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN MOORS AND CHRISTIANS IN SPANISH FOLKLORE

Ramon Vilar Herms

The author seeks to analyse the persistence of the memory of the medieval conflict between Moorish and Christian cultures in today's Spanish folklore customs. Traditional dances performed individually or in a group, as well as satirical performances, form the main focus of this paper. *Leitmotifs* that can be identified as part of this form of historical satire, include stick and



sword fighting; street performances that include beings with imaginary attributes; siege warfare that includes displays with gun powder; reenactment of battles against the Turks; reenactment of pirate attacks aimed at pillaging sacred images; and dialogues performed in a church between a Christian and a Moor concerning the virginity of Our Lady.



VOLUME IV

THE COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE AS A TRANS-EUROPEAN MANIFESTATION

“STRATHIOTI PALICARI”: VENICE, THE DEFENCE OF THE DOMINION AND THE BYZANTINE MILITARY TRADITION

Ennio Concina

The military role played by the stradiots is very important in the context of relations between Venice and the Greek world in the Renaissance period because of their contribution both to the Italian wars and during the fierce struggle with Beyazid II, which ended with the agreements of 1503. In the first decades after the fall of Constantinople, Venice recruited the stradiots to defend the eastern extremes of the Venetian mainland, particularly Friuli. Furthermore, the idea of creating a new, highly functional, specialised city on the eastern borders of the mainland, with the features of a permanent castrum to repel the Turks, was being developed. In the context of a broad defensive programme for Friuli, drawn up between 1469 and 1479, it was decided to deploy light cavalry in the castrum-city, also assigning them parcels of agricultural land in the area immediately surrounding the new city. The result was the only new city of the fifteenth century in Venice's *stato da terra*: Hemopolis (modern Gradisca) named after Giovanni Emo, *urbis conditor*, lieutenant of the Friuli homeland.

The “applied” study of historiography and of ancient military literature was to continue in the very early sixteenth century within the circle of Bartolomeo d'Alviano, *capitano generale* of Venice and his close collaborator, the Siena condottiero Baldassarre Scipione. The latter's main “consultant” was Vettor Fausto, the future successor to Marco Musuro in the chair of Greek at the Scuola di San Marco, who had already been in touch for some time with Demetrio Doukas and Giustino Decadio from Corfu. In the background, in this same context of Alviano and Scipioni, we know of the presence of a group of stradiot leaders (Costantino Boccali, Repossi Busichio, Teodoro Manassi, Nicolò Rali, and the Paleologi Costantino, Giovanni, Nicolò and Teodoro, along with many others); but it is at present not possible to document their direct participation in the theoretical discussions.



INTRODUCTION OF GREGHESCO TO THE VENETIAN THEATRE AND ITS LAPSE

Manlio Cortelazzo

This short paper attempts to define the period that saw the birth and explosion in Venice of the literary (especially theatrical) imitation of the way in which Venetian was spoken by Greek residents in the Republic, the so-called *greghesco*, starting from a mixed-language sonnet prior to 1530. This was then followed by its development and decline, first on the stage (the last comedy in which a character speaks *greghesco* was published in 1562), then in poetry and prose (in a novella of 1609).



LANGUAGE COMEDY ON THE VENETIAN STAGE IN THE LATE 16th CENTURY

Piermario Vescovo

Research conducted over recent decades has begun to trace a history of the experience of professional Italian companies between the end of the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, beyond an exclusively scholarly sphere, in the wider context of the history of European commercial theatre. The multilingual tradition in Venice is obviously not to be found within the *Commedia dell'Arte*, for the simple reason that this tradition chronologically precedes the first documented existence of professional companies since its most important personalities, such as Andrea Calmo, were not professional comedians.

Documentary research has allowed the history of a tradition to be reconstructed as being essentially the history of an academic group dedicated to literature, theatre and the craft and music of the stage in the mid-sixteenth century. Personalities such as the Venetian Antonio da Molin, called *il Burchiella*, and Gigio Artemio Giancarli from Rovigo belonged to and assisted this circle - also on stage - alongside Calmo. The history of multilingual Venetian comedy is transformed from the history of a tradition into the history of a pre-professional company, of its founders (Calmo, Molin, Giancarli) and its continuers-imitators (Negro, Fenarolo, etc.). The history of *greghesco*, that is, of perhaps the most admirable and characteristic theatrical and literary invention in the history of Venetian multilingualism in the sixteenth century, is primarily the history of the register - on the stage, on the written page, and eventually in the context of the musical score, between the 1530s and 1570s - invented by Molin, *il Burchiella*. Alongside Calmo's speciality



in the part of the old Venetian proto-Pantalone, those of Antonio da Molin can also be followed in the matching roles of characters who express themselves in *greghesco* in the comedies of Calmo and Giancarli, and additionally as author of the important poem *I fatti e le prodezze di Manoli Blessi stratiotto*, through to the invention of the *greghesca* musical genre.

Beyond a system of the free practice of multilingualism in a consistent need for the correspondence of languages and characters, and beyond the rigid cancellation of a character's language, the co-existence of systems - even if separated - which is typical of the experience of the Italian theatre with its acting tradition between the second half of the sixteenth and the end of the eighteenth centuries - is articulated in terms of linguistic composition.



GREEK THEATRE PRACTICE AND COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE: A LATE RE-DISCOVERY

Platon Mavromoustakos

The paper focuses on the extent to which important aspects of the Commedia dell'Arte acting tradition influenced the stage production of eighteenth-century works, leading to an enrichment of contemporary theatre practices in the last quarter of the twentieth century in Greece. After a short comment on some unverified information that centres on interesting, but not necessarily trustworthy sources on possible ways in which Greek theatre practice was communicated by touring companies during the previous centuries, it tries to compare the contemporary image of performances of works by Goldoni with evident signs of influence from the Commedia dell'Arte. The considerable influence in Greece of the director Giorgio Strehler's interpretation of the Goldoni dramaturgy is examined, using the staging of *Arlecchino servitore di due padroni* and *I gemelli veneziani* by the Karolos Koun Art Theatre as an example. Illustrations of these performances allow a comparison to be made of the design and stage set, showing the obvious rapport in the kinetic performance of the main roles, the creation of the stage space and the use of techniques that can be attributed to the Commedia dell'Arte





“OF ILLIRIC HOMELAND, THE MOST FAMOUS HOMELAND OF THE WORLD”, SOME REFLECTIONS UPON GOLDONI’S THEATRE AND DALMATIA

Anna Scannapieco

Like a “merchant of castradina (salted, smoked mutton produced in Dalmatia)”, “Stiepo Bruich from Pastrovicchio”, can be transformed into the brave captain Radovich from Cattaro, who, “from a glorious ancient family, / loves his home country and is friend to glory”. This ideal title concentrates and well summarises the tracks of the “Illyrian excursions” of Carlo Goldoni’s theatre, which are reconstructed here for the first time in their structure and their global evolution. Goldoni’s journey in Dalmatia developed over a span of thirty years though it consisted of few explorations. The nature of these, however, enables our eyes to see an extremely varied landscape. In it we can today see the outline of an epoch-making passage, and not only as far as the praxis and poetics of drama are concerned.



COMEDIANS AND JESTERS BETWEEN ITALY AND BAVARIA IN THE 16th CENTURY

Daniele Vianello

Two relatively close if not contiguous aspects are compared in this paper: on the one hand the fortunes of Venetian comedians and jesters in the first half of the sixteenth century (with particular reference to the versatile work of Zuan Polo and Domenico Tajacalze); on the other the spread of buffoonery and shows by Italian comedians (and related stereotypes) in Bavaria during the second half of the century.

There are undoubtedly similarities and analogies between the performances of the comici dell’Arte and those of Renaissance jesters; they have numerous elements in common, accounting for a predicable overlapping, but the differences are notable. Between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the comici dell’Arte wanted to free themselves of the stereotyped label “jester-courtesan”, distancing themselves from the slanderous craft of the jester, who, although frequenting patrician residences and representatives of power, remained substantially linked to the world of the dirty and the obscene. Recent studies propose interpreting the jester as a proto-professional figure, whose performances were embryonic precursors of the completed forms of professional comedians. At the same time, the European fortunes of the Commedia dell’Arte between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, that is, its “mythical image”, gave



enormous popularity to the old theatre “all'italiana”.

The performances of Italian comedians and jesters and the liking for the masks of the Italian comedy had become a fashion in nearby Bavaria, thanks in part to the wedding ties made between the Habsburgs and other Bavarian Catholic houses and the most important Italian families, along with the repeated stays in Italy by influential and versatile personalities such as the renowned Flemish musician Orlando di Lasso. The iconographic documents and fresco cycles in the German area, of which the most celebrated is still the Narrentrepp (‘The Jesters’ Staircase’) in the castle of Trausnitz in Landshut near Munich, confirm the reliability of the information contained in the literary documents, but do not portray details from comedies actually performed. They would seem rather to be a more general expression of the by then widely circulated “comic image” modulated on the classic scenes of clownish performances and on those of the Italian masks. What emerges from the analysis proposed is the need to keep the performances of the so-called *comici dell'Arte* distinct from the clownish ones and from the wider phenomenon of the European circulation of typical aspects of Italian Renaissance culture.



THE MYTH OF THE COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE IN RUSSIA IN THE EARLY 20th CENTURY

Raissa Raskina

Russia proved to be extraordinarily fertile ground for the rich poetic and iconographic imagination produced in the context of the *Commedia dell'Arte* at the beginning of the twentieth century, assimilating several clichés attached to it. A kind of “crusade” to recapture the lost “theatricality” was led by two high-profile exponents of St Petersburg theatre life, Nikolaj Evreinov and Vsevolod Mejerchol'd. From 1907 both directors took the same path of theatre “traditionalism”. Evreinov's meeting with the *Commedia dell'Arte* was a meeting lost, but his close associate in the early theatre, the actor and director Konstantin Miklaevskij, carried out a series of studies when preparing a cycle dedicated to the *Commedia dell'Arte*, for which he travelled to Italy, visiting Rome and Florence. In those years Vsevolod Mejerchol'd centred his research work on the *Commedia dell'Arte*. But the object on which Miklaevskij and Mejerchol'd focused their attention seemed to escape common definition. While the former passionately pursued his aim of defining the solid, historical, albeit changing, face of the reality of Italian professional comedians, trying to draw on first-hand documentary sources, the latter referred to a hypothetical theatre style of



imprecise chronological and historical confines. Unlike Evreinov, Mejerchol'd did not approach the Commedia dell'Arte with the intention of proposing a scenic reconstruction of it, he wanted rather to grasp those universal principles which, according to him, mark theatrical authenticity at any period. Some ideas expounded by Miklaevskij partly coincide with Mejerchol'd's ahistoric concept, acting in some respects as support and stimulus.

Mejerchol'd saw the Commedia dell'Arte as being primarily the theatre of the cabotin, of professionals par excellence. Improvisation, he claimed, was only possible because of the comedians' sophisticated technique. The most precious secret revealed to Mejerchol'd by the Commedia dell'Arte was an understanding that the comedians used only genuinely theatrical subjects, and that in every favourable period the theatre goes back to using them.

The fact remains that, despite his defence and promotion of the Commedia dell'Arte, Mejerchol'd never produced any complete show directly inspired by it.



TRACES OF COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE IN MODERN GREEK THEATRE (18th-19th CENTURIES)

Walter Puchner

This short article tries to examine the slight and delicate basis of evidence for the influence of Commedia dell'arte on the Modern Greek theatre mainly of the 18th century. For the Cretan theatre of the 17th century no direct influence can be assumed. For the Heptanesian theatre in the 18th century there are some indirect traces of influence but no performance on the Ionian Islands can be explicitly proved.



VOLUME V

KRALI MARCO THE HERO GUARDIAN OF BOUNDARIES

THE HERO BETWEEN THE “FAMILIAR” AND THE ALIEN

Plamen Bochkov

The author's thesis shifts from the traditional assumption that places the acritan hero as the guardian of the "edge", limit, or frontier, to one that maintains that the hero actually embodies a form of reconciliation. The acritan hero is a form of literary devise that eliminates the fundamental line of divide that separates the civilised from the uncivilised worlds, maturity from adolescence, the male gender from the female, and finally, life from death. Under close scrutiny, the acritic songs and literature of Bulgaria reveal that both the hero's and his adversaries' actions embody character traits deemed to belong to the opposing side.

The fact that acritic epics and songs are told in weddings, funerals, and other societal rituals, is not coincidental. The function of such tales is to create a common space for the entire community to be able to share a common set of values. This is precisely how men and women, the old and the young can build a sense of unity, and this is the manner by which the world of the living can establish a sense of continuity with the past generations belonging to the world of the departed.



KRALI MARCO - THE EPIC POWER IN MODERN TIMES

Valeri Stefanov

The literary figure of Krali Marko challenge the hero's character in folklore epic. Actual cultural and historic contexts impose various distances, play provocatively with scale, use ironical discourses. In other words, stereotypical formulas through which the epic hero's character is built up are involved in various situations in which they are put to the test. One of these situations is the object of this paper.

My focus is on the work of Ivan Vazov's “Krali Marko and a Rifle”, written in 1883. It constitutes a remark on legendary models, which are outlined in the traditional epic cycle of Krali Marko.



In the epic cycle Krali Marko acts according to the main principles of his legendary role - he is the protector of the community in a world of crisis, the guardian of the weak and oppressed people. He is the bearer of unbelievable qualities; his feats are true miracles. The community identifies itself with him and praises him in many songs. It should be stressed that the hero is strong not only because of his superhuman abilities, but also because he is the bearer of ideals.

The work of Vazov challenges and transforms the outlined legendary model. It unfolds as a dialogue which questions the values of an old type of heroism. The new world is a world of a stagnancy, lacking a cause and morally defined actions. In this context the Vazov's work is an ironic and nostalgic "legend", confronting the great legends of the past.



"BALKAN EAGLES AND FALCONS" OR ABOUT THE HEROIC EPIC AS A SHAPING FACTOR IN BULGARIAN AND CZECH SOCIETIES OF 19th CENTURY

Vladimir Penchev

The turbulent 19th century forms the imaginary portrait of the Balkans, of their specific identity in European consciousness and in European ideological space. Two problems appear here, that paradoxically contradict each other. One is Europe's attempt at denying the community of the Balkans by making it chaotic and even demonising it; the other is precisely the recognition of this community as a systematic typological entity. What is strange here is that such a controversial vision can be seen equally in the attitude towards the emblematic Balkan epos. On the one hand, following the paths of romanticism, the European consciousness perceives, reprocesses and emblematises Krali Marko and other heroes of the Balkan epic "pantheon" as European cultural characters. On the other, it assigns a paradigm of unsettledness, of uncertainty and of diversity, so peculiar to the European view of the Balkans. As peculiar, by the way, as its consequences - even today the Balkan peoples still "Balkanise" their epos and argue over whose it is and why. Therefore it is only right that the epic construct becomes a constitutive and intrinsic part of the concepts of the Balkan revival, transformed into a symbol of ethno-cultural identity. Furthermore, in this function, it transcends ethnic and political borders, in order to reaffirm - now on concrete ground - the emblematicity of the Balkan epic model in the eyes of the Europeans. A characteristic view of these processes is the reception of Bulgarian epic folklore texts in Czech lands during the aforementioned 19th century. They assume a symbolical meaning in the Czech social environment and are perceived



as emblematic of the Bulgarian spirit, the Bulgarian will for freedom and for everything Bulgarian. Metaphorically speaking, Krali Marko and the rest of the epic heroes are transformed into an image to imitate, a banner for Czech efforts to demonstrate their national identity and achieve national sovereignty. In the consciousness of the Czech society henceforth, the “Balkan eagles and falcons”, i.e. the Bulgarians, fighting for their freedom, are a brilliant example, showing the way to the Czechs' own freedom. This is why the epos turns out to be an emblem of what is ethnic, and Krali Marko is the bearer of the ethnic code.



THE BOUNDARIES OF KINSHIP IN BULGARIAN HEROIC EPIC

Nikolai Vukov

The main character of Bulgarian epic songs, Marko, is construed according to the main parameters of Bulgarian folk culture, in which kinship relationships are the main signifiers of personal and collective identity. The epic hero is an embodiment of this concept, as well as a demonstration of its internal logic and stability. His personality is closely connected with the kinship relationships that surround and constitute his biography. The different plots in Bulgarian epic emphasise a set of kinship roles that Marko assumes (son, brother, father, uncle, nephew, ritual brother, etc.), as well as a group of characters with whom Marko relates. In no other epic character can one find such a rich variety of kinship roles. The kinship identification of all the other characters depends exclusively on the main epic hero, and the kinship relationships that the various characters have with Marko form the key aspects of their epic performance.

The current text is an attempt to shed light on the characteristic features of the kinship model in Bulgarian epic songs. It raises the issue of the “boundaries” of kinship and demonstrates how Marko, as a chief character of Bulgarian epic songs, affirms and organises the kinship model and its “boundaries.” One of the conclusions made in the text is that the organisation and the internal hierarchy between the characters in Bulgarian epic songs is conditioned not so much by norms and models guaranteed by the patriarchal culture itself, or by the socially constructed ideas of power and prestige. Rather, they result from the functional role of each kinship relationship in the epic plots, and from the way it satisfies the main requirements related to the biography of the main epic hero and the social circle around him.





THE ARCHETYPE “KRALI MARCO” - “THE HERO-GUARDIAN OF BYZANTINE BOUNDARIES” IN BULGARIAN RENNAISSANCE LITERATURE

Kyril Topalov

The epic of Parlichev contains many opportunities for interesting studies and conclusions to be drawn with regard to the literary life of the Byzantine and South Slav legend of the guardian of the frontiers during the Balkan Renaissance. While stories like “Black Daryk” and “Sinder The Klepht” (Guerrilla) by Nikola Koslev present the guardian of the frontier in its basic version, Parlichev's version is carried out in a more complicated manner. According to this version, based on the Homeric model, the separate, lesser narratives of the heroic duels gradually build up to the larger narrative dealing with the protection of the frontier (the folklore expression of these stories are the “klepht” songs i.e. guerrilla songs). Parlichev's stories are written in a unique style, and reflect an organic composition which includes traits from Homer, folk songs (epic songs lauding Krali Marko) and sophisticated literature. The case of “Man-at-Arms” is based on heroic folk songs disseminated at that time in the area of Ohrid that tell the story of Captain Kouzman.



DJERZELEZ ALIYA: A MUSLIM COUNTERPART OF PRINCE MARKO

Pedro Bádenas de la Peña

In Bosnia, at Novi Pazar, and among the Albanians, particularly in Kosovo, the development of an epic romance may be observed. This develops in the borderland regions with Islam, or krajina, territory of the guslar singers. From the second half of the 18th century onwards, an entire corpus of exploits of heroes such as Djerzelez Aliya and Mujo and Halil has been recorded. In this context the character of Djerzelez Aliya is the counterpart of the Slav Christian epic hero Kral Marko for people who -under pressure or persuasion- had given up the Christian faith.

Before the arrival of the Ottoman Turks, there was a long tradition concerning the “epic” relations between the Byzantines and the Moslem world, through the Christian Arabs in the service of the Byzantine cause, and the “acritic” world of the warriors on the borderlands. This oral folk epic may have come into the Balkans from Arab Sicily, Moorish Spain and from the eastern steppes, brought by the Pechenegs, Cumans and other Oriental peoples. On their arrival, the



Ottomans found traces of these literary trends in Albania, in Bulgaria and within the mountain regions of Macedonia, Kosovo and behind the Dalmatian coast.

A close comparison of epic songs about two heroes confirms that the poetic image of Djerzelez Aliya and that of Marko are modelled on the magical oriental elements to be found in the Balkan and Oriental epics.



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