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## **Slovenian „Good Stories” about King Matthias Corvinus**

**I.**

The most colourful and mysterious figure of the Slovenian folk tradition is King Matthias (Kralj Matjaž). In the first place he is a positive hero of folk tales and folk songs, a saviour of Slovenians. Pável Ágoston was the first to deal with King Matthias in the Slovenian folk tradition and literature, his aim being to publish a comprehensive monograph, but he failed (Pável, 1976). Later on Ivan Grafenauer and Milko Matičetov Slovenian folklorists have taken up the topic (Grafenauer, 1951., Matičetov, 1958). A conference, held at Maribor on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of King Matthias's death in 1990, gave impetus to further research (Varga, Molnár, 1991).

Starting from the period of Romanticism, folk tales and folk songs about King Matthias represented an important inspiration for Slovenian literature. Slovenian poets and writers using the rich folk tradition and literature gave their own interpretation and actualization of the stories about the King, trying to find the answers both for the urgent fate-questions of Slovenians, as well as of their own doubts. Thus, King Matthias became one of the mythical heroes of Slovenian people.

My monography written in Hungarian devoted to this topic, summarises everything that has been written in Slovenian and Hungarian scientific literature of 20th century on folk tales and folk songs about King Matthias. This was the first time that a comprehensive picture of reception of Matthias-phenomenon in Slovenian literature was given (Lukács, 2001). Now I would like to present my latest findings in the field. The study aims at the following new questions, themes and problems: newly found historical facts, a new perspective of relation between Matthias Corvinus Hunyadi and the Slovenian provinces, a new interpretation of traditional folk texts about King Matthias Corvinus as texts of collective memory, collective narrative, and collective identity, and a comparative study of historical data concerning the most interesting mythological elements, motives of collective narratives and literary adaptations about King Matthias.

## II.

The Cillei family played a decisive role in the destiny of the territories inhabited by Slovenians, in the period before King Matthias's reign. This family, being relatives of many European royal families, influenced the political life as from the Balkans to the frontiers of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. It is a well known fact, that Hunyadi played the most important role in decline of this omnipotent family. In 1448, after the defeat at Kosovsko polje János Hunyadi promised that his son Matthias would marry Elizabeth, Ulrich Cillei's daughter. Marriage was contracted in 1455. But Elizabeth Cillei very soon after it died. After János Hunyadi's death on 11th August, 1456, the king appointed Ulrich Cillei to be his lieutenant in Hungary. This has intensified the hatred of Hunyadi's henchmen. They assassinated Ulrich Cillei in Belgrad on 9th November, 1456. This way the Cillei family died out. A fierce struggle started for the distribution of their property, finally emperor Ferdinand was the winner in 1457. As a result of bloody battles he managed to snatch the significant part of the property. After Władysław III Warneńczyk's death a new situation arose. Podiebrad became the King of Bohemia, and Matthias Hunyadi became the king of Hungary in 1458. Ferdinand and Albrecht triggered off a war of inheritance in the Habsburg provinces. The Slovenian lands were devastated by mercenaries of both parties almost for a decade. Marauding Turks coming from Bosnia and Serbia, like a spring flood, were coming from the direction of Istria and Zagreb to Slovenian territories from 1469 to 1483. They have ruined and pillaged these lands preparing for a bigger campaign. Protective measures of Frederic III were not efficient enough. The new taxes imposed upon the villeinage just worsened the situation and evoked social discontentment. The cruel Turkish attacks stopped in 1483 only as a result of the peace-treaty between King Matthias and Sultan Bayazid II. It was an important event that brought popularity to King Matthias among the Slovenians.

In the Slovenian folk songs and folk tales, as well as in literary pieces about King Matthias, the topic and motif of Matthias and the Turks, Matthias' Turkish confinement are prevalent. In connection with this let us recall an interesting and puzzling biographical circumstance. King Matthias in a letter to Sultan Mehmed II calls the sultan his own flesh and blood, and later on he does the same in connection with the younger brother of Bayazid II, the pretender prince Jem, whom he wanted to become his prisoner not the Pope's. He informs the envoy of the Pope that prince Jem was son of the sister of Janos Hunyadi's mother, who was taken into prison by Turks, and later became wife of Sultan Bayazid II. In the peace-treaty of 1488 Bayazid II also calls Matthias „his brother and relative” (Kubinyi, 2001: 9). There are no reliable historical data in this respect, but consanguinity stressed by the king was well-known.

A war broke out between Frederic III and Matthias Corvinus Rex in 1480. Hungarians occupied Radkersburg, and a bit later Fürstenfeld and next year was Maribor besieged. In 1483 they approached up to Ljubljana. The political intentions of the King became more and more clear: to drive out the Habsburgs from territories stretching from Vienna to the sea and build up a strong defence line against the Turks there. Despite Frederic's effort Matthias occupied more and more Slovenian territories. Peace talks started at the end of 1489, but after King Matthias's death in 1490 Hungarian supremacy on Slovenian territories ceased to exist. The Habsburgs have regained Slovenian territories. King Matthias represented the type of ruler who could have protected the Slovenians against the Turkish invasion and to make an order on Slovenian territories instead of Frederic III (Kos, 1955., Rázsó, V. Molnár, 1990., Štih, Simoniti, 1996., Kubinyi, 2001).

Concerning King Matthias of the Slovenian folk tradition recurring questions arise in the Slovenian literature: whom this hero could be identified with? Could it be identified with the Hungarian King Matthias? There are scarce written resources and documents proving the influence of this Hungarian king of renaissance upon the Slovenians. Still Matthias Hunyadi's influence in the region was essential, thus the Slovenians could not evade it, either.

### III.

The idea of individual redeeming and redeeming of the community (nation) is present in almost each and every story about King Matthias. So we are entitled to ask a question: where does the idea of King Matthias the saviour come from. Is there any concrete historical basis for this important motif in Slovenian works about King Matthias?

Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), an outstanding figure of Florentine humanism, neoplatonist and theologian devoted the third book of his *De triplica vita* to King Matthias. He wrote in his recomendatory letter to Matthias in 1480 that philosophers, poets, orators and historians of the Greek era were forced to suffer under Turkish yoke, and went on: „As the saints of old times in the limbo called the Messiah, so these miserable philosophers loudly called for Matthias, Matthias the redeemer (*italics mine I. L.*), to take them out of the limbo or out of the hell, back to the light and life” (Klaniczay, 1976: 166). In this case it is not the usual polite humanist formula, but the sincere admiration coming from the most outstanding Italian humanist. Ficino's is a European opinion about King Matthias, this is why there is no doubt it was well-known. Connection between the European and Slovenian Matthias, the redeemer motif is logical.

#### IV.

Group narratives play an important role in contemporary historiography. Their development has a special dynamics – certain stories appear in quite different versions, till “the good story” has been created (Pataki, 2003). Two factors play a decisive role in the development of narratives: collective memory and national identity. Maurice Halbwachs, father of collective memory theory, considers that the human memory is not of individual character, but is determined by the social communication that is we only can remember those things, which were communicated by different social groups, which, due to this, could be placed into various social schemes or social contexts (Gyáni, 2003). Memory can be communicative or cultural. According to Jan Assmann communicative memory contains recent events of the past and present common to the peers. While the cultural memory dates back to the origin of the community. Culture objectifies all important experiences and memories of the community, and saves them in the form of encoded stories (Assman, 1999).

The group narratives are extremely important for embalming the past. Nora Pierre stresses, if the continuity of memory breaks, we will diverge from our past. We can remember only if the places of memory exist: establishments, topographical points, cultural works, social customs, rituals, narratives. The most important task of the places of memory is strengthening and transmitting the national identity (Gyáni, 2003: 12). The encoded events in the places of memory are real not because they have happened, says H. White, but because they have found their place in the chronological order of events (White, 1997: 134). Certain episodes in the chain of events become extremely meaningful from time to time, so the community stylizes them. The collective story arisen in this way saves the community in physical sense, guaranties its continuity, which brings to development and organisation of individual’s self-consciousness. Those narratives constantly change: renew, reorganise, their meaning is being replanished. This is a close system of meanings, as far as certain ideas are understandable only to the members of the community (Pataki, 2003).

#### V.

Among the numerous folk tales, folk songs and literary pieces about King Matthias there are three outstanding „good stories“. Some of them has already been analysed from mytho-historical point of view (Pável, 1976: 7-29., Nartnik, 1996: 150-156): one of them is *Voznik pri kralju Matjažu* (Haulier at King Matthias), the second is a folk song *Godec pred peklom* (Fiddler at the Gate of the Hell), and the third is Ivan Cankar, modernist Slovenian writer’s short story *Potepuh Marko in kralj Matjaž* (Scallywag Marco and King Matthias).

## Voznik pri Kralju Matjažu

Neki Slovenec (pravijo) je iz Ugerske vina doma vozil. Nekega dne pride po svojem potu skoz veliko dobravo, nameri se pod visoko goro, na kateri opazi hišico, ktera stoji na pol v skalo zazidana, tako da se kumej streha iz zemlje vidila. Pred vratami zagleda verlega junaka, s sabljo opasanega. Kadar se Slovenec s vozom približa, začne junak govoriti in pitati: »Prijatelj! Ti si iz gornjih naših stran. Povej mi, ali še lazijo mravlice na te tri verhe: na Šent-Krištofov, na Šent-Helenin in na Šent-Urihov verh?

Slovenec je odgovoril: »Še lazijo, pa ves čas le redje.«

»Povej doma: kadar bode vera toliko oslabela, da ne bode nikdo več hodil na te tri verhe, tedaj bodem jaz ustal in prišel s svojo černo vojsko.«

»Kdo si pa ti?« ga upraša Slovenec.

»Jaz sim kralj Matjaž! Stopi bliže in pojdi za menoj v to hišico, da se sam s svojimi očmi prepričaš.«

Slovenec gre z njim v hišico in kralj Matjaž mu ukaže: »Stopi tu za me in poglej meni čez desno ramo skoz tot okno.«

Človek stori, kakor mu je ukazano in vidi ravno polje, dolgo in široko. Po celim polju čez in čez vse sami vojaki v orožji s konji. Pa vse mirno in tiho. Nič se ne gane, kakor da bi spali konji in vojaki.

»Vidiš, to je črna vojska!« reče kralj Matjaž začudjenemu Slovencu. – »Poglej spet skoz okno.« - Človek spet pogleda, kralj pak prime rahlo za svojo sabljo in jo malo iz nožnice povleče. Sdaj glej! Cela vojska oživi! Vojaki se vzdignejo, konji začnejo s glavami majati, herzati in s kopitami kopati.

»Vidiš!« reče kralj Matjaž, »ne bode več dolgo, in jaz bom ustal in potegnil svojo sabljo. Bode mlačen veter potegnil, vsem ljudem jedno misel dal. Moji vojaki bodo poskakali na konje. Tedaj bode črna vojska za sveto staro vero in pravico.« (Tako je dejal Kralj Matjaž..) (Grafenauer, 1951: 210-211.)

The above quoted „good story“ contains quite an amount of interesting and important mythological, philosophical and concrete historical layers. Reviewing and disentangling of these layers will prove everything that was said about the development of group narratives.

There are three small churches on the top of three hills to north-east from Klagenfurt – the one named after Saint Ulrich is ruined now. These churches were endpoints of the so called „flying pilgrimage“ (leteče procesije) of Slovenians. They used to visit all three churches on the same day (Nartnik, 1989: 64-70). King Matthias's question in the Slovenian folk tale: „Tell me, do people still go up to the three hills: to Saint Cristof, to Saint Magdalen and to Saint Ulrich?“ obviously refers to this pilgrimage.

The story begins in a huge forest, on a high mountain and in a „bower partly built in the cliff, the roof of which could hardly be seen“. Let us recall Erazem Predjamski, peer of King Matthias, in this respect, whose world famous castle Predjama is not far from the Postojna dripstone cave and is being partly built in the cave. At the end of XIV century the castle became the property of the German Lueger family, whom Slovenians consider to be the Predjamski. Most of the legends are connected to Erazmus Predjamski, who asked for the help of King Matthias against Frederic III and later became a mugger valiant. He was assassinated in his own castle in 1484 (Šumi, 1992: 146). He was a fearful mugger, who often attacked the feudals and merchants on their way to sea or from the sea to the heart of the country (Stopar, 1987: 331.). The strange situation of his castle is very similar to Matthias's bower in the folk tale („partly built in the cliff“).

In connection with the above mentioned story we have to recall two other events, too, which happened in King Matthias's time not far from Slovenian territories in 1485 and 1487.

Matthias occupied Kronenburg on 18th March, 1485, before the conquest of Vienna. Antonio Bonfini, historiographer of King Matthias wrote: „So the king occupied Kronenburg, the bastion of Vienna... It was a day of such a solar eclipse, that a lot of stars could be seen. Lots of people have prophesied that the solar eclipse meant a misfortune for the emperor.“ (Bonfini, 1959) The solar eclipse in the reality happened on 16th March, 1485, in the geographical line of Linz, Kőszeg and Esztergom. In Vienna and Buda it was almost a total eclipse. Mercure, Venus, Mars and Jupiter there were bright stars along with the Sun. It was well-known that the king was afraid of celestial phenomena. The second important event that happened on 17th August, 1487, after Wiener Neustadt had been seized, was a magnificent manoeuvre in the field of Sollenau, discribed meticulously by Bonfini. Let me quote just a small part from this rather lengthy text: „He had aligned, deployed all the legions near Wiener Neustadt on a huge meadow... The army, which had left the camp and deployed on the meadow in order to occupy the Noricum narrows and jaws, consisted of eight thousand footsoldiers, twenty thousand equestrians, and nine thousand chariots (without pages, batboys, victuallers). The King decided to deploy all the combat columns himself, to assign all the war-tasks according to merits... Obedience was so big, fear and respect to the ruler was combined with such a big love that all his comands were fulfilled quicker than his word left his

mouth, a desire to comply with his instruction made it possible to everybody even to sacrifice his life. Silence was so big that neither humane voice, nor neighing of horses was heard, only commands. Then, the combat columns moved a bit on, on a given sign started manoeuvres in front of the King, the lines drew up once in wedge-shape, once in circle, once in triangle and quadrangle, in the shape of a saw and scissors.”<sup>1</sup> In Haulier at King Matthias the mythical King Matthias vivifies the soldiers of his „black troop” just as historical Matthias in Bonfini’s description during the manoeuvres on the Sollenau meadows. Both in the „good story” about King Matthias in Slovenian folk tradition and in Bonfini’s historical description there are two states: a standstill, dead state and a vital, dynamic one. Transition from one state to the other happens that the mythical king unsheathes his sword, and so does the historical king giving a signal. On the long and broad mythical/mystical „plain” – Bonfini also wrote about a „broad meadow” – the Slovenian man notices the motionless „black troop” that he had not seen before. Two states of the „black troop” – existence/non-existence – can be compared to solar eclipse, when the real world for a short time disappears irregularly, and then comes back. These two events – a natural one (solar eclipse) and a historical (manoeuvres), when the historical King Matthias with his multinational troops, with Slovenians in it, three years before his death, really came very near to Slovenian territories, and the possibility for western expansion towards Noricum also became real, and left a longlasting effect in the collective memory of the Slovenians. We can find the most different layers of collective memory in the polyvalent „good story” Haulier at King Matthias, which changed from time to time starting from a mystical layer, to mythological and historical ones.

## VI.

The figure of Orpheus in the Greek mythology is still puzzling. His memory was enshrined by orphics: they alledged that they got the books containing Orpheus’s teachings, his narrative about the nether world describing the knowledge he gained and spread on the world (Kerényi, 1977: 365). Two main characteristics of his myth are essential: wonderful power of his song enchanting the whole world, and his trip to the nether world. Orpheus descends to the nether world in vain, he is unable to bring back Euridice. At the same time another mythical hero, who used to be compared to Orpheus in the ancient times, Dionysos managed to rescue his mother Semele from Hades (Kerényi, 1977: 368). Hungarian readers got acquainted with a Slovenian song of a perfect orphic origin about King Matthias due to Pável Ágoston. This is only one of that kind of songs among the others in the Slovenian folk tradition (Pável, 1976: 7-29).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hik.hu/tankonyvtar/site/books/b85/ch39.html>

## Godec pred peklom

*Stoji mi pole široko,  
Po poli steza vglajena.  
Po stezi pride kral Matjaš  
No se močno hudo drži.  
Jega pa sreje potnik star,  
Potnik star, sam večni Bog:  
»Pa kaj je tebi kralj Matjaš  
kaj se ti tak hudo držiš?«  
»Bog vam plati na pitanje!  
Koj se ja nebi hudo držâ,  
Ki že meni za dougo let  
Moja luba mrtva leži,  
Moja luba mrtva leži,  
No duša joj v pekli gori.«  
»Oj nikaj, nikaj, kral Matjaš!  
Le idi ti na senjem lep,  
Si kupi žoûte goslice,  
No pred peklom zaigraj.  
Da boš igrâ minote tri.  
De tebe pitâ šatan vrag:  
Čuješ, ti igre, kral Matjaš.  
Kaj pa bom ti za plačo dâ?  
Ti pa mu (ta) odgovor daj,  
Kaj boš si plačo jemâ sam.«  
Kral Matjaš grè na senjem lép  
No si kupi žoûte goslice,  
Te on ide pred pekel,  
No pred peklom zaigrâ.  
Da je že igrâ minote tri,  
Ga je pitâ šatan vrag:  
»Čuješ, ti igre, kral Matjaš!  
Kaj pa bom ti za plačo dâ?«  
»Čuješ, ti šatan, peklenski kral!  
Jaz bom si plačo sam jemâ.«  
On prime lubo za belo rokó  
No jo pela z pekla žerečega.  
Kak hitro jo perpela vun,  
Tak hitro luba pregoûči:  
»Nesrečen bodi, pekel ti,  
kaj bóš zdaj mogâ prazen bit!«  
  
Kak hitro luba pregoûči,  
Tak hitro nazaj v pekel zleti.  
»Nesrečen bodi, jezik ti,  
Kaj nesi mogâ tiho bit!  
Zdaj pa na veke goriâ boš,*



*Zdaj pa na veke trpiâ bôš!«'!"*  
(Pável, 1976: 23-24.)

The basic difference between the ancient myth and the above quoted one is in the existence of Christian elements. It is well-known that Orpheus played an outstanding role in the Christian mythology. His figure as a good shepherd can be often seen on the wall of catacombs. We do not know how got the Orpheus legend to the Slovenian folk tradition, nor we know if Matthias took place of Orpheus or some other mythical figure (Pável, 1976: 7-29).

Before Christianity there were two such religions of mystery that later organically were associated with Christianity: the first one is the cult of Mythras, the Persian sun-god, and the second is the Greek cult of Dionysos. The two religions, of extremely wild yearning for spiritual life were substituted by Orpheus, whom the early Christian church considered to be the prefiguration of Jesus Christ. Even today an Orpheus-monument from the second century can be seen at Ptuj. It is not an accident that in the Middle Ages it used to be a whipping-post (Kmecl, 1979: 31).

It is a special Slovenian feature of the ancient Dionysos-Orpheus parallel, that another version of the poem exists, recorded by a illustrious Slovenian-Croat poet Stanko Vraz not far from the Hungarian border near Ljutomer in the XIX century. In this text, King Matthias descends to the hell not for his love, but for his mother (Novak, 1967: 180). We do know a political and personal event in King Matthias's biography, which was connected to Ptuj in Slovenia. The King's mother and her future daughter-in-law first met at Ptuj. King Matthias married Beatrix, daughter of King of Naples Ferdinand I in 1476. Among the members of the populous Hungarian delegation during their visit to Naples there were 20 Turkish slaves as well.<sup>2</sup> Because of Turkish threat the queen's quite risky journey crossed Carniola and Styria. Turkish marauding groups were manacing the delegation on its way. They arrived at Ptuj in the first days of December, where the widow of John Hunyadi was waiting for them. From Ptuj they proceeded to Székesfehérvár (Prém, 1902).

Mythological and historical layers of collective memory can be found both in the folk song Fiddler at the Gate of the Hell and in the story about Haulier at King Matthias. Ptuj is the memory-place, which is a mythological and historical junction. King Matthias of Slovenian folk tales and folk songs in fact is an „archetypical symbol“ (Frye, 1998: 440-448), present in the Slovenians' collective subconscious past and future, which is influencing their historical and cultural development, in a modified, slightly misshapen and actualised form (Jung, 1993: 30-37). Past, because these texts stand sentinel over the spiritual essence of all those civilisations Slovenians were geographically in contact with during their history, and future, as far as Slovenians still safeguard King Matthias's tradition.

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<sup>2</sup> There are quite a lot of folk songs about King Matthias and the turks.

## VII.

In Slovenia wooden panels of beehives were decorated by paintings. The oldest panel comes from the middle of XVIII century, and most of them from the XIX century (Berk, Bogataj, Pukšič, 1993). Paintings of the beehives are like the folk tradition itself: full of psychological, sociological and historical contents (Gnilšak, 1992: 11). I would like to draw your attention only to two beehives out of many, which are important from the point of view of our topic. Their similar composition can be connected with Ivan Cankar, a modernist Slovenian writer's short story *Potepuh Marko in kralj Matjaž* (Scallywag Marco and King Matthias). One of the central figures of it is Christ with the glory, being undressed by two Roman soldiers. The composition is surrounded by trees on both sides. On the second one the crowned King Matthias is in the centre, his long beard being divided into two parts onto the stone table.<sup>3</sup> It is definitely anachronistic that Matthias is being guarded by five Roman soldiers with the spears. An outstanding expert of the topic, Gorazd Makarovič considers this to be quite a strange thing: „The king is not sleeping, but sitting under the trees. Soldiers, in unusual but in very Roman-like dresses, are surrounding him.” (Makarovič, 1962: 115) Again there are two trees on both sides of the panel. The pictor of the panel wanted to stress that it is King Matthias as he put *Kralj Matiaš* on the panel, and that is rather unusual in the „genre”. Soldiers in Roman dresses around him prove that this is an actualisation in both cases: Christ with the glory and historical figure of King Matthias can be easily interchanged.

The ritual and mythological system of symbols proved to be an inexhaustible resource, a sort of „archetypical grammar” for literature (Meletyinskij, 1985: 152). This is generally true, and I am going to prove it by the Slovenian literature, that the literature is genetically connected to the mythology through the folklore (Meletyinskij, 1985: 357). The method of mythical criticism as István Fried states „can help in disclosing the interpreting and deforming character of biblical and ancient elements in literary works of XX century..., it may point out... those hidden – mythological – references turning to the Bible, antiquities and – psychological – archetypes.” (Fried, 1997: 3) Melding the (folk) fine arts, unwritten tradition and literature, disentangling the existing archetypical contacts between them may bring us nearer to a better understanding of historical, intellectual layers, as well as to better interpretation and understanding of intentions and works of different authors using these layers.

Ivan Cankar's *Scallywag Marco and King Matthias* (Cankar, 1973: 7-96), written in 1905, is an interesting précis of hundred years' of presence of Matthias-myth in the literature. In one of the key episodes of the literary work, the central hero Marco

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<sup>3</sup> This is a well-known legend according to which King Matthias is sleeping in the cave of mountain Peca near the stone table. When his beard whips the table round three times, King resurrects to save Slovenians.

falls asleep and sets out to a „wonderful trip“ in his dream. In the middle of the forest he enters a cave, which is like a sepulchral vault. The picture he sees on the wall of the cave is almost the same we have seen on the beehive: „Two valiants were standing at the entrance. Their heads are deeply turned down onto their chest, their hands are on the long spearhandle. They are the spitting images of the Roman soldiers, whom Marco have seen in front of the God’s tomb in the church. Their face was grim and covered by beard“ (Cankar, 1973: 227). The image of Matthias and that of Christ on the beehive panels are the same. Taking into consideration that these beehive pictures were „individual creations“, it is not likely that Cankar could have seen somewhere the above described Matthias’s image, which is identical to the scene of Cankar’s literary work. There is no „philological“ answer to this concurrence.

The motto of Scallywag Marco and King Matthias – „If Matthias age comes back peasants will be glad“ – helps us to identify the Slovenian folk tale, which used to be Cankar’s resource. It could be found in Ivan Grafenauer’s book under the title *The Drunken Man at King Matthias* (Grafenauer, 1951: 227-228). From literary and „ideological“ point of view, Cankar found exciting only one element of the folk tale: the figure of the drunken main hero, whom he modelled to be a really ambiguous figure according to modernist esthetical principles. Marco, embodiment of the Slovenians’ longterm search for truth, is a real dionysian figure. He is an artist, a beggar, a drunken man, a tragic and a comic figure at a time. Scallywag Marco among the other „nomadic“ heros is an exceptionally complicated figure as far as he is apparently in a dialog with a concrete folk tradition, this is why he had to take into consideration certain restrictions. Because he is a symbolic hero, his life has no traditional developing line, but a biography with natural cycles, bringing him back all the time to the transcended system of values (Juvan, 1989: 479).

Matthias’s myth as one of the most archaic, the most stable and very popular element of the Slovenian folk tradition, appeared to be suitable for Cankar to answer a lot of problems concerning destiny of the Slovenian people, and the actual dilemmas of individuals, too.

What was the reason that the Matthias-myth became such an important part of Cankar’s works? At the end of 90’s in XIX century Cankar witnessed questions, which he had to answer in his literary works. One of these questions was the serious accusation of nationlessness, i.e. the relation to the Slovenian national tradition. Matthias-myth as a vivid and compulsory part of this tradition appears in the writer’s thoughts, it is suitable for posing those fateful questions, which are permanently present in the Slovenian history: defencelessness of the Slovenian people through centuries, fatefulness of the Slovenian national history, permanent foreign power, no chance for flourishing accompanied with social inequality. Matthias-myth constant presence in Cankar’s works proves: the writer did not want to reckon with the myth (Cankar, 1959: 435-439., Zadavec, 1980: 153-165), he

wanted to actualise and interpret it in the joint intersection of collectivism and individualism.

In Slovenian literature, and especially in Cankar's works, modernist literary sensitivity and literary aesthetical approach, that came from secession, which was responsive to the European and national folk traditions, have found answers to final questions in a world beyond our everyday experiences. Heros of mythology and national folklore - Dionysos, Orpheus, King Matthias, Kurent, and so on - are present in the literature directly, or indirectly in a veiled manner, that gives direct, solvable, oblique, and at the same time enigmatic answers both to the hot questions of a historical era and to the momentary individual problems of the writer. The Slovenian literature once deliberately and then spectacularly used the folk tradition, because it has to prove its national orientation, and then again it paled it to be palimpsest-like, trying to make the reader even more tenuos by the puzzling materia.

King Matthias of the Slovenian folk tradition and literature even nowadays shows us his multifaced figure, mythological past and historical reality stuck to his mantle in sometimes recognisable and understandable, but sometimes fathomless layers. The three „good stories“ as a sound narrative of the Slovenian collective memory proved to be an everlasting place of memory.

## **Summary**

The author's monograph, published in Hungarian in 2001 (Lukács, 2001), was the first attempt of a synthesis of the topic of King Matthias Corvinus in Slovenian folk tradition and literature. This study clearly continues a possible expansion of the theme that was sketched out in the monograph, primarily moving towards a new interpretation of traditional folk texts about King Matthias Corvinus as texts of collective memory, collective narrative, and collective identity. The myth of King Matthias Corvinus as a saviour strongly condenses how this exceptional soldier and possible crusader leader, who shall vanquish the unbelievers and heretics, became a ruler that liberated this part of Europe from barbarism and instilled in it the spirit of humanism and the Renaissance.

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