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TALES OF A. S. PUSHKIN

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Abstract
The author talks about the literary tales of Alexander Pushkin. We consider all of his published stories. They cause reflections, more controversial, ambiguous evaluation. Tales of the great Russian poet waiting to be explored. We are talking about vzaimosyazi culture and literature. This connection, the author shows by examples.

Keywords: The phenomenon of culture, types of culture, national culture, literature.

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Introduction

Fairy tales occupy a significant place in every person's life, which is why many writers and scholars have dedicated their work to studying them. They have classified fairy tales, determined their significance, and some have even described methods for working with them.

Fairy tales began to be studied in Russia as early as the 17th century, and by writers of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Fairy tales are divided into magical tales, domestic (realistic) tales, and tales about animals. This classification has not been disputed to this day [4, 8].

Everyone, including children, listens to and tells magical fairy tales with great pleasure. These tales allow us to escape reality, to imagine, to dream.

Fairy tales are also divided into folk and literary tales. In folk tales, the author is unknown, while literary tales were written by poets and authors. Among all of them, A. S. Pushkin stood out.

We all know the fairy tales written by Alexander Sergeyevich, which, although originally intended for adults, have become a treasured part of children’s literature. Children become familiar with them from preschool age.

The creative legacy of the great Russian poet A. S. Pushkin is inexhaustible. Many continue to study his work, but the final word has not yet been said—and likely never will be—such is the scale of his personality and the magnitude of his poetic heritage. Well-known scholars and poets have devoted articles and monographs to studying Pushkin’s work, beginning with P. V. Annenkov, V. Belinsky, M. Gorky, Anna Akhmatova, Valentin Nepomnyashchy, Georgy Makogonenko, and others.

In the final years of his life (the 1830s), the poet wrote a vast number of works, a mere listing of which takes time:

“The Tale of the Priest and His Worker Balda” (1830),
“The Tale of Tsar Saltan, of His Son, the Glorious and Mighty Bogatyr Prince GvidonSaltanovich, and of the Beautiful Princess-Swan” (1831),
“The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish” (1833),
“The Tale of the Dead Princess and the Seven Knights” (1833),
“The Tale of the Golden Cockerel” (1834).

"The Tale of the Priest and His Worker Balda" is written in a vivid, rich, folkloric language:

Volume 3, Issue 4, April - 2025 ISSN (E): 2938-3803

"Once there lived a priest, fat-headed and bald.
He went to the market one day
To see what goods were on display.
On his way he met Balda,
Wandering aimlessly afar…" [5, 9].

V. Nepomnyashchy notes that "the characters' traits are clearly defined: the 'master' is greedy and dull, the 'woman' is cunning and prudent" [3, 196].

The priest needed a cheap worker. Balda was ready to serve him for three slaps a year. The priest hesitated but relied on Russian luck. They made an agreement. Thus the plot was set in motion.

Balda worked diligently, ate for four, worked for seven; the priest's wife praised him constantly, and the priest's son called him "uncle." The priest was portrayed as very lifelike—stingy, somewhat dim-witted, a commoner himself. He did not want to pay Balda, so, in an act of trickery, he sent him to collect tribute from demons. Balda retrieved the tribute and demanded payment from the priest. He sought no profit except moral satisfaction and fulfillment of their agreement.

"The master didn't want to pay, but Balda caught up with him.
The poor priest offered up his forehead:
With the first slap he jumped to the ceiling;
With the second, he lost his tongue;
With the third, he lost his mind."
And Balda reproached him with these words:
"You shouldn't have chased after cheapness, priest." [5, 23].

Naturally, one feels sorry for the old man. But he paid as agreed.

V. Nepomnyashchy repeatedly highlights the poet's humanity in describing the triumph of justice in tales based on orally transmitted stories. In the original folk versions, "justice" is often portrayed far more harshly.

The brightest of Pushkin's tales is "The Tale of Tsar Saltan, of His Son, the Glorious and Mighty Bogatyr Prince GvidonSaltanovich, and of the Beautiful Princess-Swan." In this story, the poet embodied his dream of family: every person should have a family, and it can be happy and whole. Pushkin, like the people, valued the family structure. He drew this ideal from folk tales.

The poet always believed in family values, longed for a family and children, and wished to build a home with Natalya Nikolaevna—a home he had never had before. From what we know through memoirs, it seems that in his own family, he was not loved, and his genius and exceptional talent were not recognized. It is known that his brother Lev, despite Pushkin's pleas, distributed his poems freely, and thus Alexander, who lived on literary earnings, earned far less than he could have. Neither his father nor his mother loved Alexander; they only demanded money from him. The only ones who truly loved him were his grandmother, Elizaveta Alexeevna—whom he held dear—and of course, his nanny, whom he called "mamushka." His solitude in Mikhailovskoye was shared not by blood relatives, but by his nanny ArinaRodionovna. Reading about this is both sad and heartbreaking.

So it is no surprise that, deprived of his family's love, he dreamed of warmth and coziness in a home of his own. His fairy-tale hero, Prince Gvidon, who ultimately reunites with his father, Tsar Saltan, also yearns for this very thing.

Nanny ArinaRodionovna taught Pushkin the language of fairy tales, and the poet—who in

Volume 3, Issue 4, April - 2025 ISSN (E): 2938-3803

childhood had a better command of French than of his native Russian—discovered the beauty, depth, and breadth of the Russian language, which found its full expression in the literary fairy tales he created. All Russian children learn kindness and justice from his tales, memorize his verses, and come to know the
language through Pushkin's lines:

"The wind walks over the sea,
And urges a little ship forward;
It flies through the waves
With its sails swelling wide…" [5, 40].

Many references to Pushkin's poems are drawn from a book published on the occasion of the poet's bicentenary.

V. Nepomnyashchy writes in detail about this in the afterword to the book A. S. Pushkin. Fairy Tales / Compiled by V. S. Nepomnyashchy [5].

Nepomnyashchy dedicated a section to Pushkin's fairy tales in his book Poetry and Fate, which reads like a captivating novel. In it, he provides a thorough evaluation of Pushkin's tales in the context of his entire body of work. The tales are analyzed alongside thematically and ideologically related literary works. Nepomnyashchy attempts to view the poet's fairy tales as directly rooted in folklore—an integral and vital part of Pushkin's artistic universe.

The element of national identity, the spirit of oral creativity, became inherent to Pushkin. Nepomnyashchy marvels at this. He quotes vibrant lines from Pushkin's tales:

"The wind rustles merrily,
The ship sails merrily…",
"An old man lived with his old woman
By the very blue sea…" [3, 189].

Gradually, as the researcher notes, Pushkin's fairy tales appear as a kind of "alphabet of national character," where—much like the entire language is contained in a lexicon, as Pushkin himself put it—one can find "terrifying questions of morality" and fundamental existential problems, where a person is called upon to be a good master.

The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish was written in Boldino. It appeared almost simultaneously with The Bronze Horseman, Angelo, and The History of Pugachev. Unlike The Tale of the Golden Cockerel, it does not provoke contradictory interpretations. The plot is simple and easily remembered even by young children. "This tale is the most epic and monumental of all and in form is very close to folklore" [3, 207].

Children understand the system of imagery in this tale quite well: the old man is kind but weak-willed, too submissive to his old wife; he treats the golden fish with respect and is ashamed of his wife, who keeps asking the fish for more and more. The old woman is greedy, mean, and domineering, treating the old man as nothing more than a tool for her own selfish aims. The fish tolerates her whims for a time, but in the end, justice is restored: the tale ends exactly as it began—with the old woman sitting by the crumbling hut with a broken washtub. The narrative rhythm is: event – brief dialogue – event – a few words – another event – conclusion.

Web of Humanities: Journal of Social Science and Humanitarian Research

Volume 3, Issue 4, April - 2025 ISSN (E): 2938-3803

The structure of The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish is a closed loop:
"So he went to the blue sea...
'Have mercy, golden fish!'...
The old man returned to the old woman...
'Go back to the fish, you fool!'...
He went to the blue sea again...
'Have mercy, golden fish!'...
The old man returned again..." [3, 208].

This monotonous journey represents physical motion. The old man is obedient to his wife but dares to oppose the noblewoman when she goes too far:

"What's wrong with you, woman? Have you lost your mind?"

He fears no one but his wife. Pushkin raises the issue of social inequality and the oppression of equals by equals. According to the critic, the oppressors are born within our own "families." Both parties are to blame.

As the story progresses, the activity of the sea intensifies. First, it stirs slightly; then the blue sea becomes murky; then it is restless; finally, it turns black. The higher the old woman rises, the more threatening the sea becomes and the more inevitable the restoration of justice. In the end, she is left by the broken trough. It is her downfall. But the world itself remains unchanged. The tale reflects the transient and the eternal, ultimately transforming into a parable.

A sense of home, a sense of being a master—this may be the central artistic tone in Pushkin's fairy tales. Only with this self-awareness could he create such a magnificent symphony of the Russian soul:

the clumsy yet rhythmically rich skomorokh recitative of The Tale of the Priest...,
the scherzo-like, almost dance-like rondo of Saltan,
the mournful and drawn-out aria of The Fisherman and the Fish,
the watercolor adagio lyricism of The Dead Princess,
and the glittering, sarcastic finale of The Golden Cockerel…

This is an entire world. A land populated by kings and peasants, quarrelsome women and valiant heroes, lords and lackeys, a whole animal kingdom—hares, wolves, squirrels, dogs, grey ducks—and even mysterious foreign peoples: "sorochins," Tatars, Circassians of Pyatigorsk (!), as well as a strange but real land "beyond the sea":

"Is life there good or bad?" – "It's not bad at all beyond the sea…".

The sea itself is richly inhabited—by heroes, by demons—and changes from tale to tale, like weather changes. This is the boundless and mysterious realm of the Little Golden Fish. There are also unique heavens, where the Sun and Moon live:

the Sun—polite and gentle;
the Moon—kind, courteous, perhaps a little pedantic and cold:
"I haven't seen the red maiden.
I stand guard and only take my turn.
She must have passed when it wasn't mine…"

Volume 3, Issue 4, April - 2025 ISSN (E): 2938-3803

And finally, a universe of its own:

“Stars sparkle in the blue sea,
Waves splash in the blue sea,
A cloud drifts through the sky,
A barrel floats over the sea…”

—a naïve yet grand cosmos, as if just after creation,

as if—quoting the Book of Genesis—“the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters” [3, 191].

In Irving’s version, the “bloody fratricidal slaughter” is mentioned only in passing, whereas in Pushkin’s version it becomes one of the key events that ultimately lead to Dadon’s execution [3, 233].

This is a great tragedy. And Dadon seems to grieve. Why “seems”? Because:

“The Tsar howled: ‘Oh my children, my children!
Woe is me! Both our falcons
Have fallen into the net!
Woe! My death has come!’
Everyone wailed along with Dadon,
The depths of the valleys groaned,
The heart of the mountains trembled.
Suddenly the tent flung open…
And the maiden,
The Queen of Shamakhan,
Glowing like the dawn,
Quietly greeted the tsar.
Like a night bird before the sun,
The tsar fell silent, staring into her eyes,
And forgot before her
The death of both his sons.
She smiled at Dadon,
Took him by the hand with a bow,
And led him into her tent.
She seated him at the table,
Treated him to every delicacy,
Laid him to rest
On a brocade-covered bed.
And then, for exactly a week—
Submitting to her completely—
Enchanted and enthralled,
Dadon feasted at her side…”** [5, 136].

Anna Akhmatova concluded that the final lines of the tale are addressed directly to the tsar. In his section titled A Lesson for Good Fellows [1], V. Nepomnyashchy refers to Akhmatova’s article Pushkin’s Final Tale, with which he agrees.

Volume 3, Issue 4, April - 2025 ISSN (E): 2938-3803

It is appropriate to study A. S. Pushkin's literary fairy tales in connection with his entire body of work. Pushkin's tales evoke much reflection. Many aspects are subject to debate and varied interpretation. The tales of the brilliant poet still await their full discovery.

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