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Dragoslav ANTONIJEVIĆ
Institute for Balkan Studies
Belgrade

COMMON TRAITS IN SERBIAN AND GREEK FOLKLORE TRADITIONS

Abstract: The various Arabs masquerades have many common elements, both in Serbia and Greece: two essential structural components, one of which has been forgotten or abandoned today, the definite religious and magical component, and the more preponderant mimetic and cathartic component of folk theatricalness performed for entertainment, suppressing thus the cultic content. However, both components were permeated in the past with the important social component. The ritual, with its comic action and behavior, emphasized eroticism and completely inversed the fundamental values of the patriarchal ethos, characteristic of life in a Balkan village until the recent past. Arabs, and many other masquerades in the Balkans, contains dramatic elements of revolt, pressure and unrestrained behavior and the right to legal anarchy and symbolic destruction of normative order, denoting the climax of catharsis in social tensions.

INTRODUCTION

In a discourse published some years back I examined the parallels between the Greek and Serbian folk religions.¹ I pursued similar investigations in my subsequent works in the domain of folklore.² On this occasion I wish to point to definite correspondences in meaning, substance and form in a masquerade called "*the Arabs*", common to both Serbs and Greeks.

Let us start from the very name of the masquerade. Greeks add the adjective black, or the noun Blacks to the name "Arab", whereas Serbs seem to believe the name had been given because the mummers

1 D. Antonijević, *Zajedničko u narodnoj religiji Grka i južnih Slovena*, Balcanica VIII, Belgrade 1977.

2 D. Antonijević, *Vizantijske brumalije i savremene maskirane povorke balkanskih naroda*, Balcanica X, Belgrade 1979; D. Antonijević, *Narodno glumovanje i Dionisov kult*, Antički teatar na tlu Jugoslavije, Novi Sad 1981.

were sooty, thus resembling "Arabs", i.e. Blacks. Serbian folk tradition refers to Arabs and Blacks as black Arabs. Among Serbs and Greeks alike, or rather, among the most of Balkan Christians, the Arab has been regarded as a symbol of and synonymous to a demon of the underworld. There is an obscure memory of a three-headed black Arab, with a cult of his own, in Serbian folk poetry and legends.³

Both in the Serbian and Greek folk dances we are dealing with the Arab is always impersonated as a raider of black complexion who abducts brides and women, carrying them off to his realm. Let me add that the Arab and Turk were frequently a substitute for the devil, himself a substitute for an ancient chthonic divinity⁴

The Arabs was first recorded in Serbia by O. Mladenović and M. Ilijin who observed the performance on Shrovetide in 1952 and 1958, in the villages around Belgrade, the so-called Belgrade Danube valley (Višnjica, Veliko Selo, Slanci, Mirjevo, Vinča, Rutopek).⁵ Almost forty years later, a new research on Shrovetide in Veliko Selo was published by M. Ivanović-Barišić and D. Antonijević.

Before offering a description and analysis of the masquerade, it seems necessary to point to certain geographical and historical facts to help bring out the traits of the dance common to Serbs and Greeks

As we know from the Serbian ethnology and historiography, migrations of individual ethnic groups in the Balkans occurred throughout the centuries. According to J. Cvijić, as a consequence of these migrations, the arrangement of the groups in the Peninsula altered considerably. In many regions one population was replaced by another with different characteristics, sometimes speaking another language. The populations having mingled with one another, the various ethnic and ethno-biological processes took place. The ethnic types of individual regions were thus considerably altered, with the ancient local or medieval popular type often disappearing, and a new ethnic amalgam emerging.⁶

The inhabitants of the aforesaid villages in the Danube basin originate from southern and southeastern parts of Serbia (Pirot, Niš, Trn, Vranje, Svrlijig, Prulep, Bitolj and Tetovo). In addition it is impor-

3 *Srpski mitološki rečnik*, Belgrade 1970, 7.

4 *Ibid.*

5 M. Ilijin and O. Mladenović, *Narodne igre u okolini Beograda*, Zbornik radova Etnografskog instituta SANU, 4. Beograd 1962, 172-178.

6 J. Cvijić, *Balkansko poluostrvo*, Beograd 1966, 130.

tant to note that they include Greek settlers who came from Salonika, Serez and Edirne. In the days of Ottoman rule, the Turks moved many gardening families from Maritsa, settling them there to grow vegetables for them.⁷ Many scholars have noticed that the physiognomy of the settlers from Thrace resembles that of the inhabitants of the regions whence their forefathers came. There were wide differences in speech, costume and customs. The newcomers seldom mixed with the indigenous population, the least with those from western parts of the Peninsula. Veliko Selo (Large Village), where studies of the masquerade were conducted in 1995, was first called Novo Selo (New Village). However, when the settlers from Thrace arrived, it was renamed Veliko Selo.⁸

In Greece, studies of the masquerade were made in 1975 by A. Parafenidu in the village of Nixiani. The village is situated in the mountainous region of Pangaion, in Thrace, and, according to written sources, existed in the 15th century. The dance was performed in winter, between the New Year's and St. John the Baptist's Day. The ancient city of Akesamene is situated near Nixiani. Mt. Pangaion, legend has it, is the birthplace of Dionysus, and was in ancient times renowned as the center of the Dionysian cult. The written sources tell us that the village existed as early as the 15th century.

DESCRIPTIVE MODEL

Serbia

According to the studies made in 1952 and 1958, "the Arabs" is performed every year on Shrovetide. In the early days, women were anxious lest the "Arabs" should not drop by, so they fear that someone would catch the Arab measles that year. Only men take part in the dance, generally married men - in Veliki Mokri Lug, the participants were in their forties. The number of mummers varies from 7-8 in Mirrijevo, 10-14 in Vinča, 12-14 in Višnjica. The men are masked as bride and bridegroom, best man, bridegroom's chief attendant, bridesman, father and mother-in-law (or grandmother and grandfather), host (supposedly to record the gifts), priest or monk. Other performers are simple masks ("pictures"), one carrying a basket for the eggs and bacon, another a wine jug, the third a sack for other foodstuffs. Sometimes

7 R. Nikolic. *Okolina Beograda*, SEZb V, Beograd 1903, 905.

8 *Ibid.*, 971

they take along a donkey to load the gifts on. In Višnjica, a bear tamer with a she-bear is part of the troupe. Every group has a flute, violin or accordion player. Today all performers wear "pictures" on their faces (an ordinary, commercially available human mask), unlike the earlier days, as elders recall, when faces were smeared with soot to look like black Arabs. The man who personates the bride dons a lace blouse over his suit, ties a scarf around his head and places a wreath upon it. In Mirijevo, the groom wears a top hat, and the others fur-caps. Some of the mummies put on white summer underpants and shirts over their usual clothes; in some villages they wear old suits turned inside out. Those who personate the grandparents turn their sheepskin coats inside out and make a hump. In Višnjica, the she-bear had a fur-coat turned inside out and a gas-mask. Everyone, except the bride, carries clubs with cow-bells tied to them. In Višnjica, the cow-bell is tied to a belt. Elders in Veliki Mokri Lug recall that one of the performers used to carry the "*umeta*", a club two or three meters long with a muddy cloth wrapped around the end, swinging it about "to scare away dogs and frighten children".⁹

A few days before White Thursday, the men discuss who is to take part in the performance and set the venue for departure. They meet then on White Thursday before dawn, and dress in a field outside the village (Mirijevo), or in a house at the end of the village (Višnjica). Thus masked, they set off on their tour at dawn, entering every yard in the village with shouts, music playing and cow-bells clanging. The elders say it used to be much noisier in the earlier days. Throughout the journey, on entering a house and leaving it, the performers emit inarticulate sounds.¹⁰

The Arabs come to every house. They are rarely rejected, and women especially are glad to see them. The group stands in the yard where the household awaits, and one among the group asks: "Are you satisfied? How do you like the Arabs? May we dance freely?" The granny comes into the house to receive gifts (eggs always, then bacon, smoked meat, other victuals, drinks and money). The bride approaches the host and hostess, kisses their hands, and if there is a maiden in the house, tries to kiss her. Others make jokes and tease. Then the groom leads a wheel dance in front of the door. There is no specific dance for the occasion, just the one typical of the village to whatever melody is

9 M. Ilijin and O. Mladenović, *op.cit.*

10 *Ibid.*

played. They often writhe and clown about while performing it. On leaving the house, the Arabs try to steal an egg from a nest, a piece of bacon from the closet or a wreath of paprika hanging on the porch of every house. When they finish the tour around the entire village, they return to the house they set out from, or to another house in the center of the village, where they meet the same day for a *feast*, or, as they sometimes say, for the *wedding*. The women of the house prepare a meal from the food they are provided with, while the Arabs divide amongst themselves the money they received or buy wine and brandy with it¹¹

Of course, "the Arabs" has lost much of their significance and completeness today, but it is a wonder the custom has been preserved at all, and with such vigor, too, and in the immediate vicinity of Belgrade.

Following is a ritual procession of the "Arabs" in Veliko Selo, as recorded by M. Ivanović-Barišić and D. Antonijević, on March 5, 1995. The ritual was performed on Shrove Sunday, unlike the earlier days when it took place on Shrove Thursday. Children perform the custom on Saturday, the day before "the real Arabs" take place.

The Shrove procession we observed in Veliko Selo comprised thirty men. The number is varying, though it has increased in recent years. As one performer observed - "everyone wants to be in the Arabs, because then there is no reproach for excessive eating and drinking, or unrestrained behavior", which is, in fact, characteristic of the ritual.

All the performers in the procession wear masks, except the accordion player. Some have a specific role to play. Those are the bride and groom, best man, bridegroom's chief attendant, grandparents, the host of the procession and priest. The others are in disguise wearing masks. There are two musicians in the procession, usually playing the accordion. On this occasion, however, one of the musicians played the guitar and wore a mask. Contemporary songs are played and sung. Earlier, the Arabs would always lead a wheel dance in every yard, which is no longer the case, to the "lament" of village elders, who claim the custom was better performed before. The performers who have no particular role to play hold empty plastic bottles (of cooking oil, juice or detergent) which they keep hitting with wooden sticks to

11 *Ibid.*

enhance noise. Noise, in addition to erotic behavior, is highly emphasized in the ritual and serves to create a special atmosphere.

The masks were quite ordinary, purchased in a drugstore. Most were made of plastics, some of cloth, and few performers even wore gas-masks. Most of the masks were anthropomorphic, with the exception of a few suggesting zoomorphic figures. Heads were covered with a diversity of headgear: wigs, hoods, fur-caps, hats, knitted caps, scarfs. The impression the performers left was different from that in the earlier years, the locals stressed, because the disguise changed. A lot of creativeness was put into the appearance of the "Arabs". The attire included protective pieces of unused military clothing, or ragged and torn one, and many pieces of clothing made of plastics. Then there were the cow-bells, a broom, even a fox's jaw which one of the "Arabs" fixed on a long club. Another was wearing a wreath of paprika around his neck.

Naturally, the most interesting member of the procession is the bride. Her appearance and movements should suit those of a real bride. She wears a long white dress with a string of plastic pearls around her neck. A green wig covers her hair, with a scarf and hat on top of it, and over that a piece of white lace, as a veil. The curious villagers were quite disappointed to find the bride with a 'flat' belly, as they were expecting to see her "pregnant". This bride was carrying an ordinary bag over her arm, to collect money.

The groom had a hood over his head, and wore several old sweaters of different size one over the other.

The best man carried a plastic bag for gifts, and otherwise did not differ much from the bridegroom.

The grandparents were humped, and the grandmother had a long-haired wig over her head.

The host introduced the procession into the yard, shook hands with the head of the house, wishing him good health and fortune. He could be recognized by the hat he wore and the wreath of red paprika around his neck. The nicely-carved club he was carrying was a symbol of authority. His mask had a thick black moustache.

The priest wore a two-piece white suit, a wig, and a white linen mask with holes cut out for the eyes, nose and mouth. On his forehead was a red cross, denoting his role in the procession.

I have already stressed that the Arabs is a male company and that every year men agree on who would take part in the masque and assign

the various roles and duties. The procession in Veliko Selo set out about nine a.m. That day, no one begins any work until the procession passes. If someone should, however, they must interrupt it.

The Arabs never enter empty houses or call on houses whose members are in mourning. Households that reject them are ill-thought of. It is believed that some evil would befall them.

The Arabs also enter churchyards to receive gifts. Recently, however, the priest has avoided them on the pretext of having work to do. The priest's wife assumed the role of host and presented the gifts. In the earlier days, the performers would repose and have breakfast in the churchyard. Now they rest briefly and take breakfast in a coffee-house. They eat cheese, ham, bacon, pickles, and drink brandy, wine or beer. The food and drink is paid for with the money collected. Supper is also paid for with this money, as well as the feast, which takes place in a week (on Friday).

The masque is usually over in the evening. The food (eggs given by every household, sometimes bacon, though much less than in the earlier days) is divided equally. Most of the beverages are drunk before the round ends.

The inhabitants of Veliko Selo believe the Arabs protect a family from misfortune, particularly disease. And they fear negative consequences should the visit not take place. At least one member of the household must be home to receive the company.

Greece

I will describe the Arabs as performed in Greece and recorded by Alexandra Parafendidu,¹² who observed the masque in the village Nixiani in 1975. We know the most popular disguises and masquerades take place during Shrovetide. However, in some parts of Greece, masques at Shrovetide are unknown. Instead, they take place at Christmas, between New Year's and Twelfth Night or on St. John the Baptist's Day. The Arabs in Nixiani are performed on St. John the Baptist's Day.

In the earlier days, the masque commenced after a church service. The chief masker wears a fustanella (short full skirt of stiff white linen or cotton) and leads a masked group holding a shepherd's club. Each group has its own "fustanellophorus". The masking of the Arabs

¹² Α. Παραφεντι δού, Ο Αραπός της Νικησιανής ετο πλαίσιο τήον μεταμισεθου του δθδεκαήμερου, Thessaloniki 1976, 383-392.

is very interesting. They generally wear a knitted woollen blouse with sleeves and black trousers dating from the ancient local folk costume, wrap their calves with woollen cloth woven on a loom, resembling of knee-socks. The clothes are covered with a sheep-skin cloak, extending beneath the knees. The back of the cloak is filled with maize leaves clumped into a hump, and a thick rope firmly holds four cow-bells around the waist.

Even more interesting is the headgear, which serves as a mask at the same time. It is made of billy goat skin, and is generally black. Recently, however, masks are made of white billy goat skin, probably owing to a shortage of black billy goats. In order to achieve the desired shape, the head and legs are removed. The covering is called "barbota". The Arab sees and breathes through holes opened at eye and mouth level. The upper part of the barbota is filled with maize leaves, like the hump, narrowing toward the end to create a sharp point that resembles a small tower. The Arabs carry about a wooden object about 60 cm long that looks like a knife. They brandish their knives whilst trotting from house to house.

The maskers are usually young men, unmarried or betrothed. Each group comprises 3-6 men, plus the one wearing the fustanella.

The company sets out on its rounds of the village, trotting about, as if dancing, with the cow-bells clanging and keeping beat. The entire village, young and old, come out of their houses to receive the maskers. It is believed they bring health and good luck. They offer them brandy and wine. When the group arrives on a plateau, it halts. Then the maskers throw their wooden knives on the ground and start to dance, round and round. Or, more precisely, they hop about, causing the cow-bells to clang. Then a duel takes place: one performer falls, feigning death, the others dance around him.

After making several rounds of the village, the groups gather in the central village square, where many people await them, including a special group made up of men and women dressed in ancient local costumes. Then they all dance together to the sounds of folk instruments: drums, bag-pipes and clarinets.

As I have already said, the Arabs from Nixiani is no solitary case. It has survived from the disguises of non-Christian days. However, some disguises that take place during Shrovetide include the image of the Arab. Naturally, the disguise differs from one case to

another. This is accomplished with the mask, black dye, soot, or other black paint smeared over the face of the performer playing the Arab.

In the case of the village of Nixiani, the presence of Arabs is emphasized, as it is they who have named the custom. Parafenidu mentioned two other customs from the cycle called "Arabs". One of the customs has been preserved in the town of Didomatrix, and the other in the village of Velvedo, where men and women disguise as Arabs, using black paint or soot. Surely, the presence of one or more types of disguises referred to as "Arabs" in Greece is not merely by chance. Allow me to cite some more examples.

A group of maskers perform the custom in villages near Kastoria, with three brides and bridegrooms, an old lady, Arab, doctor and a "bear" with bells, all accompanied by personages representing "armatolozes" (Greek brigands). In Mecovo, between New Year's and St. John the Baptist's Day, the performers include a bride dressed in a European costume, a groom wearing a fustanella, doctor, granny with a distaff, with a "baby" in her arms, and one or more Arabs. Arabs wear bells and fox tails, their faces masked or sootied. They assault the bride, and the groom chases them with a club. In the neighboring village of Amera, similar scenes are performed by performers known as Arabs. These Arabs wear black leather masks and tails. In Turi, the performers are referred to as Ligutsharis. They include an Arab with a black mask, an old lady, doctor, bride and groom, priest, bears, devils and vampires. The Arab abducts the bride, who is then wrested by the groom and in a struggle that ensues one man kills the other. In the village of Baieasa (Vovouasa), the Ligutsharis have a bride, groom, doctor, granny, Arab with bells wearing a black leather or paper mask and a bandit carrying bells. If the latter has been correctly described, he seems to be a combination of the Arab and bridegroom. Bells are part of the Arab mask, and the fustanella is the right clothing for a groom. In Briaza, the performers are referred to as Arugutshari, and include a bride, groom, doctor, Arab and Karag'ozu. The dance is performed on Twelfth Night and Shrovetide. In Brachogianni near Elasson, five to fifteen boys from Samarini form a group of Ligutsharis. The personages are an old lady with a baby and distaff, Arab who seizes the baby, doctor, bride and groom. The Arab wears a kid skin mask and many wether-bells. The plot is the usual one. The Arab attempts to abduct the bride, the groom defends her and kills the Arab. The old lady, the Arab's mother, weeps over the dead body, begging the doctor to bring

him back to life. The procession Dzhamalan includes a bride, groom and Arab.¹³

Analysis and Conclusion

The various Arabs masquerades have many common elements, both in Serbia and Greece; two essential structural components, one of which has been forgotten or abandoned today, the definite religious and magical component, and the more preponderant mimetic and cathartic component of folk theatricalness performed for entertainment, suppressing thus the cultic content. However, both components were permeated in the past by the important social component. The ritual, with its comic action and behavior, emphasized eroticism and completely inversed the fundamental values of the patriarchal ethos, characteristic of life in a Balkan village until the recent past. According to ancient unwritten principles of patriarchal society, it was utterly shameful and inadmissible that a girl should be dishonored, a woman be delivered of an illegitimate child, another man's wife seduced etc. All were strictly punishable by the decrees of unwritten common law. However, many secret love affairs took place in everyday life, and premarital or extramarital scandals, regardless of this public moral code. This clearly indicates a discrepancy or contradiction between that which is prescribed and that which takes place on the level of culture. The amoral behavior of an individual inevitably leads to conflict, insecurity, jealousy and frustration, so ritual is evoked to resolve these scrapes.¹⁴

Thus ritual cycles take place at certain periods throughout the year to regulate and purify accumulated instinctive passions, especially through masquerades, such as the Arabs. The performance and action of the wedding travesty in Arabs is a suitable act and offers a framework for resolving negative effects in social rural relationships by allowing full freedom of behavior. The wedding act, humor, fun, ridiculing and parodying of one's social and instinctive life, turning the serious to the frivolous, achieve the effect of catharsis - the resolving of social conflict by opposing two contradictory feelings or attitudes, whereby one annuls the other.¹⁵

13 A. J. B. Wace, *Mumming Plays in the Southern Balkans*, The Annual of the British School at Athens, No. XIX, London, Session 1912-1913, 248-265

14 M. Prošić-Dvornić, *Pokladni ritual*, Folklorni teatar u balkanskim i podunavskim zemljama, Balkanološki institut SANU. Posebna izdanja knj. 21, Belgrade 1984, 154-155

15 V. Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphores - Symbolic Action in Human Society*, Cornell University Press 1974, 55-56, and M. Prošić-Dvornić, *op.cit.*, 156

Arabs, and many other masquerades in the Balkans, contains dramatic elements of revolt, pressure and unrestrained behavior and the right to legal anarchy and symbolic destruction of normative order, denoting the climax of catharsis in social tensions.

However, despite the social significance, this paper deals with the mimetic and cathartic form of the Arabs from the morphological viewpoint, as a tangent joining the ritual and theatrical. As in fertility rituals, particularly the form which had lost its magic traits gradually (although it retained essential signs of homeopathic ceremony), but was not yet recognized as theater, as it was believed the community had certain practical advantages from the performance. Jane Ellen Harrison named this transitory stage *dromenon* - a thing repeatedly acted or presented, demonstrated or displayed, something repeated, commemorative, something represented, anticipatively, which altogether creates a certain ritual spirit.¹⁶

Thus defining this transitional model, Harrison gave examples of homeopathic initiations of annual fertility feasts, i.e. the inherited cult of Atsı and Osiris. The origin of the *dromenon* is certain: sufficient information attests to its performance for a magical purpose, using the hypostases of fertility, kid or goatish attributes, phallic symbols, turning to *Daimon* of fertility, sacrifices and orgies, in the month of Prometheus or in spring, when it was believed the Spirit of Nature resurrected in a struggle with the Force of Evil. The *dromenon*, writes Bozidar Zečević, is the common origin of the mimetic and cathartic. It contains something resembling the neutral code of representation, whose purpose is to display a certain spirit of togetherness, the idea of a collective talent rather than a magical demand for its survival.¹⁷

The *dromenon* wants to arouse feelings anew, not to reproduce an object, said Harrison. It is a kind of stereotyped action, not completely practical, but still part of practice, a reminiscence and anticipation of actual practical action.¹⁸ So the code is still not theater, but its immediate source. Here, for the first time, patterns from nature and functions of the body can be observed, soon to develop into the initial cultivated form. Moreover, right here, the mimetic and cathartic display their content and modalities of interpenetration. Therefore, man discovers at the same time that he is able through implication to express not only

16 J. E. Harrison, *Themis*, Cambridge 1912, 43.

17 B. Zečević, *Model pozorišta ili pokušaj shvatanja njegovih dijahronijskih osnova*, Scena, 1972, 103.

18 J. E. Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual*, London 1918, 24-25.

magical intent but a collective or individual agent that may be entirely unmagical. By reducing nature to types, symbols and patterns, he learned the language that would in the future serve to signify and transform. It is precisely this discovery that lent a historic quality to the period of the dromenon, inciting the nature of theater itself.¹⁹

When describing more closely the phenomenon of the dromenon, Harrison refers to it as MIME, to distance this specific form from earlier magical and subsequent theatrical forms. Many scholastic studies indicate that mime was constituted in live folk tradition as a separate and complete action. According to some authors, the mimetic pattern was formed in the early 7th century, after the penetration of the Dionysian cult in Attica. Plutarch confirms this fact, which leads to the assumption that the mimetic pattern was formed a little earlier than the first recorded satirical chorus, and was able thus to influence the development of dromenon on an equal scale.²⁰

Our conviction today that mime always had a comic or burlesque tone stems from the subsequent Italian mimes. The form that is of interest to us here is neither tragic nor comic. It denoted the collection and distribution of symbols, a stereotyped sequence of acts performed to evoke the spirit of Dionysus, where an inherited wholeness and completeness of action emerged for the first time. The pattern, therefore, already contained a distinct ability to transform real-life order into mimetic elements. Constituted in such a manner, it signified the same thing as the prototype of theater, something that made it detach itself from base phallic mimes, a seed of beauty and solemn meaning that bloomed in tragedy, concluded Harrison.²¹

Magical symbolism began to fade increasingly in the dromenon (the magical meaning of certain symbols was forgotten), while other symbols became more profane, that is, capable of reproducing at any moment the desired feeling of belonging to the same type, the same community. It is important to note that mimesis gradually became stereotyped, that is, it was reduced to an established distribution of the elements of the action. However, in order to demonstrate an action as clearly as possible, the number of the symbols had to be minimized and the pattern recognized quickly and completely. Superfluous symbols (whose meanings were lost entirely) had to disappear to make

19 B. Zečević, *op.cit.*, 104.

20 *Ibid.*, 104-105.

21 J. E. Harrison, *Themis, op.cit.*, 32.

room for those that were understood and accepted. These new symbols subsequently acquired general meaning. People eagerly accepted them, with respect. At this stage, the performer was a plebeian with a free body, covered in the skin of his sheep, with modest mimetic potential but an open heart. Precisely this stereotype and reduction have cardinal import from the subsequent theatrical aspect, handing down a legacy to the theater, an awareness of the purity and intelligibility of the basic pattern of simplicity and standards of action, which tragedy develops close to perfection, said Zečević.²²

In order to define the phenomenon theater, W. Puchner rightfully sets out that the ritual field (Vorfeld) must be observed as a boundary region. Theater begins to be theater in this transitional field, a subject of study for ethnology and folklore. Puchner believed ritual and theater were complementary in the beginning. They can be severed only if one differential criterion is resolved, but with regard for the entire network of criteria linked by one transitional phenomenon. Puchner examined four such mutual axes of criteria with opposite outermost points: 1. symbol and reality 2. play and dance, 3. feast and celebration 4. irrationality and rationality.²³

Which axes of criteria could be viewed as elementary dramatic in the Arabs? The biggest difficulty is the separation or demarcation of the theatrical and the customary in the masked rituals. It is important for this article, as Puchner points out, that ritual and theater are complementary in their genetic unity, that ritual phenomena belong to the domain of theatrical arts, but also to anthropology. Naturally, the division has heuristic value and should be verified from case to case.²⁴

1. Viewed as a whole, the ceremony of the masquerade Arabs is a specific kind of action-plot-act wherein man establishes certain relationships. Naturally, this element alone does not constitute it as dramatic. Some writers exaggerate when they consider action (plot) a universal sign of drama. It is merely one requisite of dramatic creativity.²⁵

The first requisite is providing space for the performance; in the Arabs it is set in village streets and yards, partly in coffee-houses.

22 B. Zečević, *op.cit.*, 106.

23 W. Puchner, *Brauchumserscheinungen im griechischen Jahreslauf*, Wien 1977, 345.

24 *Ibid.*, 503

25 D. Antonijević, *Narodno glumovanje i Dionisov kult*, *op.cit.*, 215.

2. As a "spectacle", the equipment of the performers bears theatrical importance, particularly the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic masks suggestive of their deep magical and religious roots. Transformation or disguise into an image with the use of mask, movement, mimicry and words - altogether are requisites for any drama.

3. Players are selected amongst each other for whatever masquerade they are to perform. They must exhibit certain qualities, such as wittiness, or the ability to imitate, speak well and so on. Sometimes, players take a long time to prepare for their roles, either to memorize their parts or make masks and whatever else is necessary. These are all theatrical traits.

4. The strongest moment dramatically is death and resurrection. The scene displays optimism, the belief and conviction that man can affect nature and her tempers, act on the processes of production with magical and religious dances that form a bridge between the real and supernatural. In all these complex procedures the chief role is played by symbols and symbolic sequels containing semantic interpretations.²⁶

Lament over a dead hero, in addition to its deep magical and religious significance, shows a future void of pessimism and self-destruction. Quite the contrary, it expresses the idea of self-preservation, and the securing of a better and happier life for tomorrow and in the final instance throws a retrospective light on the early days when wailing for a deceased was deliberately dramatized. According to some studies, wailing for a deceased is believed to be the origin of drama.²⁷ This tragic element in masquerades reveals the embryonic stage of the aesthetic category of the tragic. Its aim is to show that the forces of darkness and all that is pressing the village community have been driven out of the village, but their return is expected the following year, and the ritual will be repeated in the same order. The final stage of the Arabs is epiphany or theophany, the moment when the hero resurrects, and the forces of darkness are expelled to the exterior. At this point the mime ends, the purpose has been revealed and the general pattern is discernible again - the welfare of the village community.²⁸

5. There are many comic situations in the Arabs, for instance, in simulating coitus, which is frequently part of magic fertility rites,

26 K. J. Kakouri, *Dionysiaka*, Athens 1965. 102.

27 *Ibid.*

28 B. Zečević, *op.cit.*, 109.

which offer a vent to popular mood and joy. If we observe the performance of individual stages of the Arabs, we shall note how often certain incidental events and personalities are caricatured ad hoc. Mockeries in dialogues that have no relationship to formal magical obscenities can also be heard.²⁹

6. The Arabs often engage in conversation with their spectators, altering their voices, attempting to depict the personage whose role they are representing. The language employed is the vernacular spoken by the peasant, often rough and coarse. They do not learn their roles by heart but improvise.

7. The question of the role of the spectators is of particular importance. The actors and spectators make up a unity. The differences between the performer and his audience are lost. The performing of the dance proves to be a closed psychological system. The collective participation of performers and spectators is an essential characteristic of masquerades. Every man is a direct participant in the play. It involves an individual who at any moment may change his place, which is quite contrary to the institutionalized theater where the performer (actor) is definitely separated from the audience

8. An analysis of the movements and singing would trace their origins to antiquity. Correlative investigations to that effect are rather difficult to undertake as we have no knowledge of ancient music. However, music and dance taken as a whole, with the use of requisites and symbols basically inspired by magic and cultism, are automatically expressive for the theater.³⁰

Let us go back and draw a brief conclusion. The cathartic pattern the concealed action of which we observed in the Arabs from the very beginning of the ceremony, is not replaced by a mimetic pattern; on the contrary, it plays the role of its hidden motif from the very beginning, a potential partner who emerges and disappears during the performance, in order to reveal at the end his true face and the function, or purpose, of mime.

Both patterns will pursue a cultivated form, said Zečević. They will continue to acquire style and perfected technique on the one hand, and more complex connotative actions on the other. Thus in highly developed theatrical forms it is more difficult to determine the self-sufficiency of the mimetic and the collective necessity of the cathartic.

29 K. J. Kakouri, *op.cit.*, 113.

30 *Ibid.*, 110

though, paradoxically, we are more accurate in discerning what is that which belongs to purpose and what to performance, to idea and to materialization. Structuralistically speaking, we notice that both patterns are mutually motivated, but we are able to single out through the same process what in the theater belongs to its nature and what to its function, what to expression, what to content, what to signifying, and what to the signified.³¹

ЗАЈЕДНИЧКЕ ЦРТЕ У ФОЛКЛОРНОЈ ТРАДИЦИЈИ СРПСКОГ И ГРЧКОГ НАРОДА

Резиме

После уводног дела у коме аутор указује на несумњиву подударност смисаоно-садржајну, у игри под маскама названој "Арапи", приступа описивању (дескриптивни модел), ове игре код Срба и Грка, указујући на многе очигледне, заједничке црте. У делу посвећеном анализи, аутор истиче две битне структуралне компоненте: једна, данас већ заборављена или напуштена несумњиво је религијско-магијска, а друга претежнија миметичко-катастаричка као обележје народне театарности са пуно забавно-извођачких елемената, који су потиснули култни садржај. Међутим, и једну и другу компоненту у прошлости је прожимала и трећа, социјална, која није без значаја. У игри "Арапи", компичне радње и понашања, наглашена еротика и потпуна инверзија основних вредности патријархалног односа карактеристичних за живот у балканским селима, сачували су се у потпуној етнографској свежини, до наших дана. У закључку аутор истиче да су "Арапи" као и толике сличне игре под маскама у Срба и Грка, прожете драмским елементима побуне, притиска и слободног понашања, у којима човек изражава право на легалну анархију и симболично рушење нормативног реда, а што у суштини обележава врхунац катарзе друштвених тензија.

31 В. Зећевић, *op.cit.*, 114.