

**Folklore as a Special Form
of Creativity**
Pet[e]r Bogatyřev and
Roman Jakobson

Outline

- *Synchronic* and *diachronic*
- The Mythological School
- Romanticism
- Bogatyřev and Jakobson (Course Pack)
- “Night on Bald Mountain”

Synchronic and Diachronic

- **Synchronic:** State at a specific point in time (old or new)
 - What roles do different spirits play in Russian folk belief?
 - How do specific folk texts function in a society?
- **Diachronic:** Change of state over time (entirely in the past or extending into the present)
 - Where do Russian beliefs about spirits come from and how are they related to the beliefs of earlier generations and other peoples and cultures?
 - How did specific folk texts in a particular society originate?

Mythological School

- Romanticism
- Philology
- Comparative method
 - Diachronic
 - Language, literature, and culture

“Folklore as a Special Form of Creativity”

- Pet[e]r Bogatyrëv (1893–1971)
- Roman Jakobson (1896–1982)
- First published 1929
- The study of folklore requires different assumptions and different methods than the study of formal, written literature

Critique of Romanticism

- Correctly appreciated collective authorship
- Overestimated the independent creativity of the folk
 - *Gesunkenes Kulturgut* ('submerged cultural value')
 - Appropriation and transformation is also creative
- Incorrectly assumed that only a homogeneous community could produce folklore

Concrete and Abstract

- “Naïve realism”
 - Only the concrete (speech of an individual, specific recitation of a tale) is real, and the study of abstractions is the study of fiction
- Communal collection of conventions
 - The shared folkloric tradition of a community, like their shared language, is also real, even though individual performative instances vary

The Individual and the Community

- [The individual creates or innovates]
- The community accepts or rejects entire creations or portions thereof
- For oral culture, that which is not repeated within the community dies with its author
- Once a creation has been lost from oral culture, it cannot be resurrected

Written and Oral Literature

- Written literature becomes literature when it is first written
- Oral literature becomes folklore when it is adopted by the community

Anonymity

- The authors of folklore are unknown because authorship is irrelevant
- Folklore is folklore because the community accepts and repeats it

Language and Folklore

	<i>abstract</i>	<i>concrete</i>
<i>language</i>	language (<i>langue</i>)	speech act (<i>parole</i>)
<i>folklore</i>	folkloric work	performance of folkloric work

“Night on Bald Mountain”

- “St. John’s Night on Bald Mountain” (Ivan Kupalo)
- First version 1867, revision 1886
- Modest Petrovich Musorgskii (1839–81)
 - Operas: *Boris Godunov* (1874), *Khovanshchina* (1880, completed by Rimskii-Korsakov)
 - Orchestral: “Night on Bald Mountain” (symphonic poem, 1867), “Pictures at an Exhibition” (piano suite, 1864)
- Nikolai Andreevich Rimskii-Korsakov (1844–1908)

What to Listen For

- Contrasts
 - Fast/slow
 - Loud/soft
 - Changes in instruments
 - (Changes in key)
- What images does the music evoke?

Fantasia

- Walt Disney Studios, 1940
- Leopold Stokowski (1882–1977), conductor
- Introduce children to classical music
- Modest Musorgskii, “Night on Bald Mountain”
- (Franz Schubert, “Ave Maria”)
