

ANTHROPOLOGICAL VIEW OF LITERARY FOLKLORE

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This article is a short summary of a longer paper which entailed the following sections:

1. Contribution to the Slovene anthropological tradition
2. Slovene knowledge about cultural anthropology
3. The concept of culturology
4. Theoretical view on the relationship between cultural anthropology and literary folklore
5. Anthropological starting points for a thematic analysis of literary folklore
6. Problems of genre from the anthropological point of view

The “term anthropology” was first used in 1501, but Herodotus can already be considered the first anthropologist as he refers to followers of other, different and foreign cultures. The variety of cultures is essential for anthropology and as a rule an anthropologist is a “professional foreigner” who is aware of a certain (cultural) situation¹ from which a comparison is made. Anthropology as a science is not possible without a comparison.

The need to devise a system and a method was present from the 17th century onwards in the form of the setting of different rules for data collecting. Among such rules those set by Robert Boyle, an English natural scientist, were particularly respected. The Slovene polymath Janez Vajkard Valvazor seems to have followed Boyle's example in his encyclopaedic work *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola* (1689).

The younger generation of former ethnology students in Ljubljana caught at that time the wind of anthropology blowing in Europe. The Slovenes had already been introduced to anthropological theories,¹ and their acquaintance with the ethnological praxis had worked as a refreshing input. A praiseworthy fact was that some members of the Institute of Slovene Ethnology at Scientific and Research Centre in The Slovene Academy of Science and Arts spoke in favour of folkloristics² as an independent subject in contrast with the ethnological school of a “destructive totalitarian postwar period of forty years”.³

The works of Ivan Lozica (b. 1950) imparted the view of Claude Lévy-Strauss in *Structural Anthropology* that ethnography, ethnology and anthropology are three levels or stages of one single research and not three different disciplines:

- a) Ethnography deals with the initial scientific work, observation and description. Lévy-Strauss includes here also the methods of fieldwork, classification and description.
- b) Ethnology would be placed in this system a step closer to synthesis (which could be geographical, historical or combined)
- c) Anthropology would represent the highest stage directed towards a complete knowledge of man.

With Lévy-Strauss, structural anthropology aims to represent itself firstly as a science of synthesis, oriented towards complexity (complexity is the second ambition of anthropology). Anthropology would then replace “the non-scientific” philosophy and would be a top-level science about man. Sociology would also be treated as a particular kind of anthropology (i.e. anthropology of one's own society).

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¹ Alla Latinina, “Kultura je način, kako premagati kaos” (“Culture is a way of conquering chaos”), *Nova revija* 12, Ljubljana 1993, No. 138, pp. XVII–XXIX.

² The status of folkloristics within academic lectures on The Department of Ethnology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. (without cultural anthropology) was very dim.

R. Muršič, “O razmerju med etnologijo in kulturno antropologijo ter predvsem o teoriji v etnologiji” (“On the Relation Between Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology”), *Glasnik Slovenskega etnološkega društva 34, Journal of the Slovene Ethnological Society* Ljubljana 1994, No. 1–2, pp. 10–16.

³ Slavko Kremenšek, “Je današnja slovenska etnologija antifolkloristika?” “Is the contemporary Slovene ethnology anti – folkloristics?” *Glasnik Slovenskega etnološkega društva 17, Journal of the Slovene Ethnological Society* (1977), No. 3, pp. 29–30. Slavko Kremenšek, “O etnologiji in folkloristiki” “On ethnology and folkloristics” *Glasnik Slovenskega etnološkega društva 17, Journal of the Slovene Ethnological Society* (1977), No. 5, 287–290. Slavko Kremenšek, “H genezi razmerja med etnologijo in slavistiko”. “On the genesis of relationbetween ethnology and Slovenistic studies” *Jezik in slovstvo 25, Language and Literature*, (1979–80), No. 6, pp. 171–176. Etc.

Such a concept of anthropology turns a discipline dealing with foreign, remote and “primitive” societies into a universal humanistic science.⁴

When one considers the link between folkloristics and anthropology the following questions arise:

Is folkloristics considered a part of cultural anthropology, subordinate to it? Or are they on equal terms?⁵

Franc Pedišek distinguishes chronologically and systematically four structural components or fields of science:

1. Subject matter is a condition *sine qua non*.
2. Methodology – the modern world strove for it.
3. The present time aims to endow science with terminologies.⁶
4. Finally, “anthropologising” is a sign of the future and a condition for man's survival.

While the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gave birth to and developed the natural sciences along with industrial technology (deaf to human living environment), the twentieth century incorporated to the utmost degree the aggressive and all-inclusive discipline of social science.

So far in the system of science two subsystems have autocratically reigned: natural science and social science. The central authentic real element and scientific subject which is man, was missing. But today this mechanistic-empirical paradigm of science is breaking apart and withdrawing. Anthropology as a subsystem of science is getting more and more persistently included between natural and social science.

Anthropology is thus finding its place between nature study and sociology. It is only with this fact, that the entire building of human science is being completed, well grounded and given sense. Natural and social sciences have their *raison d'être* only when considering the element of man as a family, as an individual and as a social being.⁷

Anthropology is a science about man as a microcosm; about the phenomenal and functional levels of his living, his awareness and his work.

Pedišek differentiates three levels of anthropology:

- a) general – as a subsystem of science (set between natural and social sciences);
- b) special – an independent field of science (physical-biological, socio-cultural, philosophical – humanistic)
- c) as the separate disciplines which compose and analyse distinct anthropological – scientific fields.⁹

On the basis of the above understanding of anthropology it seems likely that literary science has become anthropologically relevant. If the statement that “there is no poetic art which would reach the utmost limit of what belongs to a nation, without assuming a certain universality”⁸ tries to persuade us about the tacit anthropologisation of poetic arts, then Emil Staiger consciously planned his poetics as a contribution of literary science to the questions of anthropology in general.⁹ This means that he strives to follow the phenomenon of man on to the field of poetical creativity.

⁴ Ivan Lozica, “Metateorija o folkloristici i filozofija umjetnosti” (“Metatheory on Folkloristics and Philosophy of Art”), *Narodna umjetnost* 16, *National Art*, Zagreb 1979, pp.40–41.

⁵ Ingrid Slavec, “Med narodpisjem in antropologijo” (“Between natural science and anthropology”), *The Development of Slovene Ethnology (From Štrekelj and Murko to contemporary ethnological endeavours)*, Slovensko etnološko društvo (Slovene Ethnological Society) 1995, pp. 135.

⁶ Braco Rotar, “Vrnitev antropologije” (“The Comeback of Anthropology”), *Borec (Revija za antropologijo, zgodovino in literaturo)* 43, No. 1–3, 1991, pp. 69–70.

⁷ Franc Pedicek, *Prispevki za teorijo terminologije v znanosti – tudi pedagoški* (Contributions to the theory of terminology in science ...), Didakta, Radovljica 1990, pp. 62, 63, 64.

⁹ Franc Pedicek, “Antropologija – kaj si?” “What is anthropology?”, *Naši razgledi, Our Horizons*, 24. januar 1992, 37–38

⁹ Emil Staiger, *Grundbegriffe der Poetik*, Atlantis Verlag, Zürich 19667, pp. 252–256.

The above thoughts present a gradual approach to our problems as to the connection between literary folklore and anthropology. However, Staiger's conscious step to take poetics as a contribution to general anthropology may be taken within a similar understanding of the entire literary works of art, including literary folklore.

The scientific orientation of comparative history of literature actually began together with literary science of themes and folkloristics, especially in Germany, where "the history of subject matter" (Stoffgeschichte) was dealt with intensively from Romanticism onwards.

In this way the first methodological principles of a new science were rehearsed and laid down also in Slovenia in the 30's of the 20th century. Comparison became the basic method of any anthropology, as it is also one of the fundamental guidelines in literary folklore (and comparative literature).

From these issues, two theories about the origin of folklore motives arose: the migratory or so-called "Indian" theory; and the anthropological or polygenetic theory. In this context the results of anthropological research were also important because they showed that neither fairy tales nor other types of folkloristic narratives, as a form of mental activity, could originate from one specific place and spread from there with time, but they had to be created spontaneously in different parts of the world. In this way one of the presumptions of the migratory theory – of old India as the cradle of fairy tales – was disproved. The proofs of an original creation of a fairy tale or similar tales in a pre-class society (primitive tribes, where modern anthropologists traced the fairy tale, were not yet grouped into social classes) seriously disproved the theory of "sunken cultural goods".

R. R. Marett is the last classic scholar of the English school of anthropology. The book *Psychology and Folklore* (1920) is a fundamental work for studying folklore. We can find in it an attempt to the interpretation of survival.

The English school of anthropology has gained with the term survival a support for their work. The French sociological school never thought of considering folklore as a part of ethnography or ethnology. This resistance was challenged by Marett. According to him, it is not the folklorist's task to see only the old items, as his ancestors claimed, but to intertwine the old and the new ones. For him it was self-understood that, in folklore, everything that dies revives in another form, so that later when it finishes its own cycle, it can give life to new forms. When a certain superstition (survival) loses its original meaning, it gets a new one, without which survival cannot live. It is not necessary to foster illusions that man performs a certain gesture habitually and that this habit represents a (non-conscious) survival of some totemic cult. Maybe this is so also in case man surrenders to this gesture, which means he believes in it. Deriving from psychology, Marret has achieved one of the most important principles which regulate the life of folklore.

Recent Slovene literary folkloristics observes with satisfaction the efforts to clarify the relationship between cultural anthropology and folkloristics in the English speaking area. In spite of being unaware of such developments, Slovene literary folkloristics reached similar conclusions following its own methodology. For instance, one of those who paid specific attention to the relationship between (cultural) anthropology and (literary) folkloristics was William R. Bascom. Firstly he tried to differentiate terminologically and structurally the domain of fairy tales, myths, legends, riddles, proverbs and other "literary forms" from the field of customs, beliefs and rituals. Slovene literary folkloristics, in their turn, has achieved this differentiation between literary folkloristics (which includes the above mentioned genres) on one hand and scenic, musical, dance and artistic folkloristics on the other.

Anthropological starting points for thematic analysis of literary folklore run as follows according to the author of this article:

- a) Genius loci : genius populi
- b) Zoon (fauna): anthropos
- c) Kronos
- d) Topos
- e) Poesis

a) "Genius loci : genius populi" are here illustrated in detail:

In the present study it is worth considering the question of the relationship between the two axioms called "genius loci" and "genius populi". If in basic fine arts "genius loci" prevails over "genius populi" and the limit between their landscape variance "is in line with what in Slovenia was first anticipated by dialectologists", there is a big probability that with a thorough study the same will be proven for literary folklore, as literary folklore is primarily the art of dialects!" "Genius loci"

is marked as a feminine pole of any revival, whereas "genius populi" stands for a man. "Genius loci" is the elementary factor which lives subconsciously and secretly in a certain geographical area, conditioned by natural principles and their ancient cultural background. In a creative process we can compare it with the maternity pole as a certain fundamental disposition or "mood constant", "birth-giving element", "emotionally oriented", "elementary", "traditional", while genius populi is only its stimulator, but with the emphasis, on action, the "fertile", "rational" element, "capable of self-control", "advanced".¹⁰

b) Zoon (fauna) : anthropos

If man was a "natural" being as animals are, he surely would not need any norms, laws nor values. However, man only as a natural being (who is born helpless and needs care for 15 years) would sadly waste away. One cannot survive only on the basis of instincts and "natural equipment". In order to survive, granting himself a bare existence, man in fact had to create culture as his "second nature" with all its fundamental norms, traditions and regulations. By doing so, he established social and cultural values as the most important issues.¹¹ It would be hard to find a more original and better funded definition of culture. Based on the above, the existence of (also cultural) anthropology as a discipline with its own subject matter and contents, seems sensible. Since man actually waded through the entire animal and plant kingdom and gained over nature "exceptional power – the existence of the planet and life on it are virtually in his hands", which pushed mankind in serious civilisation and cultural troubles, it has been essential to provide a suitable, holistic approach to the question of man and form new ways of coexistence among people and nature on the planetary and space level."

c) Kronos

The number of human experiences is limited and an individual can experience only few great and important events in his life. Such experiences have gradually formed a process reproducing the essential events which once happened, are happening and will still happen. The constant repetition of these (ancient) archetypic images in human's experiencing probably represents, according to Jung, the basis to hand them over from one generation to another. Typical collective agreements have always been the existing life forms or biological norms of mental activities. Human beings live according to them; even if unaware of them, we react correctly. Mental life is deeply rooted and the repetition goes also for physical functions, which mainly follow the hereditary, biological laws outside the co-operation of our will. In fact, we all react as man has always reacted, in happiness or misery, common family life, everyday work and especially in different life situations. When dealing with tasks and situations we cannot handle by using the consciously gained and individual, subconscious experience treasure (i.e. those once conscious and suppressed experiences which were initially too weak to make a conscious impression), the instinctive systems of accommodation get activated (man as a species, his pre-human and animal ancestors) and take hold of collective, empirical material of millenniums, whose ground lies in the nervous system, which has a common source and development.¹²

d) Topos

Unlike the anthropological views that want to break through lower layers where determinism governs in the dark of universal instincts and structures, where there is no consciousness and individuality does not exist, Gaston Bachelard picks up the blossom from the top of the culture, where man is exclusively man, a being aware of himself.¹³ In contrast with psychoanalysis he speaks of topo-analysis. It is for the biographer to define a memory in time and this is suitable only for outer history. It wishes to evaluate the place, the beloved place that is protected by opposing forces. These are always praised places. These are not places defined by a geometer, but are experienced places. A true principle of psychological integration is reached through a picture of a home. A home (a house) is our spot in space and it is in fact the cosmos.

¹⁰ William R. Bascom: "Verbal Art", *Journal of Marican Folklore* 68, 1955, pp. 245-252

¹¹ Janez Musek: "Psihološke osnove oblikovanje vrednost", *Psychological Foundations for Value Formation, Otrok in družina 33, Child and Family*, No.7, pp.34

¹² Stanislav Braz, *Izbrana poglavja iz psihoterapije, Selected chapters of psychotherapy*, Ljubljana 1977, pp. 155, 157.

¹³ Sreten Mariæ, "Uvod", v: Gaston Bachelard, *Poetika prostora, The poetics of space*, Kultura, Beograd 1969, pp. XIII.

Memories have to be kept in something closed. A house is one of the strongest forces of integration for thoughts, feelings and man's dreams. A house represents body and soul. It is the first world of a human being. Before being "thrown into the world"¹⁴, man is laid down in a cradle of a house/home. A house creates and offers stability – it is meant as an upright being. As we know, only man is this.

He represents one of the appeals to our perception of uprightness and refers to our perception of the centrality. A house and universe. A house has brought us to a sensitive point of anthropo-cosmology. Every being wishes to find his place on earth through a physical feeling of happiness. A nest is shaped after a bird's body. How come a snail, which is the softest creature, makes its shell as something most solid / firm.¹⁵

e) Poesis

In case anthropology emphasises against the animal world its "historicism", it becomes a synonym for culture. An individual does not count much in history. The further back in history we step, the more we are convinced by this fact. The more we admire Altamira, the more we are amazed by its anonymity. Similarly anonymous are all old epos and myths, as well as all contemporary folk songs.¹⁶ In fact, already since the Pre-Romantics that literary folkloristics had - with a poem in its centre – the principal role in constituting a nation. The Czech romantic poet Vaclav Hanka (1791--1861) reaches even more far-reaching conclusions about the role of poems as being a criterion for any national and human element: "They are the images that best reflect the character of a nation; they are the history of the inner world and life; they are in fact the key to a nation's shrine. The one who rejects folk songs, will never understand what humanity is – it is revealed in shepherd songs as well as in Egyptian pyramids. We realise what a nation is in families, on the knees and laps of the song singers; and what humanity is, is grasped through the idea of nations."¹⁷

Finally I wish to mention some problems of genre from the anthropological points of view: It is important that anthropology gains as much knowledge as possible about anthropogenesis, man's development and the way he sloughed off nature. In this process language played again a decisive role.

Andre Jolles was one of the first to wonder how this was taking place. He claims it is an attempt to join into one unit the way leading from language to literature, which uses all means that linguistics and literary science have at their disposal. Methodologically speaking he was trying to find a way leading from semantics to the sense of tropes and from syntactic forms of language to artistic composition. Theoretically he wanted to find out when, where and how language could be at the same time a creation without stopping to be a sign.

In short, we have to define all the forms we call legends, tales, myths, riddles, proverbs, parables, memories, fairy tales or jokes. They were dealt with stepmotherly both from the aesthetic and historical points of view. Jolles wished to find out the essence and meaning of individual forms. In each of these simple forms the world manifests itself in a certain way. System is a closed order. Only a limited number of possibilities can be true. The etiological perspective links with a certain human mood or view and thus corresponds to two complementary elements, a suitable linguistic form and literary form.

vita (Middle Ages), biography stems from a legend
history (e. g. Norse saga) stems from a tale
answer (event) stems from a myth
question stems from a riddle
comics (funny)¹⁸ stems from a joke
a form that shows everything as real¹⁹ stems from memories

¹⁴ Ali gre tu za izrazoslovje Jeana Paula Sartra? Is this the wording of Jean Paul Sartre?

¹⁵ Gaston Bachelard, *Poetika prostora*, pp. 130, 140, 159.

¹⁶ Anton Trstenjak, *Ālovek bitje prihodnosti*, Man - a being for the future, Ljubljana 1985, pp. 83.

¹⁷ Anton Janežič, "Narodno pesništvo", *Slovenska Bèela*, I, 1850, pp. 28

¹⁸ Stane Južnič, *Lingvistièna antropologija*, (*Linguistic Anthropology*), pp. 23, 24

¹⁹ Wolfgang Kayser, *Jezièko umetnièko delo* (*Das sprachliche Kunstwerk – eine Einfurung in die Literatur Wissenschaft*), Srpskknjiževna, Beograd 1973, pp. 398

"The creative spirit" with Jolles is surely not a primary and conscious act of will power. The anthropological comprehension of simple forms is taken in consideration with Jolles, but not as a constituent part (e.g. not as a constituent part of simple forms). Kurt Ranke took this step and made a diversion into psychologism.

Form and structure reveal only the spirit of the creative man, whereas all formative variants are only a special expression of these absolute entities. Through history elementary needs of human beings correspond to these entities and Ranke believes that it is likely that²⁰ some genres of story telling are primarily forms of human statements, which stem from dreams, affection, magic and rational mental processes, as well as from enjoying fun and making up stories. He also believes that each such genre can be taken as a shaped, spontaneous statement of man about his special relation towards the world and with or in the world.

That is why each one of them must have its own function. In this way the categories of story telling are presented as an excellent anthropological question.

Ranke claims that the narrator is not an individual who has found a certain story, nor a single narrator who transfers it. This *homo narrans* represents in Ranke's view nothing else but a sum of all people who do the narration and transmit it. He is almost a representative of mankind with its desires and fears that want to utter a suitable narrative form. This *homo narrans* is really an anthropological problem and not a regional or individual one; but this narratives and their spiritual-mental motives are anthropological issues.

CONCLUSION

In short, we could describe the relation between literary folklore and cultural anthropology with the following equation: what literary folklore represents on a micro level, cultural anthropology does on a macro level. The polyvalence of man as the object of both levels of study, is typical for each of them. From the moment when, on the initiative of American new folkloristics, the surface texture and context, which create together a folklore event, are inevitably joined to the text, we cannot ignore any longer the category of man in literary folkloristics.

RESUMO

O folclore literário (i.e., literatura oral) é, em ponto pequeno, o que a antropologia cultural é em grande. De facto, é fulcral para ambas a polivalência do seu objecto — o homem.

É a partir da nova folclorística americana que os níveis de texto e contexto passaram a estar inevitavelmente ligados ao texto. Desde então que ambos os níveis têm vindo a criar em conjunto um evento folclórico e uma categoria do homem no folclore literário que é inevitável. Devido ao seu lugar tanto nas ciências filológicas como nas ciências sociais, o folclore literário entende a sua missão numa confluência de métodos de ambas as áreas.

A antropologia cultural não é só um outro nome para etnologia, nem é idêntica a ela em termos de conteúdo. É um termo mais abrangente, talvez apto a incluir a etnologia, a folclorística e outras áreas científicas afins. Esta vasta concepção de antropologia cultural é evidentemente mais interdisciplinar do que a ciência folclorística.

ABSTRACT

The relationship between literary folklore and cultural anthropology could be defined by the following equation: what literary folklore is on a micro level, cultural anthropology is on a macro level. In fact, for both the polyvalence of the object, which is man, is essential.

²⁰ Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm differentiated between literary folkloristics and poetry, which corresponds to Jolles' differentiation between simple and art forms. This can be expressed with the following equation: literary folklore vs. poetry (Grimm) equals simple forms vs. literature (Jolles)

With the new American folkloristics the levels of texture and context have been inevitably attached to the text. Ever since both levels have been creating together a folkloric event and the category of man in literary folklore cannot be avoided. Due to its place in philological as well as in social sciences, literary folklore understands its mission in a congruent union of methods of both fields.

Cultural anthropology is not just another name for ethnology, nor is it identical with it in terms of contents, but it is a broader term, possibly suitable as a common name for ethnology, folkloristics and some other close scientific fields. Such a broad concept of cultural anthropology is of course even more interdisciplinary than folkloristics itself.