

FOLKLORE AS A SPECIAL FORM OF CREATION*

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INTRODUCTION

"Folklore as a Special Form of Creation" by Jakobson and Bogatyrev is one of the most famous and oft-quoted articles in folkloristics, comparable perhaps to Axel Olrik's "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative." It has been translated into several languages.

The article constitutes a combined effort by two significant Slavic scholars, Roman Jakobson and Petr Bogatyrev, who left communist Russia and settled in Prague in the 1920s, where they were engaged in very productive scholarly work. They were both active members of the Prague Circle. Jakobson soon moved to the United States and became a leading Slavic and general linguist and folklorist. Bogatyrev returned to the Soviet Union, a decision which signified the beginning of the end of his achievements in folklore and mythology. He died in 1975.

"Folklore as a Special Form of Creation" aims at bringing out the specific characteristics of folklore in comparison with literature. This is done by constant reference to linguistics and occasionally even to economics. DeSaussure's terms **parole** (English "message"--a particular speech act) and **langue** (English "code"--a generalized form of language as adopted by the community of speakers) are referred to frequently to clarify the

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distinction between folklore and literature. It is emphasized that folklore is oriented specifically toward **langue** and literature toward **parole**. An item of folklore begins its existence only after it has been adopted and sanctioned by the community. As in the development of **langue**, the environment prunes a created work to fit its taste; if the community rejects it, it simply dies out. A community retains only those items of folklore which have a functional value for it.

Like **langue**, the work of folklore is extrapersonal and leads only to a potential existence; it is only a complex of certain norms and impulses, the canvas of the actual tradition, which the tellers revive with the embellishment of their individual creation. Should the bearers of a folklore tradition die out, there is no possibility for reactivation of the tradition.

The article touches upon numerous other questions: Hans Naumann's concept of "Gesunkenes Kulturgut"; folklore as an expression of individual or collective creativity; genetic autonomy and originality of folklore, and others.

While the Jakobson-Bogatyrev article has aroused much interest in the West, and to a lesser extent in the East, it has to my knowledge had no echo in the Soviet Union. The reason for this is the difference in the interpretation of folklore, particularly in regard to the relationship between folklore and literature. Whereas Jakobson and Bogatyrev make every effort to underscore the profound distinction between folklore and literature, Soviet folklorists have advocated the identity of the two disciplines. The literary approach was characteristic of Soviet folklore research in the 1920s and '30s, leading to the encouragement of individual master singers to create new, original works (**noviny** or "new epic songs," etc.) in the '30s and '40s. Since the '40s this trend has asserted itself in the favorable attitude taken toward the use of literary models for mass verbal creations. [For details see F.J. Oinas, "The Problem of the Notion of Soviet Folklore," **Folklore Today: A Festschrift for Richard M. Dorson** (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1976), pp. 379-97.]

FOLKLORE AS A SPECIAL FORM OF CREATION

The naive realism which particularly characterized the misguided theoretical orientation of thought during the second half of the nineteenth century has already been superseded by the newer directions in scientific thought. Only in the areas of those humanistic disciplines whose proponents were so preoccupied with the collection of materials and by specific concrete problems that they were disinclined to revise philosophical assumptions, and thus were naturally conservative in their theoretical principles, did naive realism continue to expand and frequently even gain momentum in the beginning of this century.

However strange the philosophical perspective of naive realism may seem to the modern investigator (at least where this perspective has not become catechism or irrefutable dogma), nevertheless a whole series of formulations, representing a direct outgrowth of the philosophical assumptions of science during the second half of the nineteenth century, continue to live on in many fields of cultural study as smuggled ballast, a vestige restricting scientific development.

A typical product of naive realism was the widespread thesis of the neogrammarians that the language of the individual is the one and only real language. Epigrammatically stated, this thesis asserts that, in the final analysis, only the speech of a particular person at a particular point in time represents an actual reality, while everything else is merely a theoretical-scientific abstraction. However, nothing is quite so foreign to contemporary efforts in linguistics as this thesis, which became one of the cornerstones of the neogrammarian school.

Alongside the individual, particular speech act--**parole** according to Saussure's terminology--modern linguistics also recognizes **langue**, that is, "a collection of necessary conventions adopted by a social body to permit the exercise of that faculty [language] among individuals." In this traditional, interpersonal system this or that speaker may introduce personal variations, which can nonetheless be interpreted only as individual deviations from **langue**, and only with respect to **langue** itself. They become facts of **langue** after the community, the bearers of a particular **langue**, has sanctioned them and accepted them as being generally admissible. Herein lies the distinction between, on the one hand, transformations of language and, on the other hand, individual speech errors (*lapsus*), the products of individual whim, of strong emotional states, or of the aesthetic impulses of the speaking individual.

When we come to the question concerning the "conception" of this or that language innovation, we can examine those cases where language transformations take place as a result of a kind of socialization or generalization of individual speech errors (*lapsus*), individual emotional states, or aesthetic deformations of speech. Language changes may also originate in a different manner; namely, when they constitute an inevitable, regularly determined result of speech changes which have already occurred and are embodied directly in **langue** (the biological concept of monogenesis). But with the usual changes for linguistic change in effect we can speak of the "birth" of a language innovation only from that moment when it constitutes a social fact, i.e., when the community of speakers has adopted it as its own.

If we cross now from the field of linguistics to that of folklore, here we encounter parallel phenomena. An item of folklore *per se* begins its existence only after it has been

adopted by a given community, and only in those of its aspects which the community has accepted.

Let us suppose that a member of a community has composed something. Should this oral work, created by the individual, be unacceptable to the community for one reason or another, should the remaining members of the community not adopt it, then it is condemned to failure. Only the chance transcription of a collector can rescue it by transferring it from the sphere of oral composition to that of literature.

The French poet of the 1860s, Comte de Lautréamont, offers a typical example of the so-called **poètes maudits**, i.e., poets who are rejected, silently ignored, and unrecognized by their contemporaries. He published a small volume which attracted no attention and found no readership, as was the case with his other works, which remained unprinted. At the age of twenty-four he was overtaken by death. Decades pass. In literature there arises the so-called surrealist movement, in many respects in concordance with Lautréamont's poetry. Lautréamont is rehabilitated--his works are published, he is celebrated as a master and gains influence. But what would have become of Lautréamont if he had only been the composer of works of oral poetry? Upon his death his works would have disappeared without a trace.

Here we have cited the most extreme case, in which entire works are rejected. Yet it is possible that single traits only, peculiarities of form, or single motifs may be rejected or not adopted by contemporaries. In these instances the environment prunes the created work to its own taste. And, again, everything rejected by the environment simply does not exist as a fact of folklore; it falls from use and dies out.

One of Goncharov's heroines tries, before reading a novel, to ascertain the outcome of the

plot. Let us assume that at a certain time the average reader behaves in the same way. For example, when reading a work he too may pass over all descriptions of nature, regarding them as dragging, tiresome ballast. No matter how much a novel may be distorted by the reader, no matter how much it might conflict in its composition with the expectations of the current school of literature, no matter how fragmentarily it might be perceived, still it retains its potential existence intact. A new time will come which will rehabilitate the once-rejected features. But transposing these facts to the sphere of folklore, let us suppose that the community demands that the outcome of the plot be revealed in advance, and we will see that every folk narrative will inevitably adopt a compositional scheme of the sort we encounter in Tolstoy's story "The Death of Ivan Ilyich," in which the outcome of the plot precedes the narration. If descriptions of nature displease the community, they are stricken from the folklore repertoire. In short, in folklore only those forms are retained which hold a functional value for the given community. In this way one function of a form may clearly be replaced by another. But as soon as a form becomes non-functional it dies out in folklore, while in a literary work it retains its potential existence.

Yet another literary-historical example is that of the so-called "eternal companions"--writers who, in the course of centuries, are interpreted in different ways from different orientations, by each according to its own manner and in a novel fashion. Many of these writers' peculiarities, which were strange, incomprehensible, unnecessary, and undesirable to their contemporaries come to be greatly valued at a later time, and suddenly become topical; that is, they become productive literary factors. This too is possible only in the realm of literature. For example, in oral poetry what would have

become of Leskov's linguistically daring and innovative output, which has required several decades to become a productive literary factor in the literary efforts of Remizov and subsequent Russian prose writers? Leskov's environment would have purged his works of his bizarre stylistic techniques. In a word, there remains a profound distinction between literary and folkloric transmission. In the field of folklore the possibility of reactivating poetic facts is significantly smaller. If the bearers of a given poetic tradition should die out, this tradition can no longer be resuscitated, while in literature phenomena which are a hundred or even several hundred years old may revive and become productive once again!

From the above discussion it clearly follows that the existence of a work of folklore requires a group to accept and sanction it for its continuation. In folklore research the **preventive censure of the community** must be kept in mind constantly as a fundamental principle. We deliberately use the term "preventive," for in considering a folkloric fact we are concerned not with the moments prior to its birth, nor with its "conception," nor with its embryonic life, but with the "birth" of the folklore fact as such and with its subsequent fate.

Folklore researchers, the Slavs in particular--who have at their disposal perhaps the liveliest and richest folklore material in Europe--frequently propound the thesis that there is no significant difference between oral poetry and literature, and that, in both cases, we are dealing with the unmistakable products of individual creation. This thesis traces its origins directly to the influence of naive realism: we are unable to verify communal creation by means of empirical investigation, therefore it is necessary to postulate an individual creator or initiator. Vsevolod Miller, a typical

neogrammarian in linguistics as well as folkloristics, remarks on the subject of folklore in the following way: "By whom is it conceived? By the communal creation of the masses? But this too is a fiction, since human experience has never observed such creation." Here, without a doubt, the influence of our everyday surroundings finds expression. Writing, not oral creativity, is the most familiar and best-known form of creativity to us; and so our accustomed notions are egocentrically projected onto the area of folklore as well. Thus the moment of birth of a literary work is reckoned from the point of its being set down on paper by its author; and, by analogy, the point at which an oral work is first objectivized, i.e., uttered by its creator, is regarded as the moment of its birth--when in reality the work becomes folkloric fact only at the moment of its acceptance by the community.

Adherents to the thesis of the individual character of folkloric creation tend to substitute the concept of anonymity for that of collectivity. Hence, for example, a well-known handbook of Russian oral poetry contains the following statement:

It is clear that, when dealing with a ritual song, if we do not know who the creator of the ritual was or who composed the first song, this does not, however, contradict the idea of individual creation, but testifies simply that the ritual is so old that we can determine neither the composer nor the originating circumstances of this ancient song, so closely bound up with the ritual; and, furthermore, that it arose in a situation where the personality of the author had aroused no interest, for which reason the memory of his personality has not been preserved. In this manner the idea of "communal" creation need not be invoked.

What is not taken into account here is that there can be no ritual without sanction by the community; that this is a **contradictio in**

adiecto; and that even if in the germ of this or that ritual there lay an individual expression, the path from this expression to the ritual is just as long as the path from the individual distortion of speech to grammatical linguistic mutation.

What has been said concerning the origin of ritual (or, similarly, of a work of oral poetry) may also be applied in regard to the evolution of ritual (or to folkloric evolution in general). The distinction employed by linguistics between a change in the rules of language and the individual's deviation from these rules--a distinction which has not only quantitative, but also fundamental qualitative significance--remains almost totally foreign to folkloristics.

One of the inherent distinguishing features between folklore and literature is the concept of the essence of a work of art.

In folklore the relationship between the work of art on the one hand, and its objectivization--i.e., the so-called variants of this work as performed by different individuals--on the other, is completely analogous to the relationship between **langue** and **parole**. Like **langue**, the folkloric work is extrapersonal and leads only a potential existence; it is only a complex of particular norms and impulses, a canvas of actual tradition, to which the performers impart life through the embellishments of their individual creativity, just as the producers of **parole** do with respect to **langue**.

To the extent that these individual innovations in speech (or folklore) conform to the exigencies of the community and anticipate the regular evolution of **langue** (or folklore) they become socialized and form the constituent elements of **langue** (or the elements of a folklore work).

The literary work is objectivized, existing concretely and independently of the reader; and every subsequent reader applies himself directly

to the work. This is not the path of a folklore work from performer to performer, but rather a path from the work to the performer. The interpretations of other performers may, of course, be taken into account; but this is only one of the ingredients in the reception of the work, and by no means the only source as in folklore. The role of the performer of a folklore work should not, under any circumstances, be identified with that of either the reader or with that of the reciter of a literary work, much less with that of the author. Considered from the viewpoint of the performer of a folklore work, these [folklore] works represent a fact of **langue**; that is, an extrapersonal, given fact already independent of the performer, although admitting of manipulation and the introduction of new poetic and ordinary material. But for the author of a literary work, this [literary] work appears to be a fact of **parole**; it is not given **a priori**, but is dependent upon an individual realization. All that is given is a context of currently effective works of art, against the background of which--that is, against the background of whose formal requirements--the new work of art is created (by appropriating some of these forms, reworking others, and discarding still others) and should be perceived.

A significant difference between folklore and literature lies in the fact that the former is oriented specifically toward **langue**, and the latter toward **parole**. According to the accurate characterization of the sphere of folklore given by Potebnia, the [folk] poet has no reason to view his work as his own, while viewing the works of other poets of the same circle as strange. The role of censure exercised by the community is different in literature and folklore, as was pointed out above. In the case of folklore, censure is imperative and constitutes an inescapable condition for the generation of works

of art. the writer may give more or less consideration to the demands of his environment; but however he may adapt to these demands, what is lacking here is the inseparable fusion of censure and the work, which is characteristic of folklore. A literary work is not predetermined by censure and cannot be entirely derived from it, but can only approximately surmise its demands, at times correctly, at times incorrectly. Many of the community's expectations are not taken into consideration at all.

The field of national economics offers a close parallel to the relationship between literature and the consumer in the concept of "market production," while folklore comes closer to "production on demand."

A discrepancy between the demands of the environment and a literary work may be the result of a mistake; but it may also stem from the conscious intention of the author attempting to restructure the demands of the environment and reeducate it, in a literary sense. Such an attempt by the author to influence posterity may also fail. Censure may not yield, and between its standards and the work there arises an antinomy. There is a tendency to conceive of the "folk author" as similar to, and modelled after the "literary poet"; but this transposition is inappropriate. In contrast to the "literary poet," the "folk poet"--according to the relevant observation made by Anichkov--does not create "a new environment." Any desire to change the environment is completely alien to him. The absolute supremacy of "preventive censure," which renders any conflict with the censure fruitless, produces a special kind of participant in poetic creation and leads this personality to renounce any attack aimed at overcoming censure.

In the conception of folklore as an expression of individual creativity, the trend toward effacing the boundary between the history of literature and of folklore reached its highest

point. We believe, however, as follows from the above discussion, that this thesis must be subjected to serious revision. Does this revision necessarily mean rehabilitating the Romantic conception of folklore which was attacked so sharply by the representatives of the aforementioned doctrine. Without a doubt, yes. The description of the difference between oral poetry and literature offered by the Romantic theoreticians contained a number of correct thoughts, and the Romantics were right in emphasizing the "herd nature" of oral poetic creativity and comparing it to language. But along with these correct theses, the Romantic conception also contained a series of assertions which can no longer be supported by contemporary scientific criticism.

Furthermore, the Romantics placed too great a value on the genetic autonomy and originality of folklore. Only the efforts of the succeeding generations of scholars have demonstrated the enormous role played in folklore by the phenomenon which is designated as "gesunkenes Kulturgut" by modern German folkloristics. This may give the impression that the role of collective creation in folklore is considerably delimited by the recognition of the important, sometimes even exclusive position which this "gesunkenes Kulturgut" assumes in the folk repertoire. But this is not the case. Works of art which are borrowed by folk poetry from the higher levels of society may be, in and of themselves, typical examples of personal initiative and individual creativity. But the question itself concerning the sources of folklore lies, by its very nature, outside the boundaries of folkloristics. Any question regarding heterogeneous sources becomes a target for scientific interpretation only when considered from the point of view of the system in which it is formulated--in this case that of folklore. What

is important for folkloristic science is not the origin and existence of sources, which lie outside of folklore, but the function of borrowing and the selection and transformation of the borrowed materials. From this perspective the well-known assertion that "the folk does not create, it re-creates" loses its edge, since we have no right to draw an impenetrable boundary between production and reproduction and to consider the latter as having somehow lesser value. Reproduction does not mean passive appropriation; and in this sense there is no fundamental difference between Molière, who reworked the plays of antiquity, and the folk which, to use Naumann's expression, "unsings an art song." The transformation of a work of so-called monumental art into a so-called primitive one is equally an act of creativity. Creativity is expressed here as much as in the selection of appropriated works as in their adaptation for other conventions and expectations. Established literary forms, following their transference to folklore, become the raw material for transformation. Against the background of different poetical circumstances, a different tradition, and a different relationship to artistic values, the work is interpreted in a new manner; and even those formal structures which at first glance seem to have been preserved in the borrowing should not be regarded as identical, as to a prototype. In these art forms, according to the expression of the Russian literary critic Tynianov, an exchange of functions takes place. From the standpoint of function, without which understanding of the artistic facts is impossible, the work of art outside of folklore, and the same work of art as adapted by folklore, are two distinctly different things.

The history of Pushkin's poem "The Hussar" furnishes a characteristic example of the way in which art forms change their functions in passing from folklore to literature and, vice

versa, from literature to folklore. The typical folkloric narrative about a simple man's encounter with the other world (where the crux of the narrative lies in the description of the devil's antics) is transformed by Pushkin into a series of genre-pictures through the psychological delineation of the main characters and the psychological motivation of their treatment. The main hero--the Hussar--as well as folk superstition are depicted with a humorous coloring by Pushkin. The Märchen which Pushkin uses is "folksy"; however, in the poet's reworking "folksiness" is an artistic device, being foregrounded, so to speak. For Pushkin the uneducated speech of the folk narrator is a piquante subject for versified treatment. Pushkin's poem reverted back to folklore and was incorporated into several variants of "Tsar Maximilian," one of the most popular stage pieces of the Russian folk theatre. Here it serves, along with other literary borrowings, to fill out the transitional episode, and is one of a number of colorful divertissements depicting the hero of this episode, the Hussar. The overblown braggadocio of the Hussar is as much in keeping with the aesthetic spirit of buffoonery as is the humorous portrayal of the devil figure. Nevertheless, the tendency of Pushkin's humor to gravitate toward a tone of romantic irony certainly has little in common with the buffoonery of "Tsar Maximilian" which assimilated the poem. Even in those variants where Pushkin's poem was relatively little altered, it is interpreted by a folklore-educated public in their own peculiar way, especially in its performance by folk actors and in the context of the dramatic pieces which surround it. In other variants this change in function is manifested directly in the form, with the characteristic conversational verbal style of Pushkin's poem readily transformed into folk verse; and of the original poem all that remains--stripped of its

motivations--is the plot outline, to which is appended a series of typical jests and gags.

No matter how mutually intertwined the fates of literature and oral poetry might be, no matter how common or thorough their reciprocal influence may have been, no matter how often folklore and literature may have affected one another; we are not entitled, in spite of all this, to efface the boundary between oral poetry and literature for the sake of genetic analysis.

Another notable error in the Romantic characterization of folklore, along with the assumption of its originality, was the thesis that only a folk not stratified into classes--a sort of collective personality with a single soul and a single worldview; a community which does not acknowledge individual expressions of human activity--could create folklore and be the agent of communal creation. We find this inseparable association of communal creation with a "primitive cultural community" nowadays in the work of Naumann and his school, who are in agreement with the Romantics on a number of issues:

Here individualism does not exist. We should not hesitate to draw analogies from the animal kingdom, which offers, in fact, the closest parallels. . . . True folk art is communal art, but no less than swallows-nests, beehives, or snail-shells are products of communal art.

"They are all driven by a single impulse," adds Naumann concerning the bearers of communal culture; "they are all inspired by the same thoughts and purposes." In this concept there lies a hidden danger, inherent in any inference drawn directly from a social manifestation to mentality; e.g., from the properties of a linguistic feature to those of thought. (The danger of a similar identification has been admirably exposed by Anton Marti.) We find the same thing in the field of ethnography; the unchallenged dominance of collective mentality is

by no means a necessary condition for communal creation, even if such a mentality does offer an especially favorable ground for its most complete realization. Nor is communal creativity by any means foreign even to a culture which is permeated by individualism. We need look no further for examples than the widespread anecdotes, legend-like rumors and gossip, superstitions and myth-structures, and accepted customs and modes of thought in present-day educated circles. In addition, the Russian ethnographers who have investigated the villages in the Moscow district can provide a great deal of information concerning the connection between a rich and vital folklore repertoire and the variety of social, economic, ideological, and even moral differentiations among the peasantry.

The development of oral poetry (or, similarly, literature) may be explained to a great extent not only in psychological terms, but in functional terms as well. Compare, for example, the simultaneous existence of oral poetry and literature in the very same educated circles in Russia during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Here literature fulfilled one set of cultural tasks, and oral poetry another. Naturally, in the urban situation literature gained the upper hand over folklore--market production over production on demand. But to the conservative village individualized poetry is just as alien as market production.

Accepting the thesis of folklore as a manifestation of communal creativity poses a series of practical problems for folkloristics. Undoubtedly, the translation of methods and concepts stemming from the treatment of literary-historical materials to the field of folkloristics has frequently hindered the analysis of folklore art forms. In particular, too little emphasis has been placed on the fundamental distinction between a literary text and the written record

of a work of folklore; for a transcription inevitably distorts this work, transposing it to a different category.

It would be ambiguous to speak of identical forms with respect to folklore and literature. Thus, for example, the concept of "verse," which on the surface appears to have the same meaning in literature as in folklore, actually represents two radically different entities in functional terms. Marcel Jousse, a sensitive researcher of oral metrical style (**style oral rythmique**), regards this distinction as of such importance that he reserves the terms "verse" and "poetry" for literature alone, substituting the designations "metrical schema" and "oral style" respectively in their application to oral creations, in order to avoid reading into these concepts the usual literary content. Jousse has brilliantly demonstrated the mnemotechnical function of these "metrical schemata." He interprets oral metrical style in a "setting of spontaneous narrators" in the following manner:

Imagine a language in which the two or three hundred rhymed phrases, the four or five hundred types of metrical schemata are fixed for all time and transmitted without modification by oral tradition. From that time forth personal invention would consist of taking these metrical schemata as models and creating in their image, balanced by the use of structural clichés, other analogous metrical schemata having the same rhythm, the same structure . . . and, as far as possible, the same meaning.

Here the relationship between tradition and improvisation, between **langue** and **parole** in oral poetry is clearly defined. The verse, the strophe, and the still more complicated compositional structures in folklore constitute a powerful support of tradition on the one hand, and on the other (closely bound up with the first) an effective resource for improvisational technique.

Any typology of folklore structures must be constructed independently of that of literary structures. One of the most pressing problems of linguistics is the elaboration of a phonetic and morphological typology. It is readily apparent that there exist general structural rules which languages do not violate, and evident that the variety of phonological and morphological structures is limited, and may be traced to a comparatively small number of basic types; from which it follows that the variety of structures of communal creativity is also bounded. **Parole** permits a richer variety of modifications than **langue**. These conclusions of comparative linguistics can be contrasted to the remarkable variety of literary themes on the one hand, and the limited selection of Märchen themes on the other. This limitation can be explained by the commonality of neither sources, psyche, nor external circumstances. The occurrence of similar themes is founded in the general laws of poetic composition; and like the structural rules of language, these laws are more uniform and stronger in their application to collective than to individual creation.

The next task facing synchronic folkloristics is the systematic characterization of the art forms which constitute the current repertoire of a given community--village, region, or ethnic group--taking into account such factors as the reciprocal relationship of systematic structures, the hierarchy of these structures, and the difference between productive structures and those which have lost their productive capacity. Folklore repertoire provides a means of distinguishing not only ethnographic and geographic groups, but also groups characterized by sex (male and female folklore), age (children, adolescents, old people), and occupation (herdsmen, fishermen, soldiers, thieves, etc.). To the extent that these occupational groups mentioned create folklore for themselves,

these folklore cycles may be compared to professional jargons. But there are also folklore repertoires which, although belonging to a particular occupational group, are directed at consumers who stand at some distance from the group. In these instances the creation of oral poetry is one of the professional trademarks of the group. Thus, for example, in a large part of Russia religious poetry is performed almost exclusively by the **kaliki perekhozhie**, the wandering beggars, who are frequently organized into special societies. The performance of religious poetry is one of the major sources of their livelihood. Between this sort of example of the complete separation of producer and consumer, and those cases of the opposite extreme in which nearly the entire community is at the same time producer and consumer (e.g., proverbs, anecdotes, **Schnaderhüpfel**, certain genres of both ritual and non-ritual songs) there exists a series of intermediate types. Within a particular setting a group of talented individuals emerges to more or less monopolize the production of a particular folklore genre, such as the Märchen. These individuals are not professionals, and the production of poetry does not constitute their chief occupation or source of income; they are rather amateurs who pursue their poetic activities during their leisure time. Here it is impossible to establish a complete identification between producer and consumer; but neither is there a complete separation. The boundary fluctuates. There are people who are more or less Märchen narrators and yet, by the same token, also audience; the amateur creator just as easily becomes a consumer, and vice versa.

Oral poetic creation remains collective even in the cases of separation between producer and consumer, except that then the collective aspect takes on specific qualities. Here we have a community of producers, and "pre-

ventive censure" is more independent of the consumer than if the creator and consumer are identical and censure serves the interests of production and consumption to the same degree.

Under one condition only does oral poetry by its nature transcend the bounds of folklore and cease to be a collective creation: specifically, in the instance when a well-integrated community of professionals with a solid professional tradition behaves toward certain poetic creations with such a pious attitude that they attempt at all costs to preserve these creations with no changes whatsoever. That this is more or less possible is demonstrated by a number of historical examples. The vedic hymns were passed down in the course of the centuries by the priests in this manner--from mouth to mouth "in baskets," according to the Buddhist terminology. All efforts were directed toward guarding the texts against distortion--a goal which was achieved, apart from insignificant innovations. There, where the role of the community consists only of preserving a corpus of poetic works elevated to the status of inviolable canon, creative censure, improvisation, and collective creation cease to exist.

As a counterpart to the marginal forms of oral poetry we may also mention those of literature. For example, the activity of the anonymous authors and scribes of the Middle Ages, without leaving the domain of literature, possessed certain features which brought it closer in part to oral poetry. The scribe, not infrequently, treated the work which he copied as one of a number of materials available for him to rewrite. But however many transitional phenomena may appear on the boundary between individual and communal creation, we do not intend to follow the example of the infamous sophist who racked his brain over the question of how many grains of sand must be removed from a sand pile before it ceases to be a pile.

Between any two neighboring domains of culture we may wish to choose there are always border and transitional zones. Yet this circumstance does not allow us to deny either the existence of two distinct types, or the usefulness of keeping them separate.

When in due course the gap between folklore and literary history has narrowed to the point of allowing a number of questions of a genetic nature to be answered, then the separation of both disciplines and the reestablishing of the autonomy of folkloristics is likely to facilitate the interpretation of the functions of folklore, and the discovery of its structural principles and special features.