

## FOLKLORE IN I.A. BUNIN'S WORKS

The problem of “I.A. Bunin and Folklore” cannot be considered as a new or unexplored in the case of Russian literary studies. The article by E.V. Pomerantseva entitled *Folklore in the Prose Works by I.A. Bunin* [7: p. 14–43] is among the first scholarly works on the subject and still remains one of the best in this field. V.E. Gusev, in his foreword to the book by E.V. Pomerantseva *Writers and Oral Storytellers*, stated that *E.V. Pomerantseva drew attention to the multiplicity and permanence of the writer's interests in folk arts, highlighted, in effect, Bunin's almost scholarly precision in the treatment of folkloric sources, summarized his views on Russian folklore for the first time, and profoundly analyzed the method of artistic assimilation applied by the writer to folkloric-poetical images* [7: p. 10–11].

E.V. Pomerantseva, however, did not seek to provide a systematized characteristic of Bunin's folkloric renderings and allusions, being, in particular, restricted by the framework of a small article. In addition, the scholar, examining the role of folklore in Bunin's works, did not take into account his poetry, correspondence, as well as his diary notes of 1918–1919 known as *Cursed Days*; in the last case, the omission was caused by censorship, which couldn't be avoided at the time of writing this article, i.e. in the 1970s. And even earlier, before E.V. Pomerantseva's article was written and published, a wide range of facts about the influence of folklore on Bunin's works had been detected and described by the scholars, but more often these data are connected with the writer's language and style treated predominantly from the linguistic point of view [1; 2].

In our article, we will try to systematize this great and diverse material (of course, limiting ourselves to a preliminary analysis), to touch upon the range of the

folkloric sources employed by the writer for his creative purposes, as well as to compare Bunin's theoretical views on folklore with his artistic practice.

First of all, it should be noted that Bunin used almost all folkloric genres in his works. He is fond of archaic folklore and so he frequently refers to folkloric superstitious beliefs, fortune-telling, sorcery, verbal spells, calendar ritual poetry, and family ritual poetry in his prose works as well as in his own poems. Thus, in the poem entitled *The Poison* (1913), the daughter-in-law uses the assistance provided by a magician to kill her *mother-in-law the mistress*:

*I've gave my jewelry to a magician in the pine forest,  
I've made a beverage using honey and a sweet root [3: I, p. 359]<sup>1</sup>.*

The information about the traditional custom to resort to a magician in order to make a poison may be found in the book by M. Zabylin entitled *The Russian People. Its Customs, Rites, Traditions, Beliefs, and Poetry* (1880): *Being generously gifted, a magician never says no to anything, though he can pretend a little, but only to give a potion of any kind at last <...>. As a result, the man, who has received a portion from the hands of his protector, adds it to his foe's drinking or food and so, at long last, the poison's quality will produce its effect* (here and throughout the emphasis is made by M. Zabylin—*S.D.*) [11: p. 213].

At the end of the poem, the heroine resorts to the ancient custom to keen a dead person (i.e., to the folkloric lamentations) so that no one will think that she poisoned her mother-in-law: *Oh, how I will cry, wail, here, behind the church!..* [3; I, p. 359].

The belief in the magic power of wizard brews is also characteristic for Bunin's poem entitled according to its first line *Give Me Love Potions, Granny...* (1920) [3: VIII, p. 31] where a grandson addresses his grandmother, seemingly a sorceress, so as to win the heart of a fair maiden using a specific philter, which she can make.

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<sup>1</sup> Here and throughout (except specifically defined cases) the poems are cited in our word-for-word translation, i.e. regardless their original meter and rhyme structure—*A.P.*

As is well known, Bunin's short novel *Dry Valley* (1912) pictures the Khrushchev family belonging to the ancient hereditary nobility, demonstrates the bygone fascination of the country estates, and yet renders the bleak images of the contemporary *homes of the gentry* in their miscellaneous and fleeting everyday life; to achieve these artistic purposes, Bunin extensively uses, among other things, various genres of East Slavonic folklore—from the ancient legends and oral historical tales (including in particular the legend about St. Mercury of Smolensk) to Russian and Ukrainian songs, proverbs, and popular sayings. Speaking about the oral works employed by the writer and their genre diversity, we should especially point out Bunin's sustained interest in magical folklore, sorcery, ancient verbal spells and incantations.

The image of the *famous* Klim Yerokhin, *a wizard from the village of Chermashnoye*, plays an important role in the short novel; this person is paradoxically described as *a very practical owner and, usually, a very rational and clearly speaking man but the one transfigured immediately into a kind of magus beside the diseased* [3: III, p. 174–175]. Similarly, the process of healing the young lady through incantations, the spells against melancholy, and *the handkerchief containing some magical little bones* is minutely described in this literary work: “*Dejection, dejection!*” he (i.e., Klim—S.D.) *exclaimed with the unexpected force and formidable power. “You go, dejection, to the dark forests—your place is there!” “On the sea, on the ocean,” he mumbled in a vague sinister manner, “on the sea, on the ocean, on the Buyan Island, there lies a bitch, on the bitch, lies a grey dress...*” [3: III, p. 175].

Bunin demonstrates with exceptional imaginative power the impact of the popular beliefs on the common people, including the *storyteller* Natalia, a heroine of the short novel: *And Natalia felt that there can be no more terrible words than these ones, which had immediately transported all her soul somewhere to the edge of a wild, fabulous, and primordially rude world* [3: III, p. 175–176]. It is not

coincidental, therefore, that the heroine literally repeats the incantations of the wizard Klim at the terrible moment of her life, being under some sort of delusion or drowsiness: *On the sea, on the ocean, on the Buyan Island—she began to whisper while she rushed back and sensed quite well that these magic worlds are perditionous for her.—There lies a bitch, on the bitch, lies a grey dress...* [3; III, p. 181]. Let's remind ourselves that this episode takes place before the coming of the scoundrel and *former monk* Yushka, who then rapes Natalia on the cold floor of the antechamber.

Bunin's interest in verbal spells could be substantiated by his extractions (made about 1911–1913) from the different folkloric compendiums, including those ones assembled by E.V. Barsov, P.N. Rybnikov and, above all, P.V. Kireyevsky (*The Songs Collected by P.V. Kireyevsky. A New Series*. [Issue 1. – Moscow, 1911; in Russian]). One of these extractions (presenting a text of the groomsman's verbal spell) is entitled by the writer in the following peculiar way: = *The Lessons—the Incantations against Porcha* (i.e., the sickness brought on by magic—A.P.); *these Incantations should be Recited by the Groomsman in a Bathhouse so that to Protect the Groom*. And then Bunin provides the full text of the verbal spell where the same incantation formulas as in the short novel *Dry Valley* could be easily discerned (by the way, these formulas are also typical for the traditional story-teller's introductions to the folkloric fairy tales): *And there is the white Latyr stone, and it lies on the sea, on the ocean, on the Buyan Island* [12: p. 402].

Calendar ritual poetry is also important for Bunin's literary works. Thus, the characteristically entitled poem *St. Peter's Day* (1906) provides a whole series of weather lore sayings (*On St. Peter's day, / A hot sun of God plays in the sky, / So the roads will be impassable, / The dust and drought will reign till St. Elijah's day*) [3: III, p. 265], as well as depicts a number of rites and popular beliefs connected with the sun and mythological characters:

*You rusalka girls,  
This day is your last!  
The light rises behind the forest,  
The sky has already become pale,  
The peasants with cudgels  
Are going from the villages  
To the glade, to the dove-colored sea  
Of the cold oat... [3: I, p. 264].*

All the images and descriptions rendered in this poem could be properly characterized as ethnographically correct and fully consistent with the calendar rites of St. Peter's Day, the rites which are also known as *Petrovki* in some regions of Russia: *A feverish activity starts in the villages on Petrovki; it consists in the **toloki** and **pomochi**, i.e. in the haymaking and spreading manure on the fields <...>. St. **Peter's** Day is the beginning of the "**Peter's hot season**" [11: p. 83–84] (see the poem cited above: *A hot sun of God plays in the sky*). The *rusalka girls* mentioned by Bunin are also connected with the rites and songs of St. Peter's Day: *the warding charms against rusalkas were among the purposes of the "watching for the sun" rite performed on St. Peter's Day* [9: p. 604].*

Weather lore sayings are frequent in the short story *Antonov Apples* and have a significant role to play here. Reflecting on the destiny of the landed gentry in this work (where the lyrical principle prevails in the narration), Bunin creates a particular atmosphere using folklore to a large extent. L.A. Kolobayeva analyses this short story in her book *The Prose Works of I.A. Bunin* and makes the following conclusion: *The form of artistic **time** (here and throughout the emphasis is made by L.A. Kolobayeva—S.D.) chosen by the writer perfectly meets the free flow of emotions and brilliantly conveys the sadness caused by the vanishing life of the country estates; this seemingly plain form of artistic time could, in fact, be regarded as extremely free, open, and natural. It is, so to speak, an organic time, a*

*chronicle of the nature itself, marked off in months, like in the case of the calendar* [5: p. 27].

And since the people have their own calendar, the weather lore sayings are quite natural and organic in the short story: *Autumn and winter live well together when Lavrenty waters* (as Bunin himself pointed out in the beginning of the short story, the holiday of St. Lavrenty fell on the middle of August in that year and was accompanied by the *warm, light rainfall—S.D.) are calm and rainfall light* (trans. by Robert Bowie) [for the Russian original see: 3: II, p. 179] (see also V.I. Dal: *On the St. Lavrenty feast, there is a custom to see at the water at noon: if the water is calm, autumn will be calm too, and winter will be without blizzards* [8: p. 891]); *When cobwebs* (there is the folkloric-colloquial word *tententic* in the Russian original, meaning *gossamer* or *cobweb*, as Bunin himself pointed out above—*S.D.*) *abound in Indian summer, autumn will be fruitful* (trans. by Robert Bowie) [for the Russian original see: 3: II, p. 179] (see also V.I. Dal: *If there is a lot of cobwebs [tententic] in the Indian summer, autumn will be serene and winter will be cold* [8: p. 893]). Finally, there is another weather lore saying at the beginning of the second chapter, the one decisive for the whole stylistic mood of the short story: *A fruitful Antonov means a fortunate year* (trans. by Robert Bowie) [for the Russian original see: 3: II, p. 182].

Family ritual poetry (particularly with regard to the nuptial and the burial rites) plays a significant role in Bunin's literary works. Thus, the poem *Khristya* (1908) poetically recreates the second part of the nuptial rite, i.e. the so called *sgovor* (marriage contract ceremony), which consisted in the *oglasheniye* (announcement) of the forthcoming wedding, as well as in the first official meeting of the bride and groom. The *sgovor* presupposed that the relatives from the both families (i.e., from the bride's and groom's) were to be invented, while the bride was supposed to cry bitterly and wail. At the same time, all the village women who had come to the *sgovor* as viewers were to sing songs. During this ceremony, the

bride was meant to be wearing festive and smart clothes and then to be *drank away*, i.e. given to the groom, away from here old home. So it was no coincidence that the *sgovor* was sometimes called *propoy* (i.e., *the drinking away* or *the squander*). It is quite logical to assume that Bunin was well aware of the *sgovor* and reflected some of its features in his poem:

*On sgovor, Khristya treats the dolls to the festive food—  
Here, behind a steppe hut, in the dry watermelon fields...*

*The neighbors have come to the “old woman” Khristya,  
They drink her daughter away—they drink tea and vodka,  
The daughter wears a multicolored skirt and a necklace,  
All the women take pity in her—and they sing and sing! [3: I, p. 315].*

Bunin’s poem characteristically entitled *The Bride (I was unbraiding my maidenly hair...)* (1915) depicts the amorous thoughts of the heroine *on the night before the wedding* [3: I, p. 371–372] and renders the custom to unweave bride’s plait on the eve of the marriage ceremony.

In the first edition of the short story *Kastriuk* (1895), the protagonist’s memory conjures up *the old days* with their merry praise (or glorifying) wedding songs: *But these marry “glorifying” yard songs—the ones his forefathers had already sang—like the following one:*

*Sir, tell to prepare a carriage,  
To harness twelve horses to it,  
Let the horses will be richly adorned,  
Let the footmen will be dressed up...—*

*didn’t seem to match with his mood and he broke them off with a bitter smile* [3: II, p. 491]. It is also significant that the hero’s nickname is taken from an old folkloric song and Bunin especially underlines this moment in his short story: *“Well, Kastriuk (the old man was called so by the whole village, since he, being a little*

*drunk, liked to sing the old marry little songs about Kastriuk), well, Kastriuk... don't be sad...*” [3: II, p. 21].

The short novel *The Village* (1910) depicts the ancient custom to put bride's hair into a braid, which was a symbol of the maidenly life: *The peasant women of Durnovka wear “horns” on their heads: immediately after the wedding they coil their braided hair on the crown of the head and cover it with a kerchief, which produces a queer effect, similar to the horns of a cow* (trans. by Isabel Hapgood) [for the Russian original see: 3: III, p. 31].

Moreover, at the end of the short novel, I.A. Bunin even renders the main points of the wedding rite (from the matchmaking to the wedding feast), as well as the folkloric songs, sayings, and wedding lamentations that accompany the nuptial ceremony. It is noteworthy that the whole rite is portrayed as if seen by Kuzma Krasov, since precisely this hero upholds those moral principles, which are extremely important for the author himself.

Kuzma acts as a Bride's father during the wedding ceremony, though the whole situation produces in him some kind of uneasiness. Playing such a role, Kuzma is supposed to receive Deniska and his father when they come to ask for the bride's hand. The matchmaking is carried out in accordance with the traditional rite and is accompanied by various periphrases. Initially, Deniska's father (also known as *Sery*, which means “the Grey Man”) speaks up: *“Matchmaker or not, yet a fine man” began Sery without haste, in an unusually easy and pleasant tone. “You have an adopted daughter to marry off. I have a son who wants a wife. In good agreement, for their happiness, let us discuss the matter between us.”* <...> *And he made a low, stately reverence* (trans. by Isabel Hapgood) [for the Russian original see: 3: III, p. 126]. After the Bride and Deniska had expressed their consent to the marriage, *...the two matchmakers exchanged congratulations on the affair having been begun* (trans. by Isabel Hapgood) [for the Russian original see: 3: III, p. 126].



Realizing the absurdity of this wedding and the fact that the Bride is forced to marry this *cynical beast* Deniska, Kuzma experiences heartache and sometimes even terror; the Bride—virtually a widow in this situation—feels similar emotions: *Kuzma glanced at the Bride; and in their eyes, which met for an instant, there was a flash of horror* (trans. by Isabel Hapgood) [for the Russian original see: 3: III, p. 130]. Nevertheless, the rite goes on being often accompanied by the songs and lamentations that correspond with each episode of the wedding ceremony, as is customary for the common people. At first, Odnodvorka (the person who acts as a master of ceremonies during the matchmaking rite) ...*started to sing in a high, sharp voice, glancing the while at Deniska, at his sallow face and long eyelashes:*

*“When in our little garden,  
Amid our grape vines green,  
There walked and roamed a gallant youth,  
Comely of face, and white, so white...”*

(trans. by Isabel Hapgood; with our minor corrections according to the Russian original—A.P.) [for the Russian original see: 3: III, p. 126].

This scene’s ironic absurdity is intentionally emphasized by Bunin, since Deniska’s *sallow face* and the traditional image of the *comely* and *white* bridegroom don’t go together at all; we must remember, however, that the image of bridegroom (like that of bride) is always rendered as ideal in the folkloric works. See, for example, the following song from the wedding rite (or, more correctly, from its verbal accompaniment) written down by P.I. Yakushkin:

*And Vasilyushka has flaxen curls,  
Ay, da li–lyay, lyali–lyay–lyali,  
They are just to lie on Dmitrich’s shoulders,  
On his shoulders, on his white face,  
On his white face, on his rosy face... [10: p. 97].*

In *The Village*, the so-called *devichnik* (a bachelorette party or, according to Isabel Hapgood's translation, a  *betrothal feast*), the most poetical and emotion part of the wedding rite, is also accompanied by songs and lamentations: ...*Domashka, a lame girl with a dark, malicious, and intelligent face ... had struck up in a rough, hoarse voice the ancient "exaltation" (i.e., praise or glorifying—A.P.) song:*

*"At our house in the evening, fully evening,  
At the very last end of the evening,  
At Avdotya's betrothal feast..."*

*In a dense, discordant chorus the maidens repeated her last words. And all turned toward the Bride. She was sitting, in accordance with custom, by the stove, her hair flowing loose, her head covered with a large dark shawl; and she was bound to answer the song with loud weeping and wailing: "My own dear father, my own mother dear, how am I to live forevermore thus grieving with woe in marriage?" But the Bride uttered never a word. And the maidens, having finished their song, involuntarily regarded her askance. They began to whisper among themselves, and, frowning, they slowly, in a drawling tone, struck up the "orphan's song":*

*"Heat yourself hot, you little bath,  
Ring out, you sonorous bell!"*

(trans. by Isabel Hapgood) [*for the Russian original see: 3: III, p. 129*].

As always, Bunin is ethnographically correct here in the selection of songs and lamentations intended precisely for *devichnik*. See, for example, the corresponding lines from a song written down by P.N. Rybnikov in the Olonets Governorate:

*Heat yourself hot, you little bath of mine,  
Flame yourself up, you stove damp!* [6: p. 268].

As in the case of traditional *devichnik*, where songs and lamentations were supposed to alternate with each other reaching their expressive maximum at the end of this part of the wedding rite, the dramatic tension is intensified in *The*

*Village*, and such intensification can be discerned from episode to episode (most notably, in the last scenes of the short novel). This artistic effect is conveyed through the tragic motifs of songs and lamentations, felt correspondingly by the main characters of the literary work: *And Kuzma's tightly clenched jaws began to quiver; a chill darted through his head and his legs; his cheekbones ached agreeably, and his eyes were filled and dimmed with tears. The Bride wrapped herself up in the shawl and suddenly began to shake with sobs.*

*"Stop that, you girls!" someone shouted.*

*But the girls did not obey:*

*"Ring out, you sonorous bell,*

*Awaken my father dear..."*

*And the Bride began, with a groan, to fall face down on her knees, on her arms, and choked with tears* (trans. by Isabel Hapgood; with our minor corrections according to the Russian original—*A.P.*) [*for the Russian original see: 3: III, p. 129*].

If the Bride was an orphan (as in the case of *The Village*), songs about orphanage had a special place in the complicated ritual structure of *devichnik* and were important for its poetical mood. According to the folkloric records and notes made by the writer, Bunin was especially interested in these (i.e., *orphan's*) songs. Thus, extracting passages from the book *The Songs Collected by P.V. Kireyevsky. A New Series* (Volume 1, 1911), Bunin copies out the *Song of an Orphan just before Walking Down the Aisle* with particular care and attention, maybe because it originates from his native Oryol Governorate. In any case, the excerpts from this song are almost similar to those presented in the short novel:

*At girls' night it was,*

*At the great joy...*

*I t e n d s h e r e* (Bunin's remark—*S.D.*)

*You go to the cathedral, to the church,  
Ring the huge great bell,  
Arouse my **own** father  
And my **own** mother... [12: p. 404]*

(The emphasis is made on the words, which was underlined by Bunin in his manuscript.—*S.D.*).

Extracting passages from the book *The Songs Collected by P.N. Rybnikov* (second edition.—Moscow, 1909–1910. Volume III. P. 22; in Russian), Bunin again pays special attention to the lamentations of the Orphaned Bride, which, as regards their main motifs, could be compared with the lamentations from the short novel *The Village*:

*Oh, you brothers, you bright falcons!  
You go to the God's church,  
You ring the bell thrice!  
Split yourself up, you mother damp earth!  
Open yourself wide, you coffin lid,  
Unwrap yourself, you gold brocade!  
You rise, my father, my sire! [12: p. 417].*

The “ransom” scene (i.e., the one where a “ransom” should be paid for the Bride) provides a vivid contrast to the Bride’s and girls’ lamentations, being, like all the other scenes, rendered in strict accordance with the real Russian wedding rites. Usually, the groomsman (or the *best man* according to Isabel Hapgood’s translation) exchanged traditional sayings, jokes, and periphrases with the bridesmaids. Here is an example of such a dialog taken from P.V. Schein’s compendium *The Great Russians in Their Songs, Rites, Customs, and Beliefs...: G r o o m s m e n: What kind of people are you? G i r l s: We are faithful little servants of the young princess. G r o o m s m e n: Where is the princess, then? Why*

*is she not dressed up? Why doesn't she sit at the table? Girls: Our princess is in a steamy bathhouse, under a silk bath-broom. Groomsman: Empty a room for us... Girls: Give us the golden coins! (Groomsmen cast the coppers) [4: p. 533].*

In *The Village*, this wedding play is rendered in a manner similar to the traditional rites: *The bridegroom arrived with Vaska, Yakoff's son <...> Vaska, his best man, in red shirt and knee-length fur coat worn unbuttoned, entered, frowned, and darted a sidelong look at the ceremonial girls.*

*"Stop that yowling!" he said roughly and added what was customary: "Get out of here. Begone!"*

*The girls answered him in chorus: "Without the Trinity a house cannot be built, without four corners a cottage cannot be roofed. Place a ruble at each corner, a fifth ruble in the middle, and a bottle of vodka." Vaska pulled a bottle out of his pocket and set it on the table (trans. by Isabel Hapgood; with our minor corrections according to the Russian original—A.P.) [for the Russian original see: 3: III, p. 129–130].*

And since the groomsman is also supposed to act as a master of ceremonies, it is precisely Vaska who is in charge of the last preparations for the bride's and bridegroom's departure for the church, where the sacrament of marriage should be administered by the priest: *"Ugh, damn it all!" exclaimed Vaska as he ducked his head and took his seat beside the bridegroom. And he shouted roughly, indifferently, into the teeth of the storm: "Messrs. boyars, bestow your blessing on the bridegroom, that he may go in search of his bride!"*

*Someone made answer: "May God bless him."*

*Then the sleighbells began to wail, the runners to screech; the snowdrifts, as the runners cut through them, turned to smoke and small whirlwinds; the forelocks, manes, and tails of the horses were blown to one side. . . (trans. by Isabel Hapgood; with our minor corrections according to the Russian original—A.P.) [for the Russian original see: 3: III, p. 131].* The idea of universal homelessness and

doom, the sense of impending catastrophe are incarnated in this image of horses' motion, when, in the vast and terrible blizzard, the animals drag their harness striving to run aside.

The description of the wedding rite is crowned by the most popular praise song performed by the wife of Vanka Krasny: *The blizzard was even more terrible in the twilight. And they whipped up their horses especially smartly driving home, and the loud-mouthed wife of Vanka Krasny stood upright in the leading sledge and danced like a shaman, flourishing her handkerchief and screeching to the gale, through the dark, raging turmoil, through the snow which whipped against her lips and drowned her wolf's voice:*

*“The dove, the grey dove,  
Has a head of gold.”*

(trans. by Isabel Hapgood; with our minor corrections according to the Russian original—A.P.) [for the Russian original see: 3: III, p. 132].

The final episodes of the short novel are characterized by the alarming atmosphere conveyed through the landscape images, including those of blizzard, snowstorm, and rough wind: the wedding ceremony is accompanied by the tension of the elements. Hence, the author's "remarks" or "notes" detailing the tragedy of the Bride and determining the mood of the characters who perform songs and traditional lamentations: *had struck up in a **rough**, hoarse voice the ancient "exaltation" song* (here and throughout the emphasis is ours—S.D.); *she* (i.e., the Bride—S.D.) *was bound to answer the song with **loud** weeping and wailing; they slowly, in a drawling tone, struck up the "orphan's song"; the Bride wrapped herself up in the shawl and suddenly began to shake with sobs; and he shouted **roughly, indifferently**, into the teeth of the storm; ...**screeching** to the gale ... through the snow which whipped against her lips and drowned her **wolf's** voice.*

Funeral lamentations (which, along with wedding ones, are a part of family ritual poetry) could be also discerned in *The Village*. It may be recalled that the

funeral ceremonial rite was always closely connected with folkloric laments or lamentations in which the influence of poetical tradition played a greater role, as can be seen from the use of traditional images, artistic symbols, and compositional devices. The brutal life of Durnovka, the savage customs of its people, the disgusting relations in peasant families, the mutual hatred between husbands and wives—all of this is connected with the tragical story of the Bride's broken life, with her inner drama. Being suspected by Tikhon and all the Durnovka inhabitants of poisoning her husband, the Bride as if overacts in displaying her emotions at the funeral of Rodka, behaves herself, from the peoples' point of view, *positively indecent*. And Bunin, knowing full well the aesthetics and traditions of funeral lamentations, explains in his work why such excessive feelings are considered as disreputable: *When they buried Rodka, the Bride wailed so sincerely as she followed the coffin that it was positively indecent—for, of course, that wailing should not be an expression of the feelings, but the fulfillment of a rite...* (trans. by Isabel Hapgood; with our minor corrections according to the Russian original—A.P.) [for the Russian original see: 3: III, p. 41].

But if *The Village* conveys only an impression of the funeral lament performed by the Bride, the short story entitled *The Bad Grass* (1913) includes a whole passage from the folkloric lamentation intended for a daughter mourning over her father. Averky, a hero of the short story, is dying, and he sees the following scene in his delirium: *...there is a summer day, a summer evening in the green fields; there is a slope outside the village, and on it—his grave... But who's weeping, wailing over the grave so loudly, so eerily?*

*“Oh my own father, what you have decided, what you have done to us? Who's going to grieve over us now, who's going to cherish us? Oh my own father, I've walked past our yard: no one welcomed me, no one greeted me! Oh father, I used to walk past ye—and ye welcomed me, ye greeted me! Break out, you thunder, inflame, you lightning, split yourself up, you mother damp earth! Blow,*

*you unbridled winds, scatter the gold sepulchral brocade, throw open the father of mine!”*

*“Ah, it’s my daughter!” Averky thought happily, tenderly, and a sweet vague hope began to flicker inside his heart... [3: IV, p. 150].*

The folkloric lamentation rendered by Bunin in *The Bad Grass* contributes to the recreation of Russian national mentality and cannot be perceived as tragical or totally desperate. On the contrary, the scene is imbued with a quiet sadness. Averky passes away without a fear of dying, and, being aware of the near decease, submits himself to the universal law, which presupposes that both nature and humankind are mortal. The hero dies as quietly as the grass of the field, and we know that the grass droops and wilts only to make room for new, virginal, and fresh sprouts. Thus, the finale clarifies the meaning of the short story’s title, as well as the sense of the folk proverb used by the writer as an epigraph for his work: *No mercy on the weeds!* (i.e., those that are harmful or not needed should be removed).

There are a lot of other folkloric genres in Bunin’s works, including bylinas, fairy tales, folk songs, proverbs, popular sayings, and chastushkas; all of them are rendered artistically by the writer, in an extensive and diverse manner, with a deep insight into the world of folk poetry. But it is an object and material for future studies.