

Title: Rewriting the Fairy Tale: The Strugatsky Brothers
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A popular song chosen to serve as an anthem for the Soviet Air Force in the 1930s famously declared: “We were born to make fairy tales come true.” As Helena Goscilo points out in the Introduction to an anthology of both traditional and post-Revolutionary fairy tales, the “coming true” of fairy tales under Stalin was located in such real-life marvels as the “time-defying wonders” carried out by Stakhanov in the Donbass coal mines and the “metal magic carpet” of the aviator Chkalov – human accomplishments that seemed to mirror the fairy tale’s message that “mind” (or character, virtue, determination, “consciousness”) can magically triumph over seemingly obdurate “matter,” transforming a bleak state of nature into a vision of justice and prosperity. But the very existence of the anthology Goscilo is introducing testifies to the fact that fairy tales did not simply migrate from the fictional to the factual realm during the Soviet era; in fact, the Revolutionary fairy tale became a thriving literary genre, as Soviet writers developed a paradoxical relationship to magic as, on the one hand, a cultural “survival” with no place in the modern world, and, on the other, a powerful expression of faith in the capacity of the human individual to comprehend, manipulate, and transform the material world – a faith central to Revolutionary politics. This paper examines some late examples of the genre by the Strugatsky brothers: “Monday Begins on Saturday” (“Ponedel’nik nachinaetsia v subbotu,” 1964) and its sequel, “The Tale of the Troika” (Skazka o Troike,” 1968). Among the questions it asks are: what is at stake in the Strugatsky brothers’ “double reinvention” of the Revolutionary fairy tale – first breathing new life into the genre by infusing it with tropes borrowed from science fiction, then negating the fairy tale’s most central structural feature, the magical production of justice? How do their experiments in the fairy tale genre fit into a broader history of Soviet literary treatments of magic?

Mark von Geldern and Richard Stites, *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995), 257–58.

Helena Goscilo, “Foreword,” *Politicizing Magic: An Anthology of Russian and Soviet Fairy Tales*, edited by Marina Balina, Helena Goscilo, and Mark Lipovetsky (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 2005), x.

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