

<b>R E V I E W</b>
--------------------

E. V. Barsov. Prichitan'ia Severnogo kraia, sobrannye E. V. Barsovy [Laments of the Northern Region collected by E. V. Barsov]. Prepared by B. E. Chistova and K. V. Chistov. 2 vols. St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1997. Literaturnye pamiatniki. 500 + 655 pp.

Among the numerous “classic” collections of Russian folklore that have been republished during the last decade some are simply reprints while others involve textual analysis and informative commentary. The work under review represents an outstanding example of the second type. The two volumes consist of funeral, recruit, and wedding laments, several pieces by E. V. Barsov, extensive textological notes and commentary, an article by K. V. Chistov about laments (I, 400-495), a linguistic study of the language of laments by the dialectologist A. S. Gerd (II, 603-618), and a glossary of non-literary words. While most of the laments were recorded by Barsov from Irina Andreevna Fedosova (1827-1899; I, 420-21), a few, which have been added to this edition, were collected from her by O. Kh. Agreneva-Slavianskaia (Opisanie russkoi krest'ianskoi svad'by, 3 vols., St Petersburg, 1887-89). Several photographs have been included.

Barsov (1836-1917) recorded laments from 1867 to 1869 in the north-western city of Petrozavodsk (I, 429), mainly from Fedosova but also from several other women performers, and published the texts in three parts (I, 496). The first (1872) contains funeral laments, the second recruit laments (1882), and the third (1885) wedding laments. The third appeared in two issues of the series “Chteniia v Obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh” and inexplicably breaks off in the middle of a wedding song. Almost since the appearance of the first volume Barsov's collection has been regarded as a fundamental source of information about Russian laments. Not only did it evoke responses from scholars, writers, and cultural figures in Russia, but also from abroad, including the English scholar W. P. Ralston (I, 271-273).

K. V. Chistov, a folklorist who often combines the study of folklore and ethnography, has written many articles and two books about Fedosova (Narodnaia poetessa I. A. Fedosova, Petrozavodsk, 1955, and Irina Andreevna Fedosova: Istoriko-

kul'turnyi ocherk, Petrozavodsk, 1988). In his essay “‘Prichitan’ia Severnogo kraia, sobrannye E. V. Barsovy, v istorii russkoi kul’tury” [Laments of the Northern region collected by E. V. Barsov in the history of Russian culture], Chistov places Barsov’s collection in its historical and cultural context. In his essay and endnotes Chistov also provides a many-sided commentary about the role of myth, interpretation of rituals, historical realia, as well as explanations of dialect words and expressions. In particular Chistov focuses on textological problems which in several respects are inherent to the collection. Barsov himself was dissatisfied with the publication of the laments (I, 270), complained about numerous mistakes in the first volume, and inserted a list of “supplements and corrections” (I, 322). His revealing article “O zapisiakh i izdaniakh ‘Prichitanii Severnogo kraia’; o lichnom tvorchestve Iriny Fedosovoi i khore ee podgolosnits” [On the recordings and editions of Laments of the Northern region: Irina Fedosova’s own artistic production and the chorus of supporting voices] (I, 262-77) was discovered only in 1948 and was published in 1975 (I, 393). Here Barsov describes the conditions under which he recorded Fedosova’s laments. (Her name is often pronounced with the stress on the third syllable). With her second husband she moved from the Zaonezh’e area beyond Lake Onega in Karelia to the city of Petrozavodsk on the western bank of the lake, where Barsov met her. He had to conduct his recording sessions with her in her husband’s carpentry workshop amidst noise and distractions. Furthermore, he took her laments down “from dictation” rather from a sung performance (I, 264), a method that strongly affects the accuracy of verbal texts.

As Chistov points out in detail (I, 464-67), yet other problems arise in studying Fedosova’s laments, in part because the genre in itself causes difficulties. Funeral laments actually consist of a series of rituals extending from the death of a person to the burial ceremony and the wake afterwards. The emotional atmosphere surrounding a funeral is such that the “text” is fragmented; as a result it appears no one has recorded a Russian lament during an actual funeral. Published laments thus represent “poetic” recreations which combine several rituals and which have been performed later, sometimes many years afterwards. As Chistov points out (464), “In the past funeral laments were not supposed to be performed outside the ritual; this was considered blasphemous.”

However, there also existed what are called memorial laments (“pominal’nye prichitan’ia) which were performed on anniversaries or ancestral holidays. It is likely that many of Fedosova’s songs belonged to this kind of lament. Although only women sing laments in the recorded Russian tradition, a few indications exist, especially in the medieval chronicles, that men also performed laments. Insofar as Fedosova herself is concerned, she had an exceptional talent for improvisation, something she demonstrated when on request she created a “lament” about a woman’s daughter before an audience in Moscow (I, 478). These are the reasons why folklorists may refer to her funeral laments as “plachi-poemy” [lament poems]. Questions thus arise as to how “traditional” her laments are and to what extent they are the artistic creation of a talented but individual performer.

In his essay Chistov presents the history of the publication of Barsov’s collection, corrects factual errors about Fedosova’s life, and describes her performances in several cities (Maksim Gor’kii witnessed one), the role of improvisation, how many Russian writers have drawn upon her laments, folklore textology, and the lament as a genre. In particular Chistov remarks that one of Barsov’s main achievements was to focus on the individual performer; Barsov, along with A. F. Gil’ferding in his collection of Onega epics, was one of the earliest collectors to turn attention to this aspect of orally created literature.

K. V. Chistov and his late wife B. E. Chistova started working on this new edition of Barsov’s laments in 1973 (I, 324) but saw it through to publication only in 1997. With extraordinary care they have gone over the approximately 30,000 lines that were collected from Fedosova (I, 275), seeking obvious misprints, mistakes, and distortions. They note each editorial change in the “textological commentary” where they also quote the original reading. Thus they observe the highest textological standards by citing and justifying each modification in the verbal text. One of the more curious results of such painstaking work concerns the discovery that Fedosova often “swallowed” the last two syllables of the pervading dactylic ending (I, 472), a performance technique that evidently also existed in the Serbian tradition. As the Chistovs demonstrate in their edition of Barsov’s laments, folklore textology, or the accuracy of the published texts,

should play an important role in later editions because collections of folklore, particularly those brought out before the introduction of the tape recorder in the 1950s, cannot automatically be assumed to be as reliable, as, for instance, editions of written literature usually are.

In an undertaking as large as this, one would expect to find some discrepancies. I noticed several minor errors in bibliographical references and will cite two examples; I. M. Kolesnitskaia, "Russkie svadebnye prichitaniia v *zapisiakh* [*publikatsiakh*] XIX veka," *Fol'klor narodov RSFSR*, Ufa, 1976 [1975], vyp. 2, 160-180 [169-180] (II, 600); A. V. Gura, "Poeticheskaia terminologiia *deistvuiushchikh lits* [not in title] severnorusskogo svadebnogo obriada," *Fol'klor i etnografiia Russkogo Severa* [not in title]: *Obriady i obriadovyi fol'klor*, L., 1972 [1974], 171-180 (II, 601).

The Chistovs should be congratulated for their thorough textological work, for including an extensive explanatory commentary, and for presenting all those interested in Russian folklore with an excellent new edition of one of the finest collections of Russian laments. Their contribution will provide an excellent and reliable source for the study of traditional laments for many years to come.

**James Bailey**

The University of Wisconsin