

Scottish Slavonic Review



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Jasnow



OBITUARY

G.L. PERMYAKOV 1919-1983

Grigory Lyovich Permyakov, who died at his home in Zhukovsky (hear Moscow) on 16 November 1983 after a long period of failing health, was an enthusiastic and passionate research scholar, internationally acknowledged as an authority on structural folkloristics and, more particularly, on structural paroemiology (i.e. the study of proverbs and related genres).

Permyakov was born in Perm in March 1919. In 1937 he entered the Philological Faculty of the Moscow Institute of History, Philosophy, and Literature. He was on active service in World War II. was severely wounded and remained an invalid for the rest of his life. Discharged in 1944, he completed his studies at Kazan University and worked in local broadcasting and journalism until 1953. In 1958 he turned to folklore. initially as translator and editor, later predominantly as a researcher with a theoretical orientation. He was never awarded a higher degree. never worked in a research institute, nor was his work ever given official acknowledgement. Nevertheless, he succeeded in laying the foundations of structural paroemiology, and both his person and his work were esteemed and beloved by colleagues and friends. Soviet and foreign alike.

Permyakov's theoretical interest arose out of specific, practical needs when, in the mid-sixties, he decided to assemble and publish a collection of Oriental proverbs. The lack of an appropriate classification system led him deeply into theoretical issues, culminating in the elaboration of a synthesis that is fundamental for folklore studies. His monograph Ot pogovorki do skazki. Zametki po obshchev teorii klishe (M., 1970; English version: From Proverb to Folk-Tale. Notes on the General Theory of Cliché, M., 1979) is his major theoretical work. It represents a comprehensive attempt at describing and distinguishing not only phraseological, but also various proverbial and folkloristic units on a logico-semiotic basis. Apart from his editorial work and his empirical investigations of a paroemiological minimum in Russian, proverbs were the major aspect of his theoretical works. He argued that proverbs should be considered as signs and/or models of situations or relationships between objects. They can be described on the basis of a set of logical rules on the one hand, and a limited number of complementary semantic binary oppositions on the other. His theory is contained in his Grammatika poslovichnou mudrosti (1979), which is an integrative compilation of his approach,

Right up to the end of his life, Permyakov was committed to and involved in folkloristic issues; be died while still full of ideas. plans, and projects. Although in continuous pain, Permyakov dealt with old topics in an original and refreshing manner; to many of these he found possible solutions himself. The memory of his person as well as his ocuvre should stimulate the further pursuit of questions which remain to be answered, including those which are posed by Permyakov's work. This regrettably belated obituary notice may serve as a tribute to the man and his scholarship.

[For a full list of Permyakov's writings see:

P. Grzybek (ed.), Semiotische Studien zum Sprichwort. Simple Forms Reconsidered I (Special Issue of: Kodikas/Code - Ars Semeiotica, An International Journal of Semiotics, Vols.3/4, 1984), pp.203-14.

Bochum

Pater Grzybek

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