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“I KNOW ABOUT IT, BUT I DO NOT WANT TO TALK”: TRADITIONAL BELIEFS IN SUPERNATURAL CREATURES IN THE DALMATIAN HINTERLAND

SUMMARY

Recent personal field experience in researching traditional beliefs in supernatural creatures has shown that today, too, stories of and beliefs in fairies, vampires, witches and moras are still relatively present in the Dalmatian hinterland. Such beliefs were customarily in the focus of domestic folkloristic research and were largely studied as verbal utterances of narrators, in which attention was paid to what was said (and how it was said). However, a trend emerged in folkloristics from the 1970s that began to orientate itself to the social context of the narrator and his/her stance towards narrations. Therefore, the author’s own views on the issue of researching the narrator and his/her stance towards the supernatural are offered in this paper, based on recent field research. In that way, the intention has been to contribute to those research studies that emphasise the importance of enquiring into the social context of the narrator, but also to offer an augmentation of domestic (folkloristic) research into belief in supernatural creatures in which that dimension has frequently been overlooked. In other words, domestic papers often mention the fact that we learn about supernatural creatures through kronikate (brief reports), fabulate (stories about a particular event passed on by tradition), and memorate (talking about personal experience in the first person), which indicates that we should concentrate on the form, regularity, manner and type of the narrator’s account. However, since the narrator’s account in interviews always entwines with the context of reality, experience and social structures (of the individual and the group) that give it form, we learn not only about the supernatural creatures through the narration but also about the stance of the narrator towards the supernatural, through which we also arrive at information about the narrator him/herself, his/her environment, lines of thought and aspirations. Therefore, a five-stage division of narrations and narrators is offered in this paper, which is based on the way in which the narrations are delivered and the narrator’s stance towards the supernatural that we observe in the specific situation of conversation with the researcher.

Key words: supernatural creatures, narrators, Dalmatian hinterland, socio-political context