

Yugoslav Oral Lyric, Primarily in Serbo-Croatian

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In spite of structural differences, Yugoslav oral lyric represents a unified whole in its genesis. For Yugoslavs, as well as other peoples, lyric song was the first poetic form in their aspirations toward human culture. When their ancestors immigrated to the Balkan Peninsula, they already had a well developed tradition of oral lyric that was rich and varied. From that period—the sixth and seventh centuries—until our own, under the influence of the new climate and the oral poetry of neighboring peoples, new lyric genres arose while others died out.

The first direct indications about lyric song among the South Slavs are from the sixth- and seventh-century historical writings of the Greek Procopius and the Byzantine Theophylactus Simocattes, respectively. In a tenth-century treatise against the Bogomils, the priest Kozma criticizes his fellow Slavs for preferring pagan songs and stories to Christian prayers. The *Letopis popa Dukljanina* [*Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja*], a detailed work drawing on folk traditions in general, is from the twelfth century, while from the thirteenth we have the *Žitije svetoga Save* [*Life of St. Sava*] of the monk Teodosije, which speaks of songs in the court of Nemanja. In 1487 Juraj Šižgorić of Šibenik mentions particular oral lyric genres: laments as well as wedding, love, dance, and work songs. He not only describes the songs but also compares them to the most outstanding creations of Greek and Latin lyric, affirming that they do not in any way yield place to the songs of Sappho, Catullus, Propertius, and Tibullus (among others), but even surpass them.

In 1497 the Italian writer Rogeri de Pacienza recorded what is, in my opinion, the first oral lyric song in the folk traditions of Yugoslavia. It is the *bugarštica* about Despot Đurađ and Duke Janko that was sung in the small town of Gioia del Colle in southern Italy, where settlers from the Balkan Peninsula sought refuge from the Turkish invasion. In addition to the poems of Džore Držić, Šiško Menčetić, and other Dubrovnik writers, Nikša Ranjina also included in his miscellany of 1507 a number of oral lyrics, of which three are songs of praise and one is a wedding song. In

about 1555 the Croatian writer Petar Hektorović recorded six folk songs, three of which are lyric. The first Macedonian lyric songs were taken down by the archpriest Sylvester of the Latin Church in the sixteenth century. The Slovene Primož Trubar recorded a New Year's song in 1575. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries many other recordings appeared, including entire collections of oral song, both lyric and narrative. On the Adriatic coast we find the Dubrovnik and Gulf of Kotor manuscripts and in the interior two manuscripts from Slavonska Požega and the famous Erlangen manuscript, which contains 217 songs, only six of which are not folk productions (but were still composed under the influence of folk lyric). The Erlangen manuscript songs, which were recorded around 1720 by an anonymous collector, are mostly lyric.

The systematic recording of oral lyric and, of course, of epic songs began in the nineteenth century and is closely linked with the name of Vuk Karadžić. In Vienna in 1814 he published 100 lyric songs in his *Mala prostonarodnja slavensko-srpska pjesnarica* [*Little Book of "Slavensko-srpski" Popular Songs*] and in 1815 another 104 lyric songs in his *Narodna srpska pjesnarica* [*Serbian Folk Song Book*]. Thereafter, lyric songs were published as follows: over 700 in his Leipzig edition of 1824, about 800 (including some narrative songs) in the first volume of his classic Vienna edition of 1841, and 715 (mostly lyric) in the fifth volume of the State edition of 1898 from his manuscripts. The Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts made available the rest of Vuk's manuscript lyric corpus in two volumes (1 and 5) in 1973 and 1974. His entire published collection comes to over 2500 lyric songs.

About the same time, many others, some of whom were inspired by Vuk's activity, began to record folk songs. In Croatia the forerunner of collecting was the Zagreb bishop Maksimilijan Vrhovac, who sent a circular to the Catholic clergy urging them to record folk songs. The collections of Mato Topalović, Luka Ilić-Oriovčanin, and many others appeared, including the ten-volume *Hrvatske narodne pjesme* [*Croatian Folk Songs*], which was published by the Matica Hrvatska between 1896 and 1942. Toward the beginning of the nineteenth century, Slovene folk songs were being collected by the Slovene Society in Graz. In 1839 Stanko Vraz published the collection of Slovene folk songs *Narodne pjesni ilirske . . .* [*Illyrian Folk Songs . . .*]. Macedonian folk songs in the nineteenth century were recorded and/or published by Vuk Karadžić (1815, 1821, 1822), Viktor Ivanovič Grigorovič (1848), and Stefan I. Verković (1860). With the assistance of the Zagreb bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer, a large collection of Macedonian folk songs, chiefly lyric, made by the brothers Dimitrija and Konstantin Miladinov, was published in Zagreb in 1861. Massive collections of Macedonian folk literature were made by the

Macedonians Kuzman A. Šapkarev and Marko K. Cepenkov.¹ In Montenegro lyric songs were recorded by Vuk Karadžić's associates Vuk Popović and Vuk Vrčević, who himself published part of the folk literature he collected. In Bosnia and Herzegovina Bogoljub Petranović published a large collection of lyric songs in 1867, which was followed by Ljubušak Mehmed-beg Kapetanović's collection of folk literature in 1888. Interest in collecting lyric song continued into the twentieth century and did not cease even after the Second World War. In some regions, however, such activity has run its course while in others it has only begun in a systematic fashion.

The fundamental traits of the approximately 100,000 Yugoslav lyric songs recorded to date are obvious. Most evident is their changing character, the result of their movement in time and space. Another is the presence of set stylistic devices and compositional patterns such as fixed beginnings and endings, descriptions, similes, metaphors, metonymy, stock epithets and numbers, traditional poetic diction, and other expressive features, all of which contribute to the collective character of oral lyric poetry. Yet another trait is a pagan sense of life, which is especially striking in ritual, ceremonial, and mythological songs. The variety of subject matter, another salient characteristic of this genre, makes it possible to classify it generally according to the following categories: ritual, ceremonial, religious, work, love, family, and patriotic songs.

Ritual Songs

Ritual songs accompanied seasonal changes and can be classified as winter, spring, and summer songs. Winter songs (*koledarske pesme*, New Year's songs) were sung toward the end of December and beginning of January in celebration of the sun's return from its southern solstitial point. The charm of these archaic songs lies in the fact that they reflect an ancient culture in the form of primordial concepts, beliefs, and feelings. The folk singer believed that nature was governed by good and evil spirits who could be appeased by sacrifice, ritual, and song. Deities were anthropomorphic, picturesque, and alive. The sun was extolled as a human with a mother who was concerned about his long journeys through the heavens. The new moon complained, for example, that witches were eating him. The ancient New Year rite with its songs was preserved in many Yugoslav regions in the nineteenth century. Songs varied according to area, but the wish for family prosperity was a feature common to all of them. In one example from a typical livestock-breeding area, the desire is

¹ For a detailed discussion of collecting and other aspects of Macedonian folk lyric, see the article by Tome Sazdov in the present volume.

expressed that there be an increase in animals (Karadžić 1881: No. 189):

Krave ti se istelile,
sve volove vitoroge;
kobile se izdrebile,
sve konjice putonoge;
ovce ti se izjagnjile,
sve ovčice svilorune.

[May your cows have calves,
all of them oxen with twisted horns;
may the mares have foals,
all of them ponies with white socks;
may your sheep have lambs,
all of them lambs with silky fleece.]

The New Year was often conceived of as the arrival of the new, young sun, which in fact represented the pagan light deity, portrayed in these songs as a male infant on horseback showering gold on houses. Some songs of this type underwent ecclesiastical influence, but the pagan elements are harmoniously blended with Christian ones as, for example, in “*Jordan teče*” [“The Jordan Is Flowing”] (Nedić 1969:No. 2), in which there is a boat floating in a river and carrying the mother of God and her divine child. Older elements can be discerned further on in the song as the old boat and good fortune are depicted: “Od milosti, od radosti, / šajka mu se poljuljuje, / zlatno veslo odsjajuje” [“From good will, from joy, / the boat rocks gently for him, / its golden oar is gleaming”]. This song from eastern Serbia is reminiscent of verses from the poetry of the Russian Sergej Esenin (Sergey Jesenin), who was perhaps inspired by the Russian counterparts of this type, or else the correspondence is due to chance.

Christmas songs are in actuality Christianized ancient New Year’s songs. In many of them we find the early refrain *koledo*, which clearly points to their origin. The basic characteristics of New Year’s songs are also present in them: rejoicing over the sun’s rebirth and the desire for prosperity in the coming year. We see in them also the imagery of ancient song, most often the golden door, an early symbol of Slavic New Year poetry: “Božić, Božić bata, / nosi kitu zlata, / da pozlati vrata . . .” [“Christmas, Father Christmas, / bears a twig of gold, / so he can gild the door . . .”] (Karadžić 1881:No. 194). Christmas songs are enriched by elements from other genres.

Epiphany songs (*bogojavljenjske* or *vodičarske pesme*) had lost their ancient symbolism by the time they were recorded. In the Christianized versions of these songs, preserved mainly in Macedonia and Kosovo, there is a belief that on the eve of Epiphany the heavens open and wishes are granted. John’s Day songs (*jovanjske pesme*) are linked with the feast of St. John the Baptist in January and their motifs deal generally with familial

relations. Wolf songs (*vučarske pesme*) were not sung on a specific day, but rather during the winter season when men went from house to house with a stuffed wolfskin and sang songs to assure that in that year the wolf “ne dođe s planine” [“would not come from the mountain”] and “da ne kolje ovčice” [“that he would not kill the lambs”] (Bovan 1980:No. 26). Winter ritual songs do not have a wealth of motifs nor have all subtypes been preserved to the same extent; New Year’s and Christmas songs are the most numerous. The fundamental trait of winter songs is the wish for prosperity in the coming year, a feature that shows clearly that they are based on belief in the magical power of words and ritual actions.

Spring songs, which have been recorded more extensively and are richer in motifs and expression than winter songs, celebrate the new sun’s beneficial effect on nature. Songs of early rising (*ranilačke pesme*) praise the awakening of nature. One of the finest, from Vuk’s collection, sings of the little deer that daybreak finds at the water’s edge: “rogom vodu mućaše, / a očima bistraše” [“with his antlers he muddied the waters, / and with his eyes he made them clear”] (Karadžić 1881:No. 199). Jeremiah songs (*jeremije*), sung on the feast of St. Jeremiah, appeared in a ritual context for driving away snakes. Their attributes were derived from an ancient pagan deity, a protector of snakes, and transferred to the Christian St. Jeremiah, who, according to Biblical legend, was a tamer of snakes. Young men performed the ritual and maidens sang the songs. A single motif—that the serpents should disappear into the sea—was repeated from song to song. In early spring, plowmen’s songs (*ratarske pesme*), or Mark’s Day songs (*markovdanske pesme*), were sung on the feast of St. Mark the Apostle for the protection of plowmen. When the ritual was lost, the songs became associated with the folk hero Marko Kraljević mostly as love songs, and it is difficult to recognize them as ritual songs.

Lazar Day songs (*lazaričke pesme*) have survived the longest in the eastern Yugoslav regions of Kosovo, Metohija, and Macedonia. Even today they are sung on Lazar’s Saturday (Willow Day) in the Mount Sar region of Macedonia. They have retained a pagan feeling for life, in addition to expressing good wishes to particular members of the family. A song recorded in the Vranje region deserves to be cited in full: “Igliče venče nad vodu cveta; / nad vodu cveta, nad vodu vene; / nad vodu vene, nad vodu spada” [“The little primrose wreath blooms over the water; / it blooms over the water, withers over the water; / it withers over the water, falls over the water”] (Nedić 1969:No. 19). Another, from the area of Prizren, is as follows (Bovan 1980:No. 40):

Grkalo [j]e grliče,
u svilene pelene,
u šarene povoje,
u strebrne kolepke.

[The little turtledove was cooing,
in silken swaddling bands,
in motley swaddling clothes,
in silver cradles.]

On the Sunday after Lazar's Saturday, on Palm Sunday, maidens led a round dance and sang Palm Sunday songs (*pesme na Cveti*). One such song from Kosovo is the following (Bovan 1980:No. 79):

Bela vila grad gradila,
grad gradila sa tri vrata:
prva vrata od dukata,
druga vrata od pozlata,
treća vrata od bisera.

[The white fairy was building a town,
was building a town with three gates:
the first gate was made of ducats,
the second gate was made of gold,
the third gate was made of pearl.]

Easter songs (*uskršnje*, or *veligdanske pesme*), rich in love and family motifs, were best preserved in the south of Yugoslavia. One song from Kosovo cannot be omitted (Bovan 1980:No. 82):

Jeleno, Solun devojko,
Ne diži glavu visoko,
dosta si sama visoka:
slika ti Solun dovaća,
i solunačke ofčare!

[Jelena (Helen), Salonika maiden,
Don't hold your head high,
you're tall enough as it is:
your image reaches out to all of Salonika,
and to all Salonika shepherds!]

George's Day songs (*đurđevačke pesme*) are associated with the ancient ritual dedicated to the pagan protector of vegetation, animals, and water who has been Christianized by linking the the celebration to St. George. These songs express the desire that the power of nature that has been renewed should be transferred to humans through vegetation and water. Their basic characteristic is a powerfully expressed sense of total identification of man and nature. Magic plays an important part in them, as, for example, in this song from Kosovo (Bovan 1980:No. 109):

Đurđev danče, opet nam dođi,
ali mene ovako ne nađi,
već udatu ili isprošenu,

ili majci pod zemljicom crnom!

[Dear George's Day, come to us again,
but don't find me like this,
but rather either married or spoken for,
or else beneath dear black mother earth!]

Ascension songs (*spasovske pesme*) disappeared quite early. Vuk Vrčević recorded the surviving remnants of this tradition in Budva and sent them to Vuk Karadžić, who included them in the already-completed text of his first volume of folk songs on the basis of their aesthetic quality and antique character. Two of them recall the ancient myth of the abduction of Persephone, while the third is poetically the most refined: a maiden on an island notices something moving along the shore and does not know whether it is a falcon or a young man. If she knew it were a young man, she would run barefoot to him. The feeling in this song is situated somewhere between dream and reality.

Queens' songs (*kraljičke pesme*) were sung seven weeks after Easter on Pentecost. They have survived best in the Krajina, the former military march between Austria and Ottoman Turkey. Their refrain *ljeljo, le-jo, lejlo* points to the great antiquity of these songs, but its meaning is unclear. Their ancient character is also attested by scenes of *vilas*, or fairies, in a round dance (Karadžić 1881:No. 183), about a land with two suns (Karadžić 1881:No. 176), and scenes which appear to have been taken from the magic tale (Karadžić 1881:No. 167): the threshing floor is woven with gold, a heap of pearls has been scattered over it, and a flock of doves has alighted on the heap. The Middle Ages has also left its mark on these songs (Karadžić 1881:No. 168): "u tri nova grada, / tri sindžira roblja" ["in three new towns, / three chains of slaves"]. Some queens' songs developed a number of love motifs which resulted in brief graphic descriptions, sometimes humorous in nature.

Summer songs are few in number and subtype. The best preserved among summer calendar songs are those of John's Day (*ivanjske pesme*), sung near bonfires at the time of the summer solstice on the eve of the feast of St. John (June 24). Clearly erotic in content and therefore banned by the Church, they were first published in the Kajkavian dialect toward the middle of the eighteenth century. In addition to rain-making songs (*dodolske pesme*), others unconnected with particular calendar festivals are crossbearer songs (*krstonoške pesme*), which are nothing more than Christianized rain-making songs. Both groups were sung when crops were threatened by drought. The ritual consisted in the pouring of water on the rain-making girls (*dodole*, and variant forms). Maidens or little girls dressed in leaves and flowers sang songs in which they implored "da zarosi sitna rosa" ["that tiny dew would moisten the land"] and that beneficial rain would fall. The same motif is dominant in all such songs: clouds

competing with the procession of *dodole*, accompanied by the refrain *oj dodo, oj dodole*. The monotony of these songs is broken in a song about the hero who “nosi sablju u zubima, / nosi kišu u očima” [“carries a sword between his teeth, / carries the rain in his eyes”] (Nedić 1969:No. 34). Crossbearer songs took their verses from rain-making songs but added the Christian refrain “Gospodi pomiluj” [“Lord have mercy”].

In ritual lyric songs we find ancient beliefs and the magic power of the word. The poetic utterance is merged with ritual action, music, and dance, with primeval syncretism having survived longer in them than in any other group of songs. In New Year’s songs the wish for prosperity in the coming year is expressed, while in spring songs we find cheerfulness and joy because of the wealth of nature and the beauty of life. These songs display the greatest variety, a veritable treasure house of motifs, and a world of beautiful imagery.

Ceremonial Songs

Ceremonial songs were associated with the most significant events in a person’s life. The best preserved are wedding songs, toasts, laments, and lying-in songs. In his dictionary under the entry *Babine*, Vuk described an early custom that lasted for a week when during the night neighbors and members of the household “čuvaju babine” [“observe the custom of lying-in”] and sing songs for the occasion (Karadžić 1818:col. 15): “Pored nje je bešičica, drva šimšira, / u bešici muško čedo, zlatna jabuka” [“Next to her is a little cradle, of boxwood, / in the cradle a male infant, a golden apple”] (Karadžić 1898:No. 272), or “Trepetala trepetljika, puna bisera, / pod njom sjedi snaha naša, sina rodila” [“The aspen quivered, laden with pearls, / beneath it sits our sister-in-law, she has borne a son”] (Karadžić 1898:No. 273).

Wedding songs were sung only in the context of the wedding ceremony, which survived the longest in patriarchal milieus. Singing accompanied all the ceremonial actions of this event from the moment that parents decided to marry off their son and during the wedding until the young bride was visited for the first time. There is a difference in emotional tone between songs sung at the bride’s home and those sung at the groom’s. The former are melancholy, some of them even laments, whereas the latter are merry and replete with bright imagery and *joie de vivre*. Most wedding songs can be characterized by smoothness of expression and an indirect representation of feelings. Also striking are their fixed poetic diction, polished language, powerful imagery, and harmonious blending of music and verse. Thematic diversity and wealth of poetic devices make this one of the finest genres in the oral lyric tradition.

The bright colors of the imagery are often highlighted by epithets, similes, metaphors, symbols, and even hyperbole at times. Poetic details are taken to some extent from the world of mythology, but most often from animal and plant life. Images of the unreal are borrowed from mythological and ritual songs, and abound in elements taken from the various stages in man's development. The basic characteristic of these songs at the courtship stage is the competition between two choirs, one that attacks in the name of the groom and the other that defends itself on the bride's behalf. There is defiance throughout until the conciliating verse "Dever će doći, venac doneti" ["The best man will come, he will bring the wreath"]. There are songs urging the maiden to run off if the young man is not her match, and the youth not to look at her clothing and adornments but rather her figure and face, with which he will spend a lifetime. The songs sung between the engagement and the actual wedding ceremonies reflect the anxiety of the committed maiden as she anticipates her new life: she asks a bird whether her future in-laws are happy about her arrival in her new home (Karadžić 1881:No. 11). On that occasion the girl would prepare wedding gifts; the corresponding songs depict her feelings vividly, from her secret sighing—usually symbolized in the image of a melancholy flower—to her loud wailing, all of which is most typical of songs from Kosovo. Such reactions are understandable since the girl often did not see her intended until just before the wedding.

The songs of the actual wedding day follow the couple from the time of their initial preparations until their departure to the marriage bed, and songs to wedding guests are sung to the *kum* [marriage witness], *stari svat* [chief wedding guest or guest of honor], *barjaktar* [standard-bearer], and *vojvoda* [leader, in charge of duties at the wedding]. These exhilarating songs seem to have just been taken from the lips of the wedding choirs, yet they are, in fact, scenes from ancient times and very close in style to mythological songs. All humor vanishes from them as soon as they focus on the bride's separation from her parents' home. Her brothers implore the sun in these words: "Lakše, polakše, sunašce jarko, / dok nam se seja s rododrom izljubi, / s rododrom izljubi, s majkom podeli!" ["More slowly, more slowly, dear bright sun, / until our dear sister and family have kissed each other, / have kissed each other, and she has parted from her mother!"] (Nedić 1969:No. 58). When they deliver their sister to the groom, they say to him (Karadžić 1881:No. 55):

Mlad mladoženja, ružo rumena,
predadosmo ti struk ruzmarina!
Ako uvene struk ruzmarina,
tvoja sramota naša grehota;
često zalivaj struk ruzmarina,
da ne uvene struk ruzmarina.

[Young groom, ruddy rose,
 we handed over to you a stalk of rosemary!
 If the stalk of rosemary withers,
 your disgrace will be our shame;
 water the stalk of rosemary often,
 so the stalk of rosemary does not wither.]

After these sad lines, songs are sung about the groom (Bovan 1980:No. 189):

Ajd' poodi, kume i starejko,
 moli vi se mladi mladoženja:
 konja jaše, konj mu poigrava,
 sablju veše, sablja mu se smeje,
 sama mu se uzda zauzdava,
 puca kopča, puca mu grooču.

[Let's go, marriage witness and chief wedding guest,
 the young groom entertains you:
 he rides his horse, his horse is frisky,
 he girds on his sword, his sword is laughing,
 his horse is bridled on its own,
 his buckle is snapping, his buttons are bursting with laughter.]

In this song the groom's internal state is deftly dramatized. There is an entire series of songs for the wedding guests' journey from the bride's home to the groom's. In one such song a three-year snowfall glistens and in the midst of it the pagan iris blooms: "svi svatovi peruniku beru, / ne bere je Pavle mladoženja, / već on igra konja do neveste" ["all the wedding guests are picking irises, / Pavle [Paul] the groom does not pick any, / but races his horse toward his bride"] (Bovan 1980: No. 256). These songs provide the most beautiful descriptions of the bride. She is portrayed as a "žuta dunja među listovima" ["yellow quince among the leaves"], but also as a golden-winged female falcon: "Ide soko vodi sokolicu, / blago majci, zlatna su joj krila" ["The falcon goes and leads away the female falcon, / happy her mother, her wings are golden"] (Karadžić 1881:No. 79). At the groom's home songs are sung about the *kum*, *stari svat*, *vojvoda*, and groom, but the bride continues to be the center of interest. The songs deal very discreetly with the morning following the wedding night. As in love songs, so too in wedding songs similes and metaphors are chosen with care.

Wedding and love songs in the Štokavian dialect are the most beautiful in the Serbo-Croatian-language oral lyric tradition. There are also a good number of wedding songs in the Čakavian and Kajkavian dialects. The Macedonian wedding song recalls a former period in which the bride was bought; there are thus dark forebodings in such songs, with the bride viewing her new home as a formidable prison and her ring as fetters; there are likewise songs that depict marriage as the uprooting of a

cherry tree and the destiny of the bride as drowning in the sea. Slovenes also had a highly developed tradition of lyric wedding song, but the ceremonies were to a greater extent of the Central European type, and marriage was based on freedom of choice in the selection of partners. Wedding songs of the Slovenes are joyful and at times even humorous. Most of them are in dialogue form.

Toasts were performed at weddings, *Slavas* (Serbian family feasts honoring family patron saints), and other solemn occasions. The first recordings of such texts from Hvar, Korčula, and the Gulf of Kotor region preserve early pictures of the life of the nobility, as, for example, in the following sixteenth-century text (Pantić 1964:41):

Naš gospodin poljem jizdi,
 Jizda da mu je.
 Na glavi mu sfilan klobuk,
 Sinca da mu je.
 U ruci mu zlatne knjige,
 Družba da mu je,
 Prid njim sluga pisan poje,
 Na čast da mu je.

[Our master rides along the field,
 Well may he ride.
 Upon his head a silken hat,
 To give him shade.
 In his hand golden books,
 To keep him company,
 Before him a servant sings a song,
 To honor him.]

In one poem from Valtazar Bogišić's manuscripts, we find a playing with adjectives:

Ivan mi je malahan,
 konju mi je dragahan,
 zato mu je dragahan,
 er je konju lagahan.

[Ivan (John) is small,
 he is dear to his horse,
 the reason he is dear to him,
 is that he is light on his horse.]

A large number of cheerful and witty wedding toasts have been collected in Croatia and Slovenia. Mostly toasts for the Slava have been recorded among the Serbs. Originally the Slava was intended for the protector of the land on which one lived, with Christian details interspersed later in the old poems. Most toasts were made for the head of the household (Bovan

1980:No. 303):

U čije se zdravlje vino pije
sve mu zdravo i veselo bilo,
rodilo mu vino i pšenica,
i po kući sve muška dečica.

[To him to whose health the wine is drunk
all health and joy,
may there be wine and wheat aplenty,
and throughout the house all little male children.]

In the region of Croatian Zagorje, favorite drinking songs of urban or aristocratic origin are not easily distinguished from toasts.

The lament is one of the oldest lyric folk genres. The description of Queen Jakvinta's lament in the *Letopis popa Dukljanina*, mentioned above, shows that traditional improvisation was a basic characteristic of this form. Besides laments sung by women, there are also some performed by men, preserved only in Montenegro. We also find laments in the oral epic songs *Ženidba Milića barjaktara* [*The Marriage of Milić the Standard-Bearer*] and *Smrt vojvode Kajice* [*The Death of Duke Kajica*] (Karadžić 1894:No. 78; 1895:No. 81, respectively). Most often a mother laments the death of a son. Less frequent are a mother's lament for a daughter, a sister's lament for a brother, and a sister-in-law's lament for a brother-in-law or father-in-law, while a wife's lament for a husband is quite rare. Besides being improvised, the lament can be characterized by its indirect quality, strong emotion, imagery, and sonority. Its classic verse line is the octosyllable with a four-syllable refrain.² Laments for a young man or maiden are tender and evoke especially strong emotions. Vuk Karadžić recorded and published some of these, while others were collected after the Balkan Wars and the two World Wars. There are laments composed in imitation of the folk form by such writers as Petar II Petrović Njegoš in his *Gorski vijenac* [*The Mountain Wreath*] and Mihailo Lalić in his short stories. *Slova*, strophic compositions resembling necrologies composed by literate persons, are from Slovenia.

Religious Songs

Religious songs are either ancient, containing pagan beliefs, or fairly recent, with Christian beliefs, although the latter also include those based on superstition and blindmen's songs, which arose in connection with places of worship. Mythological songs are oldest, preserving pagan elements. In

² For a different view, see Petrović 1985.

them the world is governed by sun, moon, stars, thunder and lightning, fairies (vilas) and dragons, witches, and souls of ancestors. Most often they sing of fairies. There are some songs in which the fairy is man's enemy: "Grad gradio mlad Ivane, / što je za dan sagradio, / za noć vile oborile . . ." ["Young Ivan (John) was building a town, / what he built during the day, / the fairies toppled during the night . . ."] (*HNP* 1909:No. 29). In others, however, she helps man by preparing the maiden's gifts (*HNP* 1909:No. 34) or is instrumental in making a maiden beautiful (Vuk 1881: No. 224). There are still others about fairies and maidens who rival one another in work or in beauty, and in which the girl is the victor (*HNP* 1909:No. 33). There are few recorded songs about dragons, most of them telling of a maiden's abduction by a dragon. Also few in number are those about the sun and the moon, the texts of which are unclear. There are some about the marriage of the moon and lightning that seem to have borrowed from wedding songs. Heavenly bodies in such songs appear as members of large families: the morning star is the moon's sister, and the sun too has a sister, about whom there are a number of songs. Songs based on superstition are mostly moral-didactic in character, reflecting the morality of patriarchal man. The transmigration of souls appears in others (*HNP* 1909:No. 62): the maiden Janja turns into a mountain ash; a shepherd cuts off one of its branches and makes a flute, but when he plays it, Janja's song is heard instead of music from the flute. There are other examples about a maiden's transformation into an apple, a fairy, or the like, and also about her enchanting eyes and how she charms a dragon with valerian.

Christian songs originated under the influence of sermons, the Bible, frescoes, and icons, but a large part in their formation was played by ecclesiastics, monastic students, and Church services. Songs composed by priests were frequently published, but were not accepted by the folk and so did not enter the folk tradition. The folk adapted Christian motifs to its views in the spirit of traditional oral lyric. In the song "*Molitva k Bogorodici*" ["Prayer to the Mother of God"] (Karadžić 1898: No. 246), there are numerous folklore elements: angels take to heaven flowers that have sprung up from a drop of the crucified Christ's blood. Songs about Christ's birth and baptism are Christian only in their basic motifs. In "*Opet san prečiste Gospođe*" ["Another Song about the Dream of the Virgin Most Chaste"], we are told how Christ was born on Mount Romanija, how Simeon the shepherd wrapped him in beech leaves, and that when it dawned, shining swaddling clothes appeared on the infant's body (Karadžić 1898:No. 227). In a Macedonian song Christians get St. Nicholas drunk (Nedić 1969:No. 129), while in another there is greater blending of Christian and pagan beliefs (Nedić 1969:No. 126). Moral-didactic songs are arrayed in Christian garb because in the patriarchal village community the source of moral concepts and principles was Christian religion. The

fundamental teaching about renunciation of this world's satisfactions in favor of the blessings of the other world is expressed in the song "*Šta da čini, ko misli božij biti*" ["What He Who Wishes To Be Godlike Must Do"] (Karadžić 1881:No. 213): "U dobru se ne ponosi, / a u zlu se ne poništi, / na tuđe se ne lakomi" ["Take no pride in your good deeds, / and do not destroy yourself in evil deeds, / do not covet what is others'"], for when death finds a person, he cannot take anything with him "već skrštene bele ruke / i pravedna svoja dela" ["except folded white hands / and his righteous deeds"]. There are also songs about the expiation of sinners in hell (Karadžić 1898:No. 222; 1881:No. 207). Blind men's songs were not often recorded and are not aesthetically pleasing in their entirety, but some passages are poetically successful. The set verses of these songs have endowed them with a characteristic structure. Generally there are two parts, one in which alms are requested and another in which thanks are rendered for the gift. The first section is usually touching, particularly when the blind man describes his fate. Gifted singers of such songs were inspired to tell of their dark days without sun, their nights without moonlight, and their wanderings from pillar to post.

Work Songs

Work songs were generally sung in conjunction with particular tasks. Some, however, extol work in general and man's relationship to it. At one time they must have been richer in their motifs and many have been forgotten. Songs about making olive oil, mentioned by Šižgorić in the fifteenth century, have disappeared. Others also have vanished as certain tasks became outmoded, but new songs were created as other types of work arose. Work songs in general are not so old as was once believed. Vuk Karadžić was the first to make a collection of them. The most commonly recorded type of harvest songs were those in which young men and maidens competed in reaping and in which the girls as a rule triumphed. The song "*Moba*" ["Farming Work Group"], from Vuk's collection, is especially interesting (Karadžić 1881:No. 247):

Na kraj, na kraj, moja silna mobo,
na kraju je voda i devojka,
voda ladna a devojka mlada,
vodu pijte, devojku ljubite.

[Get to the end, the end, my strong work group,
at the end there are water and a maiden,
cool water and a young maiden,
drink the water, kiss the maiden.]

Harvest songs are light-hearted, and there are also humorous ones in which lazy workers are ridiculed: “Naval’ mobo, ja i moja žena, / žena spava a ja vodu nosim” [“Get to it, work group, like me and my wife, / my wife sleeps while I carry water”] (Karadžić 1881:No. 248). Songs with similar motifs have been recorded in the Kajkavian and Čakavian dialects, and in Slovenian and Macedonian as well.

These songs provide a key to the way work was understood. In “*Kad žanju Turcima u nedelju*” [“When They Harvest for the Turks on Sunday”] (Karadžić 1881:No. 246), the saints want to punish the Christians for working the spahi’s field on a Sunday, but the Virgin takes their side, saying: “jer vlasima Turci ne veruju, / a pšenica težatka ne čeka” [“Turks do not share Christian beliefs, / and wheat cannot wait for a working day”]. Christians often worked without pay on the land of agas and begs. There are songs in which maidens prefer being ill to working in the beg’s field, where they do not obtain even a crust of bread or drop of water. Macedonian songs are quite explicit in this regard.

Love Songs

Love songs are a very old genre. As early as the tenth century they are referred to as the devil’s songs by Kozma the priest, and as wild songs by Teodosije the monk in the thirteenth century. During the course of several centuries, tens of thousands of lyric love songs were recorded in Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian, and Macedonian. Many of them have retained ancient elements from patriarchal communities. An archaic flavor is evident in the songs “*Ne otimlji, već me mami*” [“Do Not Carry Me Off, but Entice Me Instead”] (Karadžić 1881:No. 505) and in “*Žalost za dragim*” [“Longing for Her Beloved”] (Karadžić 1881:No. 556). Images of feudal times also appear: for example, castle gates, falcons flying above the town, and the arrow as the hero’s weapon. Dreams are also frequent in such songs, and their charm lies in their interpretation (Karadžić 1881:Nos. 639, 640). However, most elements in their world are from life in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. At the head of this genre, and not without good reason, Vuk published “*Riba i djevojka*” [“The Fish and the Maiden”] (Karadžić 1881:No. 285), which conveys the general notion that feelings of love should not be disclosed but cannot be concealed either: the fish is the symbol of secrecy (“*ćuti kao riba*” [“be as silent as a fish”]), but the fish here does indeed speak, for the truth is profound and must be told.³

In the songs of this patriarchal setting, the ideal qualities of the

³ For another interpretation of this song, see Miletich 1985:154, 159-60.

young man are health and strength; the maiden implores God to give her, for example, a handsome hero with a dark moustache and a broad neck. Among the ideal characteristics of the maiden in this society are meekness and shyness. The song “*Srpska djevojka*” [“The Serbian Maiden”] portrays her well (Karadžić 1881: No. 599): “Nit sam luda, nit odviše mudra, / nit sam vila da zbijam oblake, / već devojka da gledam preda se” [“Neither am I foolish, nor overly wise, / nor am I a fairy who can drive clouds together, / but rather a maiden with eyes lowered”]. The maiden’s naiveté was ardently sought after as well (Karadžić 1881:Nos. 430, 457). In a Moslem urban milieu a maiden is depicted as a harem beauty. In “*Ljuba Alagina*” [“Alaga’s Wife”] Omer’s treasure is praised (Karadžić 1881:No. 384):

Kojeno je u kavezu raslo;
nit je vidlo sunca i meseca,
niti znade na čem žito rodi,
na čem žito, na čem rujno vino.

[Which grew in a cage;
neither did it see sun or moon,
nor does it know where wheat comes from,
where wheat comes from, where red wine comes from.]

In such songs the ideal lover is portrayed in contrasting images (Karadžić 1881: No. 392):

Star je vojno trula javorina,
vjetar duva, javorinu ljulja,
kiša ide, javorina trune;
mlad je vojno ruža napupila:
vjetar duva, ruža se razvija,
a od kiše biva veselija,
sunce sija, ona rumenija.

[An old husband is a rotten big maple,
the wind blows, it rocks the maple,
the rain falls, the maple crumbles;
a young husband is a rose in bloom:
the wind blows, the rose opens up,
and because of the rain it grows merrier,
the sun shines, it grows redder.]

The contrast is even sharper in “*Dragi i nedragi*” [“The Lover and the Unwanted Lover”] (Karadžić 1881:No. 310), in which the maiden entreats her mother:

Ne daj mene, majko, za nedraga;
volim s dragim po gori hoditi,

glog zobati, s lista vodu piti,
 studen kamen pod glavu metati,
 neg s nedragim po dvoru šetati,
 šećer jesti, u svili spavati.

[Do not give me to a man I don't love, mother;
 I prefer to walk through the woods with my lover,
 eat the hawthorn berry, drink water from a leaf,
 place a cold stone under my head,
 rather than stroll through a court with a man I don't love,
 eat sugar, sleep in silk.]

In Yugoslav love lyric, motifs are rich and varied, but feelings and moods are not complex; they are only somewhat more so in songs that originated in coastal towns and in Moslem urban milieus. The numerous love songs available can best be surveyed in an examination of love in its different stages.

In songs about lovers' meeting for the first time, the girl usually falls in love as soon as she sees the young man. Such encounters take place in a natural setting: at the waterside, in a pasture, a cultivated field, a meadow, a wood, and, in Moslem songs, in a narrow street. Love is normally declared indirectly: the young man places flowers on a sleeping maiden; the maiden makes a wreath and casts it into the water so that it is carried to her beloved; the youth throws an apple at the girl; or he breaks her jug at a spring; and so on. In the song "*Ne misli se ubiti, već ljubiti*" ["They Do Not Intend to Kill Each Other, but Love Each Other"] (Karadžić 1881: No. 487), the young man throws a hawthorn berry at the maiden and she throws a sloe at him.

Yearning for each other's presence after the first meeting takes a number of forms. The youth wishes to find out if his beloved is thinking of him (Karadžić 1881:No. 600). The maiden sits at the window for days on end, looks at the blue sea, and waits for her lover (Karadžić 1881:No. 352), while in another song she asks the maple to lower its branches and lift her up that she might see her beloved in the distance (Karadžić 1881: No. 353). In Moslem songs love's yearning is stated with greater candor. In "*Molitva djevojčina*" ["The Maiden's Prayer"] (Karadžić 1881:No. 354), she asks God to give her a crystal needle to sew a quilt of blossoms so she can cover herself and her young man in order to see how he sleeps. Bosnian *sevdalinke* are more complex in the feelings they depict. In some love songs longing becomes hopeless sorrow.

An entire cycle of songs deals with lover's meetings. In "*Uslišena molitva*" ["An Answer to Prayer"] (Karadžić 1881:No. 455), the lovers meet under a pine tree. When the maiden arrives at the trysting place before her lover and falls asleep, he is reluctant to awaken her and so implores God to send a breeze from the sea that will cause a small needle to fall from the pine onto his beloved's face and awaken her. Such

rendezvous can be held under a tree, in a garden, at a window, and in the house.

Obstacles to the lovers' happiness are the subject of most songs. They arise from those who are closest to the couple. In "*Dragojlo i Smiljana*" ["Dragojlo and Smiljana"] (Karadžić 1881:No. 512), when Smiljana's brothers learn of her love for Dragojlo, they build a tower and immure her. When the youth's mother proves the source of opposition to the union, the unhappy maiden curses the woman whom fate has decreed never to be her mother-in-law. "*Nesretna djevojka*" ["The Unhappy Maiden"] (Karadžić 1881:No. 609) is typical of this type of song. It deals with a maiden who returns her ring to her beloved because her family does not like him, but she begs him not to make this known:

Jer sam ja sirota nesretna devojka,
ja bosiljak sejem, meni pelen niče,
oj pelen, pelenče, moje gorko cveće!
Tobom će se moji svati nakititi,
kad me stanu tužnu do groba nositi.

[For I am an unfortunate unhappy maiden,
I sow sweet basil and wormwood springs up,
O wormwood, little wormwood, my bitter flower!
My wedding guests shall adorn themselves with you,
when they carry my wretched body to the grave.]

These songs also contain maidens' curses, which can be serious (Karadžić 1881: No. 534) or humorous (Karadžić 1881:No. 529).

The parting of lovers, usually preceded by dark forebodings, is the subject of a good number of songs. In "*Žalosni rastanak*" ["The Sad Parting"] (Karadžić 1881: No. 554), a young couple that had loved each other since childhood is prevented from marrying by a "kurva kučka Budimka" ["whorish bitch of a Buda woman"]. In another song, the maiden curses her sweetheart who was unfaithful to her and married another: "Nek se ženi, želila ga majka, / njega majka, a on devojaka!" ["Let him marry, may he never be seen by his mother again, / by his mother, and may maidens never be seen by him again!"] (Karadžić 1881:No. 356).

Some love songs are also humorous. The song "*Ajkuna i tambura*" ["Ajkuna and the Tamboura"] (Karadžić 1898:No. 381) is typical in its patriarchal mockery of the unusual behavior of a maiden:

Ajkuna se podilberila,
iz sanduka ruho prodavala,
pobačala vezak i kuđelju,
a uzela čibuk i tamburu,
čibuk pije, uz tamburu bije.

[Ajkuna became a handsome young man,

she sold clothing from a chest,
 she threw away her embroidery and hemp,
 and took a long-stemmed pipe and tamboura,
 she smokes the pipe, plucks the tamboura.]

A number of short love songs, most of which are from the region of Vojvodina, merit special treatment here. These *bećarci* were recorded as early as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They are essentially brief, witty poetic observations, predictions of definite situations, defiant thoughts, or impertinent desires. The *bećarac* compresses a short scene into two uniform verses. These songs are filled with a zestful optimism and frivolity. The thoughts and desires expressed in them are direct, displaying a new concept of life and its joys, corporeal beauty, and pleasures. In comparison with the love songs of other areas, *bećarci* express a young girl's independence from her parents as, for example, in the following song: "Mene mati i psuje i tuče, / Opet idem kud me srce vuče" ["My mother both scolds me and beats me, / I go again whither my heart draws me"] (Leskovac 1958:No. 186). Class differences are sometimes emphasized also: "Da je meni što mi srce želi: / Lepu diku i kuću veliku" ["May I have what my heart desires: / Beautiful pride and a big house"] (Leskovac 1958:No. 158). Others are quite frivolous, such as: "Garavušo, moja namigušo, / Namigušo, i srce i dušo!" ["O brunette, my coquette / O coquette, my darling (heart) and dear (soul)!"] (Leskovac 1958:No. 344); or "Oči moje k'o dve trnjnice, — / Varam lolu već dve godinice" ["My eyes are like two sloes — / I have been deceiving my ladies' man for two years"] (Leskovac 1958:No. 340); and "Drugarice, kako se gledamo / Kad na čošku jednoga čekamo?" ["My female friends, how do we watch one another / When we're waiting for some guy at the corner?"] (Leskovac 1958:No. 8). Most of the foregoing examples are woman's-voice lyrics, and are sung by girls. There are explicit men's *bećarci* such as the following: "Stao lola na četiri šora, / Lupa glavu na koju će stranu" ["The ladies' man stood at the crossroads, / He racked his brains about which way to go"] (Leskovac 1958:No. 7).

If it were necessary to single out a few of the very best love lyrics, the following would be my choices. The first is "*Radost u opominjanju*" ["The Joy of Remembering"] (Karadžić 1881:No. 564), which Vuk was very fond of and which he published time and again. It is just possible that one reason for his liking this particular song was that it reminded him of his first love. "*Čija je ono djevojka?*" ["Who Is That Maiden?"] (Karadžić 1881:No. 496) is noteworthy because of its near-iambic rhythm and suggestion of alliteration and assonance. "*Ljubavni rastanak*" ["Love's Farewell"] (Karadžić 1881:No. 553) contains the hyperbole "Što je nebo da je list hartije?" ["What are the heavens but a sheet of paper?"], which is well known in Yugoslav folk lyric and other national traditions (Vidaković-

Petrov 1985). In “*Plač za budimskom lađom*” [“Lament for the Boat of Buda”] (Karadžić 1881:No. 561), the initial verse points to the subject of this song: “Otkide se lađa od Budima grada” [“The boat tears itself away from Buda town”]. Two Bosnian-Herzegovinian songs contain great pathos and *sevdah* [lovesickness]. In one song (*HNP* 1929:No. 76), “Prvi sevdah rana pod srdašćem” [“The first sickness of love is a wound below the heart”], the second is a wound upon the heart, and the third is a wound within the heart itself; one could recover from the first two, but not from the third. In the other song (Nedić 1969:No. 219) the lyric voice plumbs the depths of the human soul, for a maiden announces that she will not marry the young man who has been courting her, but that if he should marry another, she will poison herself.

Yugoslav love lyrics were disseminated without respect for boundaries. The Bosnian *sevdalinka* was widely circulated, but always retained its original regional characteristics, among which is a marked seriousness. Simplicity and freedom of expression are the hallmarks of the Vojvodina *bećarac*. Delicacy of feeling with an admixture of sorrow is clearly present in Macedonian songs.

The oral love lyric of patriarchal communities fostered a close symbiosis of the lover and the natural environment. Psychological parallelism is the basis for comparing interior states with natural phenomena.⁴ The connection of man with nature is especially evident in the conversations between young people and nature viewed as an animate being. Characters addressing the sun, moon, and stars appear frequently.

Songs from the Bačka region are distinguished from the rest by their bold expression of love. Their poetic diction exhibits many Germanisms, there are new forms of comparison and epithets, the decasyllable is uniform, and rhyme is more frequent here than in other songs. The settings of Moslem *sevdalinke* are densely populated areas, with enclosed porches, shops, gardens, side doors, and narrow streets common in them. These songs abound in Turkisms and Arabisms and reveal a highly developed Oriental sense for colors and aromas. A characteristic feature of Kajkavian love lyric is a rather marked subjective quality, which brings it closer to learned lyric poetry. Also typical are greater freedom and directness in the expression of love's feelings, and tender language replete with diminutives. Slovene love lyric is rather similar in its subjectivism and frequent diminutives, and is often strophic and usually rhymed. Primarily patriarchal in nature, Macedonian love lyric has a good number of archaic elements, and at times is marked by a pronounced sensuousness.

⁴ See the contribution by Hatidža Krnjević in this collection for detailed discussion of this aspect of folk lyric.

Family Songs

Family songs extol love between members of a more restricted group, principally in whose circle they are sung. They also deal with relationships between members who are not blood relatives. Lullabies are included in the category of family songs, since they too are sung in this narrower group and deal with the relationship of mother to child. Similarly, songs about soldiers and migrant workers are usually understood as part of this division.

Familial relationships in patriarchal village society were created over the course of centuries and did not change rapidly until the appearance of urban culture in that milieu. This development occurred in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in those regions under the influence of more powerful Christian states, in the nineteenth century in Serbia after it won freedom from Turkish domination, and only between the two Wars in the other regions that were under Turkish sway. In areas where heroic epic song was not a particularly important genre, lyric poetry assumed the role of depicting relationships in public life. The center of such songs was close family life. Most numerous are those dealing with relationships in the narrower family context: mother and children, husband and wife, and sisters and brothers. The mother is at the heart of such songs, for she was the key member of the family. Her children turned to her in their need and she was mediatrix between them and their father. A daughter confided simply and directly first of all in her mother in all of love's tribulations and secret desires. In "*Majka i djevojka*" ["The Mother and the Maiden"] (Karadžić 1881:No. 576), as a young man makes his way through a village, a maiden asks her mother to invite him to be an overnight guest in their home, but the mother declines, saying that he will want to be served *rakia* (brandy) and supper, and sleep in a soft bed; but the girl promises to replace all that:

“Moje mu oči rakija,
moje mu lice pogača,
a bijelo lice zaslada,
rosna mu trava postelja,
vedro mu nebo pokrivač,
a moja ruka uzglavlje,
zovni ga, majko, na konak!
Zovni ga, majko, boga ti!”

["My eyes will be his rakia,
my cheek will be his round bread,
and my white face his sweetening,
the dewy grass will be his bed,
the clear sky will be his blanket,
and my arm his pillow,

invite him, mother, to be our guest overnight!
 Invite him, mother, for heaven's sake!"]

In "*Znaci dobrih djevojaka*" ["The Traits of Good Maidens"] (Karadžić 1881: No. 516), a mother advises her son what to look for in the girl he would like to marry: "Ne gledaj im skuta ni rukava, / već im gledaj hoda i pogleda: / kako l' hode, kako l' pogledaju" ["Don't look at their skirts or their sleeves, / but look at the way they walk and the way they cast a glance: / how they walk, how they cast a glance"]. Because they are overly concerned about marrying off their children to the wealthiest persons possible, mothers are often a hindrance to real love and spoil their children's chances for a happy marriage. The problem is most clearly seen in such ballads as *Smrt Omera i Merime* [*The Death of Omer and Merima*] (Karadžić 1881:Nos. 343-45). In many a song we find young wives sighing after their mothers and the happy life they led in their former homes (Karadžić 1881:No. 409):

Đevovanje, moje carovanje,
 Car ti bijah kad djevojka bijah:
 da li mi se natrag povratiti,
 umjela bih sada devovati.

[Maidenhood, my emperorship,
 I was Emperor when I was a maiden:
 if I could do it all over again,
 I would know how to be a maiden now.]

Love between brothers and sisters is lauded most tenderly. A brother is the dearest person in the world: when a maiden has no brother, she asks her mother to purchase one for her, and when sisters do not have a brother, they fashion one of silk, boxwood, and a precious stone, and feed him: "To nam jedi pa nam probesjedi" ["Eat this and begin to talk to us"] (Karadžić 1881:No. 307). Loss of a brother results in grief of the highest order. A young wife cuts off her hair to mourn her husband, disfigures her face when her brother-in-law dies, but pokes her eyes out as a sign of grief when she loses her brother. Hair grows back again, the face heals up, "Ali oči ne mogu izrasti, / niti srce za bratom rođenim!" ["But eyes cannot grow back again, / neither can a heart for a brother born!"] (Karadžić 1881:No. 304). Although most songs from a patriarchal environment portray a sister's love for her brother in the strongest terms, sometimes a young wife's instinct for founding her own family is even stronger. In such cases the betrothed or the husband takes precedence over a brother. In "*Brat i sestra*" ["The Brother and Sister"] (Karadžić 1881:No. 308), a married sister asks her brother to come and visit her, and he promises to do so when she gives birth to a son, to which she replies:

“Kad ja rodim muško čedo,
 čeda ću se nanjijati,
 jarka sunca nagledati,
 za te neću ni mariti!”

[“When I give birth to a male baby,
 I shall rock my baby to my heart’s content,
 look at the sun to my heart’s content,
 I shall not be concerned about you!”]

Similar is the song in which the wife’s relatives replace the sister as the object of a brother’s affection (Karadžić 1881:No. 299).

Songs about the relationships of sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law resemble those dealing with brothers and sisters. They show the greatest warmth of all in the entire Yugoslav folk lyric tradition. The dealings of sisters-in-law with mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law are completely different, however. The mother-in-law is almost always portrayed as the enemy of the young wife. In this regard “*Tuđa majka zla svekrva*” [“Someone Else’s Mother Makes a Bad Mother-in-law”] (Karadžić 1881:No. 420) is typical: the mother-in-law “[s] večer vodu sve proliva, / u komšiluk dovikuje, / da u dvoru vode nema” [“(s)pills out all the water in the evening, / she calls out to neighbors, / that there is no water in the courtyard”]. Songs about husbands and wives are the most humorous. They often speak of the drunken husband and the wife who is lazy or gluttonous. Songs about ideal relationships between husband and wife are rarer. One example is “*Jovan bećar i sirota djevojka*” [“Jovan (John) the Bachelor and the Orphan Maiden”] (Karadžić 1898:No. 345), in which Jovan cheers up the maiden and marries her: “Ljubiše se ne omraziše se, / umriješe, ne prekoriše se” [“They loved each other and did not hate each other, / they died, they did not reproach each other”]. In “*Ljubav muža i žene*” [“Love between Husband and Wife”] (Karadžić 1898:No. 342), a happy couple is depicted, but everyone thinks the reason for this is an herb that the wife used to cast a spell on her husband, and so the other women search for the herb in order to have their husbands love them also, but the happy wife provides them with the ingredients for a successful marriage: “Jedno bilje, docno lijeganje, / drugo bilje, rano ustajanje, / treće bilje, neodgovaranje” [“The first herb, going to bed late, / the second herb, getting up early, / the third herb, not talking back”].

According to Vuk, lullabies are “[p]jesme koje se pjevaju djeci, kada se uspavljaju” [“(s)ongs that are sung to children when they are being lulled to sleep”] (Karadžić 1881:No. 182). A mother’s deepest love is expressed in them. Many involve nature’s collaboration, as this example shows (Đurić 1958:178):

Majka Jova u ruži rodila,

ružica ga na list dočekala,
 bela vila u svilu povila,
 a pčelica medom zadojila,
 lastavica krilom pokrivala,
 nek je rumen ko ruža rumena,
 nek je bijel ko bijela vila,
 nek je radin ko pčela malena,
 nek je hitar kao lastavica.

[The mother gave birth to Jovo (Johnny) in a rose,
 the little rose welcomed him on her leaf,
 a white fairy swaddled him in silk,
 a little bee gave him honey to drink,
 a swallow covered him with her wing,
 may he be pink like the pink rose,
 may he be white like the white fairy,
 may he be hardworking like the little bee,
 may he be swift like the swallow.]

Songs about soldiers describe the sense of absence of a husband, son, or brother. The return of loved ones from military service was highly uncertain in the past. In regions under Austrian and Hungarian control, farewells are most common and the songs are filled with sorrow. Other songs tell of the difficulties of the soldier's way of life; most of these are from the Croatian Zagorje region. The largest collection of these regional songs was published by Vinko Žganec (1950). In one such song a mother asks her son when he will be back from military service (No. 148), and he replies: "Mamica ljubljena, ja si dimo dojdem, / gda bu suhi javor zelen listek pušćal" ["Beloved little mother, I shall come home, / when the dry maple is green with leaves"]. An exceptionally fine song is from the Bunjevac region (Nedić 1969:No. 298), with its felicitous comparison of a soldier serving in a foreign army: first his body grows thin like a year-old poplar, then it withers and grows yellow like hay in the fall, until finally it cracks like soil thirsting for rain. Life was also hard in areas under Venetian rule. In one of the songs on this subject, we are told how the Venetians tricked a man into serving in a galley away from his own land (Čubelić 1952:No. 153), and so Prince Ivan from Omišalj grieves for his home:

"Aj, turne moj lipi,
 lipi ter prostrani,
 kako sam te lipo,
 lipo sagradio,
 a sada ne smijem,
 blizu tebe biti,
 komu te ostavljam?"

["O, my beautiful fortress,
 beautiful and spacious,

how beautifully,
 beautifully have I built you,
 but now I am not permitted
 to be near you,
 to whom am I abandoning you?"]

More recent soldiers' songs usually deal with recruits who ask their officers to allow them to go on leave because dear young wives have been left "unloved."

Migrant-workers' songs originated in areas that men left in order to look for work abroad. Most departed from Dalmatia, Herzegovina, and Macedonia in the nineteenth century. The most moving songs deal with the worker taking leave of his family, nostalgia for his homeland while abroad, and his return home. America frequently appears in these songs as the worker's new home, but he curses it because "[s]ve ostadoše mome neudate, / sve ostadoše ljube neljubljene" ["(a)ll the maidens remained unmarried, / all the wives remained unloved"]. These verses are repeated in many songs.

Patriotic Songs

The oldest patriotic songs tell of the heroes of Kosovo and of the many freedom fighters in the uprisings and wars of later centuries. Those of more recent times are linked with the First Serbian Revolt, the Balkan Wars, the two World Wars, and the postwar period of reconstruction. In the Second World War the patriotic song evolved rapidly, but, in addition to the traditional style and verse line, it absorbed a number of elements from workers' songs from the period between the two Wars and from revolutionary-international songs.

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