

Preface

About two years ago the editors of the yearbook "Narodna umjetnost" started preparations for publishing a special issue with contributions that would deal with contemporary conceptions of folklore. The working title of the issue was formulated as a question: "Is direct oral artistic communication the primary criterion for conceptualizing folklore — yes, no, or...?"

A large number of specialists in Yugoslavia and abroad, who have been working on the suggested or similar theoretical problems of folklore, were asked by the editors to write contributions for this issue. Major topics to be discussed were already proposed in the letter sent to the prospective contributors:

"Significant progress in understanding folklore has been achieved in recent years by defining it as 'artistic communication in small groups', as a 'natural, direct artistic communication', or the like, instead of the previous key emphases on the criteria of the collective, the anonymous, the traditional etc. This new understanding of folklore liberated folkloristics from the burden of a number of already dated orientations, but at the same time left certain aspects unresolved and added new unanswered questions.

The nature of the relationship between folklore thus defined, and various phenomena that are of essential relevance for it, but which are not 'covered' by the mentioned criteria, remains unsettled. For instance: do texts with folklore themes, preserved from earlier times and which are not precise, literal records of direct communication, belong to folklore? Or, do contemporary texts belong to folklore even though they are excluded from the direct communication process by the very fact of their recording? Should the criterion of oral communication be applied only to the genres of literary folklore — transmitted orally — or should it be, *mutatis mutandis*, applied also to the folk music, dance, theater, and customs? From this viewpoint, how should we look at material objects, at folk arts? What do we make of inscriptions, like graffiti, for instance? What are the criteria for defining 'the artistic' in folklore communication? What stand should be taken toward forms of communication which, by themselves, are neither oral nor folklore, but which take place in and are influenced by, a milieu in which folklore communications dominate?

What is the nature of relationship between folklore, understood as direct oral communication, and different aspects of *folklorismus* ('fakelore')? From the viewpoint that folklore is a different type of communication, how do we evaluate phenomena from the sphere of mass culture which are sometimes given and sometimes denied the status of modern equivalents of folklore? These questions, as well as others not mentioned here, are frequently raised. We would like to try to make a contribution toward their clarification by publishing a collection of articles by respected scholars in this field working around a common theme."

The responses of the authors have been numerous and the problems considered are highly diverse. The editors take this opportunity to thank all of the authors for their interest in this common endeavor and for their fruitful cooperation.

The theoretical views represented are diverse, as was expected and desired. It is our wish that essential aspects of the indicated problems be articulated more clearly, that some solutions be suggested and further discussions instigated. The contributions in this issue, arranged in groups of similar topic, will show to what extent our goal has been attained.

All articles contained in this book will also be published in Serbocroatian in "Narodna umjetnost" 19.

The Board of Editors