

The cover features a futuristic cityscape with a prominent observation pod in the foreground. The pod is spherical with a glass front and a metallic frame, and it has a sign that says 'Ursula'. The background is a dense urban landscape with many skyscrapers. The top of the cover has a geometric design with overlapping triangles in shades of blue, purple, and teal. The title 'REVISTA INCLUSIONES' is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center. Below the title, there is a purple rectangular box containing the subtitle 'HACIA UN FUTURO PROMETEDOR' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. At the bottom left, there is a block of text in white, sans-serif font providing publication details.

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TALENT AS A FEATURE OF A RUSSIAN FOLK FAIRY TALE HERO

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Abstract

The article is aimed at revealing the sense of a fairy tale that is one of the most popular genres of Russian folk art. A fairy tale reflects the artistic perception of the world, aesthetic and moral ideals, tastes, spiritual culture and talent of the nation. Therefore, it has constantly attracted and is still attracting attention of scientists around the world. Special attention has always been paid to the images of characters that are quite widely and variously presented in a Russian fairy tale. These are main characters and minor ones; magical (mythological) and ordinary characters; characters distinguished by their social status or by the functions performed in a fairy tale, etc. However, the typical and well-known hero has become Ivan endowed with many personal characteristics, abilities, and, most importantly, a kind soul. There are some other heroes such as Emelya, Vasily, Shish, and others. But all of them resemble Ivan, a powerful and symbolic image that has absorbed both mythological, and historical, social ideas of the Russians.

Keywords

The image of a hero – Talent – Folklore – Fairy tale – Symbolism

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Introduction

A Russia fairy tale being one of the most widespread genres of folk art, reflecting the artistic perception of the world, aesthetic and moral ideals, tastes, spiritual culture, and talent of the nation, has constantly attracted and is still attracting scientists' attention.

Many scientists have addressed the issue of the figurative embodiment of a hero in a fairy tale. E.A. Korovina¹ studies the sacred sense of fairy tales, their signs and symbols that are also hidden in the names of the heroes, their actions, and their perception of the surrounding world. The stories of real human lives are seen through the typical images of fairy tale characters.

E.M. Meletinsky considers a folklore fairy tale to be an integral, original poetic system². E.S. Novik argues that the heroes in such a system are the driving force that reveals the sense of human existence³. E.V. Pomerantseva and V. Propp think that the character of a fairy tale is always situationally introduced into the text. This may be a substance situation that is embodied in the text of a fairy tale as a feature of the narrator's idea of a person⁴.

The ideologeme situation portrays the hero as the bearer of a certain ideology expressed in the ideologeme (trivial) statement.

The object situations are created inside a fairy tale and have a real "prototype", and they are within the depicted world: the real world or the unreal world. In the real world, the hero interacting with the other characters can appear in a situation of intrigue, or in the love action, or in the heroic one, etc. In the unreal world the hero finds himself searching for truth, love, rebirth, etc.

The fairy tale hero can also enter the narration through the situation of introduction. It should be noted that a fairy tale is mainly the introduction of the hero to the listener: the listener learns everything about the hero only at the end of the story. At the time when the fairy tales appeared and developed, the listener was familiar with many sacred senses. The storyteller did not have to pay attention to their additional explaining and decoding. Today many characters, objects, names, nicknames, and actions of the hero require additional explanation and clarification.

In addition to the above mentioned situations, the image can be shown through the situation of acquaintance: the subject of speech introduces the hero to the listener. In such a situation, the first thing is to point to the situation itself, to name the hero, and to give his family name, nickname, and general characteristics.

¹ E. F. Korovina, *Do We Know Our Favorite Fairy Tales? Hidden meaning, encrypted by the storytellers. Reading between the lines* (Moscow: Publishing house "Tsentrpoligraf", 2013).

² E. M. Meletinsky, *The Hero of a Magic Fairy Tale* (Moscow–Saint Petersburg: Academy of culture research; Traditsiya, 2005).

³ E. S. Novik, "The System of Characters in the Russian Fairy Tale", *Structure of the fairy tale* (Moscow: Russian State University of Humanities, 2001), 122–163 y E. V. Pomerantseva, *Russian Folk Tale* (Moscow: Publishing house of the USSR Academy of Sciences, 1963).

⁴ E. V. Pomerantseva, *Russian Folk Tale* (Moscow: Publishing house of the USSR Academy of Sciences, 1963).

Thus, the given situations help to present the hero in the system of a fairy tale plot.

The works written by foreign authors pay great attention to the analysis of the concepts of “plot”, “motif”, “functions of the heroes”, etc. C. Bremon and B. Holbek believe that the motif and its varieties and/or its textual implementations relate to the activity of the character in the space–time of the fairy tale⁵. H. Jason and D. Segal examine in detail how the text presents a character as a subject or an object acting or experiencing an action in certain circumstances⁶. The researches done by P. Lendvai, G.A. Levinton show that the characteristics of a fairy tale character are initially set, and they are often included in the name of the character⁷.

The issue of human talent is one of the most important issues in modern science. The problem of talent is of interest both to teachers, psychologists and to folklorists, literary critics, and cultural scientists. The new psychological and pedagogical technologies aimed at identifying and developing gifted people are currently creating. Academic theorists and practitioners make attempts to define the concept of “talent”. However, this issue was of interest to the researchers of the past too. The “gifted personality” concept concerned people many years, even centuries ago. Russian folklore also proves that. Gifted, talented people with their fundamental novelty and original thinking attracted attention of Russian folk tales storytellers. Folk thinkers created the unique image of the Russian “innovator” – Fool (Ivan, Yemelya, Vasily, Shish, etc.). This is the so-called “low” character (“socially disadvantaged character”, “unpromising”): “poorly dressed, despised by others, lazy and plain, but unexpectedly performing heroic feats or drumming up the support of magical forces and achieving the fabulous goal”⁸. Talent as figurative content and the idea of a national hero is the subject of our research.

Materials and Methods

The folk sources for the research were the 3-volume collection of Russian folk tales by A.N. Afanasyev⁹.

The following **methods** were used in the study:

– *the system method* allowed us to carry out a complete analysis of a fairy tale, which is in interaction with the areas of folk beliefs, everyday life and psychology of the Russians;

⁵ C. Bremon, “The Morphology of the French Fairy Tale: Ethical model”, *Patterns in oral literature*; ed. H. Jason, D. Segal. (The Hague: Paris: Mouton, 1977), 49–76 y B. Holbek, “Interpretation of Fairy Tales”. *Folklore fellows communications* (Helsinki, 1987).

⁶ H. A. Jason, “Model for Narrative Structure in Oral Literature”, *Patterns in oral literature*; ed. H. Jason, D. Segal. (The Hague: Paris: Mouton, 1977).

⁷ P. Lendvai; T. Declerck; S. Daranyi and S. Malec, *Propp Revisited: Integration of Linguistic Markup into Structured Content Descriptors of Tales Digital Humanities* (London: Oxford University Press, 2010) y G. A. Levinton, “Some Problems of Meaning in Folklore Texts”, *Acta Ethno-graphica*, num 2–4 (1974).

⁸ E. M. Meletinsky, *The Hero of a Magic Fairy Tale* (Moscow–Saint Petersburg: Academy of culture research; Traditsiya, 2005), 179-180.

⁹ A. N. Afanasyev, “Russian Fairy Tales”, *Russian olden time*. URL: <http://starina-rus.ru/afanasiev-skazka1/oglav.php>

— the main characters of Russian fairy tales were analyzed using *structural-typological* and *descriptive* methods;

– the work with the linguistic and literary concepts, language material, which formed the artistic and poetic image of the characters of the texts under study, was done on the basis of the method of *comparative observation*.

The obtained findings of the research have practical significance for writing works on folklore studies, as well as on other Humanities (literary studies, ethnography, cultural studies, ethnopsychology, ethnolinguistics), teaching general and special courses in higher and vocational educational institutions.

Results and Discussions

Unfortunately the modern idea of a fairy tale hero is associated with laziness. However, this is an erroneous, “narrow” treatment of the image. The central fairy tale character is much deeper, being the “keeper” of the philosophical folk thought about the fate of a person. The objective of the work is to interpret the “secret sense” of the folklore image, the symbolism of the hero’s nickname, and to regard the hero from the position of a “gifted personality”.

The dictionary by S.I. Ozhegov interprets a “fool” as a “stupid person”¹⁰. According to V.I. Dal, “a fool is a buffoon who does silly things that make someone laugh”, and “to fool is to trick someone into believing something (that is, to trick in a clever way). They say, “be nobody’s fool” or “act the fool”, “play silly buggers” (that is, to behave foolishly sometimes in order to profit from it)¹¹. In addition, the nickname of the fairy tale hero includes the property status of a person: the younger son does not inherit the land or some property. Therefore, there is a certain figurative parallel with “flotsam and jetsam”: a person of little use.

Let us remember the fairy tale “At the Behest of the Pike” (“Emelya the Simpleton”). The main character of the fairy tale – Emelya – the youngest son, and according to the established fairy-tale tradition, he is a fool. He was lucky enough to catch a magic pike. Emelya was going to take it home for supper, but the pike pleaded with him to let it go. The pike told him her magic words: “at the behest of the pike, at my will ...” that made wishes come true. Lazy Emelya agreed and to his surprise, the words worked. With those magic words Emelya overcame a lot: he did the housework, punished his enemies, drove the clay stove into the Tsar’s chambers, and married the Tsar’s daughter.

The pike is not a random character of this fairy tale. According to Slavic mythological views, life on the earth originated from water. The inhabitants of the water element were considered to be great-beings, the ancestors of all living things. When Christianity came to Russia, the fish became the personification of the human soul, wandering in the ocean of the World soul. “So Christ was considered to be a fisherman, that is, a catcher of human souls, who directs them to the Kingdom of Heaven”¹².

¹⁰ S. I. Ozhegov, Dictionary of the Russian Language: about 57 000 words (Moscow: Russky yazyk, 1989), 148.

¹¹ E. A. Korovina, Do We Know Our Favorite Fairy Tales? Hidden meaning, encrypted by the storytellers. Reading between the lines (Moscow: Publishing house “Tsentrpoligraf, 2013), 53.

¹² E. A. Korovina, Do We Know Our Favorite Fairy... 48.

So in the fairy tale world, the pike is a special fish that can fulfill the wishes of a human soul. Moreover, they are not material wishes, but spiritual ones – those that the soul asks for. According to the fairy tale, Emelya does not ask for gold or silver. The fabulous thing is that the hero talks to the fish. This is treated as his special gift – being close to nature. He is kind, responsive, and unable to kill anyone. His soul is open to the soul of the world around him. That is why he can hear the pike. He takes pity on it and lets it go into the water. The reward for his kind heart is the pike's magic words.

In another fairy tale, for example, "The Frog Princess", Ivan Tsarevich also pitied the pike, and let it go to its small children. The magic fish also helped him: it brought him an egg, in which there was Koshchey's death, from the bottom of the sea.

The mystery of the soul of the fairy tale hero A.S. Pushkin was solved by A.S. Pushkin. However, in his fairy tale about the goldfish, he showed the opposite effect: the "clever" old woman did not catch the fish herself, but she began to demand more and more material wealth of her kind old husband, who had caught the fish. The end of the story is obvious: the old woman was left with nothing but a broken trough, because she was angry, greedy, envious, and selfish.

The folk hero is not like that. Let us remember Emelya, who asks only for what is necessary in his household. He wants his buckets to carry water home, his axe to cut the wood, and the wood to go to the sleigh. There is no limit for his inventive ideas. At first, his sleigh travels without any horses, like a kind of a "horseless carriage" – a car. Then he "invents" a new means of transport – a "self-driving" stove. All these "inventions" prove that Emelya is a gifted personality. He has a good head on his shoulders, flexible thinking, and a sharp mind.

Another episode in the fairy tale, proving that Emelya is not foolish, is important in understanding the image of the hero. After the Princess fell in love with Emelya and wanted to marry him, after the hero overcame all the adverse circumstances and built a palace for a young wife, at the very end of the fairy tale, the hero wanted something for himself: "at the behest of the pike, at YOUR will" to become "CLEVER and handsome". Here the folk thought is based on the plain truth that fools never admit that they are foolish and plain. Emelya is really clever and is eager to develop.

It is important that the famous collection of fairy tales by A. N. Afanasyev¹³ includes a version of the fairy tale "At the Behest of the Pike", in which the hero does not have a name, but he is called Poor. This name means rather "poor, but in the bosom of God", "God's favorite" than "extremely poor", "a beggar", "disable and miserable"¹⁴. Like Emelya, he was kind and sympathetic, but poor. No matter how hard he worked, everything was "useless". But he did not complain, he looked for the reason for his problems. And he found it, "I must have displeased God; I will pray from morning till evening, perhaps God will have mercy on me"¹⁵.

¹³ A. N. Afanasyev, "Russian Fairy Tales", Russian olden time URL: <http://starina-rus.ru/afanasiev-skazka1/oglav.php>

¹⁴ S. I. Ozhegov, Dictionary of the Russian Language: about 57 000 words (Moscow: Russky yazyk, 1989), 670.

¹⁵ A. N. Afanasyev, A.N. At the Behest of the Pike, URL: <http://starina-rus.ru/afanasiev-skazka1/131.php>

And the Lord answered the poor man's prayers. The hero caught a pike on a holy day, and he wanted to take it home for the Easter meal. However, he pitied the magic fish and let it go. And she rewarded him for his heart of gold, for his kindly soul. And it told him the magic words. These words, in our opinion, contain the sacred sense of both the image of the hero, and the whole plot of the fairy tale. In the old folk text, instead of the words "at the behest of the pike, at MY WILL" (as it is given, for example, in the books by A. Tolstoy) there were words "at the behest of the pike, with GOD'S BLESSING". So "at the behest of the pike", as it has already been mentioned above, means "at the behest of the soul". The words "with God's blessing" can be interpreted as God's help given through the "pike-soul" to the Poor. Thus, "at the behest of the soul, with God's blessing" our hero strives for happiness doing kind deeds, helping those who are close to him and those who are in need.

Furthermore, folk storytellers again emphasized the natural talent of the hero. After he had married the Princess, he led her through the forest and desert to have trial by difficulties and troubles. There she experienced real hunger and thirst. The Poor asked her, "Well, do you realize now what thirst and hunger are? That's how the poor suffer..."¹⁶. After trials and tribulations, the Princess realized her sin. The hero taught the arrogant Tsar's daughter a lesson in a smart way, and really showed her all the hardships of people's suffering.

In the fairy tales Ivan is the opposite of his intelligent brothers. However, despite their right lifestyle and way of thinking, his brothers cannot succeed in their lives. But the lazy Ivan had the good fortune to be helped by magicians, and to reveal the secret of magic words-spells. But the fairy tale does not praise or encourage laziness. While the brothers follow the generally accepted rules, Ivan relies on his own flair. He is not a fool in the literal sense of the word, he is close to Nature. This is the only character that is granted to live in two worlds at once: both in the world of Yav and in the world of Nav, or in the world of reality and in the world of the dead¹⁷.

Ivan is lying on the clay stove, which is both the center of the house and the center of the Universe. Often a clay stove is regarded as an object helping to communicate with the world of the dead (Nav) and vice versa (for example, Baba Yaga flies through the chimney to the world of Yav). The hero of a fairy tale has a naive and childlike perception of the world around him. He does no evil, and his soul is open to the forces of good and justice. He can talk to trees, birds, and animals. He can hear the voices of the dead in the underworld. Ivan is a "charmed wanderer" of the fairy tale world of Russian folklore.

The image of Ivan is contrasted with practical wisdom. He is perceived as a foolish and lazy hero according to the standards of the world of reality. But the parallel world perceives him to be different – kind-hearted, sincere, with a good sense of humor and true soul. Thus, the main lesson that the hero of a folk tale teaches us is that it is important rather a deep perception of the world or a person than a shallow one. The reason for living is rather spiritual development than material wealth. Thus, we break the primitive interpretation of the image of Ivan the Fool as a symbol of Russian laziness and stupidity. Ivan is a symbol of bright thoughts, spiritual purity, kindness, and natural gifts. This idea is

¹⁶ A. N. Afanasyev, *At the Behest of the Pike*, URL: <http://starina-rus.ru/afanasiev-skazka1/131.php>

¹⁷ S. I. Grakhova, "Demonological Folk Stories: The Principle of Two Worlds", *Philological Sciences. Issues of theory and practice*, Tambov: Gramota, part 2 num 1 (2014): 64–67.

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supported by the author's treatment of the word "durak (fool)" given by E.A. Korovina in her research: "DU" is from the English "do" (by the way, the first vowels are the same in both English and Russian languages). Well, RA means the divine, spiritual origin (RA – the ancient Egyptian God of the Sun). "K" or "Ka" was the name of the Soul in Ancient Egypt. Thus a fool is a doer of the spiritual values, but not of the material possessions"¹⁸.

Conclusion

Summing it up, we note that the favorite hero of Russian fairy tales (Ivan the Fool, Emelya, etc.), despite the contempt of others, the false interpretation the hero as a lazy and plain person ("fool"), performs heroic or just good deeds, deserves the support of magic forces, and achieves the fairy tale goal. He succeeds due to his special talent. Having a flexible mind, a pure soul that is open to the world of Nature, the hero contradicts the notorious "common sense" of ordinary people. He perceives the surrounding reality with his pure and fresh look of a dreamer. With his paradoxical ideas that are different from the ordinary ideas of everyday life, he manages to understand and achieve much more than his fabulous opposites. The hero of a fairy tale finds unconventional ("creative", "innovative") solutions even in a simple situation. The hero's success lies in his unique creative optimism.

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¹⁸ E. A. Korovina, Do We Know Our Favorite Fairy Tales? Hidden meaning, encrypted by the storytellers. Reading between the lines (Moscow: Publishing house "Tsentrpoligraf", 2013).

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