
理论与应用



Russian Formalism in Global Semiotics: Precursor of the European Branch

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Abstract: Russian formalism constitutes one of the essential lines in the history of the European semiotics. As such, this movement is influential both in arts and science. Many of its central notions are in fact musical. As a Finnish musicologist and semiotician, The present paper traces some of Russian formalism's Finnish connection and discuss some of its music-related concepts. In addition, I will focus on the key concepts and influence of three important theorists; Wilhelm Sesemann, Vladimir Propp, and Mikhail Bakhtin.

Key words: polyphonic novel, dialogism, estrangement, symphonic society, narratology

全球符号学中的俄国形式主义：欧洲学派的先声

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摘要：俄国形式主义是欧洲符号学历史上的基本方向之一，在艺术与科学中都颇具影响。形式主义的许多核心概念都和音乐相关。作为芬兰的音乐学家和符号学家，作者追溯了俄国形式主义和芬兰的渊源，并讨论了它与音乐相关的一些概念。此外，作者还考察了威廉·泽塞曼、普洛普和巴赫金这三位重要的理论家提出的核心

概念及其影响。

关键词：复调小说，对话主义，陌生化，交响型社会，叙述学

There is no doubt that the complex and rich phenomenon of what is called Russian formalism belongs to the very special cultural heritage of the whole international semiotic movement. If we explore more deeply the history of semiotics, we will notice that many of its central notions stem from the period named under Russian formalism. So it is high time to show gratitude to that period, one of the most creative but also controversial of the discipline. My essay here starts therefore with these origins, in spite of possible misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

Now every anthology or encyclopedia of the history of semiotics must contain a chapter on Russian formalism, which started its triumph in the West in the 1970s. However, the first problem we encounter here is how to define the phenomenon and how to distinguish it from other cultural phenomena of the period, i. e. the 1910s and 1920s. Certainly, it is hard to say whether it belongs to science or art, and perhaps this is one of its fascinations. Who was then, after all, a Russian formalist?

Finnish Connections

Russian formalism, which can trace its origin to the year of 1913, when an important essay by Viktor Sklovski appeared, constitutes one of the essential lines in the subsequent history of the European semiotics. The first time we, as young students, read about scholars like Propp, Sklovski, Tynianov, Eichenbaum, Tomaszewski, Jakobson, and Bakhtin, was due to a Swedish anthology *Form och struktur* by Kurt Aspelin and Bengt A. Lundberg, (*Litteraturvetenskapliga texter I urval*, Stockholm: Bokförlaget Pan /Norstedts, 1971). It contained translations of classic essays by Sklovski on artistic devices, by Tynianov on literary evolution, and by Eichenbaum on Gogol's novels. Quite naturally the book then moved from this origin to Mukarovsky, then to French structuralism and ultimately to Yuri Lotman. Semiotics in Finland started with a young student group, which called itself a “ structuralist group ” and resorted to Umberto Eco and his *La struttura*

assente, and to the Swedish translations *Den frånvarande strukturen*.

These classical texts fascinated us. Next time I heard about Russian formalism was in the Introduction to Semiotics, a course offered at the Department of folkloristics at Helsinki University by Professor Vilmos Voigt. This course for the first time introduced the sources in St. Petersburg or Leningrad and Moscow and also revealed the role the Finnish folklore studies played in Propp's theorization. What was involved was the classification method of fairy tales and folk songs by the brothers Krohn and the primary school teacher Antti Aarne. Five years later in Brazil, I found a book entitled *Intelligencia do folklore* by Renato Almeida which had, to my surprise, a whole chapter on *Escola finlandesa*. Prof. Voigt also showed how important a role these Finnish scholars played in Propp when he was writing his *Morfologija skazkii*. Later I used to mention this often until my colleague from Petersburg wrote me that I was wrong and that Propp elaborated his model independently.

Later, it became clear that this was just the origin of a discipline called narratology, a branch of semiotics. In the 1980s, when I visited and lectured at *Musée de l'Homme* in Paris, in the seminar by Prof. Gilbert Rouget, I notice that the only Finnish authors the French anthropologists knew about were Krohn brothers, whose dissertations were published in German. In the rest of this essay, I will continue to trace some of Russian formalism's Finnish connections.

Musical Connections

Another interesting aspect of Russian formalism was its artistic connections. It was obviously also an artistic practice, but an aesthetic standpoint linked to the emergence of modernism. One could link such world class artists like Majakovski, Stravinsky and Eisenstein to it. Kandinsky also has connections to Russian formalism. I could not imagine a more "formalist" book as his *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche*, albeit written later in the 1920s. I found it in Paris as a French translation *Point, ligne et plan*. His effort to create a universal grammar of all the arts, based on correspondences of colours, forms, and sounds sounded truly "structuralist", but resonated also

with Scriabinesque symbolism.

Kandinsky was originally a folklorist and ethnologue who travelled among the Zyrians (*syrjäanit*, a Finnougric tribe), wrote about their archaic life, painted and made drawings on their figures, costumes, houses, artworks, and copied especially their abstract ornamentations. This happened in 1889 at Vologda region habited by the Zyrians. In the Moscow Ethnographic Society in 1888, he had already delivered a lecture on the beliefs of Perms and Zyrians. Kandinsky was also aware of the Finnougric origin of his name stemming from River Konda area and the word *konda*, which meant “honka”, a fur tree in Finnish. Several specialists of art history pointed out that the Finnougric ornamentation was the first impulse to Kandinsky’s non-figurative art. His correspondence with A Schoenberg illuminated also his visions on the artistic form. To me all this sounded truly “formalist”, but in encyclopedias I tried in vain to find his name in the histories of Russian formalism. Instead, Malevitch and suprematism are often mentioned by the side of Jakobson. Kandinsky’s view of the form was dynamic; it was based upon inner tensions of the art work. This view then was shared in musicology by Boris Asafiev in his intonation theory, which was discovered to be a pioneer of musical semiotics in the 1970s.

The new issue in all this, compared to earlier theories, was to see the important points in the text itself, instead of in the mind of a genius creating the art work, or at the receiver’s side. So, essentially the whole epistemic movement was anti-psychological by its nature. It tried to base the aesthetic analysis on the object and its structure. It was hostile to any hermeneutic program or poetry linked to arts. It was the new objective scientific spirit of exactness which was underlined. Stravinsky’s musical poetics later was characterized by the same spirit of anti-psychological nature; he did not see a reflection of any psychic content in music, as he said in his lectures in Harvard. This was certainly a formalist attitude. When Boris Gasparow visited our structuralist group in Helsinki around 1973, he emphasized however that this asematic or antisemantic approach was in fact only the minor side of the primary semantic nature of music. The same was stated by the French philosopher Vladimir Jankélévitch when speaking of Prokofiev and

calling his style “*espressivo inexpressif*”. This meant that the asemanticity was a certain historic phase in style evolution and not a synchronically valid universal truth. However, Stravinsky could then be situated in the tradition of formalist aesthetics stemming in music from Eduard Hanslick in his essay *Vom musikalisch Schönen*, which was published in 1854, and continued even by Lévi-Strauss who claimed that *La musique, c’est le langage moins le sens*. Morpurgo-Tagliabue in his *L’Esthétique contemporaine* spoke about formalism in general as a line of the 20th century aesthetics and then meaning by it a larger phenomenon than just Russian formalism. The roots of Russian formalism, especially the studies in St. Petersburg, lie in Modernism like symbolism and futurism, which were represented by Andrei Belyi with his original theories on symbols and novels, as well as the novel *The Way of Sufferings* by Aleksei Tolstoi portraying a salon in St. Petersburg where Scriabin is played and listeners are surrounded by radically distorted futurist paintings on the walls. This was the *Zeitgeist*.

If I have been dwelling at length on the field of music field here, this can be justified by the theories of the Russian formalists themselves: namely, most of them coined their new concepts as metaphors from musical practices. So far, it seems that this fact has not attracted the attention of scholars.

Sklovski

The concept of estrangement was not just of musical origin, although *Verfremdung* was the central idea of Bertolt Brecht and in the music at his “epic theater”. As an artistic device, estrangement was strong in painting, literature, and music. In contemporary art it is not difficult to find other illustrations for estrangements which have a permanent place in avant-garde techniques. If we take a look at opera stagings and videos, one fashionable, almost unavoidable genre mixture of contemporary stagings, one variant of that *Regietheater* in which the stage director builds his own work upon the original, we will find that all works of video and film would have been successfully mixed with the performance of opera. Of these two genres certainly an authentic opera performance is stronger than its filmed version. In a film like *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, singing serves as a particular

estrangement technique. But then the video penetrates inside the opera, as a kind of representation of representation (Theater is of course always that, as Ivo Osolsobe once said!)

Can video then serve as an *ostranenie*? Yes, to some extent and at the beginning. By its force it definitely wins over the stage performance, singers are put in the background. Let us think of Harry Kupfer's *Parsifal and its Blumenmädchen* scene with slightly pornographic films replacing the real choiron stage. But when it becomes mannerism it fails. Peter Sellars' version of Tristan with continuous video films with other actors than the real singers, completely draws the attention from them and destroys live performance. In Zoldiak's radical version of Jevgeni Onegin (Savonlinna Festival, July 2013), estrangement has reached an extreme point. Yet, video loses its power totally when singers video film each other and see themselves as represented by it. This new mannerism putting singers standing there with a camera or mobile phone, with Facebook at hand all the time, is no longer estrangement but the contrary: if the original idea was to break the automatism of everyday life, now it brings the stage reality back to our daily experiences. The distance between stage and spectators shrinks, at the cost of finer subtleties and real meanings of the composer, music, singers, orchestra and all. The stage has become a narcissist reflection of the modern spectator, the popular commercial mass media culture with all forms of the symbolic violence which has intruded into art. Why should we go to opera only to see the perpetual continuation of the everyday life? Opera is no longer getting us familiar with the knowledge of the Other. All belongs to the Same. This is the end of *ostranenie*.

Tynianov

This term means a poet describing things phonetically, so that innovations on this level may militate against the semantics. If I utter a verse to you in Finnish—*Porkkanan oranssi sokaisi*—you receive it as a kind of phonetic “music” by the mere sounds of the vowels. But its meaning is nonsensical: “The orange of a carrot blinded one.”

Tynianov also had reflections on genre which hold true as well for music

as for literature. His essential idea is how we recognize a genre, and how we identify it. To which extent is a poem a poem and not any other text? What Tynianov wrote about genre shifts, changes, and dissolutions is close to the tenets of Asafiev, who was even more semiotic, since for him the signified was primary. When the emotional content changed, it needed new musical signifiers, and this caused the so-called “intonation crisis”. Meanwhile, later formalists, in Prague circle days, stated that the relationship between changing society and arts was not a causal one but a symbolic, sign relationship, and this was of course against the official *Widerspiegelung* theory.

Zirmunski

My hypothesis is that Igor Stravinsky in his *Oedipus Rex* applied Zirmunskian ideas to the musical versification of the Latin language chosen by the composer, because it could be tested as pure phonetic material devoid of semantic connotations. I thought that this was possible for Stravinsky only after his emigration in his neoclassical period.

Zirmunski also wrote about the limitations of formalism in the 1920s long before it was officially enounced by Zdanov’s visit to Leningrad University in 1947. Yet in the Moscow Slavist Congress, the comparative study was rehabilitated. At the end of the 1950s, Zirmunski was against phonology, although he studied it himself; and at the beginning of the 1960s he was against structuralism, even though he used it much himself in his metric interpretations. (For the above I am indebted to Vilmos Voigt.)

Tomasevski

Tomasevski presents a systematic vocabulary to study narratives, launching concepts like theme, fabula, subject, tension, motif, estrangement (*ostranenie*), canonic and free devices, parodies, etc. . All these notions are relevant also to music and, more specifically, to musical narrativity. Yet, when transplanting them back to the musical field, one has to be careful, since many of them are defined and used somehow differently when applied to music. One example is “theme”: in a novel the theme is the basic issue, but

in music the theme is a particular unit of musical discourse, in tonal music characterized by certain length.

The study of my colleague Erkki Salmenhaara could give us inspirations on how Tomasevski's approach was "musicalized". In Salmenhaara's view, all the Viennese classical symphonic music, i. e. symphonies, sonatas, string quartets, and other chamber music pieces with larger forms, could be classified as to the key architecture with the following diagram. There were only a few basic types which were used by great composers.

<i>Tyyppi T</i>	<i>Tyyppi TSp</i>
CC	CFaC
CCC	
CCCC	<i>Tyyppi t</i>
CcC	aA
CcCC	aAa
CCcC	aaAa
	aAaa
<i>Tyyppi TS</i>	
CFC	<i>Tyyppi tP</i>
CFCC	aCa
CCFC	aCaa
CFcC	aCA
CFCc	aCaA
	aCAa
<i>Tyyppi TD</i>	
CGC	<i>Tyyppi tP^m</i>
CGCC	aFa
CGGC	aFaa
CGCc	aFAA
	aaFA
<i>Tyyppi Tp</i>	aaFaA
CaC	aFisaa
CaCC	aFisAa
CcAc	aCisa
CacC	
	<i>Poikkeustyyppejä</i>
<i>Tyyppi TP^m</i>	CcEsAFC
CAC	aAF(D)Aa(A)
CCAC	aB(g)FCea
CAcC	
CGisC	
CCAsC	
CcAsC	
CAscC	
CEC	
<i>Tyyppi TP^m</i>	
CcC	
CCgisC	
<i>Tyyppi N</i>	
CCisC	

Diagram of Salmenhaara 26

Boris Tomasevski illustrates several concepts in his essay "the Structure of Plot" (which I have read as Finnish translation in the anthology *Venäläinen formalismi* edited by Pekka Pesonen and Timo Suni); Tomasevski presents a

systematic vocabulary to study narratives launching concepts like theme, fabula, subject, tension, motif, exposition, time, space, kinetic space, estrangement (*ostranenie*), canonic and free devices, parodies...; all these notions are relevant also for music and, say, for musical narrativity. Yet, when transplanting them back to musical field, one has to be careful since many of them are defined and used somehow differently in being applied to music, like the first one: “theme”. In a novel, theme is the basic issue, what the story is all about, like Last Days of Pompei, love story of Anna and Vronsky, society of learned men in Hesse, development of one young man like in Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*. However, in music theme is a particular unit of musical discourse, in tonal music characterized by certain length, clear cut harmonic basis, clearly melodic formula, etc..

In fact, I already sketched an essay in which Tomasevski’s approach was “musicalized” and another one in which completely traditional music theoretical study of symphony or sonata by such composer like J. Brahms will be semiotized, showing his narrative structure; this will concern perfectly absolute music without any programs. I was inspired by a study on Brahms symphonies by my colleague Erkki Salmenhaara from 1978 which I studied for my speeches for Mariinsky festival by Valeri Gergijev in Finland, having a lot of Brahms symphonies in their program!

In Salmenhaara’s view all the Viennese classical symphonic music, i. e. symphonies, sonatas, string quartets and other chamber music pieces with larger forms, could be classified as to the key architecture with the following diagram. There were only a few basic types which were used by great composers. Most common was the tonic type (in major indicated by T and in minor t) and the use of subdominant in the side movement (the type is TS). Also very common is tonic-dominant-tonic. Both these types constitute the major symphony type. In minor they are rare, and as known in the minor as a contrasting tonality serves most often the parallel major type tP; the next big group is formed by key relations which Salmenhaara calls modal parallel, i. e. in major the major side key situated at the distance of major or minor third (both upwards and downwards). Theoretical possibilities are thus if the key is C major in this TPm type as follows: CAC, CasC, CEC, CesC. Also modal

minor parallels of type Tpm appear, but more seldom. In minor a modal parallel solution (parallel key being almost always major of type): tPm is as common as parallel major.

I wanted to cite this because in the scheme we have in musical terms something similar to Tomasevski's classification of the narrative techniques, or Vladimir Propp's study on the morphology of folk tale. Here we are talking about symphonies and sonatas instead of novels or fairy tales. The key distinctions lie not only in the abstract spatial relations in the inner tonal space, but also the fact that symphonies and sonatas are already semantically loaded. Even the choice of a key is not at all arbitrary. Let us say: anyone writing in E flat major after Beethoven's *Eroica* must face the heroic character of this key. In the time of Russian formalism, the synaesthetic meanings of keys were also discussed by artists: Kandinsky portrayed different angles with various colors; Rimsky-Korsakov and Scriabin had their diagrams of correspondences of keys and colors. Individual composers thought of keys in terms of colors. For Sibelius, the combination of orange, red and black was D major.

Anyway, the classification evokes the idea of the basic theme of each story, whether it goes from "sad" minor to "victorious" major, whether it starts and ends happily but has excursion (shifting off, debrayages) into darker fields. The global plan of a work is just its symphonic structure strengthened by thematic (actorial) and motivic elements on more superficial levels of the work. However, just as Propp came to 31 basic functions of the Russian fairy tale, here we can see 58 types of symphonic literature. Analogies between story telling in a novel and symphony continue when we study them further and examine more figurative expressions in both fields.

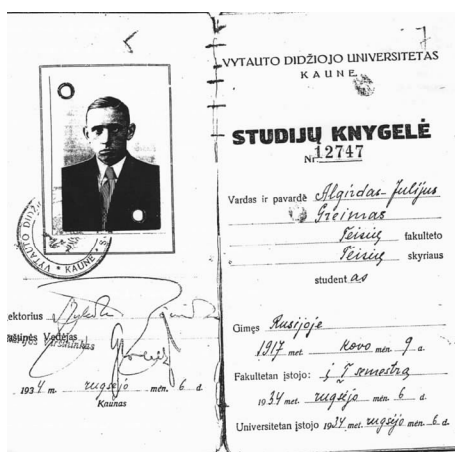
Altogether this might even lead us to think of the birth of Russian formalism *aus dem Geiste der Musik*, as with Nietzsche about tragedy.

Sesemann

One name that seems strange in this collection was Karsavin, who is among those scholars well known in Russia but totally ignored in the West. I heard about him rather recently in connection with the Lithuanian philosopher

and aesthetician Wilhelm Sesemann, who had invited this Russian intellectual from Russia to Kaunas University in the 1930s. Unfortunately these two extremely important scholars remained there after the occupation of Lithuania and did not emigrate early enough, so they shared the destiny to be sent to Siberia, where Karsavin died in 1952 and Sesemann survived. Sesemann returned as rehabilitated to Kaunas and lived there until 1962.

The reason I would like to raise these two names in this context of Russian formalism, even though neither of them is directly mentioned in any Western encyclopedia of semiotics as Russian formalists, is that they played an important role mediating formalist ideas to other scholars who became influential in the semiotic field. Sesemann was the logic teacher of A. J. Greimas at Kaunas University, where Greimas attended Sesemann's course in 1934, as shown by his study book. Greimas, the founder of the Paris school of semiotics, said later that it was from Karsavin that he realized that the Lithuanian language could be used as a scientific discourse. Certainly even less known is that as the first Finnish semiotician is the nephew of Sesemann, Finnish-Swedish poet Henry Parland, who in the 1920s wrote cultural essays inspired by Russian formalists like Zirmunski, on Russian and American movies, on Kaunas Jewish theater, etc. And Sesemann himself was a half Finn. The honorary member of the Finnish Semiotic Society, psychiatrist Oscarl Parland, has studied the life of his brother and uncle.



Greimas's Student Card in Kaunas University

Nr.	Mokslų dalykai	Profesorius pavardė	Profesorius parašas	Užskaitų pažymėjimai		Egzaminų pažymėjimai	
				Data ir prof. parašas	Data ir prof. parašas	Data ir prof. parašas	Data ir prof. parašas
1	Vatškėre tere	4 Romas	[Signature]	1934. 1. 27.	[Signature]		
2	Sėdimo tere	6 Janulaitis	[Signature]	1934. 11. 11.	[Signature]		
3	Politišė ekonomija	4 Saleius	[Signature]	1934. 11. 11.	[Signature]		
4	Romų teisė	4 Tomasiūtas	[Signature]	1934. 11. 11.	[Signature]		
5	Teisė mokytojų	3 Kivickas	[Signature]	1934. 11. 23.	[Signature]	1934. 11. 17.	[Signature]
6	Šiuolaikinė tautos istorija	2 Jungėlis	[Signature]	[Signature]	[Signature]		
7	Logika	4 Šešmanas	[Signature]	[Signature]	[Signature]		
8	Politinė kalba	8 Studenis	[Signature]	[Signature]	[Signature]		
9	Rusų kalba	8 Šarūnaitis	[Signature]	[Signature]	[Signature]		
10		BEKANNAS	[Signature]				
11	1934						
12							

Greimas's Study Book

According to Thorsten Botz-Bornstein, for Seseman the meaning was neither totally subjective, to be studied as the state of the human mind, nor completely objective, i. e. existing in a text, but living between them, in a form he saw as possessing a certain rhythm. Sesemann was influenced by Russian formalism, but his view on the form was rather dynamic, almost kinetic. The place where he put it between the subjective and objective comes close to Greimas's concept of *le monde naturel* which was not at all anything natural but already semiotized by the human mind.

Seseman also criticizes Russian formalists. His view of structure was that it was inner rhythm which constituted the true aesthetic moment. It was close to Lossky's notion of organic whole or neo-Kantian efforts to dynamize static logical systems. Sememan emphasized the two forms of knowledge: *kennen* and *wissen*, of which the first one was more important. Not the notion of "device" *priem* from Sklovski was the true essence of an art work. Of it, Sesemann said in his work *Iskusstvo I kul'tura*, which, by the way, appeared in the same year as Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* in 1927: "the notion of device as used by the school of the Formalists which is for them a substitute for form in spite of all the methodological convenience it offers it cannot be considered sound from a philosophical point of view. Form understood only as a device of

artistic expression takes in a subjective-intentional character and seems to exist without any relation to the material itself” (quoted from Botz-Bornstein, p. 41). But Sesemann’s “formalism” is an “aesthetic one” (ibid.). It is true that he was a philosopher and aesthetician in the first place and moved onto another level of abstraction than formalist scholars, whose thinking system were more concrete.

Propp

In considering the reception and influence of Russian formalism on subsequent developments in semiotics, the name which surfaces most readily is Vladimir Propp. When Propp’s *Morfologija skazki*, was translated into English in 1958 and into French in 1964, it became the “Bible” of structuralists. Its models are further developed by Lévi-Strauss, Greimas, Brémond, Elli-Kaija Kōngäs-Maranda, and Pierre Maranda.

The innovation Propp made in *Morfologija skazki* as early as in 1928 is decisive. In order to understand the productivity of the idea, let us ponder from what intellectual context it emerged. Propp’s basic discovery in studying Russian fairy tales was that the elements of one tale could be transferred to another tale without any change. The very notion of plot is defined as follows: one chooses at random one part of a tale, and provides it with word “about” and then definition is ready. Propp found all other earlier classifications unsuccessful. For Veselovski, plot consisted of several motifs, and each motif developed into a section. Plot was a theme which consisted of various situations. For him motif is primary; plot is secondary. But Propp thought that we had to first segment a tale; only thereafter could we make comparisons. All questions in the study of tales lead to the unresolved problem of why all fairy tales in the world remind us of each other. How can we explain that a tale about a frog queen is so similar to tales of the same kind in Russia, Germany, France, India, America and New Zealand? For Propp, the basic unit of a tale was “a function”. So Propp formulated his hypotheses as follows: (a) Functions are stable units of fairy tales, independent of who fulfills them or how *dramatis personae* realize them; (b) the number of functions is limited; (c) the order or sequence of functions is identical; (d)

all fairy tales belong to the same genre. However, functions do not follow each other immediately. When different persons fulfill consecutively functions, the latter person has to know all that has happened before he can enter. (How well this is realized in a Wagnerian mythic opera! Lévi-Strauss considered Wagner the first structural analyst of myth!)

How did Propp use ideas from the Finnish school of folkloristics for his achievement? According to Vilmos Voigt (in a letter to me), Propp was influenced by Aarne-Thompson. After the *skazochnaja* committee, a research committee for folk tales, was founded by *Russkoe geograficheskoe obshchestvo* (whose director was the famous orientalist, Duke S. F. Oldenburg), it invited Propp to make a catalogue of fairy tale types. Propp got a grant but soon thought that Aarne's system was outdated. After he read through Afanasjev's classical fairy tale collection, he realized that many fairy tales followed the same structure. This was the birth of Propp's morphology. He wrote his own book three times. First he wrote it as a narrative story, not morphology, and the committee did not accept it. Then, following V. M. Zirmuski's advice, Propp wrote a short text with only schemes and diagrams. It was almost incomprehensible. Finally emerged the well-known last version, which was published in the book series of Russian literature edited by Zhirmunski.

After the Second World War, Afanasjev's 3-part fairy tale collection was published. At its end, there was a catalogue of about 100 printed pages of fairy tale types, following Aarne-Thompson in 1928, edited by Propp. If we compare Aarne-Thompson type stores and Propp's morphological diagrams, we will learn the division of texts is similar, but the purposes are different. Accordingly, Propp had known since the beginning what the "Finnish" analysis of fairy tale types was like, and he twice wrote such a catalogue—yet his own method of morphology was different. (By the way, this background has been adequately treated in the dictionary of *Enzyklopedie des Märchens*. This Encyclopedia has entries for Propp, Andrejev, Morphologie, etc..)

In the 1960s, the Russian folklorists like K. V. Chistov have underlined that Propp "was a deeply Soviet great scholar", whereas the Western folklorists and Isidor Levin expressed the opinion that the context of Propp's

life work was international. The rebirth of Propp's Morphology was the idea of Roman Jakobson, and thanks to Thomas A. Sebeok, the first English version appeared (Email letter from Voigt to Tarasti in July 2013).

Levi-Strauss published his comments on Propp in his essay in *Cahiers de l'Institut de science économique appliquée* no 9, mars 1960 entitled "L'analyse morphologique des contes russes" and simultaneously in English in the *International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics* 3, 1960. He began by saying that those exercising structural analysis had been often accused of formalism. This means that form is determined by its opposition to the matter which is alien to it, whereas in truth structure does not have any separate contents: it is the content put in a logical organization, which is conceived as a property of "the real" (Lévi-Strauss 1973, p. 139). Lévi-Strauss praises the translators of Propp's work who have done an immense service to the human sciences by their work. Lévi-Strauss then comments on Propp and admits that his criticism of previous scholars is justified (Miller, Wundt, Aarne, Veselovsky). The problem is that one can always find tales which belong at the same time to several categories because classification is based upon types of tale or themes which they enact. The distinction of theme again is arbitrary. The classification of Aarne provided an inventory of themes which is very useful, but the segmentation is purely empirical, although the belonging of one tale to one category is always approximative.

Propp's work was indeed celebrated by the structuralist movement by and large. For Greimas it was one of the starting points for his semiotic school and he launched the discussion in his *Sémantique structurale* in 1966. Like Lévi-Strauss, he noticed that Propp's list could be made more economical, and one could distinguish what he called the mythical actants model with six members, that is, subject, object, sender, receiver, helper and opponent. However, the concept of an actant appears in his book much earlier than when he speaks about Propp in the chapter *A la recherche des modèles de transformation*. Also, Greimas tries to reduce the number of functions.

Yet, in the history of structuralism written by Francois Dosse, Russian formalism is mentioned just when he discusses its impact on French structuralism. However, when Propp's book appeared at Seuil in 1965, it

became the source of inspiration for the whole structuralist movement. It appeared in English in 1958 thanks to the initiative of Jakobson and effort of Thomas A Sebeok, yet Lévi-Strauss had discovered it as early as in 1960.

But there were also other scholars working further with the Proppian model. If Lévi-Strauss had changed his linear model into an achronic matrix, this was elaborated further by Elli-Kaija Kōngäs-Maranda and Pierre Maranda in their article “Structural Models in Folklore”, which appeared in *Midwest Folklore*, in the Fall of 1962. They list earlier studies on structure in folklore such as Propp’s Morphology and Lévi-Strauss, Sebeok and Alan Dundes’ theories. The primary goal of all of them was to find out the smallest operational units of structure. Aarne proposed it as “type” in 1910, Propp as “function” in 1928; they were both content units without operational value. Then Thompson proposed “motif” in 1932, and Lévi-Strauss “mytheme” in 1955 in a study on the Oedipus myth. The latter was a contentual-structural unit consisting of a relation between subject and predicate. Dundes proposed in 1962 a “motifeme”, which was an act of a protagonist, taking into account its meaning in the whole fairy tale.

When the structuralist fashion lost its attractiveness, what remained was narratology, which could still consider Propp as its pioneer, especially since almost all canonical analyses of stories started with segmentation. For instance, even in musical narratology, as I have tried to show in my study of the G minor Ballade of Chopin with its modal grammar. But, as Ugo Volli said, after Propp, various authors have tried to extend the morphology to other narrative genres, like myth, legend, popular literature, and modern novel. But in order to do, analysis is to be brought up to a higher level of abstraction (*Manuale di semiotica*, p. 111). It is hard to imagine any other type of systematic narrative study than what stems from Proppian “functions”.

Bakhtin

Yet, there is another Russian classic formalist who became very influential in the West in the 1980s. This was Mikhail Bakhtin. His profound ideas on own/alien speech, the dialogical imagination, polyphonic discourse in

literature, ideologemes, and carnivalesque culture, had a major impact on Western intelligentsia.

In his semi-philosophy and semioethics, Augusto Ponzio, together with Susan Petrilli, has taken Bakhtin as one of his precursors. Ponzio tries to analyze the present globalized reality and also life in the European Union in Bakhtinian terms. He sees Bakhtin more a philosopher than a literary theoretician (for instance: Ponzio, *Signs, Dialogue and Ideology*, p. 107–138, 1993; *Fuori Campo, I segni del corpo tra rappresentazione ed eccedenza*, p. 305–320, 1999). In fact, Ponzio writes, “We take ‘our’ words, says Bakhtin, from the mouth of others. ‘Our’ words are always semi-other. They are pregnant with the intentions of others before we use them ourselves as the materials and instruments of our own intentions. Consequently [...]. our discourses and thoughts are inevitably dialogic.”

Yet, in the West, it was perhaps Julia Kristeva who first introduced the ideas of Bakhtin. She noted as early as in 1966 in her essay “Le Mot, le dialogue et le roman”, that what is involved is a “cosmogony” in which “*on ne connaît pas la substance, la cause, l’identité en dehors du rapport avec le tout qui n’ existe que dans et par la relation*” (op cit. p. 160). She speaks of Bakhtin’s intertextuality in “two texts which join”, they contradict and relativize. The one who attends carnival is at the same time actor and spectator. She distinguishes epic literature which is monologicistic from a dialogical one. In fact, we can notice like Kristeva the following cases: (a) subject of utterance, enunciate coincides with the zero value of subject of enunciation: “he” or proper name; the most simple narrative technique which gives birth to a story; (b) coincidence of the subject of enunciate with subject of enunciation: “me” “I”; (c) coincidence of subject of enunciate with the destinator “you”; (d) coincidence of subject of enunciation at the same time with subject of enunciation and destinator. Novel becomes a play with writing and tagging the dialogical nature of the book. Kristeva ends up with a scheme portraying these case:

Practice	God
“Discourse”	“History”
Dialogis	Monologism

□ 符号与传媒

Correlational logics	Aristotelian logics
Syntagma	System
Carnaval	Narrative
Ambivalence; Menippea;	polyphonic novel

If the word is the minimal unit in Bakhtin's theory, there can be found two types: one's own word and alien word. Authoritarian word comes from the exterior and demands to be accepted; it penetrates us independently whether we find it convincing or not. The distinction between own and alien is very important in Bakhtin. We may think this coincides with existential semiotics and its categories of *Moi/Soi*. According to Bakhtin the resistance to alien, external world is of the highest importance to the development of individual ideology and identity. The whole process of learning and education is after all about how the alien becomes one's own.

Surprisingly, in quite recent years, a special cultural psychological theory emerged from Bakhtin's ideas, along with its application to psychotherapy, as well as cognitive and neurological brain studies. Hubert Hermans has created a theory of dialogical self entirely on a Bakhtinian basis. Hermans observes two kinds of positions: intersubjective interchange and dominance or social power. One may ask how dialogical the brain is and scrutinize dysfunctions like schizophrenia as a "collapse of the dialogical self". Theorists across disciplines have described the dynamic and multifaceted nature of self-experience, stressing that the self is "inherently 'dialogical' or the product of ongoing conversations both within the individual and between the individual and others". (p. 209). Moreover, Mikael Leiman from Joensuu University confirms: "Semiotic position and Bakhtinian notions of the signs suggest modification of the concept of I-position. Person's position reveals his or her subjective stance with regard to the addressee. The addressee is an invisible third, always seen to adopt a reciprocal stance, a counter-position. Thus instead of a dialogue between an I-position (a voice) and another, each I-position has dialogical relationship to its addressee. I-positions are embodied in signs, and sign mediate changes between the positions. Also Heikki Majava a Finnish psychiatrist has developed a model of transference based upon two I-positions, in the Bakhtinian sense."

There, if one says in existential semiotics that dialogue can be a disturbance in communication in which the I tries to communicate his/her ideas, this disturbance is welcome and beneficial; it must be there as a particular “noise” of the communication channel, albeit it were true that the other addressee remains an alien-psychic entity of which we can only hypothesize that he/she is something similar as the speaking subject. Thus almost imperceptibly we glide with Bakhtin into most vital debate of the nature of the self and cultural communication.

Altogether we see that the heritage of Russian formalism is not only shared by the Tartu-Moscow school of cultural semiotics (although it is in a privileged position), but Bakhtinian reception also takes place all over the world. Many applying his concepts hardly even know his background in the formalist movement; some specialists even deny that he belonged to that school at all. There he is, however, right in the encyclopedias of semiotics. Yet it is typical of contemporary schools of cultural theory and others to utilize these great figures as innovators, but detach them from their ideational context. Of course, we are interested in the works of Propp or Bakhtin just as historic documents of the early 20th century thought, but primarily for the weightiness of their ideas. We read them as classics, which will never be exhausted.

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