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HUMANIORA

**FANTASTIC IN FORM,  
AMBIGUOUS IN CONTENT:  
Secondary Worlds in Soviet Children's  
Fantasy Fiction**

by

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

When thinking about Soviet children's literature, fantasy is not the first genre to come to the mind of someone who has not lived a Soviet childhood. Instead, one probably thinks of politically-oriented socialist realist stories, overly optimistic celebrations of friendship between pioneers of different socialist countries, or colourfully illustrated folk tales of various Soviet nations. Likewise, the idea of secondary worlds in Soviet literature probably awakens images of science fiction, not fantasy. Yet, fantasy had a well-established tradition in the Soviet Union: for several generations of Soviet readers, characters like Buratino, Neznajka and Čeburaška were an important part of their childhood. Several Soviet fantasy stories featured secondary worlds that differed greatly from the worlds of more realistic-oriented literature. The purpose of this study is to examine how Soviet fantasy for children uses these secondary worlds.

Children's literature – like any other form of literature – is always closely connected to the socio-historical conditions under which it is written. This connection is quite explicitly recognizable in Soviet children's literature and it has often been the basis of studies. For example, in the most extensive non-Russian history of Soviet children's literature, Ben Hellman's *Barn- och ungdomsboken i Sovjetryssland* (1991), children's fiction is discussed in close relation with Soviet history, while the recently published *Russian Children's Literature and Culture* (2007), edited by Marina Balina and Larissa Rudova, ties children's literature to other forms of Soviet children's culture. The present study also deals with the relationship between children's fantasy literature and society, yet the view on children's literature will be text-oriented in the sense that I will not study or speculate on the actual child readers' reactions to the texts. Neither will I concentrate on individual authors' intentions – political, philosophical or other.

Children's literature is also connected with literary movements in general. As Deborah Cogan Thacker suggests, children's literature both embraces the aesthetics of the time of writing and also anticipates and inspires innovations<sup>1</sup>. In the case of Russian and Soviet literature, these connections between children's literature and adult literary movements have been noted perhaps more thoroughly than in Western Europe. Russian and Soviet children's literature has partly been written by the same authors as adult literature: many classic writers of Russian children's literature, such as Pushkin, Pogorelsky, Odoevsky and Krylov, are also known as classic authors for adults. In the Soviet era, several major authors, for example, Kharms, Mayakovsky and Zoshchenko, chose to write for children too – or had to restrict their writing to children's literature. Recently, in Russia, for example, such acclaimed authors as Ludmilla Petrushevskaya and Ludmila Ulitskaya have also written for children. There have also been studies on relations between children's literature and particular literary movements, for example, Ben Hellman's studies on Pogorelsky's and Odoevsky's tales in connection with the

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<sup>1</sup> Thacker and Webb 2005, 2.

literature of romanticism<sup>2</sup>, Irina Arzamasceva's study on Russian children's literature of the 1900s – 1930s<sup>3</sup> and Evgeny Steiner's book on avant-garde picturebooks, *Stories for Little Comrades: revolutionary artists and the making of early Soviet children's books* (1999). In this study, I aim to prove that also Soviet fantasy fiction for children was an important part of Soviet literature in general, both reflecting the ideas of socialist realism and contributing to them and, in some cases, subverting them.

## Notes on transliteration and translation

For the transliteration of both Russian terms and Russian proper names, I have used the United Nations romanization system for geographical names<sup>4</sup>. Some exceptions have been made for names that have somewhat established forms of spelling in the English language, for example, Alexander Pushkin instead of Aleksandr Puškin, Maxim Gorky instead of Maksim Gor'kij. For the titles of the children's books in question, in the text I have used the Russian transliterated form, but I have also provided English translations the first time the books are mentioned. If an English translation of the text exists, I have provided the English title in italics in parentheses. Since most of the texts are not well known in English translations – either translations do not exist or their circulation has been small – I have translated both the quotes and the titles myself; these titles are in parentheses, but not in italics. In translations of the titles, I have taken into consideration the titles under which they have possibly been published or with which they have been treated in English language scholarship.

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<sup>2</sup> Hellman 2000, Хеллман 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Арзамасцева 2003.

<sup>4</sup> See The UNGEGN Working Group on Romanization Systems 2003, [http://www.eki.ee/wgrs/rom1\\_ru.pdf](http://www.eki.ee/wgrs/rom1_ru.pdf)



## 1.1. The concept of secondary world

The central concepts of this study are ‘fantasy’ and ‘secondary world’. In practice, it is easy to define intuitively which Soviet secondary world texts belong to the category of fantasy: when the secondary world is reached by a flying carpet, the text is fantasy, when with a rocket, science fiction. The theoretical definition is more complicated. There exist several different definitions of fantasy. Two main approaches to fantasy are to treat it as a mode or as a genre<sup>5</sup>. A central theorist of fantasy as a mode is Kathryn Hume, who in her *Fantasy and Mimesis. Responses to Reality in Western Literature* defined literature as a product of two impulses – mimesis, “the desire to imitate, to describe events, people, situations, and objects with such verisimilitude that others can share your experience” and fantasy, “the desire to change givens and alter reality”<sup>6</sup>. There is no need to name any given text as “fantasy”, since the fantastic impulses can be found in texts that belong to several different genres<sup>7</sup>. Hume defines fantasy as “any departure from consensus reality” and includes depictions of alternate worlds and universes as such<sup>8</sup>. Hume’s theory of fantasy has often been criticized for not giving proper criteria for defining fantasy as a genre<sup>9</sup>. Defining fantasy as a particular genre pays attention to the historical development and the typical features of fantasy fiction. The history of the genre is usually traced back to the literature of Romanticism and followed through the ages using the most established fantasy texts, for example, books by George MacDonald, Edith Nesbit, J.R.R. Tolkien and Ursula Le Guin, as touchstones<sup>10</sup>. The typical genre features of fantasy include tendencies to follow certain plots and to use certain types of characters and settings. Critics tend to see a difference between “genuine, artistic fantasy” and popular fantasy, often referred to as sword-and-sorcery, which rigidly follows the conventional fantasy formulas producing unoriginal popular fiction, but the exact division between the two is hard to define<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, the borderline between fantasy and other literary genres, foremostly science fiction, is sometimes blurred.

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<sup>5</sup> Brian Attebery divides the different definitions into three groups. The first is fantasy as a mode, the second fantasy as a formula, and the third fantasy as a genre. Attebery 1997, 1 – 17. The division between fantasy as formula and genre is, as the author admits, slightly artificial and not definite. Attebery 1997, 11.

<sup>6</sup> Hume 1984, 20.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Hiilos 1990, 32; Nieminen 1996, 15 – 17.

<sup>10</sup> The most popular examples of fantasy tend to originate from the Anglophone cultures. For example, Richard Mathews presents a chronology of texts and events he considers important in the development of fantasy. Whereas in the beginning of his table Mathews mentions texts from *The Gilgamesh* and *The Odyssey* to Grimms’ *Fairy Tales* and *Pinocchio*, the 20<sup>th</sup> century example texts are practically all English language ones. Mathews 1997, xv – xx. This does not mean, however, that fantasy would be only an Anglophone phenomenon; it rather shows that the study of fantasy has been rather Anglocentric.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Attebery 1992, 11.

The latest criticism of fantasy tends to avoid strict classifications when defining the fantasy genre. Colin N. Manlove sees fantasy as “elusive” and rejects previous attempts – even those of his own – to absolutely define the genre, instead analysing certain features typical of fantasy<sup>12</sup>. Brian Attebery approaches fantasy and other genres as “fuzzy sets” that are not defined by boundaries but by a centre, a set of core works around which other works of the genre can be arranged<sup>13</sup> – not unlike the way Soviet socialist realism was defined by Katerina Clark<sup>14</sup>. Lucie Armitt calls fantasy a fluid mode “constantly overflowing the very forms it adopts, always looking, not so much for escapism but certainly to escape the constraints that critics like this always and inevitably impose upon it”<sup>15</sup>. Thus, the genre-based definitions are not very far from the fantasy-as-a-mode definitions.

Since this study deals exclusively with children’s fantasy, it also takes into account the readers, even though it will not use the reader response theories. Some genre theories stress the reader’s significance in defining the genre: for example, according to Tommi Nieminen, from the reader’s point of view, the existence of a genre requires a specific group of readers, specific authors and specific channels of publication<sup>16</sup>. This was the case with Soviet children’s literature, too: the readership consisted of Soviet children, certain authors were established especially as children’s authors, although the same authors sometimes wrote also adult literature, and there were publishing houses specialized in children’s literature. However, it is unlikely that there was a considerable group of readers concentrating especially on children’s fantasy. The genre of Soviet children’s fantasy is thus not so much defined by its socio-cultural sphere but by its textual features. Children’s fantasy is usually seen as separate from adult fantasy, yet sometimes overlapping with it<sup>17</sup>. In essence, the same textual criteria can be applied to children’s fantasy as to adult fantasy. The purposes of the current study are best served by a simple definition: fantasy is literature that includes some kinds of magical elements that are not possible according to the knowledge of the world at the time the text was written. This definition supports both the view on fantasy as mode and fantasy as a genre. On one hand, it acknowledges fantasy elements in texts belonging to different genres, while, on the other hand, it recognizes certain recurrent patterns that gather separate texts into one genre and make it possible to track the historical evolution of the genre.

Another central concept of this study is the secondary world. By a secondary world, I mean a literary chronotope that is in some way manifest in the text and differs from the

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<sup>12</sup> Manlove 1990, 53 – 55.

<sup>13</sup> Attebery 1992, 12. Attebery uses as the supreme core fantasy text J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Similar models have been suggested by other critics and authors of fantasy: for example, fantasy author Johanna Sinisalo has presented a model of fantasy and its neighbouring genres as intersecting and partly overlapping circles. Sinisalo 2004, 17; 19 – 20.

<sup>14</sup> Clark 2001, 176 – 177.

<sup>15</sup> Armitt 1996, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Nieminen 1996, 36.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Ashley and Grant 1997, 184.

primary world of the text. The primary world is a textual world that can be defined as the basic chronotope of the text. The terms primary and secondary world were used for the first time by J. R. R. Tolkien in 1938<sup>18</sup>, and since then they have been generally used in studies concerning fantasy literature.

Mikhail Bakhtin uses the term ‘chronotope’ to denote a special combination of time and space:

Существенную взаимосвязь временных и пространственных отношений, художественно освоенных в литературе, мы будем называть  
х р о н о т о п о м.

We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, “time space”) to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature.<sup>19</sup>

The elements of time and space form together a chronotope that is typical of particular genres:

Хронотоп в литературе имеет существенное ж а н р о в о е значение. Можно прямо сказать, что жанр и жанровые разновидности определяются именно хронотопом, причем в литературе ведущим началом в хронотопе является время.

The chronotope in literature has an intrinsic *generic* significance. It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time.<sup>20</sup>

Bakhtin states that the chronotope has a profound importance in defining the genre. In this study, the idea of a chronotope has a twofold importance: first, as the chronotope typical of Soviet fantasy fiction as a genre, and second, as a chronotope of specific secondary worlds in specific texts of that genre.

In her study of English language fantasy for children, Maria Nikolajeva uses the term ‘fantasy chronotope’ in the meaning of “the way the particular author’s ideas of space and time are artistically transformed and woven into a literary text that answers our definition of fantasy”<sup>21</sup>. She also introduces the terms ‘primary chronotope’ and ‘secondary chronotope’ when referring to “a unity of primary world and primary time” and “a unity of secondary world and secondary time”<sup>22</sup>. In other words, the fantasy chronotope is an entity consisting of different fantasy elements – or fantasemes<sup>23</sup> – of a

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<sup>18</sup> Tolkien 1975, 51; also Nikolajeva 1988, 35.

<sup>19</sup> Бахтин 1975, 234; Bakhtin 2002, 84.

<sup>20</sup> Бахтин 1975, 235; Bakhtin 2002, 85.

<sup>21</sup> Nikolajeva 1988, 113.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 23. Nikolajeva defines fantasemes as “literary devices used to introduce the extraordinary into the narrative” and treats them as “recurrent narrative element[s] inherent in

certain story, and the term is useful when describing a certain fantasy text's entire world that consists of both primary and secondary worlds and their interaction. The terms primary and secondary chronotope can be used when describing the characteristics of a certain world, either primary or secondary, of a certain text. In this study, the terms are used in a similar way. The phrase Soviet fantasy chronotope denotes a chronotope typical of Soviet fantasy fiction for children, i.e. the chronotope consisting of both primary and secondary chronotopes of the texts in question. I intend to examine the chronotopes of various texts of the genre in order to describe the typical features of the Soviet fantasy chronotope.

The relationship between secondary world and reality is an issue dealt with frequently in both fantasy texts themselves and studies on fantasy. American fantasy author Lloyd Alexander writes:

Low fantasy, usually set in a rational, physically familiar world, challenges us with the coexistence of the nonrational. High fantasy, in its secondary world, challenges us to examine the values of our primary world: a play of philosophies, not merely a play of enchanted objects.<sup>24</sup>

By high fantasy, Alexander means “works in which the major action takes place in a secondary world”<sup>25</sup>. If the essence of secondary world fantasy is to “examine the values of our primary world”, does it not include the element of “coexistence of the nonrational”? Fantasies that take place entirely in a closed secondary world, such as Yuri Olesha's *Tri tolstjaka* (1928, *Three Fat Men*<sup>26</sup>), do not deal with the issue of two contradictory realities. However, fantasies with open worlds, such as Vitalij Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (1951, *The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors*), that include at least two different worlds that contradict each other, must somehow deal with the element of the nonrational in the text. For example, in *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, the existence of the world behind the mirror is questioned at the end of the story and it is left to the reader to decide whether he or she “believes” in the secondary world or not, whereas in Sergey Mikhalkov's *Son s prodolženiem* (1982, *A dream to be continued*), the secondary world is presented as a dream. In Mikhalkov's story, there is no room for doubt whether the secondary world is real or a dream. It is unquestionably presented as a dream, unlike the classic of children's literature that has worked as its inspiration, E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Nussknacker und Mäusekönig* (1816), *The Nutcracker*. Instead of

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fantasy as a genre”. As examples of different fantasemes Nikolajeva gives “a description of a secondary world” and “a door [to the secondary world]”.

<sup>24</sup> Alexander 1979, ix-x.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., ix. One traditional way of describing fantasy has been to divide it into “high fantasy” and “low fantasy”. In high fantasy most of the adventures are situated in a secondary world, whereas in low fantasy, magical events occur in the primary, everyday world. Since this division can be perceived as evaluating, most scholars of fantasy prefer not to use it. See, for example, Nikolajeva 1988, 36; Ihonen 2004, 81 – 82.

<sup>26</sup> Olesha's book has been translated into English as *The Three Fat Men* by Fainna Glagoleva (Moscow : Foreign Language Publishing House 1963) and *Three Fat Men* by Aimee Anderson (*Complete Short Stories & Three Fat Men*. Ann Arbor: Ardis 1979). Brandist 1998, 598.

categorically stating that the child's nightly adventures are a dream, Hoffmann's story maintains the tension between the two possible explanations, thus setting an example for myriads of fantasy stories, in which the protagonist wakes up in the morning wondering whether the nightly adventures have been a dream or not.

Usually, secondary worlds differ from the reader's own world more profoundly than the primary worlds of the same texts. This has been noted by scholars of the genre, and secondary worlds have been called, for example, *de främmande världarna*, the alien worlds, by Göte Klingberg<sup>27</sup>. The idea does not especially well suit a text-based study, since it has an inbuilt notion of "alienness" towards the reader's or the author's world. The secondary world does not necessarily have to be more different from the reality outside the text than the primary world. Although the primary world may usually be described as more realistic than the secondary world, in the secondary world, very true images of the non-textual world can be present. In some texts it is not explicit which of the worlds is the primary and which the secondary one. For example, in the recent British best-selling *His Dark Materials* -trilogy<sup>28</sup> by Philip Pullman, one of the worlds that is a secondary world for the protagonist is much closer to the reader's own world than the initial primary world of the trilogy.

In his essay *Formy vremeni i hronotopa v romane (Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel)* Mikhail Bakhtin uses the term (*abstraktno-*)*čужoj mir, alien world*, when he discusses the features of a genre he calls the Greek adventure novel<sup>29</sup>. Although there are great differences concerning both the time and circumstances of writing and the textual forms, Soviet fantasy as a genre has a lot in common with the Greek adventure novel Bakhtin describes. According to Bakhtin, in an alien world everything is vague, strange and accidental:

Поэтому мир греческого романа – чужой мир: все в нем неопределенное, незнакомое, чужое, герой в нем – в первый раз, никаких существенных связей и отношений с ним у них нет, социально-политические, бытовые и иные закономерности этого мира им чужды, они их не знают; поэтому для них только и существуют в этом мире случайные одновременности и разновременности.

Therefore, the world of the Greek romance is an *alien world*: everything in it is indefinite, unknown, foreign. Its heroes are there for the first time; they have no organic ties or relationships with it; the laws governing the sociopolitical and everyday life of this world are foreign to them, they do not know them; in this world, therefore, they can experience only random contingency.<sup>30</sup>

Bakhtin's alien world describes the whole world of the Greek adventure novel. There is no real juxtaposition between *svoj i čужoj*, one's own and alien: the hero's "own world" is as vaguely described as the foreign countries to which his adventures take him. This

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<sup>27</sup> Klingberg 1980, 11 - 12.

<sup>28</sup> *Northern Lights* (1995), *The Subtle Knife* (1997), *The Amber Spyglass* (2000).

<sup>29</sup> Бахтин 1975, 251 – 252; Bakhtin 2002, 101 – 102.

<sup>30</sup> Бахтин 1975, 251; Bakhtin 2002, 101.

is an important difference between the Greek adventure novel and secondary world fantasy: in secondary world fantasy, there always exists a primary world and there is a relationship between the worlds, however vague it might seem. In some fantasy texts, the primary world is described very briefly; for example, in Vitalij Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* the reader gets only the few pieces of information that are vital in the secondary world adventure. As in the *čužoj mir*, also in a fantastic secondary world, chance and coincidence can be of great significance and in a secondary world that is not bound by the customary laws and rules, in essence, anything can happen.

In recent scholarly readings, the term 'time out' has been used to describe a pattern typical of children's literature<sup>31</sup>. The children's adventures, either fantastic journeys in a secondary world or more realistic, yet extraordinary events in the primary world, give them an opportunity to be free from adult supervision – for a while. After the time out, the children return to their familiar everyday life. The idea is derived from the Bakhtinian notion of medieval carnival as the celebration of "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order" and marking "the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions"<sup>32</sup>. The idea of a carnevalistic time out is explicitly visible in the secondary world fantasies: the child characters experience a temporary empowerment in the secondary world where they become stronger and wiser and overcome all their enemies. On the level of the plot, the adventures and the heroic deeds that have taken place in the secondary world do not necessarily have a direct effect on the primary world. When the children return home, they lose their superpowers and become once again ordinary children; the empowerment has been only temporary. Sometimes the empowering effect is still further undermined by presenting the secondary world adventures as a dream, as in, for example, Sergey Mikhalkov's *Son s prodolženiem*. Yet despite the demeaning ending of the story, the mere existence of the adventures can be empowering as such: according to Maria Nikolajeva, the carnival can be seen as "a rehearsal of a future moral and psychological transformation"<sup>33</sup>. Since growing up and maturation are imperative issues in both the lives of the child characters and the reading child audience, the rehearsal effect touches both.

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<sup>31</sup> Stephens 1992, 132 – 139; Nikolajeva 2000, 125 – 146; Lassén-Seger 2006, 145.

<sup>32</sup> Bakhtin 1984, 10. Бахтин 1990 (1965), 15. «В противоположность официальному празднику карнавал торжествовал как бы временное освобождение от господствующей правды и существующего строя, временную отмену всех иерархических отношений, привилегий, норм и запретов.»

<sup>33</sup> Nikolajeva 2000, 137.

## 1.2. The history of secondary worlds in Russian children's literature

Secondary worlds in Russian and Soviet children's fantasy have their predecessors in both children's and adult literature, as well as in the folk tradition. As the Western fantasy for children has been influenced by folktales<sup>34</sup>, so has Russian and Soviet children's fantasy. In addition, the Western tradition has played its part in forming the Soviet fantasy for children, although Western children's literature was not generally very well known in the Soviet Union, where literature was rather isolated from the rest of the world literature. Russian and Soviet children's literature has had a pattern to follow even in Russian adult literature, which has a strong tradition of describing magical events.

Fantasy as a genre of children's literature is a descendant of Romanticism and its interest in folk tradition<sup>35</sup>, which justifies beginning the search for the ancestors of Russian and Soviet secondary worlds in the literature of Romanticism. Since Romanticism stressed the value of folk tradition, folktales were widely collected and written down in various parts of Europe. The most influential collection of Russian folktales, Aleksandr Afanasyev's *Narodnye russkie skazki* (Russian folktales), was published 1855 – 64<sup>36</sup>. Especially important for Soviet fantasy in general, and the concept of the secondary world in particular, is the genre of *volšebnaja skazka*, the wonder tale, the magic tale or the tale of magic<sup>37</sup>. The milieu of the wonder tale in itself is a special chronotope that allows the occurrence of magical events and the presence of magical objects. This chronotope is also typical of the secondary worlds in children's fantasy. The nature of the milieu of the wonder tale as a magical chronotope, a combination of a detached magical place and a detached time, is often stated already in the first words of the tale. Certain typical beginnings of the Russian wonder tale – equivalent of the English language “Once upon a time...” – imply that the story is situated in a secondary world far from the everyday world:

В некотором государстве<sup>38</sup>  
In a certain country

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<sup>34</sup> Nikolajeva 2006b, 60.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 60. The beginnings of fantasy as a genre of children's literature are generally connected to the emergence of folktale-inspired literary fairy tales in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Briggs and Butts 1995, 137 – 140.

<sup>36</sup> In Russia, the interest towards folklore continued in the Soviet era, yet the new socialist realist elements of folktales were promoted at the expense of fantastic features. See, for example, Sokolov 1971, 662.

<sup>37</sup> In the Oxford Encyclopedia of Children's literature, both names ‘wonder tale’ and ‘magic tale’ are introduced. Zipes 2006, 45. In the Aarne–Thompson index the type is called ‘tales of magic’; the term covers tales AT 300 – 749. Aarne – Thompson 1987, 88 – 254.

<sup>38</sup> *Народные русские сказки А. Н. Афанасьева в трёх томах*, 1957. Том 1, 159. Василиса Прекрасная: сказка № 104.

В некотором царстве, в некотором государстве<sup>39</sup>  
In a certain tzardom, in a certain country

В стародавние годы в некоем царстве, не в нашем государстве<sup>40</sup>  
In old-ancient times in a certain tzardom, not in our country

В некотором царстве, за тридевять земель — в тридесятом государстве<sup>41</sup>  
In a certain tzardom, beyond three times nine lands, in the thirtieth country

Hence, the events of the story are marked to happen in another world, the world of the fairy tale, in which the laws of the everyday world are not binding. For example, in the story *Peryško Finista jasna sokola* (*The Feather of Finist the Falcon*)<sup>42</sup>, the metamorphosis of the falcon into a young prince and back is treated as quite a normal event.

Yet more interesting in the concept of the secondary world is a certain two-world structure that is present in many Russian wonder tales. In these stories, the main character is transferred from his or her ordinary life to a miraculous place, where wonders happen. Thus, although the setting of the wonder story in itself is different from the everyday world, the other world is even more detached and has wider possibilities for magical events to happen. In Propp's study of the functions of the characters in the wonder tale, the notion of the secondary world is mentioned in the 15<sup>th</sup> function, where the hero is transferred to the place where the object of his quest is situated<sup>43</sup>. For example, in *Peryško Finista jasna sokola*, the protagonist has to go to a magical country far away in order to find her fiancé the falcon prince after he has been injured by her jealous sisters.

Propp notes that the place where the protagonist is transferred to is usually another tzardom that can be situated far away horizontally or vertically, i.e. high up or deep down.<sup>44</sup> The other tzardom can be reached by different means depending on where the tzardom is placed<sup>45</sup>. The resemblance to the notion of secondary world in later Soviet children's fantasy is evident. In Soviet fantasy, secondary worlds are also often situated far away, either concretely, as in Vladislav Krapivin's *Deti sinego flamingo*, (1982,

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<sup>39</sup> *Народные русские сказки А. Н. Афанасьева в трёх томах*, 1957. Том 1, 376. Марья Моревна: сказка № 159.

<sup>40</sup> *Народные русские сказки А. Н. Афанасьева в трёх томах*, 1957. Том 2, 247. Елена Премудрая: сказка № 236.

<sup>41</sup> *Народные русские сказки А. Н. Афанасьева в трёх томах*, 1957. Том 1, 424. Жар-птица и Василиса-царевна: сказка № 169.

<sup>42</sup> AT 432. The story belongs to the AT 425 – 449 group of tales in which the girl has to deal with an animal spouse. Other tales of this group are, for example, *Beauty and the Beast* (AT 425C), *The Black Bull of Norrway* (AT 425A) and *East of the Sun and West of the Moon* (AT 425A).

<sup>43</sup> Propp 1998, 40 – 41. Check the English terms in the English translation.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 40 – 41.



The Children of the Blue Flamingo), in which the secondary world is situated on an island far from the protagonist's home, or far away "emotionally", as in Sof'ja Prokof'eva's *Kapitan Tin Tinyč*, (1981, Sea Captain Tin Tinyč), with the secondary world at the "ocean skazki", "the fairy tale ocean".

Secondary worlds are present in several literary fairy tales, both in Russian and Western ones. In Russia, the literary fairy tales from the Golden Age of Russian poetry preceded the wide interest in the publication of folk tales by some 20 years. The 1830s were a prominent time for literary fairy tales, which had their roots in the folk tradition<sup>46</sup>. Magical worlds can be found in literary verse fairy tales that are closely based on the Russian folk tradition, such as Pushkin's *Skazka o care Saltane* (1831, *The Tale of Tsar Saltan*)<sup>47</sup> and Pyotr Yershov's *Koněk-gorbunok* (1834, *The Little Humpbacked Horse*). A widely known and still popular literary fairy tale in Russia is the German Romantic E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Nussknacker und Mausekönig*, (1816) *The Nutcracker*, which is well known in Russia both in its literary form and as Tschaikovsky's ballet (1892). The nightly secondary dream world of *The Nutcracker* has inspired several Russian and Soviet authors. Possibly, there have been earlier texts describing dreamworlds, but Hoffmann's description is probably the most significant in the evolution of the motif in Russian children's literature. The idea of a dreamworld as a secondary world was used in Russian children's literature soon after Hoffmann's story, when Antony Pogorelsky<sup>48</sup> introduced the possibility of a dreamworld in his *Čěrnaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli* (1929, *The Black Hen or the Underground People*). Soon after, Vladimir Odoevsky used a dreamworld in his fairy tale *Gorodok v tabakerke* (1934, *The Little City in a Snuffbox*) published in 1834. A later Soviet example is Sergey Mikhalkov's *Son s prodolženiem*, (1982, *A Dream to be continued*) which is strongly based on *The Nutcracker* both in its plot and its characters.

Another important development *The Nutcracker* introduced was a child as a protagonist in a literary fairy tale, which according to Nikolajeva was a significant step towards a new kind of children's literature<sup>49</sup>. The child protagonist was introduced to the Russian secondary world literary fairy tale by Antony Pogorelsky and Vladimir Odoevsky. Pogorelsky's *Čěrnaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli* includes a two-world structure that combines the everyday world of a St. Petersburg schoolboy and an underground secondary world inhabited by miniature people. In Odoevsky's *Gorodok v tabakerke*, a boy gets inside his father's snuffbox to see how the music box in it works and meets its tiny inhabitants. A connecting attribute in both Pogorelsky's and Odoevsky's worlds was their notably small scale. The world of miniature people was investigated also in *Murzilka* stories based on Palmer Cox's American comics,

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<sup>46</sup> Hellman 1993, 14; Hellman 2004, 1174.

<sup>47</sup> The border between folktale and literary fairy tale sometimes shifts in both directions: Pushkin's tale has inspired storytellers and since the publishing of the story, oral versions of the fairy tale have been recorded. Orlov 2005, 38.

<sup>48</sup> Antony Pogorelsky was the pen name of Aleksei Alekseevič Perovskij (1787 – 1836).

<sup>49</sup> Nikolajeva 1988, 14 – 15.

*Brownies*<sup>50</sup>. The Russian texts were written by Anna Hvol'son and they were first published in the children's journal *Zaduševoe slovo* (The Heartfelt Word) in 1887, and as a book *Carstvo maljutok. Priključenija Murzilki i lesnyh čelovečkov v 7 rasskazah A. Hvol'son s 182 risunkami Koxa* (The kingdom of the little ones. The adventures of Murzilka and the little forest people in seven stories by Anna Hvol'son with 182 drawings by Cox) in 1889<sup>51</sup>. Fantasy elements, although not necessarily in clearcut secondary world settings, were also present in many other 19<sup>th</sup> century fairy tales such as Vladimir Dahl's folk tale renditions and Sergej Aksakov's *Alen'kij cvetoček* (The Scarlet Flower) from 1858. Even in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when realism became dominant in both children's and adult literature, fantasy had its place in, for example, Nikolaj Vagner's mystical and philosophical stories *Skazki Kota-Murzylki* (1872, The stories of Murlyka the Purring Cat)<sup>52</sup>.

Sometimes the line between the literary fairy tale and fantasy is elusive: for example, Antonij Pogorelsky's *Černaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli* can be called either one or the other. Balina and Rudova call it a tale of magic<sup>53</sup>, whereas Sof'ja Nikolajeva labels it as *fantastičeskij povest'*, a fantasy story<sup>54</sup>. Discussing Soviet literature in English has certain problems resulting from the differences between Russian and English terminology. In the Russian language there are at the present time two terms, *fantastika* and *fěntezi* (sometimes spelled *fěntèzi*) that share their roots with the English term *fantasy*. *Fantastika* is a more general term, which can refer to fantasy or *naučnaja fantastika*, science fiction. The second term, *fěntezi*, came into use in the 1990s when popular fantasy became widespread in Russia. The term can be found in most recent dictionaries<sup>55</sup>. *Fěntezi* usually refers to genre fiction fantasy, often of Western origin. Neither of the two terms *fantastika* or *fěntezi* has been generally used in connection to children's literature until very recently. The type of children's literature that is usually called fantasy was in the Soviet Union known as, for example, *povest'-skazka*<sup>56</sup> or *skazočnaja povest'*<sup>57</sup>. These definitions were also often printed by the publisher on the title page of the books. The word *povest'* means a story<sup>58</sup> and *skazka* a (fairy) tale, so both terms, *povest'-skazka* and *skazočnaja povest'*, would mean a "fairy-tale story". Also in post-Soviet criticism works that would in Western literature studies be called fantasy are often treated as literary fairy tales, perhaps due to the strong tradition of the Russian literary fairy tale. For example, in her study on the twentieth century Russian

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<sup>50</sup> Cox's *Brownies* were published from the 1880's onwards. They first appeared in the children's magazine, St. Nicholas Magazine, and later they were printed in several other magazines. Altstetter 1941, 135.

<sup>51</sup> Hellman 1993, 23.

<sup>52</sup> Hellman 2004, 1175 – 1177.

<sup>53</sup> Balina and Rudova 2005, 188.

<sup>54</sup> Арзамасцева и Николаева 2000, 113.

<sup>55</sup> For example, in Толковый словарь русского языка начала XXI века.

<sup>56</sup> For example, Vitalij Gubarev: *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, Rosmen, Moskva 1996.

<sup>57</sup> For example, Vitalij Gubarev: *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, Centrpoligraf, Moskva 2000

<sup>58</sup> The term *povest'* is generally used for stories that are more extensive than short stories (*rasskaz*), yet more concise than novels (*roman*). In the Russian tradition of lengthy novels, children's books that would be in English called novels are in Russian often called *povest'*s.

literary fairy tale, Ljubov' Ovčinnikova includes works such as Vladislav Krapivin's fantasy cycles<sup>59</sup>.

In this study, I will call my material fantasy, for the sake of simplicity. Still, there may be differences in what the genre is called in English and in Russian<sup>60</sup>. On one hand, the frequent occurrence of the word *skazka* in the genre name can affirm its place in children's literature tradition with folktales and literary fairy tales. On the other hand, it is a mark of the story being "not true, but (only) a fairy tale". In a sense, it serves the same purpose as the statement at the end of films, that "the characters and events of the story are imaginary and any resemblance to real people and events is coincidental", thus freeing the authors from responsibility and giving them the chance to portray things as they wish. The word *skazka* is also often used when describing the location of secondary worlds in Soviet fantasy stories: for example, in Sof'ja Prokof'eva's books the secondary worlds are often situated "в *skazke*"<sup>61</sup>, in the fairy tale. In the end, there is little difference between the Russian concept of secondary worlds situated in the *skazka* and the English language idea of them residing in the realms of fantasy.

Whereas in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century European children's literature was quite well known among Russian readers<sup>62</sup>, after 1917 Soviet fantasy for children developed in relative isolation from the rest of Western children's literature. Although certain books were translated during the Soviet era, many works that are considered world classics of children's literature have been practically unknown to generations of Soviet children<sup>63</sup>. This is also true of fantasy for children: some Western works were translated into Russian, but in general, Western fantasy was not available to the average Soviet reader. Either the translations were done relatively late or the print run was small compared to the number of potential readers. Some Western classics were known in the Soviet Union as versions so heavily edited that they can hardly be called translations. For example, L. Frank Baum's Oz-books were not translated properly until the 1990s, but they have been, and they still are, widely known and popular as re-written versions by Aleksandr Volkov. Volkov's version, *Volšebnik Izumrudnogo goroda*, (1939, revised 1959<sup>64</sup>, *The Wizard of the Emerald City*), and its sequels are still published with Volkov's name printed on the cover as the

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<sup>59</sup> Овчинникова 2003.

<sup>60</sup> What the genre is called varies in different times: in the 1990s and 2000s, the genre is called more often "fantasy" than earlier. The same phenomenon can be seen in other countries too: for example, many books that have been published in Finland fifty years ago as fairy tales could nowadays be called fantasy.

<sup>61</sup> The Russian term 'skazka' can be compared to the term 'faerie' that Tolkien introduced in the English language fantasy tradition. Tolkien 1975

<sup>62</sup> For example, fairy tales by H. C. Andersen and Zacharias Topelius, *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* by Selma Lagerlöf, *The Water Babies* by Charles Kingsley, *The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll and *The Adventures of Pinocchio* by Carlo Collodi were translated into Russian before 1917.

<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, Soviet children were acquainted with literature translated from, for example, other Eastern European languages that was unfamiliar to most Western readers.

<sup>64</sup> Mitrokhina 183.

author, not as the translator. Similarly, Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio*, although translated into Russian already in 1906, was better known in the Soviet Union in an adapted version by Aleksei Tolstoy<sup>65</sup>. Tolstoy's version, *Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino* (1936, *The Golden Key, or the Adventures of Buratino*) differs greatly from Collodi's original. In *Pinocchio*, a central theme is the urge of the wooden doll to become human, whereas this is never an issue in Tolstoy's *Buratino*, and where in *Pinocchio* the child's individual development is important, *Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino* stresses the value of collective happiness<sup>66</sup>. The adaptation of Western children's literature for Soviet children sometimes went as far as radically changing the form of the text: Hugh Lofting's novel *The Story of Doctor Dolittle* (1920)<sup>67</sup> was in the Soviet Union known both as Kornei Chukovsky's adapted prose version *Doktor Ajbolit* (1925, *Doctor Ajbolit*) and his lyric version *Priključenija Doktora Ajbolita* (1929, *The adventures of Doctor Ajbolit*)<sup>68</sup>. Adapting children's books and publishing them under the name of the translator and not the original author is, of course, not a phenomenon typical only of the Soviet Union as the practice is known in other countries too.

Fantastic elements are not an unfamiliar feature in Russian and Soviet mainstream adult fiction either. An early and widely known example of an author using fantasy elements is Nikolai Gogol. Among other fantasy elements – escaping noses and coat-stealing ghosts – also secondary worlds can be found in Gogol's works, especially in his St Petersburg tales. In *Nevskij prospect* (1835, *Nevsky prospect*) the secondary world is present as an artist's dream. Even the works of perhaps the most famous Russian realist Fyodor Dostoevsky include some fantasy elements: in *Dvojniki* (1846, *The Double*) the protagonist meets his doppelganger and in *Son smešnogo čeloveka* (1877, *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*), the protagonist visits a secondary world in his dream. Although the dominant method used in Soviet literature since the 1930s was socialist realism, even some Soviet classics have fantastic traits. A good example of a Soviet classic that introduces the thematics of secondary worlds is Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master i Margarita* (*The Master and Margarita*, written between 1929 and 1940, first published in 1967) in which the realistic and the fantastic worlds and a religious or historical world blend subtly together. Fantasy elements were also used in a subversive manner in order to comment on the political situation. Yevgeny Zamyatin used the

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<sup>65</sup> Hellman 1991, 85.

<sup>66</sup> Nikolajeva 2000, 62 – 63; Hellman 1991, 85.

<sup>67</sup> Hugh Lofting wrote a whole series of *Doctor Dolittle* books; the first one came out in 1920 and the last one in 1952. Elick 2007, 323, 336. Some sources cite 1922 as the beginning of the series. See, for example, Townsend 2004, 1258.

<sup>68</sup> Interestingly, both Tolstoy's and Chukovsky's texts have been treated as "original" outside the Soviet Union, for example, in Finland. Tolstoy's *Golden key* was translated into Finnish in 1955 (*Pieni kulta-avain eli Buratinon seikkailut*, transl. Inkeri Letonmäki) and Čukovskij's *Doktor Ajbolit* has been translated into Finnish twice as the prose version (*Tohtori Ai* 1975, transl. Natalia Baschmakoff, *Tohtori Kipula* 1980, transl. Anita Mitrošin) and once as a lyric version (*Tohtori Kivuton* 1981, transl. Maila Pykkönen). Even more interesting is that the Finnish version *Tohtori Kivuton* with Maija Karma's illustrations has been further translated into Japanese as *Naoshite naoshita sensei* (1985) by Yasuko Saeki.

two-world structure in his short story *Drakon* (1918 Dragon) in order to speculate on the events of the 1917 revolution. Evgeny Schwartz used the fantasy motif of a dragon in his play of the same name *Drakon* (1944 *The Dragon*), which is widely interpreted as criticism of tyranny<sup>69</sup>. Andrei Sinyavsky (pen name Abram Tertz) called for phantasmagoria in literature in his 1956 article *Čto takoe socialističeskij realizm* (*On Socialist Realism*) published in France in 1959, and also used fantasy elements in his own literary works<sup>70</sup>. In the 1960s and 1970s, fantastic elements became more prominent in mainstream adult literature with authors like Čingiz Ajtmatov, Veniamin Kaverin and Anatolij Kim<sup>71</sup>. Their works feature some elements that can be called fantastic although the actual word ‘fantasy’ has been connected to them only later; fantasy as a separately defined genre of adult literature did not exist in the Soviet Union. Despite the minor experiments with fantasy allowed in Soviet literature, such works as Vassily Aksyonov’s *Ostrov Krym* (1979, *The Island of Crimea*), which dealt with the world of alternative history, were not published in the Soviet Union but only after his emigration in the United States<sup>72</sup>. Charles Rought attributes the rise of fantasy in the 1960s and 1970s to a universal increase in the popularity of fantasy<sup>73</sup>. Blending levels of reality is still an actual phenomenon in Russian literature. Ludmilla Petrushevskaya, for example, has since the 1970s written several collections of fairy tales addressed to both children and adults in which the author brings together traditional fairy tale elements, the absurd and everyday life<sup>74</sup>. The encounter between different worlds is a recurring theme also in the works of one of the most popular Russian novelists, Viktor Pelevin. In *Žizn’ nasekomyh* (1993, *The Life of Insects*) the narration keeps on switching between the world of humans and the world of insects, whereas *Svjaščennaja kniga oborotnja* (2004, *The Holy Book of the Werewolf*) is a straightforward example of mixing elements of different literary and cultural traditions into a postmodern combination. The story blends folktale elements and characters from Russian and other traditions with Western and Asian popular culture in present day Russian life.

Secondary worlds in Soviet children’s fantasy have their roots in the folk and literary fairy tale and Russian adult literature containing supernatural elements. In addition, early Western children’s fantasy has contributed to the Soviet tradition of secondary worlds, although the Western influence on Soviet literature has been quite limited. It is perhaps not possible, not even useful, to show direct lines of evolution between different genres, since their relationship is complex and their interaction is not one-way. Not only does children’s literature draw from adult literature, but also it works the other way round. For example, the influence of Hoffman tradition on Russian and Soviet adult literature is commonly acknowledged: Probably the best-known “Russian Hoffmannists” were Pogorelsky, Gogol and the early Soviet literary group the Serapion

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<sup>69</sup> See, for example, Segel 1985, 418.

<sup>70</sup> СИНЯВСКИЙ 1957; Карпов 1998, 349.

<sup>71</sup> Rought 1990, 308 – 309.

<sup>72</sup> Oulanoff 1985, 17.

<sup>73</sup> Rought 1990, 309.

<sup>74</sup> About Petrushevskaya’s fairy tales, see Овчинникова 2003, 205 – 221.

brothers, yet the tradition can be followed even to 20<sup>th</sup> century children's literature. The dream sequences in Gogol's *Nevskij Prospekt* remind us of the secondary world elements in Hoffmann's *Nutcracker* and the connection is made even stronger by naming some characters after the tradition of German Romanticism<sup>75</sup>. The later Soviet children's dream fantasies draw from both the Hoffmannian and the Gogolian tradition.

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<sup>75</sup> In *Nevskij Prospekt* there are characters called Schiller and Hoffmann; however, the narrator states in the playful Gogolian manner that they are not the authors Hoffmann and Schiller. Gogol 1994, 29.

### 1.3. "All fantasy is based on reality" – Children's fantasy as a part of Soviet literature

Since the 1930s, the official method of all Soviet literature was socialist realism. The term 'socialističeskij realism', 'socialist realism', was coined in 1932 and widely adopted in the First Soviet Writers' Congress in 1934<sup>76</sup>. Socialist realism dominated Soviet literature until the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 – or at least until the 1980s and perestroika. The precise meaning of the term varied slightly over time and by definition. Katerina Clark notes that the conventions of socialist realism were defined through canonical novels that functioned as models for future writers<sup>77</sup>. According to most definitions, the main principles of socialist realism included typicality (*tipičnost'*), party-mindedness or party spirit (*partijnost'*), historical optimism (*istoričeskij optimism*), national character (*narodnost'*) and the introduction of a positive hero (*položitel'nyj geroj*). Personality cult (*kul't ličnosti*) flourished.<sup>78</sup> The typical subject of literature was the collective striving towards an even better future; most model novels of socialist realism used variations of the same master plot<sup>79</sup>. Retrospectively, the literature of socialist realism has been strongly criticised. One of its recurring epithets was 'childish'. Marietta Čudakova notes that the model-seeking nature of socialist realism and the elimination of important themes from the sphere of literature gave it childish traits; the new literature called for the infantilization of the reader<sup>80</sup>. Although the border between adult and children's literature in the Soviet Union was formally quite clear, the difference between adult and children's literature was not quite as substantial. Evgenij Dobrenko calls the literature of socialist realism "adult literature for children" and points out that the classics of socialist realism soon became young adult literature through the school reading lists<sup>81</sup>. For example, Nikolai Ostrovsky's Soviet classics *Kak zakaljalas' stal'* (1932 – 1934, *How the Steel Was Tempered*) was widely read among both adults and young adults.

Not all Soviet literature was purely socialist realist. Katerina Clark sees three categories in Soviet literature: first, literature of socialist realism, second, anti- or non-Soviet literature, and third, texts that represent Soviet literature yet are not specifically socialist realist<sup>82</sup>. Clark notes that also many of the texts belonging to the last group

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<sup>76</sup> Clark 1981, 27.

<sup>77</sup> Clark 2001, 176 – 177. The lists of canonical works changed during the period. Typical works were such as Furmanov's *Čanaev (Čapaev)* 1923, Gladkov's *Цемент (Cement)* 1925 and Ostrovsky's *Как закалялась сталь (How the Steel Was Tempered)* 1932 – 1934.

<sup>78</sup> For definitions and descriptions of socialist realism, see, for example, Марков & Тимофеев 1976, 235 – 237; Kasack 1988, 388 – 390; Terras 1991, 520 – 52; Clark 2001, 175 – 176; Pesonen 2002.

<sup>79</sup> See Clark 1981.

<sup>80</sup> Чудакова 1990, 248.

<sup>81</sup> Добренко 1994.

<sup>82</sup> Clark 2001, 174.

were widely accepted and even officially recommended<sup>83</sup>. During this study, I will argue that most of the texts dealt with in this study belong to the third group: they are mainly written according to the Soviet ideology, yet they are not strictly representative of socialist realism. Children's literature as a whole had the benefit of some freedoms adult literature did not have: for example, Marietta Čudakova states that in the 1930s Soviet Union, children's literature, alongside historical prose, was the genre that allowed writing about other than the present-day reality<sup>84</sup>. Although children's literature did not meet all the demands made on adult mainstream literature, its right to exist was not questioned – children's fantasy fiction, on the contrary, had to endure much criticism.

Fantasy was definitely not a genre encouraged by the authorities. In the First Soviet Writers' Congress 1934, Andrei Zhdanov stated the importance of “real life” as the basis of literature<sup>85</sup>, although he did also state that literature could use different genres as weapons in the struggle for the socialist society<sup>86</sup>. The aim of socialist realism was to depict the ideal reality, that is, not life as it is but as it should be. Zhdanov formulated the writer's duty to be “an engineer of human souls” as follows:

Это значит, во-первых, знать жизнь, чтобы уметь ее правдиво изобразить в художественных произведениях, изобразить не схоластически, не мертво, не просто как «объективную реальность», а изобразить действительность в ее революционном развитии.

При этом правдивость и историческая конкретность художественного изображения должны сочетаться с задачей идейной перделки и воспитания трудящихся людей в духе социализма. Такой метод художественной литературы и литературной критики есть то, что мы называем методом социалистического реализма.<sup>87</sup>

In the first place, it means knowing life so as to be able to depict it truthfully in works of art, not to depict it in a dead, scholastic way, not simply as “objective reality,” but to depict reality in its revolutionary development.

In addition to this, the truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic portrayal should be combined with the ideological remolding and education of the toiling people in the spirit of socialism. This method in *belles lettres* and literary criticism is what we call the method of socialist realism.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Clark 2001, 174.

<sup>84</sup> Чудакова 1990, 247.

<sup>85</sup> Жданов 1990 (1934), 4; Zhdanov 1977 (1934), 21. Andrei Zhdanov was a Soviet party official who from the 1930s had a strong influence on party ideology and formulation of the Soviet cultural policy; he later became notorious from his repressive acts imposed on Soviet artists.

<sup>86</sup> Жданов 1990 (1934), 5; Zhdanov 1977 (1934), 22.

<sup>87</sup> Жданов 1990 (1934), 4.

<sup>88</sup> Zhdanov 1977 (1934), 21.



Many scholars have argued that, in essence, socialist realism was utopian literature, even a kind of fantasy in its own right. Pesonen traces the utopian element through the whole arc of Russian literature from classicism to socialist realism and sees the entire Soviet society as “based on a great utopia”<sup>89</sup>. Already the early authoritative definitions of socialist realism stressed its dual nature as literature that was based, on one hand, on everyday reality and, on the other, on the utopian view of the progressing socialism. For example, Zhdanov spoke of “revolutionary romanticism” as a desirable element in literature<sup>90</sup> and, as Miéville points out, Lenin in his early writings had approved of certain kinds of fantasies that had inspirational potential for future realization<sup>91</sup>. However, these utopian “fantasy elements” were not perceived as fantastic but as realistic. The ideological basis of the new method of literature was openly admitted. The ideology of socialist realism included the building of a perfect socialist society in real life, not in some imaginary fantasyland. In Soviet literature, there was scarcely room for fantasy as a genre.

Since in the Soviet Union children’s literature was seen as an important part of literature, it was supposed to be written according to the socialist norms. In the First Soviet Writers’ Congress 1934, Maxim Gorky stressed the need for socialist children’s literature:

Рост нового человека особенно ярко заметен на детях, а они совершенно вне круга внимания литературы; наши сочинители как будто считают ниже своего достоинства писать о детях и для детей.<sup>92</sup>

The growth of the new man can be seen with especial clarity among children, yet children remain quite outside literature’s sphere of observation. Our writers seem to consider it beneath their dignity to write about children and for children.<sup>93</sup>

Soviet literary criticism saw Soviet children’s literature as opposed to the children’s literature of the pre-revolution era. This opposition was seen also in the attitude towards realism and fantasy: for example, according to Gol’dštejn, the aim of Soviet children’s literature was always to make the readers acquainted with real life instead of isolating them in some separate “children’s world” as was often seen to be the case with pre-revolutionary children’s literature<sup>94</sup>. This attitude towards literature favoured realism at the cost of fantasy, since realistic stories were considered more suitable vehicles for character formation than fantasy. However, fairy tales and fantasy co-

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<sup>89</sup> Pesonen 2002, 12.

<sup>90</sup> Жданов 1990 (1934), 4, Zhdanov 1977 (1934), 21.

<sup>91</sup> Miéville 2002, 46 – 47. Miéville refers to Lenin quoting in his pamphlet *Čto delat’* (1901 – 1902, *What is to be done*) literature critic Pisarev’s approving ideas of dreaming and fantasy.

<sup>92</sup> Горький 1990 (1934), 15.

<sup>93</sup> Gorky 1977 (1934), 57 – 58. Gorky was not the first to demand that children’s literature should be part of the socialist establishment. The idea of children’s literature as “a weapon” in the upbringing of Soviet children was first introduced already in 1918 by Lev Kormčij.

Путилова 1982, 5; Balina and Rudova 2005, 189.

<sup>94</sup> Гольдштейн 1978, 9.

existed side by side with "realistic" prose despite the sometimes rather furious discussions on whether Soviet children need fairy tales or not. In this discussion, the term 'fairy tale', 'skazka' was used as opposed to factual or realistic children's literature and it covered folktales as well as the early fantasy literature.

Several people speaking from the official Soviet view on children's literature stressed that the main purpose of children's literature was to make children good Soviet citizens. Education and propaganda were vital elements in children's literature<sup>95</sup>. Children's books were supposed to concentrate on giving children factual knowledge on issues that were considered important. Gorky, for example, in his article "O temah", "On the themes"<sup>96</sup> in 1933 lists themes he finds important for children's literature. These themes covered, on one hand, the basic views on Soviet life: how humans had evolved into their present state. On the other hand, Gorky stressed the importance of giving young readers information on natural sciences, a basic knowledge of nature, and technology.

Arguments against the fairy tale had arisen already in the very first years after the revolution. For example, in 1919, S. Poltavskij claimed that fairy tales should not contain anything not belonging to a child's everyday world<sup>97</sup>. In the early 1920s and 1930s, fairy tales were accused of alienating children from reality, teaching them bourgeois ideology, raising unhealthy feelings in children and containing unwanted mysticism and religious elements<sup>98</sup>. Several prominent works of children's literature were also accused of being entertaining rather than educational<sup>99</sup>. This attitude towards children's literature continued for a long time: Kornei Chukovsky gives several examples of how still in the 1950s and 1960s he and his fellow writers were blamed for nursing in children incorrect attitudes towards nature by showing "harmful" animals and insects in a positive light and falsifying the facts of nature in their animal stories<sup>100</sup>.

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<sup>95</sup> However, the stressing of pedagogical and ideological values in children's literature was not brought into Russian literature by the needs of Soviet propaganda. Already the first interest in children's literature in Russia in the 1820s and 1830s had pedagogical implications and the influential critics Vissarion Belinskij and Nikolaj Dobroljubov evaluated children's literature from ideological and pedagogical viewpoints. Balina 2007, 3 – 4; Арзамасцева 2000, 7.

<sup>96</sup> Горький 1989, 109 -118. Originally published in Pravda 1933, No. 287 and Izvestija 1933, No. 255. Gorky's list of the themes recommended for children's literature was based on his massive letter campaign during which children wrote letters telling what kinds of books they would like to read. Balina sees this as a sign of Gorky's sincere motivation to interact with the reading children instead of completely submitting to the party politics. Balina 2007, 12.

<sup>97</sup> Путилова 1982, 14. For an English language summary of the official views and discussion on Soviet children's literature, see Balina 2007.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 15; Balina and Rudova 2005, 190 – 191.

<sup>99</sup> Such texts were, for example, poems *Krokodil* (1917, The Crocodile) by Chukovsky, *Moroženoe* (1925, Ice Cream) by Marshak and *Skazka o Pete, tolstom rebënke, i o Sime, kotoryj tonkij* (1925, Story of the Fat Boy Petya and of Sima, Who is Thin) by Mayakovsky. The attack campaign was launched by Nadežda Krupskaja in 1928. Hellman 1991, 45 – 47; Balina and Rudova 2005, 191.

<sup>100</sup> See, for example, Чуковский 1994, 239 – 240; 251; 255.

Fantasy as a genre has not been well received in Marxist literature criticism outside the Soviet Union either. Whereas science fiction has often been regarded as a prominent genre for rational discussion of social conditions and utopian ideas, fantasy has mostly been seen as an irrational genre promoting conservative values<sup>101</sup>.

The fairy tale also had its defenders. One argument in favour of the fairy tale was its usefulness in education. È. Janovskaja saw the fairy tale as one of the most effective tools for children's social education<sup>102</sup>. Gorky too had a utilitarian view of fantasy. Gorky writes about the origins of fantasy and believes that all fantasy has its roots in reality. According to him, fantasy arose from primitive man's desire to achieve more than he currently was able to<sup>103</sup>. In his articles, "O temah" and "O skazkah" "On the fairy tales"<sup>104</sup>, Gorky compares fairy-tale elements to contemporary reality and sees fantasy items like flying carpets and seven league boots as primitive "prototypes" of contemporary aeroplanes and steam boats. According to Gorky, the importance of the fairy tale lies in its capacity to inspire people to make new discoveries. Other defenders of the fairy tale, too, stressed the importance of imagination in a child's development. Lunacharsky, the first Soviet People's Commissar of Enlightenment responsible for culture and education, saw the need of play and fantasy as an important phase in a child's development<sup>105</sup>. Perhaps the most famous and most beloved defender of fantasy and fairy tale, Kornei Chukovsky, considered imagination the most important property of the human mind and stressed that imagination should be trained already in early childhood<sup>106</sup>. He also emphasized that fantasy literature strengthens the child's notion of realism, and believed in children's ability to differentiate between fantasy and reality<sup>107</sup>. Along with the utilitarian views of fairy tales, the aesthetic and artistic qualities of fairy tales were also noted. Although, for example, Gorky mainly concentrated on the possible uses of the fairy tale he also saw its aesthetic potential<sup>108</sup>. Although the entertaining aspects of children's literature were seen in a utilitarian light, at least their importance was recognized.

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<sup>101</sup> Freedman 2002, 261 – 262. Freedman mentions Darko Suvin's *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979) as a landmark drawing a strict line between science fiction and fantasy in Marxist literature criticism. Suvin connects the "potential cognitive tendency" of science fiction with "the rise of subversive social classes", whereas fantasy is mostly treated as "just a subliterature of mystification". Suvin 1980, ix; 9. Csicsery-Ronay notes that since the 1960s, some of the most sophisticated studies of science fiction have been, if not explicitly Marxist, often at least building on Marxist concepts. Csicsery-Ronay 2003, 113.

<sup>102</sup> Путилова 1982, 15.

<sup>103</sup> Orlov 2005, 37.

<sup>104</sup> Горький 1989, 90 - 92. Originally published as a foreword for "Skazki 1001 noči"

<sup>105</sup> Путилова 1982, 17.

<sup>106</sup> Чуковский 1994, 214.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>108</sup> For example, Gorky stressed the child's need of play and humour. Medvedeva points out one of Gorky's theses: «С ребенком нужно говорить забавно», "One has to talk with a child in an amusing way". Медведева 1978, 50.

Despite the strong criticism, the fairy tale and fantasy thrived in the Soviet Union. Balina and Rudova see imagination and fantasy as important parts of children's literature and consider Soviet children's literature as a kind of sanctuary for authors for whom the politically oriented adult literature did not suit; they also point out the relative diversity of children's literature in spite of the systematic institutional control<sup>109</sup>. Children's literature was a form of internal exile for several prominent Soviet authors and fantasy, along with the fairy tale, became the central genre for subversive children's literature<sup>110</sup>. In her article about reader response, Catriona Kelly notes that in the 1960s books in which fantasy dominated were highly ranked among young readers when judged by the child readers' letters to the book publishers<sup>111</sup>. The only literary characters that have their own entries in a recent *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Russian Culture* are characters of Soviet children's fantasy: Tolstoy's Buratino and Nosov's Neznajka<sup>112</sup>. In the field of Soviet children's literature, fairy tale and fantasy had their important place.

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<sup>109</sup> Balina and Rudova 2005, 193.

<sup>110</sup> Nikolajeva 1996b, 379, 382.

<sup>111</sup> Kelly 2005c, 743. According to Kelly, in 1965 Jurij Tomin's fantasy novel *Šel po gorodu volšebnik* was the second popular book mentioned in children's letters to the publishing house Detskaja literatura.

<sup>112</sup> *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Russian Culture*, 84 – 85, 423.

## 1.4. The selection of material

The aim of this study is to examine secondary worlds in Soviet children's fantasy fiction. Consequently, the main criteria for the selection of the material are the following: the texts should be Soviet Russian, should be considered children's literature, should belong to the genre of fantasy and should feature a secondary world. In the following, I will examine these criteria in more detail.

The time scope of the chosen material is easily defined: the Soviet Union was officially formed in 1922, a few years after the 1917 revolution, and it ended in 1991. Most of the books used as primary material were first published during the Soviet period. However, there are a few exceptions: I have used some pre-Soviet texts – Antony Pogorelsky's *Černaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli* (The Black Hen or the Underground People) from 1829 and Vladimir Odoevsky's *Gorodok v tabakerke* (The Little City in a Snuffbox) from 1834 – mostly as background material. The text corpus also includes some post-Soviet works of Sof'ja Prokof'eva, because they are part of her *Povelitel' volšebnyh ključej* (The Keeper of the Magic Keys) series that began in the 1980s. Also one post-Soviet fantasy, Nikolaj Kosmin's *Piko – hrustal'noe gorlyško* (Piko the Golden Throat), published in 1994 is included. These pre- and post-Soviet works are included also for another reason: although the point is to examine particularly Soviet children's fantasy, Soviet fantasy is only a part of the continuum of Russian fantasy that has its roots in Russian Romanticism and that still continues to develop. The books are chosen to give a picture of Soviet fantasy literature as a whole: the texts selected are supposed to cover the entire Soviet period. Hence, the texts come from various decades. However, all the decades are not equally represented, since some decades have proven to be more productive than others when it comes to fantasy fiction. Here I have put quality over quantity: it is more important to cover the most significant individual works than to achieve a perfect balance between decades, if that would require leaving out important high quality works and forcing in some uninteresting run-of-the-mill books that only repeat the ideas of other works. Most of the texts dealt with are frequently mentioned in histories of Soviet children's literature, for example, in *Polveka* (1969) by Irina Lupanova, *Barn- och ungdomsboken i Sovjetryssland* (1991) by Ben Hellman and *Detskaja literatura* (2000) by Irina Arzamasceva and Sof'ja Nikolaeva, not to mention countless separate studies concentrating on individual authors and works. Thus, many of the texts discussed in this study have gained the status of Soviet classics amongst the scholars of children's literature.

In addition to the time scope, the label 'Soviet' also defines the choice geographically. The texts chosen have been first published in the Soviet Union. Although the aim of this study is to examine Soviet children's fantasy, I have limited the material to include only books published originally in the Russian language. This excludes all possibly interesting fantasy texts of other Soviet nationalities that have either been translated into Russian or not. This choice is partly due to the need to limit the research material and partly due to one of the aims of this research, which is to study children's literature

as a means of supporting – or in some cases subverting – the ideas of the dominant ideology. As the Russian language was in the Soviet Union the language of the hegemonial power, the literature written in Russian is possibly the best representative of the aims of the Soviet culture.

The second criterion is that the texts selected should be considered children's literature. The definition of children's literature is not a simple matter and definitions vary according to the purpose. Perhaps the most popular, yet rather vague definitions define children's literature as literature read by children, or literature published and marketed for them. The definition cannot be based on individual children's reading habits since they included much variation as there are different readers. In the case of Soviet literature, it is not, in practice, especially difficult to distinguish which books were marketed for children and which for adults. Usually, the publisher's intentions were clearly stated: there are often even age recommendations printed in children's books. One thing must, however, be taken into consideration when defining which books were considered children's literature in the Soviet Union. Several nineteenth century Russian classics were widely read in schools, and publishing houses that were specialized in children's literature printed numerous editions of classics for children. For the purpose of this study, I have not included in my material texts that were originally written for adults and that only later have become a part of children's reading either in original or adapted forms.

The genre of the works is a vital criterion for selection. All the chosen texts belong to the genre of fantasy. Since the object of this study is secondary worlds, I have naturally chosen texts that include some kind of secondary world elements. This leaves out, for example, works of animal fantasy in which the only fantasy element is animals behaving like humans, like, for example, Kornei Chukovsky's narrative poem *Tarakanišče* (The Cockroach), or metamorphosis fantasies like *Barankin, bud' čelovekom!* (Barankin, be a human!) by Valerij Medvedev, in which there is a supernatural element, although the connotations to secondary worlds are vague. Although sometimes it is not easy to define the boundaries between fantasy and science fiction or fantasy and fairy tale, I have left out texts that clearly represent either science fiction, for example, Kir Bulyčev's popular Alisa-books, and fairy tales including Soviet re-tellings of Russian folktales. Some borderline cases are still included in the material in order to study the boundaries of fantasy. An example of this kind of text is Lev Kassil's *Konduit i Švambranija* (*The Black Book and Schwambrania*) in which the element of secondary world is central yet the genre is not fantasy<sup>113</sup>.

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<sup>113</sup> Kassil's Švambrania books were widely read in the Soviet Union and one sign of the books' influence on their readers is the fact that there even exists a minor planet named after Kassil's fantasyland: 2149 Schwambraniya was discovered by N. S. Chernykh in 1977. See, for example, *JPL Small-Body Database Browser*.

The final criterion is the significance of the texts selected. In addition to their appreciation by critics, the texts chosen have been much loved by the readers. Almost all the texts examined were well known and widely read in the Soviet Union. Most of them were available in several different editions<sup>114</sup> and many of them circulated as more than one illustrated version. The oldest books have been read by several generations of Soviet children and their parents, and most of them are still available in new editions. Many of the books have become Russian classics. Some of them have been translated into several languages. The translations of Soviet texts were done mostly in the Soviet Union and for ideological purposes. For example, the majority of Finnish translations of Russian and Soviet children's literature have been done in the Soviet Union.<sup>115</sup> The situation in Finland does not of course represent the situation in the whole world; nevertheless, in the countries in which the Soviet influence was strong, also the Soviet children's literature classics were available for readers at least to some extent. Thus, it is not too daring to suggest that these books have had at least some influence on their readers, mostly Soviet but also at least some international ones, and shaped their view of both the world and literature.

According to the criteria above, I have limited the primary material of this study to 36 texts. The selection includes mostly novels and some short stories. I have left poetry out of the scope of this study, since it would require very different analytical tools. The number of the texts is not immensely vast, yet I believe they give a clear picture of the Soviet secondary world fantasy.

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<sup>114</sup> The criteria for choosing certain editions will be discussed in connection with the texts in question.

<sup>115</sup> Between 1892 and 1991 in Finland 163 translations of Russian children's literature were published in 196 printings while Soviet publishing houses published between 1930 and 1990 a total of 276 Finnish translations in 291 printings. Niemi 1993: 58.

## 2. SECONDARY WORLDS IN TEXTS

This section concentrates on the structural issues in the Soviet children's secondary world fantasy. The focus is on the construction elements of fantasy, or fantasemes. Because of the structure of this text, several issues dealt with in this chapter will come up again in greater depth in Chapters 3 and 4.

### 2.1. The structure of secondary worlds

The secondary worlds in Soviet children's fantasy literature can be divided into an endless number of categories that differ from each other in significant details. It is not my intention to create a comprehensive classification of all possible types of secondary worlds, but to find ways of classification that would be relevant for the material of this study.

There is also an endless number of ways to divide fantasy into subgenres. I have not found any ready-made systems that would be perfect for Soviet children's fantasy. In this chapter, I will discuss a few possible ways of grouping the Soviet fantasies, although I do not consider it especially important to force the individual works into rigid categories. However, some kind of terminology to deal with the genre is needed. Using Maria Nikolajeva's concepts of open, closed and implied worlds and Farah Mendlesohn's ideas of different subgenres in Diana Wynne Jones's fantasy, I have tried to build a system that describes the basic types of Soviet children's fantasy and together form its basic chronotope.

#### 2.1.1. Subgenres of Soviet fantasy

Maria Nikolajeva divides the secondary worlds into three groups according to their relation to the primary world:

*Closed world* will denote a self-contained secondary world without any contact with the primary world (= high fantasy).

*Open world* is a secondary world that has a contact of some kind, and both primary and secondary worlds are present in the text.

*Implied world* is a secondary world that does not actually appear in the text, but intrudes on the primary world in some way (= low fantasy).<sup>116</sup>

According to this division, the secondary world can be manifest in the text in two ways. Closed and open worlds are present in the text: they are described as places. An

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<sup>116</sup> Nikolajeva 1988, 36.



implied world, on the other hand, is not described in the text as a place, but its existence can be seen in the presence of characters or objects from a secondary world.

Open worlds are the easiest to detect, since in a novel containing an open secondary world there can be found at least two explicitly portrayed chronotopes that differ from each other. Although both worlds are described in the text, the description of both is not necessarily equal in length or depth. For example, in Vitalij Gubarev's *Troe na ostrove* (1959, *Three Children on the Island*) the description of the primary world is quite minimal and the adventures are situated mainly in the secondary world. An opposite example is found in Jurij Tomin's *Šěl po gorodu volšebnik* (1963, *The Wizard Walked over the City*): the story takes place mostly in the primary world and the secondary world is present only in one episode of the story – although a crucial one. Closed worlds are more complicated to define. In most cases, the reader can “intuitively” recognise a closed secondary world, but in principle, every literary work has a “world of its own” in it. What is the difference between the closed secondary world in, for example, Yuri Olesha's *Tri tolstjaka* (*Three Fat Men*) and the world of a non-fantasy novel? One answer is that a closed secondary world has some kind of magical or fantasy element in it, whereas the world of a non-fantasy novel contains exclusively things that can possibly exist or happen according to the understanding of the world at the time the text is written. Also the border between fantasy and fairy tale can be problematic. J.R.R. Tolkien introduced the notion of a secondary belief<sup>117</sup> that has later been used in order to separate fantasy from fairy tale. For example, Maria Nikolajeva draws the lines between myth, fairy tale and fantasy according to the reader's belief in the text<sup>118</sup>. The myth is based on belief: the events of the myth are true for its teller and reader (or listener). In fairy tales (or folktales) the reader is not supposed to believe in the story. In fantasy, the reader has a choice. The reader can – although not genuinely believing that the story is “true” in the ontological sense – believe the magical events to be true within the scope of the literary work. The reader can also choose a rational explanation for the events: they can be seen, for example, as a dream, hallucination or imagination. Often fantasy texts offer a possibility for both interpretations.

In texts about implied secondary worlds, the secondary world is manifest in the text as some kind of magic or “secondary element”, for example, a magical character or object. Implied secondary worlds differ from both open and closed worlds in the respect that they are not “shown” but rather “told about”. Of course, also open and closed worlds are shown through the narration; the difference is that the reader gets all the information concerning the implied world through one or several characters of the story or by witnessing some kind of “otherworldly” events in the primary world. The reader is not invited into the implied world, as he would be in an open or closed world.

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<sup>117</sup> Tolkien 1975, 40 – 41.

<sup>118</sup> Nikolajeva 2006, 58 – 60.

The status of an implied world as a genuine secondary world has been questioned by Maria Ihonen. According to her, the presence of magical elements does not necessarily imply an entire secondary world<sup>119</sup>. In some cases, the magical elements rather question the nature of the primary world in the sense that if the magical elements are possible in the primary world, it is no longer the primary world in its original meaning<sup>120</sup>. Thus, an implied world would differ from a closed world only in terms of a sense of wonder: in a closed world, the characters consider magic as normal, whereas in the case of an implied world both the characters and the reader have to deal with the conflict of reality and wonder<sup>121</sup>. A good Soviet example of a text in which it is difficult to determine whether there is an implied secondary world or whether the whole story is situated in one world is Lazar' Lagin's *Starik Hottabyč* (1938, Old Man Hottabyč). The secondary world that the old genie Hottabyč has come from, the ancient Middle East, is not shown directly. The plot of the story is completely situated in the primary world and the secondary world is present only in the form of the genie and the miracles he introduces. All information about the secondary world is perceived through the genie's stories: the narrator does not describe the secondary world at all except for a few explanatory comments in the foreword.

In her study of the British author Diana Wynne Jones, Farah Mendlesohn divides fantasy fiction into four categories. *Portal–quest fantasies* involve quests in fantasy settings, in *immersed fantasies* magic is perceived as a normal part of life in a fantasyland, in *intrusion fantasies* the magic intrudes on the primary world, and in *liminal fantasies*, the reader hesitates about the status of the fantastic<sup>122</sup>. These types of fantasy are not wholly mutually exclusive and Mendlesohn sees the possibility of transition from one to another within the scope of one story<sup>123</sup>. Since the work of Jones is very different from Soviet fantasy – Jones has been writing in a very different culture, the Britain of 1970s onwards, and the issues her works deal with differ greatly from those of Soviet fantasy – the criteria based on her work cannot be applied to Soviet fantasy as such; yet they offer a basis on which to build. In Soviet children's fantasy, one can find examples at least of portal–quest fantasies, which I would rather call *quest-oriented fantasies*, immersed fantasies and intrusion fantasies. When combined with Nikolajeva's ideas of open, closed and implied secondary worlds, portal–quest fantasies operate with open and closed worlds, immersed fantasies with closed worlds, and intrusion fantasies with implied worlds.

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<sup>119</sup> Ihonen 2004, 85 – 86. Actually, Nikolajeva does not state that either. However, Ihonen's argument is helpful in understanding the notion of an implied world.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 85 – 86.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 85 – 86.

<sup>122</sup> Mendlesohn 2005, XXXI – XXXII.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., XXXI.

### 2.1.1.1. *Quest-oriented fantasies*

Quest is an essential element in almost all fantasy, while in some texts it is the main foundation of the story. Mendlesohn merges two popularly used terms, portal fantasy and quest fantasy, into one category that she calls portal–quest fantasy: “the portal fantasy, in which the protagonists travel from one world to another, and the quest fantasy, in which the protagonists move through a fully imagined fantasy world with no “otherworld” in existence in search of something<sup>124</sup>”. This type of fantasy includes both quest fantasies situated in one closed fantasy world and fantasies that include a journey to an open secondary world. According to Mendlesohn, there is little difference between a portal fantasy in which the protagonist is transported to a new unfamiliar world and a quest fantasy in which the protagonists leave their familiar homes for their adventures in the wide world<sup>125</sup>. I have chosen to call their type ‘quest-oriented fantasy’, since the mentioning of a portal seems out of place in cases of quest-fantasies situated in one world. Thus, within the scope of this study, I use the term ‘quest-oriented fantasy’ for texts centred on the protagonist’s quest in a secondary world of either a closed or open type. An example of a pure Soviet quest-oriented fantasy is Veniamin Kaverin’s *Skazka o Mit’ke i Maše, o veselom trubočiste i mastere Zolotye ruki* (1939, *The Story of Mit’ka, Maša, the Happy Chimney Sweep and Master Skilful*) in which the protagonist Mitja travels to the secondary world in order to save his kidnapped sister. The goal of the quest is clear from the beginning and Mitja achieves it by getting step by step closer to the solution, gathering the information needed in performing the quest with the help of his new friends. As the story develops, Mitja’s quest also develops: in the end, freeing his sister is combined with a greater goal – freeing the secondary world of its violent ruler.

In many Soviet fantasies of the quest-type there is actually a double quest going on: on one hand, the protagonist has to perform some kind of heroic act in the secondary world and, on the other hand, solve a personal problem. Maria Nikolajeva separates four different types of conflicts typical of children’s literature. In a person-against-person conflict, the hero has to deal with an enemy, in a person-against-society conflict he is put against the social conventions. The person-against-nature conflict is about the hero fighting for survival against the natural elements, while the person-against-self conflict depicts the hero’s inner conflict.<sup>126</sup> These four types of conflict can all be met in children’s literature, and they are also found in the Soviet fantasy; yet in Soviet fantasy they have some characteristic traits. In my material, person-against-nature plots are very rare<sup>127</sup>. Some texts do have elements of a Robinsonnade: for example, in

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<sup>124</sup> Mendlesohn 2005, XXXI.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>126</sup> Nikolajeva 2006a, 100.

<sup>127</sup> Person-against-nature plots were quite prominent in other genres of Soviet children’s fiction: for example, Samuil Marshak’s famous poem *Vojna s Dneprom* (1931, *The war with the Dniepr*) the people declare a war against the river Dnepr in order to build a dam. In harmony

Gubarev's *Troe na ostrove* (Three children on an Island) the protagonist has to survive on a deserted island, but with the help of magic, survival is not an issue. Also in Krapivin's *Deti sinego flamingo* (The Children of the Blue Flamingo) from 1982 the protagonist lives with other runaway children in a deserted fortress exposed to the forces of nature. However, in both texts, the person-against-society conflict becomes more relevant. The other three types of conflicts are certainly met very frequently. The person-against-person conflicts are usually the easiest to detect, even when there are several different types of conflict present in the same story: they are often clearly visible on the surface of the text<sup>128</sup>. The conflicts tend to be very grandiose: the heroic act usually involves saving the fantasyland from some kind of disaster, for example, getting rid of corrupt rulers as in Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, saving an elk calf from the claws of a monster bird in Tokmakova's *Sčastlivo, Ivuškin!* (1983, Good luck, Ivuškin), or fighting a gang of pirates in Gubarev's *Troe na ostrove*. The person-against-self conflict is often the most subtle and sophisticated type of conflict<sup>129</sup>, yet in Soviet fantasy novels the personal problems tend to be quite strongly underlined. The protagonist does not only vaguely grow up a bit or become a slightly better person, but he or she solves a rather precise problem, for example, gets rid of her fear of the dark in Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, learns to trust his parents' judgement in Tokmakova's *Sčastlivo, Ivuškin!* or comprehends the value of collective work in Gubarev's *Troe na ostrove*.

In the spirit of both the optimism typical of children's literature and the optimism typical of Soviet socialist realism, the protagonists in Soviet children's fantasy tend to succeed in their quests. The heroic and personal quests are often linked together: the protagonists' success in the heroic quest implies success in their personal quests. Thus, it is interesting that in Gubarev's *Troe na ostrove* the children resist the pirates but cannot win over them. The heroic quest is left incomplete when the secondary-world adventure ends without the completion of the task; yet the reader is supposed to believe that the protagonist has succeeded in his personal quest of understanding the value of collective work. Another exception to the rule is Tokmakova's *Sčastlivo, Ivuškin!* in which the protagonist saves an elk calf from the monster bird representing evil in the story, yet does not get rid of the bird permanently. An interesting case is Nikolaj Kosmin's *Piko – hrustal'noe gorlyško* (1994, Piko the Golden Throat), in which the protagonist Piko fails in his highly symbolical quest to find the "rules of a good life" and to restore the foul land of the thrush and other birds to its previous, happier state. Instead, Piko is exiled to the cold North and his high ideals are betrayed by his girlfriend. Although in the end, Piko does not lose hope but decides to continue his search, the story ends without the completion of the quest and becomes more like a symbolical tale of an artist's martyrdom than a successful quest narrative.

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with the Soviet ideology, the people succeed in their attempt to conquer the forces of nature.

For an analysis of Marshak's poem, see Hellman 2007, 227 – 228.

<sup>128</sup> Nikolajeva 2006a, 100.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 100.

In Soviet fantasy, the line between person-against-self and person-against-society conflicts is frequently elusive. For example, in Tokmakova's *Sčastlivo, Ivuškin!* the boy's mistrust towards his parents can easily be read as a mistrust towards the authorities, which gives the personal quest a social dimension. In Jurij Tomin's *Šel po gorodu volšebnik* (The Wizard Walked over the City) three different types of conflict are resolved together: when Tolik defeats the antagonist, the evil boy magician, he also defeats his own character flaws and learns to live according to the collective norms of the society.<sup>130</sup> Thus, the different types of conflict can be closely entwined.

Mendlesohn describes portal-quest fantasy as “[t]he most apparently straightforward form of fantasy”<sup>131</sup>. Also in Soviet fantasy, the structure of the quest-oriented fantasies is often quite simple and often resembles the structure of the fairy tale of the *volšebnaja skazka*, or wonder tale –type. Yet sometimes the author's recognition and communication of the genre's conventions give the text an interesting air of metafiction. In the 1980s fantasy novel *Deti sinego flamingo* (The children of the blue flamingo) by Vladislav Krapivin, the use of the quest motif is quite conscious. The initial heroic quest, fighting against the monstrous lizard-squid on the secondary world island, turns out to be a false quest, whereas the actual quest is to fight the corrupt rulers and free the children and even the adults of the island. In fact, after once failing in the false quest the protagonist succeeds in completing that too, since getting rid of the monster is a step towards the freeing of the island. The whole story is very conscious of its status as fantasy and the practices of fantasy are commented on several times.

Ну в самом деле! Ведь во всех сказках, историях и фантастических фильмах если мальчишки попадали в волшебные страны, если сражались с чудовищами, то всегда выходили победителями. Значит, есть такой сказочный закон, и этот закон на моей стороне. Чего же мне бояться?

И я довольно храбро спросил Тахомира Тихо:

–А что, разве раньше не находились люди, которые хотели победить Ящера?

– Ну, почему же? Были... – суховато ответил правитель.

– И... чем кончалось?

– Как видите, Ящер здравствует.

Мне опять стало неуютно. Но я вспомнил о сказочном законе и сообразил, что те неудачники были не главные герои сказки, а я – главный. (*Deti sinego flamingo*, 266.)

In every fairy tale, story and fantasy film, when boys entered magical lands and fought monsters, they always came out the winners. This meant that there is such a law of the fairy tale, and this law was on my side. Why should I be afraid? And I asked Tahomir Tiho quite bravely:

– Haven't there been people willing to fight the Lizard before me?

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<sup>130</sup> If the Jungian notion of a Shadow is to be applied to Tolik's adversary, by coming to terms with his primitive instincts, Tolik becomes a more complete person who is better equipped to live in society. About applying Jungian concepts to children's literature, see, for example, Nikolajeva 2006a, 84 – 88; the concept of a Shadow, 86.

<sup>131</sup> Mendlesohn 2005, XXXI.

– Why would you ask that? Yes, there have been... – answered the king dryly.

– So, what happened?

– As you see, the Lizard is alive and well.

I felt uneasy again. But I remembered the law of the fairy tale and understood that these losers were not the heroes, and I – I was the real hero.<sup>132</sup>

Krapivin's fantasy can be seen as a mark of Soviet fantasy's evolution from straightforward quest-stories towards metafictional fantasy that is very conscious of the conventions of the genre.

### 2.1.1.2. *Immersed fantasies*

Immersed or immersive fantasies are “fantasies set within fantastic worlds in which the characters are fully competent in their settings”<sup>133</sup>: magic is perceived as normal, not an otherworldly phenomenon. Yuri Olesha's *Tri tolstjaka (Three Fat Men)* is an example of immersed fantasy. The world has connections to the works of E T A Hoffmann and H C Andersen<sup>134</sup>. Although, for example, the miraculous works of doctor Gaspar Arneri are deeply admired by other people, the existence of the “magical scientific inventions” such as the almost human doll or the alchemist-like scientist Tub's transformation into a werewolf-like monster are not questioned; they are possible in the book's textual world. Another example of immersed fantasy is Nikolaj Nosov's *Neznajka* trilogy that is situated in a world of miniature people, or Mites, as they are called in the English translation by Margaret Wettlin<sup>135</sup>. The books lack the presence of magic: the only fantasy element is the small size of the characters. The first book of the series, *Priključenija Neznajki i ego družej (1954, The Adventures of Dunno and His Friends)* introduces the protagonist *Neznajka* who lives in a village that slightly resembles a traditional “flower fairy world”, or a childhood utopia<sup>136</sup>. The childlike people live close to nature, get their livelihood from the forest berries, mushrooms and nearby growing cucumber fields, yet they also have products of technological origin, for example, tools, musical instruments and cars, the origins of

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<sup>132</sup> All translations of Russian fiction in this study are my own. Some of the texts cited exist in English translations too, usually done by Soviet publishing houses. Since in the existing translations the translator's choices do not always illustrate the point I want to demonstrate with the quotes, I have chosen to translate the texts myself, striving to preserve the meaningful details, even if this is done at the cost of the esthetical values of the text.

<sup>133</sup> Mendlesohn 2005, 23.

<sup>134</sup> Hellman 1991, 40. Arzamasceva finds in it connections to the literature of antiquity.

Арзамасцева 2003, 314.

<sup>135</sup> Nosov 1980.

<sup>136</sup> For a more detailed discussion on Nosov's *Neznajka*-books as representatives of a Soviet utopia, see Nikolajeva 2000, 70 – 76. Similar worlds of miniature people are met, for example, in the Swedish Elsa Beskow's picture books from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in the British Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* (1952) and its sequels. Nosov's *Neznajka* stories had their predecessors in pre-Soviet Russian cartoons by Anna Hvol'son that were based on Palmer Cox's comics *Brownies*. Загидуллина 2005, 205.

which are never explained. In the second book of the trilogy, *Neznajka v Solnečnom gorode* (1958, Dunno in the City of the Sun) the protagonists visit a more advanced utopian City of Sun that bears connotations with Tommaso Campanella's utopia *La città del Sole*, *The City of The Sun* (1602)<sup>137</sup>. Marina Zagidullina connects Nosov's City of the Sun with the peak of utopian belief in technology around the time of the writing of the book and calls the City of the Sun the near future of the protagonists<sup>138</sup>. Hence, in the beginning of the third book, *Neznajka na Lune* (1966, Dunno in the Moon), the protagonists have learned from their visit to the City and built for themselves a magnificent and technologically advanced city too.

The border between quest-oriented fantasy and immersive fantasy is negotiable. For example, Aleksei Tolstoy's *Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino* has features from both. It is clearly a quest fantasy: although the goal of the quest is not especially explained in the beginning of the story and the protagonist Buratino's progress seems slightly random, in the end there is a certain goal. Buratino undoubtedly accomplishes his quest by finding first the golden key and in the end, the puppet theatre: when he finds out where the golden key fits, all the former episodes that have seemed random, fall into place in the great narrative of the quest. The world of Buratino is a closed secondary world: there is no transition to other worlds, not even when the fantastic puppet theatre is found. The transition happens in one world only when Buratino leaves his safe home and goes into the wide world to have his adventures. The world of Buratino is also the world of immersive fantasy: the magic of the world, the animate puppets and talking animals, are taken for granted, not explained or wondered about.

### **2.1.1.3. Intrusion fantasies**

Intrusion fantasies are "fantasies in which the fantastic intrudes on the fictive normal world, creates chaos, and is negotiated (or managed) by the protagonists who return the world to an altered normality (although that may prove an illusion)"<sup>139</sup>. Perhaps the most straightforward example of Soviet intrusion fantasies is Lagin's *Starik Hottabyč* (Old man Hottacyč). The otherworld magic enters the primary world of 1930s Moscow in the form of an old genie from the implied world of the ancient east. The intrusion creates disturbance in the order, but at the end the threat of chaos is avoided when the old genie decides to embrace the primary world values and rules and gives up his magic.

Sometimes a fantasy series can begin as an intrusion fantasy and then develop into a quest-oriented fantasy or an immersed fantasy. In Sof'ja Prokof'eva's *Povelitel'*

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<sup>137</sup> See, for example, Hellman 1991, 279. The first, Italian version of Campanella's text was probably written in 1602, yet until the 1900s it was widely known only in the Latin translation *Civitas solis* that came out in 1623. Mänttari 2002, 13, 18.

<sup>138</sup> Загидулина 2005, 215.

<sup>139</sup> Mendlesohn 2005, 23.

*volšebnyh ključej* series (1980 – 1999, The Keeper of the magic keys) the secondary world develops from an implied world into an open world and finally into a closed world<sup>140</sup>. The portion of the story placed in the secondary world grows as the series goes on. In the first book *Učenik volšebnika* (1980, The Magician's Apprentice) the action takes place in the primary world, where some magic from the secondary world is introduced. The name 'intrusion fantasy' describes the story particularly well: the magician Alěša's apprentice, Vas'ka the cat, creates confusion by using magic arbitrarily for his own causes, by turning assorted objects into mice. The status quo is restored when the magician Alěša returns everything to what it was and the magic is under control again. This is a perfect example of a Bakhtinian carnival, in which the power structures are temporarily turned upside down, but the usual order is soon restored<sup>141</sup>. On the other hand, already *Učenik volšebnika* can be considered as an immersed fantasy: the existence of magic is taken for granted, at least by the magician Alěša, whose profession is magic. For other people the irrational magic performed by Vas'ka the cat is a question of disbelief.

Every sequel in the *Povelitel' volšebnyh ključej* series has some kind of quest structure. In *Kapitan Tin Tinyč* (1981, Sea captain Tin Tinyč) the adventures take place both in the primary and the secondary worlds. The quest is divided among three characters: the magician Alěša, the primary world boy Tin Tinyč and his namesake in the secondary world, Captain Tin Tinyč. Each of these three does his part in fighting the pirates who threaten the peace on the Island of the Captains. The adventures in *Glazastik i ključ-nevidimka* (1986, Glazastik and the Invisible Key) begin in the primary world and are mainly situated in the secondary one. The quest of the magician Alěša and his companions is to return the lost smiles to the faces of the secondary world inhabitants. In *Astrel' i hranitel' lesa* (1998, Astrel' and the Forest Keeper) the primary world works merely as a frame story for the actual adventures in the secondary world: Alěša spends most of the time in the secondary world saving princess Astrel'<sup>142</sup>. The latest book in the series has been published in two different versions: *Princessa Uènni* (1995, Princess Uènni) and *Malen'kaja princessa* (1999, The Little Princess). In *Malen'kaja princessa* the whole story is set in the secondary world and neither the primary world nor its inhabitants are even mentioned in the text, although the character of Večnyj Iskatel', the Eternal Seeker, who strongly reminds of the magician Alěša, dwells in the secondary world<sup>143</sup>. This is the only book of the series that could be described as an

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<sup>140</sup> The situation can be compared with C. S. Lewis' Narnia series, in which an open secondary world of Narnia is in one book of the series, *The Horse and His Boy*, presented as a closed world.

<sup>141</sup> Bakhtin 1984, 10; Бахтин 1990 (1965).

<sup>142</sup> Magician Alěša gets from the secondary world a letter written by princess Astrel', who ask for help. The magician decides to enter the secondary world. After the adventures in the secondary world, the magician simply steps back to his own world. He spends in the primary world pages 5 – 15, the secondary world pages 16 – 230 and again in the primary one the last lines of the page 231.

<sup>143</sup> In *Malen'kaja princessa* there are no characters from the earlier books of the series, but the magician Večnyj Iskatel', the eternal seeker, very much resembles the magician Alěša of the



immersed fantasy. In the *Princessa Uènni* version, the adventures begin in the primary world where magician Alěša's companions are reading a fairy tale called *Malen'kaja princessa, The Little Princess*<sup>144</sup>. The ending of the tale is missing and the company travels to the secondary world in order to save the princess of the story from the evil wizard. The part that is situated in the secondary world is quite similar to the story of *Malen'kaja princessa*.

#### 2.1.1.4. *Liminal fantasies*

*Liminal fantasy* is “[f]antasy that holds the fantastic in doubt, which leaves us uncertain as to the status of the fantastic”<sup>145</sup>. In liminal fantasies, the fantastic elements do not so much intrude into the primary world as give the ordinary world a touch of the fantastic<sup>146</sup>. In terms of open, closed and implied secondary worlds, liminal fantasies could work with any of them, the implied worlds being the strongest candidates. In Soviet children's fantasy, I would not categorize any of the works I have come across as liminal fantasy. Closest to the genre come Veniamin Kaverin's stories of the town of Nemuhin and his story Verlioka that was marketed to adults, and perhaps also some texts by Vladislav Krapivin, especially *Deti sinego flamingo*. Perhaps the genre of liminal fantasy demands the kind of subtlety that was not considered suitable for Soviet children: its blurred borders of mimesis and fantasy did not fit the tradition of socialist realism.

Despite there being no clear cases of liminal fantasies among Soviet children's fantasy, some texts present the reader with a possibility to consider whether magic has actually taken place or do the adventures have a natural explanation. One of the most famous definitions of the fantastic is given by Tzvetan Todorov in his study *The Fantastic (Introduction à la littérature fantastique 1970)*. Todorov divides texts including possibly supernatural elements into three categories: uncanny (l'étrange), marvelous (le merveilleux) and fantastic (fantastique). In the uncanny texts, the supernatural elements get a natural explanation, whereas in the marvelous texts they are truly supernatural and “new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena”<sup>147</sup>. The fantastic equals the reader's hesitation between these two options: once the reader makes a choice, he or she has left the realm of the fantastic<sup>148</sup>. According to Mendlesohn, liminal fantasy differs from Todorov's notion of the uncanny by the fact

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earlier books. See bookshop Ozon's introduction to a certain printing of the book ISBN 5-237-05642-3, 5-271-00635-2 <http://www.ozon.ru/context/detail/id/102579/> in which the magician is even called Alěša.

<sup>144</sup> The book in question is not *The Little Princess* of Frances Hodgson Burnett, yet the story has some similar “rags to riches” connotations.

<sup>145</sup> Mendlesohn 2005, 136.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>147</sup> Todorov 1980, 41.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

that in liminal fantasy the reader expects the fantastic<sup>149</sup>. This may be the case with, for example, Vitalij Gubarev's *Troe na ostrove* (Three children on an Island). The adventures in the secondary world are in the end explained as a dream, yet certain details – the capture of primary world criminals who look very much like the secondary world pirates – create a hesitation in the mind of the protagonist and the mind of the reader. Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott have pointed out in picturebooks a phenomenon they call the “Mary Poppins syndrome”. It is the addition of a minor, either verbal or visual, detail in order to bring in hesitation about the ontological status of the events in the text: either to make the reader suspect that what was presented as a dream or imagination might have been true, or the other way round<sup>150</sup>. It depends on the readers whether they wish to interpret the magical adventures as true or see them as a dream.

### 2.1.1.5. *Frame stories*

Frame stories have seldom been discussed in connection with secondary world fantasy. Open – sometimes also closed<sup>151</sup> – secondary world fantasies can be divided into two groups, genuine secondary world fantasies and secondary world fantasies with a frame story. This is not meant as a value judgement. The genuine fantasies are not thought of as inherently better than frame-story fantasies. The genuine fantasies are texts, in which the primary and the secondary world are in a logical relationship with each other, i.e. a reasonable connection can be found between them. A journey to a secondary world can be, for example, a reward for good deeds done in the primary world. In the earliest case in point, Antony Pogorelsky's *Чёрная курица, или Подземные жители*. (The black hen or the underground people), a schoolboy saves a black hen that turns out to be an important minister of an underground world, and is taken to the underground world as a reward. Entering a secondary world can also be a punishment. In Jurij Tomin's *Šel po gorodu volšebnik* (The Wizard Walked over the City) Tolik's entry to the secondary world results from his actions in the primary world: he has stolen wish-fulfilling matches from a young magician and used them selfishly, and thus the magician imprisons him in a desolate secondary world. In Anatolij Aleksin's *V strane večnyh kanikul* (1964, In the land of eternal holiday), access to the land of eternal holiday is at first a reward for winning a bicycle race, but finally it turns out to be a punishment for a careless wish. Often the relationship between the worlds is connected to problem solving: primary world problems, usually some kind of inner conflict, are solved in fantasy settings. In Irina Tokmakova's *Ščastlivo, Ivuškin!* (Good Luck, Ivuškin!), the boy enters the secondary world in order to find a solution to the problem he has in the primary world: his family is moving from the countryside to a city and the boy is afraid that he will be separated from his

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<sup>149</sup> Mendlesohn 2005, 136.

<sup>150</sup> Nikolajeva and Scott 2001, 175. See also Lassén-Seger 2006, 120, in footnote 95.

<sup>151</sup> Of course, also stories featuring implied worlds can have a frame story; however, that does not so much affect the status of the secondary world.

horse. He runs away from home with his horse and enters the secondary world where he is told that he should trust his parents. Ivuškin comes back home and his parents arrange a place for the horse with the city park department.

The second group contains books in which the secondary world has nothing to do with the primary one but works only as a kind of background or frame story. For example, in Sergey Mikhalkov's *Son s prodolženiem* (A dream to be continued) the primary world episodes could almost be cut out and the story would work as well as it does with them. The only thing that connects the two worlds is the main character Ljuba. The depiction of her life in the primary world is minimal: the primary world episodes only tell the reader that Ljuba loves sleeping and this time she will have a dream that will continue from night to night. In the story's last primary world episode Ljuba's mother takes her to see the doctor who tells Ljuba that there is nothing wrong with dreaming, but that she should be as brave in real life as she is in her dreams. Mikhalkov's text presents a good example of a pseudo-conflict typical of socialist realist literature that is resolved in the fantasy settings of a secondary world: an obviously good girl, Ljuba, is able to become even more perfect when she learns in the secondary world that she is capable of doing good deeds.

While in Mikhalkov's story the primary world lacks any kind of magic, in Nikolaj Kosmin's *Piko – hrustal'noe gorlyško* magic exists both in the secondary and the primary world. The Todorovian marvelous or uncanny elements emerge in Nikolaj Nikolaevič's life when he enters a bird shop that for some unknown reason has appeared in the place, where normally there was a laundry. The bird trader gives him a song thrush Maestro. Maestro starts to tell him about the adventures of a little thrush Piko in the kingdom of Vrunglupija<sup>152</sup>, where also Maestro comes from. The descriptions of the conversations between the author and Maestro form the frame story. The idea of a story within a story is reinforced by naming the narrator Nikolaj Nikolaevič that also happens to be the name of the actual author; the story is presented as if the author had written it down as Maestro told it. The frame story is printed in italics<sup>153</sup> and the actual story, situated in the secondary world, in regular font. Distinguishing the frame story from the secondary world story by typographical means is not unheard of in children's fantasy literature. Probably the best-known example is Michael Ende's *Die unendliche Geschichte*, (1979, *The Neverending Story*) in which the different levels of the story are printed in different colours. Furthermore, the switches between different levels are marked with cigars Maestro smokes. The telling of the story is divided into seven episodes, that each last as long as it takes for Maestro to smoke one of his cigars.

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<sup>152</sup> The word 'vrun' means 'liar' and 'glupyj' means 'stupid'. Thus, the name of the land could be translated, for example as "The land of stupid liars", "Liestupidia".

<sup>153</sup> In the first chapter of Maestro's story the introduction is given by Nikolaj Nikolaevič and it is not in italics.

One function of the frame story seems to be to define the modality of the story. Nikolajeva and Scott use the term in connection with picturebooks in order to “decide on the degree of truth” the verbal and visual text conveys; whether the text is to be read mimetically (literally) or nonmimetically (symbolically)<sup>154</sup>. Of course, the means of conveying a certain way of interpretation to the reader are different in picturebooks and books consisting only of verbal text: there are no visual hints suggesting how the text should be read; there can also be no contradiction between words and pictures to create hesitation as there often is in picturebooks<sup>155</sup>. In text-only stories, the modality of the story has to be expressed verbally. For example, in Mikhalkov’s *Son s prodolženiem*, the main point of the frame story is to tell the reader that Ljuba’s adventures are a dream, not true. In Kosmin’s book, the frame story adds an atmosphere of mysticism to the story. Frame stories can exist in both open and closed secondary world stories. Mikhalkov’s secondary world is open, since Ljuba can enter it in her dreams. Kosmin’s secondary world is almost closed: the only connection between the primary and secondary world, as far as the reader is told, is Maestro, who has entered the primary world from the secondary one. It is also hinted that the vaguely described enemies of Maestro could originate from the secondary world.

### **2.1.2. Multiple secondary worlds**

Fantasy texts can be situated in more than one secondary world. The worlds can be variations of the same theme, or they can form a heterotopia, a multitude of discordant universes that can differ greatly from each other<sup>156</sup>. Maria Nikolajeva sees heterotopias as typical of postmodern fantasy and, according to her, the existence of heterotopias “denotes the ambivalent and unstable spatial and temporal conditions in fiction”<sup>157</sup>. Against this background, it is not surprising that there exist hardly any heterotopias in Soviet children’s fiction; Soviet fantasy tends to give a rather determined and static picture of the worlds. However, some texts hint at the possibility of the existence of several different secondary worlds.

The earliest text hinting at the possibility of a multitude of secondary worlds is Vitalij Gubarev’s *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors) that came out in 1951. The protagonist Olja passes through the mirror in her grandmother’s hall<sup>158</sup>. She meets her mirror image Jalo, who explains that “По эту сторону зеркала все может быть (Gubarev 1996, 13)”; “everything is possible on this side of the mirror”. In the space behind the mirror – zazerkal’e – there is also a reflection of Olja’s

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<sup>154</sup> Nikolajeva and Scott 2001, 173.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 174 – 175; Lassén-Seger 2006, 120 in footnote 95.

<sup>156</sup> Nikolajeva 2003, 143.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>158</sup> For a Western reader, going through a mirror has a strong connotation to Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass*. Yet in the Soviet Union, Carroll’s Alice-stories were practically unknown at the time of the publication of Gubarev’s book. Hence, the motif was considered quite original. See Nikolajeva 1996b, 383.

storybook. The girls pick it up and enter a picture showing a scene of a fairy-tale town. It is not stated that there are other worlds available, yet since the girls are able to turn the pages of the book, the reader can guess that the girls could as well have entered some other picture in the book. Somehow, the girls were destined to choose this particular world: they start turning the pages when they can feel the wind coming out of the book and the book just “happens” to open at the page on which there is the picture where the wind blows. The space behind the mirror seems almost like a portal world, not a complete world in itself, but a kind of gateway through which one can enter different worlds. A similar idea of a mediating world between different worlds is met in the British classic, *The Magician’s Nephew* (1955), the second to last book of the Narnia series by C. S. Lewis. Lewis’s “Wood between the Worlds” functions in the same way as Gubarev’s room behind the mirror, as a gateway between the different worlds described in the text and, perhaps, other possible worlds<sup>159</sup>. In Gubarev’s text, one can speculate that the quality of the possible worlds depends on what kinds of objects happen to be reflecting in the mirror. One can also speculate whether the grandmother’s mirror is a unique magical mirror, or would Olja have been able to enter the secondary world through any other mirror. A similar type of portal world can be found later in Sergey Mikhalkov’s *Son s prodolženiem* 1982. In the story, Ljuba goes first in her dream into a dream town where she meets a Nutcracker that turns into a real man, Captain Milo, who takes her with him into his own world. Ljuba’s journey takes her through Snežnoe korolevstvo, the Kingdom of Snow and korolevstvo Slastej, the Kingdom of Sweets until they finally enter Džokonda, Gioconda, Milo’s homeland<sup>160</sup>. The different kingdoms seem to be part of the same world – the monarchs of the different lands are acquaintances – yet the dream town does not seem to belong to the same world.

I have found no separate Soviet text that would specifically describe adventures in more than one secondary world. However, if Sof’ja Prokof’eva’s *Povelitel’ volšebnyh ključej* series (The keeper of the magic keys) is dealt with as one text, several different secondary worlds can be found there. The existence of several worlds is explained already in the first book of the series *Učenik volšebnika*, when the old magician chooses a fairy tale, where he wants to spend the rest of his life. The old magician’s passing into a fairy-tale is presented as a departure into another world, yet it can also be seen as his death:

Секрет Тайнович был совсем старенький, седой, сгорбленный. Он вечно забко кутался в мохнатый клетчатый плед и целый день дремал в глубоком кресле. Жаловался, что никак не может как следует выспаться. Все заботы, хлопоты, суета...

И вот наконец случилось то, чего волшебник Алеша уже давно опасался.

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<sup>159</sup> A more recent British example is the intermediate world Diana Wynne Jones uses in several of her books beginning in the 1980’s.

<sup>160</sup> These worlds have predecessors in Hoffmann’s Nutcracker.

— Послушай, Алеша, мой дружок, - сказал Секрет Тайнович.— Отправлюсь-ка я в сказку! И не куда-нибудь, а к Спящей Красавице. Вот уж где я отосплюсь на славу!

[ - - ]

Волшебник Алеша с печалью посмотрел на Секрета Тайновича. Расстаться с любимым учителем...

— Ты же знаешь, все волшебники когда-нибудь уходят в сказку. Тут уж ничего не поделаешь,— стараясь казаться веселым и беспечным, сказал Секрет Тайнович.— Ну-ну-ну, не будем грустить! Тем более я оставлю тебе в наследство свою Волшебную Энциклопедию. (*Učenik volšebnika*, 6; 7.)

Sekret Tajnovič was very old, grey and round-shouldered. He was always wrapped in a fuzzy checkered shawl, dozing all day in a squashy armchair. Complaining about how he could not sleep properly. All worries, troubles and things to be done...

Finally it happened, the thing Magician Alěša had for a long time been afraid of.

– Listen, Alěša, my friend, – said Sekret Tajnovič. – I am going to a fairy tale! And not to any fairy tale, but the Sleeping Beauty. There I can sleep properly!

[ - - ]

Magician Alěša looked at Sekret Tajnovič sadly. To say goodbye to his dear teacher...

– You know that all magicians will eventually enter the fairy tale. There is nothing to be done, – said Sekret Tajnovič trying to look cheerful and happy. – Now, now, let’s not be sad! And I will leave my Encyclopedia of Magic to you as a legacy.

The departure of Sekret Tajnovič<sup>161</sup> has several attributes that are often connected to death. The magician is old, Alěša fears him leaving and feels sad. The going away is presented as being inevitable as death. Sekret Tajnovič also leaves him his Encyclopedia of magic as a legacy. When Alěša questions his teacher’s intentions by telling him that Sleeping Beauty has already been woken up by her prince, Sekret Tajnovič describes to him the multitude of possible different fairy tales – or secondary worlds:

— Э, милый мой, — хитро прищурился Секрет Тайнович. — Ты даже не представляешь себе, сколько на свете Спящих Красавиц. Я отыскал принцессу — чудо как мила! Спит себе, моя радость, крепким сном. Тем более, ее принц свернул не на ту тропинку и заблудился в лесной чаще. Так что я успею отличнейшим образом выспаться, пока он ее отыщет и поцелует. (*Učenik volšebnika*, 6 – 7.)

– Alěša dear, – said Sekret Tajnovič cunningly. – You cannot imagine how many Sleeping Beauties there are in the world. I found a princess – wondrously beautiful! She sleeps, my darling, in a deep sleep. What is more, her prince wandered from the path and got lost in the forest. I will have plenty of time to sleep until he finds her and kisses her awake.

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<sup>161</sup> The name could be translated “Secret Secretsson”, the word ‘tajna’ in his patronym being an old Slavic word and ‘sekret’ in his first name being of foreign origin: originally Latin, but taken into Russian through French. *Словарь иностранных слов* 1964, 580.

By presenting the idea of there being several different Sleeping Beauties, he also introduces the idea of parallel worlds in which the outcome of events has been different. Thus, there exists also a world in which the prince has gone off the track and has not yet found the sleeping princess. The fairy tales can also be entered without the connotations of dying. Sekret Tajnovič explains to his apprentice how to enter any fairy tale he wants to:

– Тебе достаточно нарисовать этим мелом ключ на любой двери. Потом открыть дверь – и ты... ты окажешься в сказке, в какой только пожелаешь! Понял?.. ”  
(*Učenik volšebnika*, 9)

– You only need to draw a key on any door with this chalk. Then you open the door – and you have entered a fairy tale of your choice! Understand?

Since in each book of the series the secondary world is different, the world that holds the books together is the primary and not the secondary one. The secondary worlds have in common their location in the skazka, but they are connected to each other only through the primary world: at least no direct connections between the different secondary worlds are mentioned in the text. For example, when the magician Alěša and his friends return home from their secondary world adventures, there is no mention of a possibility that they could accidentally end up in the wrong place.

The connections between different worlds in either Gubarev’s or Prokof’eva’s texts are not especially strong. In Gubarev’s text, there is no mention that events in one world could affect the fate of another. In Prokof’eva’s texts, however, the incidents in the secondary worlds have minor implications in the primary one. For example, in *Glazastik i ključ-nevidimka*, the actions of the evil king in the secondary world also affect Alěša’s world: The king’s servant collects smiles off people’s faces in order to make beautifully sounding bells out of them. When the country runs out of smiles, he starts collecting them in other worlds as well; the story starts when the smiles disappear off people’s faces in a drawing made by the magician Alěša’s friend and then from the face of Alěša’s cat Vas’ka. One of the reasons Alěša and his friends decide to go to the secondary world – besides the need to help the secondary world inhabitants – is to get the smile back on Vas’ka’s face, which can only happen by freeing the captured smiles from the king’s treasure chest. The events in the secondary world do not directly affect the primary world. Nevertheless, the secondary world poses a threat to the primary world and other possible worlds when the collector of smiles comes to visit the magician Alěša wanting to buy his magic chalk with which he could open doors to any world and steal the smiles off their inhabitants’ faces. In *Princessa Uènni* (Princess Uènni) the events in the secondary world make the ending disappear from the book Alěša’s friends are reading in the beginning of the story. Only after the adventures in the secondary world does the ending return to the book, that is promisingly called “Malen’kaja princessa”, The Little Princess, as is the other version of Prokof’eva’s book.

It is interesting that it is just Gubarev and Prokof'eva, whose texts come perhaps closest to the idea of heterotopia in the Soviet fantasy. The secondary worlds presented in their works are among the most "old-fashioned" of Soviet fantasy worlds, i.e. both the world of *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* and those presented in the *Povelitel' volšebnyh ključej* series are variants of the traditional pseudo-medieval fantasy worlds with their castles, horse carriages and wizards<sup>162</sup>. Yet it is just these works that make the reader think about the possibilities of the world being more ambiguous than is suggested by the majority of socialist realist literature.

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Taking into account the relative isolation from Western children's literature under which the Soviet fantasy has developed, the basic structures of its secondary worlds fit remarkably well into the theoretical frameworks based on English-language children's fantasy. Similar models of open, closed and implied worlds are present, but the more recent models of heterotopia cannot be found, although some texts from the 1980s onwards do have structures close to it. This corresponds to the relationship between Soviet and Western fantasy: they have common roots in the literature of Romanticism and folktales and the fundamental structures have developed in similar directions. However, since the interaction between Soviet literature and the Western tradition was limited, the most recent Western developments have had little influence on the Soviet fantasy that turned in different directions partly because of the unique social and political circumstances under which it developed.

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<sup>162</sup> In Western fantasy, especially in popular genre fantasy, the secondary worlds are frequently variants of pseudo-medieval, feudal European cultures. Even in reference guides intended for fantasy writers, directions can be found on how to create a best-selling medieval fantasy world. See, for example Varhola 1999.



## 2.2. The portrayal of the secondary worlds

The secondary worlds differ from each other in their external characteristics. The attributes of the secondary world are often connected with their location. If the secondary world is located underground, its inhabitants have to deal with mice and voles, if it is inside a mirror, things are inverted like mirror images in the primary world, and if the world is located in a fairy tale, it also has the characters and events typical of folktales. Since every secondary world of Soviet children's fantasy has its special outer characteristics, I see no point in going through every possible variant one by one; instead, I have chosen to take a closer look of a few particularly interesting types of secondary worlds.

### 2.2.1. Location

Secondary worlds can be clearly spatially located, or dislocated, from the primary world, for example, on an unknown island or underground. They can also have a more symbolical location. The first secondary worlds of Russian children's fantasy literature were situated in rather strictly spatially defined places. The secondary world in Pogorelsky's *Černaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli* (The Black Hen or the Underground People) from 1829 was situated underground, and the world in Vladimir Odoevsky's *Gorodok v tabakerke* (The Little City in a Snuffbox) from 1834 is in a musical snuffbox. Underground worlds are traditionally regarded as the land of the dead<sup>163</sup>. Descending to an underground world can also be seen as getting in touch with the unconscious or the potentially dangerous inner world<sup>164</sup>. In Pogorelsky's story, the schoolboy Alěša finds his way through a tunnel into the underground kingdom. For Alěša, the journey to the secondary world shows his darker side when he has to deal with his desire to succeed in school without having to work. Although the story has pedagogical leanings and during the journey the protagonist learns a lesson on the importance of hard work and loyalty, he does not mature much during his journey. After his underground adventures, he is not much different from what he was in the beginning of the story. Another location that is often connected with the unconscious is the forest. The forest is a typical place of action in folktales, a place of adventure in strong contrast to the safety of home. The secondary world of Eduard Uspenskij's *Vniz po volšebnoj reke* (1972, Down the Magic River) is situated in a forest, that turns out to be not an ordinary forest but the forest of traditional Russian folktales.

Another typical spatially located type of secondary world is the world to be found on an island. In Soviet fantasy, the island as a secondary world is used, for example, by Vitalij Gubarev in *Troe na ostrove* (Three children on an Island), Vladislav Krapivin in

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<sup>163</sup> See, for example, Nikolajeva 1988, 45.

<sup>164</sup> See, for, example, Sheldon Cashdan's analysis of Grimms' fairy tale *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*. Cashdan 1999, 33.

*Deti sinego flamingo* (The Children of the Blue Flamingo) and Sof'ja Prokof'eva in *Kapitan Tin Tinyč* (Sea Captain Tin Tinyč). All these secondary worlds are clearly separated from the primary world; Prokof'eva's island is even cut off from the primary world by a line that is impossible to cross by a boat until one of the characters comes up with the idea of erasing the line with a piece of rubber. In Volkov's *Volšebnik Izumrudnogo goroda* (The Wizard of the Emerald City) and its sequels the secondary world is situated in the middle of a desert in Kansas just like its original, L. Frank Baum's Land of Oz.

Most of the Soviet secondary worlds do not have a clear-cut spatial location. Even some of the worlds that seem to be located in a definitely specified object like a mirror or a book, are not in fact situated inside that particular object but more likely in something that the object represents. Gubarev's secondary world in *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors) is located in a story book behind a mirror. Yet the objects themselves are not so much places as indications of the nature of the secondary worlds. The boundaries of the world are not limited by the things that are reflected in the mirror in Olja's grandmother's hall or scenes that are visible in the pictures in Olja's book of fairy tales. The mirror is an indicator showing that the secondary world is mirror-like, that the things there are inverted images of things in Olja's world. The fairy tale book indicates that the secondary world is a fairy tale world, closer to a typical pre-modern, feudal world than to Olja's own reality in the 1950s Soviet Union.

In many Soviet fantasy stories, the secondary world is located in 'skazka' – the fairy tale. J. R. R. Tolkien writes in his essay on fairy stories of secondary worlds that are situated in faërie. According to him, faërie is "the realm or state in which fairies have their being"<sup>165</sup>. Tolkien's notion of "fairy" is not limited to fairies and elves and he is ready to interpret 'faërie' as 'magic'<sup>166</sup>. According to Tolkien, it is impossible to describe the faerie thoroughly<sup>167</sup>. Maria Nikolajeva describes secondary worlds that are situated "beyond". According to her, all secondary worlds are situated beyond human experience, some of them to such an extent that nothing is told of their location<sup>168</sup>. Since this study is about Russian literature, I prefer to use the Russian word 'skazka' instead of the English 'faërie'. In addition to fairy tale as genre, the word *skazka* can be associated with something that is not true or real, something that is invented<sup>169</sup>. Thus, it makes the difference between the realistic and the fantastic obvious, which perhaps protected the fantastic stories against the accusations of blurring the child readers' notions of reality.

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<sup>165</sup> Tolkien 1975, 16.

<sup>166</sup> "Faërie itself may perhaps most nearly be translated by Magic – but it is magic of a peculiar mood and power, at the furthest pole from the vulgar devices of the laborious, scientific magician." Tolkien 1975, 17.

<sup>167</sup> "Faërie cannot be caught in the net of words; for it is one of its qualities to be indescribable, though not imperceptible." Tolkien 1975, 17.

<sup>168</sup> Nikolajeva 1988, 43.

<sup>169</sup> See, for example, 'сказка' in Ожегов и Шведова 1997, 720.

Skazka serves as the setting for the secondary worlds in Sof'ja Prokof'eva's *Povelitel' volšebnyh ključej* (The Keeper of the Magic Keys) series. In the first book of the series, *Učenik volšebnika*, the secondary world is hardly described at all. It serves only as a place where the old magician Sekret Tajnovič goes to spend the rest of his life after his retirement and where the magician Alěša's helper, the genie, comes from. In *Kapitan Tin Tinyč* (Sea Captain Tin Tinyč) the adventures are mostly situated in skazka. The secondary world is presented as okean Skazki, the Ocean of Faerie, and the main characters, the sea captains, live in ostrov Kapitanov, the Island of Captains. In *Glazastik i ključ-nevidimka* (Glazastik and the Invisible Key) the secondary world is a town situated in skazka and in *Astrel' i hranitel' lesa* (Astrel' and the Forest Keeper) a kingdom in skazka. In every one of the first four books it is clearly stated, that the secondary world is in skazka and the word skazka is repeatedly mentioned:

А нам с вами пора в путь.

Туда, где катит свои голубые волны океан Сказки. В удивительную страну Мечты и Фантазии. Прямо́хонько на остров Капитанов. На остров, к которому со всех сторон плывут маленькие корабли, сделанные ребячьими руками. (*Kapitan Tin Tinyč* 30)

It's time for us to start our journey.

There, where the Ocean of Skazka splashes its blue waves. To the marvellous land of Dream and Fantasy<sup>170</sup>. Straight to the Island of the Captains. To the island, to which all the small ships built by children's hands sail from every direction.

– Что ж, в таком случае отправимся в сказку, – с невольным вздохом сказал волшебник Алёша. – Остаётся только выбрать дверь, на которой нарисовать ключ волшебным мелом. (*Glazastik i ključ-nevidimka* 21)

– Well, in that case, we shall head to the skazka, – sighed the magician Alěša. – We'll just have to choose a door on which to draw a key with the magic crayon.

Итак, в сказку! Как попасть в сказку – дело известное. Достаточно нарисовать ключ волшебным мелом на любой двери. И все. Потом открой эту дверь, шагни... И вот ты уже в сказке. (*Astrel' i hranitel' lesa* 10)

So, into the skazka! How to get into a skazka – we already know it. One has to draw a key on any door with the magic crayon. That's all. Then open the door and step through... And there you are, in the skazka.

Unlike the first four books, in *Malen'kaja princessa* (The Little Princess) it is not stated that the secondary world is situated in skazka. In the book, no primary world is presented but the story is situated in a closed secondary world, a "fantasy kingdom".

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<sup>170</sup> The Russian word 'mečta' means both something imagined and an object of desire. It could be translated in English as, for example, dream, fantasy, fancy, or daydream. The word 'fantazija' means imagination, fantasy, something that is not true. See, for example, Ожегов и Шведова 1997, 354, 848.

Since *Malen'kaja princessa* is counted as a part of the series<sup>171</sup>, it can be assumed that the secondary world of the book is located in the skazka just as in the other books of the series.

Another secondary world clearly located in skazka is the world of Eduard Uspenskij's *Vniz po volšebnoj reke* (Down the Magic River), yet where Prokof'eva's skazka denotes a fairy tale land in general, Uspenskij's skazka is a characteristically Russian folktale world. Although the location of the world is limited to the forest near the protagonist's grandmother's home, the location in the skazka is indicated, for example, using phrases typical of folktales, when describing the place of events: "А в это время далеко-далеко, по ту сторону Молочной реки", "At the same time, on the other side of the Milk River". *Moločnaja reka*, the Milk River, is a phrase recurrently used in Russian folktales in order to denote the fairy tale chronotope that differs from the teller's or reader's own everyday world.

### 2.2.2. Extent

The extent of different secondary worlds varies. The world can be strictly limited to a certain space, as is the case in Vladimir Odoevsky's *Gorodok v tabakerke* (The Little City in a Snuffbox), in which the secondary world is completely situated inside a musical snuffbox. On the other hand, secondary worlds do not always have spatial limitations: for example, in Anatolij Aleksin's *V strane večnyh kanikul* (In the Land of Eternal Holiday), Petja enters the land of eternal holiday that is everywhere he goes, and he cannot get out of there until Ded-Moroz, Father Frost, sets him free.

In his article on horror stories and gothic fiction, Ilkka Mäyrä refers to Manuel Aguirre's study *The Closed Space*: in horror fiction, recurring closed spaces are the fortresses of reason and the non-sense spreads out endlessly through their cellars and cavities<sup>172</sup>. If the primary world represents sense and the secondary world its opposite, the primary world would be a closed space whereas the secondary one would be all over trying to intrude into it. An example of this kind of structure can be found in the earliest Russian fantasy story for children, Pogorelsky's *Černaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli* (The Black Hen or the Underground People) that was strongly influenced by the horror elements of German Romantics and E T A Hoffmann. In the story, the magic intrudes into the primary world from the underground kingdom, underneath the rational city of St Petersburg. Notably the rational primary world of the story is St Petersburg, a city that has a reputation for being not built spontaneously but being founded in the era

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<sup>171</sup> *Русские детские писатели XX века*, 360 – 361. Here the book is mentioned as the *Princessa Uënni* variant, yet the *Malen'kaja princessa* version of the book has the same main characters – the magician Alëša, his cat and the genie – as the earlier pieces of the *Повелитель волшебных ключей* series; the book belongs to the series without any doubt.

<sup>172</sup> Mäyrä 1996, 177.

of enlightenment according to the rational plans of Peter I. On the other hand, from the 1830's onwards, somewhat after Pogorelsky's tale, St. Petersburg became known as the eerie milieu of Gogol's stories of fantasy and horror, and Pushkin's *Mednyj vsadnik* (1833, *The Bronze Horseman*) and *Pikovaja dama* (1834, *The Queen of Spades*). Later the peculiar reputation of St. Petersburg was fortified in literature by several leading Russian writers, most notably, perhaps, Dostoevsky.<sup>173</sup> The primary world itself is not a strictly closed space, but the world of the protagonist, the schoolboy Alěša, is strictly controlled by adults: he is allowed to move only in the area of the boarding school – even during the holidays – and even inside the school area some places are forbidden to him. Although the underground secondary world is not frightening in itself, Alěša's secondary world adventures bear connotations to the opposite of sense and logic: dream, (mental) illness and imagination. After his adventures, Alěša falls ill and afterwards is not even himself sure whether anything actually happened or not. The attitude towards the irrational is remarkable: Alěša's adventures are not judged as unhealthy as are the later similar adventures of Ljuba in Sergey Mikhalkov's *Son s prodolženiem* that ends with the mother taking her daughter to see the doctor because of her unusual dreams. Alěša is just told to keep his adventures to himself as if the existence of the irrational were fully acceptable, but it would be not a good idea to talk about it to others: it is after breaking this promise that Alěša's troubles with the schoolmaster and his illness start.

Vladimir Odoevsky's *Gorodok v tabakerke* (The Little City in a Snuffbox) from 1834 presents an opposite situation, a secondary world that is a controlled space isolated from the primary world. The miniature world inside a snuffbox represents the rational: in the snuffbox, everything is in order, and every tiny piece of the machinery that keeps the music box working has its own place and duty. It is the outsider, the boy from the primary world, who steps into the box and accidentally pushes the mechanism into chaos. However, Soviet fantasy followed Pogorelsky's rather than Odoevsky's example; in the material covered in this study, there are no examples of secondary worlds presented as strictly controlled places of the rational: as in horror fiction, the primary world with everyday life is the rational one.

Contrary to horror fiction, in children's fantasy, the magic does not have to be frightening and the protagonists do not always shun it. In Vladislav Krapivin's *Kovčersamolět* (1975, *The Flying Carpet*) magic enters the primary world in the form of a flying carpet. The protagonists are not afraid of the magic; on the contrary, the flying carpet feels very safe and brings newfound happiness to the children's life.

Мы поднялись на полметра и пошли бреющим полетом, поднимая за собой вихрь из семян одуванчиков. Ветерок не крикнул, не бросился с ковра. Только ресницы у него распахнулись широко-широко, и он крепко взял меня за локоть.

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<sup>173</sup> See Pesonen 2004. The dual status of St Petersburg as a city of the rational and the milieu of the eerie in Russian literature can be compared with the city of Venice that because of its somewhat similar status is a productive background for gothic stories. Cavallaro 2002, 32 – 33. Incidentally, St. Petersburg is often called Severnaja Venecija, the Venice of the North.

Это был замечательный день. Это был праздник в честь того, что у нас появился новый друг. Праздничными казались трава, солнце, пухлые облака и шумливые кусты рябины у забора. И все на свете. В нас кипела радость. Мы летали над широким двором, выписывали сложные фигуры, несколько раз взмывали с крыши в высоту, прошитую горячими лучами. Ковер-самолет неумоимо носил на себе нас четверых. (*Kovër-samolët*, 182)

We rose about half a metre in the air and began our flight. The flying carpet swept up a whirlwind of dandelion snow behind us. Veterok did not scream or jump off the carpet: his eyes just opened wide and he grasped my elbow tightly.

It was a wonderful day. It was a celebration for us getting a new friend. The grass, the sun, the fluffy clouds, the rustling rowan bushes by the fence and everything else seemed festive. The happiness flourished in us. We flew over a large yard making intricate figures, flew off the rooftops into the sky that was sliced with the rays of the sun. The flying carper easily carried all four of us.

The primary world of the novel is not as strictly closed a space as those of gothic horror stories, but it has its restrictions. The carpet widens the horizon of the primary world and gives the protagonists freedom from everyday life and from being controlled by adults.

### 2.2.3. *Marginality of the space*

When the secondary space has a certain concrete location within the primary world, the location is often somehow marginal, separate from the space occupied by adults. Already the first Russian fantasy land in Pogorelsky's *Čěrnaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli* (The Black Hen or the Underground People) is located under the city of Saint Petersburg, separate from the everyday world of ordinary people. The city underground has later become associated with sewers, rats and garbage; in literature, it has served as a hiding place for people who have drifted outside society<sup>174</sup>. In several modern fantasy and horror stories the sewers are occasionally presented as the habitats of various marginal groups of people, were they criminals, mutant monsters or individuals otherwise left outside the society. In Lev Kassil's *Konduït i Švambranija* (1930 and 1933<sup>175</sup>, *The black book and Schwambrania*), strictly speaking, not a fantasy story, yet an interesting fictional depiction of children building their own fantasyland, the secondary world becomes concrete in spaces like roofs and an abandoned house, the places where the children are able to play without adult supervision. The abandoned

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<sup>174</sup> For example, in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* 1862 the sewage system of Paris serves as a hiding place for revolutionaries and escaped prisoners and in Gaston Leroux's *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* (1909 – 1910) the lake and tunnel systems underneath the Paris opera house provide a sanctuary for the malformed "phantom".

<sup>175</sup> Kassil's books were first published separately: the first one came out in 1930 and the second in 1933. Later, they have usually been published together and in this study, they are treated as one book.

house, Dom Ugrja (Eel's House), is an extraordinary building: it is built according to the unconventional plans of a wealthy German, and with its incredible structure, coloured glass windows and astounding wall paintings it is the target of the local people's awe. Because of its peculiar structure, the house is useless and disintegrates little by little. The neighbourhood inhabitants take advantage of the parts that keep falling from the house, and when the boys discover the house as a new location for Schwambrania, it is in a dangerous condition. The marginality of the space is emphasised by the other dwellers of the house: two "alchemists", who use the house as a place to make "eliksir mirovoj radosti", the elixir of earthly happiness, that turns out to be homemade alcohol. In addition, other cases of marginal spaces as the realm of the fantastic can be found: for example, In Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (The kingdom of crooked mirrors) the mirror leading to the secondary world is conveniently situated in the hallway that is not so much a space itself but a threshold between places.

In Eduard Uspenskij's *Vniz po volšebnoj reke* (Down the Magic River), the secondary world is marginally situated in many ways: it is located in the countryside, in a forest and in the mythical time of the folktale. The countryside, as it was depicted in most socialist realist literature, was a marginal space, when compared to the city, especially when the countryside is not portrayed according to the ideals of functional and prosperous collective farming. Uspenskij's countryside is represented by an old grandmother and another old female relative, half human, half Baba Yaga, living in a forest. The important role of the grandmothers in Soviet children's fantasy<sup>176</sup> is probably due to the grandmothers' significance in Soviet family life. It was common that grandparents, especially grandmothers, lived with their children's families and actively took part in the childcare and the children's upbringing. The grandmother's influence on a child's life was often crucial and affected even the child's educational choices and future<sup>177</sup>. The juxtaposition between rural and urban life is stated in the beginning of the story, when Mitja's grandmother sits spinning and Mitja notes that in Moscow, where he lives, everybody knits yet no one spins: the countryside is thus linked with more original means of production. Spinning also has mythological connotations. It is often closely connected to the act of storytelling, since storytelling suited well together with the monotonous work<sup>178</sup>. In the frontispiece of Perrault's *Contes de ma mère l'Oye* (1695, *Tales of Mother Goose*), the storyteller is depicted as an old spinning woman surrounded by children listening to her, which became a common image of a storytelling situation<sup>179</sup>. This is also the initial situation in

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<sup>176</sup> In the study material, grandmothers have an important role in several protagonists' lives. In Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (The kingdom of crooked mirrors) the grandmother is the only adult presented in Olja's primary world life. In the same author's *Troe na ostrove* (Three on an island), the magic handkerchief responsible for the adventures comes from the protagonist's grandmother. In Krapivin's *Deti sinego flamingo* (The children of the blue flamingo) the protagonist is supposed to be looked after by his grandmother while his parents are out of town.

<sup>177</sup> Semenova and Thompson 2004, 127 – 130.

<sup>178</sup> See, for example, Warner 1995, 22 – 23.

<sup>179</sup> Tatar 1987, 108 – 109.

Uspenskij's story: the grandmother spinning and telling old folktales to her grandson. European folktales introduce several spinner characters: the best known are probably the different versions of the Sleeping Beauty, though most fairy tales tend to treat spinning as a sign of diligence<sup>180</sup>, which seems to fit the image of the efficient old women in Uspenskij's story. Spinner women are also known in European mythologies, for example, the spinning goddesses of fate known as the Greek Moirae, the Latin Parcae, the Norse Norns, and the Baltic Laima<sup>181</sup>. The idea of a goddess spinning the thread of life transferred into the character of an old woman living in the Soviet countryside can be seen as a sign of the 1970's and the rise of *derevenskaja proza*, the village prose, that tended to see the countryside in a somewhat romantic light<sup>182</sup>. In Uspenskij's story, the values connected to the countryside are occasionally presented as more beneficial than those of the city: for example, the grandmother's spinning and the stories she tells to Mitja seem to represent the good old-fashioned life. Still the "city values" have their benefits too: for example, school and Mitja's ability to read are described as beneficial and, at the end of the story, Mitja must return to Moscow, but he will be welcome back to the countryside and the folktale world the following summer<sup>183</sup>.

The forest where the secondary world is situated is even more marginal compared to the village where Mitja's grandmother lives. The mythical time of the secondary world is marginal compared to the present time and the modern concept of history. The secondary world is populated with various folktale personages, some of them belonging to the shared European folktale imagery, for example, the wolf who is interested in Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother, others particularly Russian. The gallery of the typically Russian characters includes both friendly ones like Vasilisa the Wise and the Domovoj, and villains like Koščej the Immortal<sup>184</sup>. Most of the characters have preserved their folktale attributes, yet their use differs from the traditional. This is most noticeable in Uspensky's use of the Baba Yaga character. She has her common epithets like the chicken leg hut and the flying mortar that are put to a new kind of use. Mitja and Baba Yaga use the chicken leg hut for travelling: the

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<sup>180</sup> Tatar 1987, 118.

<sup>181</sup> Liborel 1996, 1054; 1061 – 1062.

<sup>182</sup> The idea of the feminization of the countryside in Russian literature was not only a phenomenon connected to the village prose. In her study of Lev Tolstoy's childhood portrayals, Pamela Chester notes that it was typical of Russian male authors and artists of the nineteenth century to depict the countryside and nature with feminine attributes. Chester 1996, 59.

<sup>183</sup> Uspensky's later book *Djadja Fëdor, pës i kot* (1974, Uncle Fjodor, the dog and the cat) deals with somewhat similar issues. Just like Mitja, also the six-year-old Fjodor searches for a rural childhood paradise in the marginal space of the Soviet countryside. Fjodor, too, has to return home to the city and go to school, yet he gets to come back to the countryside for his holidays, which gives grounds for the sequels of the book. About Uncle Fjodor, see Nikolajeva 2000, 76 – 78.

<sup>184</sup> These characters have their counterparts in the folklore of other cultures too, yet the names and the special features attributed to them make them markedly Russian. The illustrations by Viktor Čižikov emphasize the Russian origin of the characters: they are, for example, dressed in old Russian long dresses, Vasilisa also wearing a traditional Russian headdress.



chicken legs are no longer a mere epithet: they have become a functional means of transportation. In this way, Mitja follows Gorky's idea of folktales as inspiration for practical inventions: whereas Gorky sees flying carpets as prototypes of aeroplanes<sup>185</sup>, Mitja considers the chicken leg hut useful as a kind of house-trailer and the traditional "apple on the dish" equipment<sup>186</sup> as a substitute for television. Yet the most surprising difference to folktales is Baba Yaga's relation to Mitja. Baba Yaga in folktales is a deeply ambiguous character and has several different roles: she can be either the villain of the story, a donor helping the protagonist, or an ambiguous character. However, in folktales featuring a boy as the protagonist, Baba Yaga is never presented as a donor<sup>187</sup>. In Uspensky's tale, she helps Mitja to sort out the troubles in the folktale land and is never malevolent or dangerous towards her nephew. The secret of Baba Yaga's benevolence may lie in their kinship, yet it is also untypical of Russian folktales to present Baba Yaga as a relative of a male protagonist, the exception being tales in which Baba Yaga becomes the male hero's mother-in-law.

Uspenskij has also used the idea of the marginal space as the realm of fantasy elsewhere. In *Garantijnye čelovečki* (1975, The warranty men) the world of the little warranty men is situated in places so small that people can not see them. The world of miniature people situated in the middle of the ordinary-sized people's world is related to the British *Borrowers* series by Mary Norton, beginning in 1952. Yet, whereas the borrowers make their living by "borrowing" food and household items from the big people, the warranty men do the opposite: they help people by looking after their household machines until the warranties wear off. Especially marginal is the way the warranty men plan to publish a newspaper of their own: on the actual margins of full-sized people's newspapers. One of the main characteristics attributed to Uspensky as an author is humour<sup>188</sup>. His texts are full of comedy and jokes often addressed to adults. The idea of the warranty men's newspaper on the margins of ordinary newspapers reflects the structure of the humour of the story: whereas the warranty men's news can only be seen by other warranty men, some of Uspensky's humour can only be perceived by other adults.

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<sup>185</sup> Горький 1989, 90 - 92. Originally published as a foreword for "Skazki 1001 noči". See section 1.3.

<sup>186</sup> The apple on the dish is a magical device in several folktales that makes its owner capable of seeing what is happening in distant places. It is the Russian equivalent of the medieval magicians' silver dish of water.

<sup>187</sup> Johns gives six possible types of relations between Baba Yaga and the child-protagonist in Russian folktales, based on the gender of the protagonist (boy, girl) and the role of Baba Yaga (donor, ambiguous, villain). He comes to the conclusion that for the boy protagonist Baba Yaga is essentially a villain and for the girl she can also be of ambiguous nature. When the protagonist is an adult, the situation changes: in several types of folktale with a male hero, Baba Yaga acts as a donor, whereas for an adult heroine she is rarely a donor. Johns 2004, 137; 264 – 267.

<sup>188</sup> Historians of Russian and Soviet literature see in Uspensky's prose a strong essence of parody and satire; see, for example, Арзамасцева и Николаева 2000, 397. Hellman sees Uspensky's humour as an almost absurd play with conventions and the reader's expectations and treats it as the connecting factor in the author's various works. Hellman 1991, 299.

In *Vniz po volšebnoj reke* (Down the Magic River), the use of marginal space contributes to the overall humour of the story by turning general values upside down: Uspensky shows the marginal space and marginal characters as the real, authentic world and makes children and old women heroes. In addition, the traditional folktale scenery, generally seen as a vital part of the nation's culture, gets its share of the laughter. The magical Moločnaja reka, the Milky River is literally made of milk and sometimes goes sour, the arch evil wizard Koščej keeps himself amused during his imprisonment by swinging back and forth in his chains, while the mighty Solovej Razbojnik, the Nightingale Robber is no longer able to whistle because he has lost his teeth and the good tsar Makar is bored of ruling his empire. It depends on the readers, whether they laugh at the folk tradition itself or at the pompous way the folk tradition is sometimes presented; or are not amused at all.

\* \* \*

Soviet secondary worlds tend to be vividly portrayed. Although a few texts feature rather clichéd anonymous pseudo-medieval worlds, most of them are easily identifiable and quite original. Several have typically Russian attributes, for example, places and characters familiar from Russian folklore. Soviet secondary worlds are usually not confined to strictly defined places, but have such qualities that leave the reader room for interpreting the worlds as more symbolical than material places.

## 2.3. The door to the secondary world

The means of shifting between worlds depends on the location and nature of the secondary world. It is natural to go to an underground world through a tunnel, and into a fairy tale world through a storybook. Although the characters hardly ever enter a secondary world by using one single means of shifting, but usually it is done with a combination of several of them, I will present the ways of travelling as separate ones. The ways of shifting between worlds that are presented in this chapter can be either concrete ways of entering another world or stimuli for it.

### 2.3.1. Spatial passages

Fantasy literature sometimes uses as passage fantasemes constructions that are similar to those used in everyday life. These fantasemes can be “places” themselves, like roads, tunnels, bridges, stairs, gates or doors. Their spatial dimension varies: roads and paths are quite extensive, bridges and stairs are usually smaller, but clearly conceivable as spaces, whereas doors and gates occupy a horizontally quite minimal space.

In the first Russian secondary world novel *Čěrnaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli* (The Black Hen or the Underground People) by Antony Pogorelsky, the passage between the primary world and the underground world is an underground tunnel. The tunnel and the obstacles on the way are described in detail: the tunnel is treated as a space. To pass through the tunnel, the protagonist Alěša must be obedient to his helper, the black hen, and do as she says. The first time Alěša follows the hen into the tunnel, he does not obey the rules and thus cannot get into the underground world. Next time he is more obedient, committing only a minor violation of the rules, and passes through the tunnel with the help of the hen. It would seem natural that in an early secondary world story the passage is very concrete, when in later texts, it would be more subtle. However, already in *Čěrnaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli* the homecoming of the protagonist is less tangible: Alěša wakes up in his own bed the following morning not knowing how he has got back, which supports reading the adventures in the secondary world as a dream.

Concrete passages from one world to another exist in more recent fantasy as well. They are often combined with other means of passing the boundary between two worlds. In Éduard Uspenskij's *Vniz po volšebnoj reke* (Down the Magic River) the protagonist Mitja walks a path to the folktale world. The whole text is strongly based on the travelling motif: in the beginning of the story, Mitja has come from Moscow to his grandmother's house in a village, where his journey takes him first to the forest, then to the mythical folktale world, and in the end, he makes the same trek back to Moscow. The path leading to the secondary world is called Volšebnaja tropinka, the Magic Path, and it goes through a forest. Entering a forest can in itself be a part of the passing to the secondary world. According to Vladimir Propp, the universal idea of a secondary

world that can be accessed through a forest is also typical of the Russian wonder tale<sup>189</sup>. As in *Černaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli*, also in *Vniz po volšebnoj reke* the boy protagonist's journey is described in detail as Mitja experiences it:

Но чем дальше он отходил от деревни, тем больше удивлялся. Деревья расступались перед ним как живые. Трава стала зеленее, а цветы красивее и душистее.

[ - - ]

Ему совсем не было страшно. Потому что лес вокруг был очень добрый и светлый. (*Vniz po volšebnoj reke*, 8 – 9)

The further he walked from the village, the more he was amazed. Trees looked like living things. The grass became greener and the flowers more beautiful and aromatic.

[ - - ]

He was not at all afraid, because the forest around him was very friendly and bright.

Mitja's journey is a variant of the Bakhtinian *hronotop dorogi*, the chronotope of the road. Bakhtin sees the road as a chronotope that enables the meetings of characters despite their differences<sup>190</sup>. Mitja walks along the path, meets a friendly wolf, crosses the bridge over the Milky River and finally comes to Aunt Jegorovna's, alias Baba Yaga's hut, where his grandmother has sent him, but his journey is not over yet. He continues travelling with Baba Yaga on her chicken-leg hut, until they reach the capital town of Tsar Makar's empire. This journey, too, is described thoroughly: on their way Mitja and Baba Yaga meet, and have adventures with, Russian folklore characters, the robber Solovej-Razbojnik, the grey wolf and Liho Odnoglazoe, the one-eyed Likho.

The spatiality of the path is strengthened by the fact that there is no clear borderline between the primary and the secondary world. The ordinary forest changes into a magical one little by little when the protagonist Mitja walks from his grandmother's house to meet aunt Jegorovna. This corresponds to Bakhtin's idea of the chronotope of the road being situated in the protagonist's own world. Bakhtin writes mainly about the novels of Antiquity and European classics, and despite their differences and historical changes he sees as a common factor that all chronotopes of the road are situated in *rodnaja strana*, the protagonist's homeland, or familiar territory, not in an exotic *čužoj mir*, alien world<sup>191</sup>. In Uspensky's story, the Magic Path clearly starts in Mitja's own world and ends in the world of Russian folktales, yet the exact point of change cannot be defined. One possible border between the two worlds is the Milky River. Crossing the bridge is described as a meaningful event to Mitja:

Над речкой стелился белый туман и пахло молоком. Над туманом поднимался мостик.

- Неужели эта речка молочная? - удивился мальчик. - А мне никто про это не говорил.

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<sup>189</sup> Пропп 1986: 57 – 58.

<sup>190</sup> Бахтин 1975, 248, 392 – 394; Bakhtin 2002 98, 243 – 245.

<sup>191</sup> Бахтин 1975, 393 – 394. Bakhtin 2002, 245.

Он остановился посередине моста и долго смотрел, как по лёгким молочным волнам бегают солнечные зайчики. Потом он пошёл дальше. Его шаги гулко раздавались в тишине, и с кисельных берегов прыгали в молоко разноцветные пучеглазые лягушки. Наверное, они были сделаны из желе. (*Vniz po volšebnoj reke*, 10.)

There was white fog over the river and it smelled like milk. Over the fog, there was a bridge.

– I wonder, can this be the milky river? – said the boy.

– Nobody told me about it.

He stopped in the middle of the bridge and stared for a long time at how the sunbeams played on the light milky waves. Then he went on. His steps could be heard in the silence, and big-eyed frogs of different colours jumped off the pudding banks into the milk. They were probably made of jelly. (*Vniz po volšebnoj reke*, 10)

When, at the end of the story, the narration comes back to the primary world, the shift is marked by the words “А в это время далеко-далеко, по ту сторону Молочной реки (107)”, “At the same time far away, on the other side of the Milky River”. The words mark the river as a kind of a border, not unlike the river Styx in Greek mythology and the River Smorodina in Russian folklore separating the world of the living from the world of the dead. Excluding these two examples, the river is throughout the story described as a part of the secondary world: boyar Afonin tells about spending his holiday by the milk river and the battle for power over the land is fought on Kalinovyj most, the bridge that crosses the river. In Russian folklore, Kalinovyj most is a bridge that connects the two banks of the River Smorodina and on which the big fight between good and evil is fought. The milk river is not a constant border between the ordinary and the magical but some magical events, for example, the conversation with the wolf, take place already before Mitja reaches the river. The fact that the journey to the secondary world happens gradually, from Moscow to the village, forest, folktale world and back, and not in an instant strengthens the cultural connection between the two worlds, the modern Moscow and the mythical secondary world of the Russian folklore. The gradual journey to the secondary world can be read as a symbol of entering into one’s own cultural heritage that is a vital part of one’s world.

Also in Veniamin Kaverin’s *Skazka o Mit’ke i Maše, o veselom trubočiste i mastere Zolotye ruki* (The Story about Mit’ka, Masha, the Happy Chimney Sweep and Master Skilful), the protagonist’s journey to the secondary world happens gradually, yet there is a clear spatial marker between the primary world and the secondary world, The Brown Land, or the Land of Kaščej. The Land of Kaščej can be reached in several ways; the protagonist Mit’ka consults several helpers in his own world and learns that in order to find the Land of Kaščej he must first find the world’s longest fence and hit its every fence post with a stick. Mit’ka does as he has been told: interesting enough, he does not climb over or through the fence but walks to the place where the fence ends where he falls into a pit and ends up in the Land of Kaščej.

И вот, в один прекрасный день он отправился с этой палкой в руке вдоль самого длинного в мире забора. Трр! – как барабан!

[ - - ]

Все темнее становилось вокруг. Уже и не узнать стало знакомых мест, а Митька все шел и шел. Раз-два! Раз-два! Хлоп! Забор кончился, и он кубарем покатился в темную яму. Он не очень испугался, только зубы застучали. Он полежал немного – ничего. Стал на колени – тоже ничего. Открыл глаза – и увидел себя в незнакомом городе. (*Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše, o veselom trubočiste i mastere Zolotye ruki*, 13)

And so, one beautiful day he walked with the cane in his hand all along the longest fence in the world. Trr! Like a drum!

[ - - ]

Everything around him became darker and darker. It was impossible to recognize familiar places any more, but Mit'ka just walked on. One-two! One-two! Clap! The railing ended and he tumbled down into a dark pit. He was not awfully scared, only his teeth chattered. He lay down for a moment – nothing. He rose up on his knees – again nothing. He opened his eyes – and found himself in an unknown town.

The way back from the Brown Land is different: after killing the wizard, Mit'ka and his sister Maša climb up the chimney of the wizard's palace and finally, when they are high enough, they can see their home land: they see their mother sitting on the same park bench from which the whole adventure began. When compared with Uspensky's story, the effect of the journey is different: whereas Uspensky's Mitja ends up deeper into the folktale world that seems to be a part of his own culture, Kaverin's Mit'ka enters a secondary world that is, at least on the plot level of the text, clearly separated from his own world.

Unlike tunnels, paths, and long fences, doors are not usually depicted as places: they are just passages, through which the characters go in order enter to the secondary world. In *Sčastlivo, Ivuškin!* (Good Luck, Ivuškin!) by Irina Tokmakova Ivuškin goes through a door that grows on the hill in a forest. More symbolic, but nevertheless unquestionable doors are used in Sof'ja Prokof'eva's *Povelitel' volšebnyh ključej* (The Keeper of the Magic Keys) series. In the first book of the series, *Učenič volšebnika* (The Magician's Apprentice) the old magician Sekret Tajnovič leaves to his apprentice Alěša a magic crayon, with which he can draw keys that open doors to other worlds. The old magician draws a key on the balcony door and goes through the door to the fairy tale he chooses: the Sleeping Beauty. Later on, Alěša draws a key on a picture frame and a sketched cat Vas'ka enters Alěša's world by jumping out of the picture. In the sequels, the crayon is used in similar ways: in *Glazastik i ključ-nevidimka* (Glazastik and the Invisible Key), Alěša draws a key on the door of an old bookcase to enter a fairy-tale town. In *Astrel' i hranitel' lesa* (Astrel' and the Forest Keeper), he enters the secondary world through a door of the house that children have drawn on the pavement. It is said that it does not matter which door Alěša chooses: he can go through any door to any world he wants as long as he uses his magic crayons. The magician Alěša's use of different doors, both actual ones and more symbolical ones, underlines the message of creativity strongly present in Prokof'eva's texts. Although

there are probably several real doors available, Alěša often chooses to use the ones drawn by children.

In both Tokmakova's and Prokof'eva's stories the door as a passage between the worlds is accompanied by magic words. Verbal incantations and spells have a strong place in folk tradition, so it is no wonder that they have been used in fantasy too. In Irina Tokmakova's *Sčastlivo, Ivuškin!* the door leading to the secondary world is summoned by the gatekeeper hedgehog's magic words:

Совершись чудо,  
Совершись!  
Из ниоткуда,  
Дверь, появись!  
В зеленом пригорке  
Скрипнули створки,  
У ветра за спиной  
Передо мной.  
(*Sčastlivo, Ivuškin!* 575).

Come true wonder,  
Come true!  
Appear from nowhere  
Door!  
In a green hill  
Let there be door halves  
Behind the back of the wind  
In front of me.

In Sof'ja Prokof'eva's *Učenik volšebnika*, the magician Alěša uses a spell to animate the sketched cat Vas'ka before he can jump out of the picture frame:

Не робей и не смущайся,  
Превращайся, превращайся  
От усов до хвоста  
В настоящего Кота! (*Učenik volšebnika*, 27)

Don't feel shy or uncomfortable,  
Transform, transform  
From whiskers to tail  
Into a real Cat!

In *Kapitan Tin Tinyč*, the magician Alěša uses a spell to make a sketched swallow enter the primary world of the story:

Всё, что вижу на бумаге, -  
Покорись огню и влаге!  
За бумагу не держись.  
Оживи и закружись! (*Kapitan Tin Tinyč*, 20)

Everything I see on the paper, -  
Obey the fire and water!  
Don't stay on the paper.  
Wake up and start moving!

Here the spell works without the actual door element: Alěša does not have to draw a key with the magical crayon as he has done before in order to animate Vas'ka the cat.

The spells are not used only to animate children's drawings. Alěša also uses them when he wants to enter the secondary world himself. In *Glazastik i ključ-nevidimka* Alěša first draws a key on the book-case door and after that says a spell:

Сказка, близко или далёко,  
Сказка, низко или высоко,  
Где ты прячешься теперь?  
Открывайся в сказку дверь! (*Glazastik i ključ-nevidimka*, 22)

Fairy tale, near or far,  
Fairy tale, high or low,  
Where are you hiding now?  
Open, door, to the fairy tale!

The idea of combining verbal spells and actual doors as a passage fantaseme strengthens the idea that although the secondary world is entered through a door, travelling between worlds is essentially a mental process. When in *Glazastik i ključ-nevidimka* the protagonists return to their own world, the magician Alěša tells his friends that even before actually walking through the door they are already at home in their thoughts, and the events of the secondary world are already beyond their reach.

### 2.3.3. *Image as a passage*

The image is an ancient archetype used in travelling to otherworlds. In his study of *Mary Poppins*' mythical elements Staffan Bergsten traces the motif of an artist entering his own painting to the legend of a Chinese painter Wu Tao-tsz of the T'ang dynasty (600 – 900 CE). Bergsten sees it as a glorification of the artist, similar to mythical heroes being raised to heaven from the world of ordinary mortals into the timeless world of art<sup>192</sup>. The motif is common in children's fantasy, some of the most famous examples, in addition to Pamela Travers' *Mary Poppins* (1934), being Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* (1872), C. S. Lewis' *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952) and Tove Jansson's *Pappan och havet* (1965, *Moominpappa at Sea*). In some texts an artist enters his or her own painting, for example, in *Moominpappa at Sea* Moominmamma enters the garden she has painted on the walls of a lighthouse.

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<sup>192</sup> Bergsten 1978, 64 – 65.



Characters can also enter pictures made by others, like the children in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. The mirror is a special case of a picture: the character enters a kind of inverted reality that has strong connotations of travelling into one's inner world.

In Soviet children's fantasy, an image is also used as a device through which to enter a secondary world. In all examples, the characters enter deep into the fairy tale world, not only in a two-dimensional picture. In Vitalij Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors) Olja and her reflection enter the fairy-tale world, the Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors, through the picture in the reflection of Olja's fairy tale book:

Яло, посмеиваясь, приставила открытую книгу к стене, и картинка вдруг на глазах у девочек выросла до самого потолка.

Оля тихонько ахнула

– По эту сторону зеркала все может быть, – сказала Яло. – Ты ведь попала в сказку, Оля. Пойдем посмотрим город, а завтра ты вернешься домой.

[ - - ]

Девочки взялись за руки и, обдуваемые легким ветерком, без всякого труда вошли в нарисованный сказочный город. (*Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, 13)

Jalo laughed and put the open book against the wall and the picture grew under the girls' eyes all the way up to the ceiling.

Olja took a deep breath.

– On this side of the mirror, everything can happen, – said Jalo. – You are in a fairy tale, Olja. Let's go and see the town, and tomorrow you shall return home.

[ - - ]

The girls took each other's hand and in the light breath of wind, they enter easily into the fairy tale town in the picture.

The picture grows gigantic; the girls step into it and end up on the top of the hill described in the picture. After their adventures in the Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors, they come back to the space behind the mirror from the top of the same hill. The space in which the girls can move after stepping into the picture is not limited only to the scenery in the picture, but is a whole fairy-tale world. Maybe even wider is the secondary world to which the pirates are sent at the end of Prokof'eva's *Kapitan Tin Tinyč* (Sea Captain Tin Tinyč) on the ghost ship, the Flying Dutchman. The ship is originally a picture torn out of a book and brought to the Island of Captains by the sketched swallow. Hanging on the wall of the tavern, the picture begins to change and the ship becomes old and decayed as if it were sailing towards "nothingness". After capturing the pirates, the captains of the island take the picture off the wall and throw it into the sea; the pirates are put into the ship and sent away forever.

Variants of the Wu Tao-tsz legend of an artist entering his own painting can be found in Sof'ja Prokof'eva's *Povelitel' volšebnyh ključej* (The Keeper of the Magic Keys) series. Children's drawings act as a motivation for entering secondary worlds in almost every book of the series. In *Glazastik i ključ-nevidimka* (Glazastik and the Invisible Key) magician Alěša and his friends enter a town that is actually a picture painted by a

boy in Alěša's neighbourhood. Although Alěša enters the town through the door of his bookcase, the picture is vital. The boy Vasja paints a watercolour of a town full of happy people, but when he looks at the picture, he sees that the smiles have disappeared from the faces of the people. The magician Alěša goes to the magic city to help the sad people in the picture and to find out what has happened to their smiles. In *Kapitan Tin Tinyč*, a map drawn by Valentin is one of the things that make the voyage of a toy ship to Okean Skazki possible<sup>193</sup>. Also Veniamin Kaverin sometimes uses drawing as a stimulus for magical adventures. In *Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše, o veselom trubočiste i mastere Zolotye ruki* (The Story of Mit'ka, Maša, the Happy Chimney Sweep and Master Skilful) the picture with unconventional colours drawn by Maša offers the wizard Kaščej's brother a clue as to how to lure her to go to Kaščej's land. In Kaverin's fairy tale *Sil'vant* (1982, Sil'vant) a boy turns into a sil'vant, a fantasy creature he has invented and of which he has drawn pictures.

A special case of the picture is the mirror image. The mirror as an object has magical connotations in both folk traditions and literature. According to Lucie Armitt, the most typical function of a mirror in a fantasy narrative is to act as a means for the characters to move between different worlds<sup>194</sup>. In Vitalij Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors), there are two kinds of shiftings between worlds: between Olja's world (the primary world) and the space behind the mirror and between the space behind the mirror and the Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors. The space behind the mirror can be entered by stepping through the mirror at the right moment. Olja hears a voice calling her to step through and the sound of tinkling crystals from the mirror. Blue waves appear on the surface of the mirror and when they become smooth the mirror's glass disappears allowing Olja to step through the frame. Coming back happens in a similar way. However, one can return only when the waves make it possible. Trying to walk through the mirror by breaking the glass would close the passage between the worlds forever.

Going through the mirror strongly resembles one of the most famous children's fantasies, Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* (1872)<sup>195</sup>. Not only is the idea of going through the mirror the same, also the actual entering of the mirror is depicted in a similar way:

Let's pretend there's a way of getting through into it, somehow, Kitty. Let's pretend the glass has got all soft like gauze, so that we can get through. Why, it's turning into a sort of mist now, I declare! It'll be easy enough to get through – ' She was up on the

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<sup>193</sup> Maps are a typical genre feature in fantasy. In Western fantasy, most major fantasy novels and series feature maps of the secondary worlds. In Soviet children's literature, perhaps the first novel including a map of an imaginary country is Lev Kassil's *Konduit i Švambranja*, where the protagonists invent the world of Švambranja and drawing different maps of the land is connected with the evolution of the land.

<sup>194</sup> Armitt 2005, 41.

<sup>195</sup> *Through the Looking Glass* was first translated into Russian in 1924 by V. A. Azov; perhaps the best known translation by Nina Demurova came out in the 1960s, some ten years after Gubarev's book.

chimney-piece while she said this, though she hardly knew how she had got there. And certainly the glass *was* beginning to melt away, just like a bright silvery mist. (*Through the Looking Glass*, 21)

Хрустальный звон все усиливался. По гладкому стеклу зеркала побежали голубые волны. С каждой секундой они становились все голубее и голубее, и теперь уже зеркало ничего не отражало.

Затем голубые волны рассеялись, словно туман, и хрустальный звон затих. Оля снова увидела в зеркале переднюю и свое отражение. Однако стекло исчезло. Осталась только одна рама от зеркала, через которую – Оля отчетливо почувствовала это – повеяло ветерком. (*Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, 10)

The sound of the crystals became stronger. Blue waves danced on the mirror's smooth surface. Second by second, they became bluer and bluer and the mirror did not reflect anything any more.

Then the blue waving faded away, like mist, and the sound of the crystals became silent. Olja saw on the mirror her own reflection again. Yet the glass was gone. There were only the frames through which Olja felt the wind blowing.

In *Through the Looking Glass*, the mirror becomes misty and melts away. Olja hears crystals tinkle, sees on the surface of the mirror blue waves that fade away like mist and the glass disappears. A few minutes later, after Olja has stepped through the mirror frames, the blue waves come back and close the mirror and the way back to the grandmother's hall. One difference between the two stories is that Alice first pretends the glass from the mirror is disappearing; in a way, she herself is the creator of the way of getting to the other side, whereas in Olja's case, the mirror vanishes spontaneously without Olja doing anything. Neither can she control the way back home: she will only be able to return when the mirror lets her through.

After entering the space behind the mirror, Olja sees everything reversed, in same way as Alice tells her kitten she imagines things to be in the Looking-glass House.

'Now, if you'll only attend, Kitty, and not talk so much, I'll tell you all my ideas about Looking-glass House. First, there's the room you can see through the glass – that's just the same as our drawing room, only the things go the other way. (*Through the Looking Glass*, 18 – 19)

Оля усмехнулась и внимательно оглядела отраженную переднюю, в которой находилась. Все в ней было наоборот. То, что дома стояло справа, здесь оказалось слева, а то, что там стояло слева, здесь оказалось справа. (*Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, 10)

Olja laughed and looked closely at the reflection of the hall where she was standing. Everything was the other way round. Everything that in the house was on the right was on the left, and what was on the left was on the right.

The text on the cover of Olja's fairy-tale book is seen as a reflection in the book that exists behind the mirror. In Gubarev's book, the fairy-tale book is an essential element

since the Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors in which most of Olja's adventures take place is located in the book, or rather in the inverted image of the book.

Well then, the books are something like our books, only the words go the wrong way; I know that, because I've held up one of our books to the glass, and then they hold up one in the other room. (*Through the Looking Glass*, 20)

– Там, в своей передней, ты обронила книжку, – сказала девочка Оле, вот она. И девочка протянула книгу, на которой было написано: «и к з а к С». (*Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, 10)

– You dropped a book in your own hall, and here it is, said the girl to Olja. And the girl showed Olja the book with the text “s e l a t y r i a F”.

The similarities between the two texts do not necessarily imply an intentional intertextual relationship, yet they suggest Carroll's book as a subtext for the reader – at least for the contemporary reader who has access to both texts; most Soviet readers in the 1950s were not familiar with *Through the Looking Glass*. Using a mirror as the form of passage implies something about the nature of the voyage to the secondary world. It presents the secondary world as an inner world, or the voyage into a mirror as a voyage into oneself. In Carroll's text, the inner world is irrational and sometimes frightening; events follow each other in as unpredictable ways as the characters. In Gubarev's text, on the contrary, the secondary world is the place where everything is clear and logical: good and evil are easy to recognize, one can see clearly one's true nature and take straightforward actions in order to correct its faulty aspects.

#### **2.3.4. Transported by people or animals**

In some texts the travelling between the worlds happens with the help of another person or an animal. In Sergey Mikhalkov's *Son s prodolženiem* (A Dream to Be Continued), the protagonist Ljuba is not the only one to travel between separate worlds. Captain Milo is originally from the secondary world of Gioconda, but Ljuba meets him transformed into a nutcracker in the dream town. The bewitched Milo has been saved by a wandering actor and brought by him to the dream town where he has ended up in the window of a doll maker.

Он превратил офицера в уродливого деревянного солдата. В куклу! Куклу вывезли за город и выбросили в канаву. Там меня и подобрал бродячий комедиант. Долгое время блуждали мы с ним по свету... (*Son s prodolženiem* 51)

He transformed the officer into an ugly wooden soldier. A doll! The doll was taken out of the town and thrown in a canal. I was saved by a wandering comedian. We spent a long time travelling around...

It is not explained how the wandering actor was able to shift between Gioconda and the dream town. Maestro the thrush in Kosmin's *Piko – hrustal'noe gorlyško* (Piko the

Golden Throat) has had a similar fate: he too has been carried by other people to other worlds. He has been captured by his enemies and given to a bird dealer in order to be sold and eliminated.

In folk tradition, birds are often seen in connection with other worlds: they can be manifestations of the spirits of the dead, or they can guide shamans in their journeys to otherworlds. Birds act in several stories as messengers between the worlds and assist the protagonists in their journeys. In the first Russian secondary world fantasy, Pogorelskyj's *Černaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli* (The Black Hen or the Underground People), a black hen serves as a messenger between the primary and secondary world – although the hen turns out to be a minister of the underground world in disguise. The hen tells the schoolboy Alěša about the underground world and guides him there through the tunnel. Pogorelsky's hen had several followers during the Soviet period. Ljuba in Sergey Mikhalkov's *Son s prodolženiem* travels to the secondary world on the back of a crane. In her dream town, she finds an old stuffed crane in an attic and the crane carries her and Milo to Milo's home world. However, although Ljuba and Milo travel together, Milo travels on the crane straight from the dream town in The Land of Snow, whereas Ljuba travels via her own world, where she wakes up before the arrival to The Land of Snow. The bird as a means of transport between worlds is found also in Vladislav Krapivin's *Deti sinego flamingo* (The children of the blue flamingo). The secondary world, the Island of Dvid, can be reached in several ways; the protagonist Ženja is transported there by boat, but he plans to get back to his own world riding on a blue flamingo. His plan fails and he has to use a balloon; yet when he wants to travel to Dvid again from his own world, he rides on the blue flamingo that comes from Dvid to fetch him. Also in Sof'ja Prokof'eva's *Kapitan Tin Tinyč* (Sea Captain Tin Tinyč), a swallow acts as a messenger between the two worlds. The otherworldliness of the birds in question is stressed in each text: Mikhalkov's crane is not a living one but a stuffed bird and Krapivin's flamingo is blue, a colour often associated with the transcendent, and of gigantic size. Prokof'eva's swallow is not an ordinary bird either: it is originally drawn by a child and animated by the magician Alěša; the swallow is also able to speak. Only the first magical bird messenger, Pogorelsky's hen, seems quite ordinary, until it turns out to be a man in disguise. Yet its black colour marks it as slightly different from other hens and bears a subtle allusion to magic. The black hen is also singled out from the other hens by having a name, Černuška, that also alludes to her colour. The Soviet fantasies with birds as travelling companions have perhaps used as a literary example Selma Lagerlöf's *Nils Holgerssons underbara resa genom Sverige* (1906 – 1907, *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*, *Чудесное путешествие Нильса Хольгерссона с дикими гусями по Швеции*). The book was very well known in the Soviet Union<sup>196</sup> and was also made into an animated film *Zakoldovannyj malčik* (The Enchanted Boy) in 1955<sup>197</sup>.

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<sup>196</sup> The book was first translated into Russian only a few years after its original publication, the first part in 1908 and the second in 1909. After that, it was published in several different editions. See the bibliography in Nikolajeva 1996a, 328 – 329.

<sup>197</sup> [http://www animator.ru/db/?p=show\\_film&fid=3055](http://www animator.ru/db/?p=show_film&fid=3055)

Birds are not the only animals that can carry children to secondary worlds. In Veniamin Kaverin's *Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše, o veselom trubočište i mastere Zolotyje ruki* (The Story about Mit'ka, Masha, the Happy Chimney Sweep and Master Skilful) the little girl Maša is carried to the Land of Kaščeĵ on the back of an enormous dog. The giant dog as a means of transportation has its roots in folktales: in the well-known Russian folktale *Skazka ob Ivane-careviče, Žar-ptice i o serom volke* (The story of Prince Ivan, the Fire Bird and the Grey Wolf) Prince Ivan rides on the Grey Wolf to search for the Fire Bird and the princess. There might also be a connection to Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale *Fyrstøiet* (*The Tinder Box*, 1835)<sup>198</sup> in which a dog with eyes as big as saucers carries a princess on nightly meetings with a soldier. Whereas the Grey Wolf and Andersen's dog help the protagonists to achieve their goals, Kaverin's dog is on the side of the enemy. "The youngest and most cunning brother of Kaščeĵ" kidnaps the girl promising to take her to the beautiful Blue Land, but takes her to the Brown Land instead, where she becomes the wizard's prisoner. Throughout the story, dogs are depicted as agents of evil: in addition to the one on which Maša rides in the beginning of the story, also other dogs are introduced keeping watch in the wizard's castle. Birds, in line with the above-mentioned stories, are depicted as benevolent characters that help the other protagonist Mit'ka in his attempt to free his sister.

### 2.3.5. *Dream and imagination*

The ideas of dream and imagination are often explicitly connected to the secondary worlds. Very often, the status of the secondary world is explained by dreams or imagination: already in Pogorelsky's *Černaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli* (The Black Hen or the Underground People) it is possible to interpret the secondary world adventures as dream. Sometimes dream or imagination is presented as a means of reaching the secondary world. Although in Pogorelsky's story the protagonist gets into the secondary world through other means, his homecoming from the underground world happens in sleep: he falls asleep in the underground world and wakes up in his own bed.

One of the most obvious examples of reaching secondary worlds in dreams is Sergey Mikhalkov's *Son s prodolženiem* (A Dream to Be Continued). The protagonist Ljuba shifts between three different worlds: the primary world, the dream town and Gioconda. Ljuba enters the secondary world in a dream and returns to the primary world when she wakes up. The first time she enters the dream town in a dream. She leaves the dream town riding on a crane to go to Gioconda, but wakes up in her own world before she gets there. The next night Ljuba's dream begins when she arrives on

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<sup>198</sup> Like Lagerlöf, Andersen was very well known and popular in the Soviet Union. His fairy tales have been read in several translations, some of his tales have been made into a film in the Soviet Union, and they have inspired various Russian and Soviet authors.

the crane in *The Land of Snow*, from which she goes on to *The Land of Sweets*. On the border between the Land of Sweets and *Gioconda* she wakes up in the primary world and when she goes back to sleep, she enters *Gioconda*. Finally, she wakes up in her own world. Thus, she never enters from one secondary world to another, but the shifts are always between the primary world and a secondary world. Altogether, Ljuba makes three trips to secondary worlds: one to the dream town and two to Milo's world. The ending of Mikhalkov's story is quite ominous: Ljuba's mother takes her daughter to see the doctor because of her "sick imagination":

– Удивительно, как могут пионерке сниться такие сны! С колдунами и талисманами!.. – удивилась мама, выслушав Любу. – У тебя больное воображение... Надо посоветоваться с врачом! (*Son s prodolženiem*, 59)

– Amazing that a pioneer girl can have such dreams! Wizards and talismans and all!.. – Mother said astonished after listening to Ljuba. – You have a sick imagination... We'll have to consult a doctor!

Although the doctor decides there is nothing wrong with Ljuba, the girl is told to practise her talents in reality rather than in dreams, which stresses the difference between primary and secondary worlds, dream and reality. Elena Prokhorova notes in Mikhalkov's writing "the absence of anything fantastic, extraordinary, or absurdist"<sup>199</sup>. She links this quality to the concept of "fantasectomy" introduced by Richard Stites to describe the Soviet urge to rid the culture of fantasy elements<sup>200</sup>. During the Stalinist era, the utopian fantasies that had in the first Soviet years been vital in showing the difference between the old and the new society became unnecessary, and the authors of utopian texts – for example – science fiction became unwanted<sup>201</sup>. Mikhalkov, who began his career as a children's writer during the first years of Socialist Realism in the 1930's, wrote mainly texts that had their roots solidly in the ground, and even in his late fantasy story *Son s prodolženiem* warns his young readers of the dangers of a too lively imagination.

Contrary to Mikhalkov's story, in Sof'ja Prokof'eva's stories, dreams and imagination are presented in a favourable light: the protagonist, the magician Alěša, encourages the child characters to express themselves using their creative imagination and especially by drawing. Dream as a means of crossing borders between worlds occurs in *Kapitan Tin Tinyč* (*Sea Captain Tin Tinyč*) in which the sketched swallow appears to the magician Alěša in a dream to inform him about captain Tin Tinyč's visit. The swallow does not concretely enter the primary world, yet the dream offers a means of contact between the two worlds. Although in almost all secondary world stories it is possible to

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<sup>199</sup> Prokhorova 2007, 297.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>201</sup> Stites 1989, 235 – 236.

interpret travelling to the secondary world, or even the whole secondary world<sup>202</sup>, as a product of the imagination, in Sof'ja Prokof'jeva's books the power of the imagination is emphasised. *Kapitan Tin Tynyč* is special in that the protagonist from the primary world, Tin Tynyč, never enters the secondary world, but the main character in that world is his double, the grown-up sea captain Tin Tynyč. The captain travels from the primary world to "The Ocean of Faerie" on a toy boat that is made by Tin Tynyč and that has a portentous name, *Mečta*, 'dream' or 'fantasy'. The Ocean of Faerie is separated from the primary world by a sketched line, which is easily crossed by the captains and their ships when they travel from the primary world to the secondary. However, it is impossible to cross the other way round, until the captains discover that the line can be erased with a piece of rubber.

Самое удивительное, что все сделанные ребятами корабли, со всех концов света держащие курс на остров Капитанов, переплывали её, даже не заметив, даже не почувствовав легчайшего толчка. Но обратно... Нет, нарисованная Черта была опасней любой подводной скалы, любого рифа.  
(*Kapitan Tin Tynyč*, 54.)

The most astonishing thing was that the boats made by children from all over the world that were heading for the Island of the Captains could sail over the Line without even noticing it, without feeling even a little bump. But to sail back... No, the sketched Line was more dangerous than any underwater rock or reef.

The sketched line does not limit everyone's travels between the worlds: the swallow drawn by Tin Tynyč is able to fly over it. The swallow also knows other ways of crossing the border between the primary world and the Ocean of Faerie, but tells captain Tin Tynyč after his ship has sailed through the opening made on the sketched line, that those ways are much more difficult. What these alternative ways of reaching the island are, is left to the imagination of the reader.

Taken together, both dream and imagination as the means of reaching the secondary world suggest the possibility of interpreting the secondary world as not as true as the primary world. Yet there are considerable differences between explaining the journey to the secondary world as dream or as imagination. It is interesting that in stories in which the adventures in the secondary world are depicted as somewhat suspicious or harmful, the whole adventure tends to be explained as a dream. Ljuba's adventures in Mikhalkov's text are presented in a somewhat dubious light containing the element of escapism; Pogorelsky's tale that includes an element of trying to get out of schoolwork has a follower in Gubarev's *Troe na ostrove* (Three children on an Island) in which the protagonist tries to avoid work by using magic. Because of the uncontrollable nature of dreaming, the child protagonists are less "guilty" of the destructive impulses presented in the text, which contributed to the image of Soviet children being inherently perfect. On the contrary, imagination is usually presented as a beneficial quality in a child

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<sup>202</sup> For example, in Prokof'jeva's *Povelitel' volšebnyh ključej* series the secondary world is called *skazka*, that is, fairy tale or faerie. (Or in *Kapitan Tin Tynyč – okean skazki*, the ocean of faerie.)



protagonist. Perhaps the best example is Prokof'eva's *Povelitel' volšebnyh ključej* series in which imagination and artistic endeavours contribute to most of the adventures, and the characters are never accused of escapism.

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The ways of entering the secondary world are numerous and often they correspond with the location of the secondary world: naturally, an underground kingdom can be entered through a tunnel and an island can be reached by a boat. The function in the story structure as a passage fantaseme is basically the same, yet the different ways of travelling support different ways of interpreting the worlds. Entering the secondary world through a mirror strongly suggests that the secondary world ought to be read as a depiction of one's self, and the adventures in the secondary world are easy to interpret as an inner journey.

## 2.4. Time

The idea of the secondary world as a chronotope implies the presence of distinctive time patterns in connection with the secondary world<sup>203</sup>. Distortion of time is sometimes a structural device that, on one hand, underlines the difference between the separate worlds and, on the other hand, often makes the secondary world adventures fit into the time scope of the primary world. Time is also a rather common theme in Western fantasy fiction, especially in the kind of fantasy that explores the structure of the world – time being one of its vital constituents – and the human experience on it. Such works include, for example, Philippa Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958) Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962), Michael Ende's *Momo* (1973) and Diana Wynne Jones' *Archer's Goon* (1984). Time as a subject is sometimes dealt with in Soviet children's fantasy too, yet time does not seem to be a very common theme within the genre. In addition, the lack of Soviet time shift fantasy is striking. In the following, I will treat time as a structural device and as a subject, and finally consider the absence of time shift fantasy.

### 2.4.1. Time as a structural device

The flow of time in a secondary world can be different from the primary world time. A central element of time in children's literature is the *time out*, that is based on the Bakhtinian notion of carnival. The character, usually a child, is temporarily moved out of the normal flow of time. The child experiences a momentary empowering time out during which he has more power than usually. The change in the power position is only temporary: the child character returns to his child role and loses most of the power he has gained during the time out.<sup>204</sup> In fantasy literature, this time out is often presented as a secondary world adventure. After the secondary world adventure, the child is possibly slightly stronger because of the things he has learned in the secondary world but, in terms of power, the child is essentially in the same situation as he was before the adventure.

The singularity and linearity of time is questioned by the existence of two, or several, different time lines. A conventional and convenient device in secondary world fantasy is the idea that the primary world time does not proceed as long as the child protagonists are in the secondary world<sup>205</sup>. This device is typical of Soviet fantasy too. In Vitalij Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors) and Irina Tokmakova's *Sčastlivo, Ivuškin!* (Good Luck, Ivuškin!), time stops in the primary world, a phenomenon which is thoroughly explained both to the protagonists and to the readers. In Gubarev's story, the protagonist Olja is afraid that her family will be

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<sup>203</sup> See Nikolajeva 1988, 64.

<sup>204</sup> Stephens 1992, 132 – 139.

<sup>205</sup> See for example Klingberg 1980, 100; Nikolajeva 1988, 65 – 66.

concerned if she is away and her mirror image Jalo explains that the time will not proceed in Olja's world as long as she is away. Before entering the secondary world, Tokmakova's Ivuškin asks how long his journey will take. The hedgehog guarding the door between the two worlds answers that time does not exist in the secondary world. When Ivuškin returns to his own world he sees that the time has not indeed moved forward at all. Thus, neither of the children has to explain their absence to their parents although they have spent a considerable time away in another world. The discrepancy between the primary and secondary time can also be pointed out more subtly: in Sof'ja Prokof'eva's *Glazastik i ključ-nevidimka* (Glazastik and the Invisible Key) the cat Vas'ka states happily on returning from an extensive adventure in the secondary world that the milk in his bowl has not even gone sour during his absence. An opposite example, in which both primary and secondary time proceed at the same pace is Krapivin's *Deti sinego flamingo* (The Children of the Blue Flamingo) from 1982. During Ženja's extensive adventures on the island of Dvid, time has proceeded in the primary world too and Ženja's family has thought he had disappeared and died. Ženja is saved from the need to explain himself because of his long illness after homecoming. He is never able to explain his absence to his parents who assume he has got lost in the nearby forest and is suffering from amnesia.

Time can flow at different paces even in separate secondary worlds. In Sergey Mikhalkov's *Son s prodolženiem* (A Dream to Be Continued) the time in Ljuba's two dream worlds proceeds differently. In fact, time is the one element that makes it clear that the nameless dream town is a world different from Milo's world that includes the land of Gioconda and the Kingdoms of Snow and Sweets. Milo has spent several generations' worth of time in the dream town transformed into a wooden nutcracker, whereas in Gioconda, the flow of time has been considerably slower. Milo has been away for several years, yet in Gioconda, he meets the same people he left there and they have not grown considerably older while Milo has been away. Whereas the time flow in the dream town and Gioconda is different, there are no emphasized differences between the flow of time in Ljuba's world and the secondary worlds she visits. Ljuba's adventures in the secondary world take three nights of primary world time. The flow of time in the secondary worlds during her adventures is not as clearly marked, yet the alternations of the dream episodes and the waking times are such that one can assume that during the primary world's daytime when Ljuba is awake it is night in the secondary world. Thus, during Ljuba's time in one world, nothing of importance happens in the other world. In a way, the story is similar to Pogorelsky's *Černaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli* (The Black Hen or the Underground People) in which the secondary world adventures are placed in nighttime too. One point about this kind of timing is that it provides a convenient possibility to read the fantastic adventures as a dream. Compared with daytime, night can also be seen as a marginal time, a time during which the child protagonists are outside the adult control and free to do whatever they want. Night is a good time to be away on the adventures when adults do not expect it.

### 2.4.2. Time as a theme

The concept of time is a central theme in some texts. Through the idea of time, it is also possible to explore other themes, for example, growing up. In Anatolij Aleksin's *V strane večnyh kanikul* (In the Land of Eternal Holiday) the schoolboy Petja enters the land of eternal holiday. A central theme in the text is the attempt to beat time. The strong presence of time is mentioned already in the title: both words 'večnyj' (eternal) and 'kanikuly' (holiday) are temporal definitions. Petja's chance of beating time comes when he wins a bike contest, which itself is a concrete form of beating time, and Father Frost promises to fulfill his wish. Petja wishes for never-ending holidays.

The holiday magic takes place in a secondary world. The land of eternal holidays is situated in the same space as the primary world, but in a different time, or, rather, it has a different concept of time. The secondary world operates according to rules that separate it from the primary world. The secondary world is not detached from the primary world, but it is affected by a magical holiday time that allows Petja to do things associated with holidays, but makes it impossible to work. Petja can see his friends, who live in the primary world, and talk and play with them, but he cannot go to school or the activity groups associated with school.

In Irina Tokmakova's *Sčastlivo, Ivuškin!* (Good Luck, Ivuškin!), the importance of time is stressed already in the name of the secondary world Nigde i nikogda, Nowhere and Never. As the hedgehog guardian explains to Ivuškin, there is no time at all in the secondary world:

У нас и солнце, и луна – все вместе. Время тут не идет. Нет ни дня, ни ночи. А все сразу. Нет минут. Нет секунд. Нет часов, будильников, ходиков... (*Sčastlivo, Ivuškin!*, 576.)

In our world the Sun and the Moon are both together. Time does not proceed. There is no night and no day. No minutes. No seconds. No clocks, alarm clocks, weight clocks...

The absence of time makes the land of Nowhere and Never unchangeable in principle. Its inhabitants do not age: the elk calf Ljusik will never grow up and there is no death in the land. The only one who can hurt other inhabitants and even kill them is a frightening black bird Gagana with iron claws and a brass beak. Excluding Gagana, the land is unchangeable and safe. Because there is no time and there are no changes, Ivuškin and his horse Luša never feel hungry or tired during their travel. Ivuškin and Luša bring to the secondary world with them the ticking of the primary world clocks that marks them as different from the inhabitants of the secondary world. However, in the secondary world the ticking is only an out-of-place sound: it does not bring about the real flow of time. Nevertheless, the visitors from the primary world bring with them the possibility of death to the secondary world. They are caught in the grass that usually catches and stops even the wind, yet the grass has to let them go lest they turn

into dead hay. The physical touch of the primary world time makes one vulnerable to time even in a place where time does not exist.

Because of the absence of time, the relationship between time and place becomes complicated. The absence of time makes it impossible to measure distances, which implies certain complications in the quest-based plot of the story that includes a lot of travelling in the secondary world: for example, Ivuškin and his horse can move in only a few steps the long distance from a poppy field beyond a far-away mountain. Although the secondary world lacks actual time, the narration, however, includes temporal vocabulary like 'vdrug' (suddenly), 'odnovremenno' (at the same time) and 'skoree' (quicker). In the end, Nowhere and Never is not a completely unchangeable and timeless place: Ivuškin finds there the answer to his problem and because of that he returns to his own world as a slightly changed person. Moreover, the return implies the existence of time in some form: the return to the door between the worlds happens so that Ivuškin sees in his mind the memories of his travel in the secondary world in reversed order. Both the existence of memory and the order of events imply some kind of time continuum.

### ***2.4.3. The absence of time-shift fantasy***

Time-shift fantasy is a particular type of fantasy fiction dealing with the concept of time. In time-shift fantasy, several separate time levels are present and some kind of contact exists between the different levels. In essence, it involves characters from the primary time entering a secondary time or vice versa.

There is no time-shift fantasy in Soviet children's literature<sup>206</sup>, although several things suggest that there ought to have been. The type is not uncommon in Western fantasy literature: already one of the first European children's fantasy authors Edith Nesbit wrote stories in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in which children travel back in time to witness various important historical events and even see glimpses of the future<sup>207</sup>. Time-shift fantasy has several uses: in modern fantasy, it is sometimes used as a device to discuss the nature of time, but it can also be used for more straightforward educational purposes. Travelling back in time gives the author an opportunity to acquaint the characters and the readers with the events of history and the ways people lived. A similar effect is achieved in historical fiction, but the co-existence of modern

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<sup>206</sup> For example, when Ljubov' Ovčinnikova discusses time-shifts in the Soviet literary fairy tale, she does not mention any fantasy stories, but Kir Bulyčev's Alisa-books, a hugely popular series of science fiction stories for children. Овчинникова 2003, 252 – 253. The first Alisa-stories were published in the magazine *Mir priključenij* (The World of Adventures) in 1965; the first Alisa-book *Devočka s Zemli* (The Girl from the Earth) came out in 1974 and Bulyčev kept on writing sequels until his death in 2003. For bibliographical information on the Alisa-stories, see <http://rusf.ru/kb/bibliogr/index.htm> and [http://rusf.ru/kb/stories/fantast\\_alisa.htm](http://rusf.ru/kb/stories/fantast_alisa.htm).

<sup>207</sup> Nikolajeva 1988, 70 – 71.

time and characters who are from a world similar to the readers' might help the readers to see the relationship between their own time and history. Similarly, travelling into the future could be used as a device for reflecting various possibilities for the future. Considering the inclination towards education in Soviet children's literature, one could speculate that time-shift fantasy would have been a suitable didactic instrument. It could have been a useful device to compare the present Soviet life with life in historical Russia. When I began my study, I expected to find masses of fantasy books featuring children travelling in old Tsarist Russia presented as a dystopian secondary world, thus making children notice how much better a place the socialist Soviet Union was. I was also prepared to find stories in which children would take a trip into the future and see with their own eyes the bright world of international communism that was anticipated by the official Soviet rhetoric. However, that kind of literature seems to be completely missing from Soviet children's fantasy.

One reason for this absence can be the special concept of time that was typical of the Soviet socialist realist novel. In her analysis of the Soviet novel, Katerina Clark employs the time concepts introduced by Mircea Eliade<sup>208</sup>. Eliade presents a concept of time typical of archaic societies. It consists of two different temporal categories: the mythical Great Time, *kairos*, and the everyday profane time, *chronos*. The Great Time is the time of the cultural myths and it can be seen as a mythical "Golden Age" situated in an ancient past. The Great Time can also be waiting in the future. The events of the present time transcend their profaneness only if they have an identification point in the Great Time – either in the heroic past or in the glorious future. The events and characters of the Great Time are imitated by the people living in the profane time: thus the Great Time is, in a sense, present in the profane time.<sup>209</sup> A similar concept of time was also typical of the Soviet culture and the socialist realist novel. According to Clark, Soviet, especially Stalinist, rhetoric considered the key moments of Soviet history, for example, the 1917 Revolution, the Civil War and the Second World War, as the canonized Great Time<sup>210</sup>. The peculiar time concept employed in the Soviet novel was a result of the present day reality and the heroic Great Time melting together. Thus, the past and the future were never absent from the present. Influenced by this time notion, Soviet children's literature could hardly produce time-shift fantasy: that would have required a historic or linear concept of time. Instead of "technically proper" time-shift fantasies, there are several "symbolical" time-shift fantasies in which the events of the Great Time, for example, the Revolution, are treated in a secondary world that is not presented as the Pre-Soviet Russian past. The secondary world can, for example, be a typical pseudo-medieval world, as is the case in Vitalij Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors) in which the fictional revolution can be read both as a re-enactment of the October Revolution and a prediction of the forthcoming World Revolution.

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<sup>208</sup> Clark 1981, 39 – 41.

<sup>209</sup> Eliade 1959, especially 20 – 21, 35 – 36, 85 – 86.

<sup>210</sup> Clark 1981, 40.

Katerina Clark's theory might explain the absence of time-shift fantasy describing the early years of the Soviet Union that was perceived as the Great Time. However, it does not explain the absence of time-shift fantasy dealing with Pre-Soviet Russian history. That can perhaps be explained by the status of history in the Soviet Union. Stressing the contrast between the old Tsarist Russia and the new Soviet Union was a central part of Soviet ideology. The whole existence of the Soviet Union was justified by the notion of the backwardness and injustices of Tsarist Russia. The events of the legend of the October Revolution became a national foundation myth that was continuously referred to in every field of society. In the field of literature, genres employed in depicting the events of the revolution were genres of higher mimetic status, for example, the adventure novel. Genres that made better use of the means of socialist realism were considered more suitable for depiction of the national myth. Considering the debates over fairy tales that sometimes made fairy tales and fantasy a slightly suspect genre, using fantasy for such a purpose could have been perceived as belittling the truth-value of the legend. A good example of this is Lev Kassil's book *Konduit i Švambranija* (*The Black Book and Schwambrania*) that is situated in the time just before and after the revolution and is intended to depict the differences between the tsarist and Soviet regimes. The text is not time-shift fantasy, or even fantasy; the secondary world of the book is presented strictly as imagination and play, and its truth-value is underlined by presenting the text as autobiographic fiction. Fantasy elements could thus be employed in fiction dealing with important historical events, but the connections to the historical reality had to be strengthened by preserving the mimetic approach.

Another ideological concern with the idea of time travelling was that according to the official Soviet view, Soviet man was at the height of human evolution and Soviet children were the best children in the world. Thus, it would have been ideologically questionable to introduce literature with characters from history: that would have indicated that the perfect Soviet children had something to learn from the backward people of Tsarist times. It is characteristic that the only Soviet classic that could be perceived as a time-shift fantasy is Lazar Lagin's *Starik Hottabyč* (*Old Man Hottabyč*) from 1938, in which a genie from the ancient Middle East comes to 1930s Moscow and learns about the new Soviet way of life. Strictly structurally speaking, the novel is not a genuine time-shift fantasy: the genie is not actually transferred from history to the primary time of the novel, but has lived an exceptionally long life sealed in a bottle. Thematically, however, the effect of the story is similar to that of a time-shift fantasy. It matters very little whether a character has lived thousands of years magically sealed in a bottle or whether he is otherwise magically transferred from the ancient Middle East to modern Moscow.

Still there were more possibly problematic issues connected with the thematics of time-travel. One was the risk that the past might actually be shown in too favourable a light. For example, in Kassil's *Švambranija* novels, the contrast between the old and new regime does not necessarily favour the Soviet system. When read superficially, the story seems to criticize the old Tsarist system and praise the new Soviet one, yet on a

more sophisticated reading, the book rather shows the deficiencies of the official adult utopia that replaces the children's own fantasies<sup>211</sup>. The past is described in a slightly nostalgic tone. The dark sides of the old regime are not very tangible, although they are strongly present in the text. The social injustices stressed in the book do not directly affect the main characters, children of a well-off middle class intelligentsia family who can follow from the sidelines the problems of the family's servants and other people of the lower social class. Similarly, the political reforms of the new regime seem far from the children's everyday life, whereas the troubles brought on by the new regime are very tangible: the chaotic schooling system, housing problems and even famine affect the children strongly. The safe life of the formerly wealthy children changes and they substitute the luxuries of their former life with all kinds of exceptional treats they place in their imaginary land of Schwambrania, where they live in a luxurious flat and eat all kinds of delicious foods<sup>212</sup>. Although the readers were supposed to take an optimistic view of the temporary shortcomings of the first years of the establishing of Soviet rule, one can always speculate whether the actual readers were able or willing to do so.

The reasons behind the absence of time-shift fantasies operate in both the field of literature and the field of culture in general. The absence is partly due to the concepts of literary genres: the status of the fantasy or skazka genre was not compatible with the status of history in the Soviet Union. Another reason was connected with the particular time concept that was typical of all Soviet culture. Both of these had their roots in Soviet ideology as did the notions on which subjects were suitable for literature. Thus, it can be seen that the ideological conditions can prevent the birth of an entire subgenre, as was the case with the time-shift fantasy in the Soviet Union.

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Time is a vital structural element in Soviet secondary world fantasies. The marginality of space has its counterpart in the marginality of time in stories that feature night-time adventures. Yet the importance of time as a theme seems minor, as is most apparent in the absence of time-shift fantasy that is universally an important subgenre of fantasy. In a sense, it corresponds to the non-existence of heterotopia in Soviet fantasy: the thematics of time became most prominent in Western fantasy from about 1960s onwards, when the contacts between Soviet and Western literature were relatively scarce. Time as a theme was not typical of Soviet children's fantasy as a genre, yet it might have been a more prominent theme in science fiction; it has been treated, for example, in Kir Bulyčev's popular Alisa books.

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<sup>211</sup> Nikolajeva 2000, 67 – 68.

<sup>212</sup> An interesting detail is that when the novels were translated into Finnish (1935; 1957), all references to the imaginary land of Schwambrania were cut out, as if the imaginary land would have seemed more appealing than the Soviet reality. Without the secondary world, the book is just an ordinary, slightly humorous everyday story depicting provincial town schoolboys' life around the revolution.



### 3. ELEMENTS OF SOCIALIST REALISM IN FANTASY

Children's literature had a high status in the Soviet Union. Soviet children's literature was praised as the richest children's literature in the world, written by the finest authors and admired in other countries; also the young Soviet readers were considered the most efficient and well-informed readers in the world<sup>213</sup>. Although this was obviously an ideologically coloured version of the situation<sup>214</sup> and probably part of the myth of the Soviet citizens as the most reading nation in the world<sup>215</sup>, literature was undeniably seen as a vital part of children's education. Its value in education was its most emphasized property. In this chapter, I study what kinds of issues were dealt with in Soviet fantasy and how they related to the requirements of socialist realism.

The attitude towards children had a strikingly dual nature in the Soviet Union. On one hand, children had to be educated and changed, made into Soviet citizens. On the other hand, children were considered the living future of the country and the view of the child was almost romantic: Soviet children were the best in the world. Children had a great propaganda value. Lenin and children was a recurring theme in the Leniniana genre of children's literature<sup>216</sup>. Children were used in official propaganda pictures of the leaders: especially the photographs of Stalin with children became widespread and had strong symbolic value<sup>217</sup>. Children presenting flower bouquets to important officials was basic material of official holiday parades. Slogans like "Спасибо родному Сталину за счастливое детство!", "Thank you our Stalin for the happy childhood" were used in schools and nurseries, books and magazines, posters and banners<sup>218</sup>. Among the Soviet revolution and war heroes there were also child heroes, who ended up as essential material for children's literature, especially during and after the Second World War<sup>219</sup>.

It has often been argued that, as a rule, children's literature has a stronger urge to influence its readers than adult literature. In the case of Soviet literature, the urge to educate was typical of all literature, not only children's literature. According to the doctrines of socialist realism, literature was an instrument and its purpose was to change the Soviet citizen and society; the famous slogan from the Stalin era defined the authors as "engineers of the human soul"<sup>220</sup>. In contrast to adult literature, Soviet

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<sup>213</sup> See, for example, *Эстетическое воспитание школьников* 1974, 96 – 97.

<sup>214</sup> In the above-mentioned example, the excellence of the Soviet readers was compared with readers in capitalist countries, especially in the United States, undoubtedly for propagandist purposes. *Эстетическое воспитание школьников* 1974, 97 – 98.

<sup>215</sup> Kelly 2005c, 717.

<sup>216</sup> See, for example, Hellman 1991, 78.

<sup>217</sup> See the analysis of the famous photograph of Stalin with a small girl Gelia Markizova from the Buryat-Mongol Republic in Kelly 2005b, 204 – 206.

<sup>218</sup> Kelly 2005b, 207 – 208.

<sup>219</sup> Hellman 1991, 94 – 98.

<sup>220</sup> Добренко 1994, 193.

children's literature has often been considered as giving more freedom to the author and providing a forum for higher creativity despite its deliberate propagandist purposes<sup>221</sup>.

Not all of the main principles of the socialist realism were equally represented in children's fantasy, yet examples of them all can be found. In the following, I have chosen two socialist realist aspects typical of Soviet children's fantasy: the presence of propaganda and the use of a positive hero. Through the study of these elements one can also find the presence of the others, for example, propagandist fantasy stories about revolutions usually include elements of a personality cult, as the contributors to the revolution are treated as great heroes, and the stories introducing positive heroes often have a protagonist that represents a "typical child".

The example texts range from the first years of the Soviet Union to the 1980s in order to demonstrate different aspects of the Soviet culture the texts deal with. Yet the view taken is not a chronological but rather a thematic one. Although there are certain points that are closely connected with a certain period of history, the historical aspects of Soviet fantasy literature are as ambiguous as Soviet history itself. Andy Byford and Polly Jones analyse the changes in Soviet educational policies in their editorial to an issue of *History of Education* dedicated to the history of Soviet education. They show that although during the Soviet era the changes in educational policies were closely influenced by the changes in the central power, they did not have a definite direction; the educational policies were more a constantly ongoing process with vague changes of direction<sup>222</sup>. The same can be said about fantasy fiction: it was strongly influenced by the central power and the changes in politics, but it cannot be reduced to a mere mirror of the party politics.

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<sup>221</sup> See, for example, Кукулин и Майофис 2003, 215.

<sup>222</sup> Byford and Jones 2006, 4 -5.

### 3.1. Propaganda

#### 3.1.1. *Children's literature as a means of propaganda*

One function of secondary world fantasy in children's literature in the Soviet Union was to serve as a means of propaganda. It is impossible to draw a clear line between propaganda and education. Peter Kenez gives a broad definition of propaganda:

Propaganda is nothing more than the attempt to transmit social and political values in the hope of affecting people's thinking, emotions, and thereby behavior.<sup>223</sup>

In the Soviet Union, propaganda was regarded as a crucial means of first establishing the order of the new state and later controlling it. Already in the early years of the Soviet state, propaganda was thought of as part of education<sup>224</sup>. The methods used in propaganda were essentially the same as those used in the sphere of education: for example, graphic posters were used to spread both political messages and information on health issues. The concept of propaganda was understood in the Soviet Union in a different way than it is nowadays seen in most Western cultures. The word itself did not have negative connotations, not at any rate in the official language use. The existence of state propaganda was no secret: propaganda and its mechanisms were at least partly out in the open for everyone to see.<sup>225</sup> Right from the beginning, propaganda was a vital part of the Soviet system: already Lenin had stressed the importance of propaganda and agitation, as well as the need for propagandists and agitators<sup>226</sup>.

The relationship between the propagandist and the target audience is somewhat comparable with the relationship between children's literature and the child reader. According to Kenez, in the very idea of propaganda lies the notion that some people know things better than others do, which was also the case with the Soviet propaganda<sup>227</sup>. The task of these "enlightened" people is to spread their knowledge and advice amongst the ignorant. Similar ideas are often connected with children's literature, especially when its role is discussed as an instrument of education: the adult's knowledge is seen as superior to that of the child and it is the duty of the children's authors to give the readers a part of their superior knowledge and instruct them on their path towards adulthood. In this light, it is only natural that the Soviet propaganda soon realised the possibilities offered by children's literature.

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<sup>223</sup> Kenez 1985, 4.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>225</sup> Kenez compares communist propaganda to the propaganda of the Catholic Church, and calls them the only systems proudly proclaiming their propaganda. Kenez 1985, 10.

<sup>226</sup> <http://www.marxists.org/russkij/lenin/1902/6-13-2.htm>

<sup>227</sup> Kenez 1985, 7.

In the following, I will concentrate on three different branches of propaganda that were present in Soviet fantasy fiction. First, I will discuss the different depictions of the revolution that strove to legitimize the Soviet power by contributing to the great Soviet foundation myth. The war propaganda, in its turn, went further by aiming at preserving the Soviet state and justifying the efforts of “The Great Patriotic War”, as the Second World War is known in Russian. Thirdly, I will study how certain “conflict of the worlds” stories were used in emphasizing the differences between socialist and capitalist systems in favour of the socialist one. Naturally, these are not the only propaganda issues that were dealt with in children’s fantasy, but I believe they illustrate quite clearly how children’s literature worked in the crucial phases of the Soviet state and dealt with the most important concepts on which the whole system was built.

It should also be noted that although I discuss certain works in this chapter, it is not my intention to classify those texts as mere vehicles of propaganda. In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature* article on propaganda, a propagandist text is defined as one that is written with a specific political agenda or governmental policy in mind and often lacking literary merit<sup>228</sup>. The texts dealt with in this chapter definitely have somewhat propagandist contents, yet the texts are still literary works that are open to multiple interpretations and are clearly not void of aesthetic value. Some of the same texts will be discussed in a different light in Chapter four, since outspokenly propagandist works sometimes had subversive – even opposite – meanings. Neither am I trying to analyse the intentions of individual authors nor speculating whether they wrote about propagandist issues from their own will or because of the literary-political environment at the time of writing.

### ***3.1.2. Revolution in a fantasy world***

One of the central characteristics of fantasy literature as a genre is its tendency to use myths when exploring the fundamental questions of life. One of these questions is the origin of a culture or a nation. Western fantasy has often employed Christian mythology in order to explain this; for example, C. S. Lewis’s *The Magician’s Nephew* (1955) is a story of how the magical land of Narnia was created and as such a retelling of the biblical creation myth. In The Soviet Union, the so-called October revolution was considered the most important single event in Russian and Soviet history and in the history of humankind. Thus, in the Soviet Union, the fundamental myth was the revolution. The October revolution was supposed to be the foundation point of the Soviet nation and thus a new kind of creation myth. There are several different views on the historical events associated with the founding of the Soviet Union. The official Soviet version of the revolution differed from the view most historians nowadays have on the historical events of 1917. Hereafter, when I use the term "October revolution" I do not mean the actual historical events but the Soviet view that was used for

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<sup>228</sup> West 2006b, 297.

propaganda purposes, the official truth. The October revolution was a Soviet cultural representation of the revolution, "the legend of October"<sup>229</sup>, the mythical Revolution of the Eliadean Great Time<sup>230</sup>, the way the revolution was treated in official Soviet history and propaganda.

Revolution was a recurring theme in Soviet culture. The memorial day of the Revolution, November 7<sup>th</sup>, was an important national holiday. The October Revolution was presented as the most important historical event in Soviet history school books<sup>231</sup> and it is not surprising that it was also considered a prominent theme for children's literature. Countless more or less truthful stories depicted the legendary events and heroes of the revolution<sup>232</sup>. The flood of revolution depictions in Soviet children's literature supported the official view of children's literature: portrayals of the revolution were considered important, because they affirmed the importance of the revolution in the minds of the readers. In Eliadean terminology, Soviet children's literature was based on a dual concept of time, in which the Great Time of the mythical past was always present in the profane time that reiterated the events of the Great Time.

Although the official method of children's literature was socialist realism, the Soviet foundation myth was also dealt with in fantasy. Revolution and fighting against oppressors and cruel leaders is not a unique topic of Soviet fantasy literature alone but a universal and frequent theme in fantasy literature in general. The plots of Western fantasy stories are often built around the battle between good and evil that is sometimes solved by the protagonists overcoming the evil leader and establishing a new regime. The idea of the possibilities of revolution was occasionally present already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian children's literature. Perhaps the first Russian children's fantasy suggesting the idea of disturbing the established social order was Vladimir Odoevsky's *Gorodok v tabakerke* (The Little City in a Snuffbox), published in 1834. In his dream, the small boy Miša enters a city in his father's musical snuffbox. There he meets personified parts of the musical mechanism and learns how it works. The mechanism is based on a system with vertical power relationships between the different parts: the lowest parts in the hierarchy, the bells, suffer from the punches of the hammers that in turn are controlled by the cylinder, while the spring has power over the cylinder. As Ben Hellman has pointed out, the story is easily read as an allegory of power relationships in the Russian social structure of that period with the bells representing the oppressed peasants suffering from exploitation by their rulers<sup>233</sup>. The Russian public that was keenly reading Krylov's fables at the time was probably prepared to read Odoevskij's story as a social commentary and not as a plain mechanics lesson. Miša's adventure inside the musical box end when he – against his father's particular

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<sup>229</sup> Vähä 2002, 100.

<sup>230</sup> Clark 1981, 39 – 41. Eliade 1959, especially 20 – 21, 35 – 36, 85 – 86.

<sup>231</sup> Vähä 2002, 100.

<sup>232</sup> See, for example, Hellman 1991, 31 - 33; Runge 1981.

<sup>233</sup> Хеллман 2003, 205 – 206. Hellman notes that the story has also been read as an allegory of different pedagogical practices. Хеллман 2003, 202 – 204.

orders – disturbs the queen of the mechanism, the spring, and everything falls apart with chaotic result. Although the story has often been read as supporting the author's monarchist ideas and as a warning against the consequences of anarchism<sup>234</sup>, the book still presents the idea that it is possible to disturb the established order, at least in the dreamworld of the musical box and at great expense. The idea of revolution was introduced in pre-Soviet Russian children's fiction by texts describing toy revolutions: for example, in Aleksandr Aleksandrovič Fedorov-Davydov's *Kukol'nyj bunt* (1909, The Doll Rebellion), toys make a revolution in order to protest against maltreatment by their owners.

In Soviet children's literature, revolution became a recurring theme. According to Irina Lupanova, the early Soviet class-oriented children's literature borrowed its form from the pre-revolutionary children's books: for example, the motif of the toy revolution was used again, but this time it had lost its former "bourgeoisie" moral and was instead supposed to carry a new "class-conscious" moral. The new toy revolution texts were rich in introducing the new Soviet revolutionary rhetoric to the young readers, and – although according to Lupanova the stories carried no social sympathies or antipathies what so ever, since the revolution was presented as a mere game – introduced the idea and vocabulary of the socialist revolution into Soviet children's literature.<sup>235</sup> Considering the importance of "the legend of October" to Soviet culture, the revolution theme in Soviet fantasy has unique features when compared to fantasy fiction in general. It has an obvious parallel in history and almost any fantasy story depicting a revolution in a secondary world is automatically compared to the October Revolution. In Soviet revolution fantasy, the universal fantasy theme of the struggle between good and evil has a specific feature: good is associated with socialism and evil with capitalism.

In this chapter, I will study the typical characteristics of the revolution depictions and discuss the multiple possibilities to interpret them. I study these features by using as examples two well-known revolution stories: Yuri Olesha's *Tri tolstjaka* (Three Fat Men) and Vitalij Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors). Olesha's story was written in 1928, some ten years after the October revolution, during the era when Soviet literature was still in search of new forms and different experimentations were still allowed. Gubarev's text, on the other hand, was written in 1951, at a time when the principles of socialist realism had been firmly established and the Stalin cult flourished.

### ***3.1.2.1. Revolution of the masses***

The revolution in Soviet fantasy is presented as a revolution of the masses. In this respect, the literature works according to the official Soviet ideology and the rules of

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<sup>234</sup> Хеллман 2003, 206.

<sup>235</sup> Лупанова 1969, 92 - 93.

socialist realism. The victory is achieved by a group of characters, never by an individual character. The cruel rulers, on the contrary, are more often depicted as individuals. Individual heroes are also presented, for example, Olja in Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors) and Elli in Aleksandr Volkov's *Volšebnaja strana* (The Magic Land) series. However, they are never the single main actors of the revolution but either mere examples to the masses or agitators. As a rule, the role of the revolutionaries is played by the people, the masses, and the role of the old regime by individual characters.

An early example of a literary depiction of a revolution of the masses is presented in Yuri Olesha's *Tri tolstjaka*. Many scholars<sup>236</sup> have noted that in Olesha's book the revolution is made by a group of characters who represent the whole community of people. All the four main heroes represent a certain group of people: Doctor Arneri represents scholars or intellectuals, tightrope walker Tibul artists, gunsmith Prospero represents the working class and the little girl Suok the children. All these four groups were seen as crucial in Soviet propaganda. One more important group joining in the revolution is the army.

Doctor Gaspar Arneri's role as a scientist is presented right at the beginning of the book:

Доктор Гаспар Арнери был ученый. Пожалуй, он изучил около ста наук. Во всяком случае, никого не было в стране мудрей и ученей Гаспара Арнери. О его учености знали все: и мельник, и солдат, и дамы, и министры. А школьники распевали про него песенку с таким припевом: (*Tri tolstjaka* 97)

Doctor Gaspar Arneri was a scholar. He had probably studied about a hundred different branches of science. Anyway, nobody in the country was wiser or more educated than Gaspar Arneri.

Everybody knew about his knowledge: millers and soldiers, ladies and ministers. And schoolboys used to sing about him a song with a refrain that goes like this:

As the quotation above shows, Doctor Arneri is presented as an educated man, an authority in multiple fields of science and scholarship. He is well known and respected by people of all social classes. He is an idealized representative of a scholar or a member of the intelligentsia: he starts as an observer and when he realises that a social change is taking place, he joins the struggling people. His role as the observer of society is shown by his actions in the first part of the book, when the fight between the rebellious people and the army loyal to the rulers starts. First Doctor Arneri observes the fight from a tower and walks amongst the people collecting information. The doctor recognizes his role as an outside observer isolated from the events of the revolution:

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<sup>236</sup> See for example Лупанова 1969, 110.

« Значит, я прозевал такое значительное событие, - подумал доктор. - Правда, я целый месяц не выходил из комнаты. Я работал взаперти. Я ничего не знал... »  
(*Tri tolstjaka* 99)

« So I have not noticed such an important event, - thought the doctor. - It is true; I have not come out of my chamber for a month. I have worked in a vacuum. I knew nothing of this... »

Gradually, the doctor gets involved in the events and finally he ends up helping the rebels to overthrow the rulers, the three fat men. As a scientist, Doctor Arneri has a counterpart presented as the frankensteinian scientist Tub. Tub has served the three fat men by making a lifelike doll for their heir in order to isolate him from real children. Although he has shown some humanity by refusing to remove the heart from the heir's chest and by repenting his deeds, he has turned into a werewolf-like monster and dies at the end of the story. In the text, he serves as a warning example of a scientist gone wrong, a scientist who has chosen the wrong alliances.

The working class hero Prospero, a gunsmith and the leader of the rebellious workers, is presented as physically strong, righteous and brave: a perfect positive hero. He is not scared even when he stands as a prisoner in front of the three rulers who threaten him with execution:

– Я не боюсь. Моя голова – одна. У народа сотни тысяч голов. Вы их не отрубите. (*Tri tolstjaka* 117)

I am not afraid. My head is only one of many. The people have hundreds of thousands of heads. You cannot cut them all off. (117)

The rulers are not so courageous. The almost mythical strength of Prospero terrifies the rulers and other noblemen:

– Он очень страшен, – сказал Второй Толстяк. – Он сильнее всех. Он сильнее льва. Ненависть прожгла ему глаза. Нет силы смотреть в них.

– У него ужасная голова, – сказал секретарь Государственного совета. – Она огромна. Она похожа на капитель колонны. У него рыжие волосы. Можно подумать, что его голова объята пламенем. (*Tri tolstjaka* 117)

– He is very frightening, said the Second Fat Man. – He is stronger than anyone else. He is stronger than a lion. Hatred has burnt his eyes. I have no strength to look into them.

– His head is terrible, said the Secretary of the State Council. – It is huge. It looks like the capital of a column. His hair is red. One could think that his head is on fire. (117)

An interesting detail in Prospero's external appearance is his red hair. Red hair is in literature often connected with negative qualities. Cornwell, in his discussion on Daniel Kharms' red-haired man in *Golubaja tetrad' No. 10 (Blue Notebook No. 10)*, traces the tradition of suspicious red-haired characters from the Biblical personages to characters



by Thackeray, Dickens and Gogol<sup>237</sup>. Gunsmith Prospero with his fiery rebellious nature does not belong to this group. Instead, he has equivalents in children's literature, in which red hair is often associated with characters who stand up against the social conventions. Probably the best-known redheaded literary characters are Lucy M. Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables (1908) and Astrid Lindgren's Pippi Longstocking (1945), both rebellious girls questioning the customs of their time and society<sup>238</sup>. Similarly, Prospero breaks the rules of the three fat men and acts according to a new set of ideals that would later become the standard in socialist realist literature.

Tightrope walker Tibul represents the arts. He is a gymnast and a circus performer, not a highbrow artist but a true provider of "art for the masses".

Он лучший гимнаст в стране...

[ - - ]

Он ловок, как кошка. Его искусство ему пригодилось. Недаром слава о нем прошла по всей стране. (*Tri tolstjaka* 106 – 107)

He is the best gymnast in the land...

[ - - ]

He is swift as a cat. That skill is useful to him. He deserves his fame that has reached the whole country.

A "wrong" kind of artist is presented in the character of Razdvatris<sup>239</sup>, a vain and cringing dance instructor for the aristocracy. Another artist with incorrect alliances is the circus athlete Lapitup, who entertains the people and spreads the corrupt propaganda approving of the current regime.

The little girl Suok is, like Tibul, a circus artist. She is described as a lively, brave and clever child.

Серые глаза ее блестели. Сейчас она казалась серьезной и внимательной, но от ее печали не осталось и следа. Напротив, вы бы сказали, что это шалунья, притворяющаяся скромницей. (*Tri tolstjaka* 148)

Her grey eyes sparkled. Now she looked serious and watchful, but there was no trace of her sadness. Quite the opposite: you would say that she was a little rascal who only pretended to be modest.

Whereas the three other protagonists have their corrupt counterparts in minor characters, Suok the girl does not have one. At first it seems that Tutti, the pampered heir of the three fat men, is a counterpart to the brave and clever Suok, yet as the story proceeds, the reader finds out that there is nothing "wrong" in Tutti; he has rather been a victim of the fat men's plotting. The ending of the story is optimistic in relation to

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<sup>237</sup> Cornwell 2006, 172 – 173.

<sup>238</sup> Nikolajeva 2002c, 280.

<sup>239</sup> The name comes from counting to three (raz, dva, tri = one, two three).

Tutti: after the fat men's regime is put to an end, Tutti is saved and he becomes an artist together with Suok, who turns out to be his long lost sister.

The four main characters, doctor Arneri, Prospero, Tibul and Suok, are the central actors in the revolution. However, they are not the only ones, since they get help from same-minded people. One important supporter of the revolution is the army. During the events, the army soldiers rebel against their officers and go over to the people's side. The four protagonists join together in order to remove from power the three fat men who rule the country and to save their heir Tutti, who, judging by his name<sup>240</sup>, represents the people. 'Tutti' in Italian means 'everybody', although the scientist Tub at the end of the story presents a different kind of translation for the name:

Прости меня, Тутти, – что на языке обездоленных значит: "Разлученный".  
Прости меня, Суок, – что значит: "Вся жизнь"... (*Tri tolstjaka*, 188)

Forgive me, Tutti – that in the language of the unfortunate means "separated". Forgive me, Suok – that means "the whole life"...

Thus in Olesha's *Tri tolstjaka*, the revolution is shown as beneficial to a wide range of people, which in part contributes to the idea of the beneficence of the revolution.

In Vitalij Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors), the revolution in the secondary world starts with the people's discontent with their oppressors. The class origin of the revolutionaries is narrower than in Olesha's text: all Gubarev's revolutionaries represent different sides of the working class: mirror-makers, workers on the rice fields and servants of the noblemen. The intelligentsia and artists are not represented in the text, which is perhaps symptomatic of the changes in the official politics between the 1920s and 1950s. While Olesha's story was written in the 1920s, during the first Soviet decade that has since been seen as an optimistic time of different experimentations in the field of children's literature<sup>241</sup> and culture in general, Gubarev's story came out in the last years of Stalin's rule and after the difficult years of the Second World War. Between 1928 and 1951, the attitudes towards intellectuals had changed in the whole society. In 1936 Stalin announced that in the Soviet Union, now that it had reached the state of socialism, there were only two social classes: workers and peasants; the working intelligentsija was not seen as a

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<sup>240</sup> The four main characters as well as many secondary characters in the story have foreign or at least foreign-sounding names. As far as I can see, the names do not straightforwardly suggest any characteristics of their bearers, although the names of some characters certainly add to their positive qualities. For example, the gunsmith's name Prospero bears connotations not only to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, but to prosperity in general, and the girl's name Suok was also the last name of the author's wife. I consider the names more as a means of estranging the story from "reality".

<sup>241</sup> See, for example, Steiner 1999 and Nikolajeva 1985a on early avant-garde experiments in children's literature illustrations. Hellman gives the first Soviet decade 1918 – 1928 in children's literature the epithet "All the colours of the rainbow", suggesting both the official view on children's literature and the actual experimental environment. Hellman 1991, 9, 320.

class<sup>242</sup>. In the postwar anti-Western propaganda campaigns headed by Andrei Zhdanov, intellectuals were criticized for their bourgeois sympathies<sup>243</sup>. Artists and intellectuals also disappeared from children's fantasy fiction. Gubarev's text reflects this view by excluding the artists and intellectuals from the revolutionary masses. Although there are no actual characters representing the intellectuals in *Korolevstvo krivyyh zerkal*, some traces have been assigned to the main character Olja: the foolishness of the king is underlined by his poor knowledge of mathematics when Olja outshines him with her elementary school mathematics skills. The professional intellectualism presented in Olesha's story has changed into more down-to-earth school education, basically attainable for everyone.

The revolution of the masses was now the revolution of the working masses. The mirror-makers serve as the main revolutionaries who actively take part in the fight against the rulers. The first rebellious act in the book is performed by the mirror-maker boy Gurd, who throws a stone at one of the many falsifying mirrors:

– Я рад, что разбил это кривое зеркало! Хоть одним лживым зеркалом будет меньше на свете! Вы для того и расставили по всему городу эти проклятые зеркала, чтобы обманывать народ! Только все равно вашим зеркалам никто не верит! – выкрикивал Гурд в лицо Нушроку. (*Korolevstvo krivyyh zerkal*, 20)

– I am glad that I broke that crooked mirror! Now there is one less falsifying mirror in the world! You have put these damned mirrors everywhere in this town in order to deceive the people! Well, nobody trusts your mirrors anyway! – shouted Gurd straight to Nushrok's face.

Later on, the mirror-makers sing a revolutionary song, attack one guard and kill another<sup>244</sup>. They even dare make proper mirrors. The Soviet propaganda saw the working class as the most imperative actors in creating the new society. The importance of agriculture and farm workers was also sometimes stressed in the Soviet Union; whereas, according to Marxist thought, the peasantry was a conservative class rather than a revolutionary force, the Bolshevik Party included the peasantry in their revolution plans<sup>245</sup>. Still, the agricultural workers were usually seen as less prominent than the industrial workers<sup>246</sup>. In Gubarev's text, the farm workers are presented as rebelling against the regime, but their role in making the revolution is minor and quite passive when compared to the role of the mirror-makers: once they refuse to go to work and once Olja hears them singing the same rebellious song as the mirror-makers. They are not the revolutionary activists but rather supporters of the more radical

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<sup>242</sup> Vihavainen 2002, 411.

<sup>243</sup> Halfond 1998a, 679 – 680.

<sup>244</sup> The actual words used in the text are «избили до смерти», which can mean both actually killing and beating almost to death.

<sup>245</sup> Thomson 1972, 122 – 123.

<sup>246</sup> For example, although the peasants were granted the status of an important class alongside the workers, in the 1936 constitution, the status of the peasants was ambiguous in relation to some important benefits promised for the workers. Getty 1991, 23.

factory workers. The less active role of the farm workers is symptomatic of the Soviet idea of the industrial workers' and farm workers' roles in the making of the revolution.

The servants' role in bringing about the revolution is not stressed in Gubarev's book. They are presented as the victims of oppression rather than active revolutionaries. Yet they contribute to the revolution by helping Olja and Jalo in their quest. The most central character among the servants is the palace cook, the warm-hearted aunt Aksal. She is presented as a virtuous, caring woman, which is suggested by both her name and her actions<sup>247</sup>. She does not resort to direct action like the mirror-makers: instead, she takes care of Olja and Jalo and helps them to sneak inside the king's palace. Other servants are minor characters either presented doing their jobs or shown as a proof of the cruelty of the ruling class: this is the case with the old man servant Bar, whose mere name underlines his slavelike position<sup>248</sup>.

In Soviet fantasy, that uses the structure of multiple worlds, Soviet children sometimes act as agitators helping the inhabitants of the secondary world to stage a revolution. In stories situated entirely in a closed secondary world with no contact to any primary world outside, like Olesha's *Tri tolstjaka*, these kinds of agitators from outside do not, naturally, exist. In Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, the protagonist Olja contributes to the revolution by saving the worker boy Gurd and contributing to the death of the cruel minister Nušrok. In addition to direct action, Olja influences the people of the kingdom by setting a good example. She tells about her own home country, the Soviet Union, and praises its wonderful life. It is never stated directly in the book that Olja's home country is the Soviet Union; the name of the country is not mentioned in the text. Yet her Soviet and pioneer-related attributes make it obvious where she is from. She acts like a perfect Soviet agitator when addressing the people of the kingdom:

Я не могу остаться с вами, дорогие друзья, потому что нет на свете ничего прекраснее и лучше моей родной страны! Вы, наверно, тоже построите когда-нибудь такую же светлую жизнь, как в моей стране. Я верю в это, дорогие друзья! (*Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* 93)

I cannot stay with you, dear friends, because in the whole world there is no place more beautiful or better than my homeland! I am sure that you too will sometimes build the same kind of bright life as there is in my country. I believe in that, dear friends.

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<sup>247</sup> Aksal read backwards equals "Laska"; 'laska' in Russian means caress, endearment and kindness. (The Pocket Oxford Russian Dictionary 1995, 101.)

<sup>248</sup> The Russian word "rab" means a slave. In the film version of the story, directed by Aleksandr Rou in 1963, Bar has been made into a more active contributor to the revolution. In the film, it is Bar who in the end actually kills the evil Prime Minister Nušrok who has turned into a hawk.

In Olja's words, one can see the representation of patriotism that was stressed in the post-war Soviet propaganda<sup>249</sup>. As well as the propaganda aimed at showing the socialist system as superior to capitalist systems, it also aimed at showing the Soviet Union as superior to other countries. Education sought to make children feel privileged to be born in the Soviet Union<sup>250</sup> and children's literature contributed to this. In Gubarev's story, one can see a synthesis of two seemingly contradictory Soviet values: on one hand, it supports the idea of brotherhood between the working class people over national boundaries, while on the other hand, it presents the Soviet Union as the most important country in the world and bestows national pride to the Soviet children.

Although Olja is the protagonist of the story and her actions in the Kingdom of the Crooked Mirrors are crucial to the revolution, it is the oppressed people who start the revolutionary action. The resistance has already begun when Olja enters the kingdom: the girl does not start the revolution but contributes to it. Thus, it is implied that the need for revolution is inherent in the oppressed people, which suits well the socialist realist idea of historical optimism.

### **3.1.2.2. Rulers as negative characters**

The old rulers, against whom the revolutions in Soviet fantasy for children are carried out, are always presented as absolutely negative characters. In Olesha's *Tri tolstjaka* (Three Fat Men) the most prominent characteristic of the rulers is their greed that is made concrete by their exaggerated fatness. In Soviet propaganda literature, fatness is usually connected with negative characters representing capitalist and bourgeois values. Correspondingly, thinness is associated with positive characters representing socialism, or people oppressed by the fat bourgeoisies. Fatness was used to characterise capitalists already in Soviet propaganda posters in the first years of the Soviet Union. It was also used in children's literature: perhaps the most famous example of portraying socialist and capitalist values through two different characters is Mayakovsky's poem *Skazka o Pete, tolstom rebënke, i o Sime, kotoryj tonkij* (1925, Story of the Fat Boy Petya and of Sima, Who is Thin)<sup>251</sup>. Petya is a chubby upper class child and Sima a thin representative of the working class. Petya's fatness is connected to his class and to his enormous greed: he eats so much that eventually he grotesquely explodes and all the delicious food he has eaten rains over the hungry proletarian children. The grotesque features of the capitalist characters were accentuated by the illustrations of the contemporary artist Nikolai Kuprejanov<sup>252</sup>. When in Olesha's *Tri tolstjaka* the

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<sup>249</sup> Patriotism was a vital part of Soviet propaganda during the Second World War and continued its existence also in the postwar years. See, for example, Halfond 1998a, 679 – 680; Halfond 1998b.

<sup>250</sup> Vähä 2002, 101.

<sup>251</sup> Mayakovsky also worked in the field of propaganda poster producing, so it is not surprising that in his children's poems he used an approach known from poster art. The similarities of Soviet 1920s poster art and picturebooks have been noted, for example, by Nikolajeva 1985a, 130.

<sup>252</sup> Steiner 1999, 152.

rulers are described as fat and greedy, it is obvious to the reader that they are supposed to represent harmful capitalist values. In Olesha's book, the enemies are also given other unattractive attributes like pimples and freckles. They are also described as vain or trying to hide their inadequacies by using artificial means of embellishment: false teeth and wigs. The rulers do not even have individual names: they are always referred to as "the (Three) Fat Men". In addition to their appearance, their greed is shown in their reckless appetite, for example, in the description of a dinner party in the palace:

Толстяки сидели на главных местах, возвышаясь над остальным обществом.  
Они ели больше всех. Один даже начал есть салфетку.  
– Вы едите салфетку...  
– Неужели? Это я увлекся...  
Он оставил салфетку и тут же принялся жевать ухо Третьего Толстяка. Между прочим, оно имело вид вареника.  
Все покатались со смеху. (*Tri tolstjaka* 116)

The Fat Men were sitting on the best seats, above the rest of the company.  
They ate more than the others. One of them even started eating a table napkin.  
– You are eating a table napkin...  
– Really? I got carried away...  
He left the napkin and started to chew the ear of the Third Fat Man instead. Well, it looked a lot like a pie.  
Everyone burst into laughter. (116)

The greed of the three fat men can also be seen in the way they rule their country by their wealth. The fat men control the raw materials that are essential for survival and industry: corn, coal and iron.

– Ты забыл, с кем хочешь воевать. Мы, Три Толстяка, сильны и могущественны. Все принадлежит нам. Я, Первый Толстяк, владею всем хлебом, который родит наша земля. Второму Толстяку принадлежит все уголь, а Третий скупил все железо. Мы богаче всех! Самый богатый человек в стране беднее нас в сто раз. За наше золото мы можем купить все, что хотим! (*Tri tolstjaka* 118)

– You have forgotten whom you want to fight against. We, the Three Fat Men, are strong and mighty. Everything belongs to us. I, the First Fat Man, rule over all the corn given us by the earth. The Second Fat Man owns all the coal, and the Third one has bought all the iron. We are the richest! The richest man in the country is a hundred times poorer than we are. We can buy everything we want with our gold! (118)

In his book on Yuri Olesha's works, Arkadi Belinkov connects *Tri tolstjaka* to his adult novel *Zavist', Envy* (1927)<sup>253</sup>. Belinkov sees the two novels as a thematic continuum: *Tri tolstjaka* is about revolution and *Envy* about its consequences<sup>254</sup>. Whereas the three fat men represent the old capitalist rule, Andrei Babichev, "the

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<sup>253</sup> *Три толстяка* was written in 1924 and published in 1928.

<sup>254</sup> Белинков 1997, 198.

fourth fat man” as Belinkov calls him, in *Envy* is the embodiment of the new ruling communist class.

Another characteristic turning up in the texts is the cruelty of the rulers. In Olesha’s *Tri tolstjaka* the rulers are ready to execute a group of revolutionaries, and they use cruel ways of teaching their heir Tutti how to become a future leader: the little boy is isolated from other children and told that his heart has been removed in order to prevent him from having and expressing human emotions. The fat men are even ready to factually remove the heart, but when that proves to be impossible they must settle for merely convincing the boy that the removal of his heart has actually taken place. In Gubarev’s *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors), the cruelty of the rulers is shown in the way they force the impoverished workers to make the useless mirrors under poor conditions. Their cruelty is also seen in the way they treat their servants, for example, in the scene where Lady Anidag hits her old servant Bar<sup>255</sup>.

Копыта лошадей звонко зацокали по мосту. Карета въехала во двор замка. К прекрасной даме подбежал Бар, чтобы помочь ей спуститься с седла.

– Вы должны чувствовать себя в замке как дома, дорогие дети, – певуче и ласково проговорила прекрасная дама и, обернувшись к слуге, спокойно добавила: – Какой ты неловкий, Бар! – И, взмахнув хлыстом, ударила им по лицу слугу.

При колеблющемся свете факелов Оля и Яло увидели, как Бар покачнулся и на его лице появился широкий красный рубец. Девочки бросились к хозяйке.

– Не надо!.. За что? Зачем вы его бьете, сударыня?

Хозяйка изумленно посмотрела на девочек своими красивыми бархатными глазами.

– Чем вы обеспокоены? Я ударила слугу? Ну так что ж? Как, однако, странно вы воспитаны, мальчики!.. (*Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* 66)

The sound of the horse hooves echoed on the bridge. The carriage arrived in the courtyard. Servant Bar ran to the beautiful lady to help her off the saddle.

– You must make yourself feel at home here in the castle, dear children, – said the beautiful lady in her gentle, singing voice, and turning to the servant, added calmly – How clumsy you are, Bar! – And hit him on the face with a whip.

In the light of the torches Olja and Jalo saw how Bar swayed and on his face appeared a red cut. The girls turned to their hostess.

– Don’t do that! Why? Why do you hit him, madame?

Amazed, the lady looked at the girls with her beautiful velvet eyes.

– What is bothering you? I hit the servant? So what? You boys are really strangely brought up!

The cruelty of the lady is underlined by the comments of Olja and Jalo, who, disguised as boys, are horrified and disapprove of her actions. The cruelty that is considered normal in the Land of the Crooked Mirrors is presented as alien to the Soviet system Olja comes from.

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<sup>255</sup> "Rab" = 'slave'; "gadina" = 'snake, reptile, scoundrel'.

Boris Begak points out that in Olesha's *Tri tolstjaka* the rulers are also presented as ridiculous. According to him, Olesha's story preindicates Gorky's idea, that the children should be shown the ridiculous and comical side of the "social evil".<sup>256</sup> All the negative characters in Olesha's book are described as comical, whereas the positive characters are presented using more serious tones. In *Tri tolstjaka*, even the rulers' court is presented as ridiculous: especially the dance instructor Razdvatris is a prominent comic character. One way to ridicule the rulers is to show them as weak and cowardly. Olesha does this, for example, by showing the rulers and their court being frightened by the revolution leader Prospero. Also Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* uses partly the same means of mocking the antagonists of the story. Although the main villain, minister Nušrok, is cruel, frightening and anything but ridiculous, king Topsed is shown as a pompous and weak ruler, who is easily manipulated by his ministers. His simple-mindedness is shown as his lack of ability in mathematical thinking. He admires Olja and Jalo's mathematical skills and is not able to comprehend even the most elementary mathematical problems that perhaps the children reading the book are able to solve.

The evil characters are also described as less human than the good characters: in Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, the names of the evil characters suggest their animal-like nature. The evil minister is called Nušrok (koršun = 'a kite, a bird of prey'), his mean daughter is Anidag (gadina = 'a snake, a reptile') and another minister is Abaž (žaba = 'a toad')<sup>257</sup>. Correspondingly, the positive characters' names underline their inherent goodness. The name of the warm-hearted mother-like cook is Aksal (laska = caress, endearment; kindness<sup>258</sup>) and the revolutionary mirror-maker boy is called Gurd (drug = 'a friend').

It is perhaps worth noting that in neither *Tri tolstjaka* nor *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* is the main antagonist a single individual character. The three fat men rule their country together as a collective: no one member of the troika can be separated from the others. They are also surrounded by a court of like-minded people. The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors is ruled by a king, but he does not work alone. In fact, his ministers are presented as being the true leaders of the kingdom: they even plan to overthrow the king and introduce a new leader to the country. Still, in the texts, the ruling class consists of a few individuals, a minority, when compared with the revolutionary masses.

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<sup>256</sup> Берак 1989, 31 - 32.

<sup>257</sup> In the film version of the story, also the king's name, Jagupop 77-j, has an animal connotation: popugaj, a parrot. In the film, the evil characters get punished for their bad deeds by being transformed into animals.

<sup>258</sup> 'Laska' also means a certain kind of weasel (*Mustela nivalis*) and thus contributes to the animal symbolism suggested by the names of the inhabitants of the Kingdom. The name of this animal in Russian has no such negative connotations as the English word "weasel".



### 3.1.2.1. Interpretations of the revolution in the secondary world

The depiction of revolution in a secondary world has several possible interpretations. Even within a single text, it is possible to interpret the revolution in multiple ways. I consider the following three interpretations typical of Soviet revolution fantasy literature. The revolution can be read as *a retelling of the October revolution*: the people's victory over cruel rulers is supposed to represent the victory of socialism over the former tsarist regime. This interpretation supports the official view of the Soviet history and the importance of the October revolution. The second possibility is to read the story as *an example for future socialist revolutions*. These revolutions were to take place in other countries inspired and supported by Soviet Union. The third way of interpretation is to see the revolution stories as stories about *the universal struggle between good and evil*, which is a typical theme of fantasy as a genre. Neither Olesha's nor Gubarev's texts are simple. They both may be interpreted in multiple ways. For example, Gubarev's text can be seen both as a re-telling of the Soviet revolution and an inspiration to further revolutions. It may also be read as a criticism of the social situation at the time of its writing. To my mind, none of the different readings is superior to the others; on the contrary, they complement each other.

Yuri Olesha's *Tri tolstjaka* (Three Fat Men) is easy to read as a re-telling of the October revolution. One important issue from the Soviet point of view was to establish the notion that the tsar's regime was abolished by the working masses under the leadership of the Bolshevik party. This would prove that the revolution was a real and genuine revolution of the masses and that the party was on the side of the people.<sup>259</sup> This view is supported in Yuri Olesha's *Tri tolstjaka* in which the people, represented by the four protagonists, defeat the three dictators. The connections to the October revolution are obvious: the people's victory over the three fat men represents the Bolshevik coup against the Temporary Government. The links to the 1917 revolutions have been noted by literary scholars. Boris Galanov, for example, states that the people fighting against the three mighty rulers is such a transparent allegory that even young readers are able to see the connection between the story and Soviet history<sup>260</sup>. Also Ben Hellman treats the novel as a story of the revolution and a fight for freedom in a fantasy land<sup>261</sup>. Nevertheless, Irina Lupanova states in her history of Soviet children's literature that Olesha's story is not an allegory with a revolution theme and that the revolution in the land of faerie is not associated with the real Russian revolution<sup>262</sup>. True, *Tri tolstjaka* is not as straightforward an allegory of the October revolution as the more realistic revolution stories are. Still, written in the early years of the Soviet Union (the book was written in 1924 and published in 1928), *Tri tolstjaka* has an optimistic

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<sup>259</sup> In the light of history, this interpretation of the 1917 revolutions was not valid. The tsar abdicated during the February revolution, whereas the Bolshevik party seized power in the October revolution. (Zetterberg 2002, 334 – 348.) In the official legend of the October revolution the two 1917 revolutions were amalgamated.

<sup>260</sup> Галанов 1985, 57.

<sup>261</sup> Hellman 1991, 40.

<sup>262</sup> Лупанова 1969, 109 – 110.

view of the revolution, and it supports a certain belief in the people's power to contribute to the common good.

Whereas Olesha's story is easy to read as an allegory of the 1917 revolution, Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors) serves perhaps better as an example for the future socialist revolutions that were to take place in other countries, inspired and supported by the Soviet Union. Olja's encouraging speeches are a clear example of how the Soviet example should inspire the working class of other nations.

The struggle between good and evil is a universal motif in fantasy literature. Hence, it is not surprising that the motif is also widely used in Soviet fantasy. Critics have often noted a certain weakness in Western fantasy literature: whereas several fantasy authors are masters at describing the evil, with apocalyptic visions of cruel leaders and monsters taking over the world, the good in fantasy seems to be mostly the absence of evil<sup>263</sup>. When the evil is eradicated, there is not much to be offered instead. In Soviet children's literature, the good and the evil are very straightforwardly defined: there is rarely any ambiguity in the characters' or actions' status as positive or negative. The good is usually strongly connected with the official ideas of socialism or communism, whereas the evil represents ideas that are considered the opposite, namely, capitalism and bourgeois values. The good characters are presented as members of the working class and the evil ones are rich members of the upper class. Although in Soviet revolution fantasies the historical and political connections are often underlined, the stories also have a layer of the universal story about good triumphing over evil.

### **3.1.3. War propaganda**

War, although a distressing subject, has nonetheless been relatively often present in children's literature<sup>264</sup>. In this chapter, I will concentrate on Veniamin Kaverin's story *Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše, o veselom trubočiste i mastere Zolotyje ruki* (The Story about Mit'ka, Masha, the Happy Chimney Sweep and Master Skilful). In Kaverin's story, the conflict of the worlds is presented in the form of a concrete war, and the propaganda is easily recognizable as war propaganda. Veniamin Kaverin's *Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše, o veselom trubočiste i mastere Zolotyje ruki* was published in 1939<sup>265</sup> at a point of history that was especially dangerous and difficult in the Soviet Union and in the rest of Europe. The Soviet people were living under the height of the Stalin Terror and the Second World War was beginning.

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<sup>263</sup> See, for example, Bengtsson 1999, 2.

<sup>264</sup> Agnew and Fox give numerous examples of children's literature dealing with war in their study *Children at War*. They use mainly English language texts and their purpose is to introduce books they "believe evoke a range of positive reactions among young readers", so the actual propaganda content of the books is not covered. Agnew and Fox 2001, 1 – 2.

<sup>265</sup> From now on, I will call the book for short *Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše*.

In Kaverin’s story, the “conflict of worlds” is taken literally: the evil capitalism or fascism is situated in a secondary world. *Skazka o Mit’ke i Maše* is a 60-page children’s story that uses the motifs and form familiar from Russian folktales in order to comment on the contemporary political situation. In the story a brother of Kaščeĭ the Immortal – a folktale wizard, a typical antagonist in folktales – tricks a little Leningrad girl Maša to go with him to “the land of Kaščeĭ”, the Brown Land, as a replacement for Kaščeĭ’s dead daughter. In order to save Maša, her brother Mit’ka must follow her to the brown land and kill the wizard and his three hounds. With the help of his new friends, Mit’ka succeeds in freeing both Maša and the people of the Brown Land from the cruel dictator.

### 3.1.3.1. The folktale elements

Kaverin’s story uses several folktale elements that are seen in the structure, the characters and the style of the story. The plot is a typical Proppian<sup>266</sup> folktale plot: the hero’s sister is captured by a malevolent wizard; the hero starts his journey, meets helpers or donors and saves his sister. After the wizard is punished and killed, the acclaimed hero returns home with his sister. The characters of Kaverin’s story correspond to the dramatis personae defined by Propp<sup>267</sup>. Kaščeĭ serves as the villain, the little parachutist, the jackdaw, the happy chimney sweep and Master Skilful (among others) play the part of donors or helpers, Maša’s role equals the role of the princess (or a victimized hero, see below), and Mit’ka is the a seeker type of hero<sup>268</sup>. There is no clearfalse hero in Kaverin’s tale. There is no dispatcher either; it is Mit’ka’s own decision to go on the quest to save his sister.

Spheres of Action	Characters in Kaverin’s story
1. Villain	Kaščeĭ
2. Donor (provider) 3. Helper	The little parachutist, the jackdaw, the happy chimney sweep and Master Skilful (+ other minor characters)
4. Princess	Maša
5. Dispatcher	None, or Mit’ka himself
6. Hero	Mit’ka (seeker), Maša (victimized hero)
7. False hero	None

**Table 1:** The functions of characters in Veniamin Kaverin’s *Skazka o Mit’ke i Maše, o veselom trubočiste i mastere Zolotyie ruki*

The two-hero structure in Kaverin’s story differs from the typical folktale pattern. Propp separates two different types of heroes: a seeker and a victimized hero. A hero of the seeker type is one who goes on a quest, for example, in order to find a captured

<sup>266</sup> See Propp 2000, “Chapter III: The Functions of Dramatis Personae” 25 – 65.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 2000, 79 – 80.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 36.

princess. A victimized hero is one who is seized or driven out of his or her home and whose adventures are followed in the narrative. Propp notes that his material, the Russian wonder tales, includes no tales that follow both seeker and victimized hero. Here he refers to Pushkin's *Ruslan i Ljudmila* (*Ruslan and Ljudmila*) as an example of such a story.<sup>269</sup> In Kaverin's tale, Mit'ka fulfils the role of a seeker and Maša is a victimized hero. The story begins with Maša's kidnapping, after which the narrative follows both the brother and the sister, although the majority of the further narrative is dedicated to Mit'ka. In this respect, Kaverin's story resembles *Ruslan and Ljudmila*, and since Pushkin's stories were at the time practically as well known and popular as the "genuine" folktales, the two-hero structure does not undermine the fairy-tale effect of Kaverin's story.

The most prominent folktale personage in *Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše* is Kaščej Bessmertnyj, Kaščej the Immortal, the villain of the story. The wizard Kaščej<sup>270</sup> is a recurring Russian folktale character. In folktales, the immortality of Kaščej is due to the fact that his death, life or soul exist outside his body<sup>271</sup>. He has hidden it in a secure place, for example, on the Island of Bujan, under an oak tree in a box in which there is a hare, inside which there is a duck, inside which is an egg inside which is a needle containing Kaščej's death. The wizard can usually be killed by finding his death and destroying it. In Kaverin's tale, Kaščej has hidden his death under his bed in a special box that can only be opened by the maker of the box, Master Skilful. A typical action of Kaščej in the folktales is to kidnap a female relative or the wife of the hero. This is exactly what he does in Kaverin's story too. In the story, his motivation is explained: he kidnaps Maša and tries to corrupt her "good heart" in order to make her more like his own, dead daughter. Other folktale characters of the story include talking animals, the jackdaw, and the pike that is also present in several folktales of Koščej the Immortal. Also the blacksmith, Master Skilfull, might have an earlier figure in Russian folklore. Blacksmiths are heroes in several folktales and bylinas. The folktale blacksmith as a hero also goes well with the Soviet ideals of heroic workers.

*Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše* also makes use of stylistic folktale devices. For example, the location of the Land of Kaščej is defined using folktale formulas, which is also pointed out to the reader of the text:

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<sup>269</sup> Propp 2000, 36.

<sup>270</sup> The orthography of the name varies from Koščej to Kaščej in different tales. The word *koščej* is seen as deriving from the word *kost* ('a bone') and denoting a thin, skinny, skeletonlike person; in ancient Russian it also had the meanings 'prisoner' and 'slave', possibly derived from Turkish words for 'captive'. See *koščej* in Фасмер 1986, 362.

<sup>271</sup> The motif of an external soul (E710) is universal in folktales of AT 302 type. (Aarne and Thompson 1987, 93 – 94.) It has also been used in children's literature. One of the most recent – and no doubt, currently the most famous – villain striving for immortality by separating his soul from his body is the wizard Voldemort in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* –series (1997 – 2007).

Это дорога в Кашееву страну, за тридевять земель, в тридесятое царство. Знаешь, как говорится в сказках: долго ли, коротко ли, низко ли, высоко ли, иди вперед – не оглядывайся, колоти в доску – не задумывайся. Пропустишь доску – оглянешься, оглянешься – оступишься, оступишься – заблудишься. (*Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše* 12, Italics J.S.)

It is the road to the land of Kaščeј, beyond thirty countries in the thirtieth kingdom. You know, *as it is said in fairy tales*: no matter how far, how close, how low, how high, go ahead – do not look back, knock on the board of the fence – do not hesitate. If you walk past the fence – you will look back, if you look back – you will tumble, if you tumble – you will go astray.

The folktale connections are made markedly visible. In addition to using folktale stylistics, the reader's attention is drawn to it by an explicit statement of the folktale nature of the expression: "as it is said in fairy tales". The story also has other folktale stylistics, for example, triple repetition of similar tasks, when Mit'ka has to find out the names of the three dogs and kill them.

### 3.1.3.2. Allusions to Germany

*Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše* was not the first work of Kaverin that had connections to Germany. In the early stage of his career as a writer, Kaverin was a member of the literary group, the Serapion Brothers, who had taken their manifesto from German Romanticism. They considered as their model especially E. T. A. Hoffmann, from whose works the group had taken their name. Already Kaverin's first collection of short stories, *Mastera i podmaster'ja* (Masters and Apprentices) from 1923 had connections to Germany: not to the contemporary Germany but to the German Romantics. According to Hongor Oulanoff, already these early stories had a "Hoffmann motive" of combining fantastic elements with the empirical.<sup>272</sup> Where the Germany of Kaverin's early stories, according to Oulanoff, had "little actual reference to empirical and historical reality"<sup>273</sup>, *Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše* aims at a very tangible representation of a certain place and a determined historical time.

The secondary world in the story, Kaščeј's Land, or the Brown Land, is a propagandist representation of Nazi Germany during the build up to the Second World War. The story has several obvious allusions to Germany of the 1930s: both to the events and to individual people. The Land of Kaščeј is characterized by the brown colour that at the time of writing was associated with Germany.

Это был большой и красивый город – широкие улицы, просторные сады, высокие дома. Но вот странно! Все дома были коричневого цвета. В садах росла коричневая трава. По улицам маршировали солдаты в коричневых рубашках. Вот кошка кофейного цвета вылезла из водосточной трубы. Вот коричневая

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<sup>272</sup> Oulanoff 1976, 24 – 25.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., 25.

ворона сидит на пожарной каланче табачного цвета. Можно было подумать, что в этом городе день и ночь вместо снега идет корица и никто не убирает ее с улиц вот уже пять или десять лет. (*Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše* 14)

It was a big and beautiful city – wide streets, large parks, tall buildings. But how strange! All the houses were brown. Brown grass grew in the parks. Soldiers, dressed in brown shirts, marched on the streets. A brown cat crept out of a drainpipe. A brown crow sat on the top of a tobacco-coloured fire tower. One could think that in this town day and night, instead of snow, cinnamon came down from the sky and nobody had cleared it off the streets for five or ten years.

In addition, the proper names of some inhabitants of the land suggest the connection to Germany: Frau Kraus, Frau Ščuka (Frau Pike), Karl. The prison called Boabit probably alludes to a prison named Moabit in Berlin; the name Boabit was removed from the later editions of the book. Kaščeј the wizard is an unmistakable image of Hitler. An outstanding Hitler-like attribute in his appearance is his moustache. The allusion to other contemporary dictators with moustaches is avoided by means of illustration: in the illustration by Iosif Ec, page 55 of the first edition, the resemblance between the sleeping wizard and Hitler is unmistakable. Other central figures of Nazi Germany are mentioned in the names of the hounds guarding the wizard. Their names Gim, Ger and Geb allude to Himmler, Göring and Goebbels<sup>274</sup>. Kaščeј and his men use as a symbol a picture of two crossed dog paws that resembles swastika and the phrase “Da zravstvuet Kaščeј!”, “Heil Kaščeј!” by which the wizard is honoured bears a resemblance to the infamous Nazi greeting. Other markers pointing towards the German war situation are soldiers marching on the streets, imprisoned people, birds with their wings cut out, a clearcut symbol of people who have been denied their freedom, officials capturing people from their homes by night, Kaščeј’s brother eavesdropping on the people, and the lack of food. Although



**Picture 1:** Illustration to Veniamin Kaverin’s *Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše , o veselom trubočiste i mastere Zolotye ruki (The Story of Mit'ka, Maša, the Happy Chimney Sweep and Master Skilful)* 1939 by Iosif Ec, page 55.

<sup>274</sup> It is typical of the Russian language to transliterate both letters G and H in German proper names into G. Thus, all the names Hitler, Himmler, Göring and Goebbels begin with the same letter in Russian.

these aspects were to some extent present also in the 1930s Soviet Union<sup>275</sup>, in a propagandist reading of the story they were to be read as markers of Nazi Germany.

The allusions to Nazi Germany are made obvious in the text much like the connections to folktales. The resemblance of the names of the wizard's hounds and the contemporary German officers is almost spelled out when the names are mentioned for the first time:

– Да, - торжественно повторила галка. – К сожалению, он успел назвать одно имя. Он сказал его шопотом, и я сейчас скажу его шопотом, и если кто-нибудь из вас захочет его сказать, пускай говорит его шопотом. А галчонок пойдет спать. Доброй ночи! Гим.

– Как? – в один голос спросили переплетчик и Митька.

– Гим, - повторила галка. – Первую собаку зовут Гим.

– Странное имя, - пробормотал Митька.

– Если подумать, не такое странное, – возразила галка. (*Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše* 29)

– Yes, the jackdaw repeated majestically. – Unfortunately, he managed to say only one name. He whispered it to me, I am now going to whisper it to you and if anyone of you wants to say the name, it should be said in a whisper. And the little jackdaw now goes to bed. Good night! Gim.

– What? – asked the bookbinder and Mit'ka in one voice.

– Such a strange name, – mumbled Mit'ka.

– If you think about it a little, it is not that strange, – argued the jackdaw.

The invitation to “think about it a little” is repeated when the name of the second dog is revealed. At least when Mit'ka learns the name of the third dog, the connection should be clear to both Mit'ka and the reader:

«Ага, вот и ты, голубушка, – подумал Митька. – Вот как тебя зовут. Геб!»

И он стал твердить в уме это странное имя. Впрочем, если подумать, оно было не такое уж странное! (*Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše* 46)

”Well, well, – thought Mit'ka. – That is your name. Geb!”

He began memorizing that strange name. After all, when thinking about it, the name was not that strange at all!

The story can definitely be interpreted in terms of war propaganda. Peter Kenez states the goals of war propaganda:

The propaganda aimed at (1) arousing hatred against the enemy, (2) preserving the friendship of allies, (3) winning the good will and cooperation of neutrals, and (4) demoralizing the enemy.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Kaverin's text will be dealt with from that perspective in Chapter 4.

<sup>276</sup> Kenez 1985, 9; Kenez refers to Harold D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in World War I* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1971), p. 84.

The main aim of Kaverin's story seems to be the first one, to arouse hatred against the enemy. It is worth noting that the book came out in spring 1939 when Germany was still considered a possible enemy<sup>277</sup>. The situation changed in August 1939 when the Soviet Union and Germany signed the Treaty of Non-aggression, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, that officially ended the enmity. Until then, Soviet propaganda had been supporting the idea of an antifascist coalition<sup>278</sup>. In Kaverin's book, German leaders are described as terrifying fairy tale monsters and fierce hounds. The activities of the enemy are described as dreadful, which can be seen, for example, in the way wizard Kaščeј tries to break Maša's morale by showing her his dreadful deeds:

Он ведет тайную войну с одним великодушным народом – и вот каждый день эту бедную девочку сажают на аэроплан, чтобы показать ей разрушенные города, детей, убитых бомбами, и матерей, умирающих с горя. (*Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše* 18)

He wages a secret war against one noble nation – and every day the poor girl is seated in an aeroplane in order to show her devastated cities, children killed by bombing, mothers who have died of sorrow.

Kaščeј's evil deeds – cutting the wings of the birds, burning books and capturing people from their homes by night – are meant to arouse disgust amongst the readers, who are expected to see the resemblance between the story and the situation in Europe of that period. Since the book was intended for the domestic market, the propaganda was targeted at their own people, not at the enemy or the outside world. Thus, there are no proper elements of “preserving the friendship of allies”, “winning the cooperation” of other nations or “demoralizing the enemy” in Kaverin's text.

### ***3.1.3.3. Reasons for using a secondary world***

The obvious and unmistakably spelled out aim of Kaverin's story is to make the readers pay attention to the German situation of the late 1930s. As a means of presenting Germany, the story uses the secondary world. In the book, there is a clearcut distinction between the two worlds. As much as the secondary world is associated with Germany, the primary world is associated with the Soviet Union. The children's hometown is easily recognizable from the text: the name of the town, Leningrad, is mentioned several times, as are some well-known sights of the town, like the Summer Garden. The silhouette of the city is also recognizable from Ec's illustration on page 7 of the first edition. As a story concerning the conflict of the worlds, there is no doubt of who are supposed to be on “the good” and “the bad” side.

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<sup>277</sup> According to the publishing information of the first edition of Kaverin's book, the book was taken for type-setting 28.2.1939 and for printing 29.4.1939.

<sup>278</sup> Halfond 1998b, 905 – 906.



When discussing Kaverin's early stories, Hongor Oulanoff notes that the author might have used medieval Germany as the setting for the stories since it was "emotionally distant" and allowed experimentations<sup>279</sup>. Using a secondary world has a similar effect: although the book deals with contemporary politics, it is also distanced from the actual reality by using a folktale-like fantasy world as a setting. When the book was published in 1939, anti-German propaganda was a legitimate purpose of literature and art. There was no need to disguise the propaganda behind the mask of a fairy tale. In Kaverin's case, the fairy-tale surface of the story, with its well-known fairy-tale figures and an exciting adventure plot, was probably a means of making the "moral" of the story more accessible to children, and maybe even to their parents.

Another reason for distancing the story in a secondary world is the need for a disguise: in *Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše*, it is possible to find subtle allusions to the Soviet Union of the time of writing, although Kaverin's story has been seen as more plainly addressed against Germany than, for example, Evgeny Schwartz's plays for children<sup>280</sup>. These allusions might not have been intended by the author, yet the reading public was bound to draw its own conclusions. The moustached wizard Kaščeј, while definitely being an image of Hitler, could also be interpreted as the domestic dictator: since the moustached villain in Kornei Chukovsky's poem *Tarakanišče* (The Cockroach)<sup>281</sup> was commonly interpreted as an image of Stalin all the moustached villains met in children's literature were destined to be considered as such. The option to interpret the story as a commentary on Soviet internal issues became even more prominent after the war when new editions of the books were printed<sup>282</sup>. This time the allusions to Germany were reduced: the most outstanding alteration was the changing of the dogs' names into more neutral ones: Gart, Gnor and Gaus that sound German, yet have no obvious hidden meanings.

### 3.1.4. The conflict of worlds

The concept of *bor'ba mirov*, the conflict of worlds, is vital to Soviet propaganda. Essentially, it means the juxtaposition of socialist and capitalist systems in order to confirm the superiority of the socialist one. This theme was also employed in fantasy literature. In the 1930s, several well-appreciated fantasy stories of this type were published. Lupanova<sup>283</sup> mentions such works as Vera Smirnova's *Zamorjane* (People Beyond the Sea), Aleksei Tolstoy's *Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino* (The Golden Key, or the Adventures of Buratino), Andrej Nekrasov's *Priključenija*

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<sup>279</sup> Oulanoff 1976, 25 – 26.

<sup>280</sup> Hellman 1991, 89.

<sup>281</sup> *The Cockroach* was written in 1923, before Stalin came to power. Yet afterwards it has been read as a parable of Stalin's terror. Klein Tumanov 1999, 135.

<sup>282</sup> The second edition of the book came out in 1941. After the war, it was published again in 1971. See the card catalogue of the National Library of Russia <http://www.nlr.ru>

<sup>283</sup> 1969, 274.

*Kapitana Vrungelja* (The adventures of Captain Vrungel'), Lazar Lagin's *Starik Hottabyč* (Old Man Hottabyč), Evgenyj Schwartz's *Sneznaja koroleva* (The Snow Queen), Veniamin Kaverin's *Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše, o veselom trubočiste i mastere Zolotoye ruki* (The Story of Mit'ka, Maša, the Happy Chimney Sweep and Master Skilful) and Aleksandr Volkov's *Volšebnik Izumrudnogo goroda* (The Wizard of the Emerald City).

In this chapter, I will discuss some texts that were known in the Soviet Union in different forms than in the West. I believe that they clearly illustrate the importance of the conflict of worlds as a theme in Soviet literature. According to Stephens and McCallum, children's literature is an important repository of humanist ideology and the humanist ideology manifests itself most obviously in texts that are revisions of known stories<sup>284</sup>. If retellings are seen as attempts of children's literature to promote ethical and cultural values to replace the old ones<sup>285</sup>, the Soviet retellings of Western children's classics show what kinds of values were considered suitable for Soviet children. The texts in question are *Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino* (1935, The Golden Key, or the Adventures of Buratino) by Aleksei Nikolaevič Tolstoy and *Volšebnik Izumrudnogo goroda* (1939, The Wizard of the Emerald City) by Aleksandr Volkov. Both Tolstoy's and Volkov's texts are adaptations of Western children's books. Tolstoy used as a subtext *Le avventure di Pinocchio* (*The Adventures of Pinocchio*) by Carlo Collodi. Volkov's text is an adaptation of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum. The Soviet versions differ from their originals in such ways that it is meaningful to treat them if not as original, at least as independent works of art, rather than translations. All the books have been enormously popular in the Soviet Union, and their popularity continues, although new and more faithful translations of the books are now available.

### 3.1.4.1. *Translations or retellings?*

Retellings are a relatively widespread phenomenon in children's literature. Retellings are often made of stories with no identifiable original author, for example, folktales, mythological or religious stories and legends of such heroes as King Arthur or Robin Hood. Yet sometimes retellings are made according to the texts of the original authors: Stephens and McCallum use as examples Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, Robert Michael Ballantyne's *Coral Island*, and Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*<sup>286</sup>. The purpose of retelling a classic is often to make it more accessible to the young readers; the intertextual relationship between the pre-text and the retelling can both contribute to the cultural importance of the pre-text and question the cultural values it promotes<sup>287</sup>. Yet the circumstances

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<sup>284</sup> Stephens and McCallum 1998, 15.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 254.

surrounding the Soviet retellings of Western children's literature were radically different from the situation of, for example, a Western adaptation of the story of *Robinson Crusoe*. The Western reader of a children's version of *Robinson Crusoe* probably had access to the original text, perhaps not at the time of reading but later as a teenager or adult, whereas a Soviet child reading a retelling of a Western book usually had no means of getting hold of the original text. It is possible that most child readers did not even realise that the book they held in their hands was a remaking of some other book. Although there is a definite intertextual relationship between a Soviet retelling and its pre-text, and when reading the two versions side by side, the reader can see the differences and compare the values they promote, the contemporary child reader had in reality very little possibility of doing so. Whereas, for example, adaptations of Shakespeare's texts for children contribute to the canonization of his works<sup>288</sup>, Soviet retellings did the opposite by taking the place of the pre-texts on the bookshelf of a Soviet child reader for whom the new text was to be considered the one and only.

Carlo Collodi's *Adventures of Pinocchio* 1883<sup>289</sup> got its Soviet counterpart in Aleksei Tolstoy's *Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino* (The Golden Key, or the Adventures of Buratino) in 1935. The first Russian translation of Pinocchio had been published already in 1906. Before writing his version of the story, Tolstoy had been closely involved with a new translation and adaptation of Pinocchio – *Priključenija Pinokkio* (The Adventures of Pinocchio) – while he was an emigrant in Berlin in the 1920s<sup>290</sup>. The final version of *Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino* was written back home in the Soviet Union in the 1930s<sup>291</sup>.

In the foreword to the book, the author explains the relationship between Buratino and Pinocchio:

#### ПРЕДИСЛОВИЕ

Когда я был маленький, – очень, очень давно – я читал одну книжку; она называлась «Пиноккио, или Похождения деревянной куклы» (деревянная кукла по-итальянски – буратино).

Я часто рассказывал моим товарищам, девочкам и мальчикам, занимательные приключения Буратино. Но так как книжка потерялась, то я рассказывал каждый раз по-разному, выдумывал такие похождения, каких в книге совсем и не было.

Теперь, через много-много лет, я припомнил моего старого друга Буратино и надумал рассказать вам, девочки и мальчики, необычайную историю про этого деревянного человечка.

Алексей Толстой

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<sup>288</sup> Stephens and McCallum 1998, 255.

<sup>289</sup> The story of Pinocchio was first published in the children's magazine *Giornale per i Bambini* from 1881 onwards as a serial "La storia di un burattino". The stories were collected and published as a book *La Avventure di Pinocchio* in 1883.

<sup>290</sup> Hellman 1991, 85; Galanov 1985, 42 - 43.

<sup>291</sup> Hellman 1991, 85.

## FOREWORD

When I was a child a long time ago I read a book called "Pinocchio, or the Adventures of a wooden puppet" (a wooden puppet in Italian is called burattino).

I often told my friends, girls and boys, about the interesting adventures of Buratino. Since I lost the book, I told the story every time in a different way, and made up adventures that were not at all from the book.

Now, after many years, I remembered my old friend Buratino and decided to tell you, girls and boys, a peculiar story about this wooden boy.

Aleksei Tolstoy

According to the foreword, the story is not to be taken as a word-by-word translation but as an original story inspired by Collodi's example. Tolstoy's foreword cannot be taken literally as a historical documentation of the actual writing process. According to Galanov, Tolstoy needed the foreword in order to justify his decision to make radical changes to Collodi's original text<sup>292</sup>. In the foreword, the author presents himself as a storyteller. He refers to the tradition of oral storytelling that finally changes into literary storytelling. Tolstoy's statement ties his telling of the Buratino story to the fairy-tale-telling tradition, in which the teller takes a well-known storymotif and uses it to create a story of his own.

The position of *Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino* as a self-standing work of art and not only a mere translation or plagiarism is supported by Miron Petrovskij's study in which he points out the allusions to Soviet cultural life<sup>293</sup>. In addition to the story directed to children, he sees in it a layer directed to adults. He finds in the book, for example, allusions to the Silver Age literature, an image of the Russian poet Aleksandr Blok and tangible comments on Soviet theatre. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Tolstoy's Buratino is often recognized as a typically Russian figure; for example, in a 2002 interview with Leonid Vladimirskij, perhaps the most famous illustrator of Buratino, the interviewer shows concern about the traditional beloved characters of Buratino and Volkov's Elli being replaced by Western Barbies, Spidermen and Pokemons<sup>294</sup>.

Tolstoy's version of the adventures of a wooden puppet differs from its pre-text in many aspects. Tolstoy has indeed left out several episodes of Collodi's Pinocchio, created episodes of his own and altered the ones he has used. He has also invented new characters, left out some of the old ones and changed some characters radically.

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<sup>292</sup> Галанов 1985, 44. Petrovskij explains Tolstoy's need for the foreword more explicitly. After *The Golden Key* had been published for the first time in *Pionerskaya pravda*, children started writing Tolstoy letters accusing him of using the ideas of another author. The foreword was included in the first book version of *The Golden Key* in order to explain the relationship between the two books. Петровский 1986, 213 – 214.

<sup>293</sup> Петровский 1986.

<sup>294</sup> Ануфриева 2002.

Tolstoy's version is much more simple and reduced than the original Pinocchio<sup>295</sup>. In *Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino* the plot is straightforward: everything in the story aims at finding the golden key and the wonderful puppet theatre. The structure of Tolstoy's text, too, is more integrated. The episodes that in *Pinocchio* are quite self-standing are in *Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino* subordinated to the main plot of the story. For example, Pinocchio's meeting with the malevolent puppeteer is just another episode in the story and has no major implications later, whereas in *Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino*, the meeting is crucial for the plot, since in this meeting the puppet master finds out the location of the secret door leading to the puppet theatre.

Tolstoy's story follows roughly the story line of Collodi's during the first half of the story. Aino Pervik notes that it seems as if in the beginning of the story Tolstoy had decided only to free the story from its moralism, cruelty and sentimentality, but halfway through the story decided to turn in a direction completely different from Collodi's.<sup>296</sup> In Soviet studies on Tolstoy's book, it is a common opinion that in his retelling Tolstoy removed the didactic moralism that is strongly present in the original story<sup>297</sup>. Instead of Collodi's moralism, Tolstoy introduces a new one, which is dealt with in the following sections.

Aleksandr Volkov's Magic Land<sup>298</sup> series consists of *Volšebnik Izumrudnogo goroda* (The Wizard of the Emerald City) 1939 and five sequels, the last one being written in 1975 and published posthumously in 1982. The first version of *Volšebnik Izumrudnogo goroda*, based on *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum, was published in 1939 and a new revised edition in 1959. Even after that, the author made several small changes in the text, and there are some differences between the various editions. The 1939 version had black and white illustrations by Nikolaj Radlov, but most Soviet and Russian readers are more familiar with the 1959 illustrations by Leonid Vladimirkij. Already the first version deviated from Baum's book and the revised versions are even further from the original<sup>299</sup>. Volkov has cut out some episodes of Baum's original, the attack by the Fighting Trees and the Dainty China Country, and introduced new episodes instead – a cannibal ogre and an enormous flood. The main plot, however, is preserved; new and more original plots are found in the sequels. The following text is based on the text published in 1992.

Just like the Land of Oz, the Magic Land is supposed to be situated on the American continent, not far from Èlli's home in Kansas. It is separated from the "Big World" by a desert and a mountain chain. In a sense, the Magic Land is very real and tangible. In

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<sup>295</sup> Nikolajeva 2000, 62. Soviet criticism tended to see this as a positive quality: for example, Petrovskij sees the alterations Tolstoy made in his Berlin translation as beneficial for the book. Петровский 1986, 161 – 163.

<sup>296</sup> Пervик 1985, 184.

<sup>297</sup> See for example Петровский 1986, 163.

<sup>298</sup> Volkov has changed the name of the land from Oz to Volšebnaja strana, the Magic Land.

<sup>299</sup> Петровский 1986, 258.

*Sem' podzemnyh korolej* (The Seven Underground Kings) it is clearly told how the land was separated from the Big World by a giant magician. The land has its history that is accurately written down in chronicles by the elves, who are first met in *Žěltyj tuman* (The Yellow Fog). Although it is not easy to get into the Magic Land from outside, travelling there is still possible and does not require any magic.

Like Baum's Dorothy, Volkov's Èlli too is an American citizen, living in Kansas. Mitrokhina and Nikolajeva point out the significance of the fact that Èlli's home is also situated in Kansas, not in the Soviet Union<sup>300</sup>. For the readers of Baum's book, Kansas is supposed to be a familiar everyday place. For readers of Volkov's text, on the contrary, it can be seen more like another fantasyland and an element of defamiliarisation. The only mentioned reference to the existence of the Soviet Union or Russia is made in *Žěltyj tuman* when the narrator introduces a suitable phrase to one situation in the story:

Если бы Арахна и Руф Билан знали поговорки далекой северной страны, затерянной за океаном, то они очень кстати могли бы припомнить такую: "Первый блин комом". (*Žěltyj tuman*, 42.)

If only Arachne and Ruf Bilan knew phrases used in a distant northern country, cast off beyond the ocean, this one could well come to their mind: "The first blin always comes out like a ball"<sup>301</sup>.

Since the allusion to the Soviet Union is made in the secondary world context, it comments only on the relationship between the Soviet Union and the Magic Land, not between the Soviet Union and the primary world of the story. Also the translation of the protagonist's name is interesting: the original name Dorothy is changed into Èlli (Элли) which is not a typical Russian name either. The name was probably changed in order to make it easier for the child reader, yet it does not localise the protagonist in the Soviet Union but keeps her American.

### 3.1.4.2. *Individuality versus collectivity*

In *The Adventures of Pinocchio* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, the theme of individuality is more stressed than in their Soviet counterparts. Mitrokhina notes how in *Volšebnik Izumrudnogo goroda* the theme of the collective struggle needed to fulfil a common quest is strengthened by stating that Èlli must help three other creatures before she can get her own wish fulfilled<sup>302</sup>. Whereas Baum's Dorothy helps the

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<sup>300</sup> Mitrokhina 1997, 186. Nikolajeva 2000, 63 - 64.

<sup>301</sup> "Первый блин комом" is a traditional Russian proverb, the equivalent of the English proverb "You must spoil before you spin". Dubrovin 1995, 305.

<sup>302</sup> Mitrokhina 1997, 184. Although the elements of collective effort and supporting one's friends are present already in Baum's original, the collective ideals are strongly emphasised in Volkov's text.

Scarecrow, the Tinman and the Lion out of her own good will, Volkov's Èlli helps their counterparts out of obligation. Although Èlli's friendship is based on her own needs, in the sequels her solidarity is less selfish: she always returns to the Magic Land in order to help her friends as soon as she finds out they are in trouble.

In Tolstoy's *Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino* the difference from the plots of Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio* is seen most clearly in the goals the two puppets try to achieve. Whereas Pinocchio's goal is to become a real boy, Buratino has no such dreams. Instead, he finds a golden key that gives him access to a wonderful puppet theatre where he can begin to work with his friends. *Pinocchio* is to a great extent the story of the boy's moral improvement<sup>303</sup>. Buratino's moral is never questioned. Pinocchio changes first into a hard-working puppet and later into a real boy. Buratino does not change as radically as Pinocchio. Despite his apparent naughtiness, he is mostly shown as a resourceful, brave and hard-working puppet that is ready to fight the enemy and save his friends.

In the beginning of the story, Buratino is shown as almost as naughty a boy as Pinocchio. His mischievousness can be seen already when he is still a block of wood and hits his future father Carlo on the head. As soon as Carlo has carved Buratino a mouth, the puppet starts laughing and sticks his tongue out. When he gets his legs, he runs away from home and gets his new father arrested. He is rude to the old cricket, despises his advice and throws a hammer at him<sup>304</sup>. Even with the apparent flaws in his personality, Buratino is usually seen as a sympathetic character<sup>305</sup>. Buratino's naughtiness is presented as non-serious and understandable:

Не нужно забывать, что Буратино шел всего первый день от рождения. Мысли у него были маленькие-маленькие, коротенькие-коротенькие, пустяковые-пустяковые. (*Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino*, 12)

We should remember that it was only Buratino's first day after his birth. His thoughts were very small, very short and very stupid.

Buratino's ambition to be good is underlined in the scene where, instead of school, he chooses to go and see a puppet show. Buratino shows stronger willpower than Pinocchio, who on his way to school falls for the first temptation. Buratino has decided to go to school and he manages to go past temptations like sweet pastries in the shops. He does not fall until he hears the tempting music from the puppet theatre. As Galanov states, Buratino's main fault is not laziness but his longing for exciting adventures<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> *The Adventures of Pinocchio* also has various alternative ways of interpretation. I do not intend to deal with them but to concentrate on the one that seems most important in relation to Tolstoy's *The Golden Key*.

<sup>304</sup> The cricket does not die unlike the cricket in *Pinocchio*. The idea of death and afterlife was probably not seen as suitable for Soviet children's books.

<sup>305</sup> See, for example, Первик 1985, 183.

<sup>306</sup> Галанов 1985, 46.

which is considered a less serious problem than laziness. Buratino is a typical character of Soviet children's literature: a character who does not have any major faults in his character and whose true worth is seen when he gets into important adventures. Although Buratino fails to live up to the values of the people surrounding him, for example, he frustrates Malvina the blue-haired girl puppet in her efforts to teach him good behaviour, a value that is shown as quite superficial, Buratino is the one whose bravery and resourcefulness save the day when he and his friends get into serious adventures.

Whereas Pinocchio is rewarded for his moral improvement by being transformed into a real boy, Buratino's reward for his bravery is a higher status among his friends. Buratino himself does not change significantly during the story. What changes is how other characters see him. When Buratino first meets Malvina, the blue-haired puppet in the forest, the girl saves him and tries to educate him, since she sees Buratino as a naughty and messy boy, who needs to be cured of his tendencies<sup>307</sup>. Later it is shown that Buratino is in fact in every aspect better than Malvina: Malvina is easily scared, whereas Buratino is brave, Malvina is passive and Buratino active, Malvina's "education" does not help in the situations the puppets get into, whereas Buratino's resourcefulness and industriousness save them. Even Malvina's attempts to educate Buratino are presented as somewhat ridiculous. Furthermore, the puppet Pierrot's love for Malvina and his artistic inclinations are presented as inferior to Buratino's resourcefulness. Buratino even serves as an example to Malvina and Pierrot: encouraged by Buratino's bravery they finally dare fight the enemy.

The golden key, the secret door and the fantastic puppet theatre give the story a moral acceptable in Soviet literature: striving for collective happiness. The puppets are oppressed by the puppet master and finding a theatre of their own gives them a chance to work as they wish and form a happy puppet collective, where everyone is supposed to work equally. However, after finding the theatre Buratino seems to dominate over the rest of the puppets: for example, the play the puppets start to perform is the story of Buratino<sup>308</sup>.

Collective strivings demand relative equality of the characters. For example, an omnipotent supernatural character like Collodi's blue-haired fairy does not fit well into such a scheme. The equal status of the characters is stressed by replacing the fairy with a blue-haired puppet. As a puppet, Malvina is on the same level as Buratino. Collodi's blue fairy does not have a name: giving a name to the puppet makes her more tangible as a character equal to Buratino. Malvina has preserved some of the features that make her first seem almost like a supernatural being. She is beautiful and lives in a forest

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<sup>307</sup> Similar situations in which a girl character tries to educate the boy protagonist can be found, for example, in Nosov's *Neznajka*.

<sup>308</sup> The fact that the first play is a story of Buratino's adventures is not necessarily a proof of Buratino's egoism. Tolstoy's *Golden Key* has been adapted as a play and the fact that the story ends by stating that the play you have just seen was in fact the play the puppets started playing in the theatre of their own creates a fascinating metafictional circular effect.



where animals provide her with everything she needs. All the "real magic", however, is gone. Later on, she is presented as a silly girl who is mainly concerned with superficial virtues and who is too afraid to do anything useful in difficult situations<sup>309</sup>: "Мальвина испуганно вскрикнула, хотя ничего не поняла.", "Malvina screamed out of fright, although she did not understand anything." (*Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino*, 70.) Buratino ridicules and rejects Malvina's methods of teaching by running away from her house<sup>310</sup>. At first, it seems that Buratino gets his punishment for rejecting Malvina's way of life when he gets to the Land of Fools, where he is cheated out of his last coins and thrown into a pond. Instead of a punishment, this turns out to be a beneficial turn in Buratino's life: in the pond, a turtle gives Buratino the golden key, the obvious symbol of prosperity.

Toy-narratives are often involved with existential dilemmas and concerned with what it is to be – or not to be – a human<sup>311</sup>. This theme is strongly present in *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, where the difference between humans and non-humans is treated in the context of Pinocchio's transformation into a real boy. Since Buratino does not turn into a human, such a possibility is never even discussed in the text, there is no explicit juxtaposition of puppets and humans. The only real child character present in the story is the boy who sells tickets to the puppet show and buys Buratino's ABC-book. The boy calls Buratino 'derevjannyj čeloveček', 'a little wooden fellow' and will not trade a theatre ticket for Buratino's hat, since it is only made of paper, but no further implications follow. According to Petrovskij, Buratino already has as a puppet such human qualities that becoming a real human would be completely unnecessary<sup>312</sup>. As Mark Lipovetsky puts it "Он кукла, марионетка – и одновременно стопроцентный мальчишка." "He is a doll, a marionette – and at the same time a one hundred percent boy."<sup>313</sup> Still, puppets and the puppet theatre are such a strong metaphor, that they are bound to raise questions of what it is to be a human in the Soviet Union in the 1930s.

### 3.1.4.3. *Active pursuit of happiness or opportunism*

When Pinocchio finally succeeds in his attempts to become a good person he is transformed into a real human being by the magic of the blue-haired fairy. A powerful good fairy would not have been an acceptable character in the Soviet children's literature of the 1930s, since happiness could not be granted by a non-human high authority: it could only be achieved by collective hard work. There is no magic present in *Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino*<sup>314</sup>; the only fantasy element in the book is

<sup>309</sup> Galanov calls her "such a bluestocking with blue hair". Галанов 1985, 47.

<sup>310</sup> However, the idea of education is not totally undermined in Tolstoy's book: in the end Buratino's father Carlo makes it clear that although the puppets can begin working in the theatre, they must also go to school.

<sup>311</sup> Kuznets 1994, 7.

<sup>312</sup> Петровский 1986, 206.

<sup>313</sup> Липовецкий 2003,

<sup>314</sup> See, for example, Петровский 1986, 202.

animated puppets and talking animals. Paradoxically, there is some kind of unknown authority behind Buratino's and his friends' happiness too: before they can begin their independent work they have to find the fantastic puppet theatre. The key word here is *to find*. It is never said who has originally made the puppet theatre, who has hidden it in Carlo's basement and why. It just exists there, waiting to be found and used. All Buratino must do is to find the theatre that is perfect and complete in itself: Buratino has found his ready-made place in the world. During his quest, Buratino does not even know what he is pursuing: it is only quite late in the story that he learns where the secret door is and only in the last but one chapter that he finds out what is hidden behind the door. Buratino is not an active character determinedly searching for a way to make the life of the puppets better. Instead, he is an opportunist acting in the way the situation demands and his success is based on lucky coincidences.

The goal Buratino achieves, the fabulous puppet theatre, seems to be a guarantee of a secured future – or a symbol of eternal childhood<sup>315</sup>. Buratino's world is ready-made and perfect: there is a right place for everyone. The characters do not have the freedom to choose from different possibilities. In order to become happy, they must struggle to find the place assigned to them by some unknown authority<sup>316</sup>. The perfect place for a puppet is of course a puppet theatre, and in Buratino's case, a mechanical one. The theatre is equipped with a mechanism that regulates the background and mechanical animals. When Buratino finds the theatre, he becomes a part of this well-designed machinery.

Despite the happy end having gloomy connotations to a society where individuals perform their designated roles in a mechanical puppet theatre, the theatre as a motif also has more optimistic implications. Mark Lipovetsky<sup>317</sup> reads Buratino's theatre in relation to Tolstoy's other contemporary writing. He points out that, for Tolstoy, Buratino was not only one book (1935) but a project also including working with the stage adaptation of the story (for ЦДТ 1936) and a film scenario (1937, filmed in 1939 by Aleksandr Ptuško). At the same time, he was working on the first Soviet literary work on Stalin, *Hleb (Bread)*, and during the years 1933 – 1937, Tolstoy turned from a slightly suspect emigrant writer and fellow traveller<sup>318</sup> into a Soviet classic writer. Lipovetsky has studied Tolstoy's manuscripts for Buratino the play and found drawings of "a moustached man" beside two passages of text describing the desire for a theatre of one's own. Lipovetsky sees it as a sign of the author's wish that through the infinite authority of Stalin he could somehow get "a theatre of his own", the possibility of creative freedom out of the petty control of smaller authorities. In this

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<sup>315</sup> Nikolajeva 2000, 63.

<sup>316</sup> A similar lack of freedom of choice in Volkov's *Volšebnik Izumrudnogo goroda* has been pointed out by Mitrokhina who notes that Elli "exists in relation to a known future". In order to succeed, she does not need to make decisions of her own but to fulfil the orders of the magic book. Mitrokhina 1997, 184.

<sup>317</sup> Липовецкий 2003.

<sup>318</sup> In relation to Soviet literature, the term *popučik*, fellow traveller, refers to an author who was not an active supporter of the revolution, yet quietly accepted it.

Lipovetsky sees an oxymoronic “utopia of a free marionette”<sup>319</sup>. He also points out an interesting difference between Pinocchio and Buratino: Pinocchio’s famous long nose becomes even longer every time he lies, whereas such a punishment is completely missing from Buratino. On the contrary, lying is one of Buratino’s most important character traits; in a sense, Buratino as a character is close to Petrushka, the trickster of the traditional Russian folk puppet theatre. During his adventures, the ability to lie saves him from many a tight spot. Lipovetsky reads this as a further proof of Tolstoy’s wish for artistic freedom: Buratino does not need to be transformed into a human, he only needs the chance to “lie freely”. In contrast with the theatre of Karabas Barabas, a theatre of one’s own is a better choice, perhaps not an absolute freedom, yet at least a relative one.

#### **3.1.4.4. *The enemy comes from outside***

Whereas Pinocchio must solve his inner conflicts to become a real boy, Buratino has no such conflicts. In addition to outshining his friends, Buratino also overcomes his enemy, Karabas Barabas the puppet master. The person against self -conflict has changed into a more easily grasped person against person conflict<sup>320</sup>. The puppet master appears in Collodi’s Pinocchio too, but only as a minor character. Tolstoy has given him a new name<sup>321</sup> and made him the main antagonist who tries to outwit Buratino in order to get the fantastic puppet theatre for his own use. Buratino’s quest is not to become a better person but to overcome an external enemy.

As an enemy, Karabas Barabas is close to traditional fairy tale antagonists: his main purpose is to prevent Buratino from succeeding in his quest. The puppet master is also

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<sup>319</sup> Липовецкий 2003, chapter 2.

<sup>320</sup> Nikolajeva 2006a, 100.

<sup>321</sup> The new name suggests the dubious nature of the character. The first part of the name Karabas might allude to the fairy tale Puss in Boots, in which the cat calls his master by the false name of Marquis de Carabas. The latter part of the name Barabas might be an allusion to the biblical criminal Barabbas, or just a humorous rhyme. The name Karabas also bears a connotation to Kornei Chukovsky’s children’s poem *Barmalej* (1925) in which it is used as a nonsense word, when Barmalej the man-eating robber scares the children:

Он страшными глазами сверкает,  
Он страшными зубами стучит,  
Он страшный костёр зажигает,  
Он страшное слово кричит:  
"Карабас! Карабас! Пообедаю сейчас!"  
Чуковский 2002, 143.

He flashes his terrible eyes  
He gnarls his terrible teeth,  
He lights a terrible fire  
He shouts the terrible words:  
“Karabas! Karabas! And now I will eat!”

an oppressor typical of Soviet propaganda: he is a representative of the owning class who runs his theatre by treating his workers, the puppets, harshly. His repulsive features are fortified by introducing his helper, the old man Duremar, who catches and sells leeches for his living; leeches being a typical epithet of the bourgeoisie in propaganda, the companionship with Duremar also reinforces Karabas Barabas's links to the owning class. Karabas Barabas does not succeed in his quest to find the puppet theatre and in the end, he is left forever outside society, sitting in the rain in a puddle of water.

In Volkov's *Volšebnaja strana* series (The Magic Land series), too, the enemies usually come from outside the community. In every new book, the enemies are of more alien origin. The witches of the first book are inhabitants of the Magic Land, yet they live outside the society and are very different from the rest of the populace of the land. Urfin Džjus, the main antagonist in the second and the fourth book, is an outcast, who lives far from other people. In the third book, Èlli's adversaries are the seven kings, who exercise their power over the oppressed inhabitants of underground caves. Giant Arahna of the fifth book has come from "the Big World" and belongs to a former time. Finally, in the last book, the enemies are space aliens who try to take over the world.

Urfin Džjus is an interesting villain in the sense that his evilness is motivated and his thoughts are shown to the readers. In *Urfin Džjus i ego derevjannye soldaty* (1963, *Urfin Jus and His Wooden Soldiers*) he builds an army of wooden soldiers and starts taking over the Magic Land. With the help of Èlli and her uncle, Urfin Džjus's troops are defeated and he is sent into exile. In *Ognennyj bog marranov* (1968, *The Fiery God of the Marrans*), Urfin Džjus returns after plotting revenge for ten years. This time he makes himself the leader of the marran tribe and starts conquering the Magic Land again, but once again, he is defeated and has to flee. Urfin Džjus is met for the third time in the next book, *Žěltyj tuman* (1970, *The Yellow Fog*), but this time he is not a villain. An entire chapter of the book is dedicated to Urfin Džjus's remorse: he reflects upon his former life, sees the errors of his ways and refuses to help the giant Arahna. In the last book of the series, *Tajna zabrošennogo zamka* (*The Secret of the Abandoned Castle*), Urfin Džjus has changed sides for good and takes part in the fight against the alien invaders.

The enemies depicted in *Tajna zabrošennogo zamka* (*The Secret of the Abandoned Castle*) are very different from the villains in the preceding books. Whereas in the five previous books the enemies have been more or less typical fantasy characters, the new enemies resemble more science fiction characters. The aliens have a technologically advanced space ship and they use laser weapons and hypnosis against their enemies. Moreover, the element of the revolution is present: the aliens come from the planet Ramerija where the people are divided into a race of masters and a race of slaves. The inhabitants of the Magic Land befriend the slaves and show them how to free themselves from the power of their oppressors. When they return to the home planet, they are supposed to free the entire population. *Tajna zabrošennogo zamka* was written in 1975 and published 1982, five years after Volkov's death. The weapons of modern

warfare introduced in the book suggest that it should be read in relation to the contemporary political situation and contemporary technological and military achievements. *Tajna zabrošennogo zamka* is not the first Soviet children's fantasy using space as a setting for a capitalist dystopia: Nosov's *Neznajka na Lune* (1966, Dunno in the Moon) depicted a capitalist society inside the Moon. However, the optimistic interest in space technology of the mid-sixties present in Nosov's book<sup>322</sup> has in Volkov's story been given darker shades when the threat of alien invaders shadows the protagonists' lives.

### 3.1.4.5. *Trusting the authorities*

An individual's relation to the authorities is an important issue in Soviet retellings of Western classics. In children's literature, the authority is often most explicitly visible in the form of the parents. When Jerry Griswold presents his reconstruction of the basic plot of the American children's classic, he sees as one of the main features of the stories that the protagonists are orphans, as is the case in Baum's *Wizard of Oz*<sup>323</sup>. In contrast, not one of the child protagonists of the Soviet fantasy texts that have been used as the material for this study is an orphan. Also Èlli in Volkov's *Volšebnik Izumrudnogo goroda* and its sequels has both a mother and a father and, in addition, a bunch of other relatives who have a protective attitude towards her. In the first version of *Volšebnik Izumrudnogo goroda* from 1939, however, Èlli was an orphan living with her aunt and uncle like Baum's Dorothy. In the 1959 and later versions, Èlli has parents. The presence of the parents seems important and it is stated already in the first words of the book.

Среди обширной канзасской степи жила девочка Элли. Её отец фермер Джон, целый день работал в поле, мать Анна хлопотала по хозяйству. (*Volšebnik Izumrudnogo goroda*, 6)

In the middle of the vast Kansas prairie lived a girl named Èlli. Her father, farmer John, worked all day on the field and her mother Anna took care of the household.

As Mitrokhina points out, Baum's Dorothy acts like an adult in her relationship to others, whereas Èlli's position is that of a child<sup>324</sup>. Unlike many protagonists of Western fantasy, Èlli and in later sequels her sister Ènni are always able to trust their parents so strongly that they can freely tell them about their adventures in the Magic Land. The parents believe their daughters; in Western fantasy, it is typical that all the fantastic adventures are kept secret from the adults, and if adults somehow hear about the children's adventures, they do not believe them. When the people of the Magic Land need the children's help, the children always negotiate with their parents and ask permission to travel. There are no flaws present in the parents: their decisions are

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<sup>322</sup> Загидулина 2005, 215.

<sup>323</sup> Griswold 1992, 5.

<sup>324</sup> Mitrokhina 1997, 184.

always just and right. The parents, especially the girls' mother, are anxious about their children's welfare, but still the parents think that it is their duty to let the children go and help their friends. Parents do not stand in the way of their children: on the contrary, they assist them in every way they can. A similar trustworthy parent in *Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino* is Buratino's father figure, Carlo. He is seen as a character of authority throughout the story. It is always Carlo who saves his son when he needs help most desperately. In the beginning, Carlo saves his son from the teeth of a rat and even at the end of the story, Carlo acts like a *deus ex machina* when he saves the puppets from Karabas Barabas. Unlike Pinocchio who becomes independent towards the end of the story and is ready to take care of his father, Geppetto, Buratino still needs his father Carlo as his guardian. The Soviet fantasy stories present family as a safe haven as long as the children trust their parents. On the other hand, they bestow a prominently authoritarian view of parents' power over their children. When it comes to the children's relationship with their parents, there are no ambiguities: the authority of the parents is never questioned.

Parents are not the only authority figures in the texts in question. In Volkov's Magic Land series, different power structures are an important thematic. As much as Baum's original Land of Oz has been seen as an allegory of the politics of the turn of the century United States of America<sup>325</sup>, Mitrokhina sees in the Magic Land an image of a totalitarian state, although an ambivalent one with a certain amount of inbuilt social criticism<sup>326</sup>. There are different kinds of rulers in different parts of the Magic Land and some of them are unmistakably presented as righteous and others as corrupt. Mitrokhina sees in Volkov's books criticism towards the authoritarian rulers that are presented as cruel and greedy for power<sup>327</sup>. However, even the "good" rulers resort to the same doubtful methods of exercising power as the corrupt ones. For example, in *Sem' podzemnyh korolej* (1964, *The Seven Underground Kings*) a special kind of magic water is introduced that makes people sink into a deep sleep. During their sleep, they forget everything about their former life and must be re-educated. The authoritarian underground kings use this water to take turns in ruling their country, and their use of the water is shown as being of a dubious nature. Later, the water is used by the positive heroes to make their enemies forget their sinister lives after which they can be re-educated to useful professions. Although the goals of the positive heroes are presented as virtuous, they end up using the same doubtful methods as the former rulers, and the use of the magic water by the positive heroes is never questioned.

According to Mitrokhina, Volkov sees trusting the authorities as one of the main virtues of a Soviet citizen. This is visible both in the relationships between the inhabitants of the Magic Land and in Elli's and Enni's relationship with their parents. Like the world of Tolstoy's *Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino*, the Magic Land seems to be a place where everything is pre-arranged. Elli is told that in order to get

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<sup>325</sup> See, for example, Zipes 1991 (1983), 121 – 131; Riukulehto 2001, 14 – 30.

<sup>326</sup> Mitrokhina 1997, 186.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

back home she must follow the instructions of the good fairy Villina's magic book. She is supposed to go to the Emerald City to meet the powerful wizard Goodwin, take with her three other creatures and help them find what they need. Elli does as she is told. When she deviates from the ascribed road, she gets her punishment: she is almost killed by an ogre. As in Baum's original, also in Volkov's story, the wizard turns out to be a fraud and the instructions of the all-knowing book do not guarantee Elli's success. The wizard being a fraud is not Volkov's invention only: also Baum's wizard turns out to be a circus charlatan and the entire Emerald City is a huge fraud. The Wizard calls it the Emerald city because of its green colour and makes the people wear green glasses so that the name fits better. Deborah Thacker reads this as "a comment on American consumerism and the uneasy relationship between appearance and 'truth'"<sup>328</sup>. In the Soviet version, it seems easier to read it as a comment on the authorities trying to give the people an illusion of prosperity. Mitrokhina sees in this the Soviet and Russian ambivalent attitude towards the authorities: on one hand, they must be respected; on the other, they should never be completely trusted<sup>329</sup>.

In *Buratino*, the mistrust towards authorities is even more pronounced. The only authority presented in a favourable light is Buratino's father figure, Carlo. The puppeteer Karabas Barabas is mainly an antagonist, not someone who should be treated as a person of authority. The official authorities of the story, the dog policemen of the Land of the Fools and the policemen to whom Karabas Barabas turns for help, are presented rather like caricatures of good-for-nothing capitalist officials than real figures of authority. However, the blue-haired puppet girl Malvina is in the beginning of the story treated as an authoritative figure for Buratino. She saves Buratino's life after the robbers have hung him in a tree and afterwards starts teaching Buratino and disciplining him: she forces him to take castor oil for his health and tries to teach him table manners, mathematics and writing. When Buratino does not behave himself, Malvina shouts at him and locks him in a dark closet. Buratino does not approve of Malvina's teaching methods:

– Разве так воспитывают детей?.. Это мученье, а не воспитание... Так не сиди да так не ешь... Ребёнок, может, ещё букваря не освоил, – она сразу за чернильницу хватается... (*Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino*, 48)

– Is this the way to teach children? This is torture, not education. Do not sit like this, do not eat like that. The child has not yet learned his ABC-book, and she just gives him a bottle of ink...

Buratino flees from the closet. After his escape, he is swindled by the treacherous fox and cat and gets into trouble with the police of the Land of Fools, but manages to flee from them too. Later on, the roles change. During their further adventures, Buratino is the one with power, whereas Malvina is helpless and does not know how to act in new circumstances. In *Buratino*, the attitude towards all authority, that is, all but parental

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<sup>328</sup> Thacker and Webb 2005 (2002), 89.

<sup>329</sup> Mitrokhina 1997, 185 - 186.

authority, is sceptical. By resisting the authorities, Buratino succeeds in his attempts and reaches his goal, which paradoxically enough means subordination to a higher, anonymous authority.

### 3.1.4.6. *Can a child make a difference?*

Xenia Mitrokhina points out that in every new book of Volkov's Magic Land series, the conflicts get more dangerous and more militarised and the child protagonist's chances to deal with them are more limited<sup>330</sup>. The decreasing importance of the child protagonist is also seen in the way the point of view shifts in the sequels away from Èlli. In *Volšebnik Izumrudnogo goroda*, Èlli is clearly the protagonist. The storyline follows her all the way from Kansas to the Magic Land and back, and the story is as much about Èlli getting back home as about saving the Magic Land. In the sequels, the stories always begin from the point of view of the Magic Land inhabitants: every time there is some kind of disaster threatening the country, and when things keep getting worse, Èlli or her sister Ènni are called for help. True, in the third and fourth book of the series, the children are not invited to the Magic Land. In *Sem' podzemnyh korolej* (The Seven Underground Kings) Èlli and her cousin Fred go exploring caves near Fred's home and accidentally end up in the Magic Land. The children's efforts to flee from the hands of the underground people are as important as solving the conflict between the kings. In *Ognennyj bog marranov* (1968, *The Fiery God of the Marrans*), Ènni and Tim want to go to the land Èlli has told them about and travel there through the desert on mechanical mules. However, both of these books begin with a description of dangers threatening the Magic Country and although the children's help is not directly asked for, they turn up just at the right moment to solve the problems the land is facing.

The attitude towards the importance of an individual child in Volkov's books is twofold. On one hand, Èlli becomes almost a saint in the Magic Land. Èlli is treated as a hero after she has involuntarily killed the wicked witch Gingema by accidentally landing on the witch in her house that is brought to the Magic Land by a hurricane. The inhabitants of the Magic Land call her "feja ubivajuščego domika", "the fairy of the house that killed the wicked witch". They also believe that Èlli has magical abilities. The Scarecrow and the Tinman always remember her as their saviour and it is always Èlli whom they trust when the Magic Land is in danger. Èlli becomes almost a cult hero, not unlike the real life personages of the Soviet cult of revolution heroes. On the other hand, Èlli cannot help her friends alone. In the sequels, new child characters are introduced: on the second and the third time Èlli travels to the Magic Land with her male relatives, and in the last three books instead of Èlli goes her sister Ènni<sup>331</sup>. In a

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<sup>330</sup> Mitrokhina 1997, 186 - 187

<sup>331</sup> Volkov has given his American characters English names. The name of Èlli's little sister is actually Annie, yet I have chosen to use in this study the transliterated form of the Russian version in order to preserve the similarity of the names Èlli and Ènni. In studies of Volkov's



sense, Èlli and Ènni are, in practice, interchangeable. Even their names are almost identical: the only difference is the different consonants in the middle.

At the end of the third book of the series, *Sem' podzemnyh korolej*, Èlli is told by an inhabitant of the Magic Land, the mouse queen, that she will not be able to enter the Magic Land any more. Volkov uses a pattern familiar from fantasy fiction, for example, C. S. Lewis's Narnia series, in which children travel to a secondary world, but as they grow old enough, they are no longer allowed to do so. Instead, a new generation of children is invited into the secondary world. In Volkov's case, Èlli takes her cousin Fred with her. Later on, she tells about the Magic Land to her sister Ènni who decides to go there with her friend Tim. Interestingly enough, Volkov also lets adults travel with the children: Uncle Charlie visits the Magic Land with both Èlli and Ènni. Moreover, Fred is able to go back to the Magic Land even after he has grown up. There seems to be an urge to introduce positive adult heroes as protagonists in Soviet children's literature. Perhaps the best-known adult role model in Soviet children's literature is Sergey Mikhalkov's Uncle Stěpa (1935), a brave sailor always ready to help children. Èlli's uncle Charlie, who is introduced to the reader in the second book of the series, is definitely a positive hero. He is a sailor, who has led an interesting life full of adventures. He turns out to be a skilful mechanic too and carries around with him useful gadgets that can be used in the Magic Land. Uncle Charlie has only one leg, which could be an allusion to war veterans, who in the Soviet Union were, at least officially, highly esteemed people. On the other hand, it makes him equal to the Scarecrow, Tinman and the Cowardly Lion of the first book, since they are all characters who are missing something important<sup>332</sup>, but despite their weakness turn out to be the real heroes of the story.

Both Tolstoy's and Volkov's texts leave the child characters quite few chances to make their own decisions. Buratino, Èlli and Ènni are presented as positive characters, who do not have major inner conflicts and who always know which way they should choose. Buratino makes a few bad choices in the beginning of the story, in the part that follows Collodi's example most accurately. As soon as the adventures invented by Tolstoy begin, Buratino has already learnt his lesson and shows no weakness of any kind. Èlli too turns off the yellow brick road once; she is immediately punished and never shows any desire to do so again. The child characters in these books must act within certain boundaries defined by the authorities, who remain unknown to the characters. When the child characters succeed in performing their tasks, they get their rewards: Buratino becomes appreciated by his father and friends, Èlli finds her way home and wins the admiration of the Magic Land inhabitants.

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books, Èlli is usually transliterated as Ellie, although also Allie could be a possible transliteration. Of other American characters in the books – Uncle Charlie, Fred, Tim – I have used names that correspond to actual English names.

<sup>332</sup> Just as in Baum's original, Volkov's Scarecrow does not have brains, Tinman lacks a heart and the Lion courage.

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Since literature was seen as a prominent means of educating young Soviet citizens, propaganda was a prominent part of children's literature. Propaganda was openly present in the texts, since it was considered a valid instrument of building and preserving the society. The aims of Soviet propaganda are especially visible in texts that are rewritten versions of foreign children's literature. Not surprisingly, propaganda in children's books covered the most important events in Soviet history as well as the main ideological principles of the society. Children already at an early age became aware of the culturally important concepts of the Soviet foundation myth; yet they also became accustomed to propaganda as an important part of literature.

### 3.2. Positive heroes – educating perfect children

Children's literature has a long tradition of using virtuous child characters to provide the reader with good examples. Soviet literature is no exception; on the contrary, it has probably gone even further in introducing perfect small child characters than its Western counterparts. This is partly due to the general demand for a *položitel'nyj geroj*, positive hero, in Soviet literature. A positive hero is one of the central concepts of socialist realism. The positive hero is a character that has all the best virtues desired of a model Soviet citizen, an exemplary figure that the readers could imitate and consider as their ideal<sup>333</sup>. The positive character does not represent the everyday reality but the "ideal reality". In adult literature, positive heroes are usually workers or soldiers with strong will, passionate socialist ideals and an absolute loyalty to the party. Although the positive hero is a markedly Soviet phenomenon and closely associated with socialist realism, the models for it already existed in pre-Soviet Russia. Mathewson traces the desire for the emblematic literary heroes even to the *bogatyr* heroes of Russian folklore, and notes that personified images of virtue have been used to serve different interests, whether religious, social, moral or political<sup>334</sup>. Even in the nineteenth century when literary characters generally had more dimensions than the earlier literary heroes, the search for hero images continued; Russian literature since the age of realism has been described as hero-centred<sup>335</sup>.

Positive heroes were also the standard of Soviet children's literature<sup>336</sup>. Arkady Gaidar's Timur, Aleksandr Fadeev's Oleg Koshevoi, Vitaly Gubarev's Pavlik Morozov and many others are familiar to several generations of Soviet readers<sup>337</sup>. Positive heroes were an especially prominent phenomenon during the Stalinist era that produced child characters prepared to perform heroic deeds and sacrifice their own happiness or even their life for collective causes<sup>338</sup>. In children's literature there is, however, a contradiction between the use of a positive hero and the inherent idea of character education. The demand for a positive hero made it practically impossible to write stories about naughty Stuwwelpeters or Max and Morizes, yet a perfect child

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<sup>333</sup> See, for example, Clark 1981, 46.

<sup>334</sup> Mathewson 1975, 13.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>336</sup> O'Dell 1978, 98, 104.

<sup>337</sup> Timur is the protagonist of *Timur i ego komanda* (1940, Timur and his squad), a famous novel about children performing good deeds in their home village while the men are away in the Red Army. The book inspired several "Timur movements" amongst Soviet children. Oleg Koshevoi was an actual young Soviet war hero and a member of a Ukrainian underground group resisting the German occupation during the Second World War. Fadeev's novel *Molodaja Gvardija* (1945, the second version 1951, The young guard) was based on the history of the underground group. Pavlik Morozov was a notorious child martyr, whose mostly made-up life story was supposed to serve as an example for Soviet pioneers. On Gubarev's books on Pavlik Morozov, see Chapter 4.

<sup>338</sup> Rudova 2007, 24.

character left no room for character education; there was no need to improve a character that was already perfect to begin with. Soviet authors solved this problem in several ways. One was the use of secondary characters that were less perfect than the protagonist. Another way to get round the problem of the perfect child protagonist was to create child characters that were inherently good and had only some minor flaws that had to be corrected. After the Stalinist era, heroic child characters made way for more ordinary, yet still inherently good, child characters<sup>339</sup>. Illuminating examples are the main characters of several stories by Nikolaj Nosov, for example, *Vesělaja semejka* (1949, *The Happy Little Family*) and *Vitja Maleev v škole i doma* (1951 *Vitja Maleev in School and at Home*). In the humorous *škol'naja povest'*, school story *Vesělaja semejka* the main characters, two schoolboys, do not pay enough attention at school because they have another focus of interest: building an incubator to hatch chickens. The conflict is solved when the class collective decides to do something about the situation: classmates take part in the boys' experiment so that they have time to do their schoolwork properly. The main characters are not depicted as "bad" or "naughty"; they are essentially good boys whose main "problem" is their enthusiasm, which, after being steered in the right direction, actually turns out to be a virtue.

Fantasy as a genre offers several strategies to deal with the contradiction of the demand for a positive hero and the need to educate. Many of these strategies are used in other genres too, yet in the field of fantasy they can exist in forms that would be impossible in more mimetic genres. This chapter concentrates on these strategies. In several texts, perfect friends are introduced as positive heroes who serve as examples for the less perfect protagonist and the intended child reader. The subchapter about fathers and sons concentrates on the limits of the hero's perfection. In many texts, the protagonist's morale is tested by his relationship with one of the main Soviet virtues, the love of work. An interesting phenomenon in Soviet children's literature, the abundance of adult heroes, is partly explained as a result of the need for a positive hero. Finally, the element of a double is an interesting example of how fantasy as a genre can utilize an element that is widely used in children's literature in general. The motif of a double or twins is not uncommon in children's literature, either in fantasy or in realism<sup>340</sup>, but in fantasy it can have forms impossible in other genres.

### **3.2.1. Perfect friends: spokesmen for collective happiness**

One way to get round the problem of perfect children in need of character education is to introduce beside the hero a perfect child that is presented as a positive hero. Sometimes the part of the positive hero can be played by a group of children. The use of two contrasting characters is an easily applicable means of teaching and it has been widely used in children's literature<sup>341</sup>. A very straightforward early Soviet use of it can

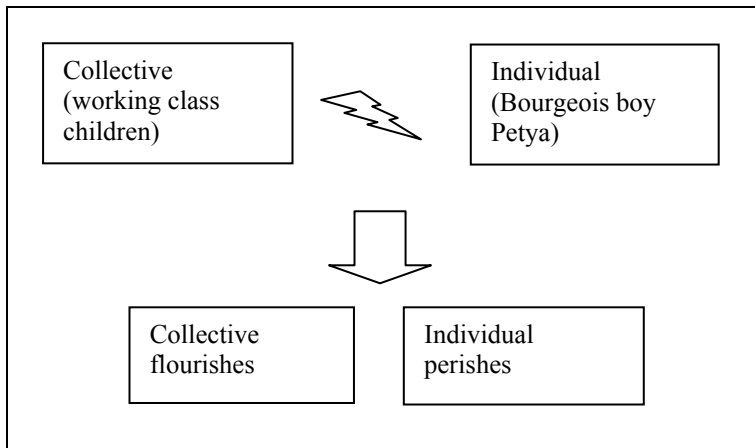
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<sup>339</sup> Rudova 2007, 24.

<sup>340</sup> See, for example, Nikolajeva 2002c, 278; McCallum 1999, 67 – 98.

<sup>341</sup> Nikolajeva 2002c, 277 – 278.

be found, for example, in Vladimir Mayakovsky’s narrative poem *Skazka o Pete, tolstom rebênke, i o Sime, kotoryj tonkij* (1925, Story of the Fat Boy Petya and of Sima, Who is Thin), in which the virtues of the working class boy are strongly contrasted with the vices of the bourgeois boy. The conflict between the collective ideals represented by the “good” character and the individualism represented by the “bad” character is solved in rather a grotesque way if read mimetically: the bourgeois boy explodes from over-eating and the working class children take all the sweets bursting out of his stomach. In the struggle between the two opposites, the individual is destroyed and the collective prospers.

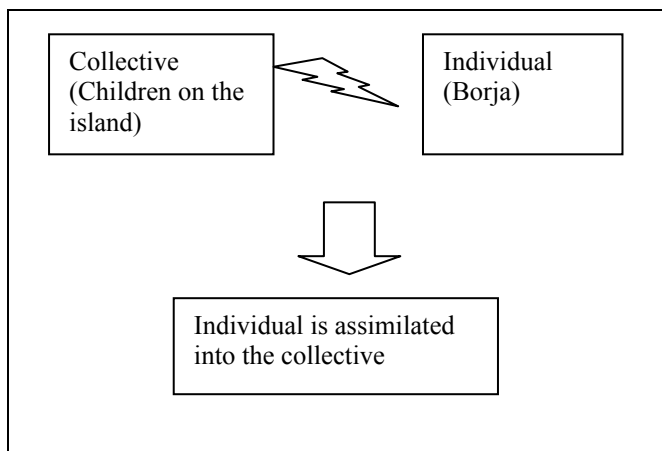


**Figure 1:** The conflict between collective and individual in Mayakovsky’s *Skazka o Pete, tolstom rebênke, i o Sime, kotoryj tonkij* 1925.

In the texts discussed in this study, the contrast between the characters is not as strong as in Mayakovsky’s agitational poem with its caricature-like characters. In these fantasy stories, there is no juxtaposition of “bad” and “good” characters; rather, there is the juxtaposition between “good” and “perfect”. The conflict between good and evil is examined in the terms of hero and antagonist. Whereas in Mayakovsky’s poem, the bad character perishes and the good one prospers, in the fantasy stories the good character develops in order to be more like the perfect character. This reflects one of the main virtues of the Soviet citizen: valuing collective happiness above individual interests. One example of Soviet children’s fantasy text dealing with the idea of the superiority of the collective over the individual is Vitalij Gubarev’s *Troe na ostrove* (1959, Three Children on an Island)<sup>342</sup>. The main character of the story is Borja, quite an ordinary schoolboy. He finds a magical handkerchief that grants wishes and uses it to avoid work and impress his friends, Mila and Jura. These two friends provide a contrast to Borja: whereas Borja has flaws in his nature that are represented by his careless and ill-motivated wishes, Mila and Jura are presented as essentially perfect children. Whereas Borja is lazy, both Mila and Jura enjoy doing their share of work,

<sup>342</sup> For a discussion on the relationship between the collective and individual in this text, see Nikolajeva 2002b, 173 – 177.

and finally they make even Borja understand the value of work. Gubarev’s novel is a genuine example of a book propagating the idea of the collective’s healthy effect on the individual. The idea is to show how the collective, in this case two friends, helps the individual who has gone astray. Mila and Jura are there to help when Borja’s wishes get out of hand and, finally, Mila destroys Borja’s miracle-making talisman when she unties the knot in the handkerchief unaware that it is the real essence of the wish-granting talisman. The loss of the talisman gets the children into serious trouble. Yet the moral of the story is that the real victory for Borja is that he can overcome all the difficulties without magic – with the help of his friends: “Да, чудесно жить на свете, если у тебя настоящие друзья!”, “Life is marvellous when you have true friends!” However, it takes Borja some time to come to this conclusion. At first, he tries to rebel against his friends: he tries to exercise his power over them with the help of the magic scarf. His actions get all three children deeper and deeper in trouble. The problems are solved only when he adapts to the will of his friends, i.e. the will of the collective. The result of the conflict between individual and collective is rather different from that in Mayakovsky’s poem. Although the collective overcomes the individual, the individual is not destroyed but rather assimilated as a part of the collective.



**Figure 2:** The conflict between collective and individual in Vitalij Gubarev’s *Troe na ostrove* (1959)

Although in Soviet children’s fantasy, the Soviet virtues are highly praised and the violation of Soviet principles is shown as destructive, the child characters opposing them do have a chance, or rather, a duty, of reformation. The fate of adult characters breaking the society’s rules is different: for example, in Aleksei Tolstoy’s *Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino* (The Golden Key, or the Adventures of Buratino) at the end of the story, the evil puppet master is shut outside the collective and in Lagin’s *Starik Hottabyč* (Old Man Hottabyč) the evil genie Omar gets trapped in space. The difference can be explained by their different functions in the story. The adult offender usually has the function of the antagonist, whereas the child offender in question is

presented as the main character, the hero of the story<sup>343</sup>. Since the positive hero of Soviet literature, including both children's and adult literature, has a strong claim to serve as an example, the characters in general probably have a stronger than usual undercurrent of being objects of identification for the reader. Here I do not mean that actual readers would have identified strongly with the characters; the characters had rather been built in such a way that they could be presented as identification points for the reader. If the child reader was supposed to empathize strongly with the main character of the story and to learn a lesson from the story, the character had to be presented with the possibility of positive development – positive in this connection meaning the possibility of achieving the desired Soviet virtues. In *Troe na ostrove*, the conflict between the collective and the individual is furthermore softened by presenting the conflict as a dream. At the end of the story, Borja wakes up and all the adventures turn out to have been a dream, although these are some minor details suggesting that some of it might have had something to do with reality. Consequently, Borja has not resisted the society's rules in his real life: he has merely resisted them in a dream. This might be seen as a form of the theory of *beskonfliktnost'*, the theory of non-conflicts, typical of the socialist realism of the 1950s.

Gubarev's *Troe na ostrove* also presents a perfect use of the collective character: a group of characters that share a common function in the story<sup>344</sup>. The collective character is a category of textual structure; it has no political connotations although it works well with the socialist principle of collective ideals. One could assume that in a culture where collective ideals are highly praised, the main characters of children's fantasy would be collective characters fighting against a common enemy. However, in several books, the main character is not a part of the collective character. He is rather an individual who at the end of the story is assimilated into the collective, or a part of the collective character that has gone astray and is returned to the collective. The friends of the main character, Jura and Mila, are an excellent example of collective character, whereas Borja himself is not part of that character. However, towards the end of the story he becomes closer to their collective by accepting their ideals.

### 3.2.2. *Fathers and sons*

One issue tied to the idea of a positive hero is the notion of “fathers and sons” that was present in Soviet culture. From Stalin's time onwards, the Soviet Union was often referred to as a “great family” in the official rhetoric<sup>345</sup>. Although the father of this family was obviously the head of the state, in the rhetoric, also some other figures might have the status of a father. The heroes of real life were highly esteemed, but they

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<sup>343</sup> In this sense, Urfin Džjus, the main adult villain in two of Aleksandr Volkov's Magic Land books, is an interesting exception: a character that starts out as a villain, yet as the series proceeds, turns into an important helper of the protagonists.

<sup>344</sup> Nikolajeva 2002c, 67 – 87.

<sup>345</sup> Clark 1981, 114.

could never reach the status of a father: they were merely respected as model “sons”<sup>346</sup>. The mainstream novel adopted the pattern of father and sons<sup>347</sup>. From the 1930s onward, the socialist realist novel has been full of eager sons under the supervision of their father and mentor figures. As in real life, also in literature, a son could not usually reach the status of a father no matter how hard he struggled.

In children’s literature, the image of a father and a son was also important. However, the nature of children’s literature brought its own characteristics to the issue. Since in most cases of Soviet children’s fantasy novels, the child does not grow up, he naturally cannot achieve the literal position of a father. Most novels dealt with in this study are limited to depicting only a relatively short time span. The child character may become a little older, a little wiser and a little closer to adulthood, but usually the text does not describe his maturation in actual adulthood. The only exceptions are some texts in which the narrator is the protagonist’s adult self as, for example, in Anatolij Aleksin’s *V strane večnyh kanikul* (In the Land of Eternal Holiday). When there are adult father figures<sup>348</sup> present in the texts, their authority is never questioned and the child character is not supposed to strive to become a father figure. Since within the scope of a children’s novel the question of achieving a father status almost never becomes relevant, it is sufficient for the child to attain the status of a model son. Although the child character was supposed to be a positive hero, he did not have to be absolutely perfect, there was still room for some character education.

In the texts dealt with in this study, the actual parents occupy only nominal roles. There are several prominent adult father figures, for example, Prokof’eva’s magician Alěša and Volkov’s uncle Charlie, who guide the child characters in their adventures. Actual parents tend to keep in the background. The phenomenon is not limited to Soviet children’s literature: it is rather universal. It is partly due to the status of children’s literature: one of the main issues dealt with in it is growing up and becoming more independent from adult supervision. The constant presence of parents would seriously undermine this purpose. Especially in fantasy stories, it would also undermine the excitement of the adventures. Also other formal parental figures in the text, for example, teachers, are depicted as fairly distant: a teacher can at best set an example to her pupils and act as a “supreme judge” in the story, or sometimes serve as a source of inspiration for the main child character, for example, in Kaverin’s short story *Nemuhinskie muzykanty* (The Musicians of the town Nemuhin). In comparison with contemporary Western children’s literature, there is one major difference concerning the relationship between children and adults. In Western children’s literature, the

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<sup>346</sup> Clark 1981, 127 – 128. Clark uses as an example of these heroic sons the hero aviators that were highly praised in Soviet media.

<sup>347</sup> Clark 1981, 129.

<sup>348</sup> Father figures do not have to be biological parents, but characters who have – either permanently or temporarily – taken the position of the parent: for example, relatives, teachers or pioneer leaders. Roberta Seelinger Trites has adopted the term *in loco parentis* for characters fulfilling the role of parents in young adult literature. Trites 2000.



child's rebellion against parents is often seen as crucial for the child's development<sup>349</sup>. In Soviet children's literature, the idea of questioning the parental authority was unthinkable. The child was not to criticize the actions of his parents, teachers, pioneer group leaders etc. Because the real adults of the stories are raised on such a high pedestal that questioning or even discussing their authority is virtually impossible, the place of the symbolical father is often occupied by the main character's peers: schoolmates or friends.

The previous section dealt with the idea of perfect friends in Gubarev's *Troe na ostrove* (Three Children on an Island). In that text, it could be said that all three child characters are presented as "sons". The "father" is not explicitly present in the text. The perfect friends, Mila and Jura, are presented as "model sons" and Borja is first an "ordinary son" who, after accepting the rules of the collective, is a step closer to becoming a model son himself too. The goal of becoming a model son is presented as possible to attain: although it is not openly stated at the end of the story that from this moment onwards Borja will be a model citizen, the reader can suppose that he at least has good chances of becoming one.

An example of a friend that is perfect to an extent that is very hard for the main character to reach is found in Anatolij Aleksin's novel *V strane večnyh kanikul* (1964, The Land of Eternal Holiday). The difference between the main character Petja and his friend Valerik is stated in the first chapter of the novel by the adult retrospective narrator:

С годами я стал замечать, что дружба очень часто связывает людей с разными и даже противоположными характерами. Сильный хочет поддержать бесхарактерного, словно бы поделиться с ним своей волей и мужеством; добрый хочет отогреть чье-то холодное, черствое сердце; настойчивый хочет заразить своим упорством легкомысленного и увлечь его за собой...

Валерик тоже пытался вести меня за собой, но я то и дело терял его след и сбивался с дороги. Ведь это он, к примеру, заставил меня заниматься в школе общественной работой: быть членом санитарного кружка. (*V strane večnyh kanikul*, 366)

As the years went by, I began to realise that friendship often binds together people of different or even opposite characters. A strong person wants to encourage a weak-willed one with his will and courage; a friendly one wants to warm up someone's cold and unkind heart; a level-headed one wants to stimulate a light-minded one with his determination...

Valerik too tried to guide me, but I often lost my way. It was he who, for example, made me take part in collective work and introduced me to the public health service group.

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<sup>349</sup> See, for example, Trites 2000, 55. "The role of parents in adolescent literature is one of the defining characteristics of the genre. Since Anglophone cultures, by and large, usually accept as a given the premise that adolescents must separate from their parents in order to grow, the literatures of these cultures reflect the same bias."

The imbalance between the two friends is striking: Valerik is presented as extremely strong compared to Petja, and it is anticipated that Petja will never meet the high standards of his friend. Although the boys are classmates they are not equals: their relationship is almost like the relationship between child and adult.

The novel is a fantasy story with a clearcut educational message: Petja seems to be in need of some character education. He wins a bicycle race in a New Year's celebrations and as a prize gets his wish granted by Ded Moroz, Father Frost. He wishes for eternal holidays. The wish becomes true and, during the story, he gets other wishes granted too. Whereas in Gubarev's *Troe na ostrove* the main character first tries to fight his friends' influence, in Aleksin's story Petja does the opposite: he admires his best friend Valerik, who is presented as a perfect child. Valerik is wise, active, honest, and strongly engaged in school and other collective activities. Petja has a high regard for his friend and, throughout the story, his deepest wish is to be admired by Valerik. Petja does everything possible to impress him. However, although magic helps him to induce admiration in his other friends, Valerik seems to be immune to the spell:

- Я вас очень прошу... Я просто умоляю: заколдуйте, пожалуйста, Валерика! Чтобы он восхищался мною, как все!

- Это невозможно, - ответила Снегурочка.

- Но ведь воля каникуляра должна быть для вас законен!

- Да, это верно. Но тут мы бессильны.

- Почему?!

- Я не могу объяснить.

- Из-за его сильной воли, да?

- Нет, дело совсем в другом.

- В чем?

- Не могу объяснить...

- Это тайна?

Снегурочка повесила трубку. Почему Валерик не поддавался Деду-Морозу? Почему он был неподвластен сказке?

Да, это была тайна. И такая, что даже каникуляру не имели права ее раскрыть... (*V strane večnyh kanikul*, 401)

- I am asking you... I am begging you: please, enchant Valerik so that he would admire me as the other children do!

- That is impossible, answered the Snow Girl.

- But the will of the holiday hero must be your command!

- Yes, that is true. But in this respect, we are powerless.

- Why?

- I cannot explain

- Is it because of his strong will?

- No, it is something completely different.

- What is it?

- I cannot explain.

- So it is a secret?

The Snow Girl hung up the phone.

Why was Valerik not under the power of Father Frost? Why was he not under the spell of the fairy tale?

Yes, it was a secret. One that even the holiday hero could not discover...

Petja's need to impress Valerik can be compared to the rhetoric of father and son, where the son wants to impress the father yet cannot become like him. It is made quite clear that Petja can never become equal to Valerik. The secret of Valerik's resistance to the "holiday magic" is revealed at the end of the story. The whole episode of wish granting and eternal holidays turns out to be Valerik's invention: it is a story made up by Valerik and he has told is so convincingly that the narrator, the adult Petja, tells how he remembers it as well as if it had been real. Thus it is clear that in a story that works on Valerik's rules, Petja can never become as good as Valerik. This also raises the question of the reliability of Valerik's excellence: all the admirable qualities, as well as Petja's admiration of his friend, are actually Valerik's invention.

It is interesting that both Gubarev's and Aleksin's stories are told in first person retrospective. Aleksin's story is narrated by the adult Petja and Gubarev's story is told by the protagonist Borja some time after the adventure has taken place. One outcome of this is the notion that the main character has understood the educational message of the story: Gubarev's Borja has understood the importance of work, and Aleksin's Petja the importance of the collective. In Aleksin's story, it is clear that a considerable time has passed between the events and the narration. An adult telling a story from his childhood is a strongly didactic device: he has access to the mind of his younger self and can thus track the thoughts of the main character. As an adult, he is also able to analyse and value his actions in a way that would be impossible for a child narrator telling the story immediately after the events.

### ***3.2.3. The importance of work***

Soviet children's literature differs from the children's literature of most other cultures in its attitude towards work. In her article, Maria Nikolajeva argues that depiction of labour is quite uncommon in children's literature, partly due to the Arcadian nature of children's literature and the urge to portray childhood as a sanctuary of innocence devoid of the restrictions and complications of adult life, including work<sup>350</sup>. Whenever work is depicted in children's fiction, it is done within the pastoral convention, not breaking the idyll of a carefree childhood<sup>351</sup>. In the Soviet Union, children's literature had its idyllic features too, yet the exclusion of labour depictions would have been against the general culture: labour was to be an essential part of the Soviet childhood idyll, not repressive but an inspiring force. In early children's literature criticism, the depiction of work was treated as a vital part of children's literature. For example, when

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<sup>350</sup> Nikolajeva 2002a, 305 – 307.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid., 307.

Maxim Gorky, in his article O temah<sup>352</sup>, lists themes that ought to be treated in children's literature, work is present in several of his points; he also suggests that the writers should use as inspiration the life experience of workers of different professions, which was one of the trends of adult literature of the time, too. In early Soviet literature, books depicting different professions were not uncommon; the best known, perhaps, is Mayakovsky's poem *Kem byt'?* (1928, Whom to Be?) describing various professions. In Soviet fantasy, the mimetic depictions of labour are still quite rare, yet in many texts work is a central theme, often a goal to be achieved. For example, in Tolstoy's *Zolotoj ključik, ili Priključenija Buratino* (The Golden Key, or the Adventures of Buratino), the goal of the puppet is to find a theatre where he can start working, and in Kaverin's *Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše* (The Story of Mit'ka, Maša), the chimney sweep is rewarded by being made a civil engineer. In Lazar' Lagin's *Starik Hottabyč* (Old Man Hottabyč), the old genie's assimilation into the Soviet society culminates in him finding himself an occupation as an amateur radio operator.

One means of introducing the benefit of work into children's fantasy is the motif of wish granting. The motif had its roots in the folk tradition: it is an element familiar from folktales. In wonder tales, the hero often acquires of a magical object that grants its owner's wishes. Literature dealing with wishes coming true is an easy method of character education. It is a relatively simple way to show the results of foolish wishes and as the genre is fantasy, it provides a possibility to avoid the worst consequences. In Western fantasy, however, wish granting has not been an especially productive theme: although already one of the first British children's fantasy authors Edith Nesbit used wish granting as the central theme in her *Five Children and It* (1902), only few Western fantasy writers have used it later.

In Soviet children's fantasy, on the contrary, a wish granted, a dream come true is a recurrent theme. Perhaps more than any other type of Soviet fantasy, wish-granting fantasy has its roots in Russian folktales and literary fairy tales. The best known Russian literary fairy tale involving wishes coming true is Pushkin's *Skazka o rybake i rybke* (1831, The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish) based on a folk motif. It introduces a wish-granting fish, a fisherman and his wife who is never happy with her husband's wishes. The couple ends up asking too much and finally the fish cancels all the wishes. Wish granting is a central element already in the first Russian text that can be considered as fantasy – Antony Pogorelsky's *Černaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli* (The Black Hen or the Underground People) from 1829. Alěša, a St. Petersburg schoolboy saves a black hen who turns out to be the prime minister of an underground country. As a reward, the boy gets a magic hemp seed that enables him to learn his homework by heart without studying. Alěša breaks his promise to the underground people by telling about their existence to the schoolmaster and is punished: he is whipped by the schoolmaster and he will never see the underground people again since they have to leave their homes for fear of exposure. Pogorelsky's tale has usually been

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<sup>352</sup> Горький 1989, 109 -118. Originally published in Pravda 1933, No. 287 and Izvestija 1933, No. 255.

understood mostly as an educational, character-building story. Hellman notes that the critics have concentrated on this interpretation from the year of the story's publication 1829 to the present<sup>353</sup>. In his article, Hellman shows that this first Russian wish-granting story is not a simple educational tale but offers possibilities for several different interpretations. For example, it can be read as an allegory of transition from romanticism towards realism as Alěša turns away from the fantastic into the real life and schoolwork<sup>354</sup>. *Čěrnaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli* also contains allusions to freemasonry and the Decabrist movement, which allows the text to be read as an allegory of a novice's initiation into a secret society – and failing in it<sup>355</sup>.

Wish-granting objects can originate from a secondary world and function in the primary one as in Antony Pogorelsky's *Čěrnaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli* and Valentin Kataev's *Cvetik-semicvetik* (1940, *The Rainbow Flower*)<sup>356</sup>. In *Čěrnaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli*, the magic object is a hemp seed. In *Cvetik-semicvetik*, wishes are granted by a flower with seven petals of different colours, to which the original title, literally translated as “the flower of seven colours” refers. The flower is given to the little girl Ženja by an old woman, the equivalent of a folktale witch. After Ženja has left her garden, the garden and the woman vanish. In Sof'ja Prokof'eva's *Učėnik volšėbnika* (The Magician's Apprentice), the magic object is a book of magic, which obviously originates from the world of magic; it is left to magician Alěša as a legacy from his mentor. In Vitalij Gubarev's *Troe na ostrove* the protagonist Borja gets his wishes granted by a magic handkerchief. The handkerchief is not said to be from outside the novel's primary world but a keepsake from Borja's grandmother. Jurij Tomin's Tolik in *Šěl po gorodu volšėbnik* (The Wizard Walked over the City) finds a magic box of matches, each of them granting one wish. The matchbox originates from a boy wizard who lives in a secondary world of yesterday.

The magic object's way of functioning can be tied to its character; the nature of the object may also limit the use of the talisman. The limitation of magic is a universal principle in fantasy: the protagonist cannot have infinite access to omnipotent magic. The ways of limiting the use of magic vary. In Valentin Kataev's *Cvetik-semicvetik* (*The Rainbow Flower*), the magic flower grants a wish every time a petal is torn off, which limits the number of the wishes to seven: despite seven being a highly magical number in folklore, it is also a convenient number plotwise, since it allows the protagonist to make several bad wishes and cancel them before starting to think about the last and most important wish. In Vitalij Gubarev's *Troe na ostrove* (Three children on an Island), the magic is associated with the knot tied in the hankerchief: when the knot is untied, the magic is gone. In Tomin's *Šěl po gorodu volšėbnik* (The Wizard

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<sup>353</sup> Hellman 2000, 111.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid., 116 – 117.

<sup>356</sup> There exists different information about the year of the first publication of the story. Some sources mention 1940: for example, Акимова 1978, 351 and Nikolajeva 2002b, 173. Yet the first edition recognized by the card catalogue of The National Library of Russia is from 1941 as well as the cover illustration provided by Akimova.

Walked over the City), the magic matchbox fulfils a wish every time a match is broken. This gives the protagonist enough wishes to make considerable changes in his life, yet also the knowledge that the number of wishes is limited. The limitation of the number of wishes also shows the carnivalistic nature of fantasy: power structures can turn upside down when the child character gets his wishes fulfilled and becomes omnipotent, yet the situation is temporary and the normal order is soon restored.

A wish come true is often presented as an opposite to work. Things earned by wishes turn out to be less satisfactory than those earned by diligent work. The nature of the wishes is that they are more granted than earned. The degree varies in different texts: sometimes the wish is granted as a reward for something. In Antony Pogorelsky's *Černaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli*, the protagonist Alěša gets his wish granted as a reward for a good deed he has performed. Saving the black hen's life costs Alěša his only gold coin:

Алеша вынул из кармана империял, составлявший все его имение, который берег пуще глаза своего, потому что это был подарок доброй его бабушки. Кухарка взглянула на золотую монету, окинула взором окошки дома, чтобы удостовериться, что никто их не видит, и протянула руку за империялом. Алеше очень, очень было жаль империяла, но он вспомнил о Чернушке - и с твердостью отдал драгоценный подарок.

Alěša pulled out of his pocket an imperial<sup>357</sup> that he had been guarding like the apple of his eye, because it was a present from his dear grandmother. The cook stared at the golden coin, glanced at the windows to make sure nobody saw it, and reached for the coin. Alěša was very, very sad for the coin, but he thought of Černuška – and gave the precious present away confidently.

The sacrifice of the coin is significant for the child, and the good deed seems to be due to his good nature: it is Alěša's inherent goodness that causes him to make the sacrifice. So the reward he gets later is more due to what he is than what he does. In Aleksandr Volkov's *Volšebnik Izumrudnogo goroda*, the protagonist has first to help other characters before she is granted her own wish. Èlli wants to go back home to her own world and is told that the wizard Goodwin will help her, if she helps three other creatures to make their wishes come true. The granting of Èlli's wish thus depends on what she is herself ready to do. According to Xenia Mitrokhina, this makes Èlli more calculating when choosing her friends than her American counterpart Dorothy<sup>358</sup>: Èlli does not have a chance to choose her friends on an emotional but on a utilitarian basis. The granting of individual wishes is impossible: only collective wishes can be fulfilled<sup>359</sup>. In Anatolij Aleksin's *V strane večnyh kanikul* the protagonist Petja is granted a wish by Father Frost at a New Year's party. He earns his wish by winning a cycling-contest.

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<sup>357</sup> An imperial was an 18<sup>th</sup> century Russian gold coin worth 10 roubles.  
<http://www.statesymbol.ru/currency/20050420/39595485.html>

<sup>358</sup> Mitrokhina 1997, 184.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

Катался я на велосипеде не очень хорошо, но в моих ушах все время звучали слова Деда-Мороза: «Самый необычайный приз за всю историю новогодних елок!»

Эти слова подгоняли меня: ведь, пожалуй, никто из участников этого соревнования не любил получать подарки и призы так сильно, как любил я! И к «самому необычайному призу» я примчался быстрее всех остальных. (*V strane večnyh kanikul* 362)

I was not especially good at riding a bike, but the words of Father Frost kept ringing in my ears: “The most unusual prize in the history of New Year parties!”

These words followed me; really, none of the other contestants loved presents and prizes as much as I did! And I was trying to get to that “most unusual prize” faster than any of them.

Although Petja has to do something to get his wish granted, in some sense he does not win the contest by his work or skills: Petja thinks that because he loves prizes and gifts more than any other participant in the contest, he is entitled to win and get the prize. The individual urge and lust for fun seems at first to give a person the right to have his wish come true. However, finally, all the fun Petja gets leads to a giant disappointment: instead of the endless fun he wants to live a normal life and to pursue the collective happiness together with his friends in school and in the animal club his friends have started.

The futility of wishes granted is often commented on in the texts. The wishes are often condemned as useless or foolish. Hasty wishes are a common motif in folktales and in the Russian context, Pushkin’s *Skazka o rybake i rybke* is again a vital prototype. When in Pogorelsky’s *Černaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli*, Alěša is granted a wish by the underground king, he makes a hasty one in order to be polite and not keep the king waiting. Thus, Alěša is not presented as a “bad boy” by the narrator, although his wish is described as a foolish one and the king disapproves of it<sup>360</sup>. Aleksin’s *V strane večnyh kanikul* has the same motif of softening the foolishness of the protagonist: after Father Frost has promised to grant Petja’s wish the boy begins in his mind to go through all the possible things he could wish for. Yet, since Father Frost is impatiently waiting, Petja makes a quick wish to have a never-ending New Year party. Among the things he considers asking for are to keep his best friend Valerik as a friend forever and, as in Pogorelsky’s story, to have all his schoolwork done by itself, or never to be asked to do chores at home. Unlike Pogorelsky’s underground king, Father Frost does not disapprove of Petja’s wish. Instead, the one who disapproves is the narrator, the adult Petja. The adult narrator intervenes to allude to his current ideas of what Petja should have asked for. He does not say exactly what would have been an appropriate wish: he just states that if he had then known what kind of future lay ahead, he could have wished for something very important for himself or for his friends. Later on, he

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<sup>360</sup> See Nikolajeva 1985b, 296.

mentions that soon after the incidents of the novel, there would be a war and a bomb would be dropped on his hometown. Supposedly, an appropriate wish would have had something to do with preventing the terrors of the war. The narrator explains young Petja's foolish wish by telling how, at that moment, he was not able to see ahead to the years to come, but could only look around him and see all the appealing details of the New Year party.

In a number of Soviet fantasies the individual wishes come true indeed, but their outcome is always somehow different from what the child protagonist has meant it to be. A model example of how things can go wrong because of careless wishes is Sof'ja Prokof'eva's *Učenik volšebnika* (The Magician's Apprentice). The novel draws on the folktale motif of the sorcerer's apprentice<sup>361</sup> by introducing a student who is eager to learn from his master, but too impatient to do it properly. One of the protagonists of the novel, the magician Alěša's cat, called Vas'ka, finds his master's book of magic and learns a spell that transforms objects into mice. He goes around the town and causes trouble by turning the zoo animals into mice. Finally, he ends up transforming himself into a mouse to escape from a tight situation. The cat Vas'ka's wish is presented as a childish one. Similarly in Aleksin's *V strane večnyh kanikul*, a child-like character wishes for something that gives him immediate pleasure instead of making a more mature wish for something practical and useful. Vas'ka, although a cat, represents a child in the story. The cat's human counterpart, the boy Vasja<sup>362</sup>, tries to do it by bragging that he is brave enough to go into the lions' cage in the zoo and Vas'ka uses his magic to accomplish his goals. Vas'ka uses the magic irrationally<sup>363</sup> and the outcome is not what he wanted it to be. However, Vas'ka's spell can be seen as a child's wishful thinking, that it is possible to solve problems magically without any real effort. It is also a manifestation of Vasja's wish to be stronger and braver than he actually is. There is an intertextual connection between Vas'ka the cat and the fairy tale *Puss in Boots*<sup>364</sup>. In the fairy tale the cat makes his master wealthy, while Vas'ka the cat represents Vasja's "magic helper". Nevertheless, instead of making Vasja's life better, he fails even in attempts to improve his own life. Even the mouse spell does not work as he wishes: when he turns a bulldog into a mouse, he cannot eat it, because it is not a real mouse but barks like a dog. In Vitalij Gubarev's *Troe na ostrove* the

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<sup>361</sup> A variation of the Aarne-Thompson type 565. The origin of the sorcerer's apprentice is sometimes traced back to Lucian's *Philopseudes* (c. 150); see Ogden 2002, 54 – 55. The motif is also known from Goethe's ballad *Der Zauberlehrling* (1797) and later from the Walt Disney film *Fantasia* 1940.

<sup>362</sup> On the use of double characters in Prokof'eva's book, see section 3.2.5.

<sup>363</sup> The number of the spell from the spellbook the cat uses is 532, which adds to the irrational nature of the cat's learning: instead of starting to read the book systematically from the beginning, he chooses a random spell from the middle of the book without a thorough knowledge of how to use it. "Закливание пятьсот тридцать второе. Как превратить в мышь любое неживое вещество и любое живое существо." (34) "Spell number 532. How to turn animate and inanimate objects into mice".

<sup>364</sup> In Prokof'eva's story, Vas'ka wishes that Vasja had drawn him a feather hat, just like in the fairy tale. Prokof'eva has also, together with Genrikh Sapgir, written a play about *Puss in Boots*, *Kot v sapogah* and books based on the character.



protagonist Borja gets his wishes granted by a magic handkerchief. Like Pogorelsky's Alěša and Aleksin's Petja, Borja makes wishes that give him the possibility to avoid work. Unlike Alěša and Petja who both have only one wish, Borja can make as many wishes as he likes as long as he is holding the magic handkerchief. His wishes too are irrational and aimed at having fun instead of working: when he first has his chores done by magic, he makes his friend black and transfers himself and his two friends to a desert island. On the island, his friends want to have fun in the traditional way, by fishing, for instance, but Borja only wants to lie in the sun doing nothing.

Hasty wishes are present also in Valentin Kataev's *Cvetik-semicvetik (The Rainbow Flower)*. The little girl, Ženja, gets lost on her way home from the bakery and an old lady gives her a magic flower that grants a wish every time Ženja tears off a petal. First she wishes for practical things: to find her way back home with the pretzels she has lost and for a broken vase to become whole again. Then she makes two foolish wishes she has to unwish immediately. In order to impress her friends, not unlike Aleksin's Petja or Prokof'eva's cat Vas'ka, she wants to travel to the North Pole, and the frightening polar bears make her wish to be back at home again. She also wishes that every toy in the world would be hers and almost drowns in playthings. Ženja thinks hard how to use the last wish and, finally, instead of asking for anything nice for herself, she wishes that a crippled boy with whom she would like to be friends would get well. The wishes show the girl's development from a self-centred child to a responsible one. After the wishes to protect and please herself, she takes care of another person who needs help. The first six wishes are connected with the need of safety, especially the first ones to undo unfortunate incidents. The next wishes are more daring, nonetheless reversible, and consequently safe. Only the last wish is beyond the point of no return. However, wiser from previous experiences, Ženja is capable of making a beneficial wish that does not require to be undone. This story is different from the others in the sense that in it the wish granted can actually do something beneficial. Yet the story has an element of work embedded in the sense that during her difficulties in making the first foolish wishes the girl learns what are the right things to wish for.

### **3.2.4. Adult heroes**

In fantasy fiction for children, as in children's literature in general, the main characters are usually children. This is probably due to the idea that a child character is thought to offer the child reader an easily acceptable subject position, and since children's literature is to a great extent about maturation, adult characters are less suitable. This is also the case in Soviet fantasy fiction. Nevertheless, in some texts, adults have a significant role as helpers of the protagonist or even as protagonists. Adult protagonists are found in Soviet children's literature in general, not only in fantasy. Among the best-known adult heroes are, for example, Kornei Chukovsky's Doktor Ajbolit (Doctor Ajbolit) and Sergey Mikhalkov's Djadja Stěpa (Uncle Stěpa). The reasons for using adult protagonists can be didactic: positive adult characters are supposed to serve as good examples and role models for the readers.

An adult character is more static than a child character in the sense that the child character is due to change in the course of the events in the text. Of course, adult characters also change, but in a child character change is more inevitable, because one of the main characteristics of childhood is the idea of constant change and development. Some kind of change is due to happen in most child protagonists. It seems to be typical of Soviet children's fiction that the changes in the child characters are minor and quite superficial: for example, in *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors) by Vitalij Gubarev, the protagonist learns to correct only her external insufficiencies like sloppiness and fear of the dark. Despite their minor faults, the child protagonists are usually portrayed as essentially good – almost perfect – and there is little room for change.

When the fictional characters are examined on the child – adult axis, the characters can be treated formally as child or adult according to their age as presented in the text. The age of the character is not necessarily explicitly stated, but the “childness” or “adulthood” is easily deducible from the attributes given to the character, for example, the social status of the character. It is usually fruitless to study the formal adulthood of the characters, because it is in most cases presented as such an unproblematic and self-evident issue that questioning it can bring nothing new to the analysis of the text. Possible exceptions can be, for example, young adult books in which the central theme is concerned with examining the boundaries between childhood and adulthood, but at least Soviet fantasy fiction does not offer many such examples<sup>365</sup>. It is more interesting to study the status of the characters through their role in the text. The central question then is whether a character has the role of a child or an adult in the text. The attributes connected to childhood and adulthood naturally vary in different times and cultures. In children's literature, the role of an adult often includes such features as independence, responsibility, setting of boundaries and active actorship, whereas the role of a child includes dependence on others, freedom from responsibility, testing of boundaries, and a certain passivity. A character with an adult role can, of course, be also formally adult, but that is not always the case. In the following, I will study two different examples of how child and adult roles are distributed between child and adult characters. Table 2 illustrates the roles of the main characters of Sof'ja Prokof'eva's *Povelitel' volšebnyh ključej* (The Keeper of the Magic Keys) series and Lazar' Lagin's novel *Starik Hottabyč*. Prokof'eva's main character magician Alěša is both factually adult and has an adult role in the text. In Lazar' Lagin's novel *Starik Hottabyč* (Old Man Hottabyč) the roles of the two main characters are changed: schoolboy Vol'ka acts like an adult in relation to the factually adult genie old Hottabyč, who has the role of a child in the novel.

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<sup>365</sup> In the material of the present study, the only text questioning the border between childhood and adulthood is Krapivin's *Deti sinego flamingo*. (The Children of the Blue Flamingo) that will be discussed in section 4.2.2.

TEXT	CHARACTER	FACTUALLY	ROLE
<i>Povelitel' volšebnyh ključej</i>	Magician Alěša	adult	adult
	Vasja Vertušinkin	child	child
	Vas'ka the cat	adult	child
Starik Hottabyč	Old Hottabyč	adult	child
	Vol'ka	child	adult

**Table 2:** Child and adult roles in Sof'ja Prokof'eva's *Povelitel' volšebnyh ključej* (The Keeper of the Magic Keys) series and in Lazar' Lagin's novel *Starik Hottabyč* (Old Man Hottabyč).

### 3.2.4.1. Traditional child and adult roles

A clear-cut example of an adult protagonist in Soviet children's fantasy is the magician Alěša in Sof'ja Prokof'eva's *Povelitel' volšebnyh ključej* series. There are three constant characters that make their appearance in every part of the series: the magician Alěša, Vas'ka the cat and a genie. It is noteworthy that all three are beings associated with magic: magicians are universally familiar from both folklore and the literature of different cultures, while genies are associated with oriental mythology, but are also known in Western cultures. Cats, although familiar everyday animals, have been associated with magic in folklore of probably every culture in which they are known. Cat-related magical beliefs can be related to domestic life, for example, the cat's ability to forecast the weather or provide happiness in the family. On the other hand, cats have been associated with black magic: they have been accused of being companions to witches and bringers of bad luck.<sup>366</sup> The two central characters, Alěša and Vas'ka, are introduced in the first book *Učėnik volšebnika* (The Magician's Apprentice). The young magician obtains magic crayons with which he is able to open doors to any fairy tale he wants to visit. With his crayons, he can also call children's drawings to life. Vas'ka the cat is born in this way: he is originally a child's drawing. Each part of the series is an independent work and, except for the first two books, each book has a similar basic plot structure: the magician and the cat use the magic crayons in order to transport themselves to a secondary world where they help someone who is in trouble. After the adventure, they always come safely back home.

The magician Alěša can be called a realistic yet ideal adult. He is both factually adult and has an adult role in the text. In the first part of the series, *Učėnik volšebnika* (The Magician's Apprentice), he has the role of a young adult: he inherits the title and possessions of his former master and starts his life as an independent magician<sup>367</sup>. His

<sup>366</sup> On magical beliefs associated with cats see, for example Salve 2007, 69 – 89; Clutton-Brock 1994, 51 – 57.

<sup>367</sup> The name of the magician Aljoša, Aleksej Sekretovič, alludes to a father-son relationship: the name of the old master is Sekret Tajnovič.

mental characteristics are very adultlike: throughout the series, he is depicted as a highly responsible person, who acts fairly and takes care of the child characters. For example, in the beginning of *Kapitan Tin Tinyč* (Sea Captain Tin Tinyč), he looks after the schoolboy Valentin who has lost his toy ship and got his feet and mittens wet:

– Всё прекрасно, но пойдѣмте ко мне, Валентин Валентинович,  
– озабоченно сказал странный человек. – Во-первых, вы промочили ноги, а во-вторых, эти мокрые варежки в правом кармане вашего пальто... Нет, нет, иди домой в таком виде я вам, откровенно говоря, не советую. (*Kapitan Tin Tinyč*, 9.)

– Everything is all right, but let's go to my place, Valentin Valentinoviř – said the stranger concernedly. – Firstly, your feet are soaked, and secondly, those wet mittens in your coat pocket... No, no; directly speaking, I wouldn't advise you to go home looking like that,

However, Alěša is not presented as a completely perfect and self-confident adult. In *Učenik volšebnika* he is sometimes depicted as an uncertain person with an identity crisis, when he questions the usefulness of his profession as a magician:

– Понимаешь, все мои друзья считают, что волшебство – это баловство, не более того.  
[ - - ]  
Да я и сам, что уж тут скрывать, последнее время нет-нет да и подумаю: уж не бросить ли мне волшебство и не заняться ли чем-нибудь... (*Učenik volšebnika*, 18 – 19)

– You understand, all my friends think that magic is just a pastime, nothing more.  
[ - - ]  
And I myself, to be quite honest, have been wondering whether I should give up magic and do something else...

Suggestive of the Soviet tradition, Alěša's identity crisis is connected with work and the value of one's profession. It is characteristic that one of Alěša's friends who criticize his choice of profession is a policeman who represents social control and power. However, the book ends by Alěša proving his competence in his work and his friends realizing the importance of the magician's profession<sup>368</sup>. As the series proceeds, Alěša's adult self-confidence increases. He still has some moments of uncertainty during his further adventures, yet he always copes with them quite quickly. In a way,

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<sup>368</sup> One point of comparison is Mayakovskij's well-known poem *Kem byt'?* (Whom to Be?) from 1928. The poem contemplates the value of different professions and comes to the conclusion that all work is important:

”Книгу переворотив,  
намотай себе на ус -  
все работы хороши,  
выбери на вкус!” (Маяковский 1960 (1928), 451.)

After reading the book/ remember/ all professions are good/ choose the one you like.

Alěša is an ideal adult who always acts the right way. Still, he is not presented as such superhuman hero as, for example, Sergey Mikhalkov's Uncle Stěpa, who is already by his external appearance equal to the bogatyr-heroes of the ancient Russian bylinas<sup>369</sup>. In magician Alěša, the essential issue is not the external superiority but a kind of "inner goodness" that positively shines from his eyes when he meets Valentin for the first time in *Kapitan Tin Tinyč* (Sea Captain Tin Tinyč):

Владельцем плаща оказался совсем не старый человек, а даже, скорее, молодой. Такой худощавый, с длинным лицом и в очках.

Но главное было не это, совсем не это!

У незнакомца были необыкновенные, удивительные глаза. Валька сразу это заметил. Его глаза были тёплые. Да что там тёплые -- они грели! Даже через очки!

Уж вы мне поверьте. Честное слово! Одна Валькина щека и один Валькин глаз сразу отогрелись. Пальцам, оттянувшим край плаща, и то стало тепло.

(*Kapitan Tin Tinyč*, 9.)

The owner of the cape turned out to be not an old man but rather quite a young one. Quite thin with a longish face and eyeglasses.

Yet this was not the main thing, really.

The stranger had unusual, astonishing eyes. Valentin noticed it immediately. His eyes were warm, they positively shone! Even through the glasses!

Can you possibly believe me, but it was true! Valentin's cheek and his eye warmed up immediately. And the fingers holding the corner of the cape became warm too.

In *Povelitel' volšebnyh ključej* (The Keeper of the Magic Keys), the role of the child is played mainly by Vas'ka the cat and, to some extent, by the genie. In addition, in some books of the series, there are also other central child characters<sup>370</sup>. Vas'ka the cat cannot be studied on the same adult-child axis as the human characters. Apparently he is an adult cat: he is always referred to by the word 'kot' (tomcat), not 'kotěnok' (kitten) and he is interested in the neighbour female cat Murka in an obviously adult way. However, in such children's literature that features humans and talking animals side by side, the animals are most often seen as childlike characters<sup>371</sup>. The childishness of the cat is reinforced, if the cat is read as the alter ego of the schoolboy Vasja Vertušinkin; this reading is prominent in the first novel of the series *Učėnik volšėbnika*. Vasja plays a central role in the book: he is the one who has originally drawn Vas'ka. The similarity of their names and the nature of their adventures ties Vas'ka and Vasja together. Their shared adventures are the focus in the first book of the series in which both have a central role; in later books, Vasja has only a minor role.

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<sup>369</sup> Prokhorova (2007, 292) calls Uncle Stěpa "the ultimate positive hero".

<sup>370</sup> Alěša and Vas'ka are not necessarily protagonists in every book of the series: in most of the individual books there are several other vital characters around whom the plot evolves, for example, in *Malen'kaja princessa* the protagonist is princess Uenni. About the relationship of the protagonist and other central characters, see Nikolajeva 2002c, 112.

<sup>371</sup> Nikolajeva 2002: 125.

The most ambiguous character in the books on the child – adult axis is the genie, whom the magician Alěša has inherited from his former master. The genie is supposed to serve him, but in several situations it is Alěša who ends up taking care of the genie. The childishness of the genie shows clearly in the last book *Princessa Uènni* (Princess Uènni), where he acts like a child when he wants Vas’ka the cat to read him fairy tales:

Еще кот Васька любит читать всякие волшебные сказки. Пристроится так уютенько на диване, и непременно рядом с ним джинн... Чуть только кот Васька откроет книгу, джинн начинает стонать и жалобно завывать:

– О несравненный кот Васька, лучший из котов! Давай читаем сказочки и посмотрим картинки. Сколько долгих тысячелетий я мечтал об этом!

– Вчера только читали, ворчит в ответ кот Васька...

[ - - ]

Кот Васька со вздохом взрослого, уступающего капризам ребенка, выпустил джинна из термоса. Джинн тут же плюхнулся на диван, поудобнее пристроил кота Ваську у себя на широком колене. Подставил огромную морщинистую ладонь, чтобы кот Васька мог положить на нее книгу.

– Вчера ты начал мне читать новую сказку. Помнишь, как она называется? «Маленькая принцесса». Ух, до чего интересная! – Джинн нетерпеливо дунул, страницы книги зашелестели. – О, если бы я мог превращать эти закорючки в чудесные слова и заклинания! (*Princessa Uènni*, 245 – 246.)

And Vas’ka the cat loves to read fairy tales. He is comfortably seated on the sofa and the genie always sits by him... As soon as the cat opens the book, the genie starts to moan and sadly howl:

– Oh, magnificent cat Vas’ka, the most excellent among all cats! Please let us read stories and look at the pictures. How many long millennia have I dreamed of it!

– We read these only yesterday, protested Vas’ka.

[ - - ]

Vas’ka the cat, looking like an adult who gives in to a child’s caprice, let the genie out of the thermos. The genie thumped on the sofa and placed the cat comfortably on his wide knee. He put his huge palm so that Vas’ka could place the book on it.

– Yesterday you began reading me a new tale. Do you remember what it was called? “The Little Princess”. Oh, such an interesting story! – The genie puffed impatiently and the pages of the book began to rustle. – Oh, if only I could make these loops and tails into wonderful words and spells!

The ambiguity of the child-adult-relationship between the genie and the cat can be seen in the quotation above. In this conversation, the cat performs the role of the adult and the genie the role of the child: the roles are emphasized by the narrator’s statement “Vas’ka the cat, looking like an adult who gives in to a child’s caprice”. Yet there is some uncertainty: the genie is depicted holding the cat on his knee like an adult would hold a child, or a human would hold a pet. The genie’s childish behaviour and illiteracy are also in strong contrast with his huge size and his old-fashioned way of speaking that has connotations to Oriental fairy tales. These disparities produce an element of humour in the story, yet they also slightly question the stability of the child and adult roles.

In Sof'ja Prokof'eva's *Povelitel' volšebnyh ključej*, most of the characters have relatively clear child or adult positions. Although the adult magician Alěša has his weak moments, he acts throughout the series as a responsible adult. Vas'ka the cat is clearly a child character, who in times briefly tries on the adult role, for example, when he has an opportunity to show his superiority in relation to the illiterate genie.

### 3.2.4.2. *Reversed child and adult roles*

Sof'ja Prokof'eva's genie is not the first in Soviet fantasy: no doubt, the most famous genie in Soviet children's literature is Lazar' Lagin's old man Hottabyč. In Lagin's novel *Starik Hottabyč* (1938, *Old Man Hottabyč*), a thirteen-year-old schoolboy Vol'ka finds an old jar at the bottom of a river. Out of it emerges an ancient genie, Hassan Abdurrahman ibn Hottab, in Russian, Hottabyč<sup>372</sup>, who has spent thousands of years sealed in the jar. Hottabyč considers Vol'ka as his new master and tries to help him by granting his wishes, or rather, what Hottabyč thinks the boy's wishes might be. The genie's efforts, for example, conjuring up oriental palaces and camel caravans in 1930s Moscow, do not suit modern Soviet life. This becomes the starting point for many humoristic situations, as well as the basis for the propaganda message of the book. During the course of events, Vol'ka acts as a guide for Hottabyč in his new life in the new world. Little by little, Hottabyč learns the new ways and becomes a member of the society, which he ultimately finds better than his old ways.

In *Starik Hottabyč*, the roles of child and adult are reversed: Vol'ka acts like an adult and the old genie Hottabyč like a child. Hottabyč is obviously an adult judging by his appearance, yet his role in the text is that of a child<sup>373</sup>. His childishness is seen in his unawareness of the practices of the society and in his development during the course of events. In the beginning, Hottabyč is stuck in the values of his old world, the undefined yet magical Arabian Nights past. Gradually, he grows to admire his new Soviet home and adopts the new values and the new way of life. Hottabyč is socialized much like children usually are in children's literature.

The child role of Hottabyč is also accentuated by questioning the external marks of childhood and adulthood. As an obvious example of this kind of external marker of adulthood is a beard. In the story, a beard is also a mark of power. Hottabyč uses his beard as an instrument of his magic: by plucking off pieces of his beard he can make magic happen. Interestingly enough, when Hottabyč is stripped of his external markers of foreignness by making him give up his oriental outfits, he is allowed to keep his beard, which bears a connotation to the Asian nations of the Soviet Union. The beard in Russia is also associated with old times and the emperor Peter the Great's famous attempts to make the Russians "more European" by making them give up traditional

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<sup>372</sup> The Russian patronymic Hottabyč means the same as the original name, 'the son of Hottab'.

<sup>373</sup> Nikolajeva 2002b, 178 – 179.

Russian clothing and cut their old-fashioned long beards. Traditionally, a long beard has also been associated with Russian orthodox priests. The beard has been a humorous symbol of old fashion and backwardness from Lomonosov's famous satirical poem *Gimn borode* (1757, Hymn to the beard) directed against the clergy<sup>374</sup>, via engravings portraying Peter the Great's barbers cutting the beards of the boyars to Soviet propaganda posters depicting bearded orthodox priests in a somewhat comical light. The beard also has comical potential in *Starik Hottabyč*. When Vol'ka wants to see an adult-rated film, Hottabyč makes him look older by growing him a beard. The revengeful brother of Hottabyč tries to kill Vol'ka's friend Ženya of old age and turns him into an old man. However, the external markers of adulthood do not make the boys adult: the bearded Vol'ka becomes the centre of attention and pity in the movie theatre where the people feel sorry for the bearded boy. Ženya becomes young again without further major consequences. Questioning the external markers of adulthood tempts the reader to question also the position of Hottabyč: although according to his appearance he is adult, it does not guarantee him the role of an adult in the story.

*Starik Hottabyč* includes a straightforward socialist propaganda message. Irina Lupanova treats the novel as one of the 1930s books that deal with the thematics of *bor'ba mirov*, the conflict of the worlds, the conflict between socialism and capitalism<sup>375</sup>. In the text, the Soviet system is presented as a perfect one, and it stands in strong contrast to the capitalist values that are represented in Lagin's novel by the past and the foreign countries, especially the United States of America. As a means of presenting the conflict, Lagin uses the *Arabian Nights* motif of the genie that grants his rescuer's wishes. Genies have been used for similar purposes before<sup>376</sup>. According to Stephens and McCallum, in children's literature, genies with their exotic nature provide the story with a point of comparison with the dominating Western values:

Genies are not human, but spirits of enormous power, often rather amoral, often bringing with them a frisson of danger. They originate in Islamic demonology, and are therefore comfortably separable from the demons of Christian Europe; and they belong to the realm of oriental fantasy, a make-believe, medieval world of magic, of immense wealth, of sensuality, of instant gratification of desire, and of sudden, irrational, and barbaric cruelties. For the modern invented stories, in particular, these elements invest the story with a sense of radical otherness against which Western humanist values are constructed as culturally normative.<sup>377</sup>

Respectively, in Soviet children's literature the character of the genie naturalizes the Soviet set of values. In the foreword to the novel, the author explains his use of the genie motif, thus giving the reader an unmistakable model for how the conflict presented in the text should be interpreted:

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<sup>374</sup> Reyfman 1990, 61.

<sup>375</sup> Лупанова 1969, 274.

<sup>376</sup> One can also find in Lagin's book the influence of F. Anstey's *The Brass Bottle*, in which a wish-granting genie turns up in modern London. The connection is generally noted amongst scholars. See, for example, Лупанова 1969, 280.

<sup>377</sup> Stephens and McCallum 1998, 231.



Ну, а что, если бы такой джинн да вдруг попал в нашу страну, где совсем другие представления о счастье и справедливости, где власть богачей давно и навсегда уничтожена и где только честный труд приносит человеку счастье, почет и славу?

Я старался вообразить, что получилось бы, если бы джинна спас из заточения в сосуде самый обыкновенный советский мальчик, такой, каких миллионы в нашей счастливой социалистической стране. (*Starik Hottabyč*, 4)

So, what would happen if a genie arrived in our country where the understanding of happiness and justice is completely different, where the power of the rich has been defeated forever and where honest work alone brings man happiness, honour and respect?

I tried to imagine what would happen if the genie were saved from the bottle by an ordinary Soviet boy, one whose like can be found in the millions in our happy socialist country.

In the foreword the reader is given the typical idealized picture of the Soviet Union as a place where people are respected in relation to their work, not their possessions. This is shown to be in sharp contrast to the old world represented by the genie. A combination like this demands that the protagonist representing the Soviet society is more or less perfect and the representative of the capitalist world is either evil or misguided. In *Starik Hottabyč*, this leads to a paradoxical situation in which the Soviet child protagonist Vol'ka is more developed than and morally superior to the oriental adult Hottabyč. The problem is solved by giving Vol'ka the role of the adult, although he is "factually" a child going to school and having hobbies typical of children. Despite his young age he has already absorbed the Soviet rules and values. Already from the beginning, he tries to restrict Hottabyč's out-of-place behaviour and keep him out of trouble. Hottabyč is an interesting character in the respect that he is able to change during the story, which is rare when compared to other conflict of worlds stories from the 1930s in which there is no place for change for the characters who represent the opposite of the Soviet system. The point that makes the genie different from, for example, the evil puppet master in Tolstoy's *Buratino*, is the fact that Hottabyč is not presented as evil or Vol'ka's antagonist: his inappropriate actions arise from his ignorance. Hottabyč is one of the "noble savage" characters that are frequently met in both Russian and Western literature<sup>378</sup>. The role of the antagonist in the novel is shared between an exaggeratedly immoral American businessman and Hottabyč's evil brother Omar. The antagonists have no chance of change and both get their punishments: the businessman is transformed into a dog and Omar gets stuck in space on the Earth's orbit. Maria Nikolajeva assigns Hottabyč the role of helper in the story<sup>379</sup>. Inbuilt in the

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<sup>378</sup> On the history of the concept, see, for example, Ellingson 2001, especially 1 – 8. The most famous noble savages in world literature are perhaps Daniel Defoe's Friday from *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Uncas from James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). Both books have also been widely read by children. Well-known noble savages in Russian literature include, for example, Cossack characters from Tolstoy's *Kazaki* (1863, *The Cossacks*) and the name character of *Dersu Uzala* (1923) by Vladimir Arsenyev.

<sup>379</sup> Nikolajeva 2002b, 182.

character is also something of the role of a catalyst<sup>380</sup>: Hottabyč is a magical character, who performs miracles in a child's everyday life. However, the miracles performed by Hottabyč do not change Vol'ka's life: they rather test his loyalty to the Soviet way of life.

The reversal of child and adult roles in Lagin's novel can be interpreted in several ways. One possible model is Mihail Bahtin's carnival theory and the change in the power positions. In Lagin's novel, the child character does not travel into a secondary world: on the contrary, old man Hottabyč arrives in the primary world, the 1930s Moscow, from the secondary world of a magical Orient<sup>381</sup>. The story is no time-out for Hottabyč either. The genie has come to Moscow to stay. He does not go back to his own world, which would not even be possible: the world he has come from no longer exists and he cannot go back in time. Some kind of minor time-out happens to Vol'ka, who experiences things he would never have known about without Hottabyč: for example, he gets a chance to travel abroad on a flying carpet and takes a trip to the North on an icebreaker, while the genie arranges that no inconvenient questions will be asked afterwards. Yet Vol'ka is not especially impressed by the miracles performed by Hottabyč. He clings firmly to the reality of the modern world and to his own identity, never trying to escape his position: on the contrary, Vol'ka does everything he can in order to resist Hottabyč's efforts to change his life with oriental luxuries. In many fantasy stories, the child protagonist is unhappy with his life and travels to a secondary world in order to experience at least momentary empowerment before coming back to his own world and perhaps realizing, that it is not such a bad place after all. Lagin's *Starik Hottabyč* presents an opposite situation: the child protagonist does not see any major faults in his own world and thus has no wish to change it but rather change the people who do not realize how excellent that world is.

The concept of *ostranenie*, *defamiliarization* or *estrangement*, introduced by Viktor Shklovsky, is useful when dealing with fantasy. Shklovsky sees defamiliarization as a means of genuinely showing the reader things that are usually perceived automatically<sup>382</sup>. Fantasy can be used as an instrument of defamiliarization. It can show the reader such aspects of life that in more realistic literature pass unnoticed, or in Shklovsky's terminology, that are "recognized", not "seen"<sup>383</sup>. In the secondary worlds of fantasy, the problematic issues of the primary world tend to be given a more tangible

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<sup>380</sup> Nikolajeva 2002c, 112 – 113.

<sup>381</sup> The secondary world is an implied one that is never directly shown to the reader. Both the reader and Vol'ka only hear about that world through Hottabyč's stories.

<sup>382</sup> Shklovsky 1991 (1917) 5 – 6.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, 6. ("Вещи, воспринятые несколько раз, начинают восприниматься узнаванием: вещь находится перед нами, мы знаем об этом, но ее не видим. Поэтому мы не можем ничего сказать о ней. — Вывод вещи из автоматизма восприятия совершается в искусстве разными способами; в этой статье я хочу указать один из тех способов, которыми пользовался почти постоянно Л. Толстой, — тот писатель, который, хотя бы для Мережковского, кажется дающим вещи так, как он их сам видит, видит до конца, но не изменяет.")

form<sup>384</sup>. Thus, fantasy has the ability to show more clearly things that otherwise are hard to grasp. In Soviet literature, fantasy is used also in another kind of defamiliarization: by means of fantasy, the events of the story are estranged from the “real world”, thus giving fantasy literature in many respects more space in which to move. Fantasy literature can, for example, deal with issues that would be unacceptable in more realistic literature. Such unacceptable issues are, for example, unorthodox social or political opinions. In the field of children’s literature, the norms of the society define which issues are “not suitable for children”. Lagin’s *Starik Hottabyč* deals with two sensitive issues that would have been difficult to handle in a more realistic genre. These issues are the question of ethnicity in the multinational Soviet Union and the generation gap between the young and the adults in the 1930s.

Maria Nikolajeva has studied the issue of ethnicity in *Starik Hottabyč* in her article *Fairy Tales in Society’s Service*<sup>385</sup>. According to her, Hottabyč with his oriental background can be seen as a representative of the Soviet people of non-Russian origins. The Soviet Union of the 1930s had a considerable number of representatives of different nations. *Sovetskij narod*, the Soviet nation, consisted of several different nationalities, whose situation was ambiguous: the official propaganda embraced all nations, yet the reality differed greatly from the ideal. Lagin’s novel deals with the question by using fantasy elements, thus giving it some distance from the actual reality. Hottabyč is an example of an “internal foreigner” who is ready to change through education. Although in the beginning he is certain of the advantages of his old world, he acts submissively in his relation to Vol’ka whom he considers his master and over time, he is willing to change his beliefs. A cruel example of another kind of “internal foreigner” who does not adapt to the new society is Hottabyč’s brother, Omar. When he, like his brother, is freed from his prison in the jar, he is ready to kill the boy who has set him free. Unlike Hottabyč, Omar will not yield in his opinions. Finally, he gets his punishment. Even then, he does not regret his opinions and his destination is shown as the result of his own ignorance and unwillingness to acknowledge the superiority of the modern world: despite both Vol’ka’s and Hottabyč’s warnings and modern science, he wants to fly to the Moon and ends up orbiting the Earth as its satellite.

The other issue discussed in the form of fantasy considers generation. The characters of Hottabyč and Vol’ka give a concrete form to the generation gap of the 1930s Soviet Union. In her study of the Russian youth after the revolution, Anne E. Gorsuch states that already in the 1920s, both in literature and in the official propaganda media, the youth were considered a metaphor for social transformation and the group of new socialist people, who would implement the new socialist society<sup>386</sup>. At the same time, they were also seen as vulnerable to unhealthy influences that were seen as coming from outside rather than inside<sup>387</sup>. Vol’ka represents the young generation that has

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<sup>384</sup> Swinfen 1984, 91.

<sup>385</sup> Nikolajeva 2002b, 179 – 182.

<sup>386</sup> Gorsuch 2000, 15 – 16.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 – 23.

lived all its life in the socialist Soviet society and has no memories of the time prior to that. Vol'ka is an ideal Soviet citizen: he is active in society, both in school and in his astronomy club, and considers the Soviet system perfect. Hottabyč represents the older generation – his age is underlined already by the title of the book *Starik Hottabyč*, Old man Hottabyč. Hottabyč has memories from the old times and in the beginning of the story he tries to act according to his old ways. The conflict between generations is diluted by making Hottabyč both a foreign and a magical person: hence the “unhealthy influences” come noticeably from outside. The conflict would be more acute if the boy had to disagree with, for example, his own grandfather. In the course of events, Vol'ka proves to be an example of the perfect Soviet child who has a complete loyalty to his society: he is not to be seduced or corrupted by the old bourgeois ways of Hottabyč. The conflict ends with the triumph of the new over the old when Hottabyč leaves his old ways behind and embraces the new ones: he becomes a proud Soviet citizen and finds a new profession as an amateur radio operator.

As seen before, in Soviet children's literature, the child was not to question the parental authority. In Western children's literature, the question of generations is most often manifest as the relationship between children and their parents, whereas in Soviet literature the child was not to criticize the actions of his parents, teachers or pioneer group leaders. On the contrary, in Lagin's novel, Vol'ka is always ready to defend his teacher against Hottabyč who does not like the way she treats Vol'ka. In fact, there was an inconsistency between the norms of children's literature and the social reality of the 1930s Soviet Union: whereas children's literature was not to question the adult authority, in reality people lived in a system in which, at least in theory, the young generation was considered more advanced than the older one. In *Starik Hottabyč*, the power balance between children and adults is discussed through the reversal of roles. The “normal situation” in traditional children's literature is one where a parent-like adult figure teaches, advises and helps the child; the adult has the power in the situation. In Lagin's novel, the situation is different – the child is the one with power: Vol'ka is the one who knows the present world better than the adult Hottabyč and helps him to adapt to the new system. However, the idea of empowering the child is undermined by giving the apparent empowered child character the role of an adult.

### 3.2.5. *The double*

The double belongs to the classical imagery of fantastic fiction and has its roots also in Russian literature. The Russian use of a doppelganger has been traced to the 17<sup>th</sup> century satirical verse *Povest' o Fome i Ereme* (The Tale of Foma and Erem)<sup>388</sup>. Russian doubles of Romanticism have a close connection to the Hoffmannian tradition. Charles E. Passage attributes the origin of the word *dvojniki*, the double, to *Dvojniki, ili moi večera v Malorossii* (1828, *The Double, or My Evenings in Little Russia*), a

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<sup>388</sup> Лихачев 1997, 375

collection of short stories by Antony Pogorelsky, “the first Russian Hoffmannist”<sup>389</sup>. The most famous classical Russian doppelgänger stories are perhaps Gogol’s *Nos*, (1836, *The Nose*) and Dostoevsky’s *Dvojniki* (1846, *The Double*), both with a strong Hoffmannian undercurrent. In Soviet children’s literature, the double is often used in order to solve the dilemma between the call for a positive hero and the need of character education: when the negative traits of the character are transferred to a double, the character itself stays “pure”. In some cases, it is easy to see the relationship between characters and their doubles. However, sometimes the connection is hard to detect. In the following, I will first show the means of establishing a connection between a character and his or her double, and then discuss the uses of the double.

The name can be a connecting factor between two characters in the way that it reveals one to be the double of the other. It is a common motif, for example, in time fantasy, where a character has an equivalent on a different time level<sup>390</sup>. Sof’ja Prokof’eva has used namesake doubles in her *Povelitel’ volšebnyh ključej* (The Keeper of the Magic Keys) series. In the first book of the series, *Učenik volšebnika* (The Magician’s Apprentice), one of the protagonists, a nine-year-old boy Vasja, has a cat called Vas’ka as his double. Although Vas’ka is a traditional and popular Russian name for a cat, it is also a variation of the same name as Vasja – Vasilij. Vasja is a standard nickname for Vasilij, Vas’ka a somewhat pejorative one. The boy protagonist of *Kapitan Tin Tinyč* (Sea Captain Tin Tinyč), Tin Tinyč, has an equivalent in the secondary world: a grown-up sea captain, whose name is also Tin Tinyč<sup>391</sup>. Vitalij Gubarev uses the namesake double motif in both *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors) and *Troe na ostrove* (Three children on an Island). In *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, the protagonist Olja meets behind the mirror her “inverted namesake” Jalo<sup>392</sup>. In the Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors, the names of all its inhabitants are words spelled backwards, for example, the king is called Topsed, ‘despot’. Since the names of the characters in the secondary world reveal the most important trait of the characters’ nature, the most prominent characteristic of Jalo is her connection to Olja. Even when the two girls pretend to be boys, the name of one is still the same as the other’s, read backwards: Olja becomes Kolja and Jalo becomes Jalok. In *Troe na ostrove* the protagonist Borja meets a pirate called Ryzj Pës (The Red Dog) on a tropical island. They are not actual namesakes, but Borja is interested in reading books about pirates and his mother calls him Ryzj Pës after he has talked to her about a pirate with such a name.

Sometimes the double resembles its host character in appearance. In *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, Jalo is a mirror image of and looks exactly like Olja except for the fact that everything in her is inverted, just as in a mirror. One detail that is used as a means

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<sup>389</sup> Passage 1956, 254 and 247. The German word ‘Doppelgänger’ (or ‘Doppelganger’) was introduced by Jean-Paul Richter in 1796.

<sup>390</sup> Nikolajeva 1988, 109.

<sup>391</sup> Tin is a nickname of Valentin; Tin Tinyč is thus a short form of the patronymic Valentin Valentinovič.

<sup>392</sup> Written in Cyrillic alphabet, the names are exact backwards-spelled forms (Оля – Яло).

to distinguish the girls from each other is that throughout the narration, the right seems to be the trademark of Olja, whereas Jalo is always connected with the left side. Olja has a birthmark on her right cheek and Jalo on her left cheek. Everything Olja does with her right hand, Jalo does with her left hand, and when Olja hurts her right foot, Jalo hurts her left foot. The external appearance is not the only connector between Olja and Jalo. Even more interesting, at least for an adult reader, is the inner nature of the girls. In addition to her looks, Jalo also mirrors Olja's inner character: she magnifies the faults in Olja's character instead of showing her them inverted, so that she seems to work more as a magnifying glass than a looking glass. The faults that are shown in Jalo are the faults of Olja in her own world: behind the mirror in the Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors, Olja acts like a hero. In that way, Jalo is the opposite of Olja behind the mirror, not the opposite of the "real" Olja in her everyday life in her own world. A different case of resemblance is between the girl Suok and the mechanical doll in *Tri tolstjaka* by Yuri Olesha. The doll is made using the little Suok as a model and as Suok grows older, the doll grows too. The doll is an inanimate object, yet it moves like a real girl, grows up and looks like a living human being. The doll is made to be a companion to Tutti, Suok's brother who has been adopted by the three rulers of the country. In the novel, the doll-double motif works as a way of creating amazement, or the sense of the uncanny<sup>393</sup>, and of introducing new turns into the plot. Yet it also provides the idea of man-made beings, like Hoffman's automatons, and encourages thinking about the difference between humans and machines. The creator of the doll is not a toy-manufacturer as the makers of animated toys often are in fiction for children<sup>394</sup>, but a scientist, maybe a character more suitable for the new Soviet ideals, but also suitable to the Hoffmannian tradition.

Sometimes the connection between the character and the double is stressed by their parallel actions. In Prokof'eva's *Učenik volšebnika*, Vasja the boy and Vas'ka the cat share many characteristics. They even talk using similar phrases:

– Да ведь я самый-самый-самый... – пробормотал Вася и махнул рукой. (*Učenik volšebnika*, 13)

– I am the most-most-most... – muttered Vasja waving his hand.

– Дяденька волшебник! Просто я самый-самый-самый несчастный человек на всем белом све... (*Učenik volšebnika*, 24)

– Uncle magician! I am the most-most-most unhappy person in the whole wor...

– Я самый-самый-самый замечательный кот на всем белом све... – послышался его голос из-под письменного стола. (*Učenik volšebnika*, 27)

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<sup>393</sup> Mechanical, lifelike dolls are a prominent element of evoking the sense of the uncanny in the texts. Royle 2003, 2.

<sup>394</sup> For example, in *Pinocchio*. About toy-makers in children's fiction, see Kuznets 182 – 189.

– I am the most-most-most excellent cat in the whole wor... – declared his voice from under the desk.

Vas'ka and Vasja have the same kinds of ambitions: both want to make a good impression on a girl, Vasja on a girl next door, Katja, and Vas'ka on a neighbourhood cat, Murka.

When the double is created by a character, it is easy to define which one is the double and which one is the original character. A double can be actively created by a character or it can be passively created, which means that the double is dependent on the character. In *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, the double Jalo is Olja's mirror image. Thus, although not actually actively created by Olja, Jalo is dependent on Olja's existence. In my material, there are no doubles that the characters would have created with the intention of making doubles of themselves. Instead, there are doubles created by characters without their knowing that they are actually making manifestations of themselves. Doubles actively created by children occur, for example, in Sof'ja Prokof'eva's *Povelitel' volšebnyh ključej* (The Keeper of the Magic Keys) series. Originally, Vas'ka the cat is created by Vasja in *Učenik volšebnika* (The Magician's Apprentice). The boy draws a picture of a cat and gives it to the magician Alěša, who magically transforms the picture into a real, living cat. The magician Alěša, who animates Vas'ka the cat, is not its actual creator but only the magical agent who helps the real creator of the double. The cat is not originally intended as a double but as a present to the magician Alěša; yet, he reflects some of the characteristics of his creator. Although the change in Vas'ka is presented as permanent, the cat is afraid throughout the *Učenik volšebnika*, and later in a sequel *Astrel' i hranitel' lesa* (Astrel' and the Forest Keeper), that the magician could turn him back into a drawing, if he behaves badly. In *Kapitan Tin Tinyč* (Sea Captain Tin Tinyč), the sea captain is invented by the boy Tin Tinyč. All the captains on the Island of Captains are products of children's imagination. They are doubles of the children of the primary world, but not identical with them. Not all the captains have their equivalents in the text set in the primary world, only captain Tin Tinyč has Valentin and the pirate queen Gina has the small daughter of a robber in a story in the middle of the novel. The old captain Columbus has his prototype not in the text but in history. Still, in the secondary world, many of the captains talk about the children who have made their ships and invented them. Thus, the reader can assume that they all have their prototypes in the primary world.

Robyn McCallum has studied the problematics of doubles in children's fiction in her book *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction: The Dialogic Construction of Subjectivity*. She concentrates mainly on Western contemporary adolescent fiction that operates on somewhat different terms from the Soviet children's fantasy, yet the use of the double has some similar features. According to her, Freudian concepts are productive when analyzing the use of doubles in fantasy, since in fantasy "the double is frequently a symbolic manifestation of a character's alterego and often represents that

character's other "evil" self<sup>395</sup>. The double also tends to "destabilize notions of the subject as unified, or coherent, or as existing outside of a relation to an other"<sup>396</sup>. In Soviet fantasy, doubles are often used in order to externalise the harmful traits of the characters in order to make them more visible and to give the character the possibility to overcome them.

An obvious example of the use of a double to externalise the worst traits of the character is Olja's double, Jalo, in *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors). In her own world, Olja is quite an ordinary girl. Behind the mirror, her good and bad traits are distributed between her and her double: Olja is polite, brave and careful, whereas Jalo is rude, cowardly and sloppy. During the story, it is mentioned several times that Olja should look at herself as an outsider, and it is made obvious that in Jalo she has her chance to do so. The flaws in Olja's original character are strongly exaggerated in Jalo's behaviour in the secondary world and they place the girls in dangerous situations. For example, the quite harmless episode of Olja forgetting her keys has a parallel in the secondary world when Jalo loses the key needed to free a friend from his prison, thus jeopardizing his life. During her adventure, Olja learns how important it is to control even the minor faults in her character: she sees them reflected in her double and realises how dangerous and repulsive they are. When at the end of the story, Olja returns home through the mirror and waves goodbye to Jalo in the mirror, she at the same time symbolically says goodbye to her weaknesses.

In Prokof'eva's *Učenik volšebnika* (The Magician's Apprentice), Vas'ka the cat is a manifestation of Vasja's worst traits. Vasja is not presented as a boy with a perfect character, but in the character of Vas'ka the undesirable traits of his nature are seen even more plainly. Vasja's bragging in order to impress his friends, especially Katja, is magnified in the cat's use of magic to impress a female cat Murka. When bragging, Vasja does not consider the outcome and gets in trouble later when he tries to live up to the expectations he has raised: he ends up trying to prove his bravery by entering the wild animals' cage in the zoo. Vas'ka the cat, too, uses his magic irrationally and the outcome is not what he wants: instead of becoming a great magician and being able to help his creator Vasja, the cat makes a terrible mess of everything by turning all the zoo animals into mice without being able to undo the magic. Just as Olja sees her faults in Jalo, Vasja sees in Vas'ka his own weakness when he realises that the cat Vas'ka, whom he thinks in that moment to be magician Alěša transformed as a cat, has been only bragging when he promised to help Vasja. The cat says it is all Vasja's fault, because the boy has drawn him and made him what he is now and Vasja understands that he himself is quite a boaster.

*Učenik volšebnika* is the first book of the *Povelitel' volšebnyh ključej* (The Keeper of the Magic Keys) series. Unlike Vasja the boy, Vas'ka the cat also appears in the later

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<sup>395</sup> McCallum 1999, 76.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid., 75.



parts of the series. In the later novels, he is no longer only a double of Vasja but an independent agent. In the second book of the series *Kapitan Tin Tinyč* (Sea Captain Tin Tinyč), he even gets his own equivalent in the secondary world in the form of the Black Cat, the helper of the pirate queen. Both cats have similar kinds of problems to solve and they are examples of what happens when one chooses different answers to the same question. Perhaps the most outstanding characteristics of the Black Cat is his way of explicitly weighing the different possibilities to solve a problem, when he considers which side he should choose, the pirates or the good captains. He ends up choosing the pirates and his decisions destroy him, when he is finally sent sailing towards emptiness with the pirates. He also chooses to deceive the messenger swallow, whereas Vas'ka is always loyal to the magician Alěša and even overcomes his natural desire to eat the swallow and instead helps her to take care of her young ones.

The opening situation in Gubarev's *Troe na ostrove* (Three children on an Island) resembles that in *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors). The protagonist Borja is presented as a boy who does not like to work. After being transported to a tropical island by a magic handkerchief, he there meets a pirate leader, Ryzj Pěs, the Red Dog. Borja and the Red Dog are presented as having important similarities<sup>397</sup>. Whereas in *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, the double is, despite all her bad traits, quite an ordinary child, in *Troe na ostrove* the double is a purely evil adult. Borja's attempt to avoid work by magic is compared to the pirates earning their living not by work but by crime and violence. The Red Dog points out their similarities and tries to seduce Borja into becoming one of them. The pirate leader can be interpreted as what Borja could become if he would not work as a proper Soviet citizen and would only live at other people's expense. As McCallum states, a double can be seen as an aspect of a character's developmental process and a representation of a possible character position<sup>398</sup>. Naturally, Borja denounces the pirates' way of life and chooses the Soviet morals instead. Yet without his magic, he is powerless against the pirates: the situation looks very bad indeed and Borja's only way of saving himself and his friends is to wake up, since the whole episode turns out to have been a bad dream. The moral of the story is made even stronger when the pirates seem to bother Borja even when he is back at home. Although the island and the pirates were only a dream, Borja does not feel safe even in his mother's comforting presence: he sleeps badly and has restless dreams until he finds out that the police have arrested a gang of criminals looking a lot like the pirates. The threat of Borja's dangerous impulses presented in the character of the Red Dog is too strong to be overcome alone, or even with family and friends, but demands an intervention by the society; Borja can feel safe only when the spreaders of the destructive yet seductive ideology are locked up by the police.

A similar dangerous and seductive double is presented in Jurij Tomin's *Šěl po gorodu volšebnik* (The Wizard Walked over the City). The protagonist, the schoolboy Tolik, has a counterpart who takes him to the secondary world. The plot of the story is based

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<sup>397</sup> Nikolajeva 2002b, 175.

<sup>398</sup> McCallum 1999, 77.

on Tolik finding magic matches that grant his wishes and Tolik uses the matches in order to get himself all kinds of nice things and to impress his friends. The double lives alone in a yesterday world, where he has everything he wants. He is presented as a cold, calculative and selfish person, who wants everything and everyone to please him: representing self-centred individualism and materialism and opposition to official socialist virtues. The double is one of the rare exceptions in Soviet children's fantasy, a child character who is depicted as thoroughly evil and beyond recovery. He wants Tolik as his friend, but demands that the friendship works on his own terms only. The double is a manifestation of Tolik's wishes to get everything and it shows how selfish wishes lead to complete loneliness.

As a contrast to all the bad doubles, a good double is found in Sof'ja Prokof'eva's *Kapitan Tin Tinyč*. The adult sea captain, Tin Tinyč, is a manifestation of the wishes the little boy Valentin has for the future. When the captain is introduced to the reader for the first time, the narrator explains the relationship between the namesakes:

Только хочу вас сразу предупредить, дорогие читатели, что это был вовсе не тот маленький Тин Тиныч, ученик первого класса, с которым вы встретились в начале этой необыкновенной истории.

Не забудьте, ведь мы с вами пересекли океан Сказки и попали на остров Капитанов, где живут *капитаны ребячьей мечты*.

Поэтому нет ничего удивительного, что через порог шагнул взрослый человек, широкоплечий и ладный, с мужественным, пожалуй, даже несколько суровым лицом. Словом, *точно такой, каким мечтал стать маленький Тин Тиныч, когда вырастет*. (*Kapitan Tin Tinyč* c, 36. Italics J.S..)

I want to make it clear, dear readers, that this was not the same little Valentin, the first-class pupil, whom you met at the beginning of this extraordinary tale.

Do not forget that we have sailed over the Ocean of Skazka and are now on the Island of the Captains, where *the captains of the children's dreams* live.

Therefore, it is no wonder that over the threshold stepped a fine adult man with broad shoulders and a manly, yet slightly harsh face. In a word, *just what little Valentin wanted to become when he would grow up*. (Italics J.S.)

Hence, it is explicitly stated that the two Tins are not the same person but the captain is the little boy's dream of his future. Already when Valentin starts playing with the miniature ship he has made, he imagines how the ship goes out sailing commanded by a captain resembling Valentin and his ideals, and decides to become a sea captain when he grows up. Since the name of Valentin's ship is *Mečta*, a dream or a wish, the sea captain is literally the captain of his dreams and wishes. The adult sea captain is also a kind of father figure: the patronymic name of the protagonist suggests that also his father's name is Valentin. Valentin's actual father is never mentioned in the text, yet the captain could also be seen as the boy's ideal image of his father.

Whereas the characters in Soviet fantasy are often placed face to face with their "bad doubles" – usually for the sake of didacticism – the good double is kept separate from its creator. Valentin never meets the captain. The adventures of the sea captain are

mostly set in the secondary world and even when he once visits the primary world, the two of them do not meet. Valentin and the captain live separate lives, although the captain is aware of the existence of the boy. For the boy, the captain is an ideal and he knows about his existence on the level of the idea: he wants to become a sea captain himself and continues his interest in seafaring. It is not stated whether he is aware of captain Tin Tinyč' existence as a miniature human being. Valentin is a character of a different type from, for example, Vasja in *Učenik volšebnika*. Where Vasja is presented as a non-perfect child, who has some undesirable weaknesses in his character, Valentin is almost perfect. He is presented as an artistic child, who builds a fine toyship and draws beautifully. He is also described as a hard-working reader, who is interested especially in seafaring. His only minor fault presented in the story is a certain carelessness, due to which he accidentally lets his ship sail away and spills ink on the map he has drawn, thus creating the dangerous black island. *Kapitan Tin Tinyč* is not as didactic a book as *Učenik volšebnika* and, thus, there is no need to put Valentin and his double face to face to point out the flaws in the boy's nature. Although captain Tin Tinyč is a positive example, he is not presented as better than Valentin but as something worth becoming as an adult.

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The ideal of the positive hero is present in Soviet fantasy in many forms. Since the use of a positive hero does not support the educational goals set upon Soviet children's literature, the protagonists of the stories are rarely depicted as perfect. Often, the protagonists are depicted as inherently good children with some minor imperfections in their nature that they learn to overcome during the adventures in secondary worlds. Sometimes the part of the positive hero is played by the protagonist's friend, or a group of friends, who serve as a role model for the protagonist and who are, according to the doctrines of socialist realism, intended as role models for the reader too. The father and son compilation, typical of Soviet culture, is seen in children's fantasy too. The highest goal the child-protagonist can achieve is the status of a model son; the status of the father is outside the ordinary citizen's reach. In some texts, adult protagonists are introduced. Although adult characters can possibly also be intended as role models for the reader, the role some of the adults have in the texts is rather the role of the child. The mixed child and adult roles have a carnivalistic and, to some extent, empowering effect. In order to discuss the protagonists' negative characters, doubles are sometimes introduced. When the child-protagonist's unwanted traits are projected in the double, the character itself remains pure of dangerous inclinations.

## 4. CHALLENGING THE TRADITIONS OF SOCIALIST REALISM

In a sense, the whole genre of Soviet children's fantasy fiction can be seen as a huge time-out from the demands of socialist realism. Although fantasy also followed some of the principles of socialist realism as was seen in Chapter 3, it was also allowed liberties that the more realistic fiction did not have. In this chapter, I will discuss the subversive qualities of Soviet fantasy and examine how topics that could not be dealt with in realistic writing were sometimes addressed in fantasy.

### 4.1. The Aesopian potential of secondary worlds

When talking about fantasy, several scholars have stressed its subversive potential<sup>399</sup>. Rosemary Jackson dedicates even the title of her book to this idea: *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981). According to Jackson, whose ideas are derived from psychoanalytical theories:

It has been seen that many fantasies from the late eighteenth century onwards attempt to undermine dominant philosophical and epistemological orders. They subvert and interrogate nominal unities of time, space and character, as well as questioning the possibility, or honesty, of fictional re-presentation of those unities.<sup>400</sup>

The idea of a subversive impact has often also been connected to Soviet children's literature<sup>401</sup>. Children's literature and theatre have sometimes been seen as a forum for social criticism that could not be expressed in the mainstream adult literature. Children's literature is unique in the field of literature as it has two explicitly different sets of audience, child and adult, giving it an ambiguous nature: though the text is mainly intended for the child reader's benefit, it can also contain elements for the adult audience. Already in 1934, Samuil Marshak pointed out that Soviet children's literature was also read by adults<sup>402</sup>. The subversive content of the text can be intended by the author or unintentional, yet perceived by the readers as subversive. Since, in the early Soviet years, several promising authors had more or less voluntarily moved from the sphere of mainstream literature into children's literature<sup>403</sup>, it is natural that literary criticism tends to seek subversive elements in their works.

When combining these two fields of literature, fantasy and children's literature, each of which had some subversive potential, it can be speculated that their combination, children's fantasy, had even stronger subversive capacity. However, as seen in the

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<sup>399</sup> See, for example, Kroeber 1988, 31 – 49.

<sup>400</sup> Jackson 1995 (1981), 175.

<sup>401</sup> See, for example, Loseff 1984, 193 – 194, Terras 1992, 500.

<sup>402</sup> Маршак 1990 (1934), 23.

<sup>403</sup> Hellman 1991, 15 – 16. Nikolajeva 1996b, 379.

previous chapter, Soviet children's fantasy supported the official ideology rather than trying to undermine it. Still, children's fantasy offered a channel for dealing with issues that were not allowed in literature in general. In the following, I will study the subversive possibilities of Soviet children's fantasy. I am not suggesting that Soviet fantasy literature acted as a kind of forum for the secret exchange of forbidden ideas; rather that sometimes it contained ideas that readers were able to interpret as subversive, whether they were intended by the author or not.

#### ***4.1.1. Aesopian language***

Russian literature has a long history of so-called Aesopian language that was used in texts to hide their subversive contents from the censorship. *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet Literature* defines Aesopian language as follows:

A term and style of speech or writing based on the deliberate use of allegory and, frequently, irony. Generally employed to circumvent social or political censorship, this special form of allegorical satire derives its effect from enciphering and deciphering of a subtext.<sup>404</sup>

The most often mentioned means of Aesopian language are the use of fable imagery, allegory, periphrasis, pseudonyms, allusions and hints, irony, juxtaposition and contrast<sup>405</sup>. In the Soviet Union, the existence of Aesopian language was a generally known fact. However, it was, at least officially, connected with pre-Soviet Russia only, while its continuation in the Soviet Union was not acknowledged. According to the Soviet view, Aesopian language was a phenomenon of the imperial past and it was used to avoid the tsarist censorship<sup>406</sup>. Literature encyclopaedias dealing exclusively with Soviet literature since 1917 did not recognize the term<sup>407</sup>. However, during the Soviet era, Aesopian language did not perish; on the contrary, it flourished as prominently as ever in order to circumvent the new Soviet censorship systems. In fact, the phenomenon itself is not only Russian but rather a universal one<sup>408</sup>. However, the

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<sup>404</sup> Parrot 1977, 39.

<sup>405</sup> Григорьев 1987, 504.

<sup>406</sup> See, for example, Григорьев 1978, 1695 – 1696; Григорьев 1987, 504 – 505.

<sup>407</sup> See, for example, Казак 1988. Aesopian language as a term is not often mentioned in English language literary dictionaries either. As examples of dictionaries ignoring the term, see Baldick 1990, Hawthorn 1998, Quinn 1999. On the other hand, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1997) recognizes the term 'Aesopian fantasy' as "a tale which tends to utilize talking animals to convey points about human nature, though stories featuring humans (or beasts) in moralistically construed otherworlds also clearly belong to this category [ - ] For tales to be understood as Aesopian it is necessary only that their moral intention *seems to be concealed*." Clute 1997, 10.

<sup>408</sup> Aesopian language shares some qualities with the concept of palimpsest as used in feminist criticism. Gilbert and Gubar define as palimpsestic "works whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning"; palimpsestic

term ‘Aesopian language’ is explicitly Russian: the term dates back to the tales of Aesop, and it was made well known by Saltykov-Shchedrin in the 1860s<sup>409</sup>.

In the Soviet Union, Aesopian language was used in several literary genres, since all literature, including children’s literature, had to pass through the censorship system before publication<sup>410</sup>. Especially productive genres in this respect were satire and drama<sup>411</sup>. Respectively, science fiction has been recognised as having had some subversive leanings in the Soviet Union<sup>412</sup>. Also the genres using the literature of antiquity had Aesopian potential<sup>413</sup>. Aesopian language was not a phenomenon of fiction only: for example, the studies by Mikhail Bakhtin have been considered as having Aesopian elements<sup>414</sup>. In the early Soviet years, children’s literature proved to be a suitable arena for Aesopian language. The use of Aesopian language in children’s literature was not a surprising phenomenon. The term itself originates from Aesop’s fables, a genre that was originally intended mainly for the adult audience, but has later been considered mostly children’s literature. In Russia, too, fables were originally written for adults and they were especially popular in the Classicist era of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when several prominent authors were writing them. The fables of the most famous Russian author of fables, Ivan Krylov (1769 – 1844), are considered an essential part of the Russian children’s literature canon. After the 1920s, the Soviet regime pushed many first-class authors from mainstream literature into the domain of children’s literature. This produced a great deal of high quality children’s literature as talented authors like Mihail Zoshchenko, Daniil Kharms and Evgeny Schwartz began writing for children. Perhaps their former status as authors of adult literature led their readers to look for ambiguity in their works for children. For example, Lev Loseff is convinced that those writers “sought even as they embraced children’s literature to retain their adult reader”<sup>415</sup>.

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writing was used in order to achieve “true female literary authority by simultaneously conforming to and subverting patriarchal literary standards”. Gilbert and Gubar 1984, 73.

<sup>409</sup> Месс-Бейер 1997, 7 – 9.

<sup>410</sup> Censorship on children’s literature is not only a Soviet phenomenon either. Mark I. West traces the idea of books being potentially damaging to children to the Enlightenment and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and sees the urge to censor children’s literature as a product of different psychological, religious or political ideas about the impact reading has on children. West 2006a, 271 – 272.

<sup>411</sup> Already in the mid-1920s, children’s drama was a strong vehicle of Soviet propaganda and agitation. Губергриц 2004, 144; Gubergrits 2005, 50 – 51. Later it became a prominent genre of Aesopian literature.

<sup>412</sup> McGuire picks Zamyatin’s *My* (1924, *We*) and the Strugatsky brothers’ texts as examples of critical Soviet science fiction. McGuire 1981, 430; 434 – 435.

<sup>413</sup> Barta, Larmour and Miller 1996, 5.

<sup>414</sup> Morris 1997, 2 – 3. Morris comments on Michael Holquist’s view on Medvedev’s and Voloshinov’s texts, often attributed to Bakhtin, using Marxist arguments as “window-dressing” to make the text officially acceptable despite its possibly subversive contents.

<sup>415</sup> Loseff 1984, 194.

In the definitions of Aesopian language, the use of Aesopian means is usually presented as intentional: the author has a message that he wants to pass on to the readership and in order to do so, uses a “secret code” in order to avoid the risks of censorship. The main difficulty of using Aesopian language is that the text must simultaneously both hide and show. The censors should not be able to point to the unwanted message of the text and yet the reader should find it. Lev Loseff uses the terms ‘screen’ and ‘marker’ to denote elements that are used in this sense<sup>416</sup>. Screens have the function of hiding the subversive contents, and markers the function of drawing attention to them. Some elements of the text work as screens, some as markers; sometimes one element can have both functions. Screens and markers can be textual elements: for example, use of allusions or irony. As Loseff points out, in addition to the textual elements, the non-textual ones also work as screens to confuse the censors<sup>417</sup>. For example, addressing, or pretending to address, the text to children can work as a screen<sup>418</sup>. Due to the ambiguous structure of the text, the Aesopian elements are very much dependent on the reader’s interpretation. Klein Tumanov writes:

At the same time, in the former Soviet Union scientific articles, journalistic writing, literary criticism, historical studies, translation, and, of course, original works of poetry and prose could all likewise become parables, allegories, and so forth, about Lenin, Stalin, and life under Communism in general.<sup>419</sup>

Obviously, a close and deliberate Aesopian reading can produce the desired meaning of almost any text. Thus, it is extremely difficult to point out for certain which texts are genuinely Aesopian and which are not. Aesopian language is not a code language that can be solved by using certain keys or tables of correlation between signs, nor is Aesopian literature simply a puzzle to be solved in the sense of the Orwellian “Dictionary of Newspeak”. The “hidden message” can even be understood differently in different times: for example, in Stalin’s Soviet Union the name character of Kornei Chukovsky’s children’s poem *Tarakanišče* (The Cockroach) was often interpreted as an image of Stalin<sup>420</sup>, whereas today its reader might see the story as an allegory of dictatorship in general. Of course, the interpretation of today’s reader may be influenced by the former interpretations and the reader might still see the characteristics of Stalin in the character, while the readers of the story under Stalin’s regime could also see the wider perspectives of the dictatorship issue. Still, seeing the cockroach as Stalin might have been a more relevant interpretation in Stalin’s time, while seeing the character as a universal representative of dictatorship might be more relevant to the later readers.

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<sup>416</sup> Loseff 1984, 51 – 52; also Klein Tumanov 1999, 130. Moss uses instead the term ‘masking’. Moss 1984.

<sup>417</sup> Loseff 1984, 52; see also Klein Tumanov 1999, 131.

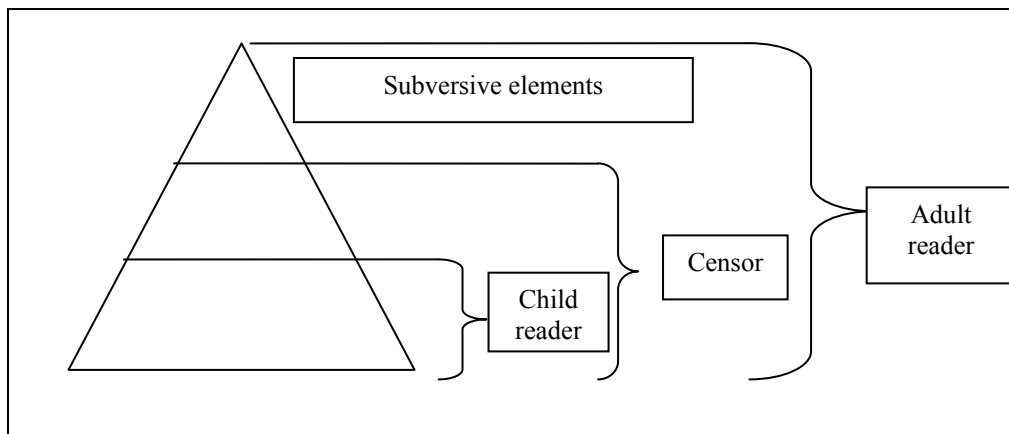
<sup>418</sup> Klein Tumanov 1999, 131.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid., 135. In the minds of the readers, it did not matter that the poem was written in 1923, before Stalin became a notorious dictator.

It can also be asked what the difference is between an Aesopian text and a literary text in general. The methods Aesopian language uses, for example, allegory, are not unique to Aesopian language, but are used in non-Aesopian literature as well. The ambiguity of Aesopian literature can be seen, for example, in the way the satirical elements in Mihail Bulgakov's *Master i Margarita* (*The Master and Margarita*) have been treated in different contexts. In several Soviet encyclopaedias, the novel has been given as an example of a text that uses elements typical of Aesopian language only as characteristic of the author's individual style<sup>421</sup>. Other sources treat the same novel as a work using Aesopian language to mask a hidden message<sup>422</sup>.

One of the important questions concerning Aesopian literature is who is supposed to understand the subversive meaning of the text. In her study of child and adult audiences of children's literature, Barbara Wall uses the terms dual and double audience<sup>423</sup>. In the case of Soviet children's literature and censorship, one should perhaps speak of a triple audience. Larissa Klein Tumanov discusses the idea of Aesopian children's literature having three different types of implied readers: the insightful adult reader, the child reader and the adult censor<sup>424</sup>. According to her definition, the insightful adult is supposed to know the conventions of the Aesopian language and find the hidden meanings below the surface text, while the function of the child reader is to naturalize the text as children's literature. Figure 3 suggests one way to look at the three different types of audiences, based on Klein Tumanov's model: in the figure, the child reader understands the basic meanings of the text, the censor also perceives some finer meanings but only the sophisticated adult reader understands the subversive elements.



**Figure 3:** Perception of textual elements by different types of audience based on Klein-Tumanov's model.

<sup>421</sup> Григорьев 1987, 504 – 505.

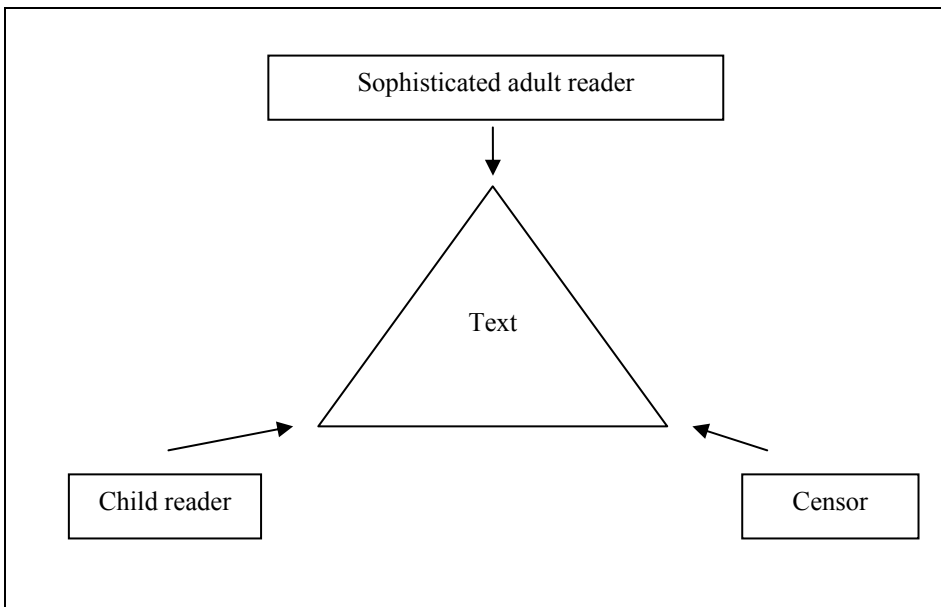
<sup>422</sup> Moss 1984.

<sup>423</sup> Wall 1994, 35.

<sup>424</sup> Klein Tumanov 1999, 129 – 130.



The main problem with this interpretation is the censor's place in the triangle. The censor was not supposed to perceive the subversive elements of the text; however, as a professional of literature, the censor was hardly any less qualified than the so-called insightful adult reader to find such finer elements in the text. Figure 4 suggests another kind of interpretation of the relationship between the text and the different audiences. Each group of readers looks at the text from a different point of view. The child reader concentrates mainly on the child-oriented elements of the text: depending on the text, for example, in fantasy texts on the plot and in nursery rhymes on the language play. The sophisticated adult reader focuses on the subversive elements. The censor concentrates on those elements of the text that are critical to the norms by which literature is perceived as acceptable or unacceptable. This does not mean that each audience is not capable of seeing the elements that are not intended for them in the first place: for example, the censor as a reader is perhaps able to see the subversive elements too, but in his official position, he does not necessarily have to pay attention to them.



**Figure 4:** Perception of textual elements by different types of audience

This division of audiences into three groups is not to be taken as a value statement, simply as different positions towards the text. Moreover, the positions of sophisticated adult reader and child reader do not necessary imply an actual child or adult; some children might be able to look at the text from the position of a sophisticated adult reader just as well as some adults may see the text from the position of a child reader. Neither are any of the elements to be seen as more valuable than the others: all the elements are vital for the text as a whole.

#### 4.1.2. *The Land of Kaščej – secondary world as a screen*

A secondary world can operate as an Aesopian screen. One of the typical techniques employed by pre-Soviet Aesopian writers was to use a different country as the setting of the text when it was actually supposed to be understood as a depiction of the author's own society<sup>425</sup>. In practice, the Aesopian screens easily become markers. It is reasonable to think that an educated reader was familiar with the authors' way of hiding their criticism by using foreign settings, and thus the reader was prepared to look for subversive contents in any text that seemed to depict life in other countries. In children's literature, the use of a fantastic secondary world often has the same qualities as the depiction of foreign countries in adult fiction. Soviet children's fantasy has a wide range of secondary worlds depicting oppressive societies that can be interpreted as a representation of some aspects of life in the Soviet Union. It is not difficult, for example, to read the crooked mirrors in Vitalij Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (1951, *The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors*) as an allegory of Soviet policies of the early 1950's. In the following, I will use Veniamin Kaverin's *Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše, o veselom trubočiste i mastere Zolotye ruki* (1939 *The Story of Mit'ka, Maša, the Happy Chimney Sweep and Master Skilful*) as an example of such a text.

Kaverin's book is a conflict of worlds story typical of Soviet children's literature in the 1930s. As such, it offers an excellent screen for discussing Soviet issues transferred to another country. As stated in Chapter 3, Kaverin's work was an easily decipherable allegory in which the reader was supposed to see through the thin layer of fairy tale in order to discover a war propaganda story aimed at showing the horrors of the wartime enemy, fascist Germany. However, the story can also be read as Aesopian literature. The formerly presented "official model of reading the text" becomes the main screen hiding the Aesopian contents of the story. In an Aesopian reading, the secondary world of the story, Kaščeeva strana, the Land of Kaščej, that is also called Koričnevaja strana, The Brown Land, shows features that can be connected with the Soviet Union of the 1930s as well as the Germany of the same time.

In the book, there is a clearcut distinction between the two worlds. As much as the secondary world is associated with Germany, the primary world is associated with the Soviet Union. As a conflict of the worlds story, there is no doubt about who are supposed to be on the "good" and "bad" side. This is a clear example of the typical Aesopian means of using the foreign country as a screen. The Brown Land is doubly marked as *čuzoj*, alien: first, it is a fantasy world and, secondly, it is clearly shown as being non-Soviet, especially since a straightforward image of the Soviet Union is presented as the primary world of the story. Although the book deals with contemporary politics, it is also distanced from the actual reality by using a folktale-like fantasy world as a setting. However, when the book was published in 1939, anti-German propaganda was a legitimate use of literature and art. There was no need to disguise the propaganda behind a fairy-tale mask. I have earlier argued, that the fairy-

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<sup>425</sup> Parrot 1977, 43.

tale surface of Kaverin's story was probably a means of making the moral of the story more accessible to children, and maybe even to their parents. Another reason for distancing the story in a secondary world is a real need of disguise: in *Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše*, it is possible to find subtle allusions to the Soviet Union of the 1930s, although Kaverin's story has been seen very clearly as addressed against Germany<sup>426</sup>. The readers were used to searching for hidden meanings in fairy tales. Thus, the fairy tale-surface that served as a screen for the pseudo-Aesopian allegory becomes a marker that suggests a genuine Aesopian content behind the screen of the allegory. In order to see the Aesopian contents of the text, the reader has to see through the mask of the official reading. In a sense, *Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše* has two layers of masking: the first mask is the folktale-like fantasy surface of the story that hides the allegorical meaning of the story. This is a mask that is easy to see through and one cannot reasonably think that any reader, at least any adult reader, could have missed the allegorical level of the story. This allegorical level provides the story with a second mask: the reader, for example, a censor, contented with seeing through the first mask, does not have to look for a new mask behind the first one if he does not want to.

What is there to be found behind the double screen, or the double mask, of fairy tale and allegory? Most of the horrors of wartime fascist Germany depicted by Kaverin can equally well be connected with the Stalinist Soviet Union. The events set in the Brown Land have close connections to the less pleasant side of the 1930s Soviet Union. Burning books can be seen as a symbol of censorship, cutting off the birds' wings might symbolise depriving citizens of human rights and freedom. Coming to people's homes at night and taking them away is easy to connect to the methods of the Soviet secret police. These allusions might not be intended by the author, but the reading public was bound to draw its own conclusions. It may be a coincidence that the text depicting the German reality fitted the Soviet one so well: after all, the two systems had considerable similarities. The option to interpret the story as a commentary on Soviet internal issues became even more prominent after the war when new editions of the books were printed<sup>427</sup>. This time the allusions to Germany were reduced. For example, the politically motivated names of the wizard's fierce dogs Gim, Ger and Geb were changed into more neutral ones, Gart, Gnor and Gaus, that do not have association to actual historical personalities.

One can always ask what is the use of playing with double masks. In a sense, double (or multiple) masking is a poor metaphor: it supports the idea that behind the last mask there is some kind of final truth to be seen. It presents Aesopian literature as some kind of game or puzzle the author has invented for the reader to solve. It reduces literature

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<sup>426</sup> See, for example, Hellman 1991, 89.

<sup>427</sup> According to the card catalogue of The National Library of Russia, the next publication of the book took place in 1971.

[http://www.nlr.ru:8101/ecase/expand\\_bm.php?id=52604&cn=30&cn1=29&cn2=77&from=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nlr.ru%3A8101%2Fecase%2Fsearch\\_extended.php%3Fb%3D%25EA%25E0%25E2%25E5%25F0%25E8%25ED%26q%3D%26x%3D0%26y%3D0](http://www.nlr.ru:8101/ecase/expand_bm.php?id=52604&cn=30&cn1=29&cn2=77&from=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nlr.ru%3A8101%2Fecase%2Fsearch_extended.php%3Fb%3D%25EA%25E0%25E2%25E5%25F0%25E8%25ED%26q%3D%26x%3D0%26y%3D0)

to a relatively simple system of communication in which the main point is to deliver the author's message to the reader in as intact a way as possible, while hiding it from the censors. The multiple layers of the text supporting and contradicting each other produce new meanings that none of the layers could provide alone. In Kaverin's story, one of these meanings that can be found by reading the different layers together is the portrayal of how propaganda and Aesopian literature work in a totalitarian society. *Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše* reveals to the reader the questionable methods of propaganda. The evil wizard Kaščej's actions are characterized by lying and falsehood: Maša is lured to Kaščej's land on false premises, Master Skilful is tricked into helping the wizard by lying to him, while the burning of books is a symbol of censorship. An interesting depiction of propaganda is the way the indoctrination of children is presented when Kaščej tries to make Maša accept his corrupt values by exposing her to violent sights: in the story, Kaščej believes that Maša will become as ruthless as his own daughter had been if only she sees enough violence and suffering. In Kaverin's story, these attributes of propaganda are connected to the enemy, but it was obvious that similar means of influencing the public opinion were not unfamiliar in the Soviet Union, either – after all, Kaverin's story itself is a fine example of Soviet propaganda. Reading both layers together forces the reader to think about the status of propaganda: in the Soviet Union, propaganda was understood as a positive thing, an important instrument for forming and preserving the system. Yet, in *Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše*, the German propaganda is shown as a questionable means of exercising power. If one reads the story as a story of the Soviet political environment, one has to question the difference between the German and Soviet ways of propaganda. Kaverin also provides the reader with direct instructions on how to find hidden meanings in a text. The advice the Jackdaw gives to Mit'ka about how to figure out the dogs' names can also be seen as a suggestion to read the text, or more widely interpreted, any text, more closely and look for meanings under the obvious surface.

#### ***4.1.3. The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors – clues for the reader***

An example of Aesopian worlds of the early 1950s is Vitalij Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors). The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors is a feudal kingdom ruled by a dictator-like king and his henchmen. On the surface, the story seems to criticise the feudal capitalist system and show the superiority of the Soviet system. However, the story has an alternative interpretation in which the oppressive secondary world can be seen as a representation of the Soviet system.

Just as Kaverin's story had prominent screen elements protecting the author, so did Gubarev's story. The screens were both textual and non-textual. Perhaps the most important non-textual screen element was Gubarev's earlier work, especially his writings on the notorious Pavlik Morozov. Already in 1933, his article "Odin iz odinnadcati (One of the eleven), based on the trial of the Pavlik Morozov case"<sup>428</sup> was

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<sup>428</sup> Дружников 1988, 154.

published. In 1940, he published the story “Syn. Povest’ o slavnom pioneer Pavlike Morozove” (The Son. The story of the great pioneer Pavlik Morozov)<sup>429</sup>. The best known and the longest lived story of the case *Pavlik Morozov* (1947, Pavlik Morozov) was a literary rendition of the events that became an official biography of Pavlik Morozov; Gubarev also made his book into a stage play in 1952<sup>430</sup>. Gubarev’s *Pavlik Morozov* provides a story that is loyal to the official myth of the brave pioneer boy who died a martyr’s death at the hands of vengeful villagers in 1932 after exposing his own father to the officials for undermining the kolkhoz. The truth-value of the myth has lately been questioned and even the prerequisites of the legend have been proven faulty<sup>431</sup>. Yet, the legend of Pavlik lived on in the Soviet Union, and in the official rhetoric, Pavlik was considered an example for all pioneers. Gubarev even received an order of honour for his Morozov-related propaganda<sup>432</sup>. In addition to Pavlik Morozov’s story, Gubarev established his reputation as a politically correct author by writing other pioneer-related literature and being the editor of *Pionerskaja Pravda*. Družnikov describes Vitalij Gubarev in the last years of his life as a writer of didactic books about children’s loyalty to the party<sup>433</sup>. Seen against the background of the author’s other work, the most natural way to interpret *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* does indeed seem to be to read it as a party-minded Soviet propaganda book. Textual screens in *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* motivate this reading even further. The use of the secondary world presents the Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors as a fantasy world clearly separated from the Soviet reality. The intertextual relationship with the social realist children’s literature is strong: the use of typical Soviet symbols, pioneer scarves, pioneer songs, revolution imagery etc, and the admiration of the Soviet reality by the main character Olja put the story in line with officially acceptable children’s literature. In addition, the clear-cut educational message – in the secondary world Olja learns to correct the flaws in her nature – adds to the acceptable status of the story<sup>434</sup>.

The markers hinting at the possible Aesopian contents of the story are particularly interesting in *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*. The whole story is characterized by the idea of inversion. The entire secondary world is a mirror image, i.e., an inverted image, of Olja’s own world. The mirror is a central motif in the story. As an object, the mirror is present in two different forms: as the mirror on the grandmother’s wall and as the distorting mirrors in the secondary world. The grandmother’s mirror serves as a passage between the primary world and the Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors. This mirror can be seen as an Aesopian screen: it validates the text as a story of a political system that is the opposite of the primary world system, especially when everything behind the mirror contributes to the idea of inversion. Whereas the grandmother mirror resembles the mirror in Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass* (1872), the distorting mirrors

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<sup>429</sup> The card index of the National Library of Russia; <http://www.nlr.ru/>

<sup>430</sup> Kelly 2005, 190 – 191.

<sup>431</sup> Дружников 1988; Kelly 2005.

<sup>432</sup> Дружников 1988, 156.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*, 156. Gubarev died in 1981.

<sup>434</sup> For a closer look at the textual screens in Gubarev’s *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, see Salminen 2002, 207 – 210.

have a predecessor in H. C. Andersen's *Sneedronningen* (1844, *The Snow Queen*) in which the devil's mirror shows everything beautiful as ugly and magnifies the ugly sides of life. Gubarev's distorting mirrors show a poor thin worker with a crumb of bread in his hand as a fat man with a big loaf of bread; the mirror in the king's palace shows Olja and Jalo as ugly and the evil king as very handsome. The king of the country and the main villain of the story, minister Nušrok, aim to put mirrors everywhere in the capital city in order to distort the people's view of reality and to create an illusion of a better life. Actually, the inversive function of the grandmother's mirror might be an illusion too. The idea of a mirror inverting reality is an optical illusion: in fact, a mirror reflects accurately what is in front of it. It is only the human perception of reality that makes us think that when we are standing in front of the mirror and raise our right hand, our mirror image raises her left hand. Our human way of interpreting reality makes us see the two-dimensional reflection as a person with a right and a left hand. Just like the evil step-mother's mirror in *Snow White*<sup>435</sup>, the grandmother's mirror – conveniently owned by an older female relative of the protagonist, described as magical<sup>436</sup> and able to talk like the Snow White mirror – shows Olja the unpleasant “truth” about herself. Like a magnifying glass or Andersen devil's mirror it magnifies her shortcomings to fantastic proportions.

The element of inversion is plainly present also in the names of the secondary world characters: the names of the characters reveal something of the nature of their owners when read backwards (see Table 2).

Name	Backwards	Meaning	Value
Jalo	Olja	Olja spelled backwards	0
Gurd	drug	friend	+
Aksal	laska	caress, endearment, kindness; weasel ( <i>Mustela nivalis</i> )	+
Bar	rab	slave	0
Topsed	despot	despot	-
Nušrok	koršun	kite ( <i>Milvus</i> )	-
Abaž	žaba	toad	-
Anigad	gadina	reptile; scoundrel	-

**Table 2.** The names of the most important secondary world characters in Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*. The column marked ‘Value’ indicates the connotations of the name. Names marked with ‘+’ are positive and those marked with ‘-’ are negative. The ones marked with ‘0’ have no moral value but rather indicate the character's position in the story: Jalo's position as Olja's mirror image and Bar's position as a badly treated servant. Note that even though the transliterated forms of Olja and Jalo do not match, in their original Cyrillic form, they match exactly.

<sup>435</sup> In addition to different folktale versions, the story of Snow White was in Russia and the Soviet Union well known as Pushkin's fairy tale *Skazka o mērtvoj carevne i semi bogatyrjah* (1833, *The Tale of the Dead Princess and the Seven Knights*).

<sup>436</sup> Before Olja enters through the mirror, the mirror addresses Olja calling itself *volšebnoe zerkalo*, the magic mirror.

The names of the characters on Olja's side have positive connotations, whereas the names of the villains have negative ones. The name describes the enemies both by appearance and by character. For example, the evil minister Nušrok looks like a bird of prey, which is suggested by his name<sup>437</sup>:

А еще через несколько секунд к мастерским подкатила сверкающая карета. Слуги распахнули дверцы, и Оля увидела выглянувшего из кареты человека, лицом похожего на коршуна. Нос у него был загнут книзу, словно клюв. Но не нос поразил ее. Девочка вздрогнула, увидев глаза Нушрока. Черные и хищные, они словно пронизывали всех насквозь. Оля заметила, что с Нушроком никто не хочет встречаться взглядом и все смотрят в землю.

[ - - ]

Оля подумала, что голос у него такой же противный, как и глаза. (*Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, 18)

After a few more seconds, a shiny carriage drove into the mirror workshop. Servants opened the doors and Olja saw emerging a man whose face looked like a kite's face. His nose curved down like a beak. Yet it was not the nose that struck her as odd. The girl shivered when she saw Nušrok's eyes. They were black, predatory and piercing. Olja noticed that nobody wanted to look him in the eyes: everybody looked down at the ground.

[ - - ]

Olja thought that his voice was as disgusting as his eyes.

The dangerousness of the enemies is further stressed by the inverted names: in different cultures there are various name taboos, beliefs that forbid people from saying aloud certain words, for example, the names of possibly dangerous animals, respected rulers, demons or spirits of the dead<sup>438</sup>. In *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, the names of the villains are inverted, which means that people do not have to actually say the rulers' true names that show them as what they truly are: the scrambled names have a euphemistic effect. The idea of a name taboo had also been used in Soviet children's literature before Gubarev: about ten years earlier, Veniamin Kaverin introduced in his *Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše* three fierce dogs whose names should not be said aloud but only whispered, thus underlining the seriousness of the dangers the dogs present.

The language play in Gubarev's text can be compared with the language play in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* books that have several of the same motifs as Gubarev's text. In Carroll's texts, the language play is a prominent nonsense element that forces the reader to abandon the conventional ways of reading<sup>439</sup>. The importance of naming emerges in Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, when Alice asks Humpty Dumpty "Must a name mean something?"<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> Olja finds Nušrok's eyes especially repulsive. In literature, the eyes often reflect the character's nature. Bright, burning eyes are often the trademark of positive heroes: later in the story, it is the look on Olja's bright eyes that makes Nušrok jump off the top of the tower.

<sup>438</sup> See, for example, Nirvi 1944, 20 – 21.

<sup>439</sup> See, for example, Saukkola 2001, 60.

<sup>440</sup> Carroll 1996 (1872), 192.

Karen Coats sees Alice's question as prefiguring the Saussurian concept of the arbitrariness of a sign and treats the name as an important attribute of the Lacanian state of the Symbolic<sup>441</sup>. Gubarev's language play does not have nonsense connotations and the names of the secondary world inhabitants are anything but arbitrary. On the contrary, the language play works according to certain rules that the reader can learn. Indeed, the reader is clearly shown how to decode the names. When Olja meets Jalo behind the mirror for the first time, Jalo explains her name:

- Как тебя зовут? – всхлипывая, спросила Оля.
- Меня зовут Яло. А тебя зовут Оля?
- Правильно! – воскликнула удивленная Оля. – Как ты узнала?
- Это очень просто. Ведь я твое отражение. Значит, имя у меня такое же, как у тебя, только наоборот. Оля наоборот будет Яло. Видишь, у меня все наоборот: у тебя родинка на правой щеке, а у меня на левой. (*Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, 12)
  
- What is your name? Asked Olja, sobbing.
- My name is Jalo. And yours is Olja, isn't it?
- Correct! – exclaimed Olja in amazement. – How did you know?
- It is very simple. I am your mirror image. It means that my name is the same as yours, only backwards. Olja backwards becomes Jalo. You see, everything in me is opposite to you: you have a birthmark on your right cheek and mine is on the left.

After entering the Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors, Olja already knows how the names there work:

- Яло, он сказал, что короля зовут Топсед, – соображала Оля. – Если здесь, как ты сказала, все наоборот, значит, он... Деспот?
- Деспот, Оля!
- Вот какой это король! (*Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, 16)
  
- Jalo, he said that the king's name is Topsed, – said Olja. – If everything is backwards here, it means that he is ... Despot?
- Despot, Olja!
- Well that's what this king is!

The same manoeuvre takes place after each introduction of a new character's name, except for the names of the mirror maker boy Gurd and the servant Bar. Either Olja or Jalo spells out the meaning of the names. Especially the names of the villains are spelled out quite explicitly:

- Нушрок – это значит Коршун! – тихонько пояснила Яло. (*Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, 17)
  
- Nušrok – Koršun; that means a kite! – explained Jalo quietly.
  
- Анидаг? – хмура брови, протянула Оля. – Это значит... это значит...
- Гадина! – подсказала Яло.

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<sup>441</sup> Coats 2004, 88.



– Гадина! – вскрикнула Оля. – Так вот кто эта прекрасная дама! (*Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, 68)

– Anigad – said Olja slowly and frowning – It means... it means...

– Gadina, a reptile! – said Jalo

– A reptile! – cried Olja. – That’s what this beautiful lady is!

Understanding the name of the enemy is presented as vital. The importance of finding out the true names is a recurring motif in fantasy fiction. The most famous example is probably Ursula K. Le Guin’s *Earthsea* series starting in 1968, in which the wizards gain power over people and natural phenomena by learning their true names<sup>442</sup>. Whereas in Kaverin’s *Skazka o Mit’ke i Maše* finding out the names of the enemies gives the hero the weapon to destroy them, in Gubarev’s story it does not directly help in the fight against them. The knowledge rather provides Olja with more reasons for her fight by supporting the idea of the enemy as inhuman beasts. Understanding the names gives Olja power over people of the secondary world. When it comes to Olja’s own name, the effect of the name inversion is not as overtly explained. The reason might lie in the different outcome of the interpretation of the language play. Whereas the names of the enemies have to do with the ideological interpretation of the text, Olja’s name is connected with the child’s character education: by introducing Olja’s namesake Jalo, the narrator can comment on the character flaws present in Olja. Unlike Carroll’s Alice, Olja never loses her own name; instead, she obtains new information about herself by getting acquainted with her inverted namesake Jalo.

The inhabitants of the Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors do not seem to be aware of the hidden meanings of their names. Cook Aksal does not seem to understand why Olja first calls her “Aunt Laska” and later she seems to find it amusing when Olja calls minister Abaž Žaba, a toad:

– Абаж? – удивленно приподняла брови Оля. – Это значит... Жаба? (18)

Кухарка расхохоталась.

– Есть у нас такой министр. О, он такой же жестокий и злой, как Нушрок! Абаж владеет всеми рисовыми полями нашего королевства. Ты права, девочка: он действительно похож на толстую жабу! (*Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, 30)

– Abaž? – Olja’s eyebrows rose in amazement. – That means... Žaba, a Toad?

The cook burst out laughing.

– That’s the minister we have. Oh, he is as cruel and evil as Nušrok! Abaž controls all the rice fields in our kingdom. You are right, girl: he definitely looks like a fat toad!

The inversion of the names invites the reader to play along with the language game. The ambiguity of the names suggests the ambiguity of the overall text too: according to Yvonne Bertills, proper names are likely to be ambiguous to the same extent as the overall language of the book in question<sup>443</sup>. The message in Gubarev’s text is clear: not

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<sup>442</sup> See, for example, Senior 1996.

<sup>443</sup> Bertills 2003, 66.

everything is what it seems – one has to look at things in an unconventional way in order to see their true nature. The language game is not the only example of inversion in the story. Another example is an inversion of gender: in order to get into the king's castle, Olja and Jalo dress as boys. The change is only superficial: the girls wear boys' clothes and call themselves by boys' names Kolja and Jalok. However, they do not actually change their gender and several times, they have difficulties in remembering to refer to themselves with male pronouns and verb forms. The overall presence of the inversion motif suggests that the reader should apply the idea of inversion to other aspects of the story too.

Applying inverted reading to the book changes the nature of the story radically. If the secondary world, the Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors, is read as a representation of Soviet reality, the picture the book paints of this reality is not rosy. The land is ruled by a dictator and his nomenklatura, which, at least to an adult reader, is easy to read as a portrayal of the Soviet situation in the early 1950s, at the height of Stalin's reign. The central motif of the story, the crooked, distorting mirrors, easily renders itself to a critical reading of the Soviet propaganda system and its aim to make the reality look better than it actually was. The inverted reading is supported by an important non-textual element: since the first years of Soviet rule, the dominant literary model was the mirror theory based on Lenin's article on Tolstoy from 1908. The basic idea was that art is a mirror of the society in which it is born, and it is capable of showing even more than the author could knowingly articulate.<sup>444</sup> Reading the book according to the mirror theory turns the text into a depiction of the Soviet reality in the early 1950s. Although reading against the grain suggests this alternative reading, it would be going too far to suggest that *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* was a story with strong, intentional elements of social criticism aimed at Soviet politics. Yet it is almost impossible to read the story without paying attention to its subversive undercurrent.

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Aesopian language provides the author with the means of discussing topics that are not favoured by the authorities of the society. On the other hand, the ambiguity of Aesopian language often obscures the meanings of the texts making them difficult for the target audience too. It can be speculated that the awareness of the possibility of the Aesopian contents in literary works turns people into skilled readers, ready to find in texts nuances that readers from societies with less strict censorship practices are not trained to find.

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<sup>444</sup> See, for example, Fer 1989, 15; Nikolajeva 1996b, 383.

## 4.2. Fantasy as a means of discussing difficult topics

Fantasy literature can sometimes discuss topics that are considered problematic for other genres of children's literature, or even for literature in general. This is especially true in children's fantasy under a totalitarian system. Fantasy literature offers the author a means of writing about difficult subjects that cannot be treated in more realistic genres, for one reason or another. In fantasy literature, the difficult matter can be distanced in a secondary world that differs to a great extent from the primary world. In the following, I have chosen to discuss two such topics, both discussed in Vladislav Krapivin's *Deti sinego flamingo* (1981, *The Children of the Blue Flamingo*). The first of these topics is the death of a child, a topic considered emotionally distressing for young readers. The other is the power relationship between children and adults that in Soviet literature was generally depicted as quite simple and unproblematic, yet in Krapivin's treatment shows some rather dark sides.

### 4.2.1. The Death of a child

One topic often considered distressing for children's literature is the death of a child. It is often seen as inappropriate as material for children's books<sup>445</sup>. In Soviet children's literature, the death of a child was sometimes treated as a heroic act, for example, in war-related stories<sup>446</sup>. According to Catriona Kelly, in the early Soviet children's literature, even when death was sometimes dealt with, the central characters usually survived<sup>447</sup>. Certain texts used the death of a child for propaganda purposes: perhaps the best known examples are the notorious stories of the legendary martyred child Pavlik Morozov<sup>448</sup>, books on the life and diary of Tanja Savičeva who died during the Siege of Leningrad, and Evgenij Bagritskij's poem *Smert' pionerki* (1932, *The Death of a Pioneer Girl*)<sup>449</sup>. However, a deeper examination of the emotions concerning the topic is quite rare in Soviet children's literature since it would have been against the tone of optimism required of Soviet literature by the standards of socialist realism. The very idea of death itself is a complicated one, and the death of a child character can be seen as even more distressing for the intended child reader. Thus, it is no wonder that the topic is rarely deeply discussed.

The absence of death in children's literature is not only a Soviet issue but also an international one: according to Alison Lurie, death was a common theme in nineteenth

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<sup>445</sup> Gilbertson 2003, 221.

<sup>446</sup> Rudova 2007, 24.

<sup>447</sup> Kelly 2005, 162.

<sup>448</sup> See, for example, Дружников 1988; Kelly 2005.

<sup>449</sup> In Bagritskij's poem, a pioneer girl lies on her death bed and fervently refuses to take a cross her religious mother offers her. The text is considered a classic of Soviet atheist children's literature. Hellman 1991, 139.

century children's literature, but in the first half of the twentieth century, it became very unusual<sup>450</sup>. Since then it has become more frequent – Lurie considers as a turning point the American E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952) – yet the death of the protagonists and their closest friends still tended to be very rare in the latter half of the century<sup>451</sup>. Fantasy literature offered a chance to deal with the theme more subtly than realistically oriented literature: many consider fantasy to be an easier genre in which to discuss the issue than other genres. An internationally well-known example of children's fantasy stories dealing with a child's death in a secondary world setting is the Swedish Astrid Lindgren's *Bröderna Lejonhjärta* (*The Brothers Lionheart*) which came out in 1973. In Soviet children's literature, a similar example of a child's death distanced in a secondary world can be found in the novel *Deti sinego flamingo* (*The Children of the Blue Flamingo*) by the Soviet author Vladislav Krapivin. The story was first published in the journal *Ural'skij sledopyt* in 1981, and as a book in 1982. It won the Aelita award for the best science fiction or fantasy novel in 1983. Compared with earlier Soviet children's fantasy, Krapivin's text is very different: the point has shifted from crude character education and propagandist conflict of the worlds plots towards a more psychological examination of a child's inner world. The emergence of more profound fantasy for children was perhaps related to the overall desire to broaden the scope of Soviet literature and improve its image, which had also brought about the fantastic strain in Soviet adult literature in the mid-1970s<sup>452</sup>. When fantasy, at least to some extent, became allowed in the mainstream literature, it was no wonder that its use in children's literature also took on new features.

#### **4.2.1.1. Portrayal of child's feelings about death**

*Deti sinego flamingo* is one of the rare cases within Soviet children's literature in which the child's feelings about another child's death are deeply discussed for other than propaganda purposes. In *Deti sinego flamingo*, the death of a child is treated from another child's point of view, filtered through an adult narrator. The protagonist Ženja is a child and the events are narrated by the adult Ženja in retrospective first-person narration. The child Ženja is the focalizing character in the novel: it is his feelings the reader learns about, although through the adult Ženja. Ženja, the narrator, has no direct access to other characters' minds; however, in certain situations it is reasonable to read Ženja's feelings as representing the feelings of all the children involved in the course of events. A good example of how Ženja's, and other children's, feelings are dealt with can be found already in the first chapter of the book. Jul'ka's death comes up for the first time when Ženja's and other children's game is interrupted by the appearance of Jul'ka's parents:

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<sup>450</sup> Lurie 1998 (1990), xiv. Dusinberre shows that in English language literature, children and death formed a common thematic combination, and death was often discussed in nineteenth century children's classics. Dusinberre 1999, 123 – 138.

<sup>451</sup> Lurie 1998 (1990), xiv.

<sup>452</sup> Peterson 1989, 254.

По деревянному тротуарчику вдоль овражка медленно шли мужчина и женщина. Я их узнал.

*И ясный вечер сразу сделался печальным и тревожным.*

Это были родители мальчика, который утонул в начале нынешнего лета.

[ - - ]

Они всегда ходили вдвоем. Бывало, что идут мимо нас, потом остановятся в сторонке и молча смотрят, как мы играем. *У нас пропадало сразу всякое веселье. Мы себя чувствовали так, будто виноваты перед ними.* Потом они будто спохватывались и торопливо уходили. *Но прежнее настроение возвращалось к нам не сразу.* (*Deti sinego flamingo*, 254; italics J.S.)

On the sidewalk by the ravine, a man and a woman were walking slowly. I recognized them.

*And the beautiful evening turned immediately sad and uneasy.*

They were the parents of a boy who had drowned in the early summer.

[ - - ]

They always walked together. Sometimes they walked past us and then stopped to silently watch us play. *Our cheerful feeling was immediately gone. We felt as if we were guilty before them.* Then they seemed to become aware of the situation and left in a hurry. *It took a long time before our former mood came back.* (italics J.S.)

Although the narrator has direct access only to Ženja's thoughts, he presents them as representing the feelings of all the children involved by using plural verbs and pronouns instead of singular. Thus, Ženja's individual emotions become a shared experience.

The appearance of the dead boy's parents is presented as distressful for the children. The narrator states that the children feel guilty before Jul'ka's parents. He explains that Jul'ka was a new boy in the neighbourhood: he had lived there only about a month before his death. Ženja tells that Jul'ka drowned when he was swimming alone in the nearby lake that was known to have dangerous depths:

На берегу нашли его велосипед и одежду. А самого не нашли. И наверно, уже не найдут; в нашем озере есть глухие бездонные омуты. Там вообще лучше не купаться в одиночку... (*Deti sinego flamingo*, 254.)

His bike and clothes were found on the beach. Jul'ka himself was not found, and never will be; our lake has bottomless abysses. No one should swim there alone...

This far the story has been about a group of children playing together during their summer vacation. The lonely swimmer Jul'ka is strongly contrasted with Ženja and the other children. The guilt that the children feel before Jul'ka's parents is presented as partly due to the feeling that Jul'ka was an outsider and not a part of the friendly group of neighbourhood children. In a sense, Jul'ka was left out, almost betrayed by the other children. The distress of the children is manifest in their mood: Ženja tells, how "the bright evening turned sad and uneasy" and that it was not easy to return to the earlier playful mood. The guilt the children feel has no motivation in reality. The narrator's

statement about Jul'ka being a new boy in the neighbourhood explains the situation: Ženja, and supposedly the other children as well, did not know Jul'ka at all and the children were in no way responsible for his death. Nevertheless, Jul'ka's death troubles Ženja: his journey to the Island of Dvid can be interpreted as a manifestation of his anxiety about Jul'ka's death. His journey begins on the same evening as he has contemplated Jul'ka's death, and it is in Dvid that Ženja meets the dead boy.

For the reader the idea of Jul'ka's death is made easier by the fact that it is only told, not shown. Jul'ka does not appear in the text as a person until roughly the middle of the story. The story of Jul'ka's death is the first thing the reader learns about him. Thus, the reader does not have to deal with the loss of a familiar character. Although Jul'ka is briefly mentioned already in the prologue of the novel, the narrator calls him only by the name Malysh, "the little one", which the reader cannot connect to Jul'ka, at least during the first reading of the book. After the brief mention of Jul'ka's parents, the boy and his death are forgotten for a long time. It is only in the secondary world of Dvid that the reader, as well as Ženja, realises that one of the runaway children is in fact Jul'ka.

#### 4.2.1.2. *The possibility of a happy ending*

Since in the Soviet Union the official method used in all literature was socialist realism, even children's fantasy had to be written according to that practice. Socialist Realism expected optimism from literature, and preferred a mimetic way of reading and a realistic interpretation. The paradox present in *Deti sinego flamingo* is that all three cannot be simultaneously present in the reading of the book, since the mimetic reading, while producing an optimistic ending, also produces a fantastic interpretation. The undesirable symbolic reading produces a realistic interpretation, but a pessimistic outcome. (See figure 5.)

mimetic reading	→	fantastic interpretation	→	optimistic outcome
	→	adventures in Dvid are true	→	Jul'ka is alive: happy ending
+		-		+

symbolic reading	→	realistic interpretation	→	pessimistic outcome
	→	adventures in Dvid are imagination	→	Jul'ka is dead: unhappy ending
-		+		-

**Figure 5:** Mimetic and symbolic reading applied to Vladislav Krapivin's *Deti sinego flamingo*.

This raises the question of how fantasy should have been read in the Soviet Union. In the following, I will analyse the different ways of interpretation *Deti sinego flamingo* offers its reader. The analysis will concentrate on the issue of Jul'ka's death.

The first way of reading the story is to adopt a *mimetic way of reading*, that is, to read the text literally, as if everything that is described in the text were true in the textual world. According to this reading, Ženja actually goes to the secondary world, the island of Dvid, finds that Jul'ka is alive there and finally brings him back home. The mimetic reading of the story produces a *fantastic interpretation*. The reader believes the fantastic events of the story to be true in the context of the book, which requires from the reader the acceptance of certain violations of the laws of nature as they are known in the world outside the text. In other words, the reader accepts the idea of “the secondary belief”, which, according to Tolkien, is the prerequisite of a successful fantasy text<sup>453</sup>. The Island of Dvid differs noticeably from the primary world of the story: the first thing Ženja notices after arriving in Dvid is that the Moon is different. A giant octopus-like lizard and enormous blue flamingos live on the island. The relationship with the primary world is explained in the text: Dvid has originally been a part of the primary world, but in order to protect the island from outsiders, a scientist has built an enormous mechanical lizard to protect the island, and has made the island invisible from outside. Despite the pseudo-scientific explanations – the island's invisibility is based on the knowledge of how the blue flamingo quills reflect the sunlight making the birds barely visible, and the peculiar position of the Moon is a consequence of the same phenomenon – there are reasons to expect that the island of Dvid is outside the primary world and can only be reached by some special means of transportation. Ženja is first taken to Dvid by boat with a secondary world stranger calling himself Ktor Èho, and later he travels between the two worlds on a giant blue flamingo.

The fantasy nature of the adventures is underlined by certain comments of the narrator that show the text to be very conscious of the conventions of the genre. In addition to Ženja being aware of how fantasy heroes always win their fights, he knows the fantasy tradition of how authors tend to solve the language problems in fantasylands<sup>454</sup>:

И еще одно... Читая фантастические истории, как люди попадали в разные загадочные королевства, я удивлялся: страна незнакомая, а герой всех понимает. Разве там говорят по-русски? Вот так же неясно и с островом Двид. По-нашему говорили его жители? Или я, попав туда, начал сразу понимать их язык? Может быть, на острове такой закон природы? (*Deti sinego flamingo* 1982, 376.)

There was still one thing... When reading fantasy stories of people who get into all kinds of mysterious kingdoms, I was always surprised: the land is foreign, and yet the

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<sup>453</sup> Tolkien 1975 (1939), 40 – 41.

<sup>454</sup> Probably the first fantasy classic concerned with this problem was the British Edith Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet* (1906) in which the narrator acknowledges, yet does not explain the fact that the child characters are able to understand the language of any country they visit during their time-travelling adventures. See Nikolajeva 1986, 106 – 107.

hero understands everyone's speech. Does everyone there speak Russian? The same thing was confusing in the island of Dvid. Did the people speak like us? Or did I somehow learn to understand their language from the moment I got there? Is it possible that there is such a law of nature on the island?

If the reader takes the events in Dvid to be true, the story has an optimistic outcome: Ženja finds Jul'ka and brings him back home to his parents. The happy ending fits well with socialist realism's demand for optimism. The "problem" with this reading is that it employs a fantastic interpretation that could hardly have been desirable under the conditions of socialist realism.

The *symbolic reading* demands a deeper view of the text. The events are not to be read literally but seen as symbolical. A symbolical reading is often used when reading fantasy: the fantastic adventures and quests in secondary worlds are read as "inner journeys", projections of the character's inner self, or a means of solving problems in the character's life. In *Deti sinego flamingo*, several aspects support the symbolical reading of the text. The symbolical reading produces a *realistic interpretation* of the story: the fantastic adventures are not true, but the result of some kind of mental process of the character. In this case, the secondary world can be interpreted as a product of dream, illness or deliberate imagination. Ženja's first journey to Dvid takes place during sleep: a man Ženja has met in his own world takes him to the island on a boat and the boy falls asleep during the voyage. Although the journey is not presented as a stereotypical dream journey, for example, there is no pondering about whether the secondary world adventures have taken place in reality or dream, it does, however, suggest the fantasy nature of the journey.

In addition, the aftermath of the secondary world adventure offers the reader the possibility of thinking that it is a figment of the boy's troubled imagination: after Ženja has returned to his own world, he falls seriously ill. Here, the Soviet reader could have recognized a similarity in the patterns with a Russian classic from the nineteenth century, Antony Pogorelsky's *Černaja kurica, ili Podzemnye žiteli* (The Black Hen or The Underground People). In *The Black Hen*, the protagonist of the story, also a young schoolboy, falls ill soon after his encounter with a secondary world. Afterwards he is not quite sure whether the adventures in the fantastic world have really taken place or has it all been just an illusion caused by fever. Another detail that ties together Pogorelsky's tale and Krapivin's novel is the bird symbolism used in both books. In Pogorelsky's tale, a black hen acts as a messenger between two worlds; in Krapivin's story, the messenger is a blue flamingo. As a bird, Krapivin's blue flamingo differs greatly from Pogorelsky's black hen. Whereas a hen is a very familiar, commonplace domestic animal – although the black colour of this particular hen marks it as different from others and has some connotations to magic – the flamingo is an exotic bird that does not dwell in the landscape pictured as the primary world of Krapivin's story. The flamingo is made even more out of the ordinary by its huge size and blue colour, a colour that has connotations with dream and fantasy. Despite the differences, the intertextual relationship between the two books can also encourage the reader to



interpret Ženja's adventures as imagination, a situation possibly provoked by anxiety about Jul'ka's death.

Another detail that reinforces an interpretation of the story as being imaginary is the constant presence of games in the book. The book starts with the neighbourhood children playing at war with their wooden swords. Ženja's adventures in Dvid take place immediately after the game and the journey to the secondary world is almost like a sequel to the war game. Ženja's game becomes reality when he meets the stranger Ktor Èho. Ktor Èho pays attention to Ženja's knight outfit, calls him a "real knight", and gives him a mission to fight the monster. The group of lost children in Dvid is a parallel of the group of neighbourhood children playing at the beginning of the book – only this time the war game has turned into real war against the adults of the island. Compared with the alternatives of dream and illness, the use of a playful, deliberate imagination is quite empowering for the child.

In Krapivin's novel, the island of Dvid can be interpreted as the land of the dead that has different representations in the mythologies of different cultures. Dvid is the place where Jul'ka has gone after his supposed death. One interesting detail is that at the beginning of the book there is a slight possibility that Jul'ka might not be dead at all. After his assumed drowning, his clothes and bicycle were found on the beach but Jul'ka's dead body was never found. This might have inspired Ženja to hope that the boy could still be alive somewhere. At least, it suggests such a possibility to the reader. The resemblance between the Island of Dvid and a mythical land of the dead is perhaps most noticeable in the means by which Ženja gets there: a stranger from the Island of Dvid, a man who calls himself by the name Ktor Èho, carries him there by boat. The dead boy Jul'ka has come to Dvid in exactly the same way. In this respect, Ženja and Jul'ka's voyages are reminiscent of ancient mythological journeys to the land of the dead, and Ktor Èho<sup>455</sup> can be compared with Charon the ferryman, who in Greek mythology carries the dead to Hades.

A further allusion to the ancient Greek land of the dead can be seen in Ženja's attempt to take Jul'ka back to their own world. This reminds the reader of Orpheus who tries to bring Eurydice back from Hades. When Ženja discovers that Malysh is Jul'ka, his first impulse is to take him back home. Ženja and Jul'ka spend evenings together talking about their homes and Ženja keeps on insisting that they will soon get back:

И конечно, [Юлька] все время спрашивал про своих родителей.  
Что я мог сказать? Я говорил, что они живы и здоровы, только сильно горюют.  
Зато как они обрадуются, когда Юлька вернется!  
(*Deti sinego flamingo*, 324.)

Of course, Jul'ka kept on asking questions about his parents.  
What could I say? I told him that they were alive and well, except for their grief. And how happy they will be when Jul'ka returns!

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<sup>455</sup> The surname of Ktor Èho translates as 'echo' with connotations to Greek mythology.

– Вернемся, Юлька, – быстро ответил я, чтобы и его успокоить, и себя. – Вернемся. Скоро уже будет юго-западный ветер. Смотри, луна почти полная. (*Deti sinego flamingo*, 326.)

We will get back home, Jul'ka, – I said quickly in order to soothe him, and myself. – We will get back. Soon the wind will turn to the southwest. See, the moon is almost full.

When the boys talk about home, Jul'ka's main concern is his parents. He wonders about their well-being and their grief. He does not directly speak about his own anguish, and the narrator does not try to guess what Jul'ka might be feeling. Jul'ka's feelings are presented through his behaviour, for example, the tears in his eyes when he talks about home and his mother.

In Krapivin's version of the story, it is not the Orpheus-like Ženja but Jul'ka who looks back and wants to stay in Dvid where he belongs and where he is needed. His hesitation about going home can be seen already in his early conversation with Ženja, when the boys discuss whether the blue flamingo could fly them home:

– Ничего. Главное, чтобы вернуться... – откликнулся я. Эти слова, кажется, встревожили Юльку. Он спросил с беспокойством:

– А ты уверен, что Птица донесет нас обоих до дому?

– Конечно. Мы же летали вдвоем.

– Мы недалеко летали. А этот путь будет, наверно, очень длинный...

– Донесет, – успокоил я Юльку и себя. – Она вон какая сильная. И верная... (*Deti sinego flamingo*, 324.)

– It's nothing. The most important thing is, that we come back... – I cried. It seemed that these words worried Jul'ka. He asked anxiously:

– Are you sure that the Bird can carry us both home?

– Of course. We have already flown together.

– We did only a short flight. And this will be a very long journey...

– She can carry us both, – I soothed Jul'ka and myself. – She is very strong. And trustworthy...

Jul'ka is not sure whether he is able to get home or not. At this point, he shows his anxiety by doubting the flamingo's capability of carrying both boys back home. Jul'ka's hesitation can be understood by the different positioning of Jul'ka and Ženja in the story: Jul'ka is supposed to be dead, whereas Ženja is only visiting Dvid, rather like the mythical Orpheus, who is only a visitor in the realm of the dead. Ženja is supposed to return home, whereas Jul'ka is not. When the time comes to go home, the two boys begin their journey together. However, when the journey is interrupted, Jul'ka changes his mind and decides not to go after all. He states that he is needed in Dvid and his place is now there by the side of the children of the island. Ženja must return home alone.

Back at home, Ženja is not entirely happy with the outcome of his journey: after being seriously ill for a long time, he decides to go back to Dvid. In the epilogue of the novel he returns to Dvid and comes back home with Jul'ka. The epilogue is written very differently from the story itself, especially when it comes to the flow of time: the time flows more quickly than in the rest of the novel. The epilogue is less than two pages long and yet it covers the events of a considerably long, although not precisely defined, period of time. Ženja's adventures on the island of Dvid are not thoroughly discussed, but only briefly hinted at. Finally, Ženja returns home and Jul'ka comes with him. The book ends with Jul'ka shouting to his mother that he has returned home. Sudden changes in the pace of the story can be an indication of importance. Acceleration can be a sign of minor importance, but it can also be the opposite.<sup>456</sup> Nevertheless, the sudden change of pace draws the reader's attention to the events described. In the context of this fantasy novel, it lures the reader to question the credibility of Ženja's adventures in Dvid. The reader has the freedom to interpret the ending as either true or Ženja's imagination.

In the case when a text addresses to two different audiences, child and adult, Barbara Wall uses the term dual address<sup>457</sup>. Krapivin's novel is a good example of books that can be discussed in terms of two different audiences. In Krapivin's case, the audience does not have to be divided into children and adults but into readers who have different ways of interpreting the novel. It is possible to read the novel literally: to interpret Ženja's adventures in the secondary world as being as real as the rest of the novel, and to believe that he really succeeds in bringing the supposedly dead Jul'ka back home. The other way of reading does not include a traditional happy ending: the adventures in the secondary world have been imaginary and both the characters of the book and the reader must deal with Jul'ka being permanently dead. Although during the story, the reader has to deal with the idea of a child's death, the possibility of a happy ending gives the novel the touch of optimism required of Soviet children's literature.

#### ***4.2.2. The complicated relationship between children and adults***

As was already stated earlier, the relationship between children and adults was mostly quite straightforward in Soviet children's literature. Children should never question the authority of the adults, and even if adults showed weakness in some respect, they should generally be trusted. The exception was, of course, adult villains against whom also children were supposed to fight, often together with the trustworthy adults. Yet in the 1960s, the approach to the theme acquired more psychological depth. The possibility of conflicts was acknowledged, while the superiority of adults was in some cases even slightly questioned. In the following, I will concentrate on two books addressing the child's relationship with adults: Anatolij Aleksin's *V strane večnyh*

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<sup>456</sup> Rimmon-Kenan 1986, 56; Genette 1980, 95 – 99.

<sup>457</sup> Wall 1994, 35.

*kanikul* (1966, *The Land of Eternal Holidays*) and Vladislav Krapivin's *Deti sinego flamingo* (1981, *The Children of the Blue Flamingo*).

#### 4.2.2.1. *The importance of growing up*

Growing up is one of the central issues both in a child's life and in children's literature. Subsequently, refusing to grow up is also a theme that sometimes emerges in literature, either dealing with the child's anxieties connected with the issue, or as a representation of adult nostalgia for childhood. Growing up is closely related to the concept of time. Becoming adult is inevitable as time goes by; the only way to prevent the inevitable is to die young, which is the case in some classic nostalgia-focused children's fiction<sup>458</sup>. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how fantasy literature can deal with this issue by using a secondary world in which time operates differently from the laws of nature as we know them.

The attempt to beat time is a central theme in Anatolij Aleksin's *V strane večnyh kanikul*, *The Land of Eternal Holidays*. Petja's chance of beating time comes when he wins a biking contest – which itself is a concrete form of beating time – and Father Frost promises to fulfil his wish. Petja wishes for never-ending holidays, which can be read as a metaphor for eternal childhood. The granting of the wish produces lots of amusement for Petja, yet it has its drawbacks: Petja can see his friends living in the world where time passes normally and realises that their way of life is better than his. The paradox between the wish for eternal childhood and the wish for growing up is inevitable. Already in the first, introductory chapter of the book, the narrator, who is the protagonist as an adult<sup>459</sup>, begins to remember his childhood and discusses the issue of growing up. In the Medical workers' culture house where Petja goes to a New Year party, there is a poster announcing a conference on “struggle for a long life” and diagrams on “the growth of decline in the death-rate in our country”. The adult narrator remembers how the poster puzzled him as a child:

Меня тогда, помнится, очень удивило, что кого-то серьезно занимают «проблемы борьбы за долголетие»: я не представил себе, что моя жизнь может когда-нибудь кончиться. А мой возраст приносил мне огорчения только тем, что был слишком мал. Если незнакомые люди интересовались, сколько мне лет, я говорил, что тринадцать, потихоньку накидывая годик. Сейчас я уже ничего не прибавляю и не убавляю. А «проблемы борьбы за долголетие» не кажутся мне уж столь непонятными, как тогда, много лет назад, на детском утреннике... (*V strane večnyh kanikul* 361)

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<sup>458</sup> For example, *Le Petit Prince* (1943, *The Little Prince*) by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

<sup>459</sup> Although the whole story about the land of eternal holidays is originally made up by Petja's friend Valerik, the words are those of the adult Petja. He tells the story Valerik told him in their childhood as he remembers it and as if it were true. The “untruthfulness” of the story is revealed to the reader only in the last chapter of the book.

I remember that in those days I was very puzzled by the fact that some people were seriously interested in “the problems of the struggle for longer life”. I could not comprehend that my life could some day end. My age caused me concern only because I was too young. When people asked how old I was, I always added a year to my age and told them I was thirteen. Now I do not add nor subtract anything. And “the problems of the struggle for longer life” do not seem to me as incomprehensible as then, so many years ago, at that children’s party...

In this quotation, both Petja and the narrator are concerned with the concept of time. Petja the child does not understand how someone can be interested in pursuing a longer life: he does not truly consider himself mortal. Petja the adult narrator, on the contrary, recognizes his mortality and sees the value in attempts to prolong human life. On the contrary, Petja the child is anxious to seem older than he actually is: Petja is worried about the fact that almost everyone in the world is older than he. He is anxious because, according to his father, he is supposed to be a diligent boy and should always be ready to help older people, and this creates in Petja’s mind a nightmarish vision, that he must spend his youth working for and helping everyone who is older than himself. On the other hand, he likes activities connected with childhood: he loves holidays, sweets and all kinds of amusement, and when he is granted a wish, he pursues his childlike dream instead of wishing for something useful that could help him in the future. Thus, Petja has two competing impulses: the urge to grow up and the wish to remain a child.

The publication of Aleksin’s story in 1966 took place just a short time before Boris Zahoder’s and Nina Demurova’s translations of *Peter Pan* (1911)<sup>460</sup>, internationally the most famous children’s book dealing with the problematics of eternal childhood. The name character, Peter Pan, has become the international emblem of never-ending childhood. The book was not widely known among the Soviet reading public until the late 1960s<sup>461</sup>, although the very first Russian translations of Barrie’s novels *Peter Pan and Wendy* and *The Little White Bird* that included an early version of the Peter Pan character were published already in 1918<sup>462</sup>. The better known translations of Barrie’s texts were done in the late 1960s: the play *Piter Pèn (Peter Pan)* by Boris Zahoder came out in 1967, and the novel *Piter Pèn i Vendi (Peter Pan and Wendy)* by Nina Demurova in 1968<sup>463</sup>, a few years after Aleksin’s story had been published. Here, I do not aim to discuss, whether Aleksin had drawn inspiration from *Peter Pan* or not. Although *Peter Pan* was not widely available in the Soviet Union when Aleksin wrote his book, it had nevertheless been published earlier and writers sometimes had access to foreign texts that were not available to the general public. The name of the

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<sup>460</sup> There are several versions of Peter Pan’s story by J. M. Barrie. The character Peter Pan was met for the first time in *The Little White Bird* 1901. *Peter Pan* the play appeared on the stage in 1904, and the novel *Peter Pan and Wendy* was published in 1911. In the following, I will refer to the novel version of the story *Peter Pan and Wendy*.

<sup>461</sup> Демурова 2004; Калашникова 2002.

<sup>462</sup> The catalogues of The National Library of Russia. Российская национальная библиотека.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid.

protagonist, Petja or Pjotr, suggests a connection to Peter Pan<sup>464</sup>, yet Aleksin's Petja differs from Barrie's Peter Pan in many respects. Although the central issue of Aleksin's book bears a resemblance to Barrie's texts, there is no question of any kind of plagiarism: Aleksin's text is a genuinely original work that can be discussed as having an intertextual relationship with Peter Pan. I find it interesting that the Soviet text discussing the idea of never-ending childhood was written at roughly the same time as the world famous classic on this very theme was being translated into Russian. Nor is it, perhaps, a coincidence that both texts emerged during the era that was later known as the years of stagnation in Soviet culture and history.

The main plot structure in Aleksin's story is quite similar to that of *Peter Pan*: the schoolboy Petja enters the land of eternal holidays which is a place for childlike amusement much like Peter Pan's Neverland is for Wendy and her brothers. Like Wendy, Petja eventually wants to leave the land of eternal holidays and return to his normal life. The location of the Land of Never Ending Holidays differs from Peter Pan's Neverland that is to be found on an island far away, beyond the maps of the primary world<sup>465</sup>. The Land of Never Ending Holidays does not differ spatially from the primary world of the book. Petja continues living in the same environment as before: he lives at home with his parents and sees his neighbours and friends just as before. The difference between the worlds is rather in the rules according to which Petja lives: he does not have to go to school, in fact he cannot go there even when he wants to, he can take part in a New Year's festival every day and he gets his wishes granted by Father Frost. In other words, Petja has stepped out of the primary time where children gradually grow up and learn things that are needed for becoming an adult Soviet citizen.

The eternal holiday, or the never-ending New Year's party, bears a close resemblance to Bakhtin's concept of carnival. However, whereas an ordinary New Year's party would be a normal carnival, a temporary freedom from the social rules<sup>466</sup>, Petja's eternal holiday is a prolonged carnival: by definition, there is no return to the ordinary from an eternal holiday. In the 1930s classic, Aleksei Tolstoy's *Buratino*, the protagonist Buratino does not have to grow up, or even become a human. He has a place in the mechanical puppet theatre, where his life will be, in a sense, endless carnival. Buratino does not have to go back to ordinary everyday life; rather, he has successfully transformed the exception into a new rule. Petja, on the other hand, gets a lesson on the importance of growing up and his carnival, although prolonged, must finally end. As is usual in the fantasy and fairy-tale tradition, Petja has a chance to undo his wish and the holidays end.

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<sup>464</sup> Pjotr is a Russian equivalent of the English name Peter. The list of typical Russian first names is relatively short, with the result that the names of literary characters coincide more often in Russian than in many other languages. Thus, searching for connections between characters' names in different texts almost always has an element of possible coincidence.

<sup>465</sup> Nikolajeva 1988, 44.

<sup>466</sup> Bakhtin 1984, 10. Бахтин 1990 (1965), 15.

Although the idea of never-ending holidays is presented as Petja's dream, the reader in the end learns that it is actually an invention of Petja's friend Valerik. The whole episode with the holiday magic is made up by Valerik: it never happened in reality, it is just a story Valerik has made up in order to amuse Petja, or to teach him a lesson. Valerik is depicted as an almost perfect child, whom Petja both likes and admires, wanting to be his friend forever. He is almost a magician: at least Petja believes that Valerik can hypnotise other people and he almost believes in Valerik's story about the land of eternal holidays. Valerik's magic is not "real magic" but rather the power of suggestion. The actual magic in the story is performed by Father Frost, although this magic is also finally presented as only Valerik's invention, since Father Frost is part of Valerik's story. Valerik has the role of a catalyst, a character that inaugurates a change in other characters<sup>467</sup>. In *Peter Pan*, it is the catalyst of the story, the magical child Peter Pan who does not want to grow up, whereas Wendy, the subject of change, is more willing to do so. Throughout the story, Wendy is the one who plays mother to the lost boys and is presented as interested in Peter in a more adult way than the boy is able to understand. Finally, after the adventures in Neverland, Wendy returns home, grows up and starts a family of her own, whereas Peter Pan goes on with his boyish life, never growing up. In Aleksin's story, the one who wants to enjoy the endless pleasures of never-ending childhood is the subject of change, Petja. The catalyst Valerik, unlike Peter Pan, never seems to pursue eternal childhood, and he never enters the Land of Eternal Holidays. On the contrary, he is presented as a symbol of everything good there is in real life.

The image of the storyteller is prominent in both books. Barrie's Wendy tells her brothers fairy tales about Neverland, while in Aleksin's story, the whole episode with the secondary world magic proves to be of Valerik's invention. There is a major difference between the two stories' protagonists: Barrie's Wendy is both the subject and the storyteller, but Petja is only the subject that goes through his changes with only a slight chance of affecting his own fate. Wendy knows "intuitively" about Neverland and Peter Pan already before she meets Peter, as can be seen from the stories she tells her brothers; on the other hand, it is possible to interpret the whole secondary world episode as Wendy's invention. Petja as a child is totally dependent on others: Father Frost and Valerik. Petja as a character in Valerik's story has no chance of affecting his fate. It is only the adult Petja who can have power over his own childhood as the narrator of the story. This reflects the problematics of power in Soviet children's literature: although in official propaganda, Soviet children were considered strong and independent, children's literature often offered a child character the role of a passive figure whose best survival tactic was to live according to the rules of his superiors – adults.

*Peter Pan* has sometimes been interpreted as a manifestation of a problematic adult nostalgia towards childhood<sup>468</sup>. In Aleksin's story, the reader can find nostalgia

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<sup>467</sup> Nikolajeva 2002: 112 – 113.

<sup>468</sup> See for example Rose 1984.

towards childhood in the narrator's attitude to Valerik. Petja is presented as a "realistic" image of a child who wishes for eternal holidays and childlike amusement, yet finally realises the importance of change and growing up, whereas Valerik is an idealized perfect child, who does not really change. Although on the level of the text he is not interested in eternal childhood, some such attributes can be linked to him. For example, he grows up physically and becomes adult, yet even as an adult he still looks rather like a child. He is the perfect mouthpiece for an ambiguous ideology towards childhood: he tells Petja a story of the importance of growing up, yet he himself does not really become adult. In a sense, the reality in which Valerik lives presents itself as a sort of magical Neverland in itself. In this Soviet Neverland, the perfect child does not have to change. Valerik is the Soviet equivalent of a perfect, eternal child while, at the same time, this character is symptomatic of a society where the perfect citizen is like an adult child: adult in physical appearance, yet a child in relation to the society.

#### **4.2.2.2. *The land of oppressed children***

Vladislav Krapivin's *Deti sinego flamingo* also provides material for the study of the relationship between children and adults. Krapivin treats the question in a way that differs from the vast majority of Soviet children's literature; it might even be called subversive. *Deti sinego flamingo* is a story of children oppressed by adults and of children who rise to oppose that tyranny. The story differs from the mainstream of Soviet literature in the sense that the struggle in the book is not based on class but age. True, the worst oppressor of the children is the king of the secondary world island, yet there is no class struggle present in the text; it is never stated which social class the runaway children represent and there are no real differences in the attitude of various adults to children.

The conflict between children and adults also exists to some extent in the primary world, and it escalates into a major conflict situated in the secondary world. In the primary world, the conflict between children and adults is presented more subtly, and as being less intentional on the part of the adults. The clashes in the primary world are presented only through Ženja's thoughts, and it is not told how much they are based on adults' actual behaviour, yet Ženja finds adults somewhat oppressive. In the text prior to the secondary world adventures, Ženja meets several adults and the only one he does not experience as hostile towards him is the bus driver who lets him ride the bus for free, since the ticket machine is broken. Other adults often arouse in him a feeling of guilt: he feels guilty when he sees Jul'ka's parents who have lost their son. Ženja is also likely to see the adults' opinions of him as negative and slightly hostile: the kiosk vendor woman is impolite to Ženja and, in the bus, Ženja is afraid that the other passengers do not approve of him:

Пассажиры на меня заглядывались: что за мальчик, которому разрешили ехать без билета? Мне показалось, что они думают: "Вот чудак, забрался сюда с деревянным щитом и мечом; не маленький вроде бы, а с игрушками". Я поскорее сел на свободное место к окошку и поставил щит на колени — загородился. Но от всех не загородишься.



Один пассажир (он сидел у противоположного окна) все посматривал на меня. Это был худой дядька в каком-то старомодном пиджаке и помятой широкополой шляпе.

Не люблю, когда меня разглядывают!  
(*Deti sinego flamingo*, 257.)

The passengers stared at me: who is this boy to be allowed to travel without a ticket? It seemed to me that they thought: “What an oddball, comes here with a wooden shield and sword; too old to have such toys.” I sat quickly on a vacant seat by the window and put the shield on my knee – I hid behind it. But you cannot hide from everything.

One of the passengers (he sat by the opposite window) kept looking at me. It was a thin man in some kind of old-fashioned jacket and a wide brimmed baggy hat.

I do not like people staring at me!

Ženja seems to live in a world where it is better not to arouse attention. When Ktor Èho, the man from the bus, then comes to talk to Ženja in a park after the bus ride, Ženja believes at first that the stranger will reprimand him for impolite behaviour – a situation not unfamiliar in Russian public transportation:

– Скажите, вы рыцарь?

“Ну, все понятно”, – решил я.

Наверно, в автобусе рядом со мной стояла какая-нибудь старушка, а я не заметил. И теперь этот человек будет меня воспитывать: “Вот ты изображаешь из себя рыцаря, а бабушке место не уступил. Разве рыцари так поступают?” Я и раньше встречал таких взрослых: они очень любят подъезжать к ребятам с воспитательными беседами.

А в автобусе и так было много свободных мест!

(*Deti sinego flamingo*, 259.)

– Tell me, are you a knight?

“Of course, now I understand”, I thought.

There had evidently been some old lady standing behind me in the bus and I had not noticed her. And now this man has come to lecture me: “You think you are a knight, yet you did not give your seat to an old lady. Do you think that is how knights behave?” I had met this kind of adult before: they love to have these educational conversations with children. And there had been so many vacant seats in the bus!

On the island of Dvid, Ženja meets similar adult oppression, but this time it is more open, as if the idea of the secondary world of the book were to make the issues of the primary world more visible and more straightforward to deal with. On the island of Dvid, the power is openly held by the adults who exercise rigid discipline over the children and suffocate their attempts to break out from the adult control. The system of Dvid is based on “keeping the balance”: in the lake lives the monstrous Jaščer, the Lizard that is said to come and punish the islanders if the balance is broken. In order to please the lizard, or using it as an excuse because the lizard has not attacked the people for three hundred years, the ruler exercises strict discipline among his subjects. In the middle of the story Ženja and the reader find out that the monster is in fact a mechanical octopus controlled by the king, who uses it as a threat in order to keep his

subjects obedient. The island has a system of different officials keeping the people, especially the children, in their place. The king has a guard called the Servants of the Lizard and the “neighbourhood educators” keep track of the improper behaviour of the children: for every misdoing the children get marks on their cards and if there are too many marks the children are publicly physically punished on *kolesnica spravedlivosti*, the wheel of justice. As a result, most of the children are well-behaved and especially the adults have learned to lead a quiet life. The system has even got rid of the teen age: when the children grow up, they become adults straight away without ever being teenagers:

- Как зачем? Ну... я не знаю. Ребята же растут, превращаются в молодежь.
  - У нас не превращаются, – объяснил Kтор. – На острове так воспитывают детей, что они сразу становятся взрослыми. Крепкими, работающими, спокойными.
  - А... как же? Сперва мальчик, а потом сразу... такой вот дядька?
  - Да, очень быстро. И никаких забот. А с молодежью сколько было бы возни! Это очень опасный народ. Им все время лезут в голову нелепые мысли: хочется чего-то изменять, куда-то лететь, строить что-то непохожее на старое... Слава богу, мы от этого избавились...
- (*Deti sinego flamingo*, 272.)

- What do you mean? I ... I don't know. Children grow up, don't they, and become teenagers.
- In our land they do not, – explained Ktor. – We bring our children up so that they become adults straight away. Strong, hardworking and peaceful adults.
- But how? First they are boys and then directly... grown up men?
- Yes, it happens very quickly. No worries. There would be so much trouble with teenagers! They are very dangerous people. They always get such ridiculous ideas into their heads: they want to change something, fly somewhere or build something never seen before... Thank god, we do not have that...

The embodiment of the unreliability of adults is the double character of Ktor Èho and the king, Tahoma Tiho. At the beginning of the story, they are presented as two separate people with different views. The king is depicted as willing to lead the island as it has been led before, whereas Ktor Èho seems to aim at changing the order. Finally, Ženja finds out that the two adults are in fact one and the same person in disguise which makes their betrayal even more bitter. Ženja ends up in Dvid on false pretences: he is lured there by Ktor Èho to fight the Lizard. He is told a local legend of a foreign knight who is supposed to arrive on the island and free the people from the Lizard. Prior to the fight, Ženja gets contradictory information from Ktor Èho and the king. Ktor Èho tells Ženja that the oppressive monster has to be killed, while the king insists everything is perfect just as it is and that it would be foolish to disturb the balance. Ženja gets to see the town with his own eyes, feels it is an oppressive place and decides to fight the Lizard. The killing of the monster turns out to be an impossible task: the monster is in fact a gigantic, steel-plated octopus. Ženja is horrified, gives up and is imprisoned and sentenced to death. The intentions of the king and Ktor Èho towards Ženja have been quite ambiguous: even those deeds of Ktor Èho that first seem well-meaning prove to be destructive. For example, his seemingly friendly

gesture of helping Ženja escape from prison turns into a betrayal: he tells Ženja to flee to the beach and when the boy gets there, an execution team is waiting for him. Ženja also finds out that it has never been Ktor Èho's intention to have the Lizard killed. Ktor Èho lures children to fight the Lizard in order to convince the people of the invincibility of the Lizard, and the children are always supposed to either lose the fight or flee and be executed as warning examples for the citizens.

In addition to the king and Ktor Èho there is another adult character whose position towards Ženja gets attention in the story. Ženja meets a hermit, Iskatel' Istiny, the Seeker of the Truth, who feeds the boy during his escape. First, he seems sympathetic towards Ženja's aspirations. Before long, it becomes clear that in his search for the eternal pure truth the hermit is not willing to take sides: he does not want to do anything bad but for the sake of objectivity, not anything good either. Thus, he gives Ženja directions on how to get to the beach without warning him that the execution is to happen there. When Ženja meets him again after escaping from the execution team the boy openly shows his contempt for this adult who is so indifferent to other people's well-being.

Because of the rigid discipline, a group of runaway children lives independently in an old fortress away from the adult population of the island. There is enmity between the children and adults that finally ends up in open warfare. The circumstances resemble the constant fighting between the Lost Boys and Captain Hook with his pirates in J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*. The fears the adults have of teenagers are actualized when the runaway boy Dug begins an independent life, and far away from the adult influence, turns into a teenager and falls in love with a neighbouring village girl who does not become a grown-up either. Dug becomes the leader of a group of runaway children living in a deserted fortress far away from adults. When the adults finally decide to attack the children's fortress, it is just Dug whom they kill in the battle. Dug as a teenager is in graver danger than the children. Despite the oppression of children, the children of Dvid are protected by law: it is against the law to kill children who have been born on the island. Dug as a teenager is not thus protected.

There is a categorical difference between children and adults in Dvid. When the children have to flee from their fortress they decide to move to the Sinjaja dolina, the Blue Valley, where only children can live:

Галь шепотом рассказал, что в южной оконечности острова, среди отвесных гор, есть место, где растет множество плодов, гнездится множество птиц и водится множество животных. Там бьют чистые родники и никогда не бывает палящей жары. Но люди там не живут. Лишь развалины темнеют на месте брошенных деревень. По утрам, едва упадут на землю рассветные лучи, там выползает из расщелин тонкий голубой туман и наполняет собой воздух. Для детей этот воздух безвреден, а для взрослых смертельно опасен. Ни один взрослый человек не решается заходить в Синюю долину. Он знает, что, если подышит там хоть немного, через несколько недель погибнет от непонятной болезни, похожей на малярию... С помощью Птицы можно было бы добраться до Синей долины.

Лучшего убежища для ребят не придумать... Но Дуг... Он ведь уже большой...  
(*Deti sinego flamingo*, 337.)

Gal' told in a whispering voice that at the southern end of the island, surrounded by steep mountains, there is a place where lots of plants grow, birds nest and animals roam. Pure springs run free and the sun is never scorching. But there are no people. Only the ruins of abandoned villages are left. In the morning when the first rays of the sun reach the valley, through the burrows infuses a fine blue fog that fills the air. This fog is not dangerous to children, yet for adults it is lethal. No adults come to the Blue Valley. They know that if they breathe in there even a little, after a few weeks they will die of an unknown disease, which seems like malaria... With the Bird's help, we could get to the Blue Valley. It is the best possible hiding place for children... Yet Dug... He is already older...

The blue fog in the valley is lethal to adults yet it has no effect on children. The reason or the mechanism behind this is not explicitly explained. The blue fog has certain similarities with the "Dust" and the "Spectres" in a recent British fantasy trilogy *His Dark Materials*<sup>469</sup> by Philip Pullman that has raised much debate. In Pullman's fantasy trilogy, the Dust is small particles that are attracted towards any conscious being, especially human adults: at the beginning of Pullman's story, the church sees the dust as a manifestation of the Biblical Original Sin, whereas towards the end of the story, it becomes clear that the Dust is connected with the idea of consciousness, knowledge and wisdom. The Spectres are ghost-like creatures that attack adults yet leave children unharmed. The child protagonists end up in a town that is so full of Spectres that it is totally devoid of adults. However, it is perceived as rather a grim place and not such a safe haven for children as the children in Krapivin's book assume the Blue Valley will be. In the Soviet context, one can hardly think of the lethal blue fog as connected with the Biblical ideas of Original Sin. Yet it is easy to connect it with the notion of children being more innocent and pure than adults, thus showing the attempts of the adult characters to control and change the children in rather a dubious light. Since, in addition to typical fantasy imagery, Krapivin also uses some science fiction imagery, for example, the mechanical remote-controlled octopus and the "magically scientific" method of making the island of Dvid invisible to outsiders, one can perhaps also see allusions to the progress of science in the blue fog. Immaterial blue fog that kills people from an unknown disease a few weeks after contamination slightly resembles the symptoms of nuclear radiation. This is probably not an eerie prediction of the events in Chernobyl some five years later, yet since nuclear power has been in use in the Soviet Union since the 1950s, the allusion could be possible. However, the blue fog metaphor does not directly work with the idea of radiation, especially when the blue fog is discussed as a mark of difference between children and adults. The Blue Valley is not a permanent sanctuary for the children: since all the children must evidently grow up – in the quotation above, the children are already worried about Dug who is older than the others – they cannot settle down permanently in the valley. The life of the children in the valley is not thoroughly depicted. When Ženja comes back to Dvid almost a year later the children rise in rebellion against the adults. Yet the Blue Valley,

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<sup>469</sup> *Northern Lights* (1995), *The Subtle Knife* (1997), *The Amber Spyglass* (2000).

as an absolutely adult-free zone, serves as a temporary refuge for the children persecuted by the adults.

As a counterweight to the unreliable adults, Krapivin's book is full of trustworthy children. Ženja experiences his most important human relationships with his friends: in the primary world, he gets a new friend Tolik who soon becomes very important to him. The wooden dagger made by Tolik turns into a magic weapon on the island of Dvid and saves Ženja on several occasions. It is Tolik who first finds and saves Ženja when he lies unconscious on the beach after coming back to his own world. Tolik is also the first and only person to whom Ženja dares tell about his unbelievable secondary world adventures. In the epilogue, Tolik flies with Ženja to Dvid, takes part in the fight for the rights of the Dvid children, and helps Ženja to bring Jul'ka back home. The solidarity between the children is unbreakable: the runaway children are loyal and protective of each other and Ženja feels strongly for their cause, especially for Jul'ka. Already during his first visit to the capital of Dvid, he rises to oppose the cruel treatment of children he does not even know yet, and he feels affinity even with a young bird that has fallen from its nest. *Deti sinego flamingo* is in strong antithesis to the message the mass of Soviet children's literature tries to introduce to its readers: instead of blindly trusting the adult authorities, the children question the adult values and defend their rights together.

#### **4.2.3. Making propaganda visible**

One of the important subversive properties of Soviet children's fantasy is its ability to show the reader how propaganda is used in a totalitarian society. Fantasy can make the imperceptible methods of propaganda visible. In secondary world fantasy, the dubious use of propaganda can be presented as a part of the policies of a foreign country, not the homeland of the reader – *čužoj*, alien, not *svoj*, ours. Yet, once the reader has become aware of the possibilities of propaganda in one environment, he is better skilled to see it in his own environment too.

The different propaganda methods are treated in several fantasies, practically throughout the entire existence of Soviet children's fantasy. In the following, as examples, I use texts that have already been discussed in earlier chapters, texts that represent different eras in Soviet history. Yuri Olesha's *Tri tolstjaka* (Three Fat Men) was published in 1928, roughly a decade after the establishment of Soviet rule. Veniamin Kaverin's *Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše, o veselom trubočiste i mastere Zolotye ruki* (The Story of Mit'ka, Maša, the Happy Chimney Sweep and Master Skilful) came out in 1939 during the Second World War, an era when practically the entire Soviet literature had to deal with the war and patriotic ideals<sup>470</sup>. Vitalij Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* (The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors) was published towards the last years

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<sup>470</sup> Terras 1991, 589 – 591.

of Stalin's rule, in 1951, and Vladislav Krapivin's *Deti sinego flamingo* (The Children of the Blue Flamingo) in 1981, towards the end of the Brezhnev years.

#### 4.2.3.1. *Discussing the methods of propaganda*

Although in the Soviet Union propaganda was to be accepted as a valuable part of first establishing and later preserving the system, in Soviet fantasy, propaganda is usually presented as dubious. Propaganda is something that the enemies use to achieve their questionable goals. In the earliest example, Olesha's *Tri tolstjaka*, the use of propaganda is typical of both the good revolutionaries and the evil capitalists on the side of the Three Fat Men. Parts of the book can be described as a propaganda fight between the two sides. Both sides have their own propagandists using entertainment to get their message through. The propaganda of the revolutionaries is shown as slightly more creative than the other side's propaganda, and more spontaneously coming from the people. The propaganda message is put through in the form of theatre, music and poetry:

В зверинце шло большое представление. На деревянной сцене три толстые косматые обезьяны изображали Трех Толстяков. Фокстерьер играл на мандолине. Клоун в малиновом костюме, с золотым солнцем на спине и с золотой звездой на животе, в такт музыке декламировал стихи:

Как три пшеничные мешка,  
Три развалились Толстяка!  
У них важнее нет забот,  
Как только вырастить живот!  
Эй, берегитесь, Толстяки:  
Пришли последние деньки! (*Tri tolstjaka*, 104)

In the zoo there was an act going on. On the wooden stage, three fat hairy monkeys were dressed as the Three Fat Men. A fox terrier played the mandolin. A clown in a scarlet dress with a golden sun on his back and a golden star on the front recited a poem to the music:

They sit on their seat  
Like three sacks of wheat.  
No other things matter  
Than getting even fatter.  
Oh, be careful, Three Fat Men  
Your days are coming to an end.

The propaganda of the opposite side is portrayed as simpler and not coming from the people, but being controlled by the rulers. One episode of the story is situated in a circus fair arranged by the Three Fat Men's government in order to keep the people's attention away from the execution of revolutionaries and to get them to support the rulers. The Fat Men have paid for a large group of artists to perform in their fair and have arrested those that have not been supportive of their cause, which is to be taken as

a proof of their corrupt methods. One of the artists bought by the Fat Men is Lapitup, a strongman:

Силач начал показывать свое искусство. Он взял в каждую руку по гире, подкинул гири, как мячики, поймал и потом с размаху ударил одну о другую... Посыпались искры.

– Вот! – сказал он. – Так Три Толстяка разобьют лбы оружейнику Просперо и гимнасту Тибулу.

Этот силач был тоже подкуплен золотом Трех Толстяков. (*Tri tolstjaka*, 129)

The strongman began his act. He took a weight in both his hands, tossed them into the air as if they were toys, caught them and smashed them together... Sparks emerged.

– Just like that! – he said. – This is how the Three Fat Men will smash the skulls of gunsmith Prospero and acrobat Tibul.

This strongman, too, had been bought by the Fat Men's gold.

The mechanisms of propaganda are spelled out clearly by one of the protagonists, Doctor Gaspar Arneri, who is throughout the text presented as a trustworthy, intelligent man. The readers are supposed to trust his explanation, when he comes across a poster announcing an amusement fair and immediately sees through the Three Fat Men's plans and, through his mind, it is explained to the readers too:

Наконец ему удалось прихлопнуть афишу к забору.

Доктор Гаспар прочел:

«Граждане! Граждане! Граждане!

Сегодня правительство Трех Толстяков устраивает для народа празднества. Спешите на Четырнадцатый Рынок! Спешите! Там будут зрелища, развлечения, спектакли! Спешите!»

– Вот, – сказал доктор Гаспар, – все ясно. Сегодня на Площади Суда предстоит казнь мятежников. Палачи Трех Толстяков будут рубить головы тем, кто восстал против власти богачей и обжор. Три Толстяка хотят обмануть народ. Они боятся, чтобы народ, собравшись на Площади Суда, не сломал плахи, не убил палачей и не освободил своих братьев, осужденных на смерть. Поэтому они устраивают развлечения для народа. Они хотят отвлечь его внимание от сегодняшней казни. (*Tri tolstjaka*, 127)

Finally, the man got the poster glued to the fence.

Doctor Gaspar read it:

“Citizens! Citizens! Citizens!

Today the government of the Three Fat Men arranges a fair for the people.

Hurry to Marketplace number Fourteen!

Hurry! There will be shows, entertainment and amusement! Hurry!”

– It is obvious, said Doctor Gaspar. The execution of the revolutionaries will take place today on the Court Square. The executioners will cut the heads of those who have risen against the power of the rich and gluttonous. The Three Fat Men wish to deceive the people. They are afraid that the people will gather in the Court Square and break the gallows, kill the executioners and free their brothers who have been

sentenced to death. That is why they are arranging entertainment for the people. They want to distract the people's thoughts away from today's executions.

However, the people are not betrayed by the Fat Men's propaganda. They despise the artists and accuse them of being traitors and having sold themselves for foul purposes, which can be seen from the public's reaction to the clown who mocks the revolutionaries on the stage:

– Негодяй! Он проданся Трем Толстякам! За деньги он хулит тех, кто пошел на смерть ради нашей свободы! (*Tri tolstjaka*, 129)

– Scoundrel! He has sold himself to the Three Fat Men! He mocks for money those who went to their death for our freedom's sake!

The mechanisms of propaganda in Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal* and Krapivin's *Deti sinego flamingo* are quite similar to each other, although in Gubarev's text it is more metaphorical. The mirrors reflecting everyday life better than reality is very similar to the propaganda system in Krapivin's world. The "living newspaper" of the island Krikunčik Čarli, Charlie the announcer, walks among the public and tells them the latest news.

— Это наш славный Крикунчик Чарли. Наша живая газета. Он всегда там, где самые важные события...

— Разве у вас нет радио?

— Ра-дио?.. Ах да, есть... Но Крикунчик — это наша традиция, к нему все привыкли. Кое-кто считает, что он чересчур шумлив, но все его любят. За то, что он любит наш остров, где царит незыблемое равновесие порядка...

И опять я не понял: всерьез говорит Ктор или с иронией?

— Если бы мы объявили о танцах по городскому слухопроводу, никто бы, пожалуй, не пришел. А Крикунчик Чарли умеет создать народ. (*Deti sinego flamingo*, 273)

– That is our famous Charlie the Announcer, our living newspaper. He is always there where the most important events are...

– Don't you have a radio?

– Ra-dio?.. Oh yes, we do... But Charlie the Announcer – he is our tradition, everyone is used to him. Some people think he is too noisy, but everybody loves him. Because he loves our island, where the balance of order is the rule...

I was again puzzled: was Ktor speaking seriously or ironically?

– If we had announcements of dances on the town central radio, perhaps nobody would come. Charlie the Announcer knows how to invite people.

Charlie is not presented as the only media in the town; there are competing media, at least a radio, yet Charlie seems to be the most influential. The reader can draw parallels to the ever-increasing supply of information during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and, perhaps, is encouraged to think about the dominance of the government-supported main media over the others.



#### 4.2.3.2. Children as the targets of propaganda

In Soviet fantasy texts, propaganda is seen almost exclusively as a method of the protagonists' adversaries. In Veniamin Kaverin's *Skazka o Mit'ke i Maše, o veselom trubočiste i mastere Zolotye ruki*, the use of propaganda is associated with the evil wizard Kačšej. His propaganda is targeted especially at one of the protagonists, Maša, whom he kidnaps, wanting to make her take the place of his dead daughter. In order to make Maša as evil as his own daughter, Kačšej shows Maša all kinds of cruelties, for example, he takes her with him to see the ruins of a bombed town. This kind of propaganda, specially targeted at a single child is similar to that of Olesha's *Tri tolstjaka*, in which the target of the propaganda is the Three Fat Men's foster child, Tutti. They have kidnapped him as a small boy and told him that his heart has been replaced by an iron heart in order to make him their heir and as ruthless as they are themselves. The "good heart" is also Maša's epithet: she is often referred to as *Devočka Dobroe Serdce*, the girl with a good heart or *hrabraja devočka s hrabrym serdцем*, a brave girl with a brave heart. In neither book, can the child be corrupted by the ruler's propaganda: both are saved by their siblings. Neither Tutti nor Maša are the protagonists of the stories, yet both are characters that the child reader can easily empathize with. Maša is occasionally internally focalised, for example, the reader has access to her thoughts in Kačšej's prison, while Tutti, although first shown as a spoiled upper class boy, is seen as more humane when he shows his feelings towards his doll and spends time with his sister, Suok. Showing pleasant child characters as a target of propaganda may suggest to the child readers that they themselves might be possible targets of propaganda – be it the propaganda of an outside enemy or the official state propaganda.

Both Gubarev and Krapivin show the side of propaganda that is based on physical power and violence. They write about societies in which both corporal and capital punishments are used to control the citizens. The rebellious workers and children are punished by whipping; on one side a traditional punishment in many societies, on the other, a symbol often used in Soviet propaganda picturing the owning class oppressing the working class. In Gubarev's text, the corporal punishment is used on both children and adults; the most important victims of their masters' whips are the mirror-maker boy, Gurd, and the old servant, Bar. In Krapivin's story, the corporal punishment is meant for children. The punishment of naughty children and the planned execution of the unsuccessful child-knights are arranged as public events. Charlie the Announcer has a strong influence as a propagandist: he acts as a host or presenter when punishments are being carried out.

Наступила тишина, а потом Крикунчик Чарли восторженно завопил:  
— О, вот она, добрая наша старая колесница справедливости! Кто не вспомнит милые школьные годы, глядя на ее скрипучие ступеньки! Ха-ха, кое-кто боялся ее в детстве, но как мы благодарны ей теперь! Не правда ли, дорогие горожане?!  
(*Deti sinego flamingo*, 274)

It became quiet, and then Charlie the Announcer shouted excitedly:

– Oh, there it is, our good old wheel of justice! Who wouldn't remember the dear school years when looking at its squeaky steps! Ha-ha, many were afraid of it in their childhood, yet how grateful we are for it now! Isn't that true, dear townsfolk?!

Combining violent and humiliating punishments and propaganda does not show the use of propaganda in a favourable light, and the reader is supposed to question the propaganda practices of the island.

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Fantasy literature has some advantages over more realistic genres when it comes to discussing topics that are not considered suitable for children's literature. In fantasy, the possibly distressing material can be estranged into fantastic secondary worlds. Fantasy can also provide the reader with the possibility to repress the upsetting matter; for example, the depiction of a child's death in a book, by offering a chance to interpret it another, safer way: the readers do not have to handle distressing issues until they are mature enough. Fantasy also provides the author with the possibility to discuss issues that are not a subject of general discussion in the society. For example, questioning the vertical power relationship between children and adults could take place in the secondary world; against the cruelties situated there, the problems in the primary world seem to be on a smaller scale, yet their existence can be pointed out. Fantasy can also question political practices by transferring them from the contemporary reality into secondary worlds: despite propaganda being an acknowledged method of Soviet ideology and politics, in Soviet fantasy, propaganda is usually treated as a dubious instrument used by the villains of the stories to corrupt the other characters. The methods of propaganda are explicitly spelled out to the reader and often the propagandist actions are aimed at child characters, which might suggest to the child readers that they themselves could be the targets of similar efforts. On one hand, the texts show the child characters as victimized, yet on the other, the children's victory over their enemies can be seen as empowering. In a sense, the empowering effect also reaches the child readers when the texts help them to recognize the propaganda elements present everywhere in the society.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Soviet children's fantasy was closely connected to the system under which it was written. It operated mostly within the limits set by socialist realism, yet despite frequent criticism, it occupied a special place in the field of Soviet literature, allowing it to develop into a distinctive literary genre. Soviet children's fantasy blends national elements and foreign influences. Its roots stretch back to European romanticism – especially the Hoffmann tradition – Russian folktales, Russian literary fairy tales and adult literature containing fantasy elements. In addition, the 20<sup>th</sup> century Western children's fantasy has had a strong influence on Soviet fantasy. The structure of Soviet secondary world fantasies mostly corresponds to the universal conventions of the genre, although the attributes of the secondary worlds tend to be typically Soviet. This is most obvious in texts like Eduard Uspensky's *Vniz po volšebnoj reke* (Down the Magic River), in which the secondary world lies in the mythical Russian past with the characters taken from Russian folklore. The pseudo-Medieval secondary worlds that are common in Western fantasy are rare in Soviet literature.

The most straightforward purposes of Soviet fantasy were to use it as a means of propaganda and an instrument of socialisation and character education. By examining three branches of propaganda prominent in children's fantasy, depiction of revolution, war propaganda and promotion of socialism over capitalism, it can be seen how the political situation in the country affected children's literature. Observation of the use of the positive hero, the imperative of socialist realism, shows what kinds of traits were considered beneficial in children's socialisation. The virtues stressed by Soviet fantasy were often the same as were promoted in children's literature in general, for example, the value of diligence and the importance of friendship. However, in the Soviet context, these universal virtues took on new meanings: diligence became the ideologically significant appreciation of work, and friendship became the realisation of the collective ideals. In addition, the existence of the positive hero reflects the dual attitude towards children: in official propaganda, children were considered the perfect new generation that had lived all their lives under the Soviet system without personal memories of the tsarist era, yet children's literature also had a strong pedagogical inclination, aiming to raise and educate new Soviet citizens.

According to Kukulín and Majofis, the interest in Soviet children's literature lies in its ideological and mythological structures being remarkably more multi-layered than those of Soviet adult mainstream literature, partly due to its use of the general models of the adventure novel with some influence from the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century educational novel. This frame of the adventure novel could be filled with individual emotional content, resulting in texts that were Soviet in form yet appealing to a wide range of readers because of the freedom in the portrayal of their child characters and their emotional richness.<sup>471</sup> The same can be said about Soviet secondary world fantasy

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<sup>471</sup> Кукулин и Майофис 2003, 214 – 215.

for children, perhaps to an even greater extent than in non-fantastic fiction. The framework of the fantasy genre and the conventional propaganda contents left room for dealing with individual thematics. The carnivalesque nature of the fantasy adventures and the estrangement effect of the secondary worlds allowed authors to situate the otherwise potentially risky material conveniently far from the everyday reality. The carnival nature of the journeys to secondary worlds is most evident in the time-out effect of the journeys; since the secondary world adventures are usually presented as less true than the primary world ones, they could feature such events that could not be placed in the primary world.

If the literature written in the Soviet Union is divided into three groups as Katerina Clark suggests, i.e. socialist realist, anti- or non-Soviet literature and texts representing Soviet literature without being socialist realist<sup>472</sup>, children's fantasy as a genre belongs mainly to the third one, although individual texts can have features from all the groups. Secondary worlds are a good example of how a single literary element can have very different, often seemingly contradictory meanings. Secondary worlds promoted Soviet values, but they also served as Aesopian screens or masks. It was, and still is, up to the individual readers to decide whether they wanted to see in the texts allusions to the downsides of Soviet reality. Instead of the rather simplifying idea of the texts being read either as pro-Soviet propaganda or as its criticism, the fantasy texts are, at a sense, in their richest when read with several layers of meaning in mind. For example, when reading Vitaly Gubarev's *Korolevstvo krivyh zerkal*, (The Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors), it is hard to decide which is stronger: the criticism against the capitalist system or the criticism towards the Soviet system. Only by reading it with both aspects in mind, can one see how ambiguous a representation of the Soviet situation it gives, and this leads the reader to ponder on the similarities of the stereotyped socialist and capitalist worldviews. Drawing on the slogan of socialist realism, "realistic in form, socialist in content", Soviet secondary world fantasy can be described as fantastic in form, ambiguous in content.

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<sup>472</sup> Clark 2001, 174.

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