

Oleksandra Britsyna, *Ukrains'ka usna tradytsiina proza: pytannia tekstologii ta vykonavstva (Ukrainian Oral Traditional Prose: Problems of Textology and Performance)*. Kyiv: Natsional'na Akademia Nauk Ukrainy, Institut mystetsvoznavstva, fol'klorystyky ta etnologii, 2006, 395 pp.

The main purpose of Oleksandra Britsyna's book is to research the textology of folk narratives. The term "textology" is broadly understood in the field of folkloristic literature as being concerned with investigating both the origin and functioning of folk phenomena (in this context only those of prose genres), as well as problems in the history and criticism of texts, methods of texts fixation, editing and publishing. The book consists of an introduction, four chapters, a multilingual bibliography, a supplement containing the enumeration of repetitive fixations of the various tale types made in different periods of time as well as of three indexes for subject, name and type indexes and a short resume (the latter both in Russian and in English).

In the first chapter the author reviews works written by Ukrainian, Russian and Western colleagues who investigated the specific textology of oral narratives from the 19th century till today, using concepts based on the Romantic approach and evolutionary theory, the "Finnish" historical-geographic school, oral theory, contextual and performance approaches, as well as on linguistics and semiotics. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the term "text" in folklore studies and with the defining of the main categories of textological studies. The author differentiates between such terms as text, oral text, fixated text and textuality. The use of the term "text" depends on the conception of scholars working in accordance with different concepts and approaches. Some perceive it as practically identical to what is known as text in literary studies, while others think it to be inseparable from such concepts as communicative context, performance, and oral composition. Britsyna proposes that we should not confuse "oral text" (and performance which is closely correlated with it) with the "fixated text", which is produced by folklorists in the process of documentation. Both "oral text" and "fixated text" are perceived by the author as appropriate for textological studies in folkloristic literature, while "text" itself is suitable for defining various semiotic phenomena. The term "variant" is considered as legitimate for textology only when various oral texts are connected genetically (e.g. when they are told by pupils of a certain narrator). Britsyna does not use such notions as archetype, because typological resemblances between the texts do not guarantee their genetic bondage.

Various terms are connected with the notations of the oral texts. Among them the author defines a "field manuscript", which is composed in the process of fieldwork and is equated with a draft, and a "clean manuscript" (both constitute collector's autographs). Sometimes collectors make handwritten copies of their notation, which may contain various slips and mistakes. One can also speak about self-notations, when the narrators write down their stories themselves (in this case Britsyna considers the term autograph to be inappropriate). Contemporary methods of notations are based on the use of tape and/or video recordings on the basis of which "transcripts" (or better, "scriptures") are made. The same oral text may have different transcripts. Britsyna recommends separating the transcript of the oral text from the collector's report, which may include various remarks concerning intonation, pauses, stresses etc. If the notated text was published, then the researcher may be able to investigate not only the collector's autographs, but also the text of

its first publication and successive republications, which may differ from each other. The terminological problems are not self-sufficient. They reflect the researchers' conceptions on the real process of folk phenomena and influence their collecting, editing and publishing activities.

In the second chapter the author addresses textual problems from the historical perspective as they were solved in folklore studies in different periods and by the representatives of various academic schools. She presents different solutions of specific problems given by so called "literary" and "ethnolinguistic" models as well as by models based on "variants" or on "performance". The author shows that in the 19th century many Ukrainian collectors (e.g. P. Kulish, M. Dragomanov, I. Rudchenko, P. Chubyn's'kyi etc.) were already sensitive to the specific aspects of folk narration and understood the importance of registering of all possible details of the oral text and the process of narration. Yet, Ukrainian editing and publishing practices of the 20th century were oriented mainly towards the "literary" model, which led to choosing "only the best of all possible examples" and ignoring less esthetically appealing fixated texts. In the publications only lexical peculiarities of oral texts were more or less preserved, while oral syntax and phonetics were largely lost. Orientation towards the esthetic quality of the publications is still rather influential in Ukraine (and not only there), as highly precise publications are disadvantaged because their perception is difficult for the readers. The existence of variants is one of the basic features of oral narratives. Yet, the history of collecting knows not only conscious decisions to collect "the best" of existed oral texts, but even a practice of contamination of the two or three variants in one (this activity was strongly objected to by P. Kulish). Among Ukrainian folklorists of the 19th century it was V. Hnatiuk (Gnatiuk), who collected many regional variants of folk stories. In the middle of the 20th century P. Lintur raised the question of organizing expeditions following Hnatiuk's journeys with the purpose of repetitive collecting. Representatives of the geographical-statistical method used a strategy of writing abstracts of perceived variants instead of collecting them as an entity. Only at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century did collectors become aware of the importance of collecting variants told by the same narrator (e.g. O. Gil'ferding's expedition in the wake of P. Rybnikov, M. Azadovskii's activities in Russia and "Finnish school" in the West).

In Ukrainian folk studies repetitive fixations were largely made in epic poetry (*dumy*), e.g. by Z. Dolenga-Khodakov's'kyi, V. Myloradovych, O. Malynka etc. In the field of folk narratives this activity was pioneered by P. Lintur and by O. Britsyna herself. Among the first Ukrainian collectors who paid attention to the figure of narrator one should mention I. Nechui-Levyts'kyi and V. Lesevych. In 1904 the latter published a book of tales collected from the same narrator, Rodion Chymkhalo. Important progress in the understanding of the role of narrator in the process of folk transmission was achieved by the representatives of Russian school and namely D. Sadovnikov, M. Onchukov, D. Zelenin, M. Azadovskii etc. Their activities led to the publication of texts not based on the criteria of genre, but the criteria of narrator. In Ukrainian publication practice the same approach was used by P. Gnedich. Attention to the narrator went hand in hand with the interest in performance. In the first part of the 20th century many fixations of the repertoire of the same narrator and that of his "pupils" were made. In a number of cases collectors perceived a narrator as an actor and paid special attention to replicas and gestures (e.g. I. Karnaukhova, P. Lintur, I. Sen'ko etc.). All this is evidence of the fact that a new model of textual studies – a per-

formance model – was born within the works of East European scholars. Yet, these first approaches were not developed later by Soviet folklore studies and remained almost unknown and therefore unevaluated in the West, where this model developed in the second half of the 20th century (E. Fine).

In this chapter Britsyna also discusses a problem of meta-graphics, which is of great importance to the textual studies in folkloristic literature in general and in Ukrainian folkloristic literature in particular. Ukraine was divided between different countries and the fixations of oral texts were made both in Latin and Cyrillic letters. One should also not forget the difference between Russian and Ukrainian principles of orthography and an underdeveloped Ukrainian orthography at the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. As a result it is not always clear which sounds were meant by each particular sign. Most of Ukrainian publications of folk prose narratives were made following literary or ethnolinguistic models and only a minority of them followed a performance model (O. Britsyna and I. Golovakha).

The third chapter concentrates on the practical problems of fixation of oral texts and starts the discussion with the problem of context (K. Goldstein). According to Britsyna, most prose narratives are less conditioned by context than are ritual songs, lamentations or spells. Each context (including an artificial one when narrators are asked by the collectors to tell a story) is perceived as natural for the specific oral text told in that context. Reviewing the methods of field work, the author discusses a stationary method, which is used mostly by non-professional enthusiasts (e.g. G. Tantsiura, N. Prisiazhniuk and in prose tradition G. Kolisnichenko) and a method of expeditions which is still most popular (sometimes the two almost merge). Yet, for the understanding of the functioning of the oral text, the methods of experimental and repetitive fixations are perceived by the author as most efficient. Depending on their purpose collectors may use active and/or passive observational techniques and interviews (or a combination of all of them). The author analyses various aspects of the use of tape and video camera (including hidden microphones and cameras) and the ethical problems that their use may trigger. The idea of paying the narrators or serving them vodka is unacceptable for Oleksandra Britsyna both from ethical and academic points of view, because she perceives it as changing a natural context into an artificial one. Concerning transcripts or scripture, she does not require their being obligatory and advises selectivity. As a person having a long experience with prose narratives, I doubt this idea because the purposes of researchers may change after a while, and the lack of full transcripts can lead to the loss of material for investigation.

Among the problems under study in this chapter is the problem of text borders, namely those between the oral text and its communicative context and between different oral texts. The author stresses the existing complications in defining the borders as manifested in the obscure beginnings and endings of oral texts. I can say that although this is not unusual, but it still cannot be seen as a rule. To my mind, this discussion would have been more inspiring, if it had been enriched by referring to existing theoretical works (e.g. W. Labov and J. Waletzky; E. Ochs and L. Capps). Another problem that is worth mentioning here is the system of signs that can be used in the scripture for the reflection of non-verbal elements of oral text, such as:

- () obscure sounds or words;
- [] collector's remarks;
- / - short pause;

... - long pause;
, - italics on the punctuation marks which are not supported the intonation;
bold letters – words which were singled out by a performer by any means possible
(e.g. by the change of the volume, temp, raising or falling intonation);
bold italics – for the words which had been overtly stressed;
italics – for the words which were pronounced much quietly than others.

To my mind, the idea of the unification of signs is productive, although I expect complications with its universal use (colleagues know that journals cannot agree to a universal system even for the references cited, which requires a constant reworking of the bibliography following the style of each journal).

The fourth chapter is devoted to the analyses of oral prose texts of different genres in the light of repetitive fixations and collecting in the frame of experiments. Oleksandra Britsyna gives a review of the ideas of the forefathers of experimental techniques in Folklore Studies (W. Anderson; F. Bartlett; L. Dégh and A. Vázsonyi; M. Perry; A. Lord etc.) and then concentrates on her experience in this field which goes back to the 1970s and proceeds to the present day. Britsyna organized various types of experiments and among them direct and indirect repetitive fixations of oral texts. The first type refers to the texts recorded by researchers from the same narrator on different occasions, after different temporal intervals, and the latter type is represented by the recordings of the oral texts which were collected in the same regions near hundred years ago by O. Malynka, V. Hnatiuk, V. Lesevich, P. Lintur, P. Gnedich. Part of the repetitive fixations is devoted to the specifics of folklore tradition as adopted by a “pupil” from an experienced narrator. Oleksandra Britsyna also used the method of “implantation”, which means artificially implanting texts, which were once known in a certain village but are now forgotten, back into the living repertoire. In such cases she investigated the changes that were made in the text by one or several narrators. The process of experiments and their results are presented in the book according to genre criteria. Thus for, example, the readers can compare three repetitive fixations of the same animal tale “Zhikharko”, which were recorded from narrator O. Zaiets (one in 1989 and two others in 2000 with an interval of 24 hours). The comparison shows a great similarity both on the verbal, para-lingual level (stresses, intonations) and kinemas (gestures, mimics). It may lead to the assumption of a rather significant stability of the oral text and consequently of the major role of memory.

Yet, these examples are exceptions rather than a rule. In most other cases the resemblance is rather synonymic than verbal, and semantic meaning is based on the restricted quantity of key words that can be changed to resembling ones. The same tendency is correct when the repetitive fixations of oral texts, told from the “teacher” and his “pupils” are compared. Large identical segments of the texts are rarely inherited, different parts of the texts show different level of stability and changes occur even in formulas. At the same time the possibility of changes in the key words is restricted by the borders of a certain semantic field, which ensures relative stability of the plot and meaning. The simplicity of composition of animal tales also restricts changes on this level. If there is a choice between various compositional possibilities (e.g. cumulative versus simple composition), the narrator usually chooses the one that is supported by long-term memory. In the genre of fairy tales Britsyna compared various repetitive fixations of tales that were made in the same village with the time interval of nearly 100 years and contemporary repetitive fixations that were made over a period of several years from the same narrator in different communication

contexts. Both the records made a hundred years ago and the contemporary ones are almost identical in plot structure. However, there are no identical segments of the texts longer than two or three words. That is why the author compares those fragments that are similar in the character of their semantic realization. The tale chosen for comparison is called "About Ivan Czarevitch and a Snake". It was first recorded by O. Malyuka in 1886-1890 and then by O. Britsyna in 1994 and 1995 from M. Trush. One should take into account the different level of authenticity of the fixations: Malyuka wrote down his fixations while Britsyna recorded the narrator.

There are practically no segments with identical wordings in the texts fixated with an interval of hundred years, yet the same key words are widely presented and form the listeners' perception of the texts resemblance. The comparison of texts that were recorded from M. Trush shows some lexical concurrence. At the same time many segments of the texts are synonymic in wording and syntax. Such examples are presented much more often than one could expect, although less than in the animal tales. Key words form a skeleton of the tale and are either repetitive in different situations of narrations or changed into synonymic ones. The intonation also has resembling patterns. Oral functioning of texts is accompanied by a special folklore-related conception of exactness common to the listeners. The next genre under study is a satiric tale or novella, which is usually shorter and less ritual in performance than a fairy tale and is close to jokes. The author compared repetitive fixations of such tales as "A revealed lover", "A stubborn wife" and some others recorded from several performers from different regions of the Ukraine and with a time interval from less than an hour to several years. It is clearly seen that although the texts resemble each other, verbally identical segments are practically absent. The same skeleton of the synonymic key words is always present and, together with the body language, preserves the stability of the text. An important observation is that gestures can replace verbal image. Gestures are identical in all the repetitive performances by the same narrator even after a long temporal interval (which is seen in the photographs of two women narrators M. Perepechai and E. Kompanets'). Satiric tales are greatly dependant from a communicative context and like jokes are used as arguments or examples in the conversation.

Three series of experimental fixations of jokes in the natural urban context were conducted by the author in 1996-1998. This method of fieldwork is defined by Britsyna as experimental observation, but to my mind it is closer to participant observation. Jokes were spontaneously told by 13 active narrators, among them 5 men and 7 women. Generally 20 participants took part in the first experiment, 15 participants in the second and 18 in the last one. The figures are higher than 13 as they also include passive participants, who told no more than 3 texts each during an experiment. Technical equipment was not used in order not to alter natural context of communication. The texts were written down by hand. In the first experiment 180 jokes were told, in the second – 100 and in the third one – 122. In many cases jokes are not told in full but only partially because punch line is perceived as sufficient in the folk group. Sometimes two punch lines from two jokes contaminate each other, which provokes the listeners' associations with both of them. The repetition of the same communicative situation triggers the repetitive narration of the jokes. Jokes told by bilingual narrators (in this case Russian and Ukrainian speakers) can function in both languages, if they are not built on linguistic puns or ethnic characteristics of the personages. Paralinguistic elements and gestures are widely used and sometimes even replace a segment of verbal text. Analyses of jokes in natural context shows that

even in this short genre the verbal stability is not achieved: wording can change in various contexts. The text can be prolonged almost like a satiric tale or be shortened to a mere formula. I should mention that although the author regrets that collectors and researchers are not interested in this genre, she does not address the existing works of her colleagues (e.g. A. Belousov; E. Shmeleva and A. Shmelev; L. Fialkova; Yelenevskaya and Fialkova etc.).

The next genre investigated in the book is defined by the author in Ukrainian as a "*nekazkova proza*", which to my mind, can be best defined in English as "non-fiction oral prose", also "personal narratives about the supernatural", "sagen" or "memorates" are also legitimate. These texts often do not have clear textual borders and constitute a part of natural conversation. The repetitive fixations of texts (e.g. "About the crippled witch", "About the house spirit (*domovoi*) who predicts the future" etc.) show a great variety of the narrators' interpretations of the events, from skepticism to a deep belief. Moreover, performers freely contaminate motifs and even change personages. According to the author, it is possible to speak about a specific realm of conceptions within the borders of which changes can be made. Although formulas are rare in non-fiction oral prose texts, yet they are substituted by phrases about the veracity of the events ("It really happened", "Maybe it's a fabrication, but maybe it's true"). Key words are extremely important in these texts as well. A special attention Britsyna pays to the book-related texts, i.e. folk texts taken from the living tradition by collecting and publication and later through reading return to the repertoire of contemporary narrators. I would like to add that S. Shtyrkov calls this process "secondary folklorization". Acquiring texts from reading leads to memorizing it word for word much more that it happens in oral tradition. Yet, it is not a rule, but only a tendency, which can be provoked by various factors, e.g. by the role of visual memory and by the different perception of exactness. The last problem discussed in the book is the transmission of texts from the experienced narrator ("a teacher") to the novices ('pupils'). The comparison of repetitive fixations of such texts shows serious dependence between them in composition, plot, wording and performance. Yet, in most cases there is a clear tendency to simplify oral texts, which is also reflected in different levels. In short, the resemblance of different narrations depends on the genre of the oral text, the type and the skillfulness of the narrator and on the context of performance.

To my mind, Oleksandra Britsyna's book is a very important contribution to the textual studies in folklore. It summarizes the history of the problem in Ukrainian, Russian and Western thought and practice, and opens new approaches to folklore research. Dr. Britsyna is friendly to her readers: she not only gives references to Western materials in the language of the original, but wherever possible she also mentions their translations into Ukrainian or Russian. I hope that her book will be translated into English and thus make it available to many of those who are interested in the problems of textology in folklore.

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