THE FUNCTIONS OF ORAL LYRICAL POEMS

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE CLASSIFICATION

TANJA PERIĆ-POLONIJO
Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, Zagreb

The meaning of function in modern folklore studies is primarily connected to the structuralist method and is used in the very meaning which it has in linguistics: *purpose* or *role* (Bogatyrëv), or in the meaning of *action* (activities) of characters (Propp), or the characters' *procedure (priem)* (Meletinski). Recently, the meaning and nature of functions are given a considerably wider sense. Along the especially emphasized *aesthetic function* (Jakobson; Bogatyrëv), attempts have been made to observe folklore phenomena/poems in a "cluster" of functions which often, depending on context/performance, alternate, not in a way to suppress one another, but to be pronounced / or more pronounced than the other (Mukarovsky). It is believed that the function is not simply "a role", it determines *the type of connection*, a mutual correlation - - that is, the ties between the folklore and non-folklore structures. This very problem confronts the classification of oral lyrical poems.

Introduction

Two circumstances prompt us to systematically deal with the problems of oral literature classification. The first is that, in the last decades, folklore studies have been in a situation, as has the literary science, to reexamine and reach new solutions and theoretical explanations from their respective

fields. In this reexamination, oral literature forms have an important role, not only through their interpretation but also through their classification. The second is that everything that happens in written literature (e.g. the cancellation of traditional forms, the termination of barriers between literature and other forms of communication through language, as well as reliance on certain traditional genres and on spoken literature genres) and in the relation the written/the oral, dictates the classification to deal with the general principles of literary division, with works of literature in each separate sphere (oral and written/artistic), with ways and nature of their organization within their own poetics, but also dictates the classification to deal with the question to what extent it is itself necessary and possible.

A new methodology of research of phenomena in their contexts, the problems of synchrony and diachrony, authenticity, aesthetic value, the problem of the relation between oral and written forms, genre theory, all these are issues which call for an important condition - a modern access to a well classified and catalogized material. The usage of computers enables us to create data bases, data libraries for the input of poems, tales and other folklore material, but prior to the so-called "technical part" of typing in the data, it is necessary to work out the criteria for the classification of the material, i.e. *the criteria for asking the computer the right questions*. It is true that computers have made possible many things that we could not even dream of before, but it seems that they have, at the same time, opened new venues of approach to the problems of classification.

In a concrete dealing with their classification, oral lyrical poems should be judged through the way they exist and function, and all the while the question should be present: how should oral literary forms be classified? This way both the catalogization and the practice can be accomplished.

As was mentioned earlier, both the literary science and folklore studies found themselves in a sphere of reexamination of their theories and methods, which reexamination resulted in the development of a "new set of instruments": the new concept of style resulted in stylistic criticism, structuralism was developed from the ventures into communication aspects, while the interest in literary forms developed genology as an independent literary scientific discipline.

In the sphere of folklore studies certain phases can be discerned which were reflected in the Croatian folklore studies, thus changing their attitude towards the object of their study. From *structuralism*, through the *text, texture and context theories* in the sixties, through the *performance theories* (that is, performance, the event that is the focus of attention) and *the chain of communication* in the seventies, to the eighties when the focus is shifted on the everyday narration, on the modern urban tradition, on

narrations on life, biographies, autobiographies, memoirs and diaries, when history and tradition reappear as relevant themes for the folklore studies and are jointly studied as *folklore in a historical process*.[1]

The research of oral lyrical poems in the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies (henceforth: the Institute) is based primarily on the material gathered in Croatia and on the state of folklore studies in the country, and widens towards more general conclusions by ways of comparison.[2]

That is, the questions of classification are closely connected to tradition (the same as all other genologic problems which stem from the attitude towards tradition), and, therefore, the related problems are specific for each community, beside those common to all.[3]

---

[1] This is the way the research of oral literature has been conducted in the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies (former Institute of Folk Art, and Institute of Folklore Research). The above mentioned is Propp's structuralism, text, texture and context theories by Alan Dundes, K. V. Čistov's performance and chain of communication theories, and theories on new urban genres. It goes, primarily, for Maja Bošković-Stulli's pursuits, which created an important theoretical framework for dealing with oral literature and put the research of the Croatian oral literature into a wider European and global context. She also modernized the approach to oral literature and illuminated and criticised numerous inconsequential theoretical positions. Today in the nineties, similar pursuits are reflected in the works of the Institute's younger associates.

[2] In addition to numerous printed material, I particularly wish to point out the "Index of Material in Manuscript" and the information about it published in the Institute's almanac in *Narodna umjetnost* No. 22 and 26.

[3] In discussions about oral literature, *the concept of tradition* is treated in two ways, and the terms *lore (tradicijski)* and *traditional (tradicionalno)* are equally represented in the literature. In her study "O pojmovima usmena i pučka književnost i njihovim nazivima" **(1973 and 1983), Maja Bošković-Stulli** mentions these two terms and their usage, stressing that the former, lore (tradicijski), was consistently used by the Nestor of the Croatian ethnology, Milovan Gavazzi. Her opinion is that a significant difference in meaning can be discerned between the terms *lore* and *tradition.* "The term *lore*, writes Ms Bošković-Stulli, denotes the way of existence through a contact delivery of knowledge, crafts etc., while the term *traditional* denotes all the phenomena which have achieved some sort of tradition, as well as tradition-related phenomena, and which are immune to novelty. If this distinction should stand, only the former term, terminologically speaking, could be applied to oral literature as a phenomenon." (Bošković-Stulli 1983, 94) I. **Lozica (1990, 40-41)** also considers the duality of the usage of the term tradition: according to him, the term oral tradition denotes a collection of oral literature conventions as a collection of rules which stem from the characteristics of oral literary genres, that is, from, let's say, the poetics of oral literature, which can function, as the author calls them (in Levi-Strauss' terminology) as an imaginary order in opposition to the realized order of concrete performances; in the other sense, oral tradition is understood to be a sequence of performances in time, that is "a chain of communication" (see: Čistov 1975, Bošković-Stulli 1978). I. Lozica inclines towards this second standpoint, limit-

Therefore, it seems that the problems of classification of the oral literary forms known and recorded in Croatia can be solved only if elevated to a general level where they become examples for consideration in principle. This way, we are forced to shift from the individual towards the general and vice versa, trying to find at least momentarily satisfying answers to the proffered questions.

In order to, at least at the beginning, avoid the disagreements originating from numerous and very often incompatible definitions of oral lyrical poems, it would be wise to start from their obligatory characteristics. In this regard, it is of utmost importance to distinguish oral from written/artistic lyrical poems; the borders between them (as is the case with those between oral and written literature) are not always very sharp and that is where their classification meets most serious difficulties. Contacts, interferences, and even imitations show that oral and written literatures do not exist as two completely divided fields. However, these difficulties can be surpassed if the consideration is based on research of the technique of oral and written poetry and if particular texts/recordings (poems) are always given their temporal context and the context of their corresponding poetics.[4]

Starting from the afore mentioned material, from numerous transcripts of oral poems dating from the previous and this century, and starting from very inspiring anthologies of oral poetry, we can perceive a possibility to divide oral lyrical poems by a variety of criteria. Of course, if these divisions are of a solely practical nature, without any aspirations to being a theoretically founded system, then merging of divergent criteria of division is not something to be objected upon too harshly. But, in any other case when a theoretically founded system of classification wants to be achieved, divergent criteria of division should not be merged.

Although aware of the fact that the abundant, multi-elementary and ever-changing oral literary material almost "wildly" defies any modelling process, we can strive, notwithstanding, to work out certain methods and a model of classification which would "cover" oral lyrical poetry in such a way as to take into consideration an individual work and the structure of the type which it belongs to, as well as the specific qualities of the oral

---

ing the concept of tradition to the second sense "in which oral literature entails all oral literary performances and spoken performances which are not literary." (ibid.)

These considerations and standpoints are also present in this work.

[4] The framework for such a standpoint on oral literature are founded in the works of Maja Bošković-Stulli, which demystify the theory of folklore's originality and primeval authenticity and suggest that oral literature be researched also through written literary forms in collections of manuscripts and books, as well as through forms of direct oral artistic communication, that is, in the process of rendition.

literature poetics in relation to its written literature counterpart. Therefore, it is presumed that the classification can be dealt with on different levels having in mind that the principles of classification are nothing but conventions, though not arbitrary ones. For that reason this problem shall need to be treated from the aspect of theory of literature, but also from the aspect of folklore studies on an equal footing.[5]

The functions of oral lyrical poems

The meaning of function in the modern folklore studies is primarily connected to the structuralist method and is used in the very meaning which it has in linguistics: *purpose* or *role* (Bogatyrëv), or in the meaning of *action* (activities) of the characters (Propp), or the characters' *conduct* (Meletinski). Recently, the meaning and nature of functions are given a considerably wider sense. Let us point out certain opinions which are close to the perception of functions in this work. It is believed that the function is not simply a "role", it determines *the type of connection*, a mutual correlation - that is, the ties between the folklore and the extra-folklore structures, which is in itself a gain for the structural character.

The problem lies in the structuralist perception which derives the function from the secondary sense of the term, not the primary one. The primary, basic meaning of the term function is - a phenomenon which is dependent on another phenomenon and changes in direct relation to the changes that other phenomenon goes through. Consequently, what is essential for the concept of function is its shifting, changeability and activity, and this must be observed and applied in the process phenomena. For this reason folklore, as a phenomenon in process, is an area where function appears out of specific characteristics of meaning. The meaning of functions is not determined only by single appearance of activity, conduct and role etc., but by repeated appearances and repeating, which cause both changes and variations as results of changes in certain folklore phenomena in relation to changes in others.

---

[5] Departing from these two positions: the theory of literature and the folklore studies, I tried to suggest, in my dissertation *Literary theoretical problem of classification of oral lyrical poems; an approach according to transcripts and rendition of poems*, 1989, rkp. IEF 1348, a system of classification which could serve both practical purposes, i.e. the catalogization, as well as further research, even the interpretation of particular poems. I tried to find a way through a compromise between the literary theoretical and folklore studies' criteria suggesting a division which seems to be applicable to the analyzed material, without any illusions about its universal application and exhaustive description.

Let us start with Bogatyrëv.

Bogatyrëv writes that transformation (*perevoploščenie*) appears in both rituals and customs, in magic rituals etc., where aesthetic function is not the fundamental one.[6]

He makes a distinction between form and function. Formal elements have a certain function. For Bogatyrëv a specific characteristic of folklore is multi-functionality, as well as the phenomenon of hierarchy of functions in folklore, in which the aesthetic function very often is not the dominant one. The shifting of functions can occur because of alterations in performances, by the increase or decrease in the number of elements of various arts incorporated in the structure of a folklore item. But, functions can change, thinks Bogatyrëv, also in the case when the form of a folklore performance remains unchanged. Such are the cases when the audience is changed.

In the hierarchy of functions one of the functions is always dominant: either magic, religious, ceremonial, social, national, regional, satirical, or even economic when the performers wish to be rewarded. This standpoint enables Bogatyrëv to consider also those folklore phenomena in which the aesthetic function is not dominant.

The Russian Formalists accepted the inseparability of form from content and researched *the relation between the material and the work*, instead of the difference between form and content. A work is a whole, the unity of material and form, and what they are interested in is the process of work's emerging out of an aesthetically indifferent material. The way the material transforms itself into a work they call procedure (*priem*). Hence, art as a procedure.

And yet, work as a unity of form and artistic content is not a self-sufficient unit, and in this realization lies the utmost extent of the Russian Formalists' method. Nonetheless, the Russian Formalists did not limit themselves to researching the procedures. The early nineteen-thirties saw the beginning of the research of functions of certain formal elements. Here we shall point out Jurij Tinjanov, who in his work "On literary evolution" wrote:

---

[6] Bogatyrëv accepts the linguistic definition of function and quotes, for illustration, a glossary of linguistic terms:
"In function, as opposed to form, lies the role which a part of sentence has in the grammatical structure of utterance; the function of subject, direct object, complement... In a more general sense it is said that a linguistic element executes a function when it contributes to the understanding of what is spoken" (Ž. Maruzo, Moscow 1960; see Bogatyrëv 1971, 30).

"The correlation of each element of a literary work (as a system) with other elements, which means with the whole system, I call the constructive function of a given element. Through detailed research it can be established that such a function is a complex concept. An element is connected, simultaneously, on one hand with a series of similar elements in other works - systems, and even other series, and on the other, with other elements of the given system (auto-function and syn-function).

This way the lexis of the given work is connected, on one hand, with both literary and colloquial lexis, and on the other, with other elements of the given work. But, both components, rather two functions of the same action, are not on equal footing." (*The Poetics of the Russian Formalism*, 1970, 289)

This quotation serves to show the existence of an evolution line binding together Tinjanov, as a representative of the formalist method, with the works of Bogatyrëv, Jakobson and Mukařovský, which appeared later and were dealing with the same problems. Tinjanov's influence can be detected in the works of more recent theoreticians, such as J. M. Lotman.

Bogatyrëv, in his piece "On the functions of lyrical folk poems", used the elements of both the formalist and the structuralist methods.[7]

Formal elements, therefore, have their function or functions. Their function can be an aesthetic or extra-aesthetic one. Jakobson, in his "Linguistics and poetics" (1966) deems an aesthetic or poetic one that function of language[8] which is concerned with the message, and not with the sender, recipient, context, contact or code. This Jakobson's orientation of the aesthetic function on the message is in poetry equivalent to the insistence on the language of poetry to be a different system of signs.

In art, formal elements, or signs, have a function in a work's (system's) whole, but also have their function outside their work, in other systems, or even in other series, as Tinjanov stated. Accordingly, work as a whole has its various functions, one of which is usually dominant, as Bogatyrëv and Jakobson stated.

Bogatyrëv thinks that functions change even when the form remains unchanged. Formal elements are connected closest to the aesthetic function, because this is the one oriented on the message. Extra-aesthetic functions change with the changes of other factors of the communication scheme. A message which is formally the same is received differently by different audiences, and especially so by an audience which does not un-

---

[7] Here I particularly stress a study by P. G. Bogatyrëv "Narodnaja pesnja s točki zrenija ee funkcii", *Voprosy literatury i fol'klora*, Voronež 1973

[8] Jakobson deals with the functions of language, so that his systematization of function relates to the functions of language in a spoken occurrence.

derstand the language of the message or such which receives the signs of one system as the signs of another.

A work may, and usually does, have more functions at the same time, and one of these, thinks Bogatyrёv (as does Jakobson) is the dominant function. The dominant function in folklore, according to Bogatyrёv, does not have to be the aesthetic one. He thinks that the dominant function can be one of the extra-aesthetic functions, and that the aesthetic function remains in the background.[9]

2.

A full comprehension of the criteria of the division of oral lyrical poems needs the problems of functions to be explained.

The question of function seems the most important one for the comprehension of oral lyrical poems and folklore in general. The function of a poem in its context can serve in determining which type of poetry the given poem belongs to, and to do that, it must be precisely determined what we think of when we talk about functions.

We could see that Bogatyrёv inclines towards the linguistic definition of function, that is, he considers the functions of certain elements of poems (that is the functions of elements between them and in relation to the whole of the system), but also the functions of whole poems in their context (that is the function of systems as wholes in relation to other systems and series). Since Bogatyrёv stands by the analogy with linguistics, we could assume, according to him, that the formal elements which are a part of a folk poem fulfill a function if they contribute to the understanding of the poem's performance.[10]

---

[9] This Bogatyrёv's opinion, shared by I. Lozica (*Izvan teatra*, Zagreb 1990, 66) seems dangerous and not precise enough: "If the extra-aesthetic function is the dominant one in a phenomenon, then the phenomenon itself will be an extra aesthetic one - states Lozica, and continues - Certainly, such an extra-aesthetic phenomenon will have its aesthetic function in the background, but it will, nevertheless, be an extra-aesthetic phenomenon possessing certain aesthetic characteristics. In my opinion, theatre is, because of its orientation on the message, always a typically aesthetic phenomenon. Therefore, it is not right to consider any phenomena which have an extra-aesthetic function as their dominant one of being theatre" - concludes Lozica.

[10] The analogy with linguistics is not at all accidental, for it is a known fact that Bogatyrёv was one of the founders of the Moscow Linguistic Circle and that he was an active member of the Prague Linguistic Circle. This method has been explicated and applied in many of his works: in his book on magic charms, rituals and beliefs of the trans-Karpat mountains region (Bogatyrёv 1971) he showed e.g. the changes in the

A less linguistic definition of function was given by Jan Mukařovský in his article "A contribution to the problem of function in architecture" (1938; see Mukařovský 1981) where he briefly explains the basic principles of the functional conception: these principles are very interesting, for they present the functional method as one which gives us an opportunity to perceive things as actions, without at the same time denying their material nature. According to his words, such a perception enables us to perceive the world as being simultaneously a motion and a firm foundation for human activities (Mukařovský 1981, 97). He notices that the concept of function itself develops and differentiates from within, which should always be kept in mind:

> "The concept of function, stated Mukařovský, primarily means that a thing which is the bearer of a function is usually used for a certain purpose; habit, that is, repeated usage are necessary preconditions of a function; for only one and unique usage of a thing this characteristic is not suitable. Nor a subjective usage of a given thing, limited to an individual person, makes it a function in the real sense of the term. In addition, a social consensus is needed on the goal for whose achievement a thing is to be used as an instrument: a certain way of usage of a given thing has to be spontaneously understandable to each member of a given community. From this originates the relationship - although not nearly so the identicalness - of the problem of function with the problem of sign: a thing not only executes its function, it also means it." (Mukařovský 1981, 97).

Furthermore, Mukařovský stresses that three series important for function should be distinguished: 1. the reality in which a function is realized, 2. the structure of functions (a group of functions in the common conscience of a community interrelated by interior relations) and 3. the individual who initiates the structure of functions by bringing in an indefinitely repeated factor of accident in the functional process. Mukařovský points out that neither of these series is related with others in a single meaning - their mutual relations develop and continually change (Mukařovský 1981, 98).

Mukařovský defines function as "a historically changeable structure of forces which govern the entire man's relationship towards the reality" (Mukařovský 1981, 98) and thinks that certain human actions and the de-

---

forms and functions of the listed phenomena and suggested a classification of rituals according to the actuality of the magic function in them. In this work he (as early as in 1929) perceived that in the transition from a motivated magic ritual into a non-motivated one, the aesthetic function becomes the dominant one. Having noted that new phenomena emerge along the patterns of older ones, and the correlation between the magic and the aesthetic, which enables the transition of the aesthetic into the magic, and not only the opposite, he also wrote in the cited work about the functions of oral lyrical poems.

tailed functions which directly govern these actions can be reduced to a few fundamental factors, in brief - to *primary functions*. These primary functions are set in man himself, in his psycho-physical constitution, which constitution is constant in its basic contours. Whenever man is a subject of an act, all the functions which can possibly be related to this act are potentially present. Notwithstanding, Mukařovský thinks that primary functions cannot be easily isolated (these are the functions which are not historically preconditioned and which cannot be reduced to any other functions). This problem is particularly interesting for the comprehension of functions in folklore. I quote:

> "Utmost autonomization of functions, which we are inclined to consider a natural state of affairs, is, in fact, a consequence of a long-term development: as long as the nineteenth century, and even in today's folklore cultures, if they are maintained, the structural correlation of functions is so close that they are realized as entire groups of functions, in which individual functions stand out as aspects of mere colouring, transitional and inseparable from the whole association. Thus, it is almost impossible to distinguish the aesthetic function from the magical-religious one (or to compare it with tattooing, or with intentionally inflicted scars on bodies as practiced by certain primitive peoples) or from the erotic function. Because of the advantage of the structural correlation of functions over individual functions, it is possible, although often with great difficulties, to identify the same function in two different historical or national contexts; (...) These reasons show that the task of determining a list of primary functions would certainly be a futile one." (Mukařovský 1981, 99).

Mukařovský also wrote about the long process of coming into being of *derived functions out of primary functions* and their emancipation (their extrication from the groups of functions in the past). However, I think that functions remain in groups, not only in folklore and not only in the past. They are not only "historically changeable structure of forces which govern the entire man's relationship towards the reality" - Mukařovský himself stresses their inveteracy in "the anthropological constitution of man" and the potential presence of all primary (and not only primary) functions when a human activity is being considered.

It is my intention here to emphasize certain fundamental problems related to the classification of oral lyrical poems, which stem from the stratification of the material and limited resources for the recording of the material. An especially outstanding characteristic - *the aesthetic function*, also points to the stratification of the material and its functional nature. The structures of poems' functions, with respect to the dominant function, change according to the changes of the conditions in which a given poem is performed: that way for example, the basic function of a song which gives rhythm to physical work is to maintain and stress the rhythm. The

same song, performed during a break, fulfills only its aesthetic function, which now takes over the place of the basic one.[11]

The functionality of folklore is a complex system of dynamic, mutual internal and external relations - the genre, the topic, the customary, social and historical relations. The folklore system appears both as a historically changeable specific creative human activity and as a historically changeable orientation of folklore towards general cognition. Therefore, it is not sufficient to observe a folklore phenomenon with respect to one function, or two - as is usually done, that is, with respect to the practical and the aesthetic function. Nor is it sufficient to observe them with respect to four functions (entertaining, ritualistic, pedagogical and behaviour-directing as W. Backom, an American folklore researcher, suggests.[12]

Here, we are interested in the multi-functionality of folklore.[13] Mere stating of the multitude of functions is not sufficient for the comprehension of folklore's multi-functionality. Folklore's functions do not stand out by their multitude but also by the versatility of their qualities, that is, by a different nature of their mutual relations and the relation between folklore and man.

The following is a suggested list of functions: the entertaining, the communication, the didactic, the cognitive, the ethical, the informative, the magic, the organizational, the ritualistic etc. Each folklore phenomenon carries in it a combination of many functions.

Let us go back to Bogatyrëv's teachings. In his time, he convincingly showed that the place and the meaning of certain functions change within different folklore genres. For instance, in the customary-ritualistic folklore the connection between the magic and the aesthetic function change constantly. Having that in mind, it could be, conditionally, spoken of "progressive functions", or of "regressive" ones, of "recurring" ones, of "new" functions etc. Since all folklore functions show a certain general system of relations (connections), it can be perceived that in this system those groups of functions can be discerned which are closest connected or are in a direct interrelation. In this, of course, if the connection itself is changed by a change, or development, of this or that genre, a whole group of functions can be changed. Therefore, Bogatyrëv's conception of the "cluster of functions", which simultaneously expresses the structural relationship be-

---

[11] This is particularly stressed in the aforementioned Bogatyrëv's work on functions in folk songs (1973).

[12] W. Backom, "Four Functions of Folklore", *Journal of American Folklore*, 1954, see 54, 333-349.

[13] In this I incline towards the theories of V. Gusev (1976, 5-10)

tween functions and their dynamic development (Bogatyrëv 1971, 6), comes in very handy.

The system of functional relations is essential primarily because of the changes in the social and historical conditions of folklore's existence, for different periods in folklore's history are characterized by different relationship of its functions. When observing the functions, it is useful to point out their *levels* and *strata*. Thus, when the levels are discussed, it is spoken of e.g. the functions of an individual work, or a genre, or a system of genres (e.g. all genres entailed in wedding folklore or wedding customs), or even the function of oral literature as a whole. Strata can point out the territorial, demographic or social functional relationship; or they can show each function's spatial and temporal limits, the strength of its impact and the mutual relationship between functions. For instance, in a customary wedding ceremony, the stratum of the magic function can be spread to all of the ceremony's episodes (segments), or can be designated, in one case, by a single action (e.g. throwing grains at the newly-weds), while in another case it will be executed through ritual actions, singing of songs, etc. Different mutual relationship between the magic function with the practical, the ethical, the aesthetic one throughout a wedding ceremony creates different functional strata which then merge, lean on one another, but can also exchange places.

The relationship between function and genre is particularly interesting. Can a genre be derived from a function? Numerous contemporary folklore researchers have answered positive to the question.[14]

The real relationship between genre and function is very complex. We can speak of a certain genre's dependence on function, but only at the level of genesis, while in the process of historical evolution and changes in genre, this dependence is not so pronounced; genre's basic function can be changed; often the entire genre changes so that a whole series of new functions are created along with its original function (Bogatyrëv 1973, 200-207).

In this quoted work, Bogatyrëv brings an interesting scale of oral lyrical poetry functions: 1. the aesthetic function, 2. the magic function, 3. the function of sign, which points out the location and range of a song, 4. the function which regulates the rhythm of work, 5. the function which points out the age and sex of the performer. When considering the magic

---

[14] Particularly see I. I. Zemcovski, "Genre, function, system", *Sovjetskaja muzyka*, 1971, No. 1, 24-32. The author's contextual approach to function is very interesting. Zemcovski stresses function as a historical category, and comes up with an interesting theory on multi-functionality of folklore in its pre-genre state, showing the way genres developed out of functions (the work deals with chants in particular).

function (e.g. charmings), Bogatyrëv points out that it can be motivated and unmotivated:

a) motivated magic functions in a song - on performance, as well as in a magic ritual, the performer considers important the fact that it is him who is performing the charming, calling to life the beings and forces the song is about;

b) unmotivated magic functions (e.g. of a song-prayer) - appear as integral components of magic rituals (their absence divests the ritual of its magic force). "Peasants, for instance, know very well that certain rituals should be carried out and certain ritual songs should be sung. At the same time they do not know why this or that song brings good about. All they know is that this or that song *should* be sung." (ibid. 203).

In their consideration poems draw attention to their expressly functional nature. Moreover, functions of songs together, as well as functions of other social factors, create a whole structure. Besides the aesthetic function, Bogatyrëv maintains, as could be seen, that songs contain other functions as well. In a research of songs the functional method helps us, thinks Bogatyrëv, to illuminate certain unclear questions of the development of oral poems (for instance, merging of written and oral literary forms). In an oral poem, the non-aesthetic function has a more prominent role than the aesthetic function, which presents the essential difference between oral and written poems. Bogatyrëv thinks that when we deal with the range and popularity of certain songs, we should also take into consideration their non-aesthetic function, and not only their aesthetic one. For instance, in different historical epochs and schools of though such an approach could point out the essential characteristics of genres in general. In the eighteenth century, for instance, the dominant function of oral songs, as cited by Bogatyrëv, was, for the educated, *the aesthetic function*; it also conveyed the ethical and patriarchal aspects of the life of the Russian peasantry. Oral poems were *exotic*. In the period of Romanticism their dominant function was the national function. Poems appear as a sign of national consciousness. Romanticists-Slavofiles, points out Bogatyrëv, thought that poems functioned as a sign of slavofilia by symbolizing Russia and the Slav nationhood. Popular thinkers of that time thought that poems had a *revolutionary function*, poems were, in their opinion, a "cry from the heart" of the oppressed people. Symbolists thought that, first and foremost, poems had an *aesthetic* or *mystical* function.

In certain cases the text of a poem is the main bearer of its function, while in others it is the melody and rhythm which carry the main function (e.g. lullabies - their main function is practical, to put the baby to sleep with their melody and monotonous rhythm. Understandably so, for they are sung to babies who do not understand the meaning of words. In cases

where the text of a lullaby is complex, it has a subordinate role and addresses the performer and rather than the child.).

One of the essentially needed tasks of modern ethnomusicology consists of the research of the musical form in relation to the changes in the functions of songs. The structure of a poem's functions, as well as the structure of other social factors, do not remain unchanged, the two structures transform: previously basic functions take "a second place", as Bogatyrёv said it, and sometimes they fade away completely. In other cases, Bogatyrёv thinks that the background function becomes the basic one, and, in the long run, new functions show up. A song's function structure changes according to the circumstances in which the song is performed. Changes in nature and lifestyle bring about changes in "the conception of the universe"; the functions of a poem depend on such changes. For instance, a song whose dominant function used to be the motivated charming changes it into the unmotivated charming which denotes the ceremony's solemnity. Such transformations can occur in the opposite direction, too. The functions of a poem can be changed by a shift from one type of community to another (from a rural one to urban and vice versa).

In a process of confrontation between theory and practice, or in a confirmation of the above model, certain weak points of Bogatyrёv's way of analysis and hierarchization of functions would undoubtedly show up. In the first place, a weak spot would be the question of clearly defined criteria for differentiating certain functions from others, as well as for their hierarchization.

Which criteria, for instance, determine, in a consideration of a genre, that the aesthetic function is placed second, or third, or whether it is true that the practical function falls from the first to the last, and not to some other place, when a transformation from the everyday to the ceremonial has taken place. From this objection logically stems another one, concerned with the principle of linear hierarchy. Do not certain functions (or groups of functions, clusters of functions) create different levels which only very conditionally speaking, could be put into a hierarchical relationship (if at all), such as the practical function or the function of identification of the social status.[15]

---

[15] On this, see the review on Bogatyrёv's article on folk costume as a system of functions and messages by M. Vodopija, *Narodna umjetnost*, Zagreb, 13, 158-159.

3.

The folklore system being an open one, *genres* in it, although their continuity is very deep, ceaselessly change their aspects in time and space in accordance with the changes and evolution of their bearers' life-style conceptions. Genres (and, indeed, motifs or topics) which are not perceived as modern, or no longer suit the common standards or fashion, in the long run either die out, or change, or one genre replaces another. Changes of functions also occur: some genres overlap, some fulfill the functions once in the domain of another genre, and some take "the vacated" places naturally. Numerous examples, important for the classification of oral lyrical poems, could be listed here. The following are certain such examples. Dirges, lullabies and carols - in each of these genres *the governing principle* is their *function*. It seems that function is one of the constitutive elements in the genesis of a genre, it remains important even when songs become generalized with the passage of time, or when they change in such a way that their functions are changed, and, consequently, their genre as well. Such a comprehension of poems' functions, their genesis and the relationship between poems and their bearers, as well as the meaning of changed circumstances of their realization, should be used in approaching all oral literary genres.[16]

Alan P. Merriam introduced a very thought out and useful distinction between the terms "use" and "function".[17] According to him, *use* "refers to the situation in which music is employed in human action; *function* concerns the reasons for its employment and particularly the broader purpose which it serves". Merriam understands the two terms to be complementary: "use" as a role directly given to a folklore phenomenon by its bearers, and "function" as the meaning discovered by scholars through interpretation and generalization. However, it can be noticed that this pair of terms is not always complementary; in some cases they diverge, so that a relational definition of function is better: function is, therefore, a relation between the facts contained in a text and the text itself in the system of human culture. Function is, in fact, a phenomenon in ceaseless process.

The following theses are important when considering the functions of oral lyrical poems:

1. Oral lyrical poems have a certain dominant function which can be lost, or changed with another function also present but previously inactive, or even changed and replaced by a function from another poem.

---

[16] A model example is Dagmar Burkhart's approach to narrative poems in her work *Funktionswandel balkanischer Volksballaden* (see: Burkhart 1980, 182-191).

[17] See his *The Anthropology of Music*, 1964, particularly p. 210.

2. The situation when a poem is used, or its performance in a specific situation (defined by time, place, bearers and recipients) is not identical but is closely connected to its function, perceived as a relationship between meaning and purpose, in fulfilling certain needs.

3. The substance, that is form (both linguistic and musical) and content, of a poem and its function are correlated: if a poem's function is changed, its substance changes, as a rule.

Let us consider some examples:

1. Ritual songs - Christmas carols and e.g. songs about Karli-ban or Beli Vid; the latter have nothing in common with carols except the refrain: "koledo, koledo, veselo, veselo". Songs about Karli-ban or Vid Maričić (Beli Vid) are characterized by a chain of heroic narrative motifs with their stress on hero's characterization, on description of his home (court), his battles, victories, wounds. Carols have their stresses differently determined, since their function is primarily ritual and consists of wishing the household's master, the household's other members, as well as the whole household, well-being and prosperity, and to praise it through singing.[18] V. M. Gacak (1973, 7-51) established, among other, that numerous Bulgarian and Ukrainian ritual carol-type songs reflect a strong influence of heroic epic poetry. Our examples performed in a carol procession have not changed their structure, or "internal composition" (to use Kayser's term), the change happened only in their "external composition" by affixing a refrain which, according to Kayser, belongs to the external composition. Therefore, it can be said that, on the level of usage, they just exchanged their places with some other songs, or that they were introduced into the same ritual with carols, into the same performance situation. On the "level of function", the song has almost not changed at all in its verbal part, its structure remained almost the same (with the addition of refrain). But, it is the refrains that draw attention to the fact that the song has become a carol in performance, and that it has maybe (or certainly) changed its previous melody, with a possibility that its content may have been quite appropriate for such an occasion by essentially praising the hero in question. In this case this is only presumed, because no actual records of such an occurrence exist.

2. The usage of certain ballads in wedding ceremonies could be observed in a similar manner. Often the ballads in question are those which sing about the faithfulness of spouses, which makes them suitable for wedding rituals.

---

[18] V. M. Gacak dealt with this topic in his "Epos i geroičeskie koljadki", *Specifika fol'-
lornyh žanrov*, Moscow, 1973, 7-51.

3. *Dirges* for the deceased are ritual songs performed by a specific person, or a group of specific persons to a specific group which is bound together by the death of their member. Dirges may be performed with a magic-apotropaic purpose in order to chase away and appease the deceased's spirit; they also may be a praise of the deceased, as well as a sign of a change within the community brought about by the death of one of its members. Most frequently they are sung in a restricted scale of melody and are never accompanied by musical instruments. Dirges are an easily recognisable genre.

Dirges are an example of songs which emphasize the motif of *separation*: the dead separate from the living, this world is separated from the other world. For this reason they are primarily performed during wakes and burials. But, in the Russian folklore there is an organic connection between funeral dirges and wedding dirges. The bride mourns the separation from her parents' home and from her maiden life. In the Russian folklore, certain dirges for the deceased and those performed by the bride are very similar, almost identical - in the same surroundings the same formulae are used. In their certain respects, funerals and weddings are analogous, in others they are completely opposite. In some of our regions, "the black" and "the white" wheel dance appear, the black, the funereal one, is danced in the opposite direction from the white, the wedding one, therefore, they appear as antonyms; the separation from the deceased is marked by sorrow while the meeting with the dead with joy; the bride's separation is marked by crying while her meeting with her new home with joy; the deceased or the bride take the role of an intermediary - they travel through space, some see them off, the others receive them; the deceased is intermediary between the dead and the living, the bride between her own and someone other's mother, etc. Numerous other analogous pairs could be found.

4. Lullabies are another easily recognised genre. They are also performed without musical instruments and often in a restricted scale of melody, with a very specified purpose - to put babies to sleep. Originally lullabies probably used to have an apotropaic purpose, but they were also always a part of the everyday life, from where they went into artistic poetry and music.

5. It would be interesting to point out a change the functions of songs undergo in the shift from the adults' repertoire to that of children. Children often know nothing about the original usage of such songs, they "toy" with them, chant them while dancing a wheel dance, use them as mocking songs, parody them, intensify their "heartbreaking" intonation in some, already their own, ballads, et cetera.

Consequently, it can be spoken of *children's songs* consisting of two bodies:

a) the songs taken out from the adults' repertoire and acquired and performed by children in their own particular way, and b) the songs created by children from nothing, such as different types of nursery-rhymes, mocking songs, unintelligible word-plays, coherent and incoherent chanting accompanied by increased hand-clapping or some other rhythmical action, et cetera.

Numerous inconsistencies can be found in different classifications which deal with this area, because lullabies, various nursery-rhymes and games (games played with children's fingers accompanied by singing, an alternating and rhythmical clapping of children's hands when standing opposite to them accompanied by singing, etc.) which the adults sing or chant to children are being classified under children's songs. There are even many cases of jocular and allegorical songs ending up in this group.

Another essential question to be emphasized when observing changes in the functions of songs is that of *precedence* - for instance, did ballads develop before ritual songs or was the opposite the case. It seems that it is hard to answer that question in many cases, especially if musical characteristics of the songs in question are not taken into consideration. On the other hand, for instance, it is presumed that carols belong to the pre-Christian solstice songs. However, in numerous of our regions, they are sung to comparatively recent melodies which cannot, by themselves, relate the date nor the type of their ritual carol. It is the verbal text (with its introductory formula, its middle part with praises, and the closing formula of seeking gifts) which does, in such a case, confirm that it really goes for a specific type of ritual songs.

4.

At the end, we shall again consider the question of the aesthetic function of oral lyrical poems. That function exists in oral lyrical poems as a rule, but it is not always active or dominant. Often when such a song is performed, the magic function, or that related to the occasion, are dominant, as Bogatyrёv points out (1973). Sometimes, certain songs (e.g. dirges) change their character when performed for the record (on researcher's request), or when they end up in anthologies.[19] Such songs have their primary purpose in everyday custom (mourning of the deceased) and not an

---

[19] See the dirges in the collection *Petokraka zašto si crvena?*, Zagreb 1959, assembled by Maja Bošković-Stulli.

aesthetic purpose. Aesthetic purpose is present in such songs, but it is not dominant.

Numerous anthologies of lyrical poetry which contain examples of oral poetry, as well as anthologies of oral lyrical poetry, point out the value and beauty of oral lyrical poetry by stressing primarily the aesthetic function of such poetry. For this reason, only those works of oral lyrical poetry are selected whose text pronouncedly expresses their poetic (aesthetic) function, the rest is most frequently disregarded.[20]

It should be said that such collections and anthologies are both purposeful and justified. Striving to elevate oral poetry to an equal level with the written one, many editors consciously choose such a method of consideration which shows only the literary aspects in an oral text.

In order to be as precise as possible in determining each and every characteristic of an oral lyrical poem, for this precedes their classification, we shall consider the aesthetic function of poems some more.[21] Although the aesthetic function is not the basic characteristic, it does, as we have pointed out, directly cause the compilation of different collections and anthologies, that is, *a specific record of oral text*, as well as certain inconsistent classifications which mix poetic criteria with criteria of everyday usage.

If we consider a song through its performance, its aesthetic function is twofold: it appears as *a poetic* and as *a musical* aesthetic function. In the case of songs whose verbal text is dominant, or of whose musical part we do not have sufficient data, we consider the poetic function, while in the case of songs whose melody and musical rhythm are dominant, we consider the musical aesthetic function.

There are, certainly, such songs whose text and melody/musical rhythm are intertwined and interrelated in such a way to cause mutual qualitative changes. These changes are mostly perceivable in *rhythm*. In its verbal realization, the song has a spoken, "irregular" rhythm, which in a poetic realization through language matches the rhythm in its real sense of natural flow, while the same song in its musical realization has a musical, "regular" rhythm, which matches the musical metre. While the former is a result of linguistic-stylistic characteristics, the latter is a result of musical

---

[20] Among many anthologies assembled by our poets, a prominent example is *The Anthology of the Croatian Poetry Since the Fourteenth Century Until Today*, Zagreb 1966, done by N. Miličević and A. Šoljan.

[21] On this, consult a very interesting study by Alenka Goljevšček *Mit in slovenska ljudska pesem*, the last chapter of which is titled "The aesthetic function of Slovene folk songs".

characteristics. In this way, we observe the rhythmical interrelation of a folk song's verbal and musical components.

Oral lyrical poem exists as a folk song in the synthesis of words, rhythm and melody. Does the text of a song, that is, only the verbal component of an otherwise sung song, unveils lyrical universes and expresses something which neither the rhythm nor the melody can - that is a question whose answer can be positive.[22] However, our task of classification dictates us to consider a more serious approach to the relationship between words, i.e. verbal expression, and melody. But, how to include this dimension in classification? An immanent classification, it seems, cannot be carried out because of syncretism as an essential property of oral literature. Nevertheless, the circumstances of performance change the formal characteristics of songs, and in that way indirectly are included into the classification. For these reasons, the process of classification should not neglect the orality as a way of existence, nor singing, nor speech or other phenomena.

Therefore, it is clear that a folklore song which is sung, which has its melody and verbal text, cannot be observed through individual methods which are realized in the analysis of musical or literary creative works. Folklore analysis has to be extended by a string of moments which would allow for the oral nature of folklore texts, as well as their musical nature, and the nature of their versification. Along the very important task of distinguishing the functions, it is necessary to have a serious approach to the problem of interrelation between a song's *words* and *melody*, and between the *song* and *custom/ritual* in the context of oral tradition. These problems will be considered on some other occasion.

(Translated by PROFIKON)

---

[22] Along many interpretations of oral poetry through verbal texts, some inspired and successful, I particularly wish to draw attention to Maja Bošković-Stulli's text "Oral poetry outside its original context", published in a special edition of *Narodna umjetnost* dedicated to the theme Folklore and oral communication, Zagreb, 19, 1982, pp. 41-55.

LITERATURE

Antologija hrvatske poezije od 14. stoljeća do naših dana
1966 [editors] Milićević, N. and A. Šoljan, Zagreb.

Backom, William
1954 "Four Functions of Folklore", *Journal of American Folklore, Washington*, vol. 54, pp. 333-349.

Bogatyrëv, Petr G.
1971 "Magičeskie dejstvija, obrjady i verovanija Zakarpat'ja", *Voprosy teorii narodnogo iskusstva*, Iskusstvo, Moskva, pp. 167-266.
1973 "Narodnaja pesnja s točki zrenija eë funkcii", *Voprosy literatury i fol'klora*, Voronež, pp. 200-207.

Bošković-Stulli, Maja
1973 "O pojmovima usmena i pučka književnost i njihovim nazivima", *Umjetnost riječi*, Zagreb, XVII, 3; 4, pp. 149-184 i 237-260; also in: *Usmena književnost nekad i danas*, Beograd 1983, pp. 5-114.
1978 "Usmena književnost", *Povijest hrvatske književnosti*, Liber-Mladost, Zagreb, book 1, pp. 21-28; and: *Usmena i pučka književnost*, pp. 7-353, 641-651.
1982 "Usmeno pjesništvo izvan izvornoga konteksta", *Narodna umjetnost*, Zagreb, 19, pp. 41-55.

Burkhart, Dagmar
1989 "Funktionswandel balkanischer Volksballaden", *Kulturraum Balkan: Studien zur Volkskunde und Literatur Südosteuropas*, Dietrich Reimer Verlag, Berlin-Hamburg, pp. 182-191.

Čistov, Kiril V.
1975 "Specifika fol'klora v svete teorii informacii", *Tipologičeskie issledovanija po fol'kloru*, Nauka, Moskva, pp. 26-43.

Gacak, V. M.
1973 "Epos i geroičeskie koljadki", *Specifika fol'klornyh žanrov*, Moskva, pp. 7-51.

Goljevšček, Alenka
1982 "Estetska funkcija slovenske ljudske pesmi", *Mit in slovenska ljudska pesem*, Slovenska matica v Ljubljani, Ljubljana.

Građa u dokumentaciji Zavoda za istraživanje folklora
1985 *Narodna umjetnost*, Zagreb, 22, pp. 85-169.

Gusev, Viktor E.
1967 *Estetika fol'klora*, Nauka, Leningrad.
1976 "Polifunkcional'nost' fol'klora", *Makedonski folklor*, Skopje, IX, No. 18, pp. 5--10.

Hansen-Löwe, Aage A.
1984 "Dominanta", *Pojmovnik ruske avangarde*, Vol. 2., ed. by A. Flaker and D. Ugrešić, Grafički zavod Hrvatske and Zavod za znanost o književnosti Filozofskog fakulteta u Zagrebu, Zagreb, pp. 39-48.

Jakobson, Roman
1966 *Lingvistika i poetika*, Nolit, Beograd.
1978 "Dominanta", *Ogledi iz poetike*, Prosveta, Beograd, pp. 120-126.

Lozica, Ivan

1990 *Izvan teatra*, Hrvatsko društvo kazališnih kritičara i teatrologa, Zagreb.

Merriam, Alan P.

1964 *The Anthropology of Music*, Northwestern University Press, [s.l.]

Mukařovský, Jan

1981 "Prilog problemu funkcija u arhitekturi" [1938], *Kultura*, Beograd, 55, pp. 97--110.

1987 "Mesto estetske funkcije među ostalim funkcijama", in *Struktura, funkcija, znak, vrednost: Ogledi iz estetike i poetike*, Nolit, Beograd, pp. 87-104.

Perić-Polonijo, Tanja

1989 *Književnoteorijski problem klasifikacije usmenih lirskih pjesama*; pristup s obzirom na zapis i na izvedbu, IEF rkp. 1348.

Poetika ruskog formalizma

1970 Nolit, Beograd.

Propp, Vladimir J.

1976 "Principi klasifikacii fol'klornyh žanrov", *Fol'klor i dejstvitel'nost'*, Izabrannye stat'ji, Moskva.

Tinjanov, Jurij

1970 "O književnoj evoluciji", in *Poetika ruskog formalizma*, Prosveta, Beograd, pp. 287-300.

Vodopija, Milivoj

1976 "Nošnja kao sustav funkcija i poruka", *Narodna umjetnost*, Zagreb, 13, pp. 155--160.

Zemcovskij, I. I.

1971 "Žanr, funkcija, sistema", *Sovjetskaja muzyka*, No. 1, pp. 24-32.