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The Fairy Tale as a Place of Memory in the Context of Intergenerational Communication

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Abstract

A fairy tale as a form of a cultural code is the most important tool for cultural and ethnic socialization, the transfer of social experience, values, and worldview. Modern society is characterized by a high level of technologization, standardization, and universalization of the communication process which leads to the formation of new social practices of communication of various social groups. The article is focused on highlighting the functional and activity role of a fairy tale in the formation of the social memory of the younger generation and the features of the implementation of intergenerational communication through the fairy tale. In the article, a fairy tale as a place of memory in intergenerational communication is also analyzed using the methodological tools of the sociology of communication.

The article discusses the detailing of the concept of “social memory”, types of social memory. With an emphasis on the identification function, the authors consider the main social functions of a fairy tale (cultural and ethnic, socializing, creative, holographic, developmental and therapeutic, lexical-shaped, recreational). The authors consider the activity aspect of the fairy tale as a place of memory is revealed, the interactional relations of communicants, conditioned by social changes and information and communication technologies, in their historical dynamics.

The article analyzes the stage of transition from mythological knowledge to the need to carry out initiation practices with the transfer of secrets to the younger generation in encoded form, in the form of a fairy tale. The most significant stage can be called the transformation of a fairy tale into a verbal-poetic story of a fantastic, adventurous, novelistic, and everyday nature. The article analyzes the impact of information technologies on the form of fairy tale transmission as the destruction of the traditional narrative format from the older generation “by the word of mouth” and the exit of the fairy tale beyond the literary genre.

In modern society, the range of communication agents in the transmission of social experience between generations has significantly expanded. There appear agents of non-family communication, which take part in the transmission of cultural memory and the formation of memory places in the younger generation. The authors note that in the communicative aspect, a fairy tale is a convenient form for transmitting cultural code, which can be adapted to current formats (Internet, animation, cinema, computer games, etc.). It is shown that the most important feature of the use of modern storytelling tools is the reduction of traditional emotionality in the interactive relationships of communicants, which leads to the erosion of traditional values and a decrease in the depth of intergenerational ties. This trend may lead to the risk of alienation of traditional values.

Keywords: Place of memory, Generation, Social communication, Social memory, Fairy tale, Values.

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Introduction

The development of modern society creates an environment in which new generations use the latest technologies to work with information and organize the communication process. This leads to the construction of new social practices of media consumption that meet the interests of different age cohorts. In the economic sphere, marketing has already taken this into account and successfully develops models of marketing communications with a specific layer of consumers, on the one hand, taking into account their specifics, and on the other, tactically influencing the formation of their specific requests. In the social sphere, the generational diversification of practices is not studied as extensively. Largely, generational differences are analyzed in the field of education (Chudnovskaya & Lipatova, 2020) and in politics (Osipova, Elishev & Pronchev, 2020), when it is necessary to predict the types of behaviour of different segments of the population in certain conditions. New political realities expand the range of current social problems, one of which is active work with the social memory of a particular society with a special focus on the younger segments of the population. Modern media discourse in the process of communication begins to compete with historical reality, imposing its own framing of memory, strategically replacing images of the past, strenuously offering a new moral grid of human community and moral values, and often bringing a split in intergenerational relations.

Social thinkers are looking for ways to preserve objectively social memory, which requires at least the development of a relevant categorical and conceptual scientific apparatus, based on which appropriate hypotheses, theories, and recommendations will be created. In this work, the authors understand social memory as “a set of socio-cultural tools and institutions that select and transform relevant social information into information about the past in order to preserve the accumulated social experience and transmit it from generation to generation” (sociological dictionary, 2018).

1. Literature review

The study of social memory at the beginning of the twentieth century is associated with the name of M. Halbwachs (2007). Cultural studies scholar J. Assman (2004) concretized the theory of social memory and introduced the concept of “remembering culture” and identified the types of memory. M. Halbwachs (2007) and P. Nora (1999) present the analysis of reflection in consciousness and the form of perception of “places of memory” in the works. Russian researcher A. V. Sokolov (2002) identified the structure of the social memory of the whole society.

In sociology, the problems of studying social and historical memory are represented by such questions as historical memory as a factor of socialization (Klimov, 2007), conceptual dominants of the analysis of social memory as a specific phenomenon of modern society (Loiko, 2013), analysis of approaches to the term “historical memory” and identification of the main factors influencing the formation of historical memory (Akhmetshina, 2014), the mechanism of “addressing” of historical memory (Shestov, 2018), the specifics of the functioning of social memory (Logunova, 2019), etc.

The work of the Soviet scientist V. Ya. Propp (2000) is devoted to the study of the structure and origin of fairy tales. Such psychologists as M. L. Franz (2004), E. Fromm (2011), and K. G. Jung (1991) wrote about the role of fairy tales and myths in the formation of personality. The works by C. Lévi-Strauss (2001), R. Ya. Malinovsky (1998), and J. Fraser (1980) reflect the thoughts of scientists about the connection between religion and beliefs with the structure of the first societies, about the features of mythological thinking. The role of a fairy tale in the upbringing and transfer of socio-cultural experience to children was given by Russian teachers L. S. Vygotsky (1999), A. V. Zaporozhets, and G. D. Lukov (1941), K. D. Ushinsky (1950). In psychology, in the early 1990s, a method of complex fairy tale therapy was developed (Zinkevich-Evstigneeva, 2000).

The works by representatives of psychology, pedagogy, philology is devoted to the study of fairy tales in the modern Russian humanitarian scientific space. The features of the formation of the emotional culture of the personality, the development of speech, and, in general, the influence of fairy tales on the psyche of the child are presented in the works by N. B. Bykova (2019), O. M. Romanova (2018), and N. G. Bondarenko (2018). O. V. Belous and E. S. Varetsa (2018) consider a fairy tale as a means of diagnosing life scenarios. The methods of using a fairy tale for mastering figurative speech in elementary school or as a means of adaptation of younger students are reflected in the articles by I. A. Pavlinova (2018), B. S.-A. Kasumova (2018). G. S. Spiridonova (2019) carried out the analysis of the Russian literary tale in the work.

2. Methodology

The works devoted to the study of intergenerational communication, socialization of children in modern society, and historical memory are widely presented in the Russian humanitarian scientific thought (history, political science, education, philosophy, sociology, law, psychology). However, the studied problem (the fairy tale as a place of memory in the context of intergenerational communication) is new for sociological science. Based on classical and modern interdisciplinary studies of historical memory, intergenerational relations, and childhood, the authors outline the basic directions for further research of the fairy tale as a place of memory in a sociological way and highlight the key social practices of intergenerational communication in a specific cultural and ethnic community. The review of Russian-language literature is carried out and the conceptual apparatus of analyzing fairy tales as a form of transmitting historical memory is clarified. The analysis of fairy tales, cultural memory, and intergenerational interaction is carried out using the methodological tools of the sociology of communication. Sociology of communication is a branch of sociology that studies the relationship between social and communicative structures, channels and methods of information transmission, and communication systems. The paper substantiates the existence of a fairy tale as a place of memory in intergenerational communication as a problem.

3. Results and discussion

The introduction into scientific circulation and the beginning of the study of the concept of “social memory” date back to the 1920s and is associated with the name of M. Halbwachs (2007). Halbwachs sees memory as a social construct created in the present, i.e. it is understood not as the sum of the memories of individuals, but as a kind of collective cultural work that develops under the influence of family, religion and social group through linguistic structures, everyday life practices, and social institutions. The structure of social memory of the whole society, according to A. V. Sokolov (2002), is represented by two layers: 1) social unconscious (ethnic psychology, archetypes, social instincts: the need for another person, empathy, submission to the leader, etc.); 2) cultural heritage: 2.1) spiritual culture (non-materialized part): national language, customs, knowledge, and skills, 2.2) material culture (materialized part): cultural monuments in the form of artefacts, documents, nature mastered by society.

An additional concretization of the theory of social memory is offered by the cultural studies scholar J. Assman (2004). He introduces the concept of “remembering culture” and identifies the following types of memory: communicative and cultural. All members of the group are attached to the first one to some extent, knowledge is acquired along with language and everyday communication; the second one always has its own carriers (shamans, priests, scientists, writers, bards, etc.). Cultural memory, in contrast to communicative memory, does not spread by itself, but needs special care, and therefore is subject to control. Society creates special broadcasting institutions to achieve these goals, one of which is the media. The researcher also notes that the state, or another dominant group, controls social memory.

The concept of “places of memory” by M. Halbwachs (2007) and P. Nora (1999) is productive. These are not places in the geographical sense, but social symbolic points where the memory of society is concentrated. Places of memory can be not only geographical points but also people, events, objects, buildings, traditions, legends, etc. Researchers are interested, first, not in the material part of this place, but in its reflection in consciousness and the forms of its perception. Thus, scientists studying the problem of social memory pay attention not only to the object of memory itself but also to the activity aspect of the question: what serves as a place of memory, how it is perceived, who and how distributes and controls information. We also note that it is not only about memory in terms of specific events, but also about the preservation of certain moral and moral values.

Representatives of the same generation are carriers of common (for certain cohorts) values, worldview, positions in relation to the surrounding world, formed over time, through the experience of historical events, the creation of certain historical markers, places of memory. To ensure the preservation of society, it is necessary to ensure the continuity of generations, during which the relationship between the past and the future is carried out through the process of transferring and assimilating material and spiritual values, the experience of previous generations for their subsequent preservation and use.

A fairy tale is one of the first symbolic places that introduce a new little person to a world that he did not create himself, and values that correspond to this and previous stages of development of a certain society. It is “a story that performs industrial and religious functions at the early stages of development in a pre-class society, that is, it represents a type of myth; at the later stages, it is a genre of oral fiction that has a content unusual in the everyday sense of events (fantastic, miraculous or every day) and is distinguished by a special compositional and stylistic structure” (Fundamental electronic library). With the development of social forms and social consciousness, it is possible to change the very concept of “fairy tale”. The Soviet scientist V. Ya Propp (2000), who, in particular, notes that the history of a fairy tale is associated with social institutions of the past and especially with religious cults, rituals, and customs of the people, contributed a lot to the study of the structure and origin of fairy tales. Such psychologists as M. L. Franz (2004), E. Fromm (2011), and K. G. Jung (1991) wrote about the role of fairy tales and myths in the formation of personality. In their works, C. Lévi-Strauss (2001), R. Ya. Malinovsky (1998), J. Fraser (1980), and others using the comparative historical method showed the connection of religion and beliefs with the structure of the first societies, reflected on the features of mythological thinking.

Placing the fairy tale in an educational context, Russian psychology and pedagogy noted that due to the simplicity of the presentation of fairy tales, the lack of direct edification, the manifestation of typicality of the characters and bringing to an absolute degree their socially significant characteristics (kindness, bravery, etc.), fairy tales are easily perceived by children.

When considering a fairy tale as a place of memory, not only the content side of the fairy tale is of great importance, but also its functional aspect: the goals of its creation and use in social life, as well as the interactive relations of the communicant-communicator and the recipient, determined by social and technological transformations. In socio-psychological terms, the following main functions of a fairy tale are essential. Let us consider them based on classification (Fairy tale as a source..., 2001), accompanied by own comments:

1. Cultural and ethnic functions. A fairy tale is a phenomenon of the culture of a people, a monument that preserves the features of its socio-economic structure, language, mentality, beliefs, etc. Due to historical reasons, it is not always possible for a modern reader to detect them due to the lack of proper knowledge, which imposes additional requirements on modern communicators, especially in intergenerational communication. Because fairy tales have been

transmitted orally for a long time, they have passed a long test of time and have preserved only essential elements through which you can learn about the identification features of a particular culture.

2. The function of socialization is closely related to the cultural and ethnic function since together they represent a single process of translation of socio-cultural experience. To prepare and adapt new members of society to life in it, the accumulated knowledge about the surrounding reality passes through intergenerational communication to the younger generation. In this way, the individual is introduced to the culture of society, forming models and rules of behaviour, teaching norms and values. Fairy tales reflect such values as hard work, talent, friendship, mutual assistance, and mutual assistance, loyalty to the people, and the Motherland. Many modern pedagogical and psychological approaches to education are based on this function of the fairy tale. In metaphorical examples that are accessible to the child's understanding, the values of good and evil are highlighted, while a clear value binary opposition is built. In the modern cultural postmodern context, with its installation on the fundamental blurring of oppositional conceptual and axiological boundaries, the fairy tale remains a kind of oasis that provides guidance to the younger generation in basic social values.

3. The creative function is aimed at identifying, developing, and realizing the creative potential of the individual, imagery, and abstraction of thinking.

4. The holographic function is related to the ability of a fairy tale to represent the big in the small. Through a simple interpretation based on a parable, children realize complex everyday situations that form their life experience and some models for solving problems that have been developed in this society.

5. The developmental and therapeutic function.

6. The lexical-figurative function is based on the ability of a fairy tale to form a person's language culture, indirectly supporting social identity. Some communicators (for example, parents) consciously approach the choice of the text of a fairy tale, paying attention to the author and speech features of the text, so that the child from a young age hears correct and well-delivered speech. This function is particularly well shown in fairy tales in verse form when further memorizing them by heart. So, the parental experience of reading Pushkin's fairy tales to children from infancy is known. We can say that in this case, the fairy tale performs a magical function.

In addition to the named functions of the fairy tale, many researchers distinguish an entertainment or recreational function. In our case, it is significant, because the consumption of information in the relaxation mode affects the level of its unconscious acceptance.

If we generalize these functions in a sociological way, we can say that they are in one form or other components of the identification function. Through intergenerational communication, the fairy tale forms and supports the identification of a particular society.

It is necessary to consider the interactive relations of communicants, largely due to information technologies, in their historical dynamics, to reveal the activity aspect of the fairy tale as a place of memory. In the format of this work, we will focus only on some of them. Based on the definition of a fairy tale, it is an echo of mythological knowledge. According to the arguments of V. E. Dobrovolskaya (2009), at the initial stages, the myth included sacred knowledge about the world, the gods, and the structure of this society. This knowledge assumed some basis for understanding, so it was addressed only to selected, trained members of society. For example, they could act as elderly members of the family, distinguished by wisdom and speech.

Another source of origin of the fairy tale could be representatives of the priestly-shamanic class, among them there were also young people with certain features. All other members of society also had to be adapted to life and know the basic structure of the surrounding reality. For this reason, there were stories in which the main information was conveyed in an entertaining and light form. As A. E. Nagovitsyn and V. I. Ponomarev (2011), initiations and other rituals preparing members of the first societies for their future social roles (bride/groom, warrior, priest, etc.) were not a one-step action. This training took place from childhood, many secrets and secrets were passed on to the younger generation in encoded form-in the format of fairy tales. Later, the relationship between communicants' changes. The fairy tale is transformed into an oral-poetic story of a fantastic, adventurous, novelistic, and everyday nature (Sokolov, 2007), and the stories of fairy tales reflect the existing socio-historical environment. The fairy tale becomes a kind of folk weapon in the fight against the injustice and untruth of life.

Initially, the fairy tale existed in oral form, regardless of the social status of communicants. This method of transmitting knowledge was quite subjective because it depended on the memory of a certain information carrier, its selectivity, and features of its perception, as well as the ability to tell an oral story. If we look at the results of anthropological research, we can see that in the first societies there were people whose specific duties were to narrate myths, fairy tales, and legends for the transmission of socio-cultural experience to the younger generation.

The direct recording of fairy tales appeared very late. Thus, in Russia, this was primarily due to the ecclesiastical orientation of the Old Russian literature, which did not allow at the early stages of getting into print literary works of a national character. In the popular environment, the subjects of communication were, as a rule, men of advanced age, who had the wisdom and certain skills of storytelling. Nevertheless, a special category of storytellers of fairy tales in this era was buffoons, who acted as professional storytellers and poets.

With the development of information technology, the oral storytelling of fairy tales begins to fade into the background. At this time, the knowledge of fairy tales can be learned not only directly from the older generation, which involves the creation of a chamber communication space, but also from books, radio, cinema, animation, television, computer games, and the Internet. Despite the spread of technological literacy among older people, they still maintain the traditional approach to telling stories to children. At the same time, we noted in the study that they could not be limited to retransmitting already known fairy tales, but independently compose stories for a specific child, based on their general socio-cultural experience, thereby preserving their own local cultural memory.

Representatives of the book industry note that buying books for children is a matter of serious choice, related to not only the content but also the purchase price. A large assortment and quantity of products in the store is not a criterion for the readability of fairy tales. The cost of a book may reorient parents to choose other formats (for example, search for free content, audiobook, role-playing games, mobile apps, computer games, etc.) or, alternatively, appeal to the collections of public libraries. The fairy tale went beyond a purely literary genre. Today, fairy tales are a resource for marketing and the entertainment industry, which creates a variety of products based on fairy tales (amusement parks with various attractions, ice shows, toys, educational games, etc.). There is not just a replication of fairy-tale images, but also their separation from the values that they bear in traditional forms of fairy-tale representation. Thus, there is a risk of alienation of deep traditional values and destruction of traditional emotionality in interactive relations of communicants. Such transformations also affected the social communication practices of adults and children.

In modern society, the institution of the family is undergoing strong changes. There is a blurring of boundaries between the traditional roles of men and women in both the family and professional

spheres. The functions of the family are delegated to other institutions, and many social practices in the family are transformed. Due to the increasing role of women in professional activities, the transition to the nuclear type of family, the role of nannies, and other agents of non-family communication in introducing children to the socio-cultural values of this society, as well as behaviours in it, is increasing. The orientation of a modern person to obtain higher education (which indicates the increasing role of knowledge in society) and the ability to verify any information through various sources is reflected in the behaviour of modern mothers who strive to do “everything according to science”, relying on expert special knowledge. This approach can provoke judgments about the fundamental necessity of a fairy tale as such and the preference for everyday stories.

Within the framework of the concept of symbolic interactionism, T. Shibutani draws attention to the fact that human nature and social order are products of communication. Any communication act is carried out within certain spatial and temporal coordinates, so the basic categories of communication theory include the categories of communicative space and communicative time. Thanks to modern technologies, the perception of space and time has changed. The result of improving the means of communication is that at the present stage of society's development, people consider knowledge, communication, mobility, and dynamics to be the main values.

In the typology of social communication, direct and indirect communication is distinguished, horizontal (carried out between individuals of the same generation or peers) and vertical (carried out between parents and children, representatives of different generations). The fairy tale is characterized largely by vertical communication, which is based on the criterion of age. Direct communication is carried out in the format of a conversation or public speech in front of an audience, this allows you to conduct an emotional impact since the exchange of semantic and evaluative information is carried out through verbal and non-verbal means. While indirect communication is one-sided and becomes possible by mass media and technical means. Based on this characteristic of communication, the fairy tale, in its traditional form of transmission, can be attributed to direct, vertical communication. This feature is one of the most important, which allows you to implement the function of socialization.

Today, the fairy tale, which acts as a channel for broadcasting socio-cultural experience, can be attributed to mass, local, intra-group, and interpersonal communication. This is because this communication channel can be used in various social groups and communication situations. However, for many people, the classic practice of storytelling persists. Preference is given to interpersonal, direct communication, in which the participants are an adult and a child, and based on the establishment of trusting relationships between the subjects of communication, accompanied by emotional elements. Here, in addition to the transfer of socio-cultural experience, which in most cases is carried out unconsciously, there is communication between the parent and the child, which affects the formation of personality. As an adult, relatives in the first (mother, father) and second (grandmother, grandfather) degrees of kinship can be represented, as well as relatives in the lateral line of kinship (siblings of the child or their parents) (Semenoy, 1974), a nanny, acquaintances, etc.

Conclusion

Being the most important element of culture and an instrument of identity formation, the fairy tale today represents a certain form of representation of the cultural code of society, which contains the main components of mentality, language, beliefs, traditions, etc. At the same time, this kind of “packaging” of the cultural code is adapted to the present day through the language and method of transmitting the fairy tale. The transformation of the communicative culture (the emergence of new high-tech methods and channels of communication associated with the standardization and universalization of the communication process) leads to changes in the availability, reception, and perception of socially significant symbolic information contained in

places of memory. The fairy tale, being one of the places of memory, also undergoes changes. Modern parents are turning to not only traditional ways of transmitting fairy tales to children but also find new ways. The use of modern storytelling tools is characterized by a decrease in the emotional connection between the narrator and the listener (children), which blurs intergenerational and family ties. The new practice of presenting fairy tales, which has direct access to other social practices (for example, in the field of marketing), may lead to the risk of alienating deep traditional values and destroying traditional emotionality in the interactive relationships of communicants. This trend is reinforced by signs of a crisis in the social institution of the family.

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