

Lee Sang Dong

**Parallels in genre among Hungarian ballads and Korean
narrative folk songs**

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TÉZISEK



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I. The purpose of the analysis, delimiting the theme

Hungarian researchers consider the ballad a typically European genre, and they are not aware of ballads outside the European culture. In this dissertation I am arguing against this theory. The analysis of narrative folk songs is in progress in Korea nowadays, thus the methodology of Hungarian ballad analysis could very well affect the Korean research. Korean researchers have only studied a limited amount of material in the Korean narrative folk song. Their resources have only been selected out of Korean, English, and German secondary literature, due to which their results could not have been complete. Another remark on the one-sided approach is that these analyses interpret ballads on the basis of English and Scottish ballads, and ballads are often altered in order to fit the argument. Adopting the complete and flexible system of the Hungarian ballad analysis in the interpretation of Korean narrative folk songs allows for a more accurate representation. Cho Dong-il, who was the first Korean researcher to consider narrative folk songs an independent literary genre, collected songs through field-work in the North-Eastern part of the Kyongsang province. This area is rich in tradition, but at the same time rather isolated geographically by the Taebek Mountains. Due to the fact that he collected narrative folk songs only in this geographical region, he assumed that narrative folk songs were exclusively conceived in this area, and that the formation of this particular genre had to do with the effects of the geographical environment on its inhabitants. Lee Jeong-ah claims in her study that the main reason why Cho Dong-il did field work in the North-Eastern part of Kyongsang province is that the pansori, which was popular in the western area, could not be found in this particular area; and Cho Dong-il assumed that there must be a narrative folk genre in the isolated area of the Taebek Mountains that compares to the pansori. This theory could very well be true, because narrative folk songs are not necessarily conceived as a result of geographical circumstances, for this same reason we need to consider a functional approach. I assume that Cho Dong-il's point of view is one-sided because he is merely relying on English and German secondary resources. Seo Young-sook's study in Korea undoubtedly proves the fact that narrative folk songs are also popular in such areas where originally only the pansori was known.

Seo young-sook's work is of fundamental value, although she is making a mistake by insisting on the assumption that severe environmental conditions are a prerequisite for the conception of ballads. As it is well known, it was a long-standing belief even in the European ballad research tradition that the lighter romance was the product of the Southern,

Mediterranean area, while the ballad, with its tragic grimness and dimness, spread mainly through the poetry of Northern countries (ex. England, Scotland, and Denmark). The mountainous, rough countryside as an environment typical in ballad conception is – supposedly – in the background of Székely ballads.

On the basis of English-Scottish ballads, Pi Chyun-deuk and Sym Myung-ho have attempted to adjust the originally unrhyming lyrics of Korean narrative folk songs to rhyming stanzas. I consider the eight-syllabic stanzas worthy of analysis, because this is the most fundamental line of Hungarian ballads. They did not take into consideration that the strophic structure is not a fundamental characteristic needed in order to regard a literary work as a narrative folk song. Their mistake is even more obvious when we look at Székely ballads that are very often unrhyming and have no clear-cut strophe pattern; nevertheless we undoubtedly consider them as authentic ballads. My supposition, mentioned above, is also supported by results in Hungarian ballad research. One common feature in Hungarian popular ballads and Korean narrative folk songs is that the central character is most often a woman. Both present some kind of event that sustains the attention of the performer as well as the audience. It is also a common feature that a dramatic plot is placed in the centre. Since the authors and performers were everyday people, they bare the most basic features of folk-poetry. The rhymeless eight-syllabic lines form the basic line pattern of Hungarian ballads, which is also common in Korean narrative folk songs, as are split eight-syllabic lines. The element of mystery plays little role in both Hungarian popular ballad and Korean narrative folk song. Their resolution is mostly sad and tragic. Both were sung during spinning and weaving. Stylistically they can be characterized by parallelism, the presence of refrains, and the use of stereotypes. Dramatic-type dialogues are also recurrent; however, these are more emphatic in Hungarian folk ballads than in Korean narrative folk songs. Obscurity and interruption are distinctive features in both of them. The way of expression is relatively simple due to the performers and the audience, their basic theme is the empirical world. Both among the characters of Hungarian ballads and Korean narrative folk songs one can find the good as well as the bad, the criminal and the innocent just like in real life. These literary works aim at expressing human feelings above all, they place their own everyday problems, and issues into the centre. The hero of the ballad is an ordinary man, struggling with everyday problems, perceiving both pain and joy. The characters of English and German ballads represent a wider social set, very often including personages of higher social rank. In addition, the problems are also of greater importance, and the solution to them is much more devastating and drastic.

II. Applied Methods

Ballad research consists of three domains: the element of music, folklore, and literature. In this dissertation the literary element prevails, the analysis of ballad lyrics, in other words. The study of folklore is closely related to other sciences such as theology, psychology, sociology, historical geography, narratology, and so on. Nonetheless, I attempt to refrain from involving other disciplines as much as possible. Given these circumstances, I choose to give a close reading to the documents rather than debating on the methodology of exploring a scene. Ballad research can be divided into two parts: on the one hand there is field-work in folk ballads; on the other hand there is systematizing and studying the results of this field-work. My first aim is to account for the existing results in field-work and then I turn to give a more detailed study of folk songs.

As it can safely be claimed that on the basis of the most important characteristics, Korean narrative folk songs are not far from Hungarian ballads (much closer to Hungarian than to English-Scottish ballads), in the process of analyzing Korean narrative folk songs a comparative study is determinant.

The comparative literary method of this dissertation is compelled to adopt a relatively extraordinary solution. It was the famous Russian comparatist, ZSIRMUNSZKIJ, who first pointed out that apart from causal comparison (how one literary work affects another), such typological analogy that confronts independent literary phenomena can occur as well. This method is seeking an answer to the question of how certain cultures that are distant both in time and space from each other, cultures that cannot possibly be aware of one another, can still share common features. Peasant life, family, love, happiness, death, loneliness, poverty, and defencelessness function in the same way. Whether in the US or in Africa, creating a narrative folk song out of these living conditions bares common as well as different features. It works the same way in Hungarian and Korean epic poetry. Obstacles in love and the hardship of people working in the fields of the Earth lead to similar expression both in shaping the theme and wording an emotional content. The methodology of this analysis is not so fully elaborated, as the study of its response criticism, but the psychological, social, and poetic analogy allows a wide generalization.

III. Thesis-like listing of results

Considering literary stylistic characteristics, there is no difference between Korean narrative folk songs and Hungarian ballads, which makes them even more suitable for a comparative analysis. Most differences spring from the different cultural backgrounds, but Hungarian ballads and the Korean narrative folk songs have common literary features. While the Hungarian literary criticism distinguishes between folk songs (that is a lyric genre) and folk ballads (that is an epic genre), Korean critics used to consider folk songs (Minyo) and the narrative folk songs (Sosaminyo) equal genres. The most recent Korean criticism, however, studies them as two different genres.

The narrative folk song in Korean narrative literature is a genre that has been spread by word of mouth. Just like in the case of folk tales, *sosamuka* (shaman narrative songs), and *pansori* (minstrel narrative song), narrative folk songs narrate a fictitious story armed with characters and a plot. It is, however, different from all the other genres. In the centre of narrative folk songs there is an extraordinary individual or a special event. As opposed to short lyric folk songs, narrative folk songs are longer, and contain a conflict and a solution. Narrative folk songs also had some practical importance, because weaving women used to sing them in smaller villages in the countryside. The Korean narrative folk song is closely related to folk songs in its form, since its lyrics are set in stanzas and are performed at a musical rhythm. Its internal features, however, are significantly different from the folk song: narrative folk songs do not primarily express feelings as folk songs do, and the narrator does not speak about himself, instead, he tells stories and events that had happened to somebody else. Concerning its content, the Korean narrative folk song has epic features. It is not worth writing a song about ordinary life unless it makes you startled with its devastating content, or it casts a smile with its exceptionally amusing and creative expression. Korean narrative folk songs cannot only be tragic and touching in their content, but can also relate a joyful, humorous event (although relatively small in number), these are also quite popular. The fundamental criterion for both kinds is that the content should be attractive, extraordinary and interesting.

The narrative folk song contains a modified interpretation of tragedy, because it places ordinary people into the centre instead of the noble class. According to the ancient Greek dramas, the reason for the tragedy is always some kind of transcendental event, fate or God's will, and its occurrence can be explained ideologically. Contrary to this, the tragedy in narrative folk songs is caused by a simple, prosaic reason, and it contains powerful social criticism. It often aims at presenting paradoxes in society, and attempts to meet the calamities of life with a smile.

Characters are simple, everyday people in narrative folk songs, they have goals and dreams, but there is little chance they can be realized. Since they are members of a social class, they face many difficulties. Very often bitter experience is presented in these literary works. Conflicts reflect the problems of real people, and their outcome also demonstrates the rules of real life. These ideological conflicts could be easily solved by adopting a different perspective, but it is not so easy to handle the problems of everyday life. The disappointment rooted in everyday life delineates an objective point of view of these everyday people. The representation of a willingness to solve problems is more important for the ordinary man, than to be offered a solution at the abstract level of imagination. These people are trying to accept and handle their disappointment and disillusionment. Moreover, we can assume that the attitude of everyday people, their way of handling problems is very well reflected in narrative folk songs. The narrative folk song, similar to other narrative genres, is based on conflicts among ordinary people, which gives rise to development in plot. The story is gradually built up, and through a turning point, the reader reaches an outcome.

In my analysis of folk ballads and narrative folk songs, I wanted to focus especially on tragic endings, because this is the major theme of this study. The epic song is very realistic and its conclusion is based on objective representation. It typically has a sad ending and expresses hopelessness. Korean epic songs mainly end tragically. Tragic outcomes can be divided into two groups. In the case of the first group the climax of misfortune is death as a kind of consequence. In the second group death produces misfortune.

Comparing the internal characteristics of Korean narrative folk songs and Hungarian folk ballads, we can conclude that they show similarities in their theme: both of them present some kind of family-related issues, constant conflicts with family members, struggle, and a bunch of ruined lives. Generally it can be assumed that Hungarian ballads cover a wider of field of life than Korean narrative folk songs, and the events they depict are more dreadful and devastating. As opposed to this, in Korean narrative folk songs the living space of its characters never go beyond their family, their rice- or other field, or the neighbouring mountain, and the events are also focused on the life of the immediate family, on living conditions, food and clothing.

The choice of the characters is along the same lines. The characters of Hungarian ballads can spring from any layer of the feudal aristocracy: they can be emperors, queens, vassals, nobles with a title, kings, lords, soldiers, knights, peasants, ordinary people, merchants, workers, servants, outlaws, criminals and morally degraded people as well. In the centre of Korean narrative folk songs, however, we find the members of the immediate family

close friends, and all of them belong to the same group of ordinary people. This is one distinctive feature of Korean narrative folk songs.

Rethorical elements do not dominate either the Korean narrative folk song or the Hungarian folk ballad. This means that both genres are simple regarding their literary style, as everyday speech is also simple. This is also proven by another common characteristic that both the ballad and the narrative folk song concentrate on one event. It is common in both genres that the story is told by a storyteller or a singer without emotional implication. This characteristic refers to a simple literary style. In Korean narrative folk songs mainly everyday words occur that relate to family life. There are only a few words and expressions referring to social activity.

It can be stated that – regarding their content – ballads and epic songs are quite different. On another note, we must insert here that the emotions of the characters, whether it is joy or anger, are expressed both in ballads as well as in epic songs. Elementary passion, miracles, love, hatred, desires, joy, and sadness. The way of expression in ballads and epic songs as well as the intensity and representation of feelings expressed in them are different, but both communicate deep and honest feelings.

I managed to demonstrate the so called „rose and briar” form, recurrent in narrative folk songs, in a Hungarian folk ballad entitled: *Két Kápolnavirág* (or *Kata Kádár*). The flower that is originally associated with love is a symbolic representation of faithfulness and remembrance even after death. Such endings represent the power and ability of fulfillment in love. Such love cannot come true in this world, only after death, or at least by the risking of somebody’s life. Love is unfulfilled, but the „emotional core” of the narrator and the audience is passed on from generation to generation. Feelings are transmitted to the next generation, the community conveys the message, and this is what fulfillment means. In a narrow sense it is an opposition to the mother-in-law and the father-in-law, in a wider sense it is a resistance to society, it is the song of freedom and human life.

Korean narrative folk songs and Hungarian folk ballads are always connected to some dramatic event. As far as plot development is concerned, we can often find such examples among folk ballads that describe an event or a situation in an extremely dramatic and intense way. The event described in the ballad often develops immediately and gradually, and reaches an abrupt resolution.

The repeated stanza structure is an important element in both the ballads and the Korean epic songs and it is used in both genres along with other forms of repetition. The function of this repeating structure is to keep the attention of the listener. Its further function

is to emphasize, but it may very well assist memorizing and recalling narrative folk songs at the time of oral broadcast.

I consider one of the main results of my study is that I am the first to analyze Korean narrative folk songs on the basis of the Hungarian metrical versification. As my analysis is the first to apply measured versification, first of all, I would like to introduce the concept of measure used in Hungarian rhythmic versification into the terminology associated with Korean narrative folk songs.

The versification of narrative folk songs is clearly based on syllables just like all other Korean poetry. The epic song structure preserved elements of the development of ancient Korean folk poetry. An ancient Korean folk song consists of two lines, and each line is built up of four Korean measures. A Korean measure has 3, 4, or 5 syllables. In a narrative folk song the same amount of Korean measures can be found as in ancient folk songs. In terms of taking a breath, the 3 or 4 syllabic measure that bares resemblance to the traditional Korean measure is suitable for a Korean narrator singing a ballad. According to Cho Dong-il, Korean narrative folk songs are poems that are made up of 4-measure lines and cannot be broken into stanzas. The standard type, which is the most common, has 4 syllables in one measure. However, there may be diversions; the number of the syllables can alter between 2 and 6.

According to my analysis of rhythmic versification in Korean epic songs, it can be observed that the Korean narrative folk song possesses a set stanza structure. Two lines make up a stanza in which (in the standard type) we can find two blocks per line, depending on the measure. There are two blocks in the standard type, thus in the case of two lined stanzas there are 4 standard blocks per stanza. The narrative folk song has two blocks, and has a 4 syllabic metric composition per each block. In Hungarian versification studies this is the so called ancient eight syllabic composition.

1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1
Hán	Szál	Mag	A		A	Má	Csúk	Kó
(At the age of one					Mother		died)	
1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1
Dú	Szál	Mag	A		A	Pá	Csúk	Kó
(At the age of two					Father		died)	

The stress falls on the first syllable in the case of the Korean block as well, as the example above illustrates, which is akin to Hungarian measure. The original “atom”, *Hán* and *A* in in

connection with three other syllables. The first syllable, *Hán* and *A*, is pronounced with more stress than *Szál Mag A* and *Má Csúk Kó*. This means that the emphatic first syllable is followed by three unemphatic ones. In the word *Mag A*, *Mag* is more emphatic than *A*. However, this stress is almost totally overshadowed by the stress on *Hán*, the first element of the 4 syllabic block. These four syllables all together stress the first syllable: *Hán Szál Mag A*. There is one stressed and three unstressed syllables: *A Má Csúk Kó* – which is connected the same way to the stressed and the three unstressed syllables. The indication of stress in the above mentioned example is also supported by logic.

When poetic art is inspired by folk poetry, the poem certainly bares such characteristics on the basis of which it can be compared to other pieces of folk poetry. It is worth comparing Arany János's ballads to Korean folk poetry, because his work possesses the essential characteristics of Hungarian folk ballads. Arany elevated the Hungarian ballad to such a high level that he raised the prestige of Hungarian folk ballads. Thus, talented and famous critics showed interest in studying ballads. For this reason, Hungarian ballad research is at the forefront of the world. While Korean ballads were not involved in the positivist school of response criticism, Hungarian ballad studies have gained substantial results in this field.

My stable conclusion is that the literary concept of the Korean ballad needs to be extended, as it has been done – to its advantage – in the case of the Hungarian folk ballad. All this provides additional help in the process of comparative analyses.

My current paper cannot be considered as a conclusion to my entire research. Later on I intend to involve the findings of other ballad critics in Central Europe. I hope that despite its imperfection, my work will provide important assistance to the analysis of Korean ballads, and that it will contribute to better understand the relationship between Korean and Hungarian culture, and thus strengthen the long standing and traditionally well-working Hungarian-Korean collaboration.