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Child Adults in Soviet Children's Literature – Lazar Lagin's *The Old Man Hottabych*

Abstract

Literary scholar Jenniliisa Salminen investigates children's fiction in the Soviet Union, where strict normative limits regulated how children could be depicted in literature. Child characters were to be positive heroes, exemplary, and serve as role models for the child reader. However, character education was undermined by these perfect child characters, thus authors used different strategies to circumvent this problem. The author Lazar Lagin, for example, introduced alongside with the protagonist another, a slightly less perfect character via whom the lesson could be taught. In *Starik Hottabych* (1938, 1955), Lagin uses an adult character, a three thousand years old oriental genie that in the text performs the role of the child in need of education.

In Soviet children's literature from the 1930s to 1950s, children were usually depicted as anything but fragile. Soviet culture demanded much from its children. They were supposed to be something special, even better than adults; in some respects, children were even seen as role models for adults (Kelly 2007, 93 – 94, 110). They also had a prominent role in propaganda (see, for example, Kirschenbaum 2002, 280–288). These expectations are seen in the depiction of children in children's literature. The child characters are perfect, to the extent that the possibility of any "character education", which was seen as an important function of Soviet children's literature, is undermined.

The use of perfect child characters in children's literature was largely due to the demand for positive heroes in socialist realism. Obviously, the tradition of exemplary child characters has been widely popular in children's literature in general, but Soviet literature added to this general idea of an exemplary child an ideological content, which gives Soviet child characters their distinct form. A positive hero in the Soviet context is an exemplary character that is supposed to serve as a role model for the reader (Clark 1981, 46). Although the roots of the Soviet positive character can be found in nineteenth century Russian realism and even in medieval Russian

writings, the positive hero had a very special place in the literature of socialist realism. According to Larissa Rudova (2008, 24), children's literature was a prime field for expounding the concept. Although the positive hero might have been a more obvious device in realistic genres – such as pioneer stories and school stories – the demand for the positive hero existed in fantasy as well, since even fantasy literature was supposed to serve the ends of the Soviet system (Nikolajeva 2010, 139 – 153). For example, in *The Three Fat Men* (1928), by Yuri Olesha, the blacksmith Prospero is a perfect example of a positive hero from the time when the ideals of socialist realism were beginning to take form.

In children's literature, the need for a positive hero often manifested itself through the requirement that the Soviet child character be perfect and serve as a good example for the reading public – for Soviet children. This seriously undermined what is perhaps ideologically the most important purpose of Soviet children's literature: character education. If the child character is perfect to begin with, there is no need to make him better or to educate him. This is where different side characters become useful. A quite common device for Soviet authors is to introduce a side character less perfect than the protagonist, through whom the lesson is given. Sometimes this works also the other way around: a not-quite-perfect protagonist gets to compare himself to another child character, an absolutely perfect child, and by his example learns to be perfect, too.

This chapter will examine Lazar Lagin's novel *Starik Hottabych* (1938, *The Old Man Hottabych*) [1], in which the perfect child character is joined by an imperfect adult character, who symbolically takes the role of the child in the story. I will explore the relation between the figures of the perfect child and an imperfect adult in Lagin's story and consider the subversive potential of the text.

A Soviet fairy tale

In Lazar Lagin's novel *The Old Man Hottabych*, the impossibility of character education for a perfect child is circumvented by introducing alongside the child an adult character, who takes the role of the child in the story. The book was immensely popular in the Soviet Union and is still considered a beloved children's classic. The novel first came out in 1938, but it became best known in the 1955 version, which was heavily edited by the author; other more or less edited versions have been published, as well. A 1956 film based on the book became widely popular. One sign of the story's ongoing popularity and the productivity of the theme is the success of the sequel, *Mednyi kuvshin Starika Hottabycha* (2000, "Old Man Hottabych's Brass Bottle"), by Sergey Oblomov, and its film version *}{0TT@БЬ)Ч* (2006[2]), where the story is placed into the world of the internet, hackers and organized crime, and is targeted to an adult and young adult audience.

Lagin's novel has two clearly recognizable subtexts. One is a humoristic novel for adults, *The Brass Bottle* (1900), by the British author F. Anstey, in which an ancient Oriental genie appears in turn of the century London and wreaks havoc when his ways conflict with the marvels of modern life. The other obvious subtext is *One Thousand and One Nights* or the Oriental fairy tale tradition in general. In Lagin's foreword to the 1955 edition of *The Old Man Hottabych*, he states that he was inspired by the fairy tale in which a fisherman releases a genie from a bottle and the genie promises to fulfil his wishes. Lagin transfers the story to 1930s Moscow in order to depict the collision between the old world and the new Soviet way of life.

The Old Man Hottabych begins when the schoolboy Volka releases a genie, old man Hottabych, from an ancient vessel, in which the genie has been trapped for thousands of years. The grateful genie wants to reward his rescuer by granting all his wishes. The plot is episodic, consisting of a series of adventures the boy and his friends get into when the genie makes his wishes come true or – in most cases – performs miracles he himself thinks the boy needs. Since the world has

changed since the genie's time, the results of the magic are in strong conflict with everyday Soviet life and ideology. As the story goes on, the genie slowly adapts to the modern world and becomes an admirer of Soviet life.

The novel has an obvious ideological purpose. It was supposed to be read as praise for the Soviet reality: no magic makes a positive impression on Soviet children, because in their world, everything is already perfect and the marvels and riches of the ancient Orient are unnecessary. The way the genie learns to adapt to Soviet life contributes to the 1930s ideology of the Soviet people as a nation consisting of many equal nations adapting to Soviet Russian rule. The ideological content varies in the different versions of the book, adapting to contemporary political issues. For example, in the 1938 version, Volka and Hottabych have an adventure in the fascist Italy, whereas in the 1955 version, they instead have a conflict with an American businessman in the spirit of the Cold War.

The perfect child

Volka is presented as a model child who knows how to be a good pupil, pioneer and Soviet citizen. It might also be worth pointing out that he is a boy living in a male-centred world: almost all characters in the book, excluding Volka's mother, grandmother, teacher and incidental bystanders, are male. The "flaws" in Volka's character are presented as minor and quite innocent. He has not prepared for an exam as well as he should have, and he goes swimming alone, although his father has forbidden it[3]. Volka happily accepts the hard-to-get football tickets the genie magically provides him. He even asks the genie to tweak the circumstances a bit in order to make the game easier for his favourite team. Similarly, he does not see anything wrong in Hottabych using his magic to get them past a long queue to the circus. Thus, Volka is a perfect example of a Stalinist era model child, for whom, as Catriona Kelly (2007, 115) describes, minor indiscipline was allowed as long as it "could be seen as a manifestation of harmless mischief, rather than of social subversion".

The episode that most severely tests Volka's morals comes in the beginning of the book, when the genie offers to help Volka cheat on a geography exam. In the 1955 version, the boy is at first disgusted by the idea of cheating, and accepts it only after the genie promises there would be no risk of getting caught. Volka justifies his cheating by not wanting to hurt the old man's feelings.

> "Thank you, Hassan Hottabych," Volka sighed. "But I don't want you to whisper the answers to me. We pioneers are against cheating as a matter of principle. We're conducting an organized campaign against cheating in exams."
> (...)
> "I don't know what to do, Hassan Hottabych," Volka sighed hypocritically. "I really hate to upset you by refusing. All right, let's do it! Geography isn't math or Russian. I'd never agree to even the tiniest cheating in math or Russian, but since geography isn't really the most important subject... " (Lagin 1992/1955, 15–16.)

In the original 1938 version, Volka is simply delighted when Hottabych promises to whisper the correct answers to him, and does not have any moral inhibitions against cheating.

The genie's out of date knowledge of geography leads Volka to give the wrong answers on his exam, and he does not pass; instead, his funny answers make him the object of his classmates' ridicule. In the original version, the episode has a more humoristic effect, whereas the 1950s version works more as a traditional cautionary tale: if you cheat, you will get your just deserts. The depth of Volka's digression is emphasized by his friend's worrying that Volka's wrong answers will affect their pioneer group's reputation, giving the individual conflict an ideological dimension. Throughout the episode, the reader is reminded that Volka actually knows the right answers, because he is an active member of the children's astronomy club and quite a good

student. Thus, at the same time as the story underlines how wrong it is to cheat, it also shows that Volka is an essentially good child who has made an unfortunate mistake.

The role of the child and the adult in the text – An involuntary carnival

What makes Volka an exceptional character in Soviet children's literature is that in the story, he takes the role of the adult in relation to the old genie Hottabych. The story has, on the surface level, some subversive potential: Volka, the child, gets to play with the idea of power over an adult character, as he gets the chance to be an adult and a superior in relation to the genie. In addition, as Maria Nikolajeva (2010, 147) points out, the boy is empowered by the company of his magical helper. I will first consider the relationship between child and adult and then the subversive potential of Hottabych's magic.

The roles of child and adult characters in children's literature tend to be quite traditional: the child is supposed to grow up, learn a lesson, obey the adults and be dependent on them. The adult is supposed to take responsibility, take care of the child, teach the child, be an authority and show independence. Naturally, the concepts of childhood and adulthood vary in different cultures and traditions. Authors can also play with the roles by reversing them. For example, in a later Soviet children's classic, Eduard Uspensky's *Uncle Fedya, His Dog and His Cat* (1974), the conflict between childish adults and a very adult-like six-year-old boy gives the book a humorous effect.

Children usually have less power than adults in children's literature. They go to bed and eat their soup when their parents tell them to, and do their homework when the teacher tells them to. In Soviet children's fiction, the situation tends to be the same and goes even further. Adults who have the position of parents – actual parents, teachers, pioneer group leaders etc. – have absolute

power over the child. In a typical Soviet children's book, the child never disobeys his or her parents or questions their authority (Nikolajeva 2000, 69). If one does, it is always clearly pointed out that it is wrong, or – in some rare cases – that it is done for ideological purposes, so that the real conflict is not so much between a child and a parent as between different ideologies[4]. Lagin's Volka is a typical Soviet child character in the sense that he does not criticize the adults in his life. The story is written so that he has no need to question his parents or grandmother; conflicts inside the family do not exist in the text. Volka does not even have negative feelings towards his teacher, who makes him repeat his geography test.

The relation between Volka and Hottabych can be read in terms of a Bakhtinian carnival (Bakhtin 1984/1965), 10), in which rules and roles are temporarily turned upside down: the actual child performs the role of the adult, and the actual adult performs the role of the child. Volka teaches the newcomer the ways to survive in Soviet society on both practical and ideological levels. He teaches Hottabych everyday survival skills, like buying subway tickets and using escalators. He also explains the ideology of the new world: Hottabych learns that in the Soviet Union, all people are equal and riches are worthless. He even learns to feel solidarity with the working classes abroad. On the practical level of education, Volka and his friends teach Hottabych to read and write.

The carnivalistic elements in children's fantasy literature often have an empowering and subversive effect on the child characters. Fantastic elements like travelling into a fantasyland temporarily give the child power, by allowing them to do things they cannot do in their ordinary life. Although the carnival has only a temporary nature, it still empowers the child by showing the possibility of defying the existing order (see, for example, Nikolajeva 2006, 89 – 90). One can ask whether the carnivalistic role reversal in Lagin's book has an empowering effect on the child. According to Nikolajeva (2010, 150) the effect in Soviet fantasy is the opposite: instead of giving the child characters self-confidence to cope with their problems, the temporary empowerment shows them their faults and makes them adjust to societal norms and subdue their

individual desires. Whereas in many other fantasy novels, whether Soviet or Western, the child faces a problem in his or her life and works out a solution within the fantasy part of the story, Volka's life is quite perfect to begin with. He does not need magic in order to deal with the issues in his life. Volka's situation could be described as an involuntary carnival. He is put in the middle of a carnevalesque power play that he is not able to enjoy because of his socialization into the Soviet society. On the contrary, he often feels distress when facing magic. For example, when Hottabych gives Volka a camel caravan and elephants loaded with treasures, the boy's first anxious thought is to get rid of them before anyone notices.

One opportunity for an empowering effect in the story is when Hottabych is able to express negative feelings that Volka, as a perfect pioneer, cannot express himself. Hottabych can vocalize the doubts Volka might have towards adult authority figures. For example, in the 1955 version of the book, Hottabych tells how he is going to punish Volka's teachers if they will not let him pass his exam.

> "If your teachers will not give you the greatest praise, they will have to deal with me!" Hottabych got furious. "Oh, they will be in trouble! I will turn them into donkeys carrying water, homeless dogs covered with scabs, or horrible and disgusting toads — that I will do!" (Lagin 1992/1955, 15.)

However, Volka does not feel empowered, but rather worried for the well-being of his teacher. Later on, one of recurring themes of the story is Volka's anxious attempts to keep his teacher out of harm's way – that is, as far from the old genie as possible.

Hottabych gives Volka another chance to feel powerful in front of authorities when a militiaman catches them riding a camel in the centre of Moscow. When Volka tries to persuade him to let them go, Hottabych uses his magic and puts what he believes to be powerful words in Volka's

mouth. In this situation, Volka is allowed to be rude to the militiaman, but at the same time preserves his innocence, since the reader knows that the impulse of rebelling against authorities comes from the genie.

> Here Hottabych took over once again and in the same breath Volka screamed: “Tremble before me and do not anger me, for I am terrible in my wrath! Oh, so frightening!” He understood only too well that his words did not frighten anyone. Instead, they annoyed some, while others found them simply funny. But there was nothing he could do about it. The crowd's surprise and indignation began to change into concern. It was clear that no Soviet schoolboy in his normal state could ever say such foolish and insolent words. (Lagin 1992/1955, 114.)

Although Volka gets to speak in a potentially very empowering way, he does not feel empowered. He sees the words as pathetic, and the crowd around him perceives Volka as comical and pitiful. Volka does not enjoy the possibilities offered to him, but instead, as an exemplary young pioneer, ends up acting exactly as the social norms of the era demand.

The adult as other

The old genie’s otherness is essential to his suitability for role reversal with a child. He belongs to a completely different category of characters than the other adults in the story. His otherness is manifested in several ways: the genie is a fantasy creature, foreigner and literally 3,732 years old. In other words, he is thrice removed from the level of the other characters of the story representing the real people populating the Soviet Union of 1930s and 1950s: on the levels of *ontological status*, *time*, and *space*. Hottabych’s complete and perfect otherness makes him a suitable character for a power play that presents him in a way ordinary adults could hardly have been depicted in Soviet children’s literature of the 1930s or 1950s.

Hottabych's otherness can be defined through the three above-mentioned aspects: the ontological status (the genie as a fantasy creature), time (the genie's old age), and space (the genie as a foreigner). While it is quite common in children's fantasy literature to contemplate whether the fantastic elements of the story are "real" or not, this question never becomes an issue in Lagin's story. The genie is presented as a fantasy being, of course, but his existence is never really questioned; Volka never considers that the genie may be a figment of his imagination, a joke or a dream. His ontological status is only briefly touched upon when he first appears in the story:

> Volka shut his eyes tight and opened them again. No, he was not seeing things. The unusual looking old man was still there. Kneeling and rubbing his hands, he stared at the furnishings of Volka's room with his lively, shrewd eyes, as if it were all a goodness-knows-what-sort-of miracle. (Lagin 1992/1955, 11.)

The situation is almost turned around by presenting the genie's point of view, in which it is Volka's room that seems wondrous, rather than the appearance of the genie. Hottabych is as real as all the other characters of the book: his being of flesh and blood is referred to in a humoristic way when he declines the use of modern shoes because of 3,000-year-old corns on his feet. His magical abilities are not questioned either; not once does Volka doubt the genie's magic tricks. They are only questioned in the sense that magic is superfluous in Volka's world, where people do perfectly well without it.

Contrary to ontological status, age is one of the central problematics in the book. Age is present already in the title of the novel: *Starik Hottabych*, literally, Old Man Hottabych. Old age is the main attribute of one of the heroes and age also plays an important role in Volka's current life situation. Volka is obsessed with growing up and wants to be treated as an adult. The story begins when Volka wakes up in the morning hearing his parents talk about him. Mother calls him a child, while father argues that the boy is almost thirteen and might soon start growing a

beard. Volka is very impressed when his building's janitor talks with him like an adult, man to man. Later, Volka's young age becomes a problem when he is not allowed into the movie theatre to see a film that has an age limit of sixteen. Hottabych tries to save the day by magically growing Volka a beard. Instead of being treated like an adult, Volka becomes the object of public ridicule and pity when the crowd gathers around him to stare at the poor boy with a beard. The external markers of adulthood do not make Volka an adult.

Whereas Volka is troubled by his young age, Hottabych's old age is perceived as something negative in the sense that he is seen as old-fashioned and not skilled enough to be living the modern Soviet lifestyle. He does not know how to cope with the contemporary world and its technology. Volka sees the old man's fear of trains and cars as embarrassing, and reprimands him:

> "You cannot jump like a village horse every time you see a bus. Now I'm insulting village horses. They haven't been afraid of cars in a long time. You must get used to the idea that they aren't demons, just good old Soviet internal combustion engines." (Lagin 1992/1955, 102–103.)[10]

If we assume that the events in the book take place at the end of the 1930s, Volka represents the first generation of people born under the Soviet regime. His parents' and grandparents' generations would still remember the old Tsarist Russia, and would have had very different educational backgrounds than the new Soviet children. Literacy was relatively low among the older generations: in 1939 only 81.2 % of the Soviet population aged 9 or above was literate (Grenoble 2003, 35), whereas the literacy rate for ages 9 – 49 was 87.4 % (Mironov 1991, 243), which indicates that literacy among older generations was markedly lower than among the younger population. In the first decades of the Soviet Union, there were major literacy campaigns aimed at the adult population, and literacy was given a highly ideological status.

Literacy becomes an issue in Lagin's story when Hottabych tries to adapt to the new world. His illiteracy is discovered in a scene in which he tries to buy a metro ticket and cannot read a notice that one of the ticket machines is broken. Literacy is presented as a skill that is essential to being able to live normal everyday life. In addition, the ideological aspects of literacy are present in the book, for example, when the narrator describes Volka's teachings as Hottabych's "first class in political literacy"[5] (Lagin 1992/1955, 246 – 248). When Volka and his friend teach Hottabych to read, they symbolically teach him also Soviet ideology.

Volka's grandparents represent the older generation of Soviet citizens, who might not have grasped all aspects of Soviet reality as they were supposed to. Volka's grandmother is present in the story, living with his family. Volka's grandfather is not mentioned in the 1938 version. In the 1955 version, he is dead but still present in the story in photos and memorabilia. When Hottabych dresses in modern clothes, he uses Volka's grandfather's photo as a model, and people in the street think he is the boy's grandfather. Hottabych's role is reminiscent of the role of a stepmother in traditional fairytales: it is psychologically easier to build a conflict between a child and a stepmother or – in Hottabych's case – a surrogate grandfather, than between a child and an actual parent or grandparent. It would not align with the codes of Soviet children's literature to show Volka being ashamed of his actual grandfather or calling him as stupid as a village horse.

The third aspect of Hottabych, his foreignness, can be addressed in terms of Orientalism, in which the main idea is that the Western world sees the Orient as 'other': unknown, exotic, inferior. Orientalism does not deal with the actual Orient, but rather with its representations in Western culture. Russian literature has a well-established tradition of Orientalism of its own. Madina Tlostanova (2008) has described the ways in which Russian Orientalism differs from the Western variant. According to her, Orientalism in Russia and the Soviet Union was somehow second rate, following the Western or European Orientalist tradition. Russian culture saw its own

Orient as a bit disappointing: the people living in the Caucasus and Russian Central Asia did not fulfil the expectations Russians had based on traditional European Orientalism. Lagin, too, has gone outside the Soviet borders when choosing his Oriental genie. Naturally, the selection is based on the Arabic stories and British novel that serve as inspiration for Lagin's book. It follows the model of Anstey's *The Brass Bottle* (1900), which is based on the British form of colonization and Orientalism (see Moore 2001). Still, Lagin's book differs greatly from Anstey's story, which is natural considering the different time of writing and political-ideological atmosphere. The fact that Anstey wrote for adults and Lagin for children also sets different expectations for the two texts: the love intrigues and half-naked Arabian harem dancers of Anstey's novel are changed into football matches and circus miracles in Lagin's text.

"Oriental" is not clearly defined in the text. The genie Hottabych incorporates traces of at least Arabic, Persian and Jewish culture. Hottabych tells Volka he had been imprisoned in his ceramic vessel by King Solomon, whom he refers to with the Arabic name Suleiman. He also boasts of his past in the cities of Bagdad, Damascus and Babylon. Even if Hottabych's cultural origin cannot be pinpointed (can one actually define the ethnic origins of a genie?), it is clear that he belongs to the ancient Middle Eastern cultures, not to Russia's "domestic" Orient. Just as a more distant old man is easier to criticize than one's own grandfather, a more distant Oriental character is a more convenient representative of a "backward" foreign culture than a character of non-Russian Soviet ethnicity, which would have had more complicated implications as to actual, non-textual reality. The depiction of the Oriental character is just what one can expect in a 1930s Soviet fairy tale: he is the opposite of the Soviet system, which is presented as the best in the world.

The Oriental character is supposed to adapt to the Soviet system. Hottabych translates his name into Russian and changes his clothes. The changing of his name is Hottabych's own idea – he wants Volka to understand its meaning[6] – and his clothes are changed at Volka's suggestion, in order to fit into the crowd. Hottabych does not give up his Oriental identity entirely: his new

Russian name still sounds foreign, although it is constructed after the Russian model. Some Russian characters mishear his name, interpreting it as something even more Russian than Hottabych:

> "What was the old man's name?" asked the man behind the desk.
> "We don't know, he's not from our street. There was a boy with him, and he called him by some weird name, like Potapych, but not really Potapych." (Lagin 1992/1955, 185.)

Hottabych's outfit also retains some Eastern features: he will not give up his exotic shoes, and in addition to his new European-style clothing, he also gets a traditional Ukrainian shirt, which may not be actually Oriental in the Soviet context, but still bears ethnic connotations, marking him as deviating from normative Soviet Russianness. Adaptation to the Soviet system is shown to be vital. This lesson is underlined by introducing Hottabych's brother, Omar, into the story. Unlike his brother, Omar does not adapt to modern Soviet life, and he is punished for it: in his stubbornness, he flies into space and is doomed to circle the Earth as a satellite for the rest of his probably endless life. Hottabych, on the contrary, becomes fascinated with Soviet progress and gives up his magic in order to live as an ordinary Soviet citizen. However, he is never allowed to fulfil his dream of becoming a radioman in an Arctic research centre.

Conclusions

In spite of the subversive potential of the magical wish-fulfilment fantasy presented in *The Old Man Hottabych* and the story's play with power between child and adult, the carnivalistic effect of Lagin's story lacks closure. The carnival is never fulfilled, since the roles never go back to normal. Volka never becomes a child again in relation to the old genie, and the genie never reaches a proper adult status, or the status of a full Soviet citizen. In this respect, both Volka and Hottabych are static characters, and any character development that occurs during the story is

superficial. Hottabych does everything he can to become an ordinary Soviet citizen, but still ends up lacking in every respect, making the story quite tragic for his part. Volka learns a few lessons that he actually already knew: he knew he should not have cheated in the exam, and now he knows it even better.

One can also question the empowering effect of the story in the sense that although the child is supposed to be seen as perfect, he is perfect only in comparison to an adult who is presented as lacking the real status of an adult. Lagin makes the perfect ideal Soviet child into a fantasy character as impossible as an ancient Oriental genie.

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[1] The book is available in an English translation by Fainna Solasko as *The Old Genie Hottabych*. The quotes from the book in this article are, however, translated by the author, since in Solasko's version some points I want to refer to are lost in translation.

[2] The title of the film is the name Hottabych written in a Russian variation of "leetspeak", where the Russian alphabet is replaced by ASCII characters.

[3] Swimming alone despite parental warnings is a pseudo-conflict typical of Soviet literature. Instead of implying that Volka is disobedient, his behaviour shows him as active and brave. Similar "pseudo-naughtiness" can be found, for example, in widely popular author Nikolay Nosov's stories, and in Alexey Tolstoy's Buratino, in which Buratino's naughtiness is not so much a vice as a sign of a rebellious nature that is valued over old-fashioned schooling ideals,

and a boyish restlessness that is valued over girlish neatness and tidiness. On pseudo-conflicts in Soviet children's literature, see Nikolajeva 2000, 68–69.

[4] For example, in Vitali Gubarev's children's book *Pavlik Morozov* (1947), which was supposed to be based on reality, the adults against whom young Pavlik is in conflict are presented as ideologically misguided. Pavlik tells on his father, who cheats the collective, and the angry villagers murder the boy as revenge. The truth value of the story has been questioned by Yuri Druzhnikov (1988) and Katriona Kelly (2005).

[5] The Russian terms *političeskaya bezgramotnost'* and *politgramota* were widely used in Soviet propaganda; both are built around the stem *gramota* (literacy), which strengthens the idea of literacy being an essential part of ideology.

[6] His name Hassan Abdurrahman ibn Hottab becomes first Hassan Abdurrahman Hottabovich ("son of Hottab" in Russian style) and is then shortened to Hottabych.