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EDUCATION BY THE WORD: GIANNI RODARI IN THE TEXTS AND CONTEXTS OF ITALIAN AND SOVIET CHILDREN'S LITERATURE¹

The article examines the early stages of the work of Italian children's poet, prose writer, and editor of children's periodicals, Gianni Rodari. The authors analyze Rodari's work in the context of the postwar situation in Italy; the authors considers Rodari's relations with Soviet Russia and the sources of the popularity of his work in the Russian translations on the example of the tale-tale "The Adventures of Cipollino".

Keywords: Mussolini's Italy (1922–1945), reconstruction of children's literature and periodicals, postwar children's literature, Marshak, "The Adventures of Cipollino", translations from Italian, playful poetry

Gianni Rodari and children's literature in Italy after Second World War

Analyzing the history of children's literature in the interwar period (1919–1939) in Italy and the Soviet Union, especially of literature included in school textbooks and curricula, we can identify many common points in the use of children's literature for the purpose of ideological influence on the child. As Benito Mussolini (1922–1943) came to power in Italy and Italian fascism took root in the daily culture of the country, schools and especially school textbooks were tasked with raising children and youth in the spirit of the new values of patriotism and fascism. All progressive children's and youth organizations, such as the Associations of the Italian Scouting movement (1910–1927), were dissolved

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as unbefitting the new worldview. A new organization for children and youth, the Opera Nazionale Balilla (ONB) became a locus of military and ideological propaganda for children and adolescents².

In Soviet Russia, the changeover in coordinates took place somewhat earlier, in the early 1920s. Founded in 1922, the All-Union Pioneer Organization — after 1924, named for V. I. Lenin — replaced all existing forms of children's life outside the family. Pioneer postulates also changed life within the family itself, heightening generation gaps and intrafamily ideological conflict, whether in families of workers and peasants or of the postrevolutionary intelligentsia³. A significant difference between the culture of childhood in Soviet Russia and the new dictatorship in Italy was the rapid development, in the former, of innovative forms of children's literature: the Soviet 1920s and 1930s saw interesting experiments in children's literature, and although there is no denying the strong pressure of ideology and the enforcement of "political correctness" on the part of the Soviet regime, children's literature remained a territory of greater freedom than in Mussolini's Italy.

In both countries, important events took place in the 1930s that would long determine the course of development of children's literature and its didactic value. The First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers (Moscow, 1934) and, four years later, the National Conference on Children's and Young People's Literature (Bologna, November 9–10, 1938) [Lollo 2010, 48–49 and Hellman 2013, 354–355] demonstrated, respectively, the ways in which literature for children was to develop in the Soviet ideological space, and the new values Italian children's literature of the fascist period was to adapt to. In a coauthored report to the First Congress of Soviet Writers, Samuil Marshak, one of the leading figures in the creation of the new children's literature in Russia after the difficult years of the Civil War, specified certain key new themes for children's books, among them: historical stories about Russia's past; stories about science and construction; the creation of the school story genre; and the foregrounding of active and inquisitive children of the new age as new literary protagonists [Hellman 2008, 217–239]. In the Italian context, the *Manifesto on Children's Literature*, drafted during the Bologna Conference, laid out specific objectives for a new children's literature, which similarly presented the (albeit different) values a child should find upon reading a new children's book describing the nationalist regime of Mussolini. The book should portray the "serene joy of the child," nourish "national roots," and serve as a "source of religious and patriotic faith, kindness and strength, courage and perseverance, of a spirit of self-sacrifice and discipline" [Lollo 2010, 48–49].

Furthermore, in Benito Mussolini's Italy, children's literature was to be purged of the presence of foreign authors. A special commission for the selection of books was responsible for reviewing Italian literary production and translations for children, which, in the particular case of Jewish authors, were placed on a special list that excluded their subsequent circulation. In both countries, children's literature was full of portrayals of "worthy children," model young Stalinist and fascist heroes who carried out the precepts of the political leaders of the fatherland, who grew up and acted in the name of the triumph of the new ideological values [Boero, De Luca 2010, 171–174].

It should be noted that the children's literature of the twenty-year reign of Italian fascism — during which schools and textbooks reinforced the regime's one-party ideology, with all the requisite iconography this entailed — indeed shaped the imagination of new generations. This literature was not marked by any particular experimentation. In this respect, Soviet children's books, especially the picturebooks of the same period, differed significantly from children's books of fascist Italy. First and foremost, the hierarchy of values for children growing up under the Italian fascist regime was supposed to include, not freedom or fantasy, but obedience and authoritarianism, religiosity and conformism, patriotism and militarism [Boero, De Luca 2010, 154–157].

Nineteenth-century Italy's liberal-conservative triad of *God-Father-Family* became the basis for countless literary narratives for children. Salvatore Gotta's (1887–1980) novel *Piccolo alpino* (1926), about a boy who lost his parents in an avalanche, found again them after several adventures and became a national hero because of his courage, was like a bible for the preschoolers and elementary school children of the ONB youth organization. The novel continued in print until the end of the Second World War, by which point its chiming with the nationalist ideals of Mussolini's Italy rang hollow. Gotta was also the author of the anthem "Giovinezza, giovinezza" ("Youth, youth"), an important part of the mythology of the younger generation in fascist Italy that identified with the demiurgic force of fascism [Boero, De Luca 2010, *Ibid*].

Along with traditional values, Gotta's novels nevertheless introduced their readers to the emergence of new technologies and technological progress; by contrast, such narratives as *Lisa-Betta* (1932) by Giuseppe Fanciulli (1881–1951) extolled patriarchy and the unity of man and nature, the ideal being the rural family with its "hardy and strong-willed" characters. Thus, the main character in Fanciulli's novel is a strong girl who, thanks to her gumption, is able to become the backbone of her family [Boero, De Luca 2010, *Ibid*].

For Italy, the end of the Second World War meant the end of the fascist regime and its replacement with a democratic republic. Upon liberating Italy, the Allies reorganized school education, in particular quickly, abandoning textbooks, and most reading books, from the prewar and wartime period. It was in the postwar period that the importance of children's books as a source and support for new democratic values was reevaluated all over Europe. A great deal of change took place in fundamental ideas about how a child should work with books, what knowledge and moral categories should be put in the heads of young readers. An important moment in the development of the postwar European tradition of children's reading was the establishment of the International Library for Children and Youth (*Die Kinder-und-Jugendbibliothek*, International Youth Library) in Munich in 1949. Its founder, Jella Lepman (1891–1970), worked extensively on a new conception of the role of books in the formation of the child, and would subsequently also help found the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) in 1952⁴. This initiative was followed by others at the international level aimed at producing new children's books, with new content—books conducive to the inculcation of democratic values in the coming generations. In addition to the books removed from circulation during Mussolini's fascist dictatorship and now restored to the children's canon, new children's authors emerged in Italy, one of whom was the humble elementary school teacher Giovanni Francesco Rodari, known to the wider world as Gianni Rodari (1920–80) [Cambi 1985, 119–154; Argilli 1990].

Gianni Rodari remains one of the best known and beloved Italian children's authors at home and abroad. He was born in Omegna in 1920 in the family of a baker. As a child, Rodari played the violin and dreamed of becoming a musician. Being of poor health, he was not drafted when Italy entered the Second World War in 1940. A graduate of St. Peter's Catholic Teachers' Seminary in Milan, during the war, under conditions of the German occupation of the country, Rodari taught elementary school. In a sense, this work was obligatory, as the family was not well off, and teachers were in great demand; but in moral and ideological terms, it was the years of teaching children, mostly poor ones, that formed Rodari's enduring conviction that the unjust world of war and inequality had to be remade. Rodari lost his brother and friends in the war, and these losses, along with his conviction that the world had to be rebuilt according to new egalitarian values, led him to join the Italian resistance, and in 1944 he became a member of the Italian Communist Party⁵.

As the contemporary Italian researcher Giulia De Florio observes, the young elementary school teacher Rodari's interest in Russia was

logical: for many of his fellow party members, the USSR represented the model for the Italian democratic society [De Florio 2019, 172–181]. Undoubtedly, his work as a teacher, and the lectures in literature and journalism that the future writer attended at the University of Milan, prepared him for his literary work, which turned out to be closely linked to his party and political commitments.

After the war, beginning in 1948, Rodari worked as a journalist for the communist newspaper *L'Unità*. In this capacity, the future children's writer sharply critiqued the content of elementary school textbooks. In his analyses of these works, Rodari emphasized their lack of reflection of the current moment in the country. They gave no sense of what was happening in postwar Italy, of its status as a new republic; the military past of the country was vaguely presented, with some references to partisan struggle against the German occupation, but also some remaining distortions of the history of the Mussolini regime. Rodari was not alone in this assessment, which was shared by the prominent educator Carleton W. Washburne (1889–1968), head of the Education Subcommittee of the Allied Commission, which in 1947 was tasked with revising educational curricula and textbooks that still retained nationalist discourse from the Italian fascist period.

Rodari's debut as a children's poet came in Sunday editions of the communist newspaper *L'Unità*: asked by the editor to run the Sunday "Children's Corner," Rodari now began to develop his talent as a children's poet and storyteller. In 1950, his first poetry collection *Il libro delle filastrocche / The Book of Nursery Rhymes* (illustrated by G. Mafai in the first edition of 1950) was published, followed by the prose novel *Il romanzo di Cipollino* (illustrated by R. Verdini in the first edition of 1951), *Filastrocche in cielo e in terra / Nursery-rhymes In the Sky and on Earth* and *Favole al telefono / Tales by the Telephone or Fairy Tales Over the Phone* (both illustrated by B. Munari in the first editions of 1960 and 1962). These poetry collections treated such key post-fascist themes as social inequality, exploitation, and antimilitarism and international solidarity. In the 1950s, Rodari was not only a communist children's author — in his story of a revolution in a vegetable garden, the main character Cipollino is a little boy-onion — but also a socially engaged poet, one keen to foster a new morality and greatly expand the political outlook of his childhood audience. In 1950, Rodari moved to Rome, where he became the first editor of the communist children's magazine *Il Pioniere*. His poems, stories, and tales for children are full of fantastical themes; he makes extensive use of wordplay and unexpected rhymes. Everything that emerged from Rodari's pen was lively

and unusual, full of reflections on life, and far from the moralizing of dry school textbooks. Meanwhile, a significant role in Rodari's growing popularity as a children's author was played by translations of his works into Russian⁶.

The Italian critic Alberto Asor Rosa says of Rodari's style that he "began by reorganizing the linguistic universe to offer a new dimension of human and social relations." Among these linguistic devices were metrical iteration (the insistent use of a single rhyme, making it easier to assimilate); the interweaving of "engaging themes and wordplay"; ludic nonsense that "conceals a transgressive element"; "paradox with a lapidary imprint" that also reconciles "hyperbolic and surreal" expressions; a search for deformation and alienation; and, last but not least, "a technique by which truth is sought via error or reversal" [Asor Rosa 2010, 13–18].

Nevertheless, the originality and novelty of his poetry, and his attempts to instill democratic principles in a new generation, were poorly received in Italian society, which, both by virtue of tradition, and amid the tense climate of Europe's Cold War division into opposing camps, met Rodari's many innovations rather tepidly. But this reaction at home in Italy did not keep him from continuing his pedagogical and literary experiments. In the 1960s and early 1970s, Rodari published several prose works for children, including *La torta in cielo / The Cake In The Sky* (1966), *Venti storie più una / Twenty Stories and One More* (1969), and *Tante storie per giocare / Many Stories for Playing* (1971).

Rodari's *La grammatica della fantasia. Introduzione all'arte di inventare storie (Grammar of Fantasy. Introduction to the Art of Inventing Stories)* represented a completely new phenomenon in children's literature when it appeared in 1973. Here Rodari gives his readers — not just children, but adults as well — a course in the basics of creativity, in how to fashion stories themselves. Rodari attached great importance to the art of oral storytelling, which is largely lost in modern culture amid the ever-accelerating pace of life. In his view, human relationships suffer from our urge to cram so much activity into our available time; but, he believed, inventing and narrating stories together — in particular, grownups and children carefully listening to and discussing their joint work — can help restore lost family ties. Rodari saw the child as an independent individual, worthy not only of attention but also trust. In this, his views coincided with the pedagogical trend, popular in post-war Italy, set by Loris Malaguzzi (1920–1994), who developed his own system of preschool education in the Reggio Emilia kindergartens. For both Rodari and Malaguzzi, the most fruitful educational model was

that which focused on children's creativity⁷. Rodari's final works for children included *Novelle fatte a macchina / Stories Written On A Typewriter* (1973), describing the absurdities of modernity, and *C'era due volte il barone Lamberto ovvero I misteri dell'isola di San Giulio / Once Upon A Time There was Baron Lambert. The Mysteries of San Giulio Island* (1978).

The broad Italian public cannot be said to have immediately hailed Rodari's work. The issues he dealt with in his writings were not only, and not primarily, issues of European postwar reality. The success of translations of his poetry and prose into other European languages attests to the international significance of the pedagogical aims he set for himself; his concern for the younger generation was based on the cultivation of universal, worldwide values. His poetic style was not only cheerful and energetic, it was also full of deep reflection and discussion of the ethics of human behavior, of the relationship between past and present, and of the many important questions of human existence that confront children and adults throughout their lives. Rodari's poems and tales were especially popular in the Soviet Union. This success is, of course, in part attributable to his political affiliation, his membership in the Italian Communist Party; but Rodari's popularity in the USSR also had purely literary roots. As his Italian biographer Marcello Argilli remarks, his fame in his native country and in the world was owed to "the extraordinary success of Rodari's translations in the USSR, first and foremost that of his tale 'The Adventures of Cipollino' and the children's poems perfectly rendered by the great poet Marshak." [Argilli 1990, 84–85] Also contributing to Rodari's Soviet popularity were the numerous trips he made to that country (1952, 1963, 1967, 1973, and 1979), both as a member of delegations of the Italian Communist Party, and on individual visits, during which the writer spent a great deal of time with children, visiting children's institutions, schools, and theaters, and often giving readings to child audiences.

All Vegetables, Unite': The Adventures of Cipollino as Revolutionary Legacy in post-Stalinist Russia

"The Adventures of Cipollino", the fairy tale written by Gianni Rodari in 1951 enjoyed an enormous popularity among children and adults in Russia. The book has reached more than 60 editions with a total number of copies exceeded several millions. During the Soviet era, an animated film was released in 1961⁸; it was turned into a feature film

by Tamara Lisizyan in 1973⁹, and in 1974 the famous Soviet composer, Karen Khachaturian, created its ballet version for children, for which he was awarded the State Prize in 1976. Most recently, in 2014, a total number of 7,000 copies of the book (not a small number for contemporary children's literature market in Russia!) were published with new illustrations by well-known contemporary artist Dmitry Nepomniashchy. This was completed by the premier Russian publishing house in Moscow, "EKSMO". Also interesting is the fact that this new edition still used the first 1953 translation of this fairy tale about the "vegetable revolution" by Zlata Potapova. In the 1970s, there was another attempt to translate this story, but the new translation or rather re-telling did not gain popularity. Instead, the leading Soviet publishing house, "Detskaia literatura", reintroduced the first translation by Zlata Potapova, a professor of French and Italian literature at one of the Moscow institutions of higher education. Potapova's translation was heavily edited by Samuil Marshak, who has translated Rodari's poetry earlier [De Florio 2019, 175]. In her above-cited article "Gianni Rodari and Samuil Marshak: A Dialogue in Time and Space," Gulia De Florio provides interesting information from reminiscences of Tsitsilia Kim, wife of TASS correspondent Viktor Kim, whom Marshak had met on his first visit to Italy in 1933. Herself a noted researcher of Italian culture and literature, Tsitsilia Kim recalls Marshak as an admirer of the Italian language, and one who knew it well [De Florio 2019, Ibid.]. This information adds to the picture of Marshak's interest in translating from Italian, as it contradicts the claim that Marshak did not know the language, that, having been first introduced to Rodari by Zlata Potapova, he worked with Rodari's poetry as provided in a word-for-word translation by Potapova herself.

However, Rodari, a children's poet, was always viewed in Russia secondary to the fairy tale writer. *The Adventures of Cipollino* was translated and published in Russia only a year after its publication in Italy; his next fairy tale, *The Blue Arrow*, 1952, was published in Russian in 1957; *Jelsomino in the Country of Liars*, 1959, was translated in Russia just one year later, in 1960. The logical question that arises immediately is why: Why wasn't Rodari's poetry widely introduced to the soviet children's audience? Why didn't the poetic translations of Rodari in Russia gain momentum until 1968? The art of translation in Russia, due to socialist realism restrictions and political censorship, was highly valued as a medium for self-expression. There were always enough experience translators who would have engaged themselves into this work.

We believe that the answer to this question could be found in the close resemblance between Rodari's non-sense poetry, whose whimsical verses were always open to allegorical interpretation, and the condemned art of the OBERIU group (The Association of Real Art), one of the most popular, as well as the most controversial poets of the 1920s and 1930s. Daniil Kharmis, Alexander Vvedenskii, Nikolai Zabolotsky, and Nikolai Oleinikov all worked in this genre in the variety of children's periodicals during this time and all fell victims to Stalinist purges. For over two decades, their literary works were condemned as "bourgeois sickly fantasies". Kornei Chukovsky, a pioneer in this type of poetic verse in Russian and a strong follower of the British tradition of absurdist nursery rhymes, was forced out of soviet children's literature by political functionaries who insisted that such poetry is not needed for a proletarian child. Thus, 1953, the year Rodari made his way to the Soviet reader, was hardly the time to revive this tradition, even in the form of translating the works of a communist Italian compatriot¹⁰.

Contemporary scholar of Russian children's literature, Ben Hellman, attributes the strong interest to Rodari's work by the new phase of Soviet history, the Khrushchev's "Thaw". Hellman writes:

After decades of enforced but self-satisfied isolation, a window was slightly opened to the outside world. Some new foreign writers were introduced, while some long-since forgotten names of importance were "rehabilitated" through new translations. The best qualities for a foreign writer hoping for an introduction to the Soviet book market were to have a revolutionary background and to be a Communist and a friend of the Soviet Union. The Italian Gianni Rodari was the perfect case... In 1952 he fulfilled his long-cherished dream of a visit to the USSR [Hellman 2013, 473–474].

We do agree with the general meaning of this statement — indeed, the Thaw period that started with Khrushchev's speech at the XX Party Congress (1956) brought back many forgotten names of Russian literati who perished through the years of Stalin's terror¹¹. New foreign authors became household names for Soviet readership through such venues as literary magazines *Foreign Literature*, through numerous translations (Hemingway would be the most cited example), but it did not happen until 1956! Why was then Rodari singled out and translated as early as 1953, the year of Stalin's death, when political struggle for power among survived leaders of the country was at its highest with little hope for liberal reforms? We believe that the answer to this question could be found precisely in the story that was selected for translation, "The Adventures of Cipollino", that introduces

the young readers to the familiar plot — the revolutionary struggle between the poor and the rich, between the oppressed and the oppressors, but it presents the obviously politicized conflict as humorous and funny, as a story of coming of age of a little onion, who is a true fairy tale truth-seeker, and who — together with his friends — overpowers the injustice and oppression by being inventive, courageous and... KIND!

Revolution as a literary theme became the focus of soviet children's literature from the very days of its formation. The decision to claim children's literature as its own ideological property was made by the Communist Party as early as 1924. The resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party has proclaimed the creation of children's literature as one of the most important issues on its agenda [O partynoy pechati 1954, 294]. The debates of the 1920s reveal two contradictory directions in soviet children's literature. On one hand, critics and party activists promoted the institutionalization of children's literature and required ideologically correct themes for the works of literature; on the other hand, the demand to illuminate these themes in the most engaging and innovative ways called for the continuation of the literary experiments. Therefore, although children's literature was increasingly appropriated by the rules imposed by the government, the actual body of texts produced under the general rubric of this literature was extremely diverse. Thus, such a compulsory theme as revolutionary history was simultaneously presented by Jury Olesha's fantastic tale *Tri Tols-tiaka* (*Three Fat Men*, 1928) and through class-oriented didactics in Anna G. Kravchenko's *Kak Sasha stal krasnoarmeitseem* (*How Sasha Became a Red Army Soldier*, 1928).

Cruelty of the revolution and the Civil War that immediately followed was well-known to the children's audience from their personal experiences. According to the data provided by the British scholar Catriona Kelly, the number of the homeless children in post-revolutionary Russia rose out of all proportion when famine struck along the Volga in 1921–1922, reducing at least 4 million children to total abandonment and destitution. Two years later, forced industrialization, followed rapidly by collectivization, added to the numbers of deserted and needy children [Kelly 2007, 193]. Jury Olesha was the first writer who made an attempt to address the horror of the revolution and created a fairy tale that focused on the festive nature of the new post-revolutionary world. Instead of depicting the struggle and torture of the class enemies, brother killing brother, and bloodshed and deprivation, his fairy tale stresses the playful nature of the revolutionary change, when good people, despite

their class orientation, all unite in the fight against evil — the tyranny of three fat men¹².

In *Three Fat Men*, the heroes are ordinary — among them is the circus acrobat Tibul, courageous smith Prospero, little girl and circus ballerina Suok, and an absent-minded scholar and inventor Dr. Gaspar Gvarneri. Evil is also ordinary — three fat men are not scary, they are rather laughable! Gluttony — the usual sin of the rich — is the major vice: they are even capable of chewing of each other's ears and napkins! Revolution in Olesha's story is not bloody and it ends in the joined feast, after three fat men and their subordinates left the country. Its triumph is celebrated by a big and joyful circus performance so the future of the people is bright and happy. However, this fairy tale remained a single attempt to create happy revolutionary victory. The legacy of the revolution began to shift from happiness and joy to the stories of struggle and a customary heroic death of revolutionary leaders, children and adults alike.

The dominant revolutionary narrative was associated through the 1930s with the child-sacrifice story: the infamously fabricated story of Pavlik Morosov, a boy who went against his own family and reported on their attempts to resist collectivization that led to their arrest. For this "betrayal" he was killed by his own relatives. Child martyrdom for the sake of the revolution and for the overall victory of the Soviet cause expanded into the years of WWII, and more children's victims were celebrated and put forward as examples of true revolutionary loyalty¹³.

It is hard to imagine that it was in this particular cultural climate that Potapova and Marshak decided to introduce a story about a bloodless revolution in the vegetable garden! Evaluating recent scholarship on Gianni Rodari, Jack Zipes writes in his review for *The Lion and the Unicorn*: "Rodari never wrote entirely for children; he rather wrote in their behalf and constantly undermined the position and perspective of adults through silly nonsense and fervent political beliefs" [Zipes 2014, 424–425]. Both the translator and the editor immediately recognized this as a possibility to present the young audience with the greatness of revolutionary justice in a form quite different from bloody tortures and untimely death, thus employing the redeeming quality of Rodari's writing. It is difficult, at this point, to reconstruct the sequence by which the text of Rodari's tale was transposed into a theatrical production, but we can state that in 1954, Sergei Bogomazov wrote the play *The Adventures of Cipollino*, which first appeared as a radio play on Leningrad Radio, and was subsequently included in the repertoire of the Central Children's Theater in Moscow. Marshak wrote

several songs for this production, including the one sung by Signor Tomato¹⁴.

Sensing rather than knowing that the change in political atmosphere is about to come, Marshak, who carried through his entire life a remarkable dedication to his young readers, recognized in Rodari's fairy tale the healing potential in addressing the horrors of Stalinist terror. Rodari's story had the same emotional impact as Olesha's *Three Fat Men*, and it was precisely this positive effect that both the translator and the editor were trying to achieve. We would argue that the choice was made not based on Rodari's political persuasion (of course it has helped, but there were many other candidates who could have competed with the Italian communist). It was rather the positive power of his tale about a little onion boy who was able to triumph over his enemies, Prince Limon and Lord Tomato, and unite the best and the bravest among the vegetables and fruits in their struggle against the injustice, and lead them to the victory.

Another very important theme in the story that was close to Marshak's heart was the resurrection of the idea of family responsibility. Old Cipollo, Cipollino's father goes to prison in order to save his son. When Cipollino is pushed through the crowd during the arrival of Prince Lemon, leading him to accidentally step on the Prince's toes, he should have been arrested for such disrespect. His father protects his son by taking the responsibility for his "crime"¹⁵. In the recent context of Soviet history when children were forced to denounce their parents as enemies of the people, when blood relatives were afraid to support each other in fear of possible arrests and accusations, family as an institution of protection and love has seized to exist. The story of Cipollino, his struggle to liberate his father and his fight for truth sounded especially refreshing and full of hope for both young children and their parents. As in Olesha's case, there was no bloodshed at the end of the story: the palace of old countesses Cherries is converted into a school for all children; Baron Orange finally is losing weight and works as a carrier at the train station. Old Mr. Squash, whose house was so unjustly appropriated by Lord Tomato, gets a new house that is collectively built by all vegetables and fruits together.

The focus of Rodari's fairy tale is on creation rather than destruction, on strengthening family ties rather than alienating family members, on friendship and support and on utopia of justice for all. This utopia, however illusionary it might look today, was very much needed in the uncertainty of 1953. In many ways, the ideals that brought together so many different characters of Rodari's story — the brave little girl Straw-

berry, her friend Radish, Professor Pear with his violin, little lonely Viscount Cherry, the nephew of old and greedy countesses were indeed the ideals of the generation raised in the 1960s. The generation of the 1960s embraced utopian hopes for a brighter future and enthusiastically aimed their energy on restoring revolutionary dreams. While the children's audience was entertained by the adventures of the little onion and his friends, the adult readers focused on the positive and playful message of revolutionary victory, ultimately recognizing its potential as a healing power for the damaged ideal of revolution. It is the collective building of a new home for Mr. Pumpkin that becomes the key episode in Rodari's tale. This collective action crystalizes the new ideology of the generation of the sixties. Striving to cleanse the revolutionary past of the crimes of Stalinism, these "children of the Twentieth Congress" were keen to revive forgotten ideals and build a bright new future in the first proletarian country. Rodari's tale could thus not have been more apt, as it taught children, in a fun and accessible way, about friendship, mutual support, and fairness, which always triumphs in the end. Although the ideals of the 1960s soon proved illusory, giving way to the disappointment and cynicism of the Brezhnev "Stagnation," the Italian writer's lighthearted tale endures, beyond the timeframe of Soviet children's literature, because, along with politics, it speaks of lasting human values.

Rodari himself articulated his poetic credo in the speech he gave upon receiving the highest international award for children's literature, the Hans Christian Andersen Medal, and we would like to conclude our account of his contributions to both Russian and Italian children's literature with an excerpt:

I think that fairy tales — both old and new — can help in the development of the mind. Fairy tales are the place of all hypotheses — they can give us the keys and help find new ways to reality. They can help the child learn about the world and give them ability to evaluate it. Things we say can come true. The big problem is to want the right things to come true — no one alone has the magic word. We must seek it together, in every language, with discretion, with passion, with sincerity, and with fantasy [Rodari 1970].

Notes

- ¹ This article is the result of joint work of the authors, Marina Balina and Dorena Caroli. Caroli authored Part I of this text while Balina is responsible for Part II. The extended version of this article appeared in M. Balina, D. Caroli, *Libri per l'infanzia di Gianni Rodari tradotti in Unione Sovietica*. In L. Todaro

- (Ed.), Gianni Rodari. *Incontri e riflessioni a cento anni dalla nascita* (pp. 215–247). Roma: Anicia, 2020. Both authors significantly reworked their text for this recent edition. The current title is taken from that of Samuil Marshak’s book *Education by the Word / Vospitanie slovom. Stat’i, zametki, vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1961).
- ² On this topic see [Koon 1985].
 - ³ On this particular debate see [Caroli 2015].
 - ⁴ Jella Lepman was a German writer and journalist, creator of the International Children’s Library (1952), the International Board on Books for Young People (1953), and the Hans Christian Andersen Award in Children’s Literature (1956). On her life and work, see [Pearl 2007].
 - ⁵ On Rodari’s political affiliations see [Boero, Luca 2010, 218–221, 242–243, 333–334].
 - ⁶ On Rodari’s work as an editor, see [Rodari 1951; Franchini 2006, 1–54].
 - ⁷ The views of Malaguzzi and Rodari on the educational potential of art in child development are very much in line with the ideas of the Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934). Rodari was familiar with his work.
 - ⁸ Boris Dezhkin’s animated film did not include all the characters in the tale but was nevertheless a smash success in Russia. Karen Khachatourian composed the film’s score, which later served as the impetus for the creation of the ballet. The latter work first premiered in Kiev, and was subsequently staged in Moscow; see https://www.belcanto.ru/ballet_cipollino.html.
 - ⁹ In the film by Tamara Lisizyan, made at Mosfilm Studios, Gianni Rodari himself appears in an episode with his daughter Paola.
 - ¹⁰ For more information on the fate of Rodari’s books in Russia, see [Brandis 1980, 248–52].
 - ¹¹ It was precisely in 1956 and 1957 that new works by Russian researchers on foreign children’s literature appeared. In the collection *Questions of Children’s Literature*, Zlata Potapova, the translator of Rodari’s *Cipollino* in Russia, published the article “The Struggle for Progressive Children’s Literature in Italy” (Voprosy detskoi literatury, 1957). The same volume included N. Elina’s article “The Origins of Modern Children’s Literature”.
 - ¹² Evgenii Brandis was the first to note the resonance between the pedagogical aims of Gianni Rodari and Jury Olesha, drawing parallels between these two tales. See [Brandis 1980, 251].
 - ¹³ See [Maslinskaya 2019].
 - ¹⁴ Marshak may have written the songs to be used in the Central Children’s Theater production, but the radio play came out before that, and Marshak, who still had creative contacts in Leningrad, gave his poems to the radio production, or at least did not object to their use in it.
 - ¹⁵ In the context of Stalinist repressions, Stalin’s famous phrase “a son is not responsible for his father” read quite differently. In public settings (mass meetings and open letters in newspapers) in which, in the Stalin era, Soviet citizens would renounce arrested family members — this was usually a

matter of children put in the position of having to distance themselves from “enemy” parents — the very structure of family trust was destroyed. Old Cipollo’s behavior and his willingness to sacrifice himself for his son hinted at the restoration of generational bonds shattered by years of fear and repression — a subtext that would be felt by adult readers.

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**ВОСПИТАНИЕ СЛОВОМ: ДЖАННИ РОДАРИ В ТЕКСТАХ И
КОНТЕКСТАХ ИТАЛЬЯНСКОЙ И СОВЕТСКОЙ ДЕТСКОЙ
ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ**

Статья посвящена творчеству итальянского детского поэта, прозаика и редактора детской периодики Джанни Родари. Авторы исследования выявляют и сопоставляют то, как в условиях авторитарного общества в Италии и в СССР детская литература использовалась в идеологических целях, какие события и институции (съезды детских писателей и конференции по детской литературе) влияли на её развитие, каким сходством обладают эти национальные литературы в рассматриваемый период. В статье анализируется творчество Джанни Родари в контексте послевоенной социокультурной ситуации в Италии, детально рассматривается его творческая биография, освещается поэтическое наследие писателя, знакомое советскому читателю в меньшей степени, чем повести («Приключения Чиполлино», «Джельсомино в стране лжецов», «Путешествие Голубой стрелы»), осмысляются причины неравномерной читательской рецепции и факторы, влияющие на вхождение книг Родари в круг чтения советских читателей. На примере повести-сказки «Приключения Чиполлино» исследуется отношение писателя к Советской России, осмысляются источники популярности творчества Родари у советского читателя, рассматриваются переводы его текстов на русский язык — в частности, работа Самуила Маршак над детской поэзией Родари и перевод «Приключения Чиполлино», выполненный Златой Потаповой.

Keywords: итальянская детская литература, переводы итальянской детской литературы на русский язык, Джанни Родари, поэзия для детей, «Приключения Чиполлино», Самуил Маршак