THE LEVELS OF CLASSIFICATION

Oral Lyrical Poems Classification According to the Record and Function

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The hypothesis is that we can deal with the classification of the oral literary genres, especially oral lyrical poems, on different levels, bearing in mind the fact that the principles for classification are pure conventions although not arbitrary. Thus the problem requires the elaboration from the literary and theoretical aspect as well as from the aspect of folklore. Having in mind these two aspects as starting points, we have been trying to suggest the classification system of division which could have purely practical purpose (in computer catalogization), but also in permanent study and the interpretation of particular poems. The solution was found in the compromise between literary theory and folklore criteria, so that the division between oral lyrical poems according to the record and according to the application has been suggested. It seems that the division is appropriate to the analyzed structure, without any illusions about its universal application and comprehensive description.

Introduction

The problems of classification have not been of the main interest of the literary theoreticians as they were ten years ago. Nevertheless, it seems that they have remained the basis of the folklore science which has to classify its disarranged, heterogeneous and interdisciplinary material.

Dealing with the problems of classification of oral and literary material (and also of folklore phenomena) has no significant tradition in Croatian literary and folklore science. I became interested in this kind of problem ten years ago as the result of the idea that the understanding of the oral literature material was important both as a folklore and literary fact and that the solutions to the problems of classification would contribute to the understanding of the way in which literature and folklore function, i.e. to the

understanding of the process they stem from. That is why my paper deals with theoretical problems of classification of the oral lyrical poems.[1]

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.

The research of oral lyrical poems in the *Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research* 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, aside those common to all.[3]

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[1] About the same topic see: Perić-Polonijo 1983:99—111; 1989.

[2] On such an occasion it has been customary to point out that it is difficult and laborious task which requires a lot of time and already elaborated methodological principle in dealing with the material. This is quite true, but in my opinion the others also meet the difficulties when they try to solve the problems of classification in their respective fields, i.e. the classification of the object of their research. I thought it was an indispensable work, from the first phase to the very last, because each specific inquiry was important for concluding about the thesis no matter if the conclusion confirmed it or not. Difficulties appeared on different level - the level of a recorder and the recording of the material. (Reliability and unreliability constantly entwined.)
Data about the afore mentioned material: I have used the available Croatian published material, as well as the written material originated in Croatia (and the information about it published in the Institute's almanac *Narodna umjetnost* 22); I have also used more relevant foreign collections which were published and paid special attention to classificational procedures of their authors.

[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", 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 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 discussion should stand, only the former term, terminologically speaking, could be applied to oral literature as a phenomenon" (Bošković-Stulli 1983:94).
I. Lozica 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 Lévi- -Strauss's 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

Therefore, it seems that the problems of classification of the oral literary forms can be solved only if elevated to general level where they become examples for consideration in principle. Thus, 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.

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 written and oral forms genre theory, all these are issues which call for an important condition - a modern access to a well classified and catalogued 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.

As it was mentioned earlier, both the literary science and folklore studies found themselves in a sphere of reexamination of the 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,

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performances in time, that is "a chain of communication" (see Čistov 1975; Bošković-Stulli 1978). I. Lozica inclines towards the second standpoint, limiting the concept of tradition to the second sense "in which oral literature entails all oral literary performances and spoken performances which are not literary" (Lozica 1990:40—41). These considerations and standpoints are also present in this work.

while the interest in literary forms developed genology as an independent literary scientific discipline.[4]

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, 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 narration 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.[5]

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 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 context of their corresponding poetics.

Starting from the afore mentioned material, from numerous transcripts of oral poems dating from the previous and this century, and starting from

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[4] Pavao Pavličić discusses the matter comprehensively in the book *Literary Genology* (Pavličić 1983). Starting from the issue how to classify literary forms, Pavličić examines inveterated notions like gendre, style and genre, as well as the conception about the basic literary genres (epics, lyrics and drama). Furthermore, he examines the relations between literary genres and the history of literature, literary genres and criticism, as well as the differences in the classification of oral and written (artistic) literature. Pavličić deals with a detailed and expounded list of the most important issues concerning literary genology and thus makes our dealing with theoretical problems of literary classification easier and possible.

[5] This is the way the research of oral literature has been conducted in the *Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research* (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 communication 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 criticized numerous inconsequential theoretical positions. Today in the nineties, similar pursuits are reflected in the works of the Institute's younger associates.

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 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.

Therefore I think that the problems of classification still represent the basic issue in the scientific work on the Croatian oral literature. That is why the purpose of this paper is to stress once and again the necessity of the critical review of the traditional principles of the classification of the oral lyrical poems.

Although aware of the fact that the abundant, multi-elementary and ever-changing oral literary material almost "wildly" defies any modeling process, we can strive, notwithstanding, to work our 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 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 equal footing.

Departing from these two positions: the theory of literature and folklore studies, I have tried to suggest the system of classification which could serve both practical purposes, i.e. catalogization, as well as further research and even the interpretation of particular poems. I tried to find the solution 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 detailed description.

On classification of oral lyrical poems

1. There are numerous written records of oral lyrical poems dating from the previous and this century and, usually, we have to classify them.

At first, it seems that it is the only possible division. But, if we perceive oral lyrical poems, in contrast to written ones, as a group of short verse forms, and specifically, i.e. as verses which are directly, orally and artistically communicated in real social situations, then the neglect of the performance characteristics would also mean the neglect of the fundamental principles of folklore. But, how to include this dimension in

the process of classification? It seems that it would be quite impossible to realize the immanent classification, because of syncretism which is the main characteristic of oral literature. Although it is a fact, the formal characteristics of oral literature are changed by the conditions under which the poem is performed and thus indirectly become part of classification. Hence our process of classification must take this into account.

2. We intend to classify oral lyrical poetry, that is, group oral lyrical poems into classes, and then create broader clusters of these classes. The subdivision should be as exhaustive as possible, so that at each degree it goes on literally according to a single principle.

   If we consider the whole of an individual work of oral literature, in our case an oral lyrical poem, we must point out that it is a creative work with several layers: each individual poem is a communicational system that is realized as the merging of text, texture and context.

   Our proposed classification will actually be a classification of the groups of the communication systems (therefore a system of systems) which emerges through observation of individual components of the system.

   In an attempt to discover the possibility of corresponding principles of subdivision, we must not disregard the structure of kinds within which each individual lyrical poem is embodied, i.e. the structure of the text of the lyrical poem on the one hand and the specificity of its performance on the other. Taking this into consideration, it seems that a classification of oral lyrical poems ought to be conducted on the level of the poem's text and on the level of the performance mode.

   Prior to any classification approach, including ours, we have the discovering of specific qualities of the material that is to be classified. The qualities common to all oral lyrical poems are especially important. These qualities, however, which we could term universal, produce an uninteresting classification: in that case all poems satisfy the quality and are part of the same class, while its complement is empty. Classification only becomes interesting for those qualities that are not universal, in cases, in other words, when one or more qualities is stressed that can be found in some, but not all, such poems.

   Here it is also important to note that such a classification must satisfy the demand for finding relevant, generally acceptable qualities for the poems under consideration, or more precisely, for their theory. It is natural to expect that such qualities are part of the language of the theory of poems that we are considering (oral lyrical poems), i.e. their "essential" words, then to the metatheory of this theory (literary theory) and relative theories (ethnology, musicology, choreology).

3. We have stated above that universal qualities produce an uninteresting classification. But, since those same universals (such as theme, verse, etc.)

are extremely important, we can find a series of individual qualities and "cover" that universal quality. This then gives us a certain layer according to which we can conduct a sound classification.[6]

Before us, then, is one of the key problems of classification: the determination of the series of qualities related to a universal quality. In doing so we require that each quality of the series must be such that there are enough poems possessing such a quality, and we permit the classes of "others" to be included, indicating that within it we can not include a "good" class that might be described with relevant qualities (in terms of the universal quality under consideration).

We will find it especially interesting to cut across various levels, and especially a marked cut of similar layers at the same level of classification, and as an extreme possibility-cutting the very level of classification, in our case the level of text and the level of performance mode.

The stated problems can be brought together under the heading of the problem of classification of oral lyrical poems: before us is a group of oral lyrical poems, it is finite, but it includes a large number of poems. First we must determine the universal qualities of that group, i.e. of these poems, and then subsequently among these we must isolate the fundamental universal qualities, while on the other, we must fine for ever universal quality a series of qualities, i.e. a layer capable of producing a sound classification according to the universal quality. Of course universal qualities are few in comparison to the large number of poems.

4. Let us turn to our proposal of conducting the classification of oral lyrical poetry on the level of the text of the poem and the performance mode.

I. On the level of the text of the poem we must stress:

  A) the structure of the lyrical poem as the fundamental universal quality that will unite: the theme as a layer unifying the meaning of the work and the layer of the type of processing of the theme that will include the a) approach to processing the theme, b) the composition, and within it: versification, the way of forming individual types with regards to extent and purpose with regards to the poem presentation;

  B) the performance mode which includes metrorhythmical structures, meloverses, melostrophes and folklore scores.

II. On the level of the performance mode we will stress the type of interpretation as a fundamental universal quality which will unite all the

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[6] Example: The universal quality such as "oral lyrical poems have a theme" can be covered by the qualities: "oral lyrical poems with love theme", or "death", etc., or, finally, "oral lyrical poem with a theme that has not been stated under previous qualities". The above example is dictated by the experience on themes of oral lyrical poems. If related to some other elements (and not oral lyrical poems), such a stratification may be useless and pointless.

layers: custom-related poems and non-custom related poems, and performance which will unite: interpretation by voice (singing, speech), interpretation by voice with instrumental accompaniment, interpretation by voice with movement (dance), as well as interpretation according to presentation.

After applying the classification, with the proposed levels we will see the interweaving of layers at the same level, and what's more, these two proposed levels will point to a third - to the context, that we have not directly included in the classification because it would be virtually impossible to do so. And finally, this interweaving will point to performance as a whole, which will bring these levels together.

Consequently, our process of classification of oral lyrical poems will distinguish poetic criterion (realized in the division on the first level) from that of the application in life.[7]

Proposal for classification of oral lyrical poetry

I. DIVISON ON THE LEVEL OF RECORDED TEXT

A. <u>Subdivision on the Level of the Verbal Expression of the Poem</u>
  The structure of an oral lyrical poem will bring these layers together:
  1.The layer of a work's cohesive meaning or theme.
    a) themes that express typical human situations and such interactions where one faces one's deepest intimate thoughts:
    1. man's attitude towards love
    2. man's attitude towards death
    3. man's attitude towards life
    4. man's attitude towards nature
    5. man's attitude towards religion
    6. man's attitude towards temporality
    7. man's attitude towards of fate and so forth
    b) themes that discuss socio-historical themes:
    1. themes related to historical events
        a) earlier
        b) recent (WWII)

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[7] According to their relation to customs, oral lyrical poems are divided in custom-related and non-custom related poems. Custom-related poems are subdivided into poems related to customs of the calendar cycle, poems related to customs of the life cycle and poems related to working customs.
Non-custom related poems are the richest in genre diversity, in their number, in range and popularity. According to the way of the presentation of reality they are divided in epic and lyrical. The former (i.e. epic) are characterized by a narrative feature, by the objective presentation of reality, etc. We have already discussed the characteristics of lyrical poems.

    2. themes relaed to the family

    3. themes related to the army (army life)

    4. themes related to a vocation (profession)

    5. themes related to trips abroad and so forth

  c) themes that discuss customs:

    1. themes related to customs of the calendar cycle

    2. themes related to the customs of the life cycle

    3. themes related to working customs

2. The layer of theme handling

  a) the way the theme is handled

    1. joking poems

    2. satirical poems

    3. parodies

    4. a child's handlong of a poem

    5. other poems

  b) composition

    1. versification:

      a) the form of verse:

        decasyllabic

        octametric

        duodecasyllabic

        hexametric

        others

      b) the strophic arrangement and order of verse:

          strophic

          non-strophic

      c) rhyme:

          rhymed

          unrhymed

    2. the way in which the individual types are formed in terms of length:

    a) the basic lyrical poem

    b) lyrical ballads and romances

    c) lyrical fragments of ballads

    d) couplets

    3. the way in which the individual types are formed in terms of mode of composition:

    a) the type of composition:

          one-piece

          two-part

          chain

          ring-like

          compound

    b) the form of presentation:

a monologue
a dialogue
compound
c) composition modes:
1. commencements (introductions) and their types:
a) the sign of the time of event
b) the sign of the place of event
c) the approach
d) psychological parallelism
2. endings
3. repetitions
4. refrains
d) the compositional meaning of a character:
standardization: a girl, a married woman, a young man, a hero, mother, a brother, a sister

B. <u>Subdivision on the Level of Musical Performance of the Poem</u>
1. The record of metrorythmical structures
2. The record of melo-verses and melo-strophes
3. Folklore scores
(*Here, the subdivision will be carried out by ethnomusicologists!)

II DIVISION ON THE LEVEL OF APPLICATION

A. THE PURPOSE will bring these layers together:
1. The layer of custom-related poems:
a) poems related to customs (rituals) of the calendar cycle (occasional, magic, entertaining)
b) poems related to customs (rituals) of the life cycle (occasional, magic, entertaining)
c) poems related to customs (rituals) of work (occasional, magic, entertaining)
2. The layer of non-custom related poems (the function of entertainment is dominant)

B. THE PERFORMANCE of an oral lyrical poem will bring these layers together:
1. Interpretation with voice:
a) singing: solo (one voice)
in a group or chorus (one or more voices)
b) recitative:
solo
in a group
c) rhythmic speech
2. Interpretation with voice and musical accompaniment:

    a) the performer accompanies himself on an instrument
    b) another individual accompanies the performer on an instrument
    c) an instrumental group accompanies the performer
    d) two, three or a group of performers are accompanied by an individual on an instrument
    e) two, three or a group of performers are accompanied by an instrumental group
    f) two, three or a group of performers accompany themselves
3. Interpretation with voice and movement (dance):
    a) without instrumental accompaniment
    b) with instrumental accompaniment
4. Interpretation in terms of presentation:
    a) function (within a custom)
    b) on stage (folklorism)
    c) within various media (radio, TV, film)
    d) the interpretation to researcher
    e) informal

(Translated by Vaska Vasiljević-Lozica)

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