

# Stories and storytelling - added value in cultural tourism

## Introduction

It is in the nature of tourism to integrate the natural, cultural and human environment, and in addition to acknowledging traditional elements, tourism needs to promote identity, culture and interests of local communities – this ought to be in the very spotlight of tourism related strategy. Tourism should rely on various possibilities of local economy, and it should be integrated into local economy structure so that various options in tourism should contribute to the quality of people's lives, and in regards to socio-cultural identity it ought to have a positive effect.

Proper treatment of identity and tradition surely strengthen the ability to cope with the challenges of world economic growth and globalisation. In any case, being what you are means being part of others at the same time. We enrich others by what we bring with us from our homes. (Vlahović 2006:310)

Therefore it is a necessity to develop the sense of culture as a foundation of common identity and recognisability to the outer world, and as a meeting place of differences. Subsequently, it is precisely the creative imagination as a creative code of traditional heritage through intertwinement and space of flow, which can be achieved solely in a positive surrounding, that presents the added value in tourism.

Only in a happy environment can we create sustainable tourism with the help of creative energy which will set in motion our personal aspirations, spread inspiration and awake awareness with the strength of imagination. Change is possible only if it springs from individual consciousness – „We need a new way to be happy” (Laszlo, 2009.). It is impossible to be successful and create tourist products that will suit man's needs in a diseased and miserable environment. That is the space of standstill where nothing „flows“, or moves in a harmonious manner.

That is how people, who ought to be the creative force in a tourist destination, become blocked: their bodies become detached from their hearts, their hearts from their minds, and their minds from their bodies. They think one thing, feel the other, and end up doing something completely different, living in a state of constant contradiction. They cannot be liberated in their thoughts if they are not free emotionally, and they cannot be free emotionally if they are not liberated in their life customs (in economical and social relations).

Oral Croatian literature (stories and storytelling) presents a potential resource in cultural tourism and a „soul vitamin“, if interpreted properly. This paper will show how this part of non-material heritage can become a remedy and the road to recovery through which we heal the individual being as well as the local community as a tourist destination, and it is precisely that this „returning to yourself“ helps that kind of tourist destination becomes a community of happy people in which tourism suiting the needs of man will be an option. Every tourist will feel welcome in such a community, and every tourist will perceive such a tourist destination as a milieu of felicity and pleasure.

## Stories and storytelling as a potential resource in cultural tourism

Certain aspects of oral and folk tradition are a part of basic scientific research of literature and folklore.<sup>1</sup> Researches of oral and folk literature, with a special focus on their older origins, demonstrate how they are preserving Croatian cultural identity as well as those Mediterranean Central European influences. These aspects can be viewed in the light of interdisciplinary cooperation between ethnologists, anthropologists and ethnomusicologists, and they are directly applicable in class, media, regional and local reviews and magazines which foster traditional culture, as well as in culture tourism in which the level of oral and folk tradition is heavily emphasized.

Folk literary phenomenon<sup>2</sup> has been present from the very beginnings of the development of Croatian literature and has been present up to this very day as a constancy marking the level on which literary communication has been going on for centuries. Folk literature used the oldest of man's interests, the one concerning dreams, so that it would collect them in one very specific book: *sanjarica* – the book of dreams. The process of levelling, which made every man's dream appear "royal", because all of those dreams could now be found interpreted in the book of dreams, has been done – from astrological fortune telling at royal courts to folks' favourite book of dreams which, thanks to Gutenberg, they will be able to keep in their homes next to their prayer books and calendars. Everyone could now find an explanation of their dream and their fate.<sup>3</sup>

If we say that tourist attraction is the DM3<sup>4</sup> formula – making and selling dreams where dreams consist of myth, magic and mystery respectively, then oral Croatian literature becomes the added value in the shaping of tourist product in culture tourism. In that case a completely different light is shed on that very special folk book, *sanjarica* (the book of dreams).

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<sup>1</sup> Folcloristic study folklore, and it deals with intercultural comparisons of subject matters, motifs, genres and structures from a literary and ethnologic point of view (Haviland, 382)

<sup>2</sup> Terms such as oral and folk literature were the subjects of Maja Bošković Stulli's writings, *O pojmovima usmena i pučka književnost i njihovim nazivima*, «Umjetnost riječi», Zagreb, 1973. no. 3 and 4, year XVII, pp. 149-184; 237-260. „And so the term folk literature corresponds, in subject matter it encompasses, to the term popular literature, *varoška pjesma* (*varoški*, adj., from *varoš* meaning *town* in a number of Croatian dialects and local speeches) – town poem/song, cantastoria, as well as the unusable but suggested notwithstanding term *polunarodna književnost* – semifolk literature, used by Bohuslav Beneš, a Czech scientist. The term folk literature encompasses readings, in verse or prose, which had been conveyed in writing, printing or in oral way, mediaeval legends, *mirakuli* and chivalric literature, hagiographies, prayer books, calendars, books of dreams, stories, novels, poems, handwritten poem books (various in content), appropriate ten-syllabic and octosyllabic poems from Kačić's glorifyings of heroic enterprises to contemporary ten-syllabic rhymed chronicles (handwritten or printed), encompassing also a huge amount of poems written during the people's liberation fights of the WWII. Not only does the folk literature encompass literary works of selfthought folk writers but it also encompasses literary works written for the folk by the educated individuals.“

<sup>3</sup> Divna Zečević, «Pučki književni fenomen - Prisutnost pučkog književnog fenomena u trajanju i razvoju hrvatske književnosti», in *Povijest hrvatske književnosti*, knjiga 1, Liber Mladost Zagreb, 1978

<sup>4</sup> Visitor attraction = dreams consisting of myth, mystery and magic, Frans Schouten, «Product development for heritage sites: a case study», *Tourism* Vol. 50. No3/2002

Enrichment, fulfilment, healing, self-healing, renewal, self-building, self-discovering through emotions – all of the aforementioned comes as a result of a new society called “the society of dreams”. That sort of society is opened to spiritual rather than material needs.<sup>5</sup>

Stories vary from one region to another, from one people to the other: their kinds evanesce, or transform in the course of time. Change comes, as well as new species, but stories are being told all the time; they are a part of human life and socialising. Often, they are *the soul* of the place, that “something special” which makes the tourist destination in this ever globalizing world differ from every other similar place, since more and more tourist destinations are becoming alike.

That is material, true and authentic, created as a result of folk creativity, and that is what makes it unique. That is a part of a potential tourist destination’s personality.

Apart from past which we remember and with which we may identify ourselves with, there is a level of past hidden deep within us. It is our unconscious past which conditions our life, especially during the early childhood period. One can talk of cultural conditioning as well, which is linked to where we live geographically speaking, and in which period of history are we living.

All of the mentioned conditions the way a tourist/consumer looks at the world, the way he/she reacts, what are his/her thoughts, what kind of relations he/she has and how they live their lives. We can lead in tourists in a new world through stories, fairy tales and legends. According to Jung<sup>6</sup> stories, fairy tales, legends and myths which contain archetypical integrity are a cure for correcting or taking over anew certain psychic instincts. Stories contain excitement, sadness, suffering, longing and understanding which spontaneously bring archetypes back to surface. Stories are saturated with instructions which lead us through the complexity of life. Stories enable us to understand the need to bring out the drowned archetypes and ways how to do it.

There are many ways to approach stories: professional folklorists, Jung, Freud or some other psycho-analysts, ethnologists, anthropologists, theologians, archaeologists, they all have a method of their own for both collecting stories and for their usage.

That is how a story in tourism becomes “the soul vitamin”, it is a place where dreams, poetry and arts meet, and stories take us back to our instinctive lives, to our deepest knowledge. In older folk tales and writings of mystics and poets (St. Catharine of Siena, St. Frances of Assisi, Rumi, Eckhart, Dickinson, Whitman etc) that mysterious habitat of instinctive nature is presented as a milieu of creatures with lives of their own. Thus this part of non-material living heritage is frequently presented as ocean, celestial arch, and earthly ground.

A properly presented story, legend or a myth evokes a sudden and deep awakening, a change or enrichment of the senses, mood or heart<sup>7</sup>. Our mood changes when instantly enriched.

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<sup>5</sup> Klarić, Vlasta. International Tourism Reserch Conference «Reinventing of Tourism Destination», Dubrovnik 2002

<sup>6</sup> The transcendent function, C.G.Jung, Collected Works, vol.8, 2. edition ( Princeton University Press, 1972)

<sup>7</sup> According to Valery, a thought, a word of poetry or dance come to life within us, connect us to a higher level, they enable us to see worlds which in reality we are unable to see. Valery compares poets' assignment

When our mood changes, our hearts change alike. Love, joy and peace are deep states of a being. Pleasure is always ignited from the outside, while joy emerges from within.

Culture resources become tourist attractions by planned designing, while the process of interpretation which includes selecting and designing or “packaging” makes them a product. Interpreting is the very essence or the main content of a product which is being sold, while packaging is not simply a makeover helping to promote or simplify. It is precisely that *stories and storytelling* can become a “brand” during that process.

Unless it becomes a brand, cultural heritage is of no interest to tourists. If designed and interpreted properly, non-material traditional heritage becomes a realistic tourist attraction and a motive for a tourist to travel and free him/herself from the daily seduction and manipulation by mass media.

A decision to make a trip to somewhere is based on the emotional value of the trip, that is to say on the evaluation of how much would the trip be in sync with the life style and whether it would enable some sort of creative, physical or emotional development, and that is what makes a trip an emotional need.

Image is the key factor in attracting visitors who are coming for the first time, while destination milieu plays a key role in inciting new visits. Tourists are in search of closeness when they are choosing their destination and when they are visiting a place: they want to see it all, they want to know it all and feel real connection.

That is why experience should not only be about entertainment, but it should also intrigue us with a riddle, convey us a message and offer us with emotions. Total experience is created solely when you include emotions as well.

Today, when mass media have taken over our lives, Alić (2009) says how the passions of the soul often remain unsaid, how speech is becoming deprived of words, and how images and electronic devices are taking on the role of communication per se (it is a communication in which man has merely a passive role). Taking all that into account speech is merely (to use the terminology of the today) information about something which goes on inside the soul, and what is written equals to presenting sounds. Having said that, stories, tales and legends present a return, a road to understanding our very essence and liberation.

Alić (2009) further on remarks how it is all about “horror vacui”. Humans are restrained by the drill of working hours, and after working hours they are in fear of all that time they have on their hands. Fromm’s “escape from freedom” has been given its universal solution: there is no need to run away from anything, since now everything can be understood as freedom of choice (of a radio or TV channel).

A return to oral literature is full of resistance. This is one way to overcome addiction, how to avoid being misled and how to avoid the seducer who lurks in the multitude of information

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(connecting words and spirit) with the wonders of ancient magic. Valery finds poetic form within magic rituals. The key thing about it is the fact that in those rituals it wasn't so much about what was being said, as it was about the sound of speech shrouding the participants of the ritual...According to Valery, the work of the spirit is constant and it goes on simultaneously. Curves of different worlds cross their paths within a human: from ordinary, unmediated, practical, to worlds of poetry, philosophy, music, and other arts, but magic alike which also witnesses the sinking or lifting of a human being in deeper worlds. ( Alić, 2009).

and hypnotises the viewer who then becomes a patient accused of changing his therapist to a remote controller while lying on his couch.

That is one way of love to oneself, achieved by quality and way of spending one's free time. We can ask ourselves with good reason: how much love do parents feel for their children if they spend their free time with them at shopping malls? We have every right to feel nostalgic about times when parents used to tell stories and fairy tales to their kids...and took them to puppet shows, to the zoo or to the botanical garden.

“We can say without a shred of doubt in our mind that our times give priority to image over thing, copy over the original, show over reality, illusion over a being. What is holy about it is nothing but a deception, and what is profane is true...All life in societies, in which modern conditions of production have the final word, comes as a huge accumulation of a spectacle. All that has been lived live has now gone to become a part of a play...A spectacle is a moment in time when merchandise overtakes social life completely. The relation to merchandise is not just visible, but it is all what one sees: the world that is seen belongs to it.”<sup>8</sup>

The history of self-knowledge abounds in methods, ways and intermediations. The Art has frequently been denominated by means of self-knowledge. Rilke suggests that love is the only mean by which one can reach the depths and the beauty of a work of art, and he goes on by saying: “...Works of art are of an infinite loneliness and with nothing so little to be reached as with criticism. Only love can grasp and hold and fairly judge them.”<sup>9</sup>

There is no need for people to be the same and like machines – the works they admire, read and observe can be that for them. By unifying tastes, passions and personalities a negative inner utopia of which man-consumer is the basis is produced.

If we try comparing stories as an attraction, an original basis of a tourist destination, unlike bestsellers which are products of massive consumption, we will realise that the production of bestsellers is a continuous chain which constantly gives birth to new products which, due to their nature, cannot entirely satiate the man and quench his consumer thirst.

Unlike the aforementioned production, Croatian oral tales<sup>10</sup> differ from the neighbouring ones, as well as from other European ones to such a degree as it is in their nature to change and adapt from one region to another, from one surrounding to another, by keeping more permanent structures.

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<sup>8</sup> Debord Guy, *Društvo spektakla&komentari o društvu spektakla*, Arkzin, Zagreb, 2000. p. 35 taken from Alić 2009:106

<sup>9</sup> Rilke, Reiner Maria, *Pisma mladom pjesniku*, Naklada Divič, Zagreb, 1997, p. 17

<sup>10</sup> A monograph by M. Bošković Stulli titled *Narodna predaja o vladarevoj tajni* utilises the way to arrange variants by using abbreviations/shortcuts and other geographic and historic method of the so called Finnish school, while the interpretation itself differs from the mentioned method (whose goal is to find the pre-shape of every story) significantly. Here, on the other hand, the subject matter of the research are anthropological, mythological, cultural and genre aspects (Bošković-Stulli 1967). Comparative research of a single storytelling subject had been applied in two articles that had come later on, where understanding and attitudes of those stories had been compared, suggests that there was written intermediation during the course of history, as well as on modern adaptations in textbooks, animated cartoons etc. (Bošković-Stulli 1985=1991; Marks 1993=1993b). Mythical (daemonic) creatures of Croatian tales have been taken under vast consideration in annotations to collections (Bošković-Stulli 1959; 1968; 1975a) as well as in some themed discussions (Bošković-Stulli 1960=1975=1988; 1991=1992; Lozica 1995).

There is no mass-production since a work of oral literature lasts as much as its performance lasts, which makes every performance a new creation, while a possible record is nothing but an incomplete and unreliable testimony.

It is precisely the story which can bring back to life a dead destination, provide liveliness, atmosphere and the lacking dramatic scenery needed to make it attractive and appealing to tourists. For example: themes of legends and mythical creatures incorporated in local ambience can breathe in peculiarity and charm. Stories, tales and legends possess the scenic value and can be set as if on a stage, hence they can be transformed into a tourist product, a tourist destination respectively.

The question suggested by Matoš, a Croatian poet, was that if giving up on beauty (here in the context of love to oneself, note by R. Franjić) to the upcoming massiveness and generally freeing up for technological channels, media, and therefore surpassing the boundaries of Art; is the rebellion against beauty actually a rebellion carried on under the standard of leaving the Arts and entering a sphere of the common, mutual, media – communication – using technical gadgets of the networked world. In the context of the question above a possible answer could be that one of the ways to return to beauty is through stories, tales and legends which thus become the mirror of the folk soul.

“On one side there is the emotional loneliness being prefigured by theorists of modern media, on the other side of computer optimism of contemporary capitalism and everything that lies in store for us – there lays one really ancient, eternal human desire for a common, small, yet important and crucial – human happiness.” (Alić, 2009: 137).

The battle for survival is possible through stories, since society in its attempts to “civilise us” and mould us into different stiff roles alienates us from ourselves and blurs the deep, life-giving messages from our souls. It is a return to old, intercultural, archetypical stories through which we can comprehend our own selves, which is infinitely wise and rich, and to deal with all the life’s chapters which lay in store for us: entering the world, being lonely and in search of something, feeling like outcasts, being friends with our own bodies, surviving, feeling anger and forgiving, sexuality, harmony with our own inner being, fostering creative life.

*In this alienated world of deception and illusion the need for mystical hearths and times to dream, for one’s own creative life and true loves becomes ever so evident. Stories convalesce, they heal especially when we lose touch with the instinctive psyche, when we live in a semi destroyed world, when we are cut off from our basic source, when we are sterilised because our instincts and natural life cycle start evanesing since they are being overcome by culture, intellect or ego – one’s own or of the others.*

We use stories and archetypes to re-establish the lost balance which is demonstrated through weariness, weaknesses, depressions, confusions, frustrations, and feelings of fear, feelings of no inspiration, lack of joy, liveliness, and spirituality.

This would-be chaos of archetypical energies can present a dangerous and insecure area for a dogmatic mind used to strictly prescribed exercises and rules employed to castrate the original nature of man, or at least to limit it. To gradually discover layer by layer our own unconscious contents means to agree to confront ourselves with our own inhibitions, fears and suppressed wishes, which every man carries within himself/herself, but many are incapable of

acknowledging it to themselves and looking at it in one wider development context. It is far easier to take the already marked path of others' teachings and beliefs, rather than accept the risk of the unknown which implies discovering and following your own path or spiritual mission, learning from your own mistakes.

Instead of discriminating and impoverishing psychic content, stories and storytelling strives to integrate and transcend differences through the language of symbols by which our unconscious being is expressed. There is no such thing as a more or less valuable spiritual lesson, there is no cleft dividing the spirit from the matter, and there is no hierarchy by which certain goals and achievements could be valued more than others. To some this is the way to heal childhood traumas, to someone else it is the way to increase personal vitality and heal the body or find a healthy relationship, or to overcome addictive ways of behaviour – the possibilities are numerous and varied, but identical in one respect: they imply liberating of one's personal creative energy as opposed to uniformed following of other people's dogmas.

A mythic story is a symbol, a set of symbolic images that spring from human psyche. Mythology is the meeting point of the known and the unknown, of the human consciousness and sub-consciousness. It used to guide people through life's trials and challenges. Some myths deal with the maturing process of the individual being – stepping out from childhood and adolescence (psychological addiction) into a self-reliable and independent grown up. With its universal message mythology used to bring people to harmony with the world they lived in.

In accordance with ethno-clinical psychology<sup>11</sup>, which also deals with clinical psychology<sup>12</sup>, and ethnology we make contact with the wild "I" via certain issues and through the analysis of fairy tales, folk tales, legends and myths. That is how stories and storytelling, words and songs, signs and symbols become a remedy, and in a way that a leading myth or a fairy tale containing all the necessary instructions a patient needs for one's own psychological development is found within the healing itself. These stories contain the drama of the patient's soul. They resemble a theatrical piece with records, characterisation and props.

The art of storytelling participates in the creation of the soul. Every time we feed the soul, it will undoubtedly grow. Stories are a cure and possess a great strength: they do not ask from us to do anything, to be anything, to pretend – all we need to do is listen. Stories contain remedies required for corrections which need to be made or for taking anew any form of lost psychological instinct. Stories contain excitement, sadness, questions, longings and understanding which take the archetype spontaneously back to the surface. (Estes 2008; Bettelheim 2000; von Franz 1970; Jung 1972)

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<sup>11</sup> Clarissa Pinkola Estes, „Žene koje su trčale s vukovima“, Algoritam Zagreb, 2008, Marie Louise von Franz, Interpretation of Fairytales ( Dallas, Sprin Publication, 1970), C.G.Jung, Collected Works, vol. 11, 2nd. edition, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1972, Bruno Bettelheim, Smisao i značenje bajki, Poduzetništvo Jakić, Cres , 2000.

<sup>12</sup> Campbell, Joseph, «The Hero with Thousand Faces», second edition, Bollingen Series 17, Princeton, N.J.: Princetnom University Press, 1968. p. 19

## Conclusion

By changing one's work surroundings, family surroundings and life surroundings, an individual/tourist/traveller transcends space boundaries in which one lives and reaches individual and family freedom which becomes a reality, at least for a while. One cannot think of oneself a subject of individual time unless one becomes an individual in every sense of the word. Free time implies a free choice and such a choice is not in the hands of a person who only passively identifies himself/herself with his/hers role in the society.

The first step to freedom is to be honest towards ourselves, because when we trust our inner potentials, then we do not waste our energy in vain. Whenever we are moved by the deep truth within ourselves, and not by the expectations of the others, we set a living example of what it means to believe. When we allow ourselves to live in such a way, we shall discover amazing energy which is always there for us and which supports us in all the circumstances of our lives, since it is only that with a sanely developed relation between *ego* and *I* do we have the ability to love ourselves (or Ourselves) and others.

Tourism of the New Era thus supports contemporary lifestyle philosophy which expresses itself in the following fashion: I, the human being, I am here to act, to discover, to learn, while the New Era tourism responds to this in the following way: We are here to provide You with cognizance and revelation, and experience which comes through those two.

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