

Oleksandra Britsyna and Inna Golovakha. Prozovyi fol'klor sela Ploske na Chernigivschyny (teksti ta rozvidki) (Prose Folklore of Ploske, a Village in Chernihivshchyna (Texts and Analysis)) (in Ukrainian). Kyiv: Institut mistetstvoznavstva, fol'kloristiki ta etnologii im Ril's'kogo (M. Ryl's'kyi Institute of Arts, Folklore, and Ethnology), 2004. 584 pp. 35 hryvna. ISBN 966-02-3370-1.

Imagine going to a Ukrainian village to collect traditional narratives. Then imagine returning to record them again and again, sometimes several hours after the original recording, sometimes a few days, a few months, a few years. Then imagine collecting narratives a whole century after the initial recording. The authors of this book, scholars from the Kyivan Institute of Arts, Folklore, and Ethnology, did just that. Their goal was an in-depth study of the development of oral tradition within a single community. They sought to understand the connection between contemporary narrative and narratives of the past. They tried to grasp the functions that narratives currently serve and to examine how stories are transmitted. Ultimately, they hoped to gain insight into traditional memory, the preservation of a text and its mutation over time.

Britsyna and Golovakha have been conducting fieldwork in the village of Ploske for an extensive period of time. They began their research in 1994 and they have been going back to Ploske on a regular basis ever since. They chose Ploske so that they could compare the texts that they collected against the materials recorded in the same village between 1886 and 1900 by Oleksandr Malynka, a prominent early Ukrainian folklorist. Their work was part of a project aimed at rerecording the narratives collected by nineteenth-century folklorists, which was begun by the Institute of Arts, Folklore, and Ethnology in the 1970s. Over the years that Britsyna and Golovakha worked in Ploske, they were joined by other scholars and students who made parallel recordings, including scholars from the United States and Canada.

The authors recorded about 300 prose narratives of different genres, including fairy tales, memorates, fabulates, dreams and dream interpretations, anecdotes, demonological stories, apocrypha, legends, and other prose narrative forms. Fifty Ploske villagers provided the material. The collectors recorded their texts under different communicative situations to see how narrative context would affect the story. The texts constitute the main body of the book.

Each narrative is meticulously documented. The collectors provide information about the performer and the date and place of performance and also describe the circumstances of performance. They note the name of the person who did the transcription of the sound file and give archival information, telling us where the collected material has been deposited. All tales are indexed according to the Aarne-Tompson classification system with parallel references to the East-Slavic Tale Type index. Non-tale texts, such as memorates, fabulates, dreams, and personal narratives, are indexed according to the classification of mythological narrative. As the extensive documentation implies, this is a scholarly and not a popular tale collection. The texts have not been edited to make them more readable and as many oral features as possible have been retained. The collectors do their best to convey the atmosphere of a live performance. They provide notes on intonation and pitch. They note pauses, gestures, mimicry, imitation of character voices, and so forth. But linguistic features are not the primary concern of the collectors. They are interested in performance. Here, too, it is not so much

the virtuosity of a particular narrator that is their concern, but the role that he or she plays in the development of the tradition. They consider factors such as personality and worldview. They look at the upbringing of their narrators and the cultural setting in which they grew up. They examine relations between the narrator and the community: the audience and the circumstances of performance and the role that a particular narrator plays in the transmission of traditional prose. They look at the narrator and his or her relationship to his own texts: changes in repertoire and in attitude towards one's own story-telling. They examine polyphonic relationships: how narratives within a single person's repertoire play off of and influence one another. The authors discuss these topics in depth, approaching oral prose as a complex phenomenon best understood when approached from a variety of angles.

There are two introductory theoretical chapters: Inna Golovakha's "The Village of Ploske, its Traditions and Performers" and Oleksandra Britsyna's "Textological Study of Prose Narrative in a Folk Community." These are followed by the main body of the book, the texts, which are arranged in four parts by performer; detailed information about each performer is provided. Part five gives twenty-eight traditional prose texts performed by Ploske villagers other than the four main narrators. Part six is a set of appendices divided into seven subchapters: 1) The fifty-one narratives recorded by Malynka in the nineteenth century, 2) Malynka's obituary, 3) tales recorded at different times and by other collectors from M. Trush, the best male tale performer in Ploske, 4) tales and other prose texts recorded at different times from M. Perepechai, a female performer, 5) tales recorded at different times from the performers' "pupils," 6) a list of the main prose texts forming the narrative tradition of Ploske, and 7) concluding commentaries, consisting of two theoretical paragraphs: Britsyna's "Peculiarities of Repeated Performances and the Problem of Folk Memory" and Golovakha's "Some notes on the History of Performance Studies in Ukrainian and World Folkloristics." There is an alphabetical index of the texts, an index of tales types and of non-tale plot types. A name index and abstracts in Russian and English are also provided. The authors include numerous pictures of Ploske and its performers in the book.

As already noted, the authors' collection method was one of repetitive recording (making recordings of the same story from one and the same performer over time and varying the time intervals). They also recorded "imperfect" texts: narrative fragments and texts that were only partially remembered. The texts were performed spontaneously or in response to the collector's request. The collectors also conducted interviews and discussions with their performers. They performed transmission experiments and they made observations outside the performance context. The recordings were made on video and audio tape and accompanied by still photographs. Finally, the authors compared contemporary texts from the same performer with each other and with the corresponding texts from the nineteenth century. They used synoptic comparisons and compared textual fragments, searching for similar narrative segments.

The authors conclude that tradition is, in fact, well preserved. The repertoires of contemporary performers in Ploske bear a striking resemblance to the material collected a century earlier. In spite of the enormous impact that the mass media has had in the twentieth century, oral prose is still alive in Ukraine and very important to its tellers. What has happened, the authors observe, is not so much a change in tradition as a reduction in its size. Starting with the middle of the twentieth century, magic tales became an exclusively

children's genre. As a result, the people who tell magic tales today are exclusively women of middle age or older with an elementary or a secondary education. The traditional circumstances of performance have also changed and written sources are used more and more. However, even though some narrators owned published collections of tales and read from them, their own telling of the tales tended to be stable over time, both in content and form. This is to say that their performance seemed unaffected by their use of printed sources and their texts were more like the oral traditions of their village than like the texts they had read in books.

On the other hand, non-tale narratives, the fabulates, memorates and personal narratives, texts that are close to spontaneous everyday speech, demonstrate vivid improvisation and a broad spectrum of variation. As stated by the authors, non-tale genres dominate in the repertoires of contemporary performers. The extensive discussion of non-tale genres and the presentation of the corresponding texts add value to this book since legends, fabulates, memorates and their performers have not been extensively recorded or studied by Ukrainian folklorists.

Using the Ploske village community as their model, the authors have produced a successful study of how oral tradition functions. They have shown how the dynamics of oral tradition works. Their findings indicate that folk prose is affected by its connection to the audience, by intergenerational transmission, and even community demographics. Oral transmission takes place through the teacher-pupil relationship. Pupils inherit not only the semantic, compositional, and verbal aspects characteristic of their teacher's narratives, they also acquire their mentor's performance traits. They achieve all the hallmarks that their community equates with narrative competence. This inherited knowledge, along with audience interest and encouragement, enable the tradition's continued existence.

The Prose Folklore of Ploske is a book that will prove essential to a variety of folklore specialists. It provides a combination of good and reliably recorded texts with important theoretical work. It will be essential reading for specialists interested in contemporary folklore, for students of oral tradition and its development and conservation. People interested in the performer will find this to be a basic study. They will find information about folk memory and about the creativity of the individual narrator. Those who are interested specifically in Ukrainian folklore and in the dissemination of certain tale plots across Ukraine will find this a useful study, as will those interested in international tale types and how they adapt to regional specifications.

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