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“THE ENTIRE REAL WORLD OF CHILDREN”: THE SCHOOL TALE AND “OUR HAPPY CHILDHOOD”

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“I dreamed of people I had killed as a child...”
From the diary of Arkady Gaidar

The birth of Soviet children’s literature (i.e., Socialist Realist literature for children) is inextricably linked with the name of Arkady Gaidar. Before him Soviet children’s literature was more *children’s* than *Soviet*. It is no accident that “founder” status was conferred upon him by Soviet criticism: “V detskoi literature Arkadii Gaidar sygral tu zhe rol’, chto i Maiakovskii v poezii dlia vzroslykh. [In children’s literature Arkady Gaidar played the same role as that of Mayakovsky in poetry for adults]” (*Zhizn’ i tvorchestvo* 18). Gaidar was primarily a prose writer—the Mayakovsky and Gorky of Soviet children’s literature rolled into one.

The fate of the literature that he “founded” seemed to be encoded in the very evolution of Gaidar himself. A member of the Party from the age of 15 and commander of a regiment at 16, Gaidar experienced the purgatory of the Civil War, taking part both in battles against the Whites and in the suppression of peasant rebellions in the Tambov province and Siberia. In Siberia, where he was already a commander in the special forces (ChON), he was brought up on charges of “official malfeasance expressed in unauthorized shootings.” He was acquitted, but was expelled from the Party for two years “for harsh treatment of prisoners.” About this critical turning point in the fate of the future icon, his official biographies remain silent. But it is here that Gaidar’s biography as a writer begins. His childhood trauma haunted him throughout his life.

Gaidar suffered from an incurable neuro-psychological disorder (“traumatic neurosis”), which manifested itself in constant insomnia, a decrease in intellectual capacity, irritability, and a tendency toward cruelty. Attacks of this disorder would begin with unprovoked mood swings, followed by drinking bouts. At the onset of an attack Gaidar would inflict sharp physical pain on himself by cutting himself with a knife, sometimes in the presence of others. Usually such attacks ended up putting him in the hospital.

He was constantly tormented by nightmares, the notes about which in his

diary are indecipherable. He used a special code, writing that he was tormented by recurring dreams “of schema No. 1” or “schema No. 2,” but then suddenly he would write something openly, as in the outcry: “Snilis’ liudi, ubitye mnoiu v detsvte. [I dreamed of people I had killed in childhood]” (Kamov 12).

But that was in his diary. On the other hand, his publications in the 1930s contained the stories that remain imprinted on the minds of every child of the Soviet era: the highly autobiographical tales of the Civil War *R.V.S.* [1926] and *School* [Shkola, 1930]; the heroic *Tale of the Military Secret* [Skazka o voennoi taine, 1935]; the joyful *Distant Lands* [Dal’nie strany, 1932] and *Chuk and Gek* [Chuk i Gek, 1939] (about the expectation of a miracle and the fact that “everything lies ahead”); the courageous *Drummer’s Fate* [Sud’ba barabanshchika, 1939] (about a homeless boy who almost becomes a “puppet in the hands of the saboteurs”); the mysterious-romantic *Blue Cup* [Golubaia chashka, 1939] (about the fact that “life, comrades, is very good”); the philosophical parable [filosofskaia pritcha] *The Hot Stone* [Goriachii kamen’, 1941]; and, finally, the culmination, the archetypal text of Soviet children’s literature (comparable to Gorky’s *Mother* for adults)—*Timur and His Team* [Timur i ego komanda, 1940].

One is tempted to approach this key figure in Soviet children’s literature from a psychoanalytical standpoint. But it is even more important to understand this literature in connection with the transformation of the violence out of which the Soviet world itself was born, which is in a way a case of social “traumatic neurosis.” The changes that occurred were crystallized very clearly in Gaidar’s fate (both literary and personal)—a blending of violence into literature.

For Gaidar the Civil War never ended, but neither did it end in the country itself. On the contrary, Stalin’s “great turning point” in 1929 in fact constituted a new phase of the war, with much more profound results: it marked the beginning of the end of the countryside, and with it the end of a thousand-year Russian patriarchal society. A new steel was being forged in the furnaces of industrialization. The epoch of the birth of the Soviet Nation had arrived. The air was saturated with violence. Art attempted to shape this process discursively and package it in books like *The Belomor-Baltic Canal: A History of Its Construction* [Belomorsko-Baltiiskii Kanal imeni Stalina: Istoriia stroitel’sтва], in plays like *The Aristocrats* [Aristokraty, 1934] by Nikolai Pogodin, and in films like *The Prisoners* [Zakliuchënnnye, 1936] by Evgeny Chervyakov. Here the discourse of violence was openly rational, socially valid, and morally legitimate.

The theme of homeless children, or street urchins [besprizorniki], was reminiscent of the Civil War. Nikolai Ekk’s 1931 cult film *Road to Life* [Putëvka v zhizn’] told of the “reforging” [perekovka] of these street urchins. Children’s communes, where yesterday’s youthful criminals turned into “honest

people," became a sort of metaphor for the camps where yesterday's kulaks and saboteurs were reformed into socially useful citizens.

This new literature bore little resemblance to one of the most popular children's books of the 1920s about homeless children, Leonid Panteleev and Grigory Belykh's *The ShKID Republic* [*Respublika ShKID*, 1926], which went through annual printings of thousands of copies. This tale of the Dostoevsky School (ShKID) for homeless and criminal youth, which existed from 1919 to 1924, told of the transformation of the Empire of Hooligans into a Republic.

But in the mid-1930s *The ShKID Republic* was replaced by Anton Makarenko's *Road to Life* [*Pedagogicheskaiia poema*] which told of the establishment of the Dzherzhinsky Commune.¹ While this book did enter the Socialist Realist canon, it never became a children's book, for Makarenko's pedagogical views were too apparent here. Although he transformed violence through a magical "reforging via the collective," he was unable to conceal his pedagogical views as a fervent adherent of "pedagogical violence." Makarenko made no secret of the fact that he

usomnilsia v pravil'nosti obshchepriniatykh v to vremia polozhenii, utverzhdavshikh, chto nakazanie vospityvaet raba, chto neobkhodimo dat' polnyi prostor tvorchestvu rebenka, nuzhno bol'she vsego polagat'sia na samoorganizatsiiu i samodistsiplinu. Ia pozvolil sebe vystavit' nesomnennoe dlia menia utverzhdenie, chto, poka ne sozdan kollektiv i organy kollektiva, poka net traditsii i ne vospitany pervonachal'nye trudovye i bytovye navyki, vospitatel' imeet pravo i dolzhen ne otkazyvat'sia ot prinuzhdeniia. (Makarenko 127)

doubted the validity of the generally accepted views of the time, which maintained that punishment produces slaves, that one must give free rein to children's creativity and rely on their self-organization and self-discipline. I permitted myself to advance my firmly held belief that as long as the collective and the organs of the collective had not yet been created, as long as there were no traditions and the first skills of work and life had not yet been instilled, the teacher has the right and the obligation not to refrain from coercion.

The problem with Makarenko's *Poem* was that it was too "pedagogical." The pedagogical machinery in it had been turned inside out (Dobrenko 2001). Therefore it suited the tastes of pedagogues, but turned out to be unsuitable for children. Critics praised Makarenko's pedagogue and vilified the pedagogues from Panteleev's tale. The problem was that Panteleev's "youthful offenders" were crowded into an established school institution (even if transformed into a "republic"). Although they do not have the right to create a "political organization," they nonetheless strive toward greater socialization. In their "prison-like children's home" they organize an "underground" Pioneer organization. It is completely different with Makarenko: at the center of his system stands a pedagogue who organizes the children's world (collective). Perhaps the only thing that united Ekk the director, Makarenko the Chekist, and Pantaleev the former street urchin was their belief in the idea that children (street urchins) were always victims.

In the course of fulfilling the task of pedagogy and upbringing, the child

falls into the area of “disciplinization” [*distsiplinizatsiia*], where he is analyzed and passed through the bureaucratic system that suppresses his urge to independence. As Arkady Nedel noted, “the basic efforts of the established system of disciplinary rules and institutions, where children were housed by the State, were specifically aimed at making the children dependent, at appropriating their independence” (43). The Octobrist circles, the Pioneer groups, and the Komsomol cells were all merely forms of disciplinary organizations for children. In Stalinism “the child cannot and must not be identified as a child, he possesses no inherent value, he only has excess value that he receives as a result of numerous symbolic additions” (Nedel’ 45).

Along with this there was unprecedented criticism of the pre-revolutionary school: it was cold and soulless with a barracks-like environment that was unbearable for children; instruction was lifeless and pedantic; there was violence at every step; the teachers fought against any expression of independence and self-reliance and many of them were virtually spies for the secret police. This image of the pre-revolutionary school was perpetuated in both the official literature and in the pre-revolutionary literature that was being popularized, as well as in cinema (the 1939 film version of Chekhov’s *The Man in a Case* [*Chelovek v futliare*] by Isidor Annensky). It was common knowledge from Stalin’s official biography that the seminary from which he was expelled was ruled by a *iezuitskii rezhim* [Jesuitical regimen] (*Stalin* 8), that Lenin called the Ministry of National Enlightenment the Ministry of *narodnogo zatemneniia* [National Darkening] and that the departments at Kazan University, where he had studied, were filled with “*professorami-reaktsionerami* [reactionary professors],” that students were locked up in cells, and that there were *politseiskie spiki* [police detectives] everywhere (*Lenin* 7–8). The same thing was known about the schools where other leaders had studied. The tradition of this sort of depiction of the pre-revolutionary school goes back to *raznochinets* literature and continued to develop right up to the early twentieth century. In *Tema’s Childhood* [*Detstvo Temy*] (late 1890s), Nikolai Garin-Mikhailovsky described the Russian school thus: “V tepereshnem vide gimnaziia mne napominaet sud, v kotorom est’ i predsedatel’, i prokuror, i postoiannyi podsudimyi, tol’ko net zashchitnika etogo malen’kogo i—potomu, chto malen’kogo,—osobenno nuzhdaiushchegosia v zashchite podsudimogo [In its current form the *gymnasia* reminds me of a courtroom with a judge, a prosecutor, and a perpetual defendant. All that’s missing is a lawyer to defend this little defendant, who, precisely because he is little, is in particular need of defense]” (155). The school also appeared like this in the recollections of memoir writers and “old Bolsheviks” about the dark times of tsarist rule.

Thus, before the revolution the child was confronted with the school, the primary disciplinary institution, as a lifeless, formalized police institution. On the other hand, the free child of the *ShKID Republic* was lacking the consciousness demanded by Socialist Realism. The *Road to Life* was much closer

to the Socialist Realist ideal, but the element of pedagogical violence in it was too openly revealed. Makarenko had written a "book for parents" when it was a book for children that was needed.

The call for its creation became the leitmotif of the first conference on children's literature, which took place in January 1936 in the Central Committee of the VLKSM (All-Union Lenin Communist Youth Union). Samuil Marshak, one of the most popular children's poets of the Soviet Union, began his speech at this conference by pointing out that children's literature needed to create "children's stories for children." In defining this needed genre Marshak called it the "school tale" [*shkol'naia povest'*], i.e., a tale telling Soviet children about the contemporary school. He stated:

V sushchnosti, o moral'noi, zdorovoi, veseloi shkole, kakoi ona u nas dolzhna byt' i kakoi ona stanovitsia na nashikh glazakh, povestei eshche net. Est' tol'ko knigi o trudnoi epokhe pereloma. No prishla uzhe pora dlia rozhdeniia i drugoi, novoi knigi. I geroiami v nei budut ne te, kto v pervye gody svoei zhizni ispytal stol'ko krytykh peremen v bytu, v sem'e, v shkole, a *nyneshnie* deti, gorazdo bolee schastlivye, imeiushchie pravo i vozmozhnost' zhit' zakonnyimi interesami svoego vozrasta. (22–23)

In essence, there are still no stories about a moral, healthy, and happy school, the way it should be here and the way it is developing before our very eyes. There are only books about the difficult transition period. But the time has come for the birth of a new and different book. And its heroes should not be those who in the first years of their lives experienced so many drastic changes in their everyday lives, in their families, and in their schools, but rather *today's* children, who are much happier and have the right and the opportunity to live according to the right interests of their age.

And children's literature of the 1920s and '30s did indeed tell of history: of the Civil War and its heroes (including "child heroes"), of technology (the subway, stratostats, steamships and icebreakers, trains and factories), of fascinating journeys and remarkable explorers and heroic expeditions (to the most exotic places, from the Amazon to the Arctic Circle), of animals, and of adventures. There was a blossoming of so-called "science-fiction" [*nauchno-fantasticheskaia*], "popular science" [*nauchno-populiarnaia*], and "scientific-technical" [*nauchno-tekhnicheskaia*] literature for children (which explained how a car was built, or how to make your own model glider, model ship, mechanical toy, homemade telegraph, or musical instrument).

However, by the mid-1930s it had become clear that not only was pre-revolutionary children's literature the "handiwork of high-born ladies and idiotic sermonizers," but that children's literature of the 1920s had also picked up its "vulgar traditions": a "sticky wave of pre-revolutionary literary rubbish" had risen up in Soviet times, having been "snatched up and revived by shifty operators and hucksters, who in the first years after the revolution adapted themselves to the business of producing books for Soviet children" (Babushkina 10). It turned out that the Soviet "historical book for children" had not yet found its way "out from under the heap of historical prejudices of the past"

(Lysiakov 10), that popular children's books of the 1920s about the Civil War had "debased and vulgarized life," that their "vulgar adventurism" put them on par with pre-revolutionary "adventure literature" and "pulp detective novels of the pre-revolutionary years" (Babushkina 10), and that "popular science literature" was not at all "scientific" and not in the least "popular," whereas "technical literature" was too "technical" and, above all, it did not adequately show the connection of science and technology with "social life" and "socialist construction" (Grigor'ev 15).

By the mid-1930s children's literature found itself at a crossroads, as did Soviet pedagogy (in connection with the suppression of "pedological distortions" in 1936). It is impossible to understand the evolution of Soviet children's literature outside the context of the evolution of Soviet pedagogy, and in particular outside of the connection of Soviet pedagogy with violence and the strategies of discipline being developed in the Soviet Union. Soviet children do not only go to school, go on excursions, play war games and sing war songs, sit around the Pioneer campfire, make model airplanes and ships, play with gliders, and join the Young Naturalists, thus becoming part of the collective *body*. In reading books about heroes and about the "everyday life of the school," they enter into the collective *spirit*. Through this reading children find themselves in a network of signs and meanings from which there is no escape. In this network they can easily be revealed, identified, and, ultimately, controlled and normalized.

And it is here that we encounter Gaidar. No one was better able to blend the violence that saturated the very air of the 1930s into infantile discourse, into play, into children's *self*-initiated activities. Soviet aesthetics understood that the "task of the creation of the image of the adolescent, who is growing and maturing in the fight for socialism, naturally requires above all a solution to the problem of the combined presence in him of the characteristics of childhood with the emerging characteristics of adulthood" (Ebin 110), or, in the terms of the Socialist Realist master narrative, the combination of spontaneity [*stikhiinost'*] and consciousness [*soznatel'nost'*] (Clark 24).

Gaidar's chief discovery was the "self-generation" [*samozarozhdenie*] of the organization of children through play. Only now children played very proper games. As his friend, the popular children's writer Fraerman, recalled, Gaidar said:

Pochemu vo vse veka rebiata neizmenno igrali v razboinikov? Ezheli podumat' khorosho, to ved' razboi vseгда schitalsia delom plokhim i vseгда nakazyvalsia. A mezhdue tem, rebiata — chutkii narod, oni zria igrat' ne budut. Tut delo v drugom. Delo v tom, chto, igraia v razboinikov, rebiata igraiat v svobodu, vyrazhaia vechnoe stremlenie k nei chelovechestva. Razboiniki zhe v te proshlye veka byli chashche vsego vyrazheniem protesta nesvobodnogo obshchestva. Sovetskie zhe deti zhivut v inkh usloviakh, v inoe vremia, ne pokhozhee ni na kakie drugie vremena, i poetomu igry u nikh drugie. Oni ne budut igrat' v razboinikov, kotorye srazhaiutsia s korolevskimi strelkami. Oni budut igrat' v igru, kotoraiia pomozhet sovetskim sol-datam srazhat'sia s razboinikami. (*Zhizn'* 94–95)

Why have children through the ages always played robbers? If you really think it over, robbery after all has always been considered a bad thing and has always been punished. And besides, children are very perceptive, they don't play for no reason. Something else is going on here. The thing is, by playing robbers children are playing at freedom and expressing humanity's eternal striving toward freedom. For robbers in past centuries were most often an expression of protest in unfree societies. Soviet children, on the other hand, live under different conditions, at a different time unlike any previous time, and thus their games are different. They will not play robbers who fight against royal soldiers. They will play the kinds of games that help Soviet soldiers fight against robbers.

Timur and his team are not robbers. On the contrary, they fight with "robbers" (Mishka Kvakin and his friends). They help their victims—adults, children, the elderly. Adults do not understand these "proper" games. They expect something else from children. Timur's question: "A kogda vy byli mal'chishkoi, chto vy delali? Kak igrali? [What did you do when you were a boy? How did you play?]" is answered by his uncle: "My? [...] My begali, skakali, lazili po krysham, byvalo, chto i dralis'. No nashi igry byli prosty i poniatny vsem. [Us? [...] We skipped and ran and climbed on roofs, and sometimes we got into fights. But our games were simple and everybody understood them]" (Gaidar 3: 152).

The "complexity" and "unintelligibility" of Timur's games lie in the fact that they correspond exactly to the official disciplinary codex, which traditionally was imposed from above, through pedagogues and schools. Here, for the first time, it comes from below.

This was a "miracle." Discussing this in his article "Gaidar's 'Miracle,'" Lev Kassil wrote that the "budnichnaia burzhuaiznaia ustavnaia moral' vsegda vkhodila v protivorechie s vysokimi romanticheskimi pomyslami molodezhi [everyday prescribed bourgeois morality was always at odds with the lofty romantic ideas of youth]," and only in Soviet times

vpervye v istorii chelovechestva prostye i elementarnye pravila lichnogo povedeniia, privivaemye detiam, polnost'iu sovpali s zakonami revoliutsionnoi distsipliny, s trebovaniiami obshchestvennoi zhizni [...] *nasushchnoe*, povsednevnoe stalo po sushchestvu svoemu *romanticheskim* [...]. Eto i sdelalo Gaidara odnim iz osnovopolozhnikov metoda sotsialisticheskogo realizma v detskoj literature, kotoryi uচিত nas videt' v segodniashnikh delakh cherty zavtrashnego dnia. (179)

for the first time in the history of humankind the simple, elementary rules of personal behavior instilled in children fully coincided with the laws of revolutionary discipline, with the demands of social life [...] the *vital*, the everyday became in essence *romantic* [...]. And this made Gaidar one of the founders of the method of Socialist Realism in children's literature, which teaches us to see elements of the past in today's affairs.

And the undisputed pinnacle of Socialist Realism in children's literature was the image of Timur. This was (in Soviet terms) the "full" [*polnaia*] if not yet "final" [*okonchatel'naia*] victory of Socialist Realism. The final victory would come after the war—in the school tale.

Makarenko explains the "consciousness" of homeless children simply: they were in school under the command of a Chekist teacher and the "collec-

tive organs" formed by them. With Gaidar children finally became free, but they were outside the confines of the school. Here there occurred a "removal" [*sniatie*] of pedagogy—rather than being externally imposed it became internal, but it was not yet institutionalized.

Gaidar finished his work on the film script and the tale *Timur and His Team* in 1940. Both the film and the tale came out right before the war and enjoyed enormous success. Millions of children around the country eagerly joined the "Timur Movement" organized by the Central Committee of the Komsomol, *Pioneer Pravda*, and Central Radio. Then the war started, and both the Timur myth and the self-generating "conscious discipline" discovered by Gaidar were destined to become the nucleus of a new genre—the school tale.

The state had declared its right to appropriate infantile consciousness, but the encounter between the "maturity" ("consciousness") that was "self-generated" in the child's environment and the main disciplinary institution—the school—did not take place until after the war. It was here that the "formal" (school) was transformed into the "informal." In the school tale of the late Stalinist period there occurred a "transition from form to content": the school became an informal institution, discipline became conscious, and schooling turned into joy and pleasure. Here the search for the establishment of violence was completed. Violence went from being visible to invisible and turned into its opposite—pleasure.

At the same time that the state was declaring war on "pedagogical distortions" in 1936, a "discussion of formalism" was also in full swing. The fight against avant-garde "confusion" in all areas subject to the total harmonization of Soviet life also affected children's literature. On March 1, 1936, *Pravda* published an editorial "On Sloppy Artists" [*O khudozhnikakh- "pachkunakh"*], which defended "realistic drawing in children's books" from avant-garde "flourishes" and "formalist daubing" [*pachkotnia*]. *Pravda* maintained that "*pachkotnia* in children's books is deeply reactionary, because it completely and utterly denies the entire real world of children" (3). The Party stood up in defense of (or to be more precise, the creation of) this "reality."

The main role in the creation of this "reality of the world of children" was to be played by the school tale. This tale was born (in an entirely different form, of course) in the 1920s. But the development of this genre in the post-war years was based on the harsh criticism of tradition. What might conditionally be called the "tale about school" of the 1920s was now subjected to complete negation. Critics wrote that these books "show how badly these writers knew the Soviet school. The theme of patriotism was not prevalent in the works about school. They failed to create an image of the teacher in the Soviet school, of its children's collective, and of the Komsomol and Pioneer organizations that were the leading organizations in the development of the Soviet school. There is not a single work from this period that would be of interest to readers today" (Grechishnikova 197). It was no better with the school

tale that was revived in the late 1930s. Each of the stories appearing in these years² forced critics to ponder the very vitality of the genre.

In late 1938 Marshak stated:

Net u nas bytovoi povesti o nashei shkole, o lagere, o sem'e. Vprochem, esli vy posmotrite v katalogi, vy obnaruzhite mnogie desiutki shkol'nykh povestei i rasskazov. No pochti vse oni, po kakomu-to strannomu sovpadeniiu, sostarilis' ili umerli na drugoi zhe den' posle svoego vykhoda v svet. V nikh bylo vse, chto polagaetsia v shkol'noi povesti, klassnye doski, i party, i shpargalki, i bol'shie peremeny, i uchitelia, i ucheniki. Ne bylo tol'ko odnogo—liudei, v sushchestvovanie kotorykh mozžno poverit'. Ne bylo geroev, kotorym chitalel' khotel by podrazhat'. Ne bylo i takikh personazhei, kotorye vnushali by chitateliu otrashchenie i nenavist'. Ne bylo trudnykh polozhenii, nad kotorymi chitalel' mog by zadumat'sia. (1938, 16)

We have no everyday stories about our schools, our camps, our families. However, if you look in catalogues you will discover dozens and dozens of school tales and stories. But almost all of them, by some strange coincidence, grew old or died the very day after they appeared. Everything you would expect in a school tale was there: blackboards, desks, crib notes, long recesses, teachers, and pupils. Only one thing was missing: people whose existence you could believe in. There were no role models, nor were there any characters that would evoke disgust or hatred in the reader. There were no difficult situations that the reader could think about.

Marshak attributed this to the fact that the writers “do not know the school” and work without “warmth” toward and interest in the school, in a “cold manner.”³

Renouncing its varied experiences of the 1920s and '30s, the Soviet “school tale,” at its peak in the postwar years, was one of the latest literary products of the Stalinist era. Postwar literature differed in particular from prewar literature in that it lost all traces of the revolutionary past, and especially the very concept of *new school*. All genres originating in the Stalinist era were openly antirevolutionary and conservative. This included not only the historical novel or biographical film, which flourished in these years, but also the products of late Stalinism—the patriotic play and the school tale.⁴

Required to show the “entire real world of children,” the school tale was also the first school of the new aesthetic optic and therefore presupposed a total Socialist Realist perspective. The child, who was beginning to comprehend the world of literature and learning to see the relationship between literature and reality, was supposed to draw from literature lessons in reading (of literature and reality) and “speech development.” The child’s identification with the world of the school tale helped him proceed to the literature of an entire group of writer-teachers (Valentina Oseeva, Maria Prilezhaeva, Frida Vigdorova, Nikolai Nosov, Aleksei Musatov, and Oskar Khavkin), “who made the tale about school more realistic” (Grechishnikova 202). The processes of identification and socialization run a parallel course with particular intensity through children of school age, and the reading skills acquired at this time are preserved throughout one’s entire life.

In the postwar years the country entered a new epoch: the signposts of state legitimacy were now placed on the revised map of history. The “salvoes of the Aurora” (the revolutionary past) mythologized in the 1930s were com-

pletely drowned out by the “fireworks of Victory.” The world of the child being designed by the state also changed. Children’s literature of the 1920s and ’30s was inextricably linked with the theme of homeless children and therefore went directly into a whole series of penitentiary themes (labor re-forging, colonies, camps, Chekist teachers, etc.). Street urchins disappeared from postwar literature (although there were just as many of them in the postwar years as there had been during NEP), giving way to a much more sympathetic character—the orphan.

The theme of re-forging [*perekovka*] in camps, which was central in the literature of the 1930s, gave way to the theme of reeducation [*perevospitanie*] under the influence of wise, child-loving teachers, the school collective, Pioneer or Komsomol friendship, etc. The school—the basic institution of reeducation, directly connected with the camp in the culture of the 1920s and ’30s (from *The ShKID Republic* to *A Road to Life*)—turned into a genuine domain of “socialist humanism.” The “cold manner” of writing about school faded into the past. The temperature for tempering the new steel increased many times over. Harsh teachers, cruel children, and poverty all disappeared. Like the dreams about apple trees in Siberia that were supposed to appear as a result of “Stalin’s grand construction projects” of canals and protected forest zones, the school tale was supposed to warm up this frigid epoch.

Occupied with the constant “warming up” [*uteplenie*] and rearranging of everyday life, the school tale persistently described a nonexistent comfort in which adults and children supposedly lived. In Prilezhaeva’s novel *Over the Volga* [*Nad Volgoi*], where everyone is enthralled by the music of Tchaikovsky, the lives of adults and children are spent conversing in salons around the piano with busts of composers. The entire milieu of these conversations, the life style, the circle of interests, the tea parties, the table under the lampshade, the circle of family interests—this is all the embodiment of the ideals of the bourgeois family. And life in the rooms of young village teachers goes as follows:

Dver’ dazhe rasshatalas’ v petliakh, vse skripit i otvoriaetsia. Vse vremia zabegaiut to Misha, to Niura, to Vlas’evna, to Marus’ka, tetia Dusia, a inogda i Ivan Evdokimovich zabredet. Odnomu nuzhna spravka, drugomu—pomoshch’ v uchebe, tomu—pis’mo napisat’, tomu—po karte pokazat’, gde shagaet po chuzhim zemliam syn ili brat.

A uzh vecherom i vovse ne dom, a klub. Snova gudit tolstukha pech’, snova svistit samovarchik, pliuetsia chugunok s kartoshkoi. Vlas’evna priadet v ugolku, tianet-tianet nitku, a potom vdrug pustit’ vereteno pliasat’ po polu i podtianet ego v vozdukh. Kruzhitsia, v’etsia vereteno na vesu, slovno tolstaia rybka na udochke. A vokrug Leny i Galiny Vladimirovny rasiadutsia rebjata, kto na lavke, kto na skameechke, kto na iashchike, a kto i primo na polu. Idut razgovory, pesni poiut, chitaiut knizhki. (Karnaukhova 175)

The door even wobbled on its hinges, creaked, and opened. The whole time they are running around—first Misha, then Niura, then Vlasievna, then Maruska, auntie Dusia, and sometimes even Ivan Evdokimovich wanders in. One of them needs a piece of information, another one needs help with homework, still another—to write a letter, and another—to show on the map where his son or brother is tramping through foreign lands.

And in the evening it's not a house at all, but a club. Again the big fat stove drones, again the samovar whistles, again the kettle of potatoes spits. Vlasievna spins in the corner, pulls and pulls the thread, and then suddenly lets the spindle dance on the floor and pulls it back up in the air. The spindle twists and turns like a fat fish on the line. And all around Lena and Galina Vladimirovna sit the children, wherever they happen to end up: one on the big bench, one on the little bench, one on a crate, and one right on the floor. They are talking, singing songs, and reading books.

The young teacher tells the pupils unusual fairy tales. "And where does she get them from, these fairy tales, where there are no princes, no Baba Yagas, no Zmei Gorynych, where instead there are soldiers and pilots, heroes and leaders?" (175).

One may assume she gets them from school tales. One such fairy tale—about the "eagle's spring" [*orlinyi kliuch*—is about the heroic pilot Gastello, who flew his burning plane into a column of German tanks. And at the site of this feat there now gushes forth a spring, and whoever drinks from its hot currents will also become a heroic eagle pilot. The teacher concludes her story thus:

—A vy, rebata, poishchite tot kolodets, zaglianite v svetlye strui, vypeite goriachei vody, v kotoroi orly pleskalis', chtoby vyrosli vy sami orliatami!

—Naidem, —govorit Misha i smotrit v bushuiushchee plamia pechki, —nepremenno naidem. (175–77)

"And you, kids, seek this well, look at its bright currents, drink of its hot water, in which eagles splashed, so that you yourselves will grow up as eaglets!"

"We'll find it," says Misha, looking at the raging flame in the stove, "we'll find it for sure!"

The narrative becomes epic. It is this mixture of epic literature and everyday life (the "entire reality of the world of children") that gives the school tale its unique atmosphere. Here desires (in the form of "dreams") constantly coincide with reality. They are extinguished at the exact moment of their articulation; having barely been thought, they are already realized; therefore here it is good whenever and wherever it is supposed to be good.

It was as if the epic world were dozing on the very threshold of the school tale, which was occupied with the construction of "the present," ready at any minute to break through the fabric of the "ordinary." Usually the act of joining the Komsomol (or the Pioneers), which amounted to the initiation of the hero, was the locus of this breakthrough.

The epos is born right before one's eyes. It is no longer connected with the distant past, but rather almost exclusively with the recent war. The packaging of the war and the description of the present in the terms of epic timelessness constitute the very essence of this discourse. Inherent in its ideological mysticism is a totally unique psychologism of the lofty. In Oseeva's tale *Vasek Trubachëv and His Comrades* [*Vasek Trubachëv i ego tovarishchi*]:

Vasek vspominal, kak v proshlom godu on s ottsom ezdil v Moskvu. Oni dolgo stoiali na Krasnoi ploshchadi i smotreli na Kremli'. Vasek stoial s krasnym galstukom na shee, kak stoit

chasovoi. On boialsia poshevilit'sia. Myslenno on daval sebe kliatvu svershit' kakoi-nibud' nebyvalyi podvig vo slavu Rodiny. I ne odin! Vasek videl sebia na vode i na sushe besstrashnym moriakom i ranennym komandirov, on pobezhdal i umiral v zhestokoi skhvatke s vragom. On stoial bez shapki, s zatumanennymi glazami, i, kogda otets tronul ego za rukav, on molcha poshel za nim, unosia v dushe svoe torzhestvennoe obeshchanie. (162)

Vasek recalled how he and his father had gone to Moscow last year. For a long time they stood on Red Square and looked at the Kremlin. Vasek stood with a red kerchief around his neck like a watchman standing at his post. He was afraid to move. He swore to himself that he would perform some sort of unheard-of feat for the glory of the Motherland. And not just one! Vasek imagined himself on land and at sea, as a fearless sailor and a wounded commander, he was victorious and died in the terrible fight with the enemy. He stood without his cap, with misty eyes, and when his father touched his sleeve he followed him silently, bearing his solemn promise in his soul.

One of the primary tasks of postwar literature was the mythologizing of the war. Of all this postwar literature the main work, which remained in the literary canon to the very end of the Soviet era, was a novel by the most important Soviet writer of that time, Aleksandr Fadeev, titled *The Young Guard* [*Molodaia gvardiia*]. In essence, this novel was a sort of a school tale. Along with *The Young Guard*, which told of the heroes of the Komsomol underground in Krasnodon (and received the Stalin Prize for 1946), the following works also entered into the canon of postwar literature: Valentin Kataev's *Son of the Regiment* [*Syn polka*] about the teenaged hero Vania Solntsev (Stalin Prize, 1946); Lev Kassil and Mark Polianovsky's *Street of the Younger Son* [*Ulitsa mladshogo syna*], about the Pioneer hero Volodia Dubinin (Stalin Prize, 1950); and Valentina Oseeva's *Vasek Trubachëv and His Comrades* (Stalin Prize for Part II, 1951). Also of note are the following books about Pioneer and Komsomol heroes: Elena Ilina's *The Fourth Altitude* [*Chetvërtaiia vysota*, 1946], about Gulia Koroleva; Elena Koshevaia's *Tale of My Son* [*Povest' o syne*, 1948], about Oleg Koshevoi; and Liubov Kosmodemianskaia's *Tale of Zoia and Shura* [*Povest' o Zoe i Shure*, 1950], about Zoia and Shura Kosmodemianskaia; as well as two books about the heroism of children and youth, Semion Samsonov's *On the Other Side* [*Po tu storonu*, 1949] and Yuri Korolkov's *The Partisan Lenia Golikov* [*Partizan Lenia Golikov*, 1953]. The fact that this category of books won the Stalin Prize almost every year is a testament to the status of this theme.

The Young Guard is present as a theme in many school tales. The very act of reading Fadeev's novel is portrayed as causing extraordinary excitement in children: "Outside the walls the autumn rain was pounding and streams of water trickled down the windows; at the table, in a yellow circle of light, sat Pasha Kivachëv reading about the brave kids from Krasnodon, and the teacher noticed how the faces of the children glowed with some sort of new light and their eyes sparkled" (Musatov 169). The children's eyes "sparkle," "light up," and "burn brightly." They are enthralled when the old mechanic tells them about the workings of a tractor (in Ales Iakimovich's tale *Moscow*

Calling [*Govorit Moskva*]), when the old teacher tells them about new kinds of trees being grown by the Michurinists (*The House on the Hill* [*Dom na gore*]), and when the history teacher tells them how Russian travelers "discovered" unknown lands (in Prilezhaeva's tale *Over the Volga*).

The main function of the school tale was always the positioning of the school as an institution that merely formalizes the process of extra-institutional socialization that takes place from the bottom up, and which takes place not between the disciplining and the disciplined, but rather between school friends, between loving parents and their children, and between pupils and kind-hearted teachers. War literature about children and for children finally legitimized this extra-institutionality. The model for *The Young Guard*, in which the lofty (heroic) value of free discipline and the *self*-organization of Komsomol members was confirmed, turned out to be the unique development of *Timur and His Team*, which can be placed in the subgenre of the "vacation tale" [*kanikuliarnaia povest*]. During the war the pupils find themselves beyond the confines of the school (like Timur and his group), but their discipline and organization remains at the same high level at which they would have conducted themselves in school.

Oseeva's book *Vasek Trubachëv and his Comrades*, the entire second part of which is devoted to the adventures of classmates in occupied territory, can be viewed as a continuation of *Timur and His Team*. In *Timur*, the proto-text of the school tale, an informal "team" becomes formalized in school (not the other way around!), a situation for which there is no place at all in the pages of Oseeva's tale. The process of socialization (formalized, harshly regimented, and repressively normalizing) is represented as informal and free and merely reinforced by the school as an institution. The most valuable trait of Trubachëv is his leadership ability. Vasek is a postwar version of Timur, and the circumstance that he is not on vacation, but rather in school, is of primary significance: the "vacation tale" is transformed into a school tale. In Oseeva's tale, the Pioneer group—which itself marched to the front lines, took part in battles, and then provided voluntary aid to the wounded in hospitals, helped reestablish schools, went back to school, etc.—proved the secondary status of the school as a formal institution and the primary status of the self-directed Pioneer organization as the real, informal—and therefore much closer to the children—level of authority. The demotion of the school here confirms that the formal organization and the formal leader are nothing more than a continuation of the informal organization and informal leadership.

Taking the place of the war is vacation, which puts the children into informal (but, unlike the war, controlled) relationships. While the emphasis in the literature of war is placed on the formation and unification of the children's (youth) collective, in the vacation tale it is placed on individual development. In all these books the pupils one way or another end up in a rural setting (they go off on vacation to visit their grandmothers, aunts, uncles, etc.), where they

help the adults, and by getting involved in “real work” they discover the “great world of troubles of those who work the land.” In Susanna Georgievskaja’s *Grandmother’s Sea* [*Babushkino more*, 1949], Iosif Dik’s *Fiery Brook* [*Ognënyi rucheï*, 1950], Nikolai Dubov’s *Fires on the River* [*Ogni na reke*, 1952] and others, the “naïve preconceptions of urban kids are shattered by real life” (Razova 320).

The vacation tale brings the “freedom” of wartime (where children demonstrate miracles of consciousness) into school (normal) time, elevating to the forefront the child’s realization of his own social nature, which arises out of the clash with the “demands of the collective.” Thus, in Ivan Vasilenko’s *Zvezdochka* the action takes place in a trade school. The fifteen- and sixteen-year-old pupils are doing an internship at a factory, where they are assigned the manufacturing of a very important tractor part—the *zvezdochka* [sprocket; little star], which (metaphors!) “transfers motion from axle to axle” and turns out to be the “guiding star” of the main characters. The adolescent collective is divided up into brigades of boys and girls, between whom, of course, a competition takes place that constitutes the “conflict” of the tale and furthermore is institutionalized as the “socialist competition of two brigades.” It is impossible to determine the winner: in the categories of both achievement and discipline neither lags behind the other, so that it becomes necessary to resort to a third criterion—neatness: “To whom shall we give first place in neatness and tidiness?—the speaker squinted in a scheming manner—I’ll say this: the neatness among the boys is austere, while among the girls it is elegant. But that’s how it should be, and it is impossible to give one preference over the other” (Vasilenko 538).

That is precisely the problem. Finally it is decided that the winner will be determined during the production practicum: whoever fulfills and exceeds the quota will be the winner. But here again, of course, the two brigades are running “neck and neck.” And then the main heroine hits on an improvement in the manufacturing process, and the productivity of the girls’ brigade increases by 150%.

This “competition” is accompanied by a rivalry between the two teenaged leaders, who are secretly in love with one another. But since they are only teenagers and by definition nothing serious can happen between them, the conflict is resolved in the following way:

Pasha ne otvetil. Ustavias’ v duplo iabloni, on bezzvuchno shevelil gubami.... Marusia zabe-spokoilas’.

—Ty chto, a?—ispuganno sprosila ona Pashu.

On povernulsia k nei i so strannym vyrazheniem litsa, kakogo Marusia nikogda u nego ne videla, khriplo skazal:

—A ved’ ia dam zavtra...vosemnadtsat’ zvezdochek... Bol’she tvoego...

—Chto?—tikho sprosila Marusia.—Chto ty skazal?

—Da, vosemnadtsat’,—uzhe tverdo i reshitel’no povtoril on.—Raz tak, to znachit možno venets zvezdochki predvaritel’no ne obtachivat’...

—a obtachivat' ego srazu! —radostno podkhvatila Marusia.

Ona krepko skhvatila ego za ruki i, sisiaia schastlivymi glazami, skazala: Nakonets-to! [...] Teper' my ne possorimsia bol'she nikogda! (Vasilenko 570)

Pasha didn't answer. Staring at a hollow in the apple tree, he silently moved his lips... Marusia grew worried.

"What's wrong, hm?" she asked Pasha, frightened.

He turned to her with a strange expression on his face, the likes of which Marusia had never seen before, and said hoarsely:

"You know, tomorrow I'll make... eighteen sprockets... More than your..."

"What?" Marusia asked softly. "What did you say?"

"Yes, eighteen," he repeated firmly and decisively. "If so, then we can skip the preliminary grinding of the sprocket crown..."

"... and grind it all at once!" Marusia joyfully cut in.

She took him firmly by the hand, her happy eyes shining, and said, "Finally! [...] Now we'll never have to fight any more!"

One should not think that the school tale intended to convince the reader that this is how relationships between sixteen-year-olds develop. Rather, it strove above all toward the *derealization* [*derealizatsiia*] of these relationships. And not only, of course, relations between the sexes, but also between pupils and their parents, between teachers, and between the demands of school and of the Pioneer and Komsomol organizations. In other words, its task came down to not allowing these relationships to be articulated and find their own language, since a language like this, filled with frustrations, trauma, and desire, would remain beyond control. The denial of the "entire real world of children" in this literature was a small price to pay for the maintenance of control over the individual being socialized. Here we encounter a truly typical example of that which will later be labeled "conflict-free" [*beskonfliktnaia*] literature. One may presume that it is connected exclusively with the choice of clashes [*kollizii*] in which the characters are placed. Besides, the very activities of children in the school tale presuppose a particular set of clashes and, accordingly, conflicts [*konflikty*] (not vice-versa).

While at the beginning of almost every tale the children horse around—shoot slingshots, teach a puppy how to count, "exercise their will" by refusing to eat pies, play sick, skip classes at school, break windows in the teachers' lounge, and get bad grades on their unlearned lessons—by the end (which usually amounts to the end of the school year) the slingshots are forgotten, their will is disciplined, and the bad grades are corrected. The tale usually begins with the hero thinking of making something of his "own"—building a home electrical station (Alexei Iakimovich's *Moscow Calling*), keeping bees (Nikolai Nosov's *Kostia Sinitsyn's Diary* [*Dnevnik Kosti Sinitsyna*]), or building a home incubator (Nosov's *Happy Little Family* [*Vesëlaia semeika*]), but afterward it becomes clear that he will not be able to manage it alone. To his aid come an Octobrist group, a Pioneer group, a sponsored [*podshēfnyi*] class, or even the whole school, and then it becomes a more "general" or even uni-

versal concern (the construction of an inter-kolkhoz electric plant, a movement to create protected forest zones).

Back in 1936, one of the actions in the official campaign against formalism in the arts was the banning of Abram Room's already completed film from Yury Olesha's screenplay, *The Stern Youth* [*Strogii iunosh*]. According to the official statement the main reason for the ban was that the central theme of the film, the so-called "codex of new morality," which in the film was discussed by Komsomol members, was represented as "a mixture of pretentious maxims [...] and abstract concepts."⁵ Exactly a quarter-century later, in 1961, a new Party Program was adopted at the XXII Congress, a section of which was the "Moral Codex of the Builder of Communism." Becoming the basis of the official "Rules for Students," "Pioneer Laws," and "Komsomol Regulations," this codex was studied in every Soviet school and did in fact consist of a list of "maxims" and "abstract concepts," often repeating verbatim those that Olesha's characters had discussed. What was perceived in the 1930s as "empty moralizing" had been officially adopted by the late 1950s in the highest political document of the country, the Party Program. It was not at all the content of these "maxims" that was significant, but rather that they began to function in public discourse: in the 1930s these "abstract concepts" were buried in pedagogues' textbooks and teachers' manuals and were not suitable for mass consumption, whereas during the Khrushchevian Thaw they became common property in the most public of Soviet documents. Their adoption became possible because the same "current generation of Soviet people" to whom the third Party Program had promised "life under Communism" had grown up with Soviet children's literature and the school tale and had made these "maxims" publicly digestible.

The foundation of children's literature was the so-called "Leninist-Stalinist teaching on conscious discipline," which amounted to an instrumentalization of the well-known transition from the spontaneous [*stikhiinost'*] to the conscious [*soznatel'nost'*]. Soviet literature, as Katerina Clark has shown, was occupied with demonstrating this transition throughout its history. Clark's structural approach to the Soviet novel should, however, be supplemented by a functional approach, which allows one to address the questions of the aesthetic, social, and political functions of these texts. They should be understood both structurally and in the context of the disciplinary practices and discourses in which they function (Clark 33). There is no question that children's literature is one of the most important disciplinary institutions.

In Soviet discipline "consciousness" not only comes to the forefront, it is defined as its fundamental distinction from "bourgeois" discipline—"the discipline of blind obedience, regimentation, repression, and hypocrisy" (Boldyrev 114). Furthermore, conscious discipline is declared the fundamental factor in the future Communist society, since "with conscious discipline the actions and deeds of a person are motivated not by fear or material advan-

tage, but rather by Communist ideals and convictions" (Kairov 366). It is noteworthy that discipline in Soviet pedagogy is interpreted almost exclusively in moral categories: "Conscious discipline cannot be provided with the help of particular, special methods or individual 'disciplinary' measures. The inculcation of conscious discipline is inseparable from the inculcation of all the other moral qualities of the pupils" (Boldyrev 114). And elsewhere: "The inculcation of conscious discipline in pupils is an indispensable part of the inculcation of Communist morality" (Kairov 366).

At its foundation lies an "understanding of study as a duty to the Motherland, and of discipline as the most important condition for successful study" (366). In accordance with this, at the center of every school tale is a fight for academic progress [*uspevaemost'*]. For example, the pupil at first lets his class down in fighting for advanced status, but after the admonitions and help of his comrades, teachers, and parents, he begins to understand "the significance of study as a duty" (366). Or one friend decides to no longer whisper the answers to the other or allow him to copy, which at first causes an argument, but afterward the one helps the other, who improves his bad grades and becomes a conscious and conscientious pupil. The children here can hardly wait for the end of vacation, which the authors relate thus:

Vot i konchilos' leto—s pionerskimi pokhodami, kupan'em, rybnoi lovlei, so sladkim zapakhom sena na lugu, s rabotoi v pole, v sadu, na prishkol'nom uchastke [...]. Teper' za partu, za knigi! Soberutsia so vsei okrug skol'nik, v klassy voidut uchitelia. Chto-to oni otkroiut rebiatam, kuda povedut ikh? (Musatov 364)

And so summer was over—with its Pioneer hikes, swimming, fishing, with the sweet smell of hay in the meadows, with the work in the field and garden, on the school grounds [...]. Now it was back to the desk, to the books! All the pupils will gather from all the districts, into the classrooms will come the teachers. They will open up new horizons for the kids, where will they take them?

Conscious discipline also presupposes a "careful attitude toward school and social property" (Kairov 366). Therefore the children here engage in the restoration of the school after the war and the reconstruction of the school garden.

A fundamental part of conscious discipline is "respect, a refined and sensitive attitude toward one's elders" (366), who can be divided into parents, teachers, and neighbors. To the last group almost always belong elderly women, who speak exclusively in proverbs and dote upon the neighbor children. Although these old women may be cantankerous, they are in fact immeasurably kind-hearted. Matveevna "nagged Sasha incessantly, but actually her only joy in life was to feed and pamper the gray-eyed, pug-nosed boy, whose funny tufts of hair fanned out over his brow" (Musatov 186).

Another category of "elders" was the teachers. They are the fully empowered characters in the school tales, some of which are actually more devoted to the teachers than to the pupils: the image of the young female teacher lies

at the center of Frida Vigdorova's *My Class* [*Moi klass*, 1949] and *Pathway to Life* [*Doroga v zhizn'*, 1954], Prilezhaeva's *Masha Strogova's Youth* [*Iunost' Mashi Strogovoi*, 1948], Irina Karnaukhova's *Tale of Friends* [*Povest' o druzhnykh*, 1949], and Ekaterina Riazanova's *On the Threshold of Youth* [*Na poroge iunosti*, 1954].

In the school tale instructions are given to the young teachers by everyone. Grandfather tells his granddaughter, who has decided to become a teacher: "Uchitel', on kto? Sadovnik. Sad rastit. I esli ty liubish' khoroshie plody, tak bud' dobr, potrudis' v sadu: vskopai, polei, podviazhi sukhuiu vetochku obrezh'. [A teacher, who's that? A gardener. He tends an orchard. And if you like good fruit, then be good and work in the orchard: dig, water, tie up, prune dead branches]" (Karnaukhova 12). In another tale the teacher's sister says: "Doktora, inzhenera, komandira kto uchit? Uchitelia! Bez nikh nichego ne moglo by v mire delat'sia. Bez nikh i dom nikto by ne postroil. Samaia glavnaia professiia v mire—eto uchitelia! I khoroshie vyidut liudi iz rebiat ili plokhie—eto tozhe ot uchitelia zavisit! [Doctors, engineers, commanders—who teaches them? Teachers! Without them nothing could get done in the world. Without them no one would build a house. The most important profession in the world—it's teachers! And whether the kids turn into good people or bad—that also depends on the teacher!]" (Musatov 55).

The school tale creates a genuine cult of the teacher. Here the children adore their teachers and view them with delight:

Mal'chik s blagodarnost'iu posmotrel na uchitelei. Vot i vseгда tak: rebiata kuda-to rvutsia, lezut, stuchatsia, a dver' vse zakryta i zakryta... Uchitelia zhe poroiutsia v karmanakh, naidut nuzhnyi kliuchik—i srazu dver' naraspashku: vkhodi svobodno! (Musatov 110)

The boy looked thankfully at the teachers. That's how it always goes: the kids rush off somewhere, clambering, banging, but the door is always closed... The teachers, however, dig in their pockets and find the necessary key—and immediately the door is unlocked: enter freely!

And the teachers themselves are wholeheartedly committed to the children and school.

The final group of "elders" consists of the parents, who usually have very warm and friendly relationships with their children. The children worship their parents. And the parents, for their part, treat the children respectfully, fulfilling their role as unofficial teachers. The children are transformed right before our eyes: a child turns from a troublemaker into a conscious Pioneer, delighting even his stern father:

Kogda vznikali kakie-nibud' nedorazumeniia, Omor teper' vse chashche govorit zhene: "Uznai u syna." On uzhe ne krichal na Orusbeka, ne grozilsia, a ispodtishka liubovalsia im. I Bermet radovalas' etomu. Da i kak ne radovat'sia! S kazhdym dnem Orusbek ros, podobno molodoi trave posle dozhdia. Kharakter ego vyravnivalsia, shkola i kollektiv pionerov davali emu vse bol'she znanii. (Sydykbekov 169)

Whenever any misunderstandings arose, Omor would now say: "Ask our son." He no longer yelled at Orusbek or threatened him, but secretly admired him. And this made Bermet very

happy. After all, how couldn't she be happy? Every day Orusbek was growing like new grass after rain. His personality was becoming more balanced, and he was gaining more and more knowledge from school and the Pioneer collective.

Such relationships between parents and children are typical of the school tale.

The school tale is a visual aid for conscious discipline and might justly be called the *disciplinary tale* [*distsiplinarnaia povest'*]. Imbued with "love of children" and "humanism," it is the product of the long history of the rhetorical regurgitation of violence. The history of the genre was itself the history of the formation of the pedagogy of conscious discipline, announcing itself at the top of its lungs in the works of Makarenko. The "removal of pedagogy" in Gaidar's prose became the outlet for introducing conscious discipline into children's literature, where it was realized in the school tale.

The school tale is, to paraphrase Mayakovsky, a *novel-adolescent* [*roman-podrostok*]. The child knows how to look, but still does not know how to see. His vision is socially unfocused. The school tale gives the child the optical tools necessary for the conceptualization of reality. Over the course of many years it in fact forms and trains the conceptual abilities of the child. Its role in the process of socializing the Soviet person cannot be overestimated. It lays the groundwork for reading the great Socialist Realist novel. At the very moment when the child was outgrowing children's literature in the final grade of school, s/he was beginning to read Soviet literature. So, in fact, *Vasek Trubachëv and His Comrades* was read alongside *Evgeny Onegin*, and *Prilezhaeva* alongside *Turgenev*. But the moment that *Turgenev* fell by the wayside, along with *Oseeva*, the child had already reached the level of "adult" Soviet literature. Now it was the turn of *Fadeev* and the industrial novel.

Many school tales were in fact adaptations of "adult" novels for children. Thus, *Prilezhaeva's* novel *Over the Volga* tells of the struggle in class between two moral precepts represented by Volodia, the son of a Communist worker, and Yury, the proud son of a careerist engineer. A conflict between the fathers in the factory develops alongside the rivalry between the sons (Volodia's father is a worker pushing for improved production methods [*rabochii-ratsionalizator*], while Yury's father is an overly cautious engineer [*inzhenier-perestrakhovshchik*]). The clashes between the adults at the factory occupy no less space in the novel than those of the sons at school (the same can be said of *Iosif Likstanov's* tale *First Name* [*Pervoe imia*] and others). *Musatov's* *Hay-Poles* [*Stozhary*] has parallel story lines about the drama of a child hiding from his stepmother the truth about the death of his father at the front, and about his mother, who is the best worker at her kolkhoz and is therefore elected chairperson at the end. This is a typical clash in the kolkhoz novel. In fact, such texts merge with the metagenres of postwar literature—the industrial novel and the kolkhoz novel.

But something similar (only in the reverse direction) occurs in “adult” novels. Thus, at the end of the archetypal industrial novel, Vsevolod Kochetov’s *The Zhurbins* [Zhurbiny, 1952], each and every adult turns into a pupil: the middle son learns to be a riveter from his uncle, while the father-in-law learns math from his daughter-in-law and the youngest son from his future wife. At the end the daughter-in-law of the elder Zhurbins turns out to be a member of a strange family:

Zina molcha slushala razgovory, vsmatryvalas’ v kazhdogo iz Zhurbinykh. [...] Upriamo idut Zhurbiny svoimi putiami. Vot Aleksei [...] on zakonchil pervyi kurs instituta. Vot Kostia... on khodit tri raza v nedeliu v vechernii tekhnikum [...]. Ego Duniasha tem vremenem zanimaetsia na kursakh masterov. Vot Ivan Matveevich—po-prezhnemu, ee, Zinin student. On uchitsia, ne rasschityvaia ni na kakie diplomy,—“dlia sebia”, chtoby ne otstavat’ ot zhizni, ot tekhniki, ot molodykh, chtoby idti vmeste s nimi, s molodymi, do glubokoi starosti. Vot ee Viktor. On tozhe ne dumaet poka ni o kakikh diplomakh, no skol’ko knig perechital! Istoriuu, literaturu, on znaet, pozhalui, luchshe Ziny, okonchivshei desiatiletku i institut. On nikogda ne khvastaetsia, ne shchegoliaet etimi znaniiami, oni u nego dlia ponimaniia liudei, zhizni, sobytii. (Kochetov 724)

Zina silently listened to the conversations and looked intently at each of the Zhurbins. [...] The Zhurbins stubbornly go their own way. There’s Aleksei [...] he’s finished the first year at the institute. There’s Kostia [...] he takes evening classes at the technical school three times a week. Meanwhile his Duniashka is taking foreman’s courses. There’s Ilya Matveevich—like before, he’s her, Zina’s, student. He studies without figuring on getting any diplomas—“for himself,” in order not to fall behind the times, in technology, behind the young people, in order to keep up with them, with the young, until a ripe old age. There’s her Viktor. He’s not thinking about any diplomas either, but how many books he has read! History, literature, he knows maybe more than Zina, who graduated from the ten-year school and the institute. He never brags, never shows off his knowledge, for him it’s all in order to understand people, life, and events.

And all the same, the school tale is not merely a story of reforging [*perekovka*] adapted for children from the “adult” novel. The final assurance of the possibility of remaking the human being came to Soviet literature after the war, when the idea of reforging from the 1930s was put to rest once and for all. After the age of terror, followed by the war, the price of human life, which had not been great in Russia to begin with, fell so far that the idea of reforging lost all its appeal. While in the 1930s the process of reforging entailed a social-psychological rupture, in postwar literature, and particularly in the school tale, everyone is indiscriminately reeducated with ease—from schoolchildren to their behind-the-times teachers and parents lacking in consciousness (such characters—aloof teachers and parents, “cut off from the demands of life,” raising their children to be selfish, lazy sissies—are present in every tale, and their “reeducation” [*perevospitanie*] generally appears as one of the story lines). Every school tale consists of stories of reeducation.

“Reeducation” is the triumph of conscious discipline, a kind of conflict-free reforging, a “reforging” without violence. Reeducation is no longer reforging, since it is lacking not only in violence, but even, it would seem, in any sort of serious “educational impact” on the part of the school. The heroes

move toward their own transformation by some sort of unknown, but powerful, force. The mysticism of this movement conceals the fundamental institution that in reality almost always acted extremely harshly, and sometimes even brutally—the school. In postwar culture disciplinary institutions (including the school) become almost completely camouflaged, which did not occur in the culture of the 1930s. The task of the school tale was to show that the act of transformation could be effected by anyone: close friends, good and kind teachers, loving parents—but not the school, which in reality did produce this effect through the violence of the collective and the disciplinary efforts of teachers, parents, and "social organizations." The school years were permeated with violence and rupture. They were always traumatic. Therefore the real school drama in Stalinism was subject to *derealization*, the instrument of which was the school tale.

Oriented to the "reality of the world of children," the school tale was almost the only genre of children's literature that was subject to some sort of verification, which could be said neither of preschool children's literature (the fairy tale) nor the remaining genres of literature for school-aged children (adventure literature or historical fiction). But the specific nature of the school tale lay in the fact that, unlike adult literature, its reader lacked the tools for verification. On the contrary, the very act of placing the child in the world of the school tale caused a new set of tools to be formed, where literature was not to be verified by reality, but reality by literature.

The metamorphoses that the school undergoes here are based upon the syncretism of children's perception. In reality the Soviet school was not, of course, broken down into Pioneer (Komsomol) events, lessons, and excursions, and thus remained "a self-contained, branching system whose goal was to make the child perceive the world exclusively in school terms" (Vail and Genis 100). The school appears here (as everywhere) as a repressive social force, in conflict with which the child is socialized. Therefore the school tale attempts to remove the child's unavoidable conflict with the school, which constitutes the true conflict of school-aged children, by means of discursive operations and the formation of a substitute sphere of the imaginary. In the final analysis, the maxims of the school tale (such as: being lazy is bad, but studying hard is moral; whispering answers to your friends is immoral, but helping them study is good, etc.) all come down to instilling in the child a "general disposition that will forever leave a feeling of shame in the person at any act of protest" and in the final analysis will "replace moral sensibility with civic duty" (Vail and Genis 101). And along with this the school gives the child his first definitions of morality, which develop into a complete picture not only through direct actions (pedagogical discipline through the Octobrist, Pioneer, and Komsomol organs, etc.), but also synthetically, through literature.

The school tale creates a complete picture of the world. The point, however, is that the school itself "is nothing but an illusion. Its model of an ideal

world is nothing more than a cardboard visual aid" (Vail and Genis 103). While adult Socialist Realist literature created a model of reality, the school tale for all practical purposes created a *model of a model*. There is no doubt that "striving to extend the poetics of the arithmetic book into reality laid the foundations of consciousness" (Vail and Genis 104); however, the tasks of children's literature did not just boil down to this. Of course the "poetics of the arithmetic book" determined the pattern of all Soviet art. But Socialist Realism was not only a factory of dreams, it was also a factory of reality.

"The entire real world of children," in defense of which the State rose up in the 1930s, was in no way merely an "idealized" world (and not only in the sense that the school did indeed include happy cultural excursions, friendship, and Pioneer camps). Just because the school tale categorically refused to acknowledge that these "joyful" sides of school life were offset by conflicts with parents, teachers, the collective, and, finally, at that critical adolescent age, with oneself, it does not necessarily follow that the picture being painted here was "false." If it was indeed false, then it was for a different reason: it passed off the repressive process of socialization in school as the realization of the desires of the child (and in this the function of the school tale is unique), and at the same time not only directed, but also created these desires. Whereas in fact, as Nedel has accurately noted, the "world of adults, living off the discursive exploitation of children, creates not their future, but its own, it realizes not their fantasies, but its own, it moves toward its own desires, not toward theirs" (57). The school tale is a kind of adult conspiracy. Hijacking the future of children, it *derealizes* the world of children, depriving them of social support at the very age when this support is of the utmost importance. Therefore if the school tale reflected anything, it was the *entire unreality* [*ne-real'nost'*] of the world of children, since it was merely the flip side of the *irreality* [*irreal'nost'*] of the adult world.

Translated by John Meredig

NOTES

- 1 Also of note here is *Konduit i shvambraniia* (1930–33) by Lev Kassil, which told primarily of the pre-Soviet school—about the breakup of the old *gymnaziia* and the birth of the Soviet "labor school."
- 2 The status of children's literature is reflected in the volume of the printings: while in 1918 the printings of children's books amounted to 2,911,000 copies, it had grown to 35,134,000 copies in 1940, and reached 119,652,000 copies by the end of the Stalinist era (see Razova 2).
- 3 Yury Nagibin called his article on the school tale in *Literaturnaia gazeta* "By All the Rules of Math" [Po vsem pravilam matematiki] and Aleksandr Mariamov titled his review of the genre in *Literaturnyi kritik* "The Adventures of Mannequins" [Prikliucheniia manekenov]. The former described the complete "interchangeability" of plot clichés, which were reminiscent of the solution to a simple geometrical theorem, where the data were school, fam-

ily, teachers, and pupils, and one was required to prove that a healthy character was forged in the school, and where the initial conflict of the "reforging" of the lackadaisical pupil into an exemplary pupil and good citizen was carried out in a number of roles: "exemplary pupil" [*otlichnik*], "model airplane enthusiast" [*aviamodelist*], "foolhardy pigeon-breeder" [*otchaiannyi golubevod*]. The latter maintained that the problem was embedded in the very genre of the school tale itself, which turned the writer into a "commentator on class registers, school newspapers, and Pioneer diaries." He suggested renouncing the recently coined term "school tale" and writing honest books "not about what happens in the school building, but about the lives of school-aged adolescents."

- 4 Tamara Gabbe, one of the most penetrating critics of children's literature of the 1930s, linked the crisis of this still new genre with the fact that it had no tradition: pre-revolutionary books on this topic were generally aimed at exposing the old school (an "honest book could not possibly have" any other task, according to Gabbe). Writers who had attended the pre-revolutionary *gymnaziia* were simply not acquainted with the Soviet school, and in this school there were no "customary everyday routines or customary relations. Everything was simmering, seething, and unfolding right before our eyes." Lacking personal experience, writers began to study the school "externally"—right down to the programs and protocols of the Methods Commission of the National Committee of Enlightenment (Narkompros) (Gabbe 36). As a result the picture became mathematically "regular" and the characters were transformed into "mannequins."
- 5 Ukrainfilm's decree on the banning of the film *Strogi iunoshia* of June 10, 1936. See more on this issue in Margolit and Smyrov 114.

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