ARTICLES

Towards the Systematization of Stanza Forms in the Russian Folk Song

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In both *byliny* and literary poetry texts are organized such that each succeeding line adds something new to the exposition, which proceeds without interruption from the beginning to the end (ABCDE…). In literary verse the division of a poetic text into stanzas does not alter this principle. Folk songs, in which stanzas are formed by the regular repetition of lines or by the regular inclusion of a refrain, traditionally differ, because these features do not supplement the information being conveyed in the text. Such repetitions are explained by the melody of a song, which is more developed and longer than the accompanying verbal material. This demonstrates the non-linguistic nature of stanza forms, which were in their formation long ago connected with choreography and the music created by it.

Just as a stanza in poetry represents a group of lines, so the melody of a song is an articulation of several musical sections, which may be related to each other by similarity (AA), contrast (AB), or a combination of both (such as ABAB or AABB). The end of a song's stanza is perceived together with the end of the melody and the following stanza is perceived from the outset as a repetition of this melody. However, the melody alone, without the text, does not permit a more detailed judgement about the internal structure of the stanza in a given song. Thus Rudneva [1994] demonstrated that several kinds of poetic stanza can be sung to a melody with the same sequence of musical sections; the reverse correlation seldom occurs.

On the contrary, the text of a well recorded song permits the stanza structures to be classified with maximum accuracy. In reality, the number of lines in a stanza simultaneously represents the number of musical sections in its melody. In this case, the line represents a single rhythmic principle which determines both the melody and the words of a given song; over and above this, it also contains a specific verbal pattern for combining poetic lines into stanzas.

As a measure of the overall musical-poetic rhythm, the line is more accessible and intelligible than the melody. It is no accident that stanza forms are classified by line in literary as well as in musicological studies. Although some argue for song stanza forms to be studied as a coordination of word and melody, and although musicologists have accumulated some experience

in applying such a method, nevertheless the literary approach to stanza forms remains the dominant one and is likely to remain so in the future. However, the study of versification as applied to folksong verse, has expressed relatively little interest in stanza forms, tending to exclude them from consideration.(1)

In the present article stanzas will be examined from the viewpoint of the organization of a song's verbal texture, and an attempt made to trace the development of stanzas in Russian folk songs through a systematization of its forms.

Folk song stanza forms are not heterogeneous according to the degree of their "crystalization." When simple and distinct stanza forms exist, clear classification features can be used systematically to separate them one from another. But there exist as well intermediate forms which cannot easily be classified. Should they be considered a simple stanza or a long line divided into its component parts? Or should they be regarded as a couplet or quatrain? At the same time, such intermediary forms can be just as stable as those in the first category, since they have a definite structure, are reproduced and preserved in the tradition. If stanza forms in folk songs are viewed as something that continuously evolves, stanzas of the first type can presumably be connected with stages in the crystalization of forms, and the second type with crises and transitional periods. As will be shown below, four groups of crystalized forms and at least three intermediary forms can be distinguished in the overall picture of stanza forms in Russian folk songs.

Insofar as the line serves as the measure of stanza complexity, the stichic (line by line) form can be taken as the first level in the systematization proposed here. The stichic form has been observed in northern *byliny*, laments, some game songs (including those of children), some cradle songs, and the sposeefasken verse of "wisecracks" (*pribautki*) and incantations. The stichic form is known to many European peoples, but in Russian texts in this form (in particular those from the Russian North) a consistent rhythm predominates in the melody and, correspondingly, in the lines sung to it. A free-verse like line in this form occurs in laments local to the Riazan', Penza and southern part of Nizhnii Novgorod regions, as well as to the area on the border of Russia and Belarus.

> I vy, sherye kukushechki!
> I chto zh vy perestali kukuvat'?
> I vy, melki ptashechki, i ne stali shchebetat'?
> I razliubimyi moi diatenyk priiatnyi!

I chto zh ty tak ot menia uletel?

[Razumovskaia 1998: no. 38]

For traditional sung folklore what could be called the line as stanza represents the next level in the complexity of stanzaic patterns. Here the creativity of folk poetry reaches an apex unsurpassed in succeeding levels of complexity. With very simple means it is possible to convert a line into a stanza, that is, into a structure which consists of at least two verse sections: a refrain word or several such words are inserted after each line. Experiments with melismatic transformation (*raspev*) in the performance of epic texts in stanzas have been carried out by using precisely this simple form. The bylina "Il'ia Muromets on the Falcon Ship" and the historical song about the death of Mikhail Skopin-Shuiskii are examples; both were sung in Siberia with the refrain *Vinograd'e krasno-zelenoe*.

1.   Po sinemu moriu po Khvalynskomu,

 Vinograd'e krasnoe, zelenoe.

2.   Khodil-gulial Sokol-korabl',

 Vinograd'e krasnoe, zelenoe . . .

[Makarenko 1913: 133]

A different variant with essentially the same composition is also possible: the refrain word then appears before the content line. Similar features occur in ritual songs and also in laments, where the refrain words without meaning, *Oi, toshneshen'ko*, *Ox-ti mnetsen'ki*, or, in the tradition of eastern Vologda, *O-e'ei* are only encountered before the content part of the line.(2) Thus for example:

Oi, toshnekhon'ko,

 Ty moia da milá lada,

Oi, toshnekhon'ko,

 Ia ved' shla da primetila,

Oi, toshnekhon'ko,

 Ia svoiu da milú ladu . . .

[Efimenkova 1980: no 39]

or:

Okhti mnetsen'ki,

 Moe serdeshnoe ditiatko,

Okhti mnetsen'ki,

> Ty kuda nariazhaesh'se,
>
> *Okhti mnetsen'ki*,
>
> Ty kuda sobiraesh'se . . .

[Efimenkova 1980: no 69]

General speaking, concluding refrain words are more often perceived as a separate section allowing the preceding stanza to be understood. However, words of this kind at the beginning are usually fused with the content bearing part of the line.

No matter how many words are in the refrain, in the examples cited the refrain is almost equal to the content line of the stanza. Sometimes the refrain can be shorter, as, for example, the refrain words *ekhi*, *lady*, or *slava* in wedding songs and Yuletide fortune-telling songs (*podbliudnye pesni*). In any case, the crystalized "stanza with a refrain" will either exceed the number of syllables in the longest lines in Russian folk poetry (for example, the thirteen-syllable line predominating in northern *byliny* and funeral laments, or the line of 8+6 syllables), or it will not be consonant with any meters in sung verse, where a given number of syllables is not exceeded. In the reverse case, as will become evident later, this can develop into a critical situation and become a transitional phenomenon.

Another way of forming a stanza out of a single line is to repeat the line which concludes the preceding stanza in the beginning of the next stanza (AB, BC, CD . . .). In this instance, a song is expressed in couplets, but actually only a single recurrent new line contributes to the formation of this simple stanza form. A similar stanzaic pattern is common in wedding and also in non-ritual lyric songs.

> U stola bylo u stolika,
>
> U stola bylo besednogo.
>
>   U stola bylo besednogo,
>
> Protiv zerkala khrustal'nogo,
>
>   Protiv zerkala khrustal'nogo.
>
> Tut stoial-to dobroi molodets . . .

[Zemtsovskii 1974: no. 58a]

If we add to this that a line taken from a preceding stanza can be doubled in the following stanza, thereby forming a three-line structure, it becomes clear that the above type also has variants. A stanza of this type can be found in wedding songs from south-west Russia and also in the songs of some Siberian settlers:

1.   Stupaite, boiare,

Stupaite, boiare,

Da ne boitesia nochi.

2.   *Da ne boitesia nochi*,

Da ne boitesia nochi,

Bog vam na pomochi.

[Pokhabov 2000: no. 26]

And finally there is a third type: *pars pro toto*. Here each line is changed into a complete stanza thanks to its repetition *in toto* (AA), or to the repetition of parts of it (A/a_2; A /a_2 a_2 ; A /a_2 a_2 a_2; a_1 $a_1 a_2$ a_2; a_1 a_1 AA; AA a_2 a_2), or to combinations formed from the repetition of parts such as refrain words (A/ r a_2; A /a_2 r a_2).(3) In effect, the first variant is the universal one, encountered in the ritual, round dance, non-ritual lyric and dance songs of all East Slav peoples. The second and third variants are characteristic of songs connected with the dance or some other regular movement, although this is not obligatory.

A/a_2

1.   Sveti, sveti, mesiachek, segodniashniu noch',

Ei, segodniashniu noch'.

2.   Prosveti dorozhen'ku s kontsa i v konets,

Ei, s kontsa i v konets . . .

[Rubtsov 1991: no. 108]

A /a_2 a_2

1.   A na gore tserkovka

Tserkovka, tserkovka.

2.   Na tserkovke buldovka

Buldovka, buldovka . . .

[Rubtsov 1991: no. 12]

A /a_2 a_2 a_2

1.   Da ne po polu zhemchug katalsia,

Katalsia, katalsia, katalsia.

2.   Da i Pavel zhenit'sia sriazhalsia,

Sriazhalsia, sriazhalsia, sriazhalsia . . .

[Kolpakova 1967: no. 142]

$a_1\ a_1 a_2\ a_2$

Shlo-proshlo solntse, *shlo-proshlo solntse*

da pozad' lesov, *da pozad' lesov . . .*

[Novikova i Pushkina 1986: no. 77]

$a_1\ A\ a_2$

Kupalenka,

Kupalenka – noch' malen'ka,

noch' malen'ka . . .

[Razumovskaia 1998: no. 44]

$a_1\ a_1\ AA$

Seiu, veiu,

Seiu, veiu,

Seiu, veiu bel lenochek,

Seiu, veiu lenochek . . .

[Kaluzhnikova 1997: no. 70]

$AA\ a_2\ a_2$

Vniz po matushke po Volge,

Vniz po matushke po Volge,

Vot po Volge,

Vot po Volge . . .

[Vlasov 1992: no. 69]

$A\ /\ r\ a_2$

1. Oi, poseiu konopelku,

Rano-rano, konopelku.

2. Ne na pakhotnu zemelku,

Rano-rano-rano, vot zemelku . . .

[Kolpakova 1967: no. 123]

$A\ /\ a_2\ r\ a_2$

1. A my maslentsu sostrekali,

Sostrekali, dusha, sostrekali.

2. My na gorushku vykhodili,

Vykhodili, dusha, vykhodili . . .

[Zemtsovskii 1967b: no. 3]

a_1 a_1 A/ r a_2 r a_2

> *Poshel kozel,*
>
> *poshel kozel,*
>
> Poshel kozel v ogorod,
>
> *Ai, liuli, v ogorod,*
>
> *Ai, liuli, v ogorod . . .*

[From the author's own field recordings]

These quotations from song texts clearly correspond to the level defined by the text in the systematization of stanza forms. However, in the versification of Russian folk songs forms have been preserved where the regular subdivision of a line and repetition of an isolated colon or augmentation of the refrain have been realized within the poetic line. In this case, a structural category representing something intermediary has been created; this is still not a stanza, but it is also not a unified line. Such a situation reveals a crisis, which in this instance has been expressed in the development of a new form within the old framework. Thus a line, which has a fixed caesura, consists of 4+3 syllables and coincides with the four-foot trochee, is accompanied by the regular repetition of the last colon. Acquiring the form A a_2, such a line corresponds to one of the variations in the verse of the well-known Russian song "Kamarinskaia."

> Vo gorenke vo novói, *vo novói*
>
> Stoial stolik dubovoi, *dubovoi . . .*

[Lobanov 1998: no. 59]

Compare:

> Nabelenaia, namazanaia,
>
> Aloi lentoi opoiasanaia . . .

[Zhekulina 1979: no. 417]

The fact that in the folk tradition a similar form with a doubled colon is perceived not as a stanza but a line, is demonstrated also by the rhymed couplet in the first pair of the above lines: *vo novói – dubovói*. It is understandable that because of the rhymes these lines with doubling are combined in couplets. However, attachment to a line rather than expansion into a stanza is proven, in our opinion, also by the metrical equality of the expanded group to a line which corresponds to a longer meter. For example, this occurs when the content part of a line ends with refrain words.

> Iz-pod kustyshka olen', *liuli-liuli*,
> Pod rakitovym olen', *liuli-liuli* . . . .
> > [Kolpakova 1967: no. 148]

Compare:

> Edin nov monastyr' stanovilsia
> Molodoi chernets sprovostrilsia . . .
> > [Kolpakova 1963: no. 103]

But if a line with a refrain or repetition is not equivalent to a longer meter, this must undoubtedly represent a phenomenon related to the level of a stanza.

The next clear level in the systematization of song stanza forms involves the couplet, that is, a real couplet formed from different lines. In Russian sung folklore couplets were formed in two different ways, the first involving a long line with caesura being broken up into two short lines. Couplets of this kind acquired the same principles of stanza formation as are produced during the conversion of a line into a stanza, but without the same diversity. Thus the composition of a stanza, in which a refrain word comes after a complete line but a colon in this line is repeated ($A / r\ a_2$), has been preserved, but it has passed to the level of combined lines (ABRB).

> Iz boiarskikh-to vorot
> Vykhodil shel'ma-kholop,
> *Da ai, Zdunai, moi Zdunai,*
> *Vykhodil shel'ma-kholop.*
> > [Kolpakova 1963: no. 252]

Songs, sung with a similar disposition of the text but with the refrain *Ei, liubo, liubo da liubo da liuli* recast from the earlier refrain *Ai liuli*, became drill songs in the Russian army in the nineteenth century.

A composition with repetition of the last line of the preceding stanza at the beginning of the next stanza (AB/BC) was converted into the repetition of couplets (ABCD/CDEF). Although this form is common in dance songs, in the example quoted below from a ballad the text contains a large proportion of lines with rhymed couplets. This is an indisputable indicator of short lines and not of hemistichs in a long line.

> 1. Pod iablon'iu zelenoiu,
> > Pod kudriavoi, zelenoi,
> > Sidel molodets takoi, da

Nezhenatyi, kholostoi.

2. *Sidel molodets takoi, da*

    Nezhenatyi, kholostoi,

    Nezhenatyi, kholostoi, da

    Derzhal gusli pod poloi . . .

[Balakirev 1957: № 26]

The same compositional repetition of the ending of the preceding stanza in the beginning of the next stanza has been even more distinctively transformed in "largo songs" (*protiazhnaia pesnia*)(4) with a specific kind of apanadiplosis (*vydelennyi zapev*).(5) In Russian songs this is a universal type of stanza in which the repeated part does not comprise more than one third of the text in a new stanza. Don Cossack *byliny*, which are performed as largo songs, were most likely transformed from a stichic into a stanza form in precisely this manner:

1. Ne svetila da krasnaia solnyshka

    Da-i ona . . . ona rovno de . . . oi, rovno deviat' let,

2. *E-oi, rovno deviat' let,*

    Ai, da na desiatym da vot tolichka godochku

    Da krasna . . . krasnaia proglia . . . ai, no proglianula,

3. *E-oi, ona proglianula,*

    Ai, da prosvetila byla krasnaia solnyshka

    Da-i ona . . . ona vse chisto . . . ai, vse chisto polia . . .

[Dobrovol'skii and Korguzalov 1981: no. 88]

A second way of forming couplets does not involve the transformation of one thing into another, but arose completely independently. Couplets of this kind consist of short lines which are primarily rhymed. Like the stichic form they can be considered one of the earliest forms in the systematization of stanzas. They are not widespread in Russian folklore, occurring mainly in lullabies:

Baiushki,baiu!

Kolotushek nadaiu.

Bai da liuli!

Khot' segodnia umri.

U nas grechikha na toku,

Ia blinov napeku,

> A tebia, ditiatku,
>
> Na pogost povoloku . . .
>
> > [Anikin 1991: 70]

A more interesting variant emerges when only one of the lines is doubled. In the example quoted below the stanza is organized according to the formula ABB. However, the eight-syllable line is not composed in the four-foot trochee, but in syllabic verse with a caesura and hemistichs of 5 + 3 syllables. This song is obviously derived from Ukrainian tradition, where three-line stanzas with the pattern AAB are common.

> 1. Stoliki moi zastlany,
>
>   Gostiushki moi zazvany,
>
>   *Gostiushki moi zazvany.*
>
> 2. Ia na vas, gosti, divliusia,
>
>   Da gorilochki nap'iusia,
>
>   *Da gorilochki nap'iusia . . .*
>
> > [Samarenko and Etinger 1978: no. 87]

Another possible structural complication of the couplet as a stanza form in North Russian comes from its enrichment through a developed refrain. In principle this takes place in narrative songs where the stichic form has been reworked into a stanzaic form because of the interlaying of the text with refrain words. The same method, but in regard to the couplet, is applied in barge hauler refrains (*pripevki*) such as *Dubinushka* or *Khodom-vodom*. They represent sets of short couplet songs not connected by content and alternating with a refrain consisting of a number of poetic lines:

> Nu, rebiata, prinimaisia,
>
> Za dubinushku khvataisia.
>
> *Ei, dubinushka, ukhnem,*
>
> *Ei, zelenaia sama poidem,*
>
> *Podernem, podernem da ukhnem*!
>
> > [Banin 1971: 175]

What is known as the *stradanie*, a special, two-line variant of the *chastushka*,(6) belongs to the same level in the stanzaic organization of a song text. A regular *chastushka* in the form of a quatrain often follows each *stradanie* couplet. Through its content, this quatrain is connected with the couplet in the initial part (*zapev*) of the *stradanie*. However, this lends a new quality to the

form since a small two-part couplet is formed. Several multi-stanza songs, chronicling present-day local events, are sung to the tunes of two-part *stradaniia* of this kind. In them the text, which has a similar couplet structure, develops from beginning to end without stanzaic repetition:

> Okh, vy sygraite "Razlivnova"(7)
>
> Okh, dlia movo serdtsá bol'shova.
>
> Ne vozite po bol'nitsam,
>
> Ne studite moiu krov'.
>
> Nichavo bol'novo netu –
>
> Menia muchaet liubov'! . . .

> [From the author's own field recordings]

The couplet represents the limit of complexity in the line of the traditional Russian "long song." When the quatrains of literary versification were absorbed into the peasant song, it emerged that in *largo* songs quatrains could be mechanically divided into two couplet stanzas though cross rhyme was ignored. Only the basic framework of meters remained in the folk melody (*raspev*), while rhyme was not always observed.

> 1. Ia vechor-to kak v etu poru
>
>   Vykhodila ia po . . , oi, i poguliat'.
>
> 2. *Vykhodila ia poguliat'.*
>
>   Ottogo ia tol'ko vykhodila,
>
>   Chtob milogo dru . . , i druzhka uvidat'.
>
> 3. *Chtob milogo uvidat',*
>
>   Ia vechor-to druzhka milogo
>
>   Unimala ia no(i) . . , okh, ia nochevat',
>
> 4. *Unimala ia nochevat':*
>
>   – Ty-to nochui-ko, nochui-ko, moi liubeznoi,
>
>   Nochui nochen'ku, nochui, okh, i u menia.
>
> 5. *Nochui nochku ty u menia –*
>
>   – Oi, rad by ia, rad by tol'ko da nochevati,
>
>   Boius', dó svetu, e-okh, i ia prospliu,
>
> 6. *Boius', dó svetu prospliu. –*
>
>   – Oi, ty-to ne boise-to, miloi, ne pugaise,
>
>   Ia sama-to pora . . , oi, porane ia vstaiu . . .

[Zhekulina 1979: no. 44]

In a different stanzaic pattern, the analogous reduction of the quatrain to the level of a couplet also took place in the later songs of the various Cossack traditions. In them the song stanza was formed simply by doubling each pair of lines in the quatrain.

1.   Vstala, prosnulasia zoren'ka iasnaia,

Slyshatsia zvony podkov.

Vstala, prosnulasia zoren'ka iasnaia

Slyshatsia zvony podkov

2.   Edet v nabege stanitsa udalaia

Sotni orlov-kazakov

Edet v nabege stanitsa udalaia

Sotni orlov-kazakov . . .

[Kaluzhnikova 1998: no. 19]

For the reasons given above, we have to disagree with Rudneva, who suggests that "songs with a four-line poetic stanza **became established** (emphasis ours, M. L.) in the rural environment . . . through city songs set to the words of Russian poets being introduced to the population at large" [Rudneva 1994: 49]. The traditional poetic thought of the people, formed on the basis of the long chorus song, did not accept the new stanza form, but disrupted it and accommodated it to its own long established canons. Here again we can distinguish a crisis zone in the systematization of song stanzas.

The division of a long line into two short ones also constitutes a crisis zone, since the first method of forming a two-line stanza in Russian folk songs is connected with a division of this kind. In other words, the majority of the items being systematized and examined on the level of a couplet, turn out to possess ambiguous and unstable characteristics. Among all the possible features inherent to transitional and crisis phenomena, just two actually exist; one is rising (from the level of a line to a couplet) and the other is descending (from the level of a quatrain).

The quatrain was fully assimilated by the Russian folk song only in the *chastushka*, the single, so-called "stable form" in Russian poetic folklore. When literary verse found a distinct resonance in the folk tradition, the quatrain came to represent the fourth level of stanza complexity. Nevertheless, the *chastushka* contains examples of a stanzaic melody with repetition of the couplet which completes a preceding stanza at the beginning of the following stanza ("Sormach" and analogous forms of the *chastushka* in Povolzh'e).(8) However, the rhymed

quatrain with incomplete cross rhyme is strictly observed in this type of *chastushka*. There also are other kinds of rhyming which confirm the four-part poetic stanza of the *chastushka*.(9)

Thus in the stanza formation of Russian folk songs we can observe four levels of complexity in the development from a stichic form to a quatrain with cross rhyme. Parallel to this phenomenon there has been a decline followed by the complete disappearance of the repetition of lines. The rhythm of the line as a song's contents and the rhythm of the melody have fused. Productive phenomena in the long song have disappeared along with the tendency to develop a quatrain. The multi-stanza song appeared at the same time as the *chastushka* and continues to appear. However, its life and productivity have not been inspired by traditional village culture village because of its different social base.

NOTES

1   In particular, in his recent seminal book on the verse of lyric songs James Bailey [1993: 17-18] only touches upon stanza forms in regard to repetition in the text of songs. He points out the necessity of separating word repetition relating directly to the song text, which, for this reason, pertains to the literary study of verse, from repetition arising from the musical structure. In his opinion, the latter demands a primarily musicological analytical approach. However, those musicologists, who study the stanza forms of songs, focus on their own field and try not to touch upon the poetic word. One thinks of the highly innovatory research done by Kvitka [1971], who examined stanza forms in the songs of many Slavic peoples from the musical time durations in the melody of the lines in a stanza, but not from the organization of the lines. In the songs which interested him, stanzas were formed through the repetition of its basic lines (AABB). The first A and last B were fitted into bars of 2/4, and the last A and first B into bars of 3/4. This produced the rhythmical stanzaic form ABBA which is characteristic of traditional melodies among many East European peoples.

2   The lines of Efimenkova's texts have here been divided into separate phrases to demonstrate each verse more clearly.

3   In the discussion that follows, A = a full line; a_1 = the initial hemistich of this line; a_2 = the concluding hemistich of the same line; r = the refrain word which corresponds to a hemistich.

4   The *protiazhnaia pesnia* is not a genre but a musical form according to which the verbal text is fragmented by word-breaks, repetitions, and inserted particles and exclamations. For a monograph on the subject, see: Zemtsovskii [1967a].

5   The term was coined by Gippius [1957: 236].

6   A type of song originating towards the end of the nineteenth century. These short "ditties," which are frequently composed in quatrains, are often rhymed, are "fast" (*chasto*), are normally performed in chains, are usually highly topical and represent the most productive song genre in present-day Russian folklore. For a recent study of the *chastushka* and especially of the *stradanie,* see: Lebedinskii [1984].

7   *Razlivnova* [on tap] refers to the name of a specific *chastushka* melody from the western part of Tver' oblast'. There is a play on words here: *razliv* is also a musette, that is, a specific timber in an accordion, and also a way of selling draft alcoholic drinks from barrels rather than in sealed bottles.

8   *Sormach* is the *chastushka* melody common in Nizhnii Novgorod oblast' and further south in Povolzh'e. The name is derived from the village of Sormovo (presently a district of Nizhnii Novgorod).

9   For rhyming in the *chastushka* see: Iarkho [1984: 143].

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