

## **Romantic Tradition in Russian Fairy Tale for Children (1960-1980s)**

**By**

**Dilyara Ilurovna Zalalyeva**

KFU IPIC post-graduat Kazan Federal University,

**Natalia Georgievna Makhinina**

PhD in Philology, associate professor of the Department of Russian Literature and Its Teaching Methods IPIC KFU, Kazan Federal University,

Email: [mahinin@rambler.ru](mailto:mahinin@rambler.ru)

**Ellina Viktorovna Shustova**

PhD in Philology, lecturer of the Department of Foreign Languages for International Relations IIR KFU Kazan Federal University,

**Anna Leonidovna Gumerova**

PhD in Philology, senior research fellow

### **Abstract**

The research is focused on the origins and evolution of Russian romantic fairy tale of 1960-1980s for children. Addressing this topic is connected with the need to determine the specifics of functioning of this kind of fairy tale. The main aim of the study is to identify what features that had initially appeared in Russian romantic fairy tale of the XIX century remained in the XX century, as well as the nature of the changes occurred. Research of the works of the XX century Russian fairy tale authors A. Sharov and E. Borisova enables to see the evolution trends of romantic fairy tale as a literary genre. Such distinctive features of romantic fairy tale as stable problem-thematic complex, elements of medieval aesthetics in depicting the fictional world, the specificity of the subject organization – these have remained in its development in the XX century. The result of the study shows that the romantic fairy tale of the XX century experienced not only the direct influence of the romantic fairy tale of the XIX century, both Russian and foreign, but also the influence mediated by the works of A. Green and E. Schwartz. It became apparent in the typology of characters, denoting a conflict between an adult and a child's worldview. The stylization used by the authors romantically sublimates the mundaneness, and the miracle does not oppose it, but appears through it.

**Key words:** meta-genre, Russian fairy tale, romantic tradition, A. Sharov, E. Borisova.

### **Introduction**

The complex multilevel process of contemporary literature development is determined by its constant correlation with previous periods of its development. This aspect of contemporary literature development can be defined with the concept of "literary culture" (Pashkurov & Razzhivin, 2014) which combines the opposition and interaction of different eras in the development of literature. This concept was explained in the article by A.N.

**Published/ publié in *Res Militaris* (resmilitaris.net), vol.12, n°3-November issue (2022)**

Pashkurov and A.I. Razzhivin «Literary culture as a dialog of contradictions and reconciler (basing on review of poetics of Russian literature of XVIII – beginning of XIX century)». Being reflected in the poetic manner of the work, value-based and aesthetic contradictions are commonly found at the intersection of literary traditions (Paul Ricoeur, 1974).

Fairy tale becomes one of the meta-genres that determine the development of literature in the XX century and at the turn of the XX and XXI centuries. The researchers note that this status begins to be developed in the Silver Age: «The culture of the Silver age, which is characterized by an interest in the first principles of the universe and human existence, actively turns to folklore, archaic, and myths» (Mahbobzadh et al., 2020). Its ability to genre transformation and to influencing other genres determined such a phenomenon of XX century literature as fabulousness.

The work of A. Pogorelsky "The Black Hen, or Underground Dwellers" became an absolute example for all the following generations of authors who continued the romantic fairy tale tradition of Russian romantic fairy tale, focused on the perception of children. For almost two centuries, a certain problem-thematic complex, which included the themes of loneliness, growing up, cognition, trial in their specifically romantic interpretation, was incorporated into it. Another distinctive feature of this romantic fairy tale, which retained its significance in the following periods of its development, was the use of the aesthetics of the Middle Ages in depicting the fictional world. M.N. Lipovetsky defines this as stylization, considering it one of the leading features of neo-romanticism (Lipovetsky, 2018).

If the fairy tale of A. Pogorelsky clearly demonstrates the tradition of early German romanticism, primarily of E.T.A. Hoffmann and J.L. Tieck, then the works of the author of the second half of the XIX century N.P. Wagner, who also got known as the author of romantic fairy tales, were stronger influenced by H.C. Andersen.

All these complex reflections are manifested in romantic fairy tales that are actively functioning in Russian literature of the 1930s and then of late 1950s - 1960s. Attitude to romanticizing the reality, typical of these periods, which had different reasons and forms, yet encouraged addressing romantic structures, including the fairy tale genre. In this regard, the work of A. Green, primarily the romantic extravaganza "Scarlet Sails", undoubtedly influenced the development of the romantic fairy tale.

## **Methods**

The main principles of the analysis of the romantic fairy tale texts are the principles of cultural-historical and textual analysis.

## **Results and Discussion**

In the fairy tales of the authors of the 1960s-1980s A. Sharov and E. Borisova, the romantic character comes to the fore. He is ultimately characterized by the ability to surrender

to fantasy, to create around a wonderful world generated by it. This world does not have clearly expressed national characteristics, although often: «The nationalization of space and the marking of geographic places, which are historically significant for the “imagination” of the national worldview, is simultaneously associated with the designation of the borders of ethnic identity» (Galimullina et al., 2019).

The uniqueness of such characters is also evidenced by their portrait characteristics. However, the character's ability to perceive the world around differently than others becomes more important. Most notably, it is revealed to them in its natural hypostasis, which is typical of the romantic perception of the world (Pashkurov et al., 2018). In the fairy tale “Happy End” by E. Borisova, Vesnushka (eng. Freckle) loves to play in an overgrown front garden, which seems to be an enchanted mysterious forest to them. A. Sharov's three-year-old boy Volodya (“Volodya and Uncle Alyosha”) also lives mainly in the world of his fantasies, where a broken cup turns into a ship sailing on the tea sea, little men made of radishes and apples come to life. This writer is generally characterized by creating a situation when his character in his wishes and dreams opposes the others, who are adhering to trivial ideas. Being born in the family of Cannibal, Ninochka (“The Star Shepherd and Ninochka”) does not want to be a witch, because she is endowed with a great gift of sympathy for someone else's misfortune.

At the same time, the reasoning of the child's immersion into the world of fantasy with his loneliness and any experienced suffering, which is inherent in the Russian romantic fairy tale, remains. Therefore, in all these fairy tales, despite the traditional happy ending, notes of sadness are clearly identified.

In their ability to abandon the boring everyday life around them, children in the fairy tales of A. Sharov and E. Borisova are traditionally opposed to adults. In the fairy tale “Happy End” by E. Borisova, Vesnushka (the Freckle girl) is the antithesis of her aunt, who, having appeared in the girl's house after the death of her mother, first weeded out the front garden, and then cut off the happy endings of the fairy tales in her favorite book.

For E. Borisova, it is important to emphasize the inspirational worldview of Vydumshcik (eng. Inventor). Not only does he tell amazing stories to the others, but also immerses them into a fictional fairy-tale world. Vydumshcik introduces images from folk legends into his fantasies and gives them a vivid and full-fledged appearance. His sister Margarita, whom he asks to believe in a dream in one of the most difficult moments of their life, also gets involved in the game. Their shack, covered with mold, turns into a beautiful home, which is full of a blue glow from a star fallen from the sky. Here the author identifies the most important attributes of the romantic worldview – faith in a miracle (Vydumshcik persistently urges both Anna and her sister to believe in the events happening being real “- Don't be sad! Do you want – everything will be different?! One has only to want and believe” (Borisova, 1972)) and the pursuit of the ideal, traditionally symbolized by a star within the romantic tradition.

Hence comes the importance of a dream in the fairy tales of A. Sharov and E. Borisova, which is related to fantasy. The dream of Vydumshcik (eng. Inventor), which Anna takes part in, is described in the style of a dream. In the fairy tale “The Star Shepherd and Ninochka” Student, who works as a star shepherd, gets up to work at the Secret Hour, “when it is pitch-dark and everyone in the world is asleep – even night owls, even fireflies put out their green lights, even a mother at the bedside of a sick child closes her eyes, placing her anxious hand on his head, – at this very hour that no one in the world has seen – what can you see there in a dream?! – Student got up...” (Sharov, 1976). This detailed description of the Secret Hour is also intended to emphasize the conventionality of the differences between what is dreamed of and what is in reality. This is also evidenced by the fact that Student lives in a sky-high tower which no one sees.

The power of fantasy of the fairy tales characters carries out one of the key metamorphoses – the revival of the dead. In the scene above, in the Vydumshcik's (eng. Inventor) shack, a paper rose starts blooming and smelling sweet. In another fairy tale by E. Borisova “Happy End”, the characters of the magic book of fairy tales come to life, the poodle sewn to the pillow gains the ability to move and speak, and Trubochist (eng. Chimney Sweep) doll turns into a boy. Drawn little men in A. Sharov's fairy tale about Ezhenka become alive too.

This revival is ambivalent. In some cases it is motivated only by the play of the characters' fancies. These are both Vydumshcik's (eng. Inventor) fantasies and Volodya's dreams from the fairy tale “Volodya and Uncle Alyosha”, in which the Radish and Apple little men come to life. On the sign painted by the Wandering Artist in E. Borisova's fairy tale “Hurry while the candle is burning”, the sun and the moon come to life, as well as the crayfish holding a mug of beer in its claws. When the Innkeeper scolds the Artist and hits his sign with a stick, the metamorphoses occur: the sun frowns, the moon's edges of lips go down showing sadness.

However, outwardly unmotivated revival also exists in fairy tales, although later the motivation gets revealed more and more clearly. For example, Trubochist (eng. Chimney Sweep) doll's transformation is motivated by his desire to help Vesnushka (eng. Freckle), who has undertaken a dangerous path. As the action develops, the motive of how difficult it is to become a decent person can be seen more and more evidently.

The characters of the fairy tales by A. Sharov and E. Borisova do not remain unchanged. Each of them must go their own way in order to achieve a particular goal. A. Botnikova, analyzing the tale of Hyazinth and Rosenblüte by Novalis, says that the traditional path of a romantic character can be traced in it: “...the child's innocence of soul, doubt and craving for knowledge and, finally, the ultimate finding of truth – this kind of triad reflects romantic ideas about the life of the human spirit” (Botnikova, 2005). Thus, a romantic character is always a motional character, not fixed in one spatial continuum. This trait is fully inherent in the characters of the fairy tales by A. Sharov and E. Borisova. Remarkably, the differentiation in depicting the motion of characters can be seen. One type of path here is traditional for a fairy tale in general, since it is associated with a rather precisely interpreted lack. Vesnushka (eng.

Freckle) in the fairy tale “Happy End” sets off on a journey to find the happy ends of the fairy tales cut off by her aunt, and Sashka in the fairy tale by A. Sharov “The Cuckoo, Prince from Our Yard” – to become visible again. A different type of path is determined by what can be defined as an inner impulse, a kind of longing of the soul. It is in this path that the Boy rushes off to (“Dandelion Boy and Three Keys” by A. Sharov). He hears the call of the wind and birds and rushes off to his path. And Vydumshcik (eng. Inventor) from the fairy tale “Hurry while the candle is burning” goes to the mountains not only for water, but also because he longs to meet the Wise Hermit from the legend.

However, both paths are broadly the self-knowing of the character. Having given up friendship, love, the opportunity to help people for the sake of jewelry, Dandelion Boy realizes that he did not know himself, did not understand his true aspirations. But Sashka from “The Cuckoo...” by A. Sharov not only realizes the value of true friendship and genuine feeling, but also discovers the ability to make important decisions that change the fate of the whole world.

The presence of those who direct the characters on their path is also one of the peculiarities of fairy tales. Along with the magical creatures – dwarves, which appear, for example, in the tales of A. Sharov, new interpretations of the images of “addressers” arise. They also have secret knowledge that gives meaningful powers. It is more about accumulation of experience, intensive gaining of knowledge, rather than the result of contact with the “other” world. Therefore, in “The Star Shepherd...” it is Student who becomes a mentor, in “Hurry while the candle is burning” it is the Wise Hermit, and in “Happy End” it is the book.

The antagonists in the fairy tales of E. Borisova and A. Sharov are mainly those who oppose the dream with their commercialism, adherence to everything trivial and rigid. In these characters, the infernal principle can be noticed, which determines the appearance of one of the types of antagonistic characters in romantic literature. The dialogue of Skuka (eng. Boredom) and Trubochist (eng. Chimney Sweep) can be interpreted as temptation. Vorozheya in E. Borisova's fairy tale “Hurry while the candle is burning” is a sorceress. In A. Sharov's fairy tale “The Star Shepherd and Ninochka” the sorcerer and witches act as antagonists, and the cannibal and vampiric essence is accentuated in them.

However, taking into consideration the needs of children for the evil to be beaten, the authors give these images a comic highlight. For this, the destruction of the usual boundaries of the fairytale image is used, giving it the features of an adult that are well known to a modern child. The enraged Cannibal in E. Borisova's fairy tale “Happy End” counts his pulse and drinks a bottle of valerian. In the same fairy tale, the image of the Sorceress appears, who was originally kind, but then started sitting in an armchair for a very long while, became addicted to solitaire and cooking jam, and lost the ability to distinguish between good and evil. Thus, it is emphasized that such an inactive, actually philistine existence is incompatible with true miracles. Vorozheya (eng. Sorceress) from “Hurry while the candle is burning” fairy tale does not help people much with her magic but deceives them. So she makes Vydumshcik (eng. Inventor) see a wasteland instead of his house, but his convinced saying the phrase “I do not believe” dispels the delusion. A young man who does not have magical abilities

works miracles with the power of conviction. The only real magic – the transformation of a young man into an old man – is performed by the Vorozheya due to the forces of nature, by making a potion from a flower that grows in a swamp once in a hundred years. An ironic decrease of her status also occurs in the episode when the “speaking” Silent Neighbor shouts that not only does not she know how to work magic, but is even illiterate. Such a comic reduction of images of traditional villains gives a reason to talk about the tradition of H.C. Andersen, mediated by E. Schwartz.

According to the research by F.P. Fedorov “Person in the Romantic Literature”, another version of the romantic villain “is grotesque images of animals and automata triumphantly marching through the late romantic literature, especially German one...” (Fedorov, 1987). The antagonists in the tales of A. Sharov and E. Borisova often emphasize their belonging to the artificial world. For example, the Tsar Sorcerer in A. Sharov's fairy tale “The Cuckoo, Prince from Our Yard” orders the physician to wipe the dust from his “royal eyes”, thereby exposing his mechanistic essence. In E. Borisova's fairy tale “Hurry while the candle is burning” the images of the characters presented at the beginning are clearly “masked”.

## **Summary**

The structure of the system of characters in the fairy tales by A. Sharov and E. Borisova is based on contrast, like one in the traditional romantic fairy tale. The dreamers confront the adult world as a philistine one. E. Borisova and A. Sharov have two options for the characters of dreamers. The first one is a child, who, due to his ingenuousness and inexperience, is perceiving the world as mysterious and at the same time internally harmonious. The second one is an adult who has retained dreaminess and has the ability to deliver his perception of the world to other people. These characters follow the path typical of the characters of romantic fairy tales, associated with growing up and self-understanding.

## **Conclusion**

The system of characters in the fairy tales of E. Borisova and A. Sharov is largely determined by the romantic tradition, mediated by the aesthetic searches of fairy tale authors of the first half of the XX century. Certain influences of the literary situation contemporary to the authors can also be mentioned.

## **Acknowledgements**

This paper is performed as part of the implementation of the Kazan Federal University Strategic Academic Leadership Program.

## **References**

A.N. Pashkurov, A.I. Razzhivin “Literary culture as a dialog of contradictions and reconciler (basing on review of poetics of Russian literature of XVIII – beginning of XIX century)”, *Life Science Journal*, № 11, (8s), pp. 120-124, 2014.

- Paul Ricoeur, "The Conflict of Interpretations. Studies in Phenomenology", Publisher: Northwestern University Press; 512 p., 1974.
- S. Mahbobzadh, L.H. Nasrutdinova, M. Yahyapour, "Reception of mythological image of the bird at Bunin cycle «The bird's shadow»", *Utopia y Praxis Latinoamericana*, Vol. 25, Is. Extra 7, pp. 417-423, 2020.
- M.N. Lipovetsky, "Neoromanticism in Russian poetry of the XX-XXI centuries: meaning and scope of the concept", *Philological class*, №1(59), P. 13-18, 2018.
- A.F. Galimullina, G.R. Gainullina, F.G. Galimullin, L.R. Faezova, A.R. Gilmudinova, "Peculiarity of implementation of the national cultural code in tatar poetry and prose of the second half of the XX century", *International Journal of Engineering and Advanced Technology*, Vol.9, Is.1, pp. 7421-7424, 2019.
- A.N. Pashkurov, A.I. Razzhivin, I.Yu. Dulalaeva, "The Idyll and he Problems of Harmonizing Culture", *Opcion*, Ano 34, № 85, pp.1904-1917, 2018.
- E.B. Borisova, "Hurry while the candle is burning", M.: Soviet Russia, 128 p., 1972.
- A.I. Sharov, "Baby Arrow - Conqueror of the Oceans", M.: Children's Literature, 146 p., 1976.
- A.B. Botnikova, "German Romanticism: the Dialogue of Artistic Forms", M.: Aspect Press, 351 p., 2005.
- F.P. Fedorov, "Person in the Romantic Literature", Riga: University of Latvia, 118 p., 1987.