



V. Ya. Propp's Theoretical Views (On the Example of Russian Folk Tales)

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Abstract

In this article, V.Ya. Propp's methods of studying Russian folk tales from an ethnographic point of view, to what extent can these tales serve as an ethnographic source about Russian people? if possible, he illuminates how ethnographic reality is described in the reality of a fairy tale, and its theoretical views on what the relationship should be between real ethnographic evidence and a fairy tale.

Keywords: *Ethnography; Ethnology; Folklore; Fairy Tale; Motive; Fiction; Texture; Evolution, Morphology; Synchronous Analysis; Hyperbolization; Transformation; Ethnodifferentiation*

Introduction

In the history of science theory, folk tales have been studied by folklorists mainly using philological methods and research methods [1]. However, this method of studying fairy tales is not unique.

A fairy-tale is a multifaceted phenomenon. Therefore, there are various scientific approaches to the study of folk magic tales in science. The object of study of this example of folklore can be not only its poetic features (language, plot, etc.), but also historical elements and folk-life events. It is difficult to imagine a fairy tale outside the context of the history, ethnography, history of religion, history of forms of thought and poetic forms, linguistics, historical poetics of the peoples of the world [2]. In fairy tales, artistic texture plays an important role, which is an important shaping factor of the genre. The study of the text of a fairy tale requires the study not only of its ideological and artistic functions, but also of its relation to reality, to its historical origin: has been reworked several times and developed in relation to a set of traditional ideas and concepts of the existing nation [3].

The Main Results and Findings

At this stage the greatest interest may be in the study of fairy tales on the basis of ethnologically specific methods; thus, in this way it is possible to expand the scope of research objects of this science.

The essence of V.Ya. Propp's theory is mainly to find answers to the following questions: can Russian folk tales serve as an ethnographic source about the Russian people; if possible, then how the ethnographic reality is described in the reality of the fairy tale and what is the relationship between the real ethnographic evidence and the fairy tale.

The following tasks are solved in the study of V.Ya. Propp's theoretical views:

- 1) V. Ya. Propp's analysis of *The Historical Roots of the Magic Tale* as a theoretical basis for further research [4].
- 2) The material culture reflected in the Russian fairy tale is studied and the typical features of its image are clarified.
- 3) family and social relations reflected in Russian fairy tales are considered and their peculiarities in the description of fairy tales are defined.
- 4) the spiritual culture reflected in Russian fairy tales is studied.
- 5) Some general principles of representation of ethnographic reality in a fairy tale are sought.

V.Ya. Propp's theory is based on the first historical-ethnological study of Russian magic tales in Russian science. In contrast to the traditional analysis of fairy tale plots, tasks, character traits, poetic views, and language, a number of ethnographic elements present in Russian magical fairy tales are analyzed.

These diverse, but not contradictory, but complementary ways of studying fairy tales have long needed a systematic connection. However, this approach has not been developed due to the specificity of this folklore genre, which has important features of fantasy and texture. Typically, individual plots and motifs are studied ethnologically.

V.Ya. Propp advances the notion of a two-tiered ethnographic reality based on the ethnographic facts described in the tales, and accordingly interprets all elements of the transformed folk daily life in this genre of folk oral art. In *The Morphology of a Magic Tale*, he used a method of systematic synchronous analysis of the tale in order to determine the essence of the magic tale.

V. Ya. Propp was not fundamentally opposed to an evolutionary historical approach. It is only a descriptive structural study of history, that is, of fairy tales emphasizes that it is necessary before studying its evolution. In *The Morphology of a Magic Tale*, V.Ya. Propp leads the reader to the idea of the expediency and necessity of studying a fairy tale from the point of view of its genesis, and thus inspires the reader to the idea of the need to study the historical roots of a magical tale.

“Historical Roots of Magic Tales — The First Experiment in the Ethnological Study of Magic Tales” presents a historical analysis of the specific motives of magic tales conducted by Propp. He argued that the tale should be compared to the historical truth of the past and that we should look for its roots; a story in which we must compare social institutions of the past and trace its origins; argued that the fairy tale should be associated with both the legends of primitive peoples and the legends of the ancient fairy-tale class states.

The motives of V. Ya. Propp's magical tale are associated with primitive agitation or with the mythological idea of death in one way or another. The researcher distinguished the motifs of the magical tale as follows:

- A) magical fairy-tale motifs associated with the dedication ceremony: the abduction of children into the forest or their abduction by the spirit of the forest; ruined hut; trade in grain before ripening; the humiliation of the heroes by the old woman witch; cutting of fingers; showing imaginary signs of death to the living; The oven of your lick; moisturizing and revitalizing; swallowing and exhaling; get a magic tool or magic helper; travestism (men wearing women's clothing and vice versa); a forest teacher and a “cunning fan”.
- B) Motives related to the notions of death in magical tales: the abduction of girls by a snake; to accept the return of the deceased as a miraculous birth; going out in iron shoes; the view of the forest as an entrance to another kingdom; the smell of the hero; sprinkling water on the door of the hut; Being a guest at witch; interpreter-guide figure; a long journey by eagle, horse, boat; fight with guards who are ready to eat visitors; weighing; “Coming to another kingdom”.

These two groups of motives do not exclude each other, but are closely related to each other, as dedication ceremonies often include the time of temporary death of the person to whom the dedication ceremony is addressed.

The idea that the magical fairy-tale motifs expressed by V. Ya. Propp have their historical roots in the distant past is generally confirmed by empirical data and the logic of reasoning. The researcher used many materials to prove his hypothesis.

V. Ya. Propp tried to prove the existence of motives in the tale, the roots of which go back to an ancient primitive dedication ceremony, and perhaps he was able to find a match between these events. According to Propp, the initiation cycle is the ancient basis of a fairy tale.

In addition to the dedication cycle in the fairy tale, there is another group of motifs related to the hereafter. These two groups of fairy tale motifs form the core of a magical fairy tale. The scientist has devoted a large part of his work to examining these motives and the compatibility between them.

However, V. Ya. Propp did not forget to point out that there are some reasons for the origin of the tale to be studied differently and separately. This group of motives includes, in particular, the marriage of the protagonist and his enthronement.

Propp sees a source of magical tales in ancient legends. At consecration ceremonies, tribal chiefs reported to the neophyte (a person who had converted to a particular religion) “sacred stories,” which were of a sacred nature.

However, with the decline of hunting, the rituals began to disappear. At this time there was a separation of myths from ceremonies, which in turn turned sacred myths into secular myths, i.e. artistic myths that were the beginning of a modern fairy tale, not a sacred one.

All the ethnographic (ethnological) plots present in V. Ya. Propp were obtained by the scientist through scientific observations from the real life of many tribes that were somewhat backward in their development. They formed a scientific ethnographic fund used by the scientist to interpret what was studied in Russian magical tales.

So, V. Ya. Propp's concept (views, opinions) is based on ethnographic data on the early stages of development of human society. The approach to the analysis of the Russian magic fairy tale from these positions paved the way for its ethnographic study.

The Russian magic tale, along with its fantasy and texture, encompasses a number of ethnographic facts: economics, elements of material culture, social institutions, and beliefs.

However, in a fairy tale, these “familiar” everyday facts are not always fully described as they are. They often go through a phase of transformation and “re-coding,” in which “facts” become “artistic” creations and are interpreted differently.

Farmers' views on reality, the world, and life, and their attitudes toward these events, can serve as a guide for the fairy-tale world. If we look through this prism at a fairy tale fantasy built from the “materials” of real everyday life, we can find a certain trend in the depiction of ethnographic elements: farmers created positive and beautiful images, negative and bad images.

In order to portray and defend ‘good’ and ‘beautiful’ things in their own way, sometimes they seem to violate the established order in society. This is especially evident when talking about social order in a fairy tale.

Features of a fairy tale - fantasy, constant hyperbolization (exaggeration of things, events and happenings), strict formalization of events - in part serve as an obstacle to the study of fairy tales as an ethnographic source.

The truth is that there are no moments, episodes, or paintings in the tale that resemble an ethnographic museum, because the tale depicts two sets of realities and two layers of ethnographic reality.

In fairy tales, everyday ethnographic elements serve as a “building material” to create the legendary ethnographic reality. This is the basis for the placement of wonderful events in the fairy tale, which plays an ethnodifferentiating role in the universal similarity of the plot of the fairy tale: typical, distinctive elements of Russian life, such as Russian ovens, sundresses, cabbage soup, the image of Santa Claus, etc. make the fairy tale exactly “Russian” fairy tale.

Fairy tales, including fairy tales, never claim to accurately portray reality. At the same time, it is necessary to remember once again the historicity used in the study of fairy tales. The historical basis implies the integrity of the real life of the people in the process of its development in all periods of its existence. The field of history includes historical forms of labor, family relations, social relations, wedding ceremonies, management, and even small details of the life of the people, in a word - the ethnographic reality of the people.

Conclusion

According to Propp’s theoretical views, the Russian magic fairy tale can serve as an ethnographic source, combining two sets of reality - real ethnographic reality and reality transformed through artistic processing, but still created from the materials of the former, the ethnographic reality of the fairytale world. In a fairy tale, these two realities and their interrelationships take place in depicting different aspects of people’s lives.

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