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BYLINA AND FAIRY TALE

The Origins of Russian Heroic Poetry

by

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I

THE RUSSIAN FOLK EPOS AND THE FAIRY TALE

INTRODUCTION

A comparison of the Russian folk epos – the *byliny* (sing. *bylina*) – with the fairy tales reveals similarities in structure and content. Such similarities can be explained by an independent development from a common source, by cross-penetration of motifs between the two genres, or by evolution of one genre from the other. A detailed comparison of examples from both genres, based entirely on intrinsic evidence, indicates that the *bylina* evolved from the fairy tale. The first step in such an analysis is the establishment of genre chronology.

The accepted view among Russian scholars is that the fairy tales are older than the *byliny*.¹

Previous studies positing the evolution of epos from the fairy tale rely on extrinsic evidence. Wundt views the fairy tale as older than the epic song and bases this chronology on a historical reconstruction of the remote past. He suggests that the totemic age produced credited *Märchen* or animal myths, which in turn evolved into tales of fortune or fairy tales no longer credited. Epos then evolved out of the fairy tale.²

Žirmunskij accepts the genre chronology and the general validity of the evolution of epos out of fairy tales. He does, however, deny the universal applicability of Wundt's formulation and claims for Russia. among other countries, an independent development of the folk epos. He believes the *byliny* are a product of the feudal era and directly connected with historical, national events.³ Only an investigation of the precise

¹ V. Ja Propp, *Russkij geroičeskij èpos* ("Russian Heroic Epos") (Moscow, 1958), p. 259; V. P. Anikin, *Russkaja narodnaja skazka* ("The Russian Folktale") (Moscow, 1959), p. 97. See also later discussion in this chapter and in Chapter II.

² Wilhelm Wundt, *Elements of Folk Psychology*, E. L. Shaub trans. (London-New York, 1916), pp. 270–282.

³ V. M. Žirmunskij, *Èpičeskoe tvorčestvo slavjanskix narodov i problemy sravnitel'nogo izučeniya èposa* ("The Epic Art of the Slavic Peoples and Problems of Comparative Epic Studies") (Moscow, 1958), pp. 65–70.

relationship between the two genres can substantiate Žirmunskij's claim.

In *The Historical Roots of the Fairy Tale*, Propp proposes the evolution of the *byliny* from fairy tales.⁴ In a later work, *Russian Heroic Epos*, he considers an independent evolution of the *byliny* and fairy tales from ancient mythology.⁵ *The Historical Roots of the Fairy Tale* reconstructs the ancient totemic rites and presents them as the ultimate origin of the fairy tale. The compositional unity of the fairy tale and the epos is given as evidence of the evolution of the epic song out of this genre. This theory of evolution could be based on purely intrinsic evidence. Propp, however, bases it on historical reconstruction: "With the growth of feudal culture, folklore elements become the property of the ruling class; on the basis of this folklore are formed heroic narratives. . ."⁶

Besides basically agreeing with Wundt, Propp also directly contradicts Žirmunskij, who denies the origin of the Russian epos from the fairy tale. Wundt and Propp base their argument for genre chronology on reconstructed historical progression; Žirmunskij bases his on the presence of historical material in the *byliny*. However, all three scholars agree on genre chronology: the fairy tale is older than the *bylina*.

The relationship between the two genres is a topic requiring detailed study. Extrinsic evidence is useful in such a study if it is well authenticated; if it is not, it is best to rely first on intrinsic evidence readily available within the fairy tales and the folk epos. On this point, Bascom writes:

Anthropologists have come to the conclusion that the search for ultimate origins. . . is a hopeless one where historical documents and archeological evidence are lacking. In folklore, where archeology can be of almost no help at all, and where documentation does not yield the answers directly, attempts to reconstruct history on an even more restricted scale can yield results only in terms of probability rather than proven fact, and there is the constant danger of being enticed into the realm of pure speculation for which one can never hope to discover supporting evidence.⁷

It seems, therefore, that the only piece of solid extrinsic evidence testifying to the relatively late development of epos is the historical material within it, but that does not necessarily make the fairy tale a older genre.

⁴ V. Ja. Propp, *Istoričeskie korni volšebnoj skazki* ("The Historical Roots of the Fairy Tale") (Leningrad, 1946).

⁵ Propp, *Russian Heroic Epos*, see especially pp. 5–58.

⁶ Propp, *Roots of the Fairy Tale*, p. 337.

⁷ W. R. Bascom, "Folklore and Anthropology", in *The Study of Folklore*, A. Dundes ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965), p. 31.

Verification of the genre chronology and evolution proposed by Wundt and Propp requires a comparison of the two genres along intrinsic lines. The greater the similarity between the two genres that can be demonstrated, the less likelihood there is of independent development. Conclusions are reached by the purely literary analysis suggested by Bascom:

The anthropologist, to speak frankly, feels that his colleagues in folklore are often so preoccupied with the problems of origin and historical reconstruction that they overlook problems of equal or greater significance to which one can hope to find satisfactory answers. He looks to them for guidance in literary analysis of folklore. . . .⁸

Other methods of analysis and conclusions reached thereby are presented only for purposes of comparison. Chapter II provides an overview of various approaches to the relationship of the *byliny* and the fairy tales.

SELECTION OF TEXTS AND SOURCES

The structure of fairy tales is essentially uniform: the hero embarks upon a quest, overcomes a series of obstacles, returns home and lives happily ever after. The atmosphere of the supernatural is all-pervasive.

The fairy tale has two types of heroes, one type exhibiting a greater kinship with the epic protagonist than the other. Meletinskij distinguishes between them on the basis of name: Ivan the Prince is a more active and heroic protagonist than Ivan the Fool; hence, fairy tales in which Ivan the Prince appears are closer to the epos.⁹ The manner of acquiring invincibility is, however, a more satisfactory basis for distinction. The fairy-tale hero who is magically endowed with invincibility prior to his quest bestows more of his attributes upon the epic hero than the one who receives his invincibility from a donor after setting out from home.¹⁰ A donor is a personage capable of granting powers, usually by presenting the hero with a magical agent.

Obviously, both types of hero must be included in a study such as this.

There are many collections of folktales. Afanas'ev's (1855–1862), Xudjakov's (1860–1862), Sadovnikov's (1884), Ončukov's (1908), and

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ E. M. Meletinskij, *Geroj volšebnoj skazki* ("The Hero of the Fairy Tale") (Moscow, 1958), p. 233.

¹⁰ *Narodnye russkie skazki A. N. Afanas'eva* ("Russian Folktales of A. N. Afanas'ev"), A. E. Gruzinskij ed. (Moscow, 1914), Nos. 77, 105.

Smirnov's (1917) collections are the most important.¹¹ Since this investigation is primarily concerned with the Russian folk epos and its evolution from the fairy tale, rather than with the fairy tale itself, and since the latter does exhibit a marked uniformity, Afanas'ev's collection has been selected as the best representation of the traditional fairy tale.¹²

Although a marked structural uniformity and the dominance of the supernatural are characteristic of the fairy tale, this is not true of the *byliny*. A comparison of the *bylina* "Volx Vseslav'evič" with the *bylina* "Il'ja Muromec and the Big Idol" reveals that the first *bylina*, like the fairy tale, relies heavily on supernatural material, whereas such material is infrequent in the second *bylina*.¹³

There are also structural differences between the two *byliny* in relation to the hero, donor, and king. In "Il'ja Muromec and the Big Idol" the hero aided by a donor figure saves the ruler; in "Volx Vseslav'evič", on the other hand, the protagonist dispenses with the aid of a donor and combats the king.

The texts selected should be representative of the differences among *byliny* with regard to structure and the use of supernatural material. The detailed analysis necessary to provide intrinsic data on the evolution of the epic genre requires that only a limited number of texts be used. The greater the number of subjects chosen, the less is the chance of substantiating conclusions and, conversely, the greater the likelihood of compounding unproven generalizations. Therefore, six *byliny* in variants that employ the supernatural material in varying degrees have been chosen: "Volx Vseslav'evič", "Il'ja Muromec and Solovej the Brigand", "Aleša Popovič and Tugarin the Dragon", "Il'ja Muromec and the Big Idol", "Dobrynja Nikitič and Gorynyč the Dragon", and "The Bloody Fight against Mamaj".¹⁴ This is a fair selection, since the fairy tale and the

¹¹ For a more detailed listing see Propp, *Roots of the Fairy Tale*, p. ii.

¹² V. Ja. Propp, *Morfologija skazki* ("Morphology of the Folktale") (Leningrad, 1928), p. 109.

¹³ V. Ja. Propp and B. N. Putilov (eds.), *Byliny I* (Moscow, 1958), pp. 8–20, 183–195.

¹⁴ The titles given here are generalizations from a variety available in collections utilized for the purposes of this study: *Drevnie rossijskie stixotvorenija sobrannye Kiršeju Danilovym*, ("Ancient Russian Verses Collected by Kirša Danilov"), A. P. Evgen'eva and B. N. Putilov eds., (Moscow–Leningrad, 1958); *Pesni sobrannye P. V. Kireevskim*, ("Songs Collected by P. V. Kireevski"), P. A. Bezsonov ed., 5 vols. (Moscow, 1860–1863); *Pesni sobrannye P. N. Rybnikovym* ("Songs Collected by P. N. Rybnikov"), A. E. Gruzinskij ed., 3 vols. (Moscow, 1909–1910); *Onežskie byliny*, ("Onega Byliny"), A. F. Gil'ferding comp., 3 vols. (Moscow – Leningrad, 1949–1950); *Belomorskie byliny* ("White Sea Byliny"), A. Markov comp. (Moscow, 1901); *Pečorskie byliny* ("Pečora Byliny"), N. Ončukov comp. (St. Petersburg, 1904); *Arxangel'skie byliny i istoričeskie pesni* ("Archangel Byliny and Historical Songs"), A. D. Grigor'ev comp.,

bylina employ practically the same kind of supernatural material; the greater its use in the *bylina*, the more similarity there is to the fairy tale. Also, the structural differences among the six *byliny* represent a departure in varying degrees from the established fairy-tale patterns; the greater the departure, the less similarity there is between the *bylina* and the fairy tale.

There is a wide choice of sources. Epic folk poetry first appeared in print in 1804, in the Kirša Danilov collection; few texts in the field were gathered until the 1830's, when Kireevskij began his collecting activity. The publication of his texts was begun as late as the 1860's. Following the Kireevskij *byliny* came those collected by Rybnikov. In the early 1870's, Gil'ferding's texts appeared, and from then on the collecting activity was well on its way. Since the epos is of primary concern in this investigation, all available collections from that of Kirša Danilov to those of the twentieth century are used.

There were two additional considerations in choosing materials for study. Many *byliny*, especially in the twentieth century, evolved into fairy tales.¹⁵ The basic reason for this phenomenon is the decline of the epic tradition. This type of fairy tale could not be used as evidence of similarity between the two genres. Since these tales preserve the essential narrative line of the respective *byliny*, they were easy to detect. Also, separate *bylina* motifs penetrating the fairy tales were encountered, as for example, the locality of Kiev, and the court of Prince Vladimir.¹⁶ Such penetration is rather rare. Still, epic motifs in the fairy tales were eliminated as evidence of a genetic relationship between the *bylina* and the fairy tale.

RELEVANCE OF CONCLUSIONS

Russian folk epos may be divided into three major groups: the heroic *byliny*, *byliny* with a *skazka*-like (folktale) content, and *byliny*-novellas. The epic songs chosen for investigation belong to the first group. Schol-

3 vols. (Moscow - Prague, 1904-1939); *Byliny severa* ("Northern Byliny"), A. M. Astaxova comp., 2 vols. (Moscow - Leningrad, 1938-1951); *Onežskie byliny* ("Onež Byliny"), Ju. M. Sokolov and V. Čičerov eds. (Moscow, 1948); *Byliny M. S. Krjukovoj* ("Byliny of M. S. Krjukova"), Ju. M. Sokolov ed., 2 vols. (Moscow 1939-1941); *Byliny*, V. Ja. Propp and B. N. Putilov eds., 2 vols. (Moscow, 1958). *Byliny* collections will be henceforth referred to by the name of the compiler. The source for fairy tales will also be referred to simply as Afanas'ev.

¹⁵ A. M. Astaxova, *Narodnye skazki o bogatyrjax russkogo èposa* ("Folktales about Russian Epic Heroes") (Moscow - Leningrad, 1962), pp. 9-71.

¹⁶ Afanas'ev, Nos. 85, 178.

ars point to a broad similarity, but not necessarily a direct genetic relationship, between the *skazka*-like *byliny* and the fairy tales. Typically, after the pattern of the fairy tale, the *skazka*-like *bylina* deals with a heroic quest upon which the hero gains a bride and returns home safely. Also, the supernatural material evidenced in these *byliny* echoes the magical world of the fairy tale.

Although conclusions stemming from this study have primary validity for the heroic epos, the finding of a genetic relationship with the fairy tale should also be applicable to the *skazka*-like epos. As for the *byliny*-novellas, Propp and Putilov describe them as follows:

In scholarship, the term "novella" is usually applied to *byliny* dealing with subjects of every-day life or romantic adventure. The heroic and the fairy-tale-like motifs are either altogether absent from these *byliny*, or they remain very much in the background.¹⁷

These scholars point out the late (post-heroic poetry) development of the novellas and their close kinship with the ballad. Although the subject requires a separate study, it is likely that the novellas fall outside of the epic genre proper, assuming the characteristics of both the epos and the ballad.

Note: original Russian text of translated *bylina* fragments is given in the Appendix, pp. 134–157.

¹⁷ Propp and Putilov, *Byliny*, II, p. 165.

II

THE EPOS AND THE FAIRY TALE IN RUSSIAN LITERARY CRITICISM

EARLY STUDIES

The term *bylina* is now commonly used to denote Russian folk epic poetry. At the end of the nineteenth century, Vsevolod Miller advanced the theory that this term is scholarly in origin.¹ In 1839, Saxarov, a connoisseur of Russian folklore, published *Songs of the Russian Nation*, a section of which he entitled "Byliny of the Russian People"; thus *bylina* first gained scholarly acceptance at that time. This literary term, according to Miller, subsequently became a part of popular usage. He claims that, among the folk, the *starina* (narrative of old) was the common designator of the epic song. Miller also states that Saxarov derived the term *bylina* from a phrase in *The Song of Igor's Campaign: po bylinam sego vremeni* 'in keeping with the happenings of these times'.² In recent years, Uxov submitted evidence that suggests the use of this term independently of Saxarov.³ However, Uxov cites no printed material prior to 1839 in which the term *bylina* appears. Although Uxov's article poses important questions concerning the origin of the term *bylina*, there is little doubt that Saxarov introduced it into common usage.⁴ In written sources prior to the 1840's, Miller finds the following terms denoting *byliny*: *stixotvorenje* (poem), *pesnja* (song), *stat'ja* (piece), and *skazka* (folktale). For the purposes of this study, the term *skazka* is especially important. The remaining terms are essentially neutral, inasmuch as they do not hark back to any specific genre.

As Čičerov notes, scholars in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, as well as popular writers, usually designated the *byliny* as

¹ V. Miller, *Očerki ruskoj narodnoj slovesnosti* ("Essays on Russian Folk Literature") (Moscow, 1897), I, pp. 28–29.

² V. Nabokov (trans.), *The Song of Igor's Campaign* (New York, 1960), p. 29.

³ P. D. Uxov, *Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta* ("Messenger of Moscow University"), No. 4 1953, pp. 135–192.

⁴ A. M. Astaxova, *Byliny* (Moscow – Leningrad, 1966), pp. 21–27.

skazki.⁵ In the years 1780–1783, Levšin's *Russkie skazki* ("Russian Folktales") was published. Harkins comments that Levšin included the *byliny* in his use of the term *skazki*; at that time the term was "applied to any folk narrative, whether in prose or in verse"⁶. Since etymologically the word *skazka* denotes a short narrative, such a usage is understandable.⁷ Levšin, however, knew the versified *bylina* genre and the prose *skazka* genre.⁸ If he chose to call both *skazki*, it is because he apparently saw little difference between them. In his use of the word, *skazka* means tale or folktale, but not simply and indiscriminately "narrative".

In 1804 appeared the first edition of *byliny*, namely that of Kirša Danilov, who had collected them some fifty years earlier, perhaps in the Urals.⁹ Grammatin equates most of these songs with *skazki*.¹⁰

During this period, the study of Russian folklore was still in its infancy. Thus, the equating of the epos with the folktale did not follow from any serious analysis of the two genres. Indeed, it is quite clear that the two are by no means identical.

It should be pointed out that at this time there existed no classification of *skazki* into specific groups. Only in the second half of the nineteenth century did the Russian mythological school make a twofold division of the *skazki* into mythical tales and animal tales.¹¹ At the turn of the century, Vsevolod Miller introduced the now commonly accepted classification of *skazki* into three groups: fairy tales, tales of everyday life and

⁵ V. I. Čičerov, *Russkoe narodnoe tvorčestvo* ("Russian Folk Art") (Moscow, 1959), p. 213.

⁶ William E. Harkins, *The Russian Folk Epos in Czech Literature, 1800–1900* (New York, 1951), pp. 239–240.

⁷ The seventeenth century "Pričta o starom muže i molodjoj device" ("An Instructive Tale About an Old Man and a Young Maiden"), ends: "Sej skazke konec" ("This is the end of the narration"). See N. K. Gudzij (ed.), *Xrestomatija po drevnej ruskoj literature XI–XVII vekov* ("An Anthology of Old Russian Literature, XI–XVII Centuries") (Moscow, 1962), pp. 443–445.

⁸ M. K. Azadovskij, *Istorija ruskoj fol'kloristiki* ("A History of Russian Folklore Studies") (Moscow, 1958), I, p. 67.

⁹ This collection of *byliny* has had more editions than any other in the history of Russian epic poetry. The heroic songs of Kirša Danilov were republished in 1818, 1878, 1892, 1901, 1938, and 1958.

¹⁰ Quoted in Harkins, *The Russian Folk Epos in Czech Literature*, p. 7; the quotation dates from 1809.

¹¹ O. F. Miller, *Opyt istoričeskogo obozrenija ruskoj slovesnosti* ("An Essay Toward a Historical Survey of Russian Literature") (St. Petersburg, 1865), pp. 137, 186. The precise terms used here are: *Ostatki mifičeskogo èposa: skazki; ostatki životnogo èposa: skazki o životnyx* (the remains of the mythical epos: folktales; the remains of the beast epos: animal tales).

animal tales.¹² It is apparent from these classifications that early folklorists, when equating the *byliny* with *skazki*, always denoted by the term *skazka* the mythical tale or, more specifically, the fairy tale. In this connection, Propp's observation is especially relevant:

One thinks of the folktale (*skazka*) and such figures as Baba Jaga and her hut, manyheaded serpents, Ivan the Prince (*Ivan carevič*), the beautiful princess (*prekrasnaja carevna*), the magical flying horse, and the like immediately come to mind.¹³

In spite of this classification, in Russian literature the folktale (*skazka*) often appears as a synonym for fairy tale (*volšebnaja skazka*).¹⁴ Therefore, in quotations from Russian sources, whichever term appears, the meaning is interchangeable.

The second edition of the Kirša Danilov collection (1818) contains an introduction by Kalajdovič, the first serious student of Russian folklore and a forerunner of the later historical school. Kalajdovič juxtaposes the *piry* (feasts) of the *byliny* with the feasts of Prince Vladimir as they are described in the medieval Russian chronicles and indicates the relevance of the personages of Aleša Popovič and Dobrynja Nikitič, who also appear in the chronicles, to their namesakes in the *byliny*. Kalajdovič refers to the texts of the collection both as songs and as folktales. The phrase, "The mode in which our folktales (*skazki*) are sung depends on their content", is characteristic.¹⁵ There can be little doubt that Kalajdovič designates *byliny* as *skazki*, since the latter are narrated and the former are sung.

Kalajdovič's ideas about Kirša Danilov and his songs should be noted before further analysis of his views. Kalajdovič considers Danilov to be

¹² Fairy tales and tales of everyday life belonged to the former mythical group of tales. See M. Speranskij, *Russkaja ustnaja slovesnost'* ("Russian Oral Literature") (Moscow, 1917), p. 414. The precise terms used here are: (1) *skazki s čudesnym soderžaniem*; (2) *skazki bytovye, ili narodnye anekdoty*; (3) *skazki o životnyx*; i.e., (1) 'folktales with a wondrous content' – this terminology evolved into *volšebnye skazki* 'magical tales – fairy tales' in subsequent years; (2) 'tales of everyday life or folk anecdotes'; (3) 'animal tales'.

¹³ Propp, *Morphology of the Folk Tale*, p. 96. Propp himself, who does not like the name *volšebnaja skazka*, since he feels that this type of folktale is primarily defined by its special fixed structure rather than magical content, has no qualms about using simply the term *skazka* on his title page, though his work is concerned specifically with the fairy tale.

¹⁴ Depending on the context, *skazka* may also mean a tale of everyday life or an animal tale, since in scientific terminology this is a blanket designation for all three types of folktales.

¹⁵ Danilov (Moscow, 1878), p. xix.

a poet who used folklore (chiefly the fairy tale) as a basis for his own compositions, which he set to music. (This first collection of *byliny* contained texts and the music for their vocal performance.) Thus Kalajdovič, in his introduction, expresses his views about Danilov's mode of composition. That he should think of Danilov more as a poet is fully understandable; Kalajdovič's knowledge of the folk epos was limited to one collection, Kirša Danilov's.

Kalajdovič uses the term *skazka* for a specific reason. To him it is not a question of identity of genres, as it was with Grammatin or Levšin. The designation, folktale, acquires in Kalajdovič's remarks the quality of a critical appraisal and an indication of origin:

Let us look at Danilov's description passages: they are simple, rich with repetitions and for the most part anachronistic. As for his language, it is that of the folktale (*narodnaja skazka*).¹⁶

He adds that Danilov drew his material far more from the fairy tale than from historical sources.

The ready acceptance of the term *bylina* for the folk epic by the middle of the nineteenth century indicates the growing awareness of the differences between the *byliny* and the fairy tales. The polemic between the amateur folklorist, Šepping, and the critic, Aksakov, is illuminating in this respect. Šepping compares the fairy tales about Ivan the Prince with the epic poetry of the Kirša Danilov collection, concluding that the fairy tales about Ivan the Prince were formerly epic songs about a Russian epic hero.¹⁷ He maintains that oral transmission distorted the ancient epic songs of the Danilov collection and turned them into fairy tales. Šepping admits that the fairy tales make far more use of the supernatural. However, in comparing Ivan the Prince with Il'ja Muromec, Dobrynja Nikitič, Aleša Popovič, and other epic heroes appearing in the Danilov collection, he finds definite points of similarity: the magical horse, the abduction of a princess, and the struggle with a dragon. Like Kalajdovič, Šepping points to certain stylistic similarities of the *byliny* and the fairy tales, not to claim identity of style, but rather to show kinship, thus justifying his theory.

A comparison of the views of Kalajdovič and Šepping shows a growing tendency toward the differentiation of the *byliny* from the fairy tales.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

¹⁷ D. O. Šepping, "Ivan carevič, narodnyj ruskij bogatyř" ("Ivan the Prince, a National Russian Epic Hero"), *Moskvitjanin* ("The Moscovite"), No. 21, 1852, Part VI, pp. 21, 23.

The former sees little difference between the two; the latter, in order to justify his claim, points to a process of gradual distortion as explanatory of the differences between the *byliny* of Kirša Danilov and the fairy tales. When Kalajdovič discusses a relationship between the fairy tale and the *bylina*, his arguments are not altogether wrong. Yet his conclusion that Danilov mixed a little history with a large dose of the fairy tale can hardly be accepted. Danilov was a collector, not a poet. To verify this point, one only has to compare his *byliny* with any of the subsequent nineteenth- or twentieth-century collections. The value of Šěpping's observations concerning the similarity of the folk epos and the fairy tale cannot be denied, for his points about the magical horse, abduction, and the dragon are indeed pertinent. However, Ivan the Prince is not an epic hero. There are essential differences between the *byliny* and the fairy tales. Kalajdovič and Šěpping are perceptive investigators who see a genre kinship and try to explain it.

For Aksakov, Šěpping's claim that "Ivan the Prince is a Russian epic hero" stems from a basic misunderstanding of the differences between the two genres:

In our opinion, there is a sharp dividing line between the folktales (*skazki*) and songs (*pesni*). The folktale and the song are different from the very beginning. The people themselves established this difference, and we might as well adhere to this differentiation made by them in their literature. "The tale is fiction, the song is a fact", as the people themselves say. When we look at the song and the tale, we can understand the profound meaning of these words.¹⁸

Here Aksakov is stating an essential difference between the aesthetics of the two genres: alleged fact versus admitted fiction. He points to other factors separating the folk epos from the fairy tales:

In songs geography may be inexact, but this stems from ignorance. In folktales, however, the narrator abandons the boundaries of time and space. . .

The magical element also contributes to the differentiation between the song and the folktale. In the latter it is constantly present and almost all the heroes find support and help from the magical. In songs, on the other hand, although one cannot negate the presence of the supernatural element within, it is always on the side of the adversary.¹⁹

Aksakov's observations have withstood the test of time. They provide the essential criteria for the differentiation of the *bylina* from the fairy tale.

¹⁸ K. S. Aksakov, *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij* ("Complete Collected Works") (Moscow, 1889), I, p. 380.

¹⁹ Aksakov, *Complete Works*, pp. 380-381.