Bylichkas in Folklore for Children: Psychology of Being

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Abstract: The article discusses the genre of bylichka that was adopted by children from grown-ups and changed over to children's folklore as a scary story type. The genre features, the poetics of children's bylichka are revealed. The difference of children's bylichka from the one created by adults is seen in poetic borrowings from the fairy tale genre. That is where the property of the world duality is coming from that is built on binary relations, in turn, making up the ternary structure. Special attention is given to psychological aspects of performance and living of children's bylichka. The mythical-cultural world of children is disclosed that makes up a complex combination of consistent patterns of children's psyche and the specific perception of the outside world. The birth in the child's imagination of a scary story appears as a reaction to the ancient pagan fear of substances of the unreal world. We are discussing the system of psychological protection as a way to protect from them that evidences the degree of the psychic maturity of a child.

Key words: Bylichka • A scary story • Poetics • Genre feature • Mythical-cultural world • Overcoming fears • Suppressed emotions • Children's world perception • Mechanisms of psychological protection • Children's imagination • The unconscious

INTRODUCTION

Children's folklore is oral word-based creativity of children themselves and of grown-ups who create special pieces of work for children, or separate phenomena of adult folklore that are adopted by children. This opinion is shared by V.P. Anikin [1], E.V. Pomerantseva [2], V.A. Vasilenko [3] and a number of other researchers. The constantly changing public conditions impacted the understanding of it, dynamism of the subject, simplicity of contents and structure of children's folklore [about the genre variety of children's folklore see: 4]. From the second half of the 20th century, we are observing «the invasion» of urban culture into the rural culture; there is taking place conceptualization and new mythologization of urban and rural space. This phenomenon has its own background: the significance of mythological ideas in different eras of cultural development cannot be doubted and only the area of their spread changed and so did the character and the degree of their presence, while the daily routine of being of the old and the formation of new myths stayed unchanged. So even today, the mythology (urban, professional, everyday and so on) is widely represented in the modern folk culture, in particular, in the folklore of children that is the object of our special research.

- Bylichka in children's folklore: for the theory of the genre
- Bylichka is the genre of non-fairy tale prose folklore, a story about the meeting with a fantastical creature of people's demonology.

Children's Bylichkas Correspond to All of the Folklore Rules: oral free-form performance, perception understanding of it, dynamism of the subject, simplicity of the language. It is also important that the story-teller chooses the memoir-illustration style of speaking, the peculiarity of which is the transfer of the history of either personal or heard recollection. The basis of mythological stories is the fantasy and mysticism [5].

Let us note that in the children's folklore in the poetics of bylichka there are borrowings from folk fairy tales. Different types of fairy tale narrative structures are often used (cumulative and closed chain of themes); epic tripling (for example, the situation of meeting with a creature from the parallel world is repeated three times); in the compositional structure fairy tale formulas are quite common («once upon a time», «once upon a time in one house there lived...»). The main thing is that children's bylichkas are copying the tradition of favorable endings of fantastical stories.

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Once upon a time there lived a girl. Her story is, first of all, expressed by the world picture and can be repeated three times (according to the fairy tale). She stretched her arm to it as she due to the peculiarities of their artistic image can be snorted and disappeared in the darkness.

On the second night the cat came back to the girl's room again. It sat again across her bed and looked at her with its green eyes. This time the girl asked, «Kitty-cat, where are you from? Whose cat are you? Why don't I see you in the afternoon?». She stretched her arm to it as she wanted to pet it. However, the cat snorted and disappeared again.

In the morning, the girl told her mother about this story. The mother thought and said, «My daughter, I think I can guess why the cat is coming to see you. We left a hobgoblin in the old house. It is mad. That is why it is snorting. We need to correct the mistake». They called the grandmother and told her the story. The grandmother taught them how to get at peace with the hobgoblin and how to invite him in the new house. To do that it was necessary to buy a new basket, a warm handkerchief, a fresh pie and milk. Then they needed to go to the old hobgoblin, a witch (a sorcerer), a white woman (a woman grandfather or a grandmother, a policeman, etc.);

the main character's helper who, unlike in fairy tales, is not fantastical, but realistic (a mother or a father, a he-friend or a she-friend, a grandfather or a grandmother, a student, a driver, a doctor, a teacher, etc.);

an opponent (a spirit of darkness, a wood spirit, a hobgoblin, a witch (a sorcerer), a white woman (a woman in white), a corpse, a poltergeist, etc.).

The basis of bylichkas is a situation of a «meeting» with an otherworldly being. Often in children's bylichkas the meeting of the main character with someone mythical can be repeated three times (according to the fairy tale tradition). All three meetings are filled with different psychological meaning: a shock, terror pressure, a desire to get rid of fear. The vector of the story is the victory over evil, the restoration of harmony between the external and the internal world.

Often children's bylichkas borrow the playing function from another genre of modern children's folklore-scary stories which are playful stories the task of which is to scare with the last phrase that is screamed out (for example, «Give me your heart!», «Pray, the scared one!»). The more terror it produces, the more fun it is to laugh over the situation that caused it.

The Psychology of the Narration of Bylichka: Bylichkas are usually narrated by children of eight to fifteen years old. This deliberate retelling of the story has the goal of accurately transmitting the content and getting a specific reaction from the listener, i.e. making him feel scared. Perceiving the chilling story, the listener usually
psychologically relives and is victorious over fear (often through laughing). This way, bylichka can be considered as one of the forms of personality self-affirmation.

Bylichka is usually told at different times of the day (of course, more often late at night, before bedtime), when possible, together with other narratives of this type. The narration is done at a slow speed, with long pauses, in a whisper or at halftone that allows to keep the principle of the traditional demonologized story-to-scare.

The listener learns from the narrator about the fact of the meeting with a representative of folk demonology, about the impressions and the emotional stress experienced. If the narrator himself is not a witness of the event, he refers to the convincing for the listener facts, the details of the «contact», asks in detail what the main character felt at that point. All this strengthens the belief of the listener in the livelihood of what is being told.

Sometimes narrators of modern bylichkas and byvalshinas do not strive to make the listener feel fearful and believing in the supernatural case that took place. Their narrations sound «when appropriate», in the context of a conversation as stories about unusual events from people's life that they have heard at some point in time. Together with the setup for truthfulness, the warning is lost and so is the didacticism of such stories. The narrator takes up the position of «you may want to believe it or not» towards the listener.

The Psychology of the Life of Bylichka in the Children's Environment: Stories about mythical beings appear due to the principles of the formation of children's consciousness, the sources of which should be found in the childhood world. The mythical and cultural children's world is formed through a complex combination of peculiarities of children's psychology and a specific perception of the outside world under the impact of the closest cultural environment of the child, language stereotypes, texts of traditional folklore, fiction, etc. This unknown world that forms mythological thinking is a certain way of learning the reality for a child, of his involvement in the culture, a way of psychological self-regulation and will development. “Children's “scary” folklore that is full of dramatic collisions reflects the psychological state of the child who realizes the difficulties of the surrounding world and feels worried and disturbed. Children's scary stories are ways through which a child overcomes his own fears the best way. This is an effective fight with the child's own subconscious, the satisfaction of the need to show strong personality features such as bravery, willpower and courage. This is exactly how self-affirmation and inherent worth of the child, the development of his cognitive and research instinct are formed. Therefore, there is a certain training of the feeling of his personal borderline and the instinct of self-preservation that take place [8].

Despite the fact that children's oral prose is represented by simple images, psychological and emotional feelings are found there of those subjects that are the ones that create something bigger in a child's imagination that has special psychic energy. Scary stories appear as a response of a child's psyche to an ancient pagan archetype-the fear of death, fear for the unconscious terror of beings from the world of unfound people and dislocated souls. By the middle of the pre-school age, a child realizes that he/she is mortal. Various childhood fears, whether that is a fear of ghosts, night fears, being scared of white robes, dogs, etc. can be considered to be as a scaled fear of death. Due to the peculiarities of age-related development, a child does not keep these worries inside, but talks about them. That is why exactly children like it so much to listen to and tell children's scary stories, intuitively making them into a psycho-correctional medicine from fear. That way children learn to overcome their fear.

Usually children learn to get used to scary stories from five-six years old. At that age children start realizing that the world surrounding them had existed when they were not alive yet, then that means that there will be a moment when they will not exist again. These thoughts are scary not only for adults, but for children whose everyday life is filled with happy discoveries and feelings of novelty these thoughts are simply torturous. «In an old, old house, in a dark, dark room there is an old, old grand piano standing. On the old, old grand piano, there are very, very black candles and when the night comes, then ...».

Scary stories from the point of view of reasonableness seem to adults something irrational, that is why children prefer to listen and tell them in a friendly children's group and far away from adult attention. Dreadful, scary stories are a launching mechanism of subdued emotions that with screams and yells of children come out from somewhere inside, from the very unconscious. Often times, being scared of punishment and anger of the elder generation, children tend to hide emotions of the negative spectrum such as offence, despair, disappointment, etc. Any professional psychologist knows that subdued emotions are similar to a bomb of slow effect: it is not known when they will get out and it is not clear what can happen. Deep mechanisms of the unconscious make a child at the instinctive level
get rid of the negative feeling of fear and, therefore, live and relive their own fears. Getting rid of a personal fear happens based on a cognitive scheme: at first a child relives the fear pretending and then he transforms it in the imagination and then projects it into a reality. That is a surprisingly simple psychological means used by children from generation to generation. «If telling scary stories happens in a group, in some dark place, in the environment that is inclining to it», we can be talking about the psychological meaning of this certain ritual that was in the joint reliving of fear and joint overcoming it [9].

However, in order for scary stories to have a strong psycho-correctional impact, children have to reach nine-ten years of age. According to M.P. Cherdenikova, this is related to eras in the dramatic history of overcoming fear. Thus, at five-six years of age the perception by a child of scary stories can be characterized as naive, as a small listener feels true fear from what he hears. As the child gets older (from eight to twelve years old), the attitude to such stories changes: scary stories narrate not in order to scare, but to make people around laugh. Thus, stories with a clearly comical ending, the so-called anti-scary stories, become the most favorite genre among teenagers. These narrations have two parts: the beginning that is scary and the ending that is comical, «There is an old man and an old woman sitting in front of a TV-set. All of a sudden one of the channels shows, «Get rid of a microwave and other sources of harmful energy». The old man and the old woman all «dangerous» objects. They sit and shake from fear. What is actually going on? And the program on TV says, «You listened to two versions of Russian folk fairy tales» [6]. Laughing over their fears is the only good way to take off the elevated emotional anxiety, worry and fear.

The feeling and perception of the environment for children has a correlational similarity with the perception of the world by a caveman [10]. Many thousands of years ago the life of ancient people was too full of various fears. What are the strange and unclear sounds? Can a wild hungry animal be quietly prowling? Whimsical glow of the burning fire puts terrible shadows on cave walls, in the dances of which one can see a hateful enemy, a crazy animal or a punishing deity. By the way, the surrounding reality did not provide a primitive man with quiet and careless existence, making him live under constant pressure and feeling danger [11]. The body that has to react to such a psychic state starts producing adrenaline in the blood. Centuries and millennia evolutionarily came one after another! People built houses, separated their residences with fences, put curtains on the windows, locked doors with latches and started living without constant fear for their safety. However, the human body is persistently asking for adrenaline. The specific feature of the child's age, little life experience, not enough anticipation makes a lot around strange and therefore, dangerous and in order to understand and comprehend the surrounding reality it is necessary to use personal resources and come up with a more accurate way of dealing with it.

The system of mechanisms of psychological protection is an irreplaceable antidote and unconscious way of refining their worries into scary stories. Telling, listening to scary stories tells about the degree of psychological maturity of a child, the level of development of his mechanisms of personal protection and self-preservation. As a result of the cultural-historical processing of irrational human experience, as well as that at the instinctive level, scary stories similarly start reflecting deep events that take place in human psychic and protect it from harmful impact of their own fears. Dead people who scare with their appearance, unrealistic animals, ghosts and monsters impact children's imagination, make them have associations that are in the depths of the human unconscious and wake up dual feelings of the unknown and panic internal worry and anxiety. Glass dolls, white slippers, crawling curtains (the possibilities are endless) demonstrate the feeling of fear that rises from the depth of the unconscious. Dark spots, black stains project and are associatively connected with the fear of death. That is a certain exit into the complex, strange, often aggressive world that worries the made up character of a scary story animates these worries, helps to believe in them for some time and, therefore, overcome his own fears, see his own actions of his emotional feelings and comprehend his own behaviour [12].

Therefore, as real life events and pedagogical-teaching practice show, scary stories (bogeyman stories) project children's fears and have to be relived and rationalized specifically in childhood. They are a way to understand the world around, the ability to speak about what worries a child, an attempt to test himself, raise his self-esteem, feel the generality of suffering from fear (knowing that other people are also scared like him, the child realizes that he is not alone in his emotional experiences of fear) through forming his life experience, a certain training for sudden life events.
REFERENCES