

THE MADNESS OF TWO HEROES: HERACLES AND MARKO KRALJEVIĆ

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Abstract

The motif of insanity was quite frequent in Ancient Greek Literature. In turns, it was viewed as obsession, illness, or just and justified punishment. Insanity always brought some kind of self-inspection and self-cognition. Heracles is an ancient hero who committed a crime against his closest relatives in a state of severe madness. The Serbian epic hero Marko Kraljević shared a similar fate. The authors of the paper will investigate the motives of insanity of both heroes in two different, but traditionally close cultures: Greek and South Slavic. The motif of *heroic madness* is explored in tragedies related to Heracles, and in Serbian epic poetry known as the epic cycle of Marko Kraljević.

Key words: madness/insanity, Heracles, Marko Kraljević, isolation, punishment, conflict, crime, murder.

ЛУДИЛО ДВА ХЕРОЈА: ХЕРАКЛЕ И МАРКО КРАЉЕВИЋ

Апстракт

Мотив лудила био је веома чест у античкој грчкој књижевности. Некада је лудило третирано као опседнутост, болест или праведна казна. Лудило је увек доносило неки увид и спознају. Херакле, антички јунак, због злочина према ближњима пада у тешко стање лудила. Сличну судбину доживљава и српски епски јунак Марко Краљевић. Аутори рада истражиће мотиве лудила код два јунака две традиционално блиске културе: грчке и јужнословенске. Мотив лудила хероја истражује се у грчким трагедијама везаним за Херакла и у циклусу српских епских песама о Марку Краљевићу.

Кључне речи: лудило/махнитост, Херакле, Марко Краљевић, изолација, казна, сукоб, злочин, убиство.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout human history, individuals who behaved differently from the majority and opposite to the moral values of the community were isolated, expelled, or punished by the environment itself. Such unusual behaviour intrigued other people, who tried to comprehend and explain the causes and consequences of such acts. In every epoch, thus, we find literary records as attempts to answer the questions of what madness, or insanity, is, what causes it, and how a mad person looks and behaves.

The essence of *losing the mind* is a feeling almost akin to the loss of one's life and, even more often, it is a fate worse than death itself. People who succeed in defeating this condition of clouded consciousness become empowered by this metaphysical experience as a person who returned from the world of the dead (Radulović, 2019). Crime towards both others and oneself is often associated with madness, either as the cause or as the consequence of it. The conflict between the person's needs, hopes and beliefs, and their unfulfillment are the crucial points in straying from the path of sanity. The only salvation those who fail to stay on that path seek is death, mostly their own or the death of those around them (Šofranac, 2013, p. 14). That is why madness is so intriguing, and why it became a common motif in the tragic stories of many cultures. Today the word 'madness' is used within a spectrum of bountiful meanings, starting from mental disorders and moving onto milder meanings such as ecstasy, foolish behaviour, anger or even excessive joy.

SOURCES OF MADNESS

Judging by the frequency of madness as a subject in Ancient Greek literature, Thomée, one of the pioneers in the historical research of insanity, concludes in his study of insanity (Thomée, 1830) that the behaviour characterised as madness occurs more frequently in unstable social, economic and political conditions, in circumstances of constant warfare and destruction, and even in the unfavourable, humid climate. One can trace this kind of behaviour in Heracles and Marko Kraljević, both of whom are victims of tremendously difficult life conditions, horrific bloody conflicts and cruel geographical environments. Thomée also lists a number of mythical stories with deities and heroes who became victims of madness (Vaughan, 1919, p. 12, pp. 21-24).

The widespread and common belief among the Ancient Greeks was that the gods provoked and caused madness in humans. People would get swept up in divine anger due to some omission, impious or inappropriate act, and even due to 'immense happiness', for which they would consequently be punished, as attested in Herodotus (Hdt. 3.21) and Sophocles' play *Oedipus Rex*. It seems that the gods' 'favourite' type of punishment was insanity.

In the Middle Ages, however, insanity was understood as God's punishment, or as a consequence of possession by divine or demonic forces, as is the case of nymphs in the South-Slavic mythology (*Serb. vila*). The etymology of the noun *vila* and the verb *viliti*, *vileniti* is possibly connected to the loss of clarity of mind and fury, as corroborated in other similar Balto-Slavic words (Loma, 2015, pp. 247-250 et passim; Skok, 1988 s.v. *vila*). In Serbian mythology, the *vilas* are supernatural beings who lived near water and appeared after midnight, like nymphs and Rusalki. These female demonic creatures sometimes possessed people, similarly to Hellenic goddesses Selene, Artemis and Hecate, associated with the moon, or night time, as well as Nereids, deities of water (Vaughan, 1919, p. 16, p. 26). Those who, instead of sleeping, lived their lives at night would typically be the ones who got possessed. In common speech, the Serbian verb *vileniti* is used to describe those who perform their daily activities during the night, or those who cannot sleep, usually hunted by some manic thoughts (Tolstoj, Radenković, 2001, pp. 80-82; Skok, 1988, p.593). In the case of Marko Kraljević, the *vilas* are strongly connected with the hero's birth, life, and his heroic and mystical death.

THE MOTIF OF THE MADNESS OF THE TWO HEROES

A comparative study of the fates of the Hellenic hero Heracles and the South Slavic hero Marko Kraljević points to certain similarities between the two of them (Vukadinović, 2006). Our focus is directed at the motif of madness/frenzy that occurs in ancient plays and Serbian epic sources.

Madness was especially addressed by Greek tragic poets (e.g. madness of Ajax, Cassandra, Philoctetes, Phaedra, Medea, Orestes, etc.). Each of these cases of madness have their own causality and consequence. The loss of mind is evident in the heroes' behaviour, depicted on and behind the stage, or in the comments given by others in the play, who act as eyewitnesses. What is indicative in these texts is that, from the psychodynamic point of view, the Greek poets portrayed insanity with incredible precision, focusing on how it begins, how a person succumbs to it, and how the illness culminates. The madness that derives from conflicts in most ancient texts is accompanied by ambiguity, which also plays an important role in understanding the process of succumbing to the state of a lost mind (Šofranac, 2013, p. 37). According to Šofranac, "This ambiguity is not necessarily in the very hero, but in the structure of the drama itself" (Šofranac, 2013, p. 37). A conflict of love and hatred, i.e. mixed feelings, can be noticed towards the victim (Maričić, Radulović, Todo- rović, 2018). As Šofranac notes, "Murders are, most often, part of the sacrificial rituals and an integral part of these rituals is ambiguity" (Šofranac, 2013, p. 37). In tragedies in which madness is a motif, the images of rites and ritual sacrifice are dominant. The sacrifice of Iphigenia, the beloved

daughter of Agamemnon, by her own father in Aulis, provoked by the collective madness of soldiers, is eventually substituted by the sacrifice of an animal (usually the hero's horse or a dog) instead of a human, in this case a deer. Similarly, such is the case of the furious Ajax, who killed animals thinking that he was killing his enemies. The madness of Heracles is directly connected to sacrificial rites, and it occurred just before he wanted to offer sacrifices of purification to Zeus. It was at that moment that he was possessed by Lyssa (Madness), and began to slaughter his family.

If we follow the classification of heroes, characterised in the history of European literature by five basic developmental tendencies, according to Northrop Frye (Frye, 1957, pp. 23-28), Heracles belongs to the first type of hero, because he is above other people and their natural surroundings. He became a demigod, and every story about him became a myth. If Frye's classification is applied to the South Slavic hero, one could notice that he sublimates the elements of the historical and mythical Marko Kraljević, a typical medieval hero of folk tales and legends. Since his qualities are above other people (but not above their natural surroundings) then, according to Frye, Marko Kraljević is a stratified literary-historical-epic figure. According to the circumstances of his birth, his acquisition of supernatural power and divine attributes, his very name, his hard nature and, finally, all the heroic accomplishments with various heroes of supernatural powers, he is actually a Slavic demigod. In a thousand years, the shadow of the historical Marko Kraljević would be shattered, and every legend and song about the hero would become a myth, as was the case with Heracles, whose poetic significance was first noted by Homer (Hom. Il. 19.95-105). Heracles and Marko Kraljević will be remembered as 'fierce guys' in the history of literature. What they did, and what was said, paraphrased, recorded, sang and dramatized, surpasses the biography of a common mortal.

Heracles' madness, however, differs in many ways from the aforementioned mythical figures, because he is, above all, a cultural hero, with kingship over many cities. He is also the father of many sons of the pre-Homeric age. In the Serbian epic, Marko Kraljević's frenzy, anger and grudge were mentioned by the *singer of tales* – a term coined by Milman Parry and Albert B. Lord (Lord, 1960), meaning minstrels (*Serb.* *guslari*) – the interpreters of heroes' actions. Heracles' madness was exceptionally described by Euripides in his tragedy *Heracles Furens* (Ἡρακλῆς μαινόμενος), which is considered to be his most daring play (Maričić, 1988).

There are certain elements that led us to believe that this play has a historical background. It was written and performed during the whirlwind of the madness of the Peloponnesian war in 424 BC, or some years earlier, in 428 BC, when the war was raging alongside the consequences of a plague epidemic, which the tragic poet Sophocles had portrayed in his play *Oedipus Rex* as a punishment from the gods. The case of Heracles'

madness is mentioned by earlier and posterior ancient Greek authors, such as Pindar (520 - 445 BC) and Apollodorus (2nd century BC), but their poetic and prose narratives did not have the intention to describe the psychological state which Hercules suffered as the perpetrator of bloodshed and, ultimately, someone who was mad enough to kill his own wife and children. The dive into Heracles' mind and soul was the task of Euripides, the first psychologist of the ancient world.

The opening scene of Euripides' play is set right after Heracles made his twelfth labour – a descent to Hades. In his absence, the tyrant Lycus intended to kill his family. At the last moment, Heracles returns from Hades and kills Lycus. This is the point at which the second part of the tragedy begins. As the choir sings a hymn in Heracles' honour, Lyssa (Λύσσα), the goddess of madness (anger, frenzy) enters the scene. It is noticeable that *lyssa* is literally 'wolfish rage', a derivative of the word *lykos*, meaning 'wolf', which was the name of the usurper Lycus, previously killed by Heracles. Lyssa is invoked by Iris (Ἴρις), the messenger goddess of the Olympians, acting in accordance with the command of Hera, Zeus's wife:

Iris

Courage, old men! She, whom you see, is Madness, the daughter of Night, and I am Iris, the handmaid of the Gods. We have not come to do your city any harm, but our warfare is against the house of one man only, against the one who is called the son of Zeus and Alcmena. For until he had finished all his grievous labors, Destiny was preserving him, nor would father Zeus ever stand for me or Hera to harm him. But now that he has accomplished the labours of Eurystheus, Hera wishes to brand him with the guilt of shedding kindred blood by slaying his own children, and I wish it also. Come then, unwed maid, child of black Night, harden your heart relentlessly, send forth the frenzy upon this man, confind his mind even to the slaying of his children, drive him, goad him wildly on his mad path, shake out the sails of death, that when he has conveyed over Acheron's ferry that fair group of children by his own murderous hand, he may learn to know how fiercely burns the wrath of Hera against him burns and may also experience mine; otherwise, if he should escape punishment, the gods will become as nothing, while man's power will grow.

Madness:

I call the Sun-god to witness that here I am acting against my will; but if indeed I must at once serve you and Hera and follow you in full cry as hounds follow the huntsman, then I will go; neither ocean with its fiercely groaning waves, nor the earthquake, nor the thunderbolt with blast of agony shall be like the headlong rush I will make into the breast of Heracles; through his roof will I burst my way and swoop upon his house, after first slaying his children; nor shall their murderer know that he is killing the children he begot, till he is released from my madness. Behold him! see how

even now he is wildly tossing his head at the outset, and rolling his eyes fiercely from side to side without a word; nor can he control his panting breath, like a fearful bull in act to charge;

he bellows, calling on the goddesses of nether hell. Soon will I rouse you to yet wilder dancing and pipe a note of terror in your ear. Soar away, O Iris, to Olympus on your honored course; while I unseen will steal into the halls of Heracles.

Chorus:

Alas alas! lament; the son of Zeus, flower of your city, is being cut down. Woe to you, Hellas! that will cast you away from your **benefactor**, and destroy him as he dances in the shrill frenzy of Madness. She is mounted on her chariot, the queen of sorrow and sighing, and is goading on her steeds, as if for outrage, the Gorgon child of Night, with a hundred hissing serpent-heads, Madness with the eyes flashing. Soon has the god changed his good fortune; soon will his children draw their last breath, slain by the father's hand.¹

(Eur. *Her.* 822-841; emphasis added)

The attack of Heracles' madness, as well as the crime itself, was described by Euripides with incredible precision in the words of the messenger:

Messenger

Victims which came to purify the house were stationed before the altar of Zeus, for Heracles had slain and cast from his halls the king of the land. There stood the group of his lovely children, with his father and Megara; and already the basket was being passed round the altar, and we were keeping holy silence. But just as Alcmena's son was bringing the torch in his right hand to dip it in the holy water, he stopped without a word. And as their father lingered, his children looked at him; **he was no longer himself; his eyes were rolling; he was distraught; his eyeballs were blood-shot, and foam was oozing down his bearded cheek. He spoke with a madman's laugh:** "Father, why should I offer the purifying flame before I have slain Eurystheus, and have the toil twice over? It is the work of my unaided arm to settle these things well; as soon as I have brought the head of Eurystheus here, I will cleanse my hands for those already slain. Spill the water, cast away the baskets from your hands. Ho! give me now my bow and club! To Mycenae I will go; I must take crow-bars and picked axes, for again I will shatter with iron levers those city-walls which the Cyclopes squared with red plumb-line and mason's tools." Then he set out, and though he had no chariot there, he thought he

¹ For the original Greek version (Murray, 1913). Translated by Edward P. Coleridge, vide: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a1999.01.0102> downloaded 5/10/2022;

had, and was acting like he was mounting to its seat, and using a goad as though his fingers really held one.

(Eur. *Her.* 921-949; emphasis added)

After all has transpired, Heracles regains his consciousness. Then he falls into a state of despair and regret. He was overwhelmed by preposterousness and the desire to commit suicide. Theseus dissuades him from his dark intentions, and advises and consoles him:

Heracles

Hear me if just for a moment...I will unfold to you why the **life now is unbearable to me** as well as it was formerly. First, I am the son of a man who incurred the guilt of blood, before he married my mother Alcmena, by slaying her aged father. Now when the foundation is badly laid at birth, it is necessary for the race to be cursed with woe; and Zeus, whoever this Zeus may be, begot me as an enemy to Hera; yet do not be vexed, old man; for I regard you as my father rather than I do Zeus. Then, while I was being breastfed and nursed, that bedfellow of Zeus foisted fearsome snakes into my cradle to cause my death. Afterwards I took on a cloak of youthful flesh, what else do I need to tell **after all of the toils I endured? what have I not destroyed**, whether it were lions, or triple-bodied Typhons, or giants or the battle against the hosts of four-legged Centaurs? or what about when I had killed the hydra, that monster with a ring of heads with power to grow again, I passed through a herd of countless other toils besides those and came to the dead to grab to the light the three – headed hound, hell' gate keeper at the bidding of Eurystheus. And last, ah, woe at me! **I have dared this labour, to crown the sorrows of my house with my children's murder**. I have come to this point of necessity; no longer may I dwell in Thebes, the city that I love; for suppose I stay, to what temple or gathering of friends shall I go? For mine is no curse that invites greetings. Shall I go to Argos? how can I, when **I am an exile from my country? Well, is there a single other city I can rush off to?** Am I then to be looked at askance as **a marked man**, held by cruel stabbing tongues: "Is not this the son of Zeus that once murdered his children and his wife? **Plague on him**², take him out from the land!" **Now to one who was once called happy, such changes** are a grievous thing; though he who is always unfortunate feels no such pain, for **sorrow is his birthright**. This, I think, is the piteous pass I shall one day come to; **for earth will cry out forbidding me to touch her, the sea and the river-springs will refuse me a crossing**, and I shall become like Ixion who revolves in chains upon that wheel.

² One of the oldest curses in Serbian is *Kuga ti na kuću!* („Plague on your house“) reflecting the worst punishment, meant not for an individual, but for the whole family or tribe (i.e. society);

And so this is best, that I should be seen by no one of the Hellenes, among whom in happier days I lived in bliss. **What right have I to live?** what profit can I have in the possession of a useless, impious life? **So let that noble wife of Zeus dance**, beating her foot in her shoe; for now has she gained her heart's desire in utterly confounding the first of Hellas' sons. Who would pray to such a goddess? Her jealousy of Zeus for his love of a woman has destroyed the benefactors of Hellas, guiltless though they were.

Theseus:

I cannot counsel you... There is not a man alive that has wholly escaped misfortune's taint, nor any god either, if what poets sing is the truth. Have they not intermarried in ways that law forbids? Have they not thrown fathers into ignominious chains to gain the sovereign power? Still they inhabit Olympus and brave the issue of their crimes. And yet what shall you say in your defence, if you, a child of a man, takes your fate excessively hard, while they, as gods, do not? No, then, leave Thebes in compliance with the law, and come with me to the city of Pallas. There, when I have purified you of your pollution, I will give you home and the half of all I own... these shall henceforth be called yours by men, while you live; and at your death, when you have gone to Hades' halls, the whole city of Athens shall exalt your honor with sacrifices and a monument of stone. For it is a noble crown of a good reputation for citizens to win from Hellas, by helping a man of worth.

(Eur. *Her.* 1255-1339; emphasis added)

In the mythical biography of Heracles, the extensive slayings and bloodshed singled him out from other Greek heroes. Each murder had something to do with divine punishment. Heracles was often in a state of No-sense (Foucault, 2013). His heroic labours excommunicated him from life in a peaceful community. He is a hero who has to wander alone with his own tragedy. Euripides is the poet of anthropodicy. It is no coincidence that Heracles' infamy is characterised as the culmination of bloodshed which results in the loss of reason, but only in the form of a psychotic episode (Milivojević, 2007). Euripides is the first author who showed that the greatest battles happen in the human mind, and that the greatest battle is the battle with ourselves. The irrational force of passion captured Heracles' mind. The perception of reality gets a new dimension and meaning. The scope and precision of medical and psychological knowledge expressed in the tragedy *The Frenzy Heracles* causes astonishment and admiration. Euripides is the first European writer who articulated madness. His knowledge of this disease of the spirit and mind is far beyond mere observation, a topic that today seems to be strictly professional and meant for the medical specialists to dwell on. To the audience and the readers of Euripides' play, the poet clearly presents the phenomenon of Heracles' pathogenesis, or what happens when a person experiences an emotional and

moral breakdown. Understanding this interaction between the hero and the situation in which he finds himself makes Euripides a psychologist at a time before psychology was established as a scientific discipline.

In Heracles' case, madness did not occur by chance. Even he himself says that this is the consequence of the "ancestral sin" (ver. 1255). Heracles is suffering from a turnover of destiny, from a game of chance, from an external force. His insanity was also preceded by a series of 'dirty' labours which he, as a hero, had to fulfil. And he served a man 'worse than himself'. After one of these labours, in return, he received his wife Megara, the daughter of the king of Thebes. However, Destiny did not intend for him to live a calm life beside his wife and children. Hera had other plans, causing him to undergo new sufferings. Theseus, whom Heracles had taken out of Hades, consults a friend and assures him that suicide would be a cowardly act (Maričić, Šijan, 2020, p. 71, p. 73; also see Garrison 1991; Dover, 1974, pp. 168–169; Van Hooff 1990). Heracles accepts this kind of self-cognition with difficulty. Heracles' madness is an initiation into his awareness that man must endure regardless of the difficulties of life, proving that the blows of destiny constantly play with human lives. Euripides carried out a vivisection of Heracles' emotions and mind, putting that complex mosaic in front of us all to 'see' from our own viewpoint and 'read' in our own manner.

Unlike with Heracles, in the Serbian epic ballads about Marko Kraljević, a folk singer does not explicitly say anything about Marko's insanity. There is an obscure madness at hand here. The singer of tales expresses only the manifestations of madness in the forms of Marko's frenzy, pride, rage, unreasonable behaviour, grudges, insensible laughter, and the like. The singer primarily depicts the medieval Serbian knight as the protector of the weak and dis-empowered people: he frees the captives, opposes the Ottoman scoundrels, and speaks with and treats wounded animals. But there is also a dark side to his nature. Like most epic heroes, he is also a hector, a grouch, a drunkard, vain in his own heroism, drunk on his own masculinity, easily offended, haughty and wild. His cruelty is part of his infantile perception of the world, which is actually the perception of the epic singer. In each ballad, there are always just *black and white* spheres in which Marko, led by some personal instinct, solves certain labours. He is a hero of epic times and 'communication by the sword'. He has an epic biography of murders and conflicts on the battlefield, a biography full of bloodbath that enthralls him, and through all that time he had to serve people 'worse' than himself. In all these, one can recognise a personal and a national frustration. In order to satisfy the higher principles of justice and to establish the world's balance, Marko was given the role of the avenger by the singer of tales that inspired Margaret Yourcenar to write the "Smile of Marko" and "The End of Marko" in her *Oriental Tales*. Due to his role of avenger of the poor, weak and oppressed, Marko

trusts no one except himself. He holds a grudge against everyone, because he sees potential enemies in everyone.

In some areas of the Balkan region, Marko was purposely portrayed as an anti-hero. In these ballads, he is characterised as a bloodthirsty man – he kills his brother, his mother, his wife and girlfriend and, in some cases, morbid, even cannibalistic motifs are related to his character. According to Ljubinković (1995), these ballads were created in the so-called ‘limitrophe’ areas, in which different ethnic and religious interests are confronted and opposed, creating different and completely opposite views on the character and role of Marko Kraljević (Ljubinković, 1995, pp. 184-187).

It is said above that bloodshed and murder are often associated with madness, either as a cause or as a consequence. Nevertheless, the intention of an epic singer was not to show us the psychological state of Marko’s madness, but rather to describe Marko’s violence as a result of deep frustration and inhibition. On the other hand, Marko’s every misdeed is justified by the folk singer. We will indicate here only one aspect of Marko’s frenzy – violence, expressed towards women. Why towards women? In the singer’s subconscious, women have an unpredictable, ‘demonic’ nature, similar to the *vilas* which are, as Euripides’ Madness, the daughters of Night. A woman is inclined to communicate with the invisible and intangible world, known as intuition. The language of a woman is not a sword; on the other hand, she is willing to shed blood due to internal urges. Women are the ones who know how to provoke anger and rage in Marko. The hero is not immune to their evil language and the truth that comes out of their mouths.

In the poem *Marko Kraljević and the Daughter of the Moorish King*, Marko tells his mother about the Arab princess who helped him escape from captivity. In doing so, she stole many ducats and ran away with him, as Ariadne and Medea did in the Greek tradition. But there is no gratitude in this hero, since Marko put “his ‘kalpak’ (headgear for medieval Serbian knights) on his knee” (*Marko Kraljević and the Daughter of the Moorish King*, 52-53), an action usually performed when he negotiated with the enemy, and a clear sign that he does not keep his word (Čajkanović, 1994, pp. 366-367). In his male pride, he finds in the act of the girl a betrayal towards her own kind, and if she was able to betray her own religion and homeland, she would do the same to him. He displayed the same pattern in his own house, when Vidosava, the wife of his uncle Momčilo, betrayed him for Vukašin. However his subconscious gives him no peace, and he builds endowments in order to gain redemption:

On a morning, as day dawned,
I sate me down to rest.
And the Moorish maiden took me,
Encirch’ng me with her black arms.
And when I looked on her, mother.

On her black face and white teeth,
 A loathing gat hold on me;
 I drew the rich-wrought sabre.
 And smote her on the silken girdle.
 That the sabre cut clean through her.
 I mounted my Sharatz,
 And the head of the Moorish girl spake and said:
 ‘Brother-in-God, Kraljević Marko!
 Leave me not! Leave me not!’
 Therein, mother, I sinned against God,
 Gaining much gold thereby.
 And for this cause I let build many pious buildings.

(*Marko Kraljević and the Daughter of the Moorish King*, 77-85)³

In the Moorish girl, however, Marko saw the embodiment of the enemy, who differs in looks/skin and religion. But in the human dimension, he feels something terribly wrong in this act of his, a great sin, for which he is remorseful. The other sin, greater yet than murder, is stealing. That’s why his mother calls every spoil that Marko brings home *ludo blago* (*Engl.* fool’s treasure) i.e. ‘gold without labour’. For Marko, stealing is probably the greatest sin of all, which is why he always distributes it to others.

Marko’s mother asked a question:
 “Ah, my son, Kraljević Marko,
 Wherefore dost thou build so many pious buildings?
 Hast thou sinned greatly against God?
 Or doth gold come to thee without labour?”

(*Marko Kraljević and the Daughter of the Moorish King*, 1-5)

In the ballad from Dalmatia, *Marko Kraljević kills his sweetheart*, his wife secretly curses him before a mirror. Marko’s mother hears the curse, which she afterwards recounts to her son. His crime equals Heracles’, but what differs is the cause of the crime and his bonds with the female figures. There is a clear patriarchal relationship with his wife, and a pathological relationship with his mother. There is no communication with the child-bearing woman, while the mother is seen as a pillar of the house. The hero leaves his household and even his mother after the committed crime, and thereafter begins a new story of the tragic knight:

And that fell hard on Marko’s soul,
 so he took his forged knives,
 and he went to his sweetheart’s dwellings,
 he struck her into the heart,

³ All translations of the ballads were done by D.H. Low, unless it is differently noted. For the original version see: Lukić, Zlatković, 1996;

cut out her unborn child
 and gave it to his mother
 impaled on that very knife:
 "Here is, mother, the apple that isn't ripe,
 which you haven't let to mature"
 And to his court he spoke out loud
 "Farewell, my court!
 When I hear the cuckoo bird sing inside you,
 then my mother will see her Marko".
 And he spoke to his ash tree
 "Farewell, green ash tree!
 When an apple grows on you,
 then my mother will stop waiting for Marko."

(*Marko Kraljević kills his sweetheart*, 23-39)⁴

In the epic ballad from the region of Split, *Marko and Philip the Hungarian* (Stojković, 1922) the Hungarian hero (Vukadinović, 2007) has a strong desire to defeat Marko. Prior to his clash with Philip the Hungarian, Marko had asked Philip's wife Anđelija for Philip's whereabouts while at their doorsteps, but she addressed the hero with disparaging words, for which he punished her by beating her beautiful face and stealing gold ducats in order to 'pay the drink' to her husband. Here are the words that offended Marko: "Get thee hence, starveling dervish, Philip is no brother to such as thee!" (*Marko Kraljević and Philip the Hungarian*, 74-75).

In another, less known version, Marko's cruelty grows completely mad:

Then he grabbed Philip's sweetheart,
 he cut through her white breasts
 and pulled her arms through that holes...
 He carved out her black eyes
 and gave them to her like apples
 to hold in her hands,
 and he bound her to Šarac's tail
 dragged her across the green mountain,
 while her body was hitting trees and stones;
 He took her to the crossroads
 and cut her in four and tied her limbs
 to four branches for eagles and ravens to eat their fill.

(*Marko Kraljević and Philip the Hungarian*, 2nd version)

He commits no lesser a crime against the beautiful Rosanda in *The Sister of the Captain Leka*. The girl rejects Marko's marriage proposal, because she desires another groom. She makes a mistake and characterises Marko as the servant of the Sultan, who would have no grave, and no

⁴ Translation by the authors;

proper burial. Furious due to her refusal and offense, Marko tricks her into approaching him. The girl has a tragic end:

...by the hand he seized the damsel.
 He drew the sharp dagger from his girdle,
 And cut off her right arm;
 He cut off her arm at the shoulder.
 And gave the right arm into her left hand.
 And with the dagger he put out her eyes,
 ...
 And wrapped them in a silken kerchief,
 And thrust them into her bosom.

(*The Sister of the Captain Leka*, 534-543)

In the ballad *A Damsel Outwits Marko*, a young woman saves herself from the violent hero's nature using her own wits. In order to inflict psychological turmoil, Marko uses verbal violence:

"Bitch that thou art!
 ...
 Well for thee, fair damsel.
 That thou tookest no apple.
 Nor apple nor golden ring!
 By the faith of my body,
 I should have cut off thy two hands,
 Nor wouldst thou have saved thy head.
 Nor ever on thy head have worn the green garland!"

(*A Damsel Outwits Marko*, 87-93)

Similarly, Marko has no mercy when he cuts off the right hand of the blacksmith Novak, who had forged him a sabre. The hero has an obsessive vision of himself as the best and undisputed knight. Any opposition to that image causes furious anger and vengefulness. In his arrogance, the hero becomes so conspicuous that he loses awareness of reality. He cannot stand the reality. After he calms and comes to his senses, he is regretful. He feels guilty after the crimes, since he has transgressed the values of his social and cultural environment. That is why he tries to make up for his crimes with building churches, and in the case of Novak, with ducats:

In good sooth, Kraljević Marko,
 I have forged one better,
 A better sabre — for a better knight.
 ...
 "Stretch forth thy hand, Novak!
 Stretch forth thy hand that I pay thee for the sabre."
 ...
 Kraljević Marko swung the sabre
 And hewed off his arm at the shoulder:

“Lo, here thy recompense, smith Novak!
 Nevermore shalt thou make blades or better or worse.
 And here for thee are an hundred ducats.
 For to nourish thee the days of thy life.”

(*Marko Kraljević and Musa Kesedzija*, 144-162)

There is no ballad that explicitly states that Marko has fallen into a state of madness. Bloodshed is permitted to heroes. Killing is justified. In order to survive, one has to be severe, because the world is similarly severe. Cruelty is his means of survival. That is why Marko trusts no one. The only female figures to whom he pays due respect and shows fear are the *vilas*. His final destination would be related to a *vila*. It is indicative that Marko is said to have been buried by the monk Vaso somewhere in, or near the monastery Hilandar on the Mount Athos, which is called Vilindar in the ballad (*Engl.* ‘the gift of a *vila*’, a popular-folk etymology). A *vila* announces Marko’s death. But the *vila* is a supernatural creature. She can harm him, and that is why he is afraid of the *vila*. On the other hand, the only female person whom he trusts is his mother. She is his conscience, his moral and knightly code, the essence and the basis, or the motivation behind many of his actions. Marko becomes the personification of her principles. She is the only one to whom the hero confesses his madness and his misdeeds:

Marko eats a poor dinner,
 dry bread and some onion.
 Still, loud laughs out Marko.
 His old mother asked him:
 “Why are you laughing, Marko my child?
 Are you laughing to a poor dinner of yours
 or to the old ages of your mother?”...
 “I am laughing neither to my poor dinner
 nor to your old age,
 but I am laughing, my dearest mother,
 to my youthful foolishness”

(*Marko and the Poturica*, 1-12)⁵

This self-ridicule (Čajkanović, 1994, pp. 366-367) is an epic manifestation of madness. It is not a laughter of fear and repentance, but an unusual association that does not jeopardise the hero’s values. In another ballad, the mother advises her son not to take part in any other bloodshed:

⁵ Translation by the authors.

O my son, Kraljević Marko,
 Cease, my son, from thy adventures.
 For evil may bring no good thing with it,
 And it wearies thine aged mother.
 That she must ever be washing bloody garments.

(*The Ploughing of Marko Kraljević*, 6-9)

These verses announce that the mother has grown old and nothing has changed. She still washes Marko's bloody clothes and sees no end of bloodshed.

Marko's life is constantly agonistic. Bearing the awareness of the historical reality, Marko Kraljević as the epic hero also moves through the space of various historical facts and periods. He lived for more than 300 years in the ballads, and 400 in the minds and beliefs of the people – as long as the Turkish oppression prevailed. This is approximately the period spanning between the battle of Kosovo in 1389 and the Serbian Uprising in 1804. The singers of tales throughout that time gave to Marko, a real medieval knight, the attributes of an epic hero whom they remembered as the protector of the oppressed. Folk ballads recall and reflect everything that was tragically characterised in history: the collapse of the Serbian Empire, the discord of the Serbian noble houses, the fatal battles, vassalage and waging war on the side of the invaders, the Turkish oppression of the people, rapes and terror, migrations, the loss of lands, family, offspring and, finally, identity. In the ballad *The Death of Marko Kraljević*, and its several versions (Lukić, Zlatković: 1996, pp. 489-490), the hero feels desperate when he realizes that he no longer has hope to satisfy his essential desires or to preserve some of his values. The hero falls into a pathological despair, where he sees his existential breakdown. This is a sign of the cancellation of the basic ontological and axiological assumptions on which he was created as a being. Marko's despair represents an epic suicide and the real slavery of the conquered people. He does not leave his weapon to any other hero. The hero has no successor, no progeny. Unlike Heracles, Marko Kraljević kills his horse, throws his mace into the sea, and breaks his sabre. Marko's death is a metaphor for the collapse of the state and its people under the mighty and cruel enemy. In order not to be rejected and forgotten in the years to come, Marko acts mercifully. In his last will and testament, as it is described in the ballad, the hero takes care of his own burial, the churches and the poor:

“One purse (sc. of gold) I give to him that findeth me,
 That he may bury my body;
 Another purse I give for to adorn the churches.
 The third I give to the maimed and the blind.
 That the blind may go into all the world.
 To sing and to celebrate Marko.”

(*The Death of Marko Kraljević*, 107-112)

The trinity in these final verses came from the people's Christian spirit that celebrates Prince Marko as a hero, a saviour and a saint. The same is the case with Heracles, who was a ἥρως (*Engl.* hero), σωτήρ (*Engl.* saviour) and ἅγιος πατρών (*Engl.* saint). The Serbian people forgave, forgot, praised Marko's deeds, and justified his misdeeds of madness and his immense pride. His madness reflects his incapability to stay calm and spiritually untouched while living in a crazy and turbulent Balkan world of pain, injustice and horrors. Conversely, his Hellenic counterpart has to endure all of life's sufferings, among which the worst one is the slaughter of his own family by his own hand, as his most difficult labour and ultimate fate.

CONCLUSION

The diachronic analysis of madness in the poetic sources of two close and similar traditions stemming from different ethnic groups led us to the conclusion that madness originates from things and events that are difficult to bear, sad to know and hard to accept. The motif of madness was quite common in ancient Greek literature. In turns, madness was treated as an obsession, sickness or righteous punishment. Madness always brought some insight and cognition. If we look at the motif of madness in Euripides' Hercules and the one in the epic Marko Kraljević, we may notice that Hercules suffered a fate imposed by the gods in a culture that was at the beginning of its rich history. The result of his madness is the wrath of the gods. In the end, he accepts his unjust life and difficult tasks as a result of inevitable fate, without negotiation. Marko's madness is a consequence of the loss of individual and national freedom imposed not by *force majeure*, but by humans. His 'individual madness' manifests tremendous anger and frustration due to the collective loss of the state, freedom and people. Marko Kraljević cannot and does not know how to suffer. He is a hero of survival. He does not accept suffering and sacrifice as the mystery of life, unlike other Serbian heroes such as Miloš Obilić and Prince Lazar, and therefore he fights reality. While doing so, he faces cruelty and sometimes loses his temper and his mind, and he commits cruel crimes too. That is why the folk singer of epic songs tries to justify the crimes of the hero, and to transform his misdeeds into heroic deeds.

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ЛУДИЛО ДВА ХЕРОЈА: ХЕРАКЛЕ И МАРКО КРАЉЕВИЋ

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Резиме

Античка Грчка, уз древни Рим, најзначајнији је извор уметничких узора, мотива и традиција уопште. Из неког разлога, мотив лудила много је присутнији у уметности једне у односу на другу колевку цивилизације чији смо баштинници. Хераклово лудило се, ипак, по много чему разликује од многих митских личности, јер је он пре свега културни јунак, родоначелник многих градова и синова претхомерског доба. У српској епици, о махнитости, бесу, гордости и инату Марка Краљевића говорили су народни певачи - гуслари, као тумачи јунакових

поступака. Епски певачи се нису бавили унутрашњом манифестацијом Марковог лудила, што им и није био циљ, већ описом његових екстатичних злочина. Постоји, условно речено, три вида у којима се оно може приказати: лудило јунака који претрпи тешке ударце, губитке и разочарења; симулирано лудило које има сврху мимикрије и привлачења пажње, управо да би се она одвратила од суштине; и, на крају, оно што посматрачи виде или доживе као лудило, а што можда и не заслужује такву одредницу.

Дијахронијска анализа лудила у поетским изворима две блиске традиције, али различитих етничких група, довела нас је до закључка да лудило потиче од ствари и догађаја које је тешко поднети, тешко прихватити и тужно познавати. Мотив лудила био је прилично чест у старој грчкој књижевности. Понекад је лудило третирано као опсесија, болест или праведна казна. Стање лудила је увек доносило неки увид и спознају.

Ако погледамо мотив лудила у Еурипидовом Хераклу и исти мотив у епским песмама о Марку Краљевићу, приметимо да је Херкле доживео судбину коју су му богови наметнули у култури која је била на почетку њене богате историје. Резултат његовог лудила је гнев богова. Они су ти који су поставили границе хероју, тј. смртнику. Херакле на крају, без преговора, прихвата неправедан живот и тешке задатке као резултат неизбежне судбине. Марково лудило је последица губитка индивидуалне и националне слободе наметнуте не вишом силом, већ поступцима људи и друштвеним околностима. Његово „индивидуално и егзистенцијално лудило“ испољава огроман бес и фрустрацију због колективног губитка државе, слободе и народа. Марко Краљевић не може и не зна да трпи. Он је херој опстанка. Марко Краљевић не прихвата страдање и жртву као мистерију живота, за разлику од других српских јунака Милоша Обилића и кнеза Лазара, и зато се бори са стварношћу. При томе се суочава са окрутном реалношћу у којој јунак повремено губи разум и чини грозне злочине. Епски певач не анализира психолошке окидаче јунакове природе. Он све време покушава оправдати злочине митског хероја Марка Краљевића и та злодела претворити у јуначка дела трагичног средњовековног јунака.