GENRE AND AUTHORITY IN THE SCHOLARLY CONSTRUCTION OF CHARM AND PRAYER: A VIEW FROM THE MARGINS

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This paper presents a critique and some theoretical reflections on the relationship between the genres of charm and prayer in folklore and religions scholarship. I draw special attention to the construction of the liminal genre of 'archaic prayer' in Hungarian scholarship and its relationship to magic and the 'charm' genre as elucidated in the work ethnographers Éva Pócs, Zsuzsanna Erdélyi and Irén Lovász amongst others. It is commonly recognised that scholarly distinctions between genres cut across *emic* categories and insider knowledge structures. Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, this paper critiques the discourse on archaic prayer in relation to the dichotomy between magic and religion and the emic/etic distinction through a focus on power/knowledge relations and the politics of language in the religious field.

Key words: Bourdieu, charms, folklore, folk prayer, genre, folk religion

INTRODUCTION

I would like to open this paper with a reminder of the often repeated call that on the question of genre we should listen to the native, to the emic perspective. Numerous commentators on charms, incantations and prayers have insisted that in the consciousness of the 'folk' the inseparability of these verbal acts is the natural state of affairs. Scholarly distinctions between genres, however, clearly cut across emic categories and insider knowledge structures. The common deployment of the emic axiom requires serious scrutiny if we are to approach an understanding of the nature of the limitations that our current disciplinary horizons (here I refer to folklore scholarship and to the academic study of religion, the two fields with which I am most familiar) place on charm scholarship. Paramount in this exercise would be the identification of the forms of knowledge and discourse upon which recourse to 'the perspective of the folk' are built and a recognition of the historical power relations and politics of culture that feed the folkloristic endeavour, especially in relation to 'folk religious' phenomena.

Taking a lead from Judith Butler's exploration of the Foucauldian mode of 'critique,' not as judgement or "fault-finding" but as 'practice' (Butler 2002), in what follows, I hope to demonstrate that an excursion to the limits or the margins of our object of study can open up new pluralist perspectives on the epistemological 'crisis point' in charm scholarship identified by Agapkina and Toporkov (2011) and taken up elsewhere in this volume by Passalis (2010). The emphasis is therefore not on determining correct and incorrect, good or bad, right or wrong ways of viewing, categorising or delimiting charms, but on a mode of 'critique' that might reveal aspects of the framework within which charm scholarship operates.

Referring to Adorno, Butler highlights that in order "for critique to operate as part of praxis […] is for it to apprehend the ways in which categories are themselves instituted, how the field of knowledge is ordered, and how what it suppresses returns, as it were, as its own constitutive occlusion" (Butler 2002: 2). The reappearance of the repressed to disturb and unsettle what appear to be the most solid constructs is of course one of the central insights of Jacque Derrida's work. The form of praxis advocated here must operate against a framework of institutional knowledge that systematically and cumulatively reinforces epistemological positions that preclude the possibility of thinking and ordering knowledge in any other way (Butler 2002: 4). Moreover, the very means by which we epistemologically ground our knowledge, which is invariably centripetal in focus, seeking to relate phenomena to a perceived model core or nexus, producing objects of occlusion the subsequent characterisation of which as 'other' masks the very process of ordering by which they take on their identity. An analysis of the process of production of cultural categories therefore offers us an important insight into how objects come to 'stand outside of' generic categories and how ideological positions are masked by this process. How this functions with regard to the genres of charm and prayer, caught between the fields of magic and religion, forms the overarching context for the critique that follows. Folklorists, social theorists, religionists and theologians have in the past constructed the genres of 'charm' and 'prayer' as diametrical opposites, subjecting them to processes of inclusion and exclusion, suppression and institution, prohibition and prescription.

Integral to the praxis of critique is the identification and assumption of perspectives from which one can gain some distance from normative standpoints and 'naturalized' states of affairs in order to apprehend 'from the margins' what it is that 'returns' as constitutive of our constructs. In some sense therefore, this can be regarded as a critical or emancipatory hermeneutic that engages in the desubjugation of the occluded and masked constituent. However, the aim is not to establish a new ordering but simply expose the limits of

the reigning structures in order that possible futures, which are beyond the means of the critique to regulate, may emerge and, as Butler puts it, "so critique will be that perspective on established and ordering ways of knowing which is not immediately assimilated into that ordering function" (Butler 2002: 5).

The margins, verge or edge is a place of creativity where structures, habits and normative procedures, the prudence of the centre (de Roest 2010: 253), open a gap for reflection and new potential.[1] The critique that follows takes a marginal perspective on two levels. Firstly, it takes as its empirical object the category of 'archaic prayer,' which is located on the messy liminal territory where the category/field of magic and the category/field of religion meet. In dealing with phenomena that appear peripheral and ambiguous 'commonsense' approaches to categories and genre often prove deficient. The essentializing and centralizing tendencies of academic disciplines and fields routinely ensure that core organising principles are applied to phenomena that, from the given central perspective of a particular field, with its particular assumptions about the constitutive dimensions of the object of study, appear ambiguous and indeterminate. As Amy Shuman has indicated in relation to Feminist approaches to folklore, the approaches to and systems of classifying texts that have focused on generic boundaries "usually tell us more about the edges and crossovers than they do about the centers" (Shuman 1993: 71). This centralizing tendency has the effect of cementing as peripheral the status of objects apprehended as 'like' but not 'like' enough, similar but not the same, related but somehow tainted, deficient, corrupted or distorted.

In charm scholarship we encounter at least three principal knowledge-producing fields (i.e. fields that determine what is important and useful to know about charms); national or ethno-linguistic based folklore scholarship, religious institutions and elites, and sociological/anthropological theory, each of which contributes radically divergent viewpoints to the discourse. Each claims to be the knowledge-holder of the essential core truths in relation to the object of study with the legitimacy to structure and categorise. Critiquing some of the central assertions of scholarship on charm and prayer from the perspective of Pierre Bourdieu's model of the religious field may appear to be a partisan move, siding with social theory over philological or theological standpoints. However, the intent is not to promote a Bourdieuan perspective but to indicate instances where knowledge has been structured selectively by a narrow set of criteria that results in the exclusion of certain viewpoints. Irén Lovász (1993, 2002) first introduced Bourdieu's analysis of the structure of the religious field into the discourse on Hungarian 'archaic prayer.' In the final paragraphs of this paper I attempt to draw further and more wide-ranging conclusions with

regard to the categories of magic and religion from the application of Bourdieuan theory. In this sense, the critique is directed from the margins of the established dominant discourses within charm scholarship.

In contemporary scholarship genre in conceptualised in a number of different ways. On the most basic level, genre has functioned, and continues to function, to order and systematise folkloric data in publications. This mirrors the 'espying' and objectification of genres in the field that takes place at the collecting stage (Ben-Amos 1981a: xi). There is no space here to rehearse the history of the concept of genre in folkloristics, which continues to shift and multiply as theoretical perspectives in folklore scholarship evolve, but regardless of how folklore genres are viewed, whether that be as permanent or evolving, universal or ethno-specific modes of communication, functional categories or evolutionary forms, in their scholarly construction, they represent exclusive analytical categories that posit generic boundaries.[2] This is not to say that these categories do not arise in response to discrete modes of communication that exist in the 'lore of peoples' (Ben-Amos 1981a: xxxii). However, they are all concerned with problems of referentiality, "with finding a set of referents for genre" in order to establish an ordering principle (Shuman 1993; 77). Whilst it is important to recognise the changing multidimensional nature of scholarly concepts of genre that seek to pay attention to the complexity of the phenomena they classify, we still need to take particular account of the way scholars "utilize the distribution of power, knowledge and authority" in the classification of genres (Shuman 1993: 77). This is especially the case with regard to past scholarly activities that continue to shape the field within which we operate today. The specific case of genre construction discussed below is particularly instructive as it illuminates the modes of deployment of power, knowledge and authority in relation to the existing genres of charm and prayer whilst also situating the new genre in relation to the broader categories of magic and religion.

THE CONTOURS OF THE GENRE OF 'ARCHAIC PRAYER' IN HUNGARIAN FOLKLORE SCHOLARSHIP

I draw my examples from the discourse in Hungarian folklore scholarship on a particular category of prayer that has only relatively recently received official recognition as a folklore genre. 'Archaic apocryphal folk prayer', as the genre was initially known ('apocryphal' was later dropped from the title), was defined as a genre in 1970 thanks to the work of ethnographer Zsuzsanna Erdélyi. Examples of this kind of prayer had appeared in earlier studies of religious

folklore in Eastern Europe (see Веселовский 1876, Kálmány 1891, Marian 1904 and Бессонов 1970). In these collections they had been included alongside the established genres of religious legends, hymns, carols and incantations and were subjected to the same kind of textual analysis. Scattered examples and references appear in earlier Hungarian scholarship but it was not until 1968, when Erdélyi began her systematic collection and study of what at the time was a virtually unknown oral tradition, can we really speak of the establishment or the 'institutionalisation' of the genre of 'archaic apocryphal prayer' in Hungary. She presented her findings to the Hungarian Academy, which accepted her definition of the new genre on February 11th 1970 (Erdélyi 1999: 18). Similar forms of prayer exist in many other languages and religious cultures in the region and across the rest of Europe. However, only in Hungarian scholarship has this genre received unequivocal official recognition and incorporation within the institutional folklore 'canon.' This genre of archaic prayer has generated a large and expanding body of collections as well as a number of analytical studies and essays (Erdélyi 1976, 1999, 2001, Tánczos 1995, 1999a, 1999b, 2000, Lovász 1993, 2002, Harangozó 1992, 1998, 2001, 2004, Takács 2001 amongst others) very little of which is available in other languages.[3]

Today, there is a recognition that the establishment of a distinct discipline of folklore demanded, as part of the process of legitimation, the construction of genres and that genres are therefore the product of moves by scholars attempting to shore up their 'share of the market' (Harris 1995: 510). Genre is central to the whole folkloristic endeavour. In a similar vein, in order for the Study of Religions, or the History of Religions as it is more often called in the US, to legitimate its claim to disciplinary status scholars engaged in the institutionalization of a discourse on religion as a *sui generis* category (see in particular McCutcheon 1997 and Fitzgerald 2000). Both of these moves have implications for the subsequent appropriation and positioning of charms, incantations and prayers as objects of study within the academic disciplinary framework. Religions scholars focused on the centrality of the uniqueness of the religious experience as the principle marker of a religious field whilst folklorists occupied territory inhabited by orality, tradition and the peasantry.

Harris, reflecting on the legacy of the centrality of 'genre' in folkloristics points to the recent (writing in 1995) realization that "genre is a continuous site of contestation; with the acceptance of merging, blurring, and overlapping categories of classification, folklore scholars have changed the questions they ask about the urge to classify" (Harris 1995: 510). It is important to highlight these reflections as they inform not only our understanding of the 'urge to classify' in regard to the genre of archaic prayer in 1970s Hungary (and the subsequent discourse on its relationship to the categories of magic and reli-

gion) but also the context of this publication as, in some senses, the foundational institutional platform for scholarship on Charms, Charmers and Charming.

The form of prayer under discussion here was ascribed the labels 'archaic' and 'apocryphal' for a number of reasons. The term 'archaic' is applied in the light of numerous elements that appear in the prayers that, according to Erdélyi, have their origins in the popular devotional literature from the 13th to the 15th century. The Marian laments, passion plays, Marian prayers and meditations on the Passion of Christ in the literature of medieval Christianity, much of which was also a vehicle for the emerging national 'vulgar' literatures of the period, left their mark on the prayer texts that are found in the oral traditions of many European peoples (Erdélyi 1999: 12). The spirituality that evolved due to the influence of Saint Francis of Assisi and others gradually enveloped the whole of Europe.[4] The modes of devotional practice characteristic of this period, which centred on atonement through the inner experience of the Passion of Christ and profound suffering of the Virgin Mary at the loss of her son, waned in later centuries giving them the character of 'archaisms' in relation to more recent forms of prayer. These 'archaic' elements, from the perspective of the Church, came to be considered obsolete and redundant.

Alongside these so-called 'archaic' elements some of the most popular and enduring images from the apocryphal literature of the Middle Ages also appear in these prayers, notably Marian 'dream' and 'search' motifs, the 'Holy Grail' and symbolism of the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden as the Cross of Christ (Harangozó 2004: 19). The interweaving of diverse elements from various historical strata and devotional traditions when subjected to purely 'textual' interpretations has had the effect of 'confusing' the folklorist with regard to their original 'function'. In addition, the process of 'folklorisation' in oral transmission, has rendered this form of prayer "theologically and liturgically absurd" in the eyes of many comentators (Erdélyi 1999: 33). Also, the move from a literary form to oral performance and transmission underscores the associations drawn in medieval Catholic heresiology between heresy and the *illitaratus* (Biller 1994: 3–9). These factors each contribute to the attribution of this form of prayer's second appellation of 'apocryphal.'

In addition, scholars also employ the term 'folk prayer,' or *népi ima* in Hungarian, which has the effect of aligning the tradition more closely to the field of folklore, oral tradition and the domain of the folklorist. Recourse to the orality of a genre is of course one of the principle means by which folklorists authenticate and assert their hold on classification and categorization of their objects of study (Harris 1995: 513). Harangozó, in describing the character of the genre, adds that "[Their] origin stretches back into the depths of time, the imagery as

far back as the time before written record, when traditions were reliant on a purely oral culture" (Harangozó 2004: 18).

Designating such prayers as 'folk' manifestations can have a dual effect of both 'denigrating' a suspect manifestation of popular religion in relation to true religious phenomena (the ecclesiastical perspective), or off 'elevating' this same manifestation to the status of symbolic representation of the genius of the ethnos or nation (the romantic nationalist perspective). Erdélyi expresses the relationship between these diverse dimensions of the genre of archaic prayer by starting with their origin in the wellspring in oral tradition.

> It [archahic prayer] appears as the inheritance of the oral traditional culture feeding of the historical past, a special spiritual reserve, which reveals the largely unexplored territory of folk spirituality and consciousness. (Erdélyi 1999: 13)

Harangozó goes even further when he explicitly links archaic folk prayer to a Hungarian worldview and mentality, claiming for the genre a peculiar significance for Hungarian national culture.

> Whilst being the most recently discovered, [folk] prayer is also the deepest branch of our folk culture.[…] Familiarity with prayers, and the analysis of their actions and symbolic world is indispensible for gaining an understanding of traditional Hungarian mentality, worldview and spirituality. (Harangozó 2004: 13–14)

The genre of archaic prayer is thus firmly placed within the realm of folklore and of Hungarian national culture. The canonization of the genre within the field of folklore has the effect of deemphasizing the universal pan-European dimension of this form of prayer as a manifestation of Christian culture.

THE STRUCTURE OF ARCHAIC PRAYER

Despite the incredible diversity in terms of imagery and setting, Hungarian archaic folk prayers are generally comprised of three central building blocks identified by Erdélyi (1999: 35).

1. Generally the opening is lyrical and evocative in character and includes the appearance of a divine agent and/or messenger. The character(s) are often located within a sacred landscape or interior. The opening images and symbolism may presage aspects of the narrative that follows.

2. The central section of the prayer, according to Erdélyi, is comprised of some reference to or aspect of the Passion of Christ. This 'epic-dramatic' com-

ponent of the prayers, which in the Hungarian material most often comprises of a Passion scene, in other traditions may take other forms such as Jesus' baptism in the river Jordan by John the Baptist or the suffering of the Virgin Mary at the loss of her son, or the miracle of the Resurrection. These scenes are considered to increase the experiential and emotional power of the prayers through the connection to the central dramas and transformative events of the Christian narrative.

3. The closing formula determines the precise spiritual, material or corporeal benefit to be gained by reciting the prayer. These formulas express the conditions under which clemency, the remission of sins, the alleviation of suffering or salvation can the earned. They also confer on the text authority and authenticity through the direct association of the words with a divine agent and his/her heavenly messenger.

This three-way division is not always present in precisely this form but as a general rule the presence of the closing formula indicates an overall structure of this kind and can be considered the *sui generis* marker of the genre (Erdélyi 2001: 15). The following examples illustrate this three-way construction outlined above. Both examples were collected by the author, the first is a Csángó-Hungarian prayer from the eastern Romanian province of Moldavia, the second was collected amongst the Gagauz of the Republic of Moldova.

Hond ülőre Krisztus Urunk,	*[At home] Christ our Lord,*
siralmas kertedbe,	*In your lamentable garden,*
siralmas székedbe,	*On your lamentable throne,*
térgyig vérbe,	*Up to your knees in blood,*
könyökig könyvedbe,	*Up to your ankles in tears.*
arany hajad leeresztvel,	*Your golden hair flowing down,*
s a szent lelked megőrülvel,	*and your Holy soul driven mad.*
s ugy imádkozol,	*Oh, how you pray,*
s ugy imádkozol!	*Oh, how you pray!*
Hogyne imádkójzak	*How could I not pray*
ha ki vajok írval az atyám keziből,	*If I am given over from my Father's hand,*
S bé vajok írval a zsidók kezikbe!	*And delivered into the hands of the Jews!*
Három napig idézzenek,	*For three days they question me,*
harmadnapra megfogjanak,	*On the third day they lay hands on me,*
nagy Kálvária hegyre kivigyenek,	*They take me to the great hill of Calvary,*

nagy keresztre felfeszítsenek!	*They crucify me on a big cross!*
két lábam egy vas szeget verrenek,	*They hammer an iron nail into my feet,*
két kezem két vas szeget verrenek,	*They hammer two nails into my hands,*
fejembe egy tövis koronát üssenek,	*Onto my head they push a crown of thorns,*
véremet, epémet,	*With my blood, with my liver,*
fekete födvel megitassák!	*They libate the black earth!*
Elmenj magad jó ángyelionkám, Szent Lukács,	*Go my good angel, Saint Luke,*
el híreszd ezt a keresztényeknek!	*And announce this to the Christians!*
Aki elmondja este lefektibe,	*Whoever says [this prayer] at bedtime,*
regvel felkőltibe,	*In the morning when rising,*
én nem küldöm sem az arcangyalaimot,	*I will not send my archangels,*
sem az apostolimot,	*Nor my apostles,*
hanem én magam mejek,	*But I myself will go*
s kivátom a legküssebb ujjacskáját a bűnből,	*And save him from sin even down to his little finger,*
mindörökké Ámen.	*Forever and ever, Amen.*

(Imre György, born 1919, village of Călugăreni/Kalugarén, Bacău county, Romania, recorded on 28th Sept. 1993)

Padişah giti Irusalimä	*The Lord went Jerusalem,*
Allahın evinä,	*To God's house.*
Pristolda duva etti Ayöz Angeli	*On the altar the Holy Angel prayed,*
Düşünä geldi Isus Hristozu	*A vision of Jesus Christ appeared*
Zetledilär kruçeya gerdilär	*They tortured him, crucified him,*
Ayaklarna ellernä enser Koydular,	*In his ankles and knees nails were put,*
Kanını akttılar	*They shed his blood,*
Ama zänetmedilär,	*But is wasn't wasted.*
Ayoz Angel Altın çaşkaya tutu	*The Holy Angel placed a golden cup,*
Aksın ama zän olmasın.	*That it could flow and yet not be wasted.*
Bu molitva kim bilirsaydi	*Whoever would know this prayer,*
ateştän yanmaycek,	*Will not be burned by fire,*
Sudanda bulmaycek veçnika	*And in water will never be drowned,*
Dcanı pak kurtulmuş olacek	*His soul will be clean and free,*

Hem Saabi Isus Hristos	*And our Lord Jesus Christ,*
Allahın Oolu Ad[...] beni	*The Son of God […] my*
Günahkeri.	*Sins.*
Amin.	*Amen.*

(Kristova Evdokiya Feodorovna, born 1930, village of Avdarma, *Unitatea Teritorială Autonomia Găgăuzia* (The Gagauz Autonomous Region), Republic of Moldova, recorded on 11th February 2006)

THE 'MAGICO-RELIGIOUS' CHARACTER OF ARCHAIC PRAYER

Folklorist Irén Lovász suggests that this form of archaic folk prayer described and classified by Hungarian scholarship should be regarded as 'magical prayer' and indeed much of the literature speaks of them as 'mixed' or 'syncretic' in character (Lovász 2001: 44). Such a conclusion is derived from both textual readings, Tánczos (1999a: 253) for example refers to the primacy of "magical coercive motifs" over those that are based on petition or supplication, as well as contextual ones. Erdélyi refers to the fact that in "folk consciousness" healing incantations, archaic and canonical prayers are not parcelled into separate categories but are employed in 'real life' situations as and when required regardless of the function that we read from the text (Erdélyi 1999: 798–800). However, as Tánczos states, both text and context also demonstrate that alongside any concrete goals this tradition is also "embedded in the universal, long-term religious perspective" of the Christian believer (Tánczos 1999a: 252). This tendency to equate the practical existential concerns with 'magic' and the 'folk consciousness' and universal transcendental concerns with 'religion' sets up a polarity in the cosmological 'order' that reinforces the principal metanarratives of scholarly discourse on magic and religion. There is no need to rehearse these issues in any detail here, but regardless of whether we take Frazerian, Malinowskian or Durkheimian approach, magic is always associated with practical ends by means of manipulation and command, whilst religion is considered to be based on a more genuine 'communion' with the spirit world and aims for higher 'valuable' ends (Malinowski 1984: 87–90).

In relation to charms, Éva Pócs (whose work Lovász draws on in her analysis of archaic prayer) justifies the use of the term 'magico-religious' by equating the term 'magic' to all attempts to influence something or reach a particular goal directly by the use of an incantation; she terms this the 'magic relationship.' Where the text of the charm refers to a third party intermediary in order to achieve the desired influence she describes it as a 'religious relation-

ship'. The term 'magico-religious relationship' Pócs reserves for those occasions when the charm 'refers' to a third party whilst also acting to influence directly (through the use of the charm) the given situation. Pócs points out: "Religion fought using the weapons of magic, and magic too placed in its armoury tools with a similar function to those of religion" (Pócs 2002: 176). The term 'magico-religious' is therefore used to describe a very particular set of relationships that seem to combine two apparently distinct spheres of action (Pócs 1986: 705–706).

Although this can be viewed as a useful starting point from the perspective of charm scholarship, the reliance on the propositional content of charms in this way masks the political dimension of the establishment of these categorical distinctions. The contributions of Hungarian scholars cited above seem to point to a set of common sense distinctions that are reinforced by the various scholarly fields identified above. Theologians, folklorists and social anthropologists all broadly agree that these represent some of the key polarities that distinguish 'charm as magic' from 'prayer as religion.' An examination of the relationship between the 'religious' dimension and the 'magical' dimension of the liminal genre of archaic prayer gives us a peculiarly instructive window on this particular problem of genre and classification. The implications of reading tensions between 'coersion' and 'petition' or between the 'concrete existential' and the 'universal and transcendent' in order to distinguish between genres and sub-genres only become apparent when attention is drawn to two important factors. Firstly, the particular problems attached to emic-etic distinctions in the field of folklore and secondly, the problem of power relations between agents in the religious field.

THE PROBLEM OF THE EMIC AND ETIC DISTINCTION

The term archaic prayer is of course an etic term that Hungarian folklorists have applied to a phenomena on the basis of certain distinguishing characteristics. The emic/etic distinction was first elaborated by Kenneth Pike (1967). Etic approaches are inherently classificatory, they seek to devise systems, genres, types and units that structure phenomena in such a way that they can be readily and logically analysed and compared (Dundes 1962: 101). In the field of folklore this begins with the construction of genre and progresses through ever smaller independently identifiable component motifs and units. An emic approach, on the other hand, aims at the interpretation of data in harmony with the perspective of the insider, respecting the explicit categories of the 'other.' This approach is both structural and contextual, thus: "emic units within

this theory are not absolutes in a vacuum, but rather are points in a system, and these points are defined relative to the system" (Dundes 1962: 101). This also highlights another key feature of emic categories; that is that they are transmitted through lived experience and practice rather than through explicit communication and a command of rules (Jardine 2004: 262). These two distinct standpoints from which we can describe human action have clear implications on the object of study, offering us an important perspective on the dichotomy between magic and religion in the discourse of Hungarian archaic prayer.

The particularity of explanations based on emic categories and systems, according to what Ben-Amos refers to as the 'ethnic system of genres,' generally are only applicable and valid for one religion, culture or language (Ben-Amos 1981b: 226). However, the construction of 'folklore' genres within the various European states and regions have attempted to produce categories that encompass only those emic patterns, categories and units that fit the contours of an etic national ideological system and are useful in propagating such a system. That is to say, processes, on the level of national and political discourse, overwrite local knowledge formations; that is, their meanings become subservient to an etic controlling paradigm. In the case of archaic prayer, located in the liminal space between the 'folk' and 'religion', this process is twofold as not only the actors working within the national ideological paradigm but also the agents of ecclesial institutions attempt to objectify, classify and control through the promotion of analytical categories that reinforce the etic controlling paradigm. In the case of Christian Churches, I refer of course to the doctrinal and theological perspectives enshrined in dogmas and canon law and transmitted and enforced by clerical hierarchies.

A dialogical relationship exists between the etic categories, in this case 'archaic prayer,' determined by various scholarly, ideological or ecclesial agendas, and the emic categories or native genres that distress them and ultimately render them unfit for purpose. Hungarian scholars have pointed to the problem that in the lived experience of the 'folk' 'archaic prayer' has no meaning or relevance as a category of text or mode of action (Erdélyi 1999: 798–800). The construction of the genre of archaic prayer therefore constitutes an appropriation of emic phenomena into an etic paradigm, that of national folklore scholarship. Scholarship portrays 'archaic prayer' as a normative ideal category of folklorists, and therefore by extension also of the 'folk,' when clearly emic categories do not agree with this ideal construction. In addition, folklore scholars have yet to appreciate the role they play in the construction of knowledge within the religious field (as opposed to the field of folklore scholarship)

and the political dimension of categorizations that assimilate theological and ideological standpoints unreflexively.

ARCHAIC PRAYER AS A SITE OF LINGUISTIC STRUGGLE

Lovász (2001: 42–53) has analysed Hungarian archaic prayer from a performance perspective using speech-act theory and draws attention to an important distinction. According to Searle's typology of speech acts, prayers, curses, blessings and incantations all meet certain requirements of Searle's first category of 'request'. In the case of archaic prayers an important aspect of requesting is absent – they lack a direct appeal or address to the divine agent. This might appear in the vocative, for example: 'Hail Mary' or 'Oh, sweet Jesus.' In addition, they also lack a direct appeal such as might appear in the form: 'free me', 'help me' or 'let us follow.' In Lovász's analysis, the presence of the closing formula, outlined above, and the absence of the pleading, begging or requesting typical of other forms of prayer distinguishes archaic prayer as a discrete category. In place of an appeal there appears what Zsuzsanna Erdélyi refers to as the 'causal-logical relationship', which is based on the exact external fulfilment of certain conditions in order to secure a desired result. Prayers based on this kind of premise appear to have been widespread in medieval Europe. Keith Thomas cites an example from the *Enchiridion* of Salisbury Cathedral in England that is strikingly similar in form and tone to the examples above: "Whoever sayeth this prayer following in the worship of God and St Rock shall not die of the pestilence by the grace of God." He suggests that it was the medieval Church that "weakened the fundamental distinction between prayer and charm by introducing into prayer a form of 'mechanistic manipulation' that is proper to magic" (Thomas 1991: 46–47). Erdélyi also discovered numerous historical literary precedents dating back to the 13th century for the kind of 'logical construction' that not only works automatically or mechanistically in the way Thomas describes but also connects the recitation, identification, and emotional or psychological experience of the Passion of Christ and/or the sorrow of the Virgin Mary with the closing formula in the generation or attainment of grace and merit for the person praying (Erdélyi 2001: 50). In this sense, not only the coercive tendencies of archaic prayers but also the experiential dimension of the Passion of Christ comes to be considered 'magical in character':

> The ethnographic literature has had much to say about the fact that the secret of the particular power of the 'Friday' prayers in which the Pas-

sion of Christ is recounted is magical in character seeing that every form of *imitatio Christi* – for example performing the stations of the cross, self-flagelation and in our case the verbal evocation and reliving of the Passion – has a coercive effect: the person praying receives grace before God. (Tánczos 1999a: 255)

The devotional exercise of sharing in the suffering of Christ and the Virgin Mary, which was seen as a valid component of the path to personal salvation from at least the end of the 13th century, is expressed in a concrete and causal form in these closing formulas. Not only that, the recitation of the prayers is connected to this-worldly as well as other-worldly benefits. In the examples given above we see assurances against death from drowning and fire as well as forgiveness of sins. Other prayers promise amongst other things immediate transferal to the heavenly realm upon death or foreknowledge of the hour of death.[5] Scholars of the genre, as well as clerics that have commented on this form of prayer, perceive a tension between the this-worldly material relating to existential concerns and those connected with the transcendental other-worldly concerns of the next life. Tánczos considers that "the concretization of the goal of the prayer often brings about a transformation of the relationship with the divinity in that the concrete this-worldly aims first appear in the form of a supplication or petition only to take on more coercive magical characteristics later in their development" (Tánczos 1999a: 252). This kind of appraisal, which reinforces the kind of radical separation between the two diametrical opposites labelled magic and religion, also has its roots in socio-economic conditions as we shall see below.

Attitudes toward appropriate relations with the divine expressed by folklore scholars also mirror clerical attitudes towards archaic prayer. As Erdélyi (2001: 46) explains, the clergy are commisioned to defend certain truths and their own position within the economy of salvation.

In the interests of impartiality we should state that the opposition of the church was just. Priests that were ordained to protect the purity of the faith out of necessity could attack certain component elements [of the prayers] mainly on the grounds of the 'truths' expressed in the closing formulas; in the Church's terms these are indeed truly unsanctionable prayers, which profess some kind of self-absolution: the forgiveness of sins without priest and without sacrament.

Therefore, not only are these prayers considered to be counter to church teaching in relation to personal salvation, they also undermine the role of the clergy as mediator with the divine realm.

In this regard, it is important to note that the words of the prayers are very frequently ascribed directly to holy messengers and the divine realm, and in some cases God himself. This is the case both with the narrative accounts of the Passion that are introduced and recounted in the words of variously: Mary, a holy angel, one of the saints, or Jesus himself, and the closing formulas, which are again introduced by one of these holy personages, often the same divine agent to whom the Passion narrative was recounted (Tánczos 2000: 297) and are then reiterated as originating with God or Jesus Christ himself. This characteristic of the prayers is clearly present in the Romanian closing formula below and the Hungarian Moldavian-Csángó example that follows it (already reproduced in full above):

Dumnezeu din gură, așa ziceau	*The Lord with his mouth, says thus*
Cine știe, cine spune astea trei cuvințele	*Whoever knows, whoever says these three little words,*
Aseară când culcă	*In the evening when retiring*
și dimineață când sculă	*and in the morning when rising,*
Luați sufletelul și duce și-l	*Take his soul and bear it*
în sânul lui Avraam	*To the bosom of Abraham,*
Pe loc odihneală, pe scaun de ceară	*To the place of rest, to the throne of wax.*
Amin	*Amen.*

(Hacioglu (Arabauci) Zina Georgievna, village of Vinogradovka (*Kurçu*), Odessa Oblast, Ukraine, recorded on 5th June 2006)

Aki elmondja este lefektibe,	*Whoever says [this prayer] at bedtime,*
regvel felkőtibe,	*In the morning when rising,*
én nem küldöm sem az arcangyalaimot,	*I [Jesus Christ] will not send my archangels*
sem az apostolimot,	*Nor my apostles,*
hanem én magam mejek,	*But I myself will go*
s kivátom a legküssebb ujjacskáját a bűnből,	*And save him from sin even down to his little finger,*
mindörökké Ámen.	*Forever and ever, Amen.*

This way of framing 'archaic' prayers gives them a distinctive 'immanent' and 'unmediated' quality that reinforces their authority as a direct source of blessing, protection and salvation. The closing formula speaks 'above the text', on a level Lovász refers to as 'metacommunictive,' in the sense that it communicates the terms and conditions of the text itself. This ability of the text to

speak above the text is due to the quality of agency inherent in language, the ability of the text to speak from beyond the speaker.

As Pierre Bourdieu states "authority comes to language from outside" and it is through the involvement or participation in the "authority of the institution" that invests words with their 'performative' power (Bourdieu 1994: 109). In other words, the force represented or manifested within the words of the speech act resides outside the text. In the case of the authorised speech of religious institutions this process is clearly observable. This is how it comes to pass that petition, invocation, supplication, dedication, intercession, benediction and confession constitute the legitimate modes of interaction with the divine, as these are determined by the texts of religious institutions, the instruments of clerical monopoly of relations with the divine realm. The ability of archaic prayer, however, to alter ontological reality and structure cosmological and social relations has its source, not in the religious institution, but in the correlation between the divine 'word' or 'instruction' that is embedded in the 'text.' That is to say, in the agency of language that has the ability to speak from above the text. In the case of archaic prayer, language is used to subvert or undermine the authority of the religious institution.

Pierre Bourdieu's explanation of the emergence and *modus operandi* of the religious field, which builds on Weber's typology of religious actors, describes it as a struggle between the body of priests, who seek to monopolize the means of salvation by maintaining control of secret religious knowledge, and those excluded from secret religious knowledge, the laity.

> The opposition between the holders of the monopoly on the management of the priests and the laity […] is at the heart of the opposition between the sacred and the profane and, correlatively, between legitimate manipulation (religion) and profane and profanatory manipulation (magic or sorcery) of the sacred, whether it is a question of objective profanation (i.e., of magic and sorcery as a dominated religion) or of intentional profanation (i.e., of magic as an antireligion or an inverted religion) (Bourdieu 1991: 12).

In this way, certain practices become associated in the symbolic system with legitimate action and others, often categorised as magic or superstition, are suppressed. The mechanics of the religious field therefore are responsible for determining objects excluded from this monopoly. Charms and suspect forms of prayer, become profane, illegitimate, dangerous and sinful. The power to categorize and condemn accumulates religious capital in the hands of the priestly elite. The 'mediated' aspects of religious practice controlled by the clerical hierarchy take on the character of legitimate religious action and 'unmediated'

relations with the divine, are labelled as coercion and supplication (Lovász 1993: 74–75).

Significantly, the pragmatic character of archaic prayer, the concrete this-worldly goals and coercive techniques, according to Bourdieu, therefore merely reflect the genuine concerns and 'spiritual arsenal' of the disadvantaged or impoverished social classes who occupy a "dominated position in the relations of material and symbolic power" (Bourdieu 1991: 12). That is to say, the association of concrete or specific goals and coercion and manipulation of spiritual powers with magic is the by-product of a social and economic system that divests large portions of the population of symbolic power. The survival of archaic prayer represents a "resistance, that is, the expression of a refusal to allow oneself to be deprived of the instruments of religious production" (Bourdieu 1991: 12).

In this way, the authority invested in the religious language of institutions has determined the structure of scholarly discourse on archaic prayer. Prayer and charm, following the logic or Bourdieu's argument, are Christian constructs in so far as they emerged out of the struggle for power and monopoly of access to religious capital within a particular European socio-economic context. The use of language by non-clerical agents (the 'folk'), in the form of archaic prayer and charms, that can be seen to represent a struggle to maintain a relationship to the means of production of religious capital (access the religious elite seeks to divest them of) are excluded from the religious field through their association with magic. The categories and genres produced by ecclesial, folklore and religionist discourses, out of the perceived liminality of what can be termed the 'folk religious' field (Passalis 2010), are the continuing site of this linguistic struggle. In the form they take as objectified genres of folklore scholarship, archaic prayers and charms represent the repressed, yet constitutive, dimension returning to disturb the categorical constructs of 'religion' and 'prayer'.

CONCLUSION

The literature on charms and archaic prayer in Hungarian is extensive. I have only been able to draw on limited examples in outlining the emergence, contours and character of the genre as they are elucidated in Hungarian scholarship. The critique I have presented, as indicated in the introduction, is intended to offer a view from the margins of both disciplinary and categorical boundaries. The principle observation I make here is that the tendency to equate practical existential concerns with 'magic' and the 'folk consciousness'

and universal transcendental concerns with 'religion' sets up dichotomies in the cosmological 'order' that are constructed and reinforced by the authority of scholarly discourse.

In relation to the discourse on archaic prayer, the process of genre formation represents a site of struggle that emerged out of the imperative within folkloristics to 'shore-up' territory within the academic field. This was achieved by simultaneously embracing the genre as a reflection of the genius of the 'folk' (distinct in terms of nation, ethnos and language) whilst assimilating ecclesiastical discourses on the nature of the distinction between charm and prayer and magic and religion.

At the same time, recourse to the emic/etic distinction within the discourse on archaic prayer has the effect of masking the process by which emic categories and phenomena are overwritten by meanings proper to an etic controlling paradigm (national folklore scholarship) that perpetuates the representation of the genre as liminal and peripheral. Locating it at the margins is perhaps one means of preventing the genre potentially disrupting the 'impervious' categories at the core of the competing fields of folklore scholarship and the academic study of religion. I am not calling here for scholars to abandon etic categories in favour of a sole recourse to native taxonomies or ethnic genres. Rather, I simply seek to draw attention to the fact that scholarly reference to and recourse to emic categories constitutes in itself a manifestation of the agency of scholarly actors and as such contributes to the construction of the 'folk religious field' by scholarly actors. The 'espying' and objectification of folk religious phenomena, the identification of ethnic taxonomies or native genres, the construction of ideal types and universal categories all actualise the objects of 'folk religion' in scholarly discourse.

The 'moves' outlined above may appear to reflect a process of natural ordering, a useful and convenient way of categorising phenomena that allows us to map and correlate our data. Indeed, the construction of the genre of 'archaic prayer' is demonstrably based on distinctive features and structural patterns. However, it is the conceptual ordering of the genre in relation to the categories of magic and religion and charm and prayer that delimits and determines considerably the scope and perspective of our 'interpretive possibilities' (Shevzov 2003: 59). The categories that we ourselves institute through various legitimating moves (such as the establishment of this journal) determine how the field of knowledge is ordered. Irén Lovász, in first pointing to the saliency of Pierre Bourdieu's work on the structure of the religious field in relation to archaic prayer – in particular the processes by which acts of exclusion within the religious system are responsible for the production and construction of suppressed categories of magic and charm – has opened up a new and poten-

tially rich conceptual resource for scholarship on the social study charms and charming. Bourdieu's representation of religion as a monopolistic system of symbolic domination, competitive and economic in its framing and terminology, has received mixed reception in religions scholarship. However, on the level of both discourse analysis on genre within charm scholarship and in regard to micro-discourse analysis of the speech acts of charmers, Bourdieuan social thought, through its appreciation of the significance of the power, agency and authority of language, carries in my view considerable analytical leverage.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NOTES

[1] I am indebted to Henk de Roest for these insights regarding the creative potential of the margins.

[2] For an overview of the state of folklore scholarship on genre up to the 1980s see Ben-Amos 1981a.

[3] The Transylvanian Hungarian scholar Vilmos Tánczos has compiled a bibliography of works on Hungarian archaic prayer and closely related areas that exceeds twenty pages. Of these, only a couple have appeared in other languages most notably 'The Manifestations of 'szent' in Traditional Prayers of Moldavia and Gyimes' (Tanczos 1999) and 'Gli strati arcaici della poesia religiosa populare ungherese' (Erdélyi 1998). Dömötör Tekla also dedicates a couple of pages to discussing folk prayers in *Hungarian Folk Beliefs*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 216–221.

[4] The route and mode of transmission of this particular expression of spirituality between Catholic West and Orthodox East has been the source of some debate. Most scholarship dealing with this issue has centred on the dissemination of the apocryphal legend The Dream of the Mother of God. Various theories have sought to explain the widespread nature of this tradition through reference to the wandering *Flagelanti*, the penitent brotherhoods of the 13th century and the later *Laudesi* confraternities of the 13th-14th century. For a brief summary of these debates see Orosz (1992).

[5] It is interesting to note at this point that the popularity of closing formulas of this kind appears to coincide with the new emphasis on and the increase in significance in popular religious practice of the doctrine purgatory that came in the 14th century (See Eliade 1975: 207).

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Incantatio

An International Journal on
Charms, Charmers and Charming

Issue 1

Contents

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first issue of Incantatio. This peer-reviewed journal is the natural outcome of the recent upsurge in charms studies, as illustrated, for example, by the activities of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research's Committee on Charms, Charmers, and Charming (http://www.isfnr.org). It is intended that Incantatio will be a lively forum for charms studies from a wide variety of traditions and scholarly approaches rather in the manner that Proverbium fulfills this role in paremological studies. Some of the range we hope to cover will be indicated by the contents of this our first issue, where we have articles on both medieval and (near-)contemporary charms, both European and North American material, and both close readings and theoretical interventions. Alongside such articles, we intend to published reports of conferences (or conference sessions) and reviews of books which touch on charms, charmers and charming.

The general editor of Incantatio is Mare Kõiva (mare@folklore.ee), who is also editor of the Electronic Journal of Folklore (http://www.folklore.ee/folklore). In addition, each issue will have a guest editor. For this first issue this role is being played by Jonathan Roper. We look forward to informative and productive developments in charms studies appearing the pages of Incantatio.

Mare Kõiva and Jonathan Roper