Erotic as well as Comic Topics (in the Folksong)¹

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The presentation of topics which are openly erotic and show naturalised sex is considered taboos in folk environment. However, everyone who experienced a traditional wedding party, a carnival or a folk feast knows that with increasing fun and amusement increases also the frequency of obscene and erotic songs. Even those who have not experienced such events and have met the folk entertainment only on a stage of a folk festival must have noticed that the authors of humorous programmes like to present (which almost becomes a cliché) some bawdy songs, because they ensure a burst of laughter among the audience. Then it is necessary to ask, what do the erotic and the comic have in common, what is the structure of a comic image in an erotic song, and how do comic figures become a priori erotic figures, and vice versa. In order to further examine these issues, it is important to focus on a synchronic analysis of the relationship between the comic and the erotic in folksong, especially in the system of imagery and the structure of a comic image. In the present paper I will attempt to provide a short outline of the issue.

The repertoire of folksongs is immensely rich especially in regard to the comic image of the erotic, even in a broader European context. In its concept, there is a very important role of an 'erotic figure' which is almost identical to the concept of the 'comic figure', especially when dealing with comic images. The 'erotic figure' is not a character endowed with an extra sexual performance or sex organ size; it is a subject (a person,

¹⁾ In the following text I have used fragments of songs from published works, manuscripts, and from private collections of J. Blaho, B. Garaj, M. Járek, M. Rusko, V. Žideková, and from my collection. Some songs come from the manuscript of the wedding songs collection of Pavel Stopka (the archives of the Institute of Ethnology, Slovak Academy of Sciences, No. 1330). Song lyrics are presented in original Slovak dialects; the transcription respects the records of collectors.

personified animal or a thing) which stands in the centre of an erotic poetic image, and its activities, social status or physical appearance relate directly to the motifs of eroticism and sex in a specific poetical image. In the system of the erotic image of folksong, there are three relatively distinctive types of erotic figures. Considering folk universalism and multi-functionality of some motifs, some of the attributes can be shared by several types of figures.

1. The **indistinguishable type** is represented exclusively by human beings. In general, it may be whoever who is not distinguishable socially. morally or anthropologically within a closed community. His or her status is equal to other members of the community and he or she can get to the centre of an erotic image thanks to various, mostly occasional and functional contexts (such as wedding, baptizing). Above all, the aim is to confront the male and the female, which is done within the semantic sphere of sex and erotica in the poetic image. Such figures can be young men, girls, adult men, women, the old, the young, parents, children, best men, brides, and so on. The folksong shows them in the context of sexual encounter or as a reflection of their own sex organs. This type also includes figures with hidden identity, whose narrations are provided in the Ich-form, the 1st person singular (or plural). These narrators, performers of a folk song, boys, girls, husbands, wives, and so on, have no attributes of erotic figures generally. Their erotic status is accomplished by a combination of an activity performed within the context of the story and a metonymic attribute which extends, specifies, particularises and enhances the function of the main character in the general context of the poetic image. This is the moment when an indistinguishable type becomes an erotic character.

Mariša, Mariša, ňechodz do viňice, chlapci sú beťári, stáhnu nohavice.

Mariša ňedbala, do pivňice prišla, tam ju poscískali, ledvaj domov išla. Ked som ja bol maly chlapec, pásaval som telence, lahél som si do priekopy, šmýkaval som divčence.

Spí ďievča, na lavici chrápe, kocúr sa jej medzi nohy driape. Spí, spí, aňi ňepočuje, kocúr sa jej na pičke zbavuje.

Taťko, taťko, čo robíte, šak tú mamku zadusíte, ajn cvaj.

Nezadusím, nezadusím, ja si na nej oslu brúsim, ajn, cvaj.

Čakaj ma, mužíčku, na peci v kútičku. Donesem ti pičku v červeném ručníčku.

2. The distinguishable type of an erotic figure is also exclusively a human. His or her status in the closed community is defined on the basis of a reflection through which the community perceives him as 'the other' or 'strange'; most often he or she is marked by another ethnic group. This type reflects a different denomination, higher levels of economy and society, urban environment, neighbouring village community, various jobs and professions, and most of all, different ethnic groups. The status of this type of the erotic figure is semantically marked to a large degree, and therefore an attribute is not necessary for his or her image. For example, the names of specific types of ethnic groups are already marked by stereotypes, which give their bearers specific features, among others also exceptional sexual abilities. In the Slovak folksong, this type of the erotic figure can be represented by Jews and Gypsies, as well as Hungarians or Germans. Very popular figures are farmers, civil servants, preachers, organ players, monks, craftsmen, and so on. Quite often we can meet two characters within one poetic image, which enhances its erotic and poetic effects.

Išla Anča veľa duba, povedala že je hrubá, Žid sa smiav, až tak srav.

A Židovka veľa vŕbi, povedala že hu svrbí, Žid sa smiav, až tak srav,

Tej nemeckej kuchyni matal som tam Nemkyni, namatal som teplý kút, ona rečie das ist gut.

Bil gazda gazdinú po piči chabinú a gazdiná gazdu po čuráku rázgú.

A tí páni od počti, tí piglujú aj kočki. A tí páni z úradu, tí piglujú zezadu.

A tí páni od dráhi, tí piglujú moc rázi. A tí páni financi, tí to melú aj v tanci.

Ked som išiel od Prešporka sticha, videl som tam na židovke mnícha. Čože robiš na židovke, mníše? Povedal, že po latinsky píše.

3. The **carnival type** of an erotic figure is represented mainly by anthropomorphised images of animals and things, which act as humans within the carnival "upside-down world" according to Mikhail Bahtin.

In the context of an erotic image, it is principally an imitation of human sexual intercourse; or, when the comic characters are represented as sex organs, it is a grotesque imitation of activities, which are in the sensual experience of a real world of man and nature considered normal, even trivial (such as work, livelihood, blooming and other vegetative processes of the plants, etc.). In the Slovak folk song, these erotic figures are represented by a rich pool of domestic and wild animals (rabbit, weasel, bear, fox, ram and sheep, snake, lizard, cat, fish, various species of birds, etc.), various work tools (spinning wheel, spindle), other nonliving objects (pipe, pouch, bundle), but above all feminine and masculine genitals (pussy, dick, balls), and so on.

Na Čiernej hore cicinka ore, vajčurky bráná, pička poháná.

Neboj sa ti, pička, hladu, veď ťa vajka vichovajú. Konček orie, pička bráňi, vajcia choďia po žobraňí.

Kázala Anička Janičkovi, by sa jej podíval medzi nohy. Medzi nohy na kolená, či je tá kukučka operená.

Veselá som veselá celá celučičká, zarosla mi třním rit, rozmarynom pička.

> Okolo Trenčína letela cicina, pička na lopate vitajte ujčiná.

OkoloTrenčína letela cicina, kokot na lopate vitaj milý brate. The comic element comes from the anthropological basis and therefore the social aspect of a comic imagery in the folksong has a very important role. According to a French philosopher Henri Bergson (1993, 15), common use and collective habits generalize comic situations. Folk imagery is based mainly on a real life, and on personal sensual and emotional experience, and it is inseparable from the folksong. It is the authentic sensual experience which helps form the images of a folk bard of the world and of his or her own microcosm. The constant confrontation of individual experience and the surrounding world shapes poetic visions of the world. The poet provides his or her knowledge of harmony and contradictions of the ideal and the real (and the emotions shared) through images, which are subsequently kept in the collective memory. Comic imagery finds its space between the ideal vision and the poetic imagery, and personal reflection of life experience.

The philosopher Umberto Eco (1994, 97) says in his study about the comic that the comic effect can be achieved "when we break some rule (usually, but not necessarily, this rule is of lesser importance, such as social etiquette)". We can often see the violation of collective rules in the comic imagery in the folksong, but such violation is exclusively of a generally acceptable character which the community is willing to tolerate. The violation of a collective norms, projections and ideas occur in the folksong within four thematic, relatively independent areas; they are 1. ethical norms and ideals, 2. aesthetical, 3. anthropological, and 4. linguistic norms and ideals. A number of motifs have got a rather universal nature, and so they belong to more thematic areas at the same time. Moreover, there can be more mutually differentiated thematic areas, which enhance their comic effect.

The violation of ethical norms can be found in the images of complex socially structured relationships within the family (parents – children, lover – mistress, father – mother, husband – wife, father-in-law – mother-in-law, godfather – godmother, widower – widow); in relationships within the collective (men – women, boys – girls, individual – group, the young – the old); in social relationships in wider

context (the other, strangers – locals). We can also find the images of negative human qualities (stupidity, gullibility, sloth, greed, adultery, gluttony, drunkenness, especially in women, pride, gossiping, loss of virginity, lust); and frequently also the images of poor body hygiene and food desecration. Finally, this group also includes the reflections of images, which are taboo according to the social etiquette, especially sexual intercourse and excreting.

Ach, mamičko moja, to nemóže bíťi, abich ja líhala konča vašej riťi. Vi bi ste sa líbali, líbali, mne bi ste spat nedali.

> Dole Váhom voda klcká, gdosi moju milú trcká.

Išel kmoter s kmotru do húšča na hríbi, obrátel kmotričke košielku na ruby. Kmotrička, kmotrička, jako sa vám lúbi, veru lepšie kmotre, jako hladat hríbi.

> Milá, milá, ňeverím ťi, kúpim zvonček, zavesím ťi. Keď ťi buďeš druhím dávat, zvonček buďe pocengávať.

Bola bi t'i ja dala, aj za jenu korunu, až potom t'i bud'eš ved'et', čo to ja mám za huňu.

Chodí drotár po dedine, diefka nanho volala, abi jej šiel zadrótovat dierku medzi noháma.

Nesedávaj na ohnišči, lebo sa ti zanečiščí. Jako si ma jebal na tom stodolisku, bodaj sčastie nemal na tom kokotisku.

Jako si ma jebal, tak som ti držala, do riti si vepchal, pička vrzukala.

Pičurienka, pička, bielym kvetom kvitne, bude to šuhajko, kerí do nej pichne.

Hajačky, hajačky, dalas mi stojačky, lepšie mi to padlo jak hrňec omáčky.

The violation of aesthetical norms relates mostly to the image of an aesthetic ideal which the collective applies on an individual or a subgroup of the community (such as members of a social class). It reflects not only outer attributes of beauty (perfect body, face, eyes, hair), but also particular attributes of clothing or products made by people.

A ty, Kača rapavá, nesadaj si polla mna, lebo tvoje rapiny, popadajú aj na mna.

Mala som frajera z dolného majera, mal on oči také, jako pol taniera.

Mala som frajera bol trojakej krásy, rapavý, karpavý kučeravé vlasy.

Rapavý škúlavý na obidve oči, ani mu to perko odo mna nesvedčí.

The violation of anthropological rules is associated with the collective image of the perfect human body (considering especially ideal measures and proportions regarding anthropological construction of the

human body as a closed and finished complex). The violation of these norms brings images of figures with growth defects and disorders (organ or body dwarfism, gigantism of some organs, deformities, visual or auditory handicaps, abnormalities, and so on). This group also includes anthropomorphised animals and things, which are animated in contrast with life experience and objective reality, which perform what people normally do, or in cooperation with people. Similar behaviour can be observed by some human organs (mostly sex organs), which separated from the body act independently.

V jednej ďiere ňetopiere, a v tej druhej vrabce, cigánka má takú chadžu, boli by z ňej strapce.

Ak máš velkí, ak máš ťenkí, namotaj si kúďele, najprv ňuchaj, potom šťuchaj, pomáhaj si prdele

> Povedala straka vrane, že si spravia z riti sane. Že sa budú tak voziti, od prdele až do riti.

Čože je to za skleňički, od tej večej maličká? Tá maličká to je samček a tá večia samička.

Za našimi humny išiel kokot s bubny a tak vám bubnoval skoro sme ohluchli.

The violation of linguistic norms includes both external (formal) and internal (contextual) aspects of the collective language usage. In the comic poetic image, such violation can be traced in the use of various onomatopoeic words, nonsensical and mangled words, words borrowed

from other ethnic groups and distorted, and so on. This also includes the use of words, which the collective morals consider vulgar or rude (they are mostly expressive designations of sexual organs and sexual intercourse). The comic effect can also be achieved by substitution or illogical change of some formal agents within the whole structure of the verse (rhythm, rhyme), and so on.

Fidli, fidli, fidli, liť, kázala si vypíliť. A ja som jej vypílev, na bok som si zakrivel, fidli, fidli, fidli, liť.

Ligo-ligo-ligot'ina ligota, ňestaraj sa moja milá, len ho ta, len ho ta.

Šúchala sa Á, po lavici BÉ zadrela si CÉ do papulice.

Išla baba rexum garda undrfajer cez rybník postretol ju šinka brinka zvonka cinka kominík.

In the system of the comic imagery the person who violates the norms is also very important. According to Eco the norm must be broken by "someone who is not likeable, who is a representative of an un-noble, low-status class, and who is awful (quasi animalistic)" (Eco, 1994, 97). In the comic images in the folksongs the norms are really subverted by "someone not likeable", strange, or different (preacher, Jew, Gypsy, boys and girls from a nearby village, etc.). It can also be someone who is a target of our criticism (husband, wife, parents, mother-in-law, godfather, godmother, other boys and girls from the village, elderly people, and so on.). In the folksong, the violator can also be the narrator himself/herself, when the comic depiction is an expression of self-irony. Furthermore it can be someone of our close people who becomes temporary 'different'

due to the functional context of the folksong (such as the young son-inlaw, young bride, cooks, best men, and grandparents). Here, the folk imagery finds many auto-stereotypes and hetero-stereotypes of the comic figures. The frequency of first names, family names, and local topography proves that stereotypical local comic figures play an important role in the structure of the comic image of the folk song.

> Umrela cigánka v Seged'íňe, ňimala ňišt chĺpkov na chud'iňe. Aj čo mala, kaďe šťala, aj to si zúbkami ostrihala.

> > Tancovav bi kňaško, ale mu je ťaško. Orgaňistu prosev, abi mu riť nosev.

Pán starejší premilení, čo sa vám to v griťi mrví? Máťe vi tam prepelice, rozdriapu vám nohavice.

The sensory experience of man is reflected in erotic symbolism of the folksong as well. This mostly deals with the external sensory similarity of the symbols with sex organs (phallus, vagina, genitals) and with the mating procedure. These symbols belong to the most archaic group of erotic symbols. Nose and fingers often substitute the male sex organ because of their external cylindrical shape, size, and posture. Abdomen, buttocks and mouth represent the female sex organs. The distinct attributes are their round shape, size and the opening that represents sort of a 'shell' – the space where new life origins, where new world emerges, or a 'nest'; straw and twigs, which make it, represent tactile feeling of smoothness or roughness, they also represent hair or fur (it is similar with the images of prickly bushes and grass).

Ket som išiel z hája na prvého mája, vajčurky mi brnkotali, cicinka mi stála

> Anička konope močila, žaba jej do pičky skočila. Neboli konope, leš bol len, vyskoč mi žabička s pičky ven.

A tam hore na Považí sedem kilov pička váži, zarostená chupatá, váži aj pol deváta.

Ked si dala Cigánovi daj aj mne, Cigán má len jenno vajce, ja mám dve

> Už som prešjel tatry Chobot, nevidel som taký kokot. Jeden taký duhý mával, orechy ním oraňoval.

Images of nature are a very important part of the erotic symbolism; they also reflect external physical attributes of particular objects, or they represent an archaic level of erotic motifs associated with the image of fertile and prosperous function of various plants or their parts (such as the cone). Female sex organs are sometimes represented by flower symbols (species, colour, vegetative stage, such as blooming). A garden as a symbol is also very popular. Male sex organs are represented by various roots (horseradish) or parts of the trees. The tree is also a very old symbol of life and a model of hierarchy of the universe.

Ani by ste neverili jaká som ja vrtká, na zadku mám poveterník a na pretku šiška.

Moja pičurienka na červeno kvitňe, buďe to za chlapca čo mi do ňej pichňe. Bodaj ta moj milý, bodaj ta vret hádzal, ket si mi pri riti záhradku rozhádzal.

> To je chren, to je chren, čo to visí chlapcom z gací ven

Prišjel ke mne včera večer kdosi, doniesel mi v nohaviciach čosi, a to bolo také jako drevo, len sa mi to medzi nohy drelo.

The richest supply of natural erotic symbols can be found in the images of animals. Here again we can meet the archaic images of animals representing strength, fertility and potency on the other side, and the images based on sensual experience associated with the similarity to sex organs (fur, shape, colour, smell, etc.) and sexual intercourse on the other side. Items like quail, fish, cat, cuckoo or squirrel stand as symbols of female sex organs; ground squirrel or snake represent male sex organs.

Chvalabohu na vísosťi, táto riba ňemá kosťi. Ňemá kosťi, aňi rebrá a preca je taká dobrá.

> Spadla do jami, hore nohámi, ukázala vevericu medzi nohámi.

Nechcem baraninu ani hovedzinu, len takú zverinu, čo dvíha perinu.

Ked som bola malá, maličkú dievečkú, kukávali chlapci na moju dierečku.

A ked som vyrostla, do rozumu prišla, pustili mi chlapci medzi nohy sysla. Jaj, mamičko moja, čo je to za sysla, celý mi tam behél kapsa mu odvisla.

Išla Anička do hajičička travu žat. Poščípal jej pičku, pičurienku, pičku, pičurku, pičku, pičku had.

Finally, human sexual intercourse is presented with the use of animal images. Mostly it is the external similarity of positions and movements during mating. Here the sexual intercourse is associated symbolically with one zoological species, such as sheep and ram, rabbits, or mixing of two species, such as rabbit and weasel, cat and mouse, or fox and bear.

Br, ovečka, br, jedna na druhú, skočiv baran na ovečku, na tú, na tú, na tú, na tú, na tú hrbatú.

Tancovali dvá zajáci popolavej srsti, keré dievča nesce dávat, nech si drží v hrsti.

Id'e zajac po pažit'i, pita si on od lasici, lasic, lasic, daj mi z toho, daj mi z toho, čo t'i t'ečie voda z toho.

Crafts and work themes also provide a wide choice of erotic symbols. The images of these symbols are based on the confrontation of the human sex organs with the external material qualities of the objects. Here, we can see various kinds of tools (spindle, spinning wheel, pen, and knife); as well as symbols of work activities confronted with sexual intercourse (shepherding, ploughing, sharpening of tools, sawing, wiring, sweeping the chimney, and polishing).

Anička má kolovrátek, Janko zase vreteno, Ked to dajú dohromady to by sa im vrtelo!

Čože je to za pisára, čo to v noci píše, pichne pero do pičurky a len ritú kníše.

> Pásov koziar kozi, koziarka kozlence, prepásli sa g jarku, koziar na koziarku

Mala som frajera orgaňistu, spravil mi organček na ohňisku. Bodajže ťa orgaňista, jak mi ten organček pekňe píska.

> Ide sedlák z orání, dal sa do piglování. Kone nehal v pluhu stát, išiel si zapiglovat

Erotic symbolism can also be found in more pleasant activities than work. These are usually ordinary activities, mostly resting, and various pleasures and the images of pleasant feelings and delight (such as sweetness, warmness, smoking, and tasting).

Hore – dole bežala s javorovú putnú, každému sa chválila, že má ona chutnú.

Bola v hájku njesla trávku, kukala sa medzi nohy de má fajku.

Ja mám fajku, ty máš pípku, môžeme si zapalovat každú chvilku. Povedala ľíška meveďu, medveďu, že má vona slačiu od medu, od medu,

Topographic symbolism of erotica can be found in the images depicting spatial placement of sex organs (at the bum, under the navel, under the belly, and above knees), and in the images defining the boundaries of this space (e.g. by legs and knees).

Pán starejší, čo vám poviem, jaj, čo má ďievča više kolien.

Má tam ona pekné vtáča, ja, pán starejší, ňech opáčia.

Pička moja pička ty moje imanie, prečo si si našla pri riti bývanie.

Prečo nie na pupku, alebo na brade, ale až pri riti, pri tom velkom smrade.

Anička dušička, máš biele kolená, pusti ma medzi ne, budeme rodina.

Another type of topographic symbolism is applied in the poetic images of sexual intercourse, while these symbols depict the position of people (lay down on the back, do it upright) or the locality where the sexual intercourse takes place (on the plum tree, on the apple tree, in hay).

Ajački, ajački, dala mi stojački, lepší mi to padlo jak hrňec omáčki.

Janko bude husi pást, Anka zase kačky, Janko lahne dole bruškom, Anka horeznačky. Aby dala pod bránú, aby dala skrablánu, pod bránú skrablánu, sirku zapálit.

Aby dala na jabloni, aby dala jako vloni, na jabloni jako vloni, jablk natrhat.

The reflection of human existential span is also typical for the folk imagery. Consequently, the erotic images in the folksong work with its specific inventory of symbols and specific terms typical for different stages of human life. The images of erotica in early budding in teenagers are associated with a desire to discover, to taste, the first intimate touch, the experience of making love for the first time, etc. The imagery is full of visions, dreams and fantasy. The symbols are often idealised, romantic, and even sentimental. There is a duel between the taboo (the young maid tries to protect her virginity, she does not want to show what she hides under her skirt, etc.) and the one who does not accept the taboo (the lad is curious, he longs for sensual experience even at the cost of violating the taboo).

Ach, mamičko, manko, prišjel ke mne Janko, šak som sa zasmála.

Mal pri riti pytlík, pri pytlíku knutlík, na pôl rífa bezmála.

Anička, dušička, nenechaj ma trápit, roztáhni nožičky hej, nemôžem ti trafit.

A já som roztáhla, jako si mi kázal, jak mi čil netrafíš, hej, nech ta Parom skára.

Chlapci, povjém vám, holú pičku mám. Velice proste, nech mi zaroste, šak to bude vám.

In the older age, the erotic imagery reflects the rich sensory experience of an adult person. The above-mentioned duel between the girl and the boy transforms (between the man and the woman) to a simple "do you want or not" or "will you sleep with me or not". The emotional relationship and erotic desire gradually differentiate. The imagery bursts into allegorical visions, and specific terms are often detached from the person (for example the sex organs begin to act independently in an equal representation of the whole person). In these adult images the terminology of erotica and sex is less imaginative and becomes straitforward. An adult person is familiarised with taboos of erotica and sex and knows very well all sensory images. Adult people express themselves more openly and professionally. On this level it is very typical to use openly expressive words in direct terms.

Pičurjenka, pička, čos taká krvavá, ty si sa tej noci s čuráčkom ihrala.

Navarila piča piva, vajcia sa opili, prišli domov uplakaňie, že sa s pičov pobili.

> Pod borovičkov krútila pičkov, nie celov, nie celov, len polovičkov.

Pri Trenčíne na Ratúzi vysí pička na dva fúzy. Ide to, nejde to, necháme to na leto.

In the old age, with the decline of life strength, people are aware that there are limitations in the sexual life as well. The images of an ageing body are in a sharp contrast with their rich lifelong experience. Objectivity, wisdom and detachment appear in the person's view on their sexual life. With the smile and self-irony people recall the period of their sexual activity. All the strength that faded from the body appears with even greater force in the naturalised images of the erotica, lasciviousness and sex.

Ešťe som ja chvalabohu ňie starí, ňie starí, ešťe moje haraburďi nastali, nastali.

A ja son si mislev, že sa to len duchňi a to moje inštrumenťi o holú zem buchli.

Today the very popular but wrong notion, especially among the laymen, is that the folksongs with motifs of naturalised erotica, lasciviousness and sex are exclusively masculine. In reality, the male pole is equal to the female pole (not only considering the imagery in the songs but also considering the performers). According to a Polish folklorist Jerzy Bartmiński the balance between the male and female pole together with the dynamics and harmony is one of the three basic attributes of sensual psyche of the folk erotica. This is also valid in the case of the erotic symbolism and direct terms. There is a great amount of them in the environment of the female erotic imagery, ranging from the romantic images to an open expressive bodily naturalism.

Kebi si ma vid'ev v tanci, ale bi si krúťev vajci, kebi si ma vid'ev opilú, ale bi si krúťev cicinú. Jako si ma jebal, tak som ti držala, do riti si vepchal, pička vrzukala.

Tiridy, tiridy mám na pičke hnidy, kdo mi ich vytuče, dam mu na papuče.

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