Plants in Slovenian Folk Songs

Subjects: Plant Sciences
Contributor: Živa Fišer

Traditional knowledge about plants, including their economic and symbolic values, is passed down from generation to generation in many different ways, such as by being written and via the oral tradition. Literary texts and poems across the globe, from the earliest times to the present, abound with plant references and emphasize the past and present importance of plants in daily life. Although these texts cannot be fully trusted as historical documents, they can still be used as sources for understanding the relationship between humans and plants.

ethnobotany folk poetry plant symbolism ritual plants useful plants

1. Introduction

Traditional knowledge about plants, including their economic and symbolic values, is passed down from generation to generation in many different ways, such as by being written and via the oral tradition. Literary texts and poems across the globe, from the earliest times to the present, abound with plant references [1][2][3] and emphasize the past and present importance of plants in daily life. Although these texts cannot be fully trusted as historical documents [4], they can still be used as sources for understanding the relationship between humans and plants. Moreover, comparing plant occurrences in historical and contemporary literary texts can also reveal changes in plant symbolism and use over time and in different places.

Similarly to other literary documents, traditional folk songs also offer an interesting insight into the relationship between humans and plants. Traditional folk songs are typically studied within the domain of ethnomusicology, which focuses on how songs are performed and transmitted and the role of music in building cultural identities [5], with an emphasis on indigenous peoples and local communities. However, the study of songs from an ethnobiological perspective offers a different perspective on the same topic, focusing on the relationship between humans and nature. As several works have shown, traditional songs can serve as repositories of indigenous peoples' ethnobiological knowledge [6][7][8], management practices [9], linguistic expressions (e.g., archaic words; [10]), and many other cultural values.

It can be speculated that folk songs contain the most important, or in some cases the most widespread, plant species in local communities that have acquired symbolic, economic, and ecological values over time. The fact that folk songs and tales were passed down orally from generation to generation allowed them to change and adapt to local characteristics over time and in different regions. In regions where different ethnic groups, cultures, or religious beliefs have met, this has led to the blending of beliefs and practices.

Since their settlement at the present site in the 8th century AD, the Slovenes (then called Carantanians) lived in an area with a vibrant political and cultural history, in a region often referred to as “where the Orient meets the West”, both culturally and geographically [11]. The invaders brought with them plant and animal species, traditions, knowledge, and religious beliefs that merged with the existing cultures, forming a pagan-Christian mixture that can still be observed today in some festivals, such as the Slavic mythological figure of “Zeleni Jurij” or Green George, who is celebrated on St. George’s Day in April.

2. Classification of Plants According to Their Values

Although none of the plants were assigned to one category exclusively (Supplementary Material S1, Table S1, could be found in https://www.mdpi.com/2223-7747/11/3/458#supplementary) many plants are classified predominantly to one: rose, marjoram (*Origanum majorana* L.), and lily are mostly used as symbols, while lime and pine trees are most often cited to depict the environment. Tobacco (*Nicotiana tabaccum* L.), carrot (*Daucus carota* L.), or oats (*Avena sativa* L.) are plants mentioned exclusively for consumption; the first for smoking and chewing, while the latter two as food. Only a few plants (pear (*Pyrus sylverstris* L.), clover, oak (*Quercus* spp.), Norway spruce, and apple (*Malus domestica* Borkh.) are cited almost equally in all three categories.

References with a symbolic meaning are by far the most common ones, representing almost half (49.3%) of all occurrences. Over a third of references (36.7%) are associated with their usefulness, while only a small percentage of plant references (14.0%) refer to the depiction of the environment. The number of different taxa and number of citations within each (sub)category in presented in **Figure 1**.

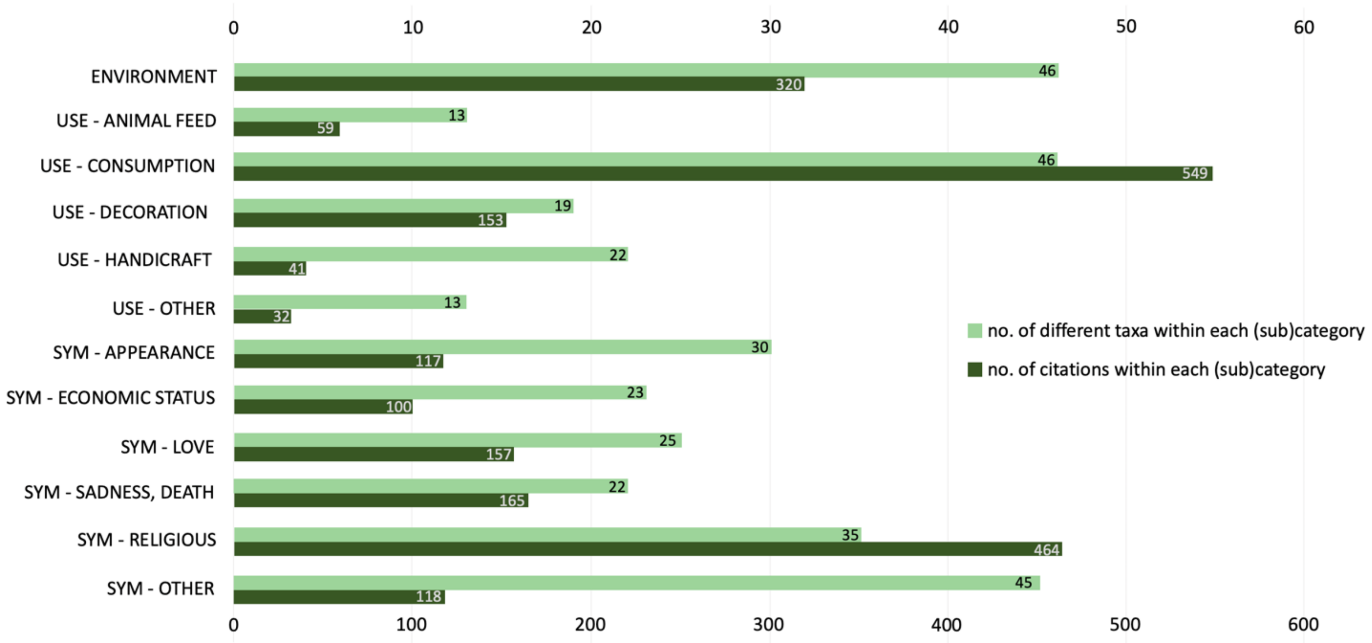

Figure 1. Number of different taxa (light green) and citations (dark green) within each (sub)category.

2.1. Plants with a Symbolic Value

2.1.1. Religious Symbolic Values

In many folk songs with religious content, plants symbolize Mary, Jesus, St. Joseph, or angels: “There is a garden by the road,/In the garden grow some flowers./The first flower is a lily,/Because Mary is merciful/The second is a rose,/Because Mary is gentle./The third is rosemary,/Because Jesus is Mary’s son./The fourth is a carnation,/For the angels from heaven./The fifth is marjoram,/Because Jesus is Mary’s throne./I will gather them all,/And give them in honor of Mary.” (Pri cesti stoji garteljček,/V njem pa rastejo rožice./Ta prva rožca lilija,/Ker je Marija usmiljena./Ta druga roža gartroža,/Ker je MArija cartana./Ta tretka roža rožmarin,/Ker Jezus je Marijin sin. Ta šterta roža nageljnček./Kar so nebeški angeljčki./Ta šeta roža je mar’jon,/Ker Jezus je Marijin tron./Vse te rožce bom vkup pobral,/Mariji v čast jih bom dar’val.” Š4919). It is clear from this song that some plant references are used exclusively to form the rhymes (in Slovenian) and, thus, some of these do not have necessarily a true symbolic value. In the traditional songs analyzed, lilies and roses are the flowers most frequently associated with Mary, which is consistent with representations in visual art in Europe since the Middle Ages [12][13][14][15]. Some other flowers are also used in this context, but less frequently. Among lilies, the species that symbolically represents Mary is usually the white-flowered Lilium candidum, which was also given the name Madonna lily and has been associated with the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary since the Middle Ages [14][15].

Wheat and grapevine are also very often associated with religion, symbolizing the Eucharist: “*...The first flower/Is the yellow wheat:/At Holy Mass they make/Sacramental bread of it.../The second:/Is the beloved grape:/At Holy Mass they make/The Blood of Christ from it...*” (“*Perva rožica je leta:/Oj rumena všeničica:/Per svetej maši jo nucajo/Za samo sveto hoštijo.../Druha rožca je leta:/Ljuba vinenska tertica:/Per svetej maši jo nucajo/Za samo sveto rešnjo kri...*” Š4927).

Love

In the songs analyzed, love is usually represented by ornamental plants, especially rosemary, carnation, rasp-leaf pelargonium (*Pelargonium radens* H.E. Moore), marjoram, and cotton lavender, while native plants are rarely associated with love. Several of these flowers form the traditional Slovenian love bouquet (in Slovenian, “ljubezenski pušeljc”) [16][17][18]. This bouquet was an important part of daily life in the past. The carnation, always red in color, symbolizes life and love, not only in Slovenian folklore, but also in many other (especially Southern European) cultures [8][19]. Rosemary, which retains its fragrance both fresh and dried, represents faith, while the fragrant green rasp-leaf pelargonium represents hope. Therefore, the values represented in this bouquet are love, faith, and hope. Girls gave their boyfriends bouquets of carnations and rosemary (and sometimes other flowers) to symbolize their love and devotion.

Sadness and Death

Among the plants that symbolize negative feelings, death or sadness, or even criminal acts, many are not particularly attractive, such as clover: “*There grows green clover/in a green field./In the morning the farmer comes/and mows the clover.../Oh, sinner,/the same will happen to you.../In the evening you will lie down in your bed/all healthy and strong.../but then death will come to you/and knock you down*...” (“*Raste, raste detela,/Na*

zelenem travniku./Zautra kosec pride,/Jo doli pokosi.../Ravno, ravno tako/Boš grešnik ti.../Vzvečer doli ležeš,/Si frišek no si zdrav.../Kda ti smert do tebe pride,/Te doli pokosi...” Š6120), or “*My mother asked me/“Where did you find this baby?”/“There, in those green ferns*” (“*Nas so mati prašali/“ Kje ste to dete najdeli?”/“Tam le v zeleni praproti*.” Š2278)), or have undesirable characteristics, such as the rush-producing nettle (*Urtica dioica* L.): “*She had three sons:/The first she threw into the sea/The second into the nettle*...”; (“*Sej je imela že sinke tri:/Enga je bla vrgla v morje,/Drugega je bla v koprivje...*” Š171), the thorny blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa* L.), or the bitter wormwood (*Artemisia* spp.). Many of these plants, for example box (*Buxus sempervirens* L.) and Norway spruce, are evergreen. De Cleene and Lejeune [12] mention that in German speaking countries, several blue flowering spring flowers, such as violets, pyramidal bugle (*Ajuga pyramidalis*), bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), and the spring gentian (*Gentiana verna*), were believed to bring bad luck. In some European countries (e.g., Italy, Netherlands), periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) was used in children’s funeral wreaths or planted on graves (especially those of children), thus the Italian name Fiore di Morte (death’s flower) [20]. Indeed, the lesser periwinkle and spring gentian are associated with death also in some songs: “*Spring gentians faded,/they were dry and faded./Mila fell asleep among them;/never again did she wake up*.” (“Sp*anjšice ble ocvetele,/Ble so suhe že in vele./Mina je bla v njih zaspala,/Nikdar več ni z spanjšic vstala*.” Š234). Sadness or death is often represented by withering or dried flowers or plants (marjoram, spring gentian, rosemary).

Even the traditional bouquets given by girls to boys were not always associated with positive feelings. When boys went to war or when they died, girls made green bouquets that represented sadness or death: “*Last year you received/A bouquet of flowers/This year I will give you/A bush of nettle*...” (“*Vlan’ si še pušelc/Iz rožic dobil,/Pa letas germušelc/Ti dam iz kopriv*” Š4461). Rosemary and cotton lavender are usually mentioned as components of green bouquets. Carnations, roses, and lilies were also often associated with death, as they were among the few cultivated ornamental plants planted on graves.

The references to ferns are interesting and show the importance of ferns both as useful and symbolic plants. Ferns grow wild in nature and their symbolic meaning relates to nature. Since dry fern leaves were used by farmers in the past to stuff mattresses, they are usually mentioned in connection with poverty and/or sleep. Some poems mention that women gave birth in the ferns and left their unwanted children there. In other poems, women who could not have children found newborns in ferns and took them home. The roots of the worm fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas* (L.) Schott) were once used to cure intestinal worms [21], but also to induce abortions [22], which might explain the connection between ferns and infanticide. On a more positive note, ferns are also mentioned as the place where lovers secretly meet and make love.

Human Appearance and Characteristics

The specific properties of plants are often compared to humans, both with a positive and negative connotation. Female beauty was for example described through the comparison with red roses, white lilies, white buckwheat flowers, white and red poppies, and black berries of blackthorn: “*She was slim as hemp,/Red as a rose,/White as a poppy flower/God himself brought her to this world*!” (“*Je b’la tenka ko konoplja,/Rudeča kakor gartroža,/Bela kakor makov cvet,/Sam Bog te zvolil na ta svet!*” Š1036). Even male beauty was sometimes compared to flowers: “*My*

loved one is beautiful as carnation flower" ("*Moj ljubi je lep/ko fajdelnov cvet*" Š2900) or "*My boyfriend is handsome as laurel flower*" ("*Moj šocel je lep/Kakor lomberjev cvet*" Š2907). However, in the latter case the beauty probably does not really refer to laurel flowers as they are rather inconspicuous, but flowers serve as symbol of the plant's usefulness. Mosses, ferns, and other unattractive green plants or unappreciated vegetables are used to emphasize ugliness or stupidity: "stupid as a cabbage stem" ("*Per deli je terda/Kak zeljov kocen*" Š2926); "*Her face is green as moss/.../Everyone is scared of her*" ("*Zelena ku mah,/.../ Pa gleda ku sova,/Da je vsakig strah*" Š2887); or "If you want to be mine,/You have to buy some color,/So you won't be as green,/As sorrel and absinthe..." ("*Če češ moj bit',/Moraš barvo kupit',/Da ne boš tko zelen,/Kot ta ščavlja in pelen*." Š2654). However, the green and not particularly attractive hemp (*Cannabis sativa* L.) is usually associated with positive qualities, probably due to its many useful properties.

Economic Status

Several plants are used as symbols of economic status. Although some crops were regarded as "poor people's food", others symbolize richness or wealth. Potatoes, cabbage, beans, and turnips symbolize poverty: adjectives such as black (black potatoes-probably meaning burned potatoes), small (small beans) or stinky (stinky cabbage) are often associated with these foods: "*On Sunday there is nothing else (to eat)/Than a piece of meat/And some stinky cabbage*..." ("*V nedeljo ni druzga/Kot košček mesa/In zraven mav zelja/Usmrajenega*." Š7399). Among the grains, wheat was the most appreciated one, while rye, barley and buckwheat are regarded as food of the poor or as animal feed: "*The pilgrims are gathering/To visit the holy mother by the lake./They are preparing food for the travel:/Wheat for the rich ones,/Barley for the poor ones*..." ("*Oj romarji se zbirajo/K mater božji na jezero./Oj za brašnjo napravljajo:/Ti bogati za pšenično,/Ti ubogi za ječmenovo*." Š292). The low appreciation for barley is evident from several songs referring to eating barley porridge. Porridge was a common prison food and the saying "eating porridge" refers to being in prison [23].

2.1.2. Useful Plants

Plants Used for Human Consumption

Grapevine is by far the most frequently referenced useful plant, used exclusively for consumption. Among the other fruits, the dominating species are temperate trees which have been cultivated in the region for centuries: apples, pears, hazelnuts, cherries, walnuts, plums, figs, sour cherries, olives, and peaches. Oranges are the only fruits that are not commonly grown in the region due to the mostly unsuitable climate. Nowadays, they are occasionally cultivated in the sub-Mediterranean part of Slovenia, but folk songs indicate that they were occasionally also grown in the past outside the warmer sub-Mediterranean: "*Grow, grow, orange tree,/Orange tree, noble tree*..." ("*Rasti, rasti pomoranča,/Pomoranča, žlahtno drev'!*" Š923).

Vegetables are mentioned less frequently than fruits. This is probably because growing vegetables was not very common before the 18th century; pumpkins, cucumbers, melons, turnip, carrots, radishes, onions, and garlic are among the few vegetables grown until the end of the 17th century [24]. Vegetables also often have a negative connotation, compared to fruits or grains, and represent a symbol of poverty or contempt for

foreigners, e.g. "...*You will eat white turnip,/And sit hungry by the stove*…" ("*Belo repo bodeš jedla,/Lačna pol' se k peči vsedla.*" Š8351) or "*Vlachs-farting peas, shitting lentils*!" ("*Vlah/Prdi grah,/Seri lečo*!" Š7718). Among the vegetables present in the region since the settlement of the Slavs (between the 6th and 8th century), only cabbage, turnip, and lettuce are mentioned in more than 10 songs, while lentils, faba beans, green peas, onions, radishes, and leeks are mentioned less frequently. Introduced vegetables and grains are mentioned only rarely (except potatoes and beans, which both appear in over ten songs), but are usually despised: e.g., "*On Friday we eat/Those damn beans:/When you put them in mouth/You almost vomit./On Saturday there is nothing else (to eat)/Than black potatoes,/How can I eat them/They smell like pitch*..." ("*V petek je tisti/Prokleti fižol:/V usta ga deneš,/Bi kmalu kozlal./V soboto ni druzga,/Kot črni krompir;/Kako ga bom jedel,/K smrdi kakor šmir!*" Š7402). None of the analyzed songs mention the now widespread bell peppers or tomatoes. Although they were introduced by the 19th century, they became more popular only in the beginning of the 20th century, after the analyzed songs had been recorded. In the last 100 years, those two vegetables became common and, together with some other new world vegetables, such as zucchini or eggplants, gained their place in traditional Slovenian cuisine.

Cultivated grains represent one of the most important food sources and the staple food of this region. Many cultivated grains are mentioned in folk songs, stressing their importance for the local population. Wheat is the most commonly cultivated and also the most appreciated grain species, which also resulted in the plentiful citations in folk songs. It was present in the region for at least 5000 years and Medieval times, taxes were paid in wheat [24]. The cheaper version of wheat is barley, one of the oldest and most cultivated crops worldwide. In Slovenia, barley is the main ingredient of the traditional porridge (in Slovenian language "ričet"). In the past, barley was even more common than today, as it was cheaper than wheat and, therefore, popular amongst the poorest: "*The pilgrims are gathering/To visit the holy mother by the lake./They are preparing food for the travel:/Wheat for the rich ones,/Barley for the poor ones*..." ("*Oj romarji se zbirajo/K mater božji na jezero./Oj za brašnjo napravljajo:/Ti bogati za pšenično,/Ti ubogi za ječmenovo*." Š292). Folk songs also mention bread and pastries made from other grains, such as a special flatbread made of common buckwheat ("ajdova prosjača") and bread made of oat or buckwheat. Buckwheat is second to wheat and is followed by oat. Other mentioned grains are proso millet, rye, and maize. Corn, now an important crop in Slovenia, is mentioned in only three songs. Corn was introduced in the 17th century and its cultivation progressed slowly in some regions as it competed with the much more popular buckwheat [11][24] and other cereals. By the end of the 19th century, corn was widely grown and its absence from songs is surprising.

Tobacco was used both for smoking and chewing, although all references except one refer exclusively to smoking: "I went to Celovec/.../I did not eat or drink anything/only smoked and chewed tobacco" ("V Celovc sem bil/.../Nič nisem jedel, nič ne pil,/.../Le rauhtabak in čiktabak/Je bila moja špiža." Š7345).

Plants Used as Animal Feed

Fruits and other parts of plants are also mentioned as sources of food for wild and domesticated animals. The latter —horses, pigs, chickens—were fed with wheat, oats, clover, and hazelnuts. As a rather expensive commodity,

wheat was used to feed noble horses, but the more common feed for working horses was clover or oats. Pigs were fed with acorns, beechnuts, and apples. Proso millet, but also grains of wheat, were used to attract wild birds. Mice are mentioned in a few songs, where they feed on proso millet, while in one song a bear is eating oats and lentils.

Decorative Plants

Among the decorative plants, most citations refer to the previously mentioned bouquets (see the section Plants with Symbolic Values: Love and Sadness and Death). Bouquets have been used throughout Europe for several purposes and on different occasions; the composition of flowers usually reflected their purpose e.g., [25][26][27]. Although none of the species that composed the traditional Slovenian bouquets are native in the region, they became an essential part of the Slovenian culture. Rosemary is the second most referenced plant species in Slovenian folk songs, which gained its popularity due to its scent and evergreen character; while carnations, as mentioned previously, even became the national flower symbol, as in some other European cultures (Spain, Monaco) [14:475]. These species were grown in gardens and pots around houses, on windowsills and balconies.

Rosemary has been an important plant species in the Mediterranean since at least Ancient Greece and was used later by both pagans and Christians [28]. Rosemary has many symbolic meanings in Europe, such as love, death, eternity, fidelity, virginity, and others (see [29] and references therein). Many of these symbolic meanings are also found in the Slovenian folk songs. Although rosemary is extensively used as a condiment nowadays, the references in folk songs are mostly symbolic ones and do not relate to its useful values.

Some songs mention the “German rosemary” instead of “rosemary”. The Slovenian name of *Santolina chamaecyparissus* L. is “nemški rožmarin” (translated into English as German rosemary), and in a few cases it is difficult to understand whether the reference relates to *Rosmarinus* or *Santolina*. Among the wildflowers, blue or white violets were also collected for bouquets.

Lilies and roses were (at least initially) not cultivated in gardens, therefore, they were not used in bouquets or wreaths but were often planted on graves. A special kind of religious bouquet, called “Mary’s bouquet”, was devoted to Virgin Mary and was composed of her symbol, the rose. Lilies used in bouquets were almost exclusively white, while roses were always red.

Plants Used for Handicrafts

Branches and trunks of various shrubs and trees were used to make objects of daily use. The songs mention the use of wood of Norway spruce for boats, silver fir for boards, apple for chests, lime and maple for cradles, hazel and dogwood for sticks, maple for musical instruments and arches, box for smoking pipes, juniper and alder for agricultural tools, such as hoes and plows, and oak for smaller decorative items such as Jesus crosses. Pliable branches of hazel and willow and stems of old man’s beard (*Clematis vitalba* L.) are mentioned as sources for making reins, baskets, or for tying: “*He came to get gbanca (traditional pastry),/It’s made of barely/And tied with a hazel branch*” (“*Po gbanco je prišel,/Ječmenova je,/Z ‘no leskovo trtico/Zvezana je.”* Š3581). The making of homemade baskets from hazel and willow branches is well documented from some Balkan countries [30][31] and

was also an important source of income in some Slovenian villages [32]. Nowadays, basketry is practiced only on a small scale, but its ethnological importance was confirmed by the inclusion of weaving in the Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage [33]. Although hazel and willow baskets are still made for commercial purposes, baskets made from old man's beard were only used for domestic purposes [32]. Textile fibers were obtained from herbaceous plants, such as hemp, flax, and stinging nettle. Similarly to the now commercially more important flax and hemp fibers, nettle fibers were used to make textiles in Central Europe before the introduction of cotton in the 19th century, but their production ceased during World War II when other, cheaper fibers became more readily available [34].

Other Miscellaneous Uses

The folk songs studied also contain sporadic references to some medicinal and magical plants or plants used in religious rituals. Dafni et al. [29] classify ritual plants as plants or their parts used in private or official ceremonies to create a tunnel with gods or supernatural forces. These plants may include sacred trees, hallucinogenic and narcotic plants, incense, and aromatic plants with other uses. Religious uses mentioned in folk songs include sprinkling the dead with evergreen plant twigs and making funeral wreaths. These consisted of green plants, usually rosemary and also cotton lavender (*Santolina chamaecyparissus*), but were sometimes combined with colorful flowers, as mentioned in one of the folk songs: "*When I die/I will have a beautiful wreath/Of rosemary/And red carnations*" ("*Če jez dekle umrla bom,/Venček lep imela bom:/Z' rožmarina blagiga,/Z' nagelna rudečiga.*" Š6250).

The sprinkling of the dead with (usually evergreen) plant shoots at funerals has its origins in antiquity and has survived as part of the Christian burial tradition. Various plants, usually evergreens, were used in burial rituals, such as myrtle, basil, olive tree, spruce, juniper, rosemary, box, and others [29][35][36][37]. In reports from some countries (e.g., Iraq), the evergreen habit is said to preserve the soul and is referred to as evergreen life force [38]. One of the folk songs says: "*She entered the room/And sprinkled him/With green rosemary*" ("*Prek praga je stopila,/Z zelenim rožmarinom/Ga poškropila*" Š205).

Only three plant species were mentioned as having medicinal properties, namely carrot, fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare* Mill.), and laurel, as well as the magical "koren lečen". Koren lečen is a root of a presumably magical plant that cures all diseases: "*I have an unknown taproot,/Unknown taproot, medicinal taproot (koren lečen):/I put it under my tongue,/In the evening I get very sick/In the morning I lie there dead/.../The next day the people in the castle cry/.../Only the court jester laughs,/Talks and says:/"I have a strong feeling/That the young Zora is not dead./.../He (the king) opens my mouth/and removes the root/Unknown root, healing root (koren lečen)/...*" ("*Sej imam jest neznan koren,/Neznan koren, koren lečen:/Ki ga pod jezik položim,/Precej zvečer hudo zbolim./Zjutraj pa že mertva ležim./.../Le grajski norec se smeji,/Tako-le pravi, govori:/„Močno, močno se meni zdi,/De mlada Zora mertva ni./.../Pa Zori vzame 'z ust koren,/Neznan koren, koren lečen.*" Š114) or "*...He plucks a tap root/a dear and noble one:/.../If you, my darling, are better,/this (taproot) will cure you;/But if you are dying,/you will be much worse with it./...*" ("*Vun potegne žlahten koren;/.../Če tebi k zdravji bo,/Potem ti preci bole bo;/Če pa tebi smrti bo,/Potem ti taki huje bo!*" Š129). Although there has been debate in the past as to which plant species "koren lečen" refers to,

and some candidates have been mentioned, such as bryony (*Bryonia* L.) [39] or blessed thistle (*Cnicus benedictus* L.) [24], the most common opinion is that it is a fictional magical species.

Fennel is mentioned as a remedy to ward off snakebites: "...*Eat, eat the fennel,/so that the colorful snake will not bite you*..." ("*Jej, jej, jej, koromač,/Da te ne piči pisan kač!*" Š7851). This song was sung by children at Easter while eating fennel and other blessed Easter foods. In one of Pliny's works, he mentions a fable about snakes eating fennel when they shed their skin to improve their eyesight. This fable led to the development of an ointment made from viper skin, fennel, and frankincense to improve eyesight [40]. The use of fennel seeds as an antidote is reported from Hindu and Chinese cultures [41].

The absence of medicinal and magical references in Slovenian folk songs was unexpected, as traditional medicine and wild plant gathering are widespread in the area [20] and Mlakar [24] lists a large number of plants with apotropaic magical powers used in Slovenia. However, a similar observation was made by Cardaño and Herrero [42] and De Cleene and Lejeune [12]. The latter found only five references to medicinal use in folk songs of Castile and León (Spain), and, surprisingly, none of the cited species (lemon, orange, apple and rose) is primarily associated with medicine.

2.1.3. Plants as Features of the Environment

The most frequent plants used to describe the environment are native or cultivated trees: lime is by far the most cited tree, followed by maple, beech, pine, grapevine, apple, pear, and oak. This comes to no surprise, as lime is regarded as the most important tree species in the Slovenian culture. The importance of lime has roots in the Slavic times, when lime was worshiped as a ritual tree. Thus, since the early days, lime trees were planted in village centers, where all important events took place: "*There is a village named Dolina/In the middle there stands a lime tree/Underneath the gypsies gather*..." ("*Stoji, stoji Dolina vas,/Na sred vasi pa lipica./Se tam cigani zbirajo*..." Š133). This tradition is still vivid today in Slovenia and large lime trees are often protected by law as sites of cultural and natural heritage [43]. Of course, lime is not the only tree species that was planted in villages, but was sometimes replaced by oaks, pines, pears, and other trees: "*There is a green pine growing in the courtyard/a black horse is tied to it...*" ("*Na dvori vam zelen bor,/Zanj' privezan konjič vran...*" Š4746) or "*A pear is growing in front of the house/Underneath the pear is a cool shade...*" ("*Pred vrati vam hruška zrasla,/Pod njo vam je hladna senca*..." Š5083). Some tree species, such as beech, willow, or pine, are usually used to describe the natural environment outside the human settlements: "*The shepherd is herding goats/In the green pinewood…*" ("*Kazarič mi kazice pase/U zeljanen borawji*..." Š176).

Among the herbaceous plants used to describe the environment are both wild plants (e.g., clover, ferns, stinging nettle, violets), as well as cultivated ones (e.g., wheat, roses, cotton lavender, lilies).

References

1. Ellacombe, H.N. The Plant-Lore and Garden-Craft of Shakespeare, 2nd ed.; W. Satchell and Co: London, UK, 1884.
2. Włodarczyk, Z. Review of plant species cited in the Bible. Folia Hortic. 2007, 19, 67–85.
3. Quealy, G.; Collins, S.H.; Mirren, H. Botanical Shakespeare: An Illustrated Compendium; Harper Design: New York, NY, USA, 2017.
4. Pardo-de-Santayana, M.; Tardío, J.; Heinrich, M.; Touwaide, A.; Morales, R. Plants in the Works of Cervantes. Econ. Bot. 2006, 60, 159–181.
5. Fernández-Llamazares, A.; Lepofsky, D. Ethnobiology through Song. J. Ethnobiol. 2019, 39, 337–353.
6. Agrawal, S.R. Trees, Flowers and Fruits in Indian Folksongs, Folk proverbs and Folk Tales. In Contribution to Indian Ethnobotany; Jain, S.K., Ed.; Scientific Publishers: Jodhpur, India, 1997.
7. Ahmed, M.M.; Singh, P.K. Plant-lore with reference to Muslim folksong in association with human perception of plants in agricultural and horticultural practices. Not. Bot. Horti Agrobot. Cluj-Napoca 2008, 36, 42–47.
8. Herrero, B.; Cardaño, M. Ethnobotany in the Folksongs of Castilla y León (Spain). Bot. Sci. 2015, 93, 1–12.
9. Turner, N.J.; Lepofsky, D.; Deur, D. Plant Management Systems of British Columbia's First Peoples. BC Stud. Br. Columbian Q. 2013, 179, 107–133.
10. Turpin, M.; Stebbins, T. The Language of Song: Some Recent Approaches in Description and Analysis. Aust. J. Linguist. 2010, 30, 1–17.
11. Štih, P.; Simoniti, V.; Vodopivec, P. A Slovene History; Inštitut za Novejšo Zgodovino: Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2008.
12. De Cleene, M.; Lejeune, M.C. Compendium of Symbolic and Ritual Plants in Europe; Man & Culture Publishers: Ghent, Belgium, 2002.
13. Koch, R.A. Flower Symbolism in the Portinari Altar. Art Bull. 1964, 46, 70–77.
14. Kandeler, R.; Ullrich, W.R. Symbolism of plants: Examples from European-Mediterranean culture presented with biology and history of art: JUNE: Lilies. J. Exp. Bot. 2009, 60, 1893–1895.
15. Kandeler, R.; Ullrich, W.R. Symbolism of plants: Examples from European-Mediterranean culture presented with biology and history of art: OCTOBER: Roses. J. Exp. Bot. 2009, 60, 3611–3613.
16. Makarovič, G. Cvetlice v Ljudski Umetnosti. Motivi v Oblikovanju za Kmetije; Slovenski Etnografski Muzej: Ljubljana, Slovenia, 1974.
17. Šavli, J. Slovenska Znamenja; Založništvo Humar: Bilje, Slovenia, 1994.

18. Kumer, Z. Pušeljc pa mora bit Rože v slovenski ljudski pesmi, Muzikološke razprave In Memoriam Danilo Pokorn; Krstulović, N.C., Faganel, T., Kokole, M., Eds.; Založba ZRC: Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2005.
19. Belyavski-Frank, M. Flowers, Fruit, and Food: Symbolism in Bosnian and Macedonian Love Songs and Wedding Songs. In Bosanskohercegovački Slavistički Kongres; Knjiga, 2, Ibrišimović-Šabić, A., Eds.; Zbornik Radova: Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2019.
20. Mlakar, V. Sacred Plants in Folk Medicine and Rituals. Ethnobotany of Slovenia; The Raymond Aaron Group: Markham, ON, Canada, 2020.
21. Viegi, L.; Ghedira, K. Preliminary study of plants in ethnoveterinary medicine in Tunisia and Italy. Afr. J. Tradit. Complementary Altern. Med. 2014, 11, 189–199.
22. De Laszlo, H.; Henshaw, P.S. Plant Materials Used by Primitive Peoples to Affect Fertility. Science 1954, 119, 626–631.
23. Keber, J. Slovar Slovenskih Frazemov; Založba ZRC: Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2011.
24. Mlakar, V. Rastlina je Sveta, od Korenin do Cveta; Samozaložba: Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2015.
25. González, J.A.; García-Barriuso, M.; Gordalizac, M.; Amich, F. Traditional plant-based remedies to control insect vectors of disease in the Arribes del Duero (western Spain): An ethnobotanical study. J. Ethnopharmacol. 2011, 138, 595–601.
26. Łuczaj, J.L. A relic of medieval folklore: Corpus Christi Octave herbal wreaths in Poland and their relationship with the local pharmacopoeia. J. Ethnopharmacol. 2012, 142, 228–240.
27. Łuczaj, L. Herbal Bouquets Blessed on Assumption Day in South-Eastern Poland: Freelisting versus photographic inventory. Ethnobot. Res. Appl. 2011, 9, 1–25.
28. Lapucci, C.; Antoni, A.M. La Simbologia delle Piante; Polistampa: Florence, Italy, 2016.
29. Dafni, A.; Petanidou, T.; Vallianatou, I.; Kozhuharova, E.; Blanche, C.; Pacini, E.; Peyman, M.; Dajić Stevanovic, Z.; Franchi, G.G.; Benitez, G. Myrtle, Basil, Rosemary, and Three-Lobed Sage as Ritual Plants in the Monotheistic Religions: An Historical–Ethnobotanical Comparison. Econ. Bot. 2020, 74, 330–355.
30. Andonova, M. Baskets from the Mountain: An Ethnobotanical Approach to the Balkandjii Tradition. ArchéOrient-Le Blog. CNRS/University Lyon 2: Lyon, France, 2017. Available online: https://archeorient.hypotheses.org/7769 (accessed on 30 December 2021).
31. Pieroni, A. Local plant resources in the ethnobotany of Theth, a village in the Northern Albanian Alps. Genet. Resour. Crop Evol. 2008, 55, 1197–1214.
32. Bras, L. Pletarstvo na Slovenskem. Vodnik po Razstavi; Slovenski Etnografski Muzej: Ljubljana, Slovenia, 1973.

33. Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Weaving. Republic of Slovenia; Ministry of Culture: Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2016.
34. Vogl, C.R.; Hart, A. Production and processing of organically grown fiber nettle (Urtica dioica L.) and its potential use in the natural textile industry: A review. Am. J. Altern. Agric. 2003, 18, 119–128.
35. Scranton, R.L. A Wreath in the Vassar Classical Museum. Am. J. Archaeol. 1944, 48, 135–142.
36. Ložar-Podlogar, H. Death customs in the Slovene countryside. Etnolog 1999, 9, 101–115.
37. Kielak, O. The ethnobotanical character of the Polish Dictionary of Folk Stereotypes and Symbols. Ethnobot. Res. Appl. 2020, 19, 1–15.
38. Buckley, J.J. The Mandaeans: Ancient Texts and Modern People; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2002.
39. Kunaver, D. Čarodejna Moč Rastlin. Rastline v Ljudskem Izročilu; Samozaložba: Ljubljana, Slovenia, 1996.
40. Stannard, J. Medicinal plants and folk remedies in Pliny, “Historia Naturalis”. Hist. Philos. Life Sci. 1982, 4, 3–23.
41. Duke, J.A. CRC Handbook of Medicinal Herbs; CRC Press: Boca Raton, FL, USA, 1985.
42. Cardaño, M.; Herrero, B. Plants in the Songbooks of Castilla y León, Spain. Ethnobot. Res. Appl. 2014, 12, 535–549.
43. Šmid Hribar, M. Kulturni vidiki drevesne dediščine. Glas. Slov. Etnološkega Društva 2011, 51, 44–54.