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In spring of 1998 the Moscow scholarly publishing center "Lodomir" published this new book in the series "Russkaia potaennaia literatura" [Russian Secret literature]. The editor of this volume is the prominent Petersburg folklorist and investigator of Russian culture and everyday life, A. F. Belousov, who also compiled the first collection of school folklore in Russian folkloristics, which appeared earlier (*Shkol'nyi byt i fol'klor*: V 2 ch. [Everyday school life and folklore: in 2 parts], Tallinn, 1992).

Urban school folklore is a new topic of study in Russian folkloristics. The world of children's subculture so contradicted the aims of official Soviet pedagogy that it was perceived not merely as a marginal and forbidden sphere, but even as "nonexistent." For this reason the "discovery" and the systematic study and publication of school texts were impossible until the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The collection under review is the most complete anthology of Russian school folklore to date, and the most diverse in terms of the materials presented. The thematic and generic range of texts published here is extraordinarily broad. The collection will acquaint a reader with oral and written children's folklore, love lyrics and scabrous verses, children's games of make-believe countries, children's magic and mythology, and texts both comic and sentimental: methods for summoning the Queen of Spades, "zaum" [trans-sense] in children's poetry (by A. L. Toporkov); children's scary stories, children's utopias (S. M. Loiter); ballads (S. B. Adon'eva); girls' manuscript love stories (S. B. Borisov and S. I. Zhavoronok); girls' albums in the twentieth century (V. V. Golovin and V. F. Lur'e); the album of a children's colony (M. V. Kalashnikova); "the school chronicle" -- a peculiar kind of "explanatory dictionary" of school life (V. F. Lur'e); schoolchildren's parodic poetry, street graffiti, poems whose comic effect results from the "deception" or disappointment of the expectation of a vulgar rhyme (M. L. Lur'e); "sadistic doggerel" (A. F. Belousov); and family stories (I. A. Razumova).

The scholarly value of this edition depends not only on the published texts, but also on research materials. In his introductory article, Belousov attempts to trace the historical development of school folklore, which is indissolubly connected with the history of the Russian school in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The fundamental conflict of school folklore consists, in the investigator's opinion, in the clash of "constructive" and "destructive" attitudes towards study, and of norms of adults' and children's culture. Belousov's conclusion is brilliantly supported by his analysis of several examples of school folklore, which are organized as "parodia sacra." These expose their topics to mockery, "turn them inside out," or take various manifestations of grown-up culture to absurd extremes ("sadistic doggerel" and parodic school poetry).

The introductory articles to each of the collection's sections are also of considerable interest. I will pause briefly to discuss only three of them. In his article on the Queen of Spades in school folklore, A. L. Toporkov not only describes the methods for "summoning" this specific "demonologic" character, but also reveals the "particular myth-making possibilities" of children's creative activity, following the mechanism of folklorization of a literary work (Pushkin's story "The Queen of Spades"). This last aspect is of particular interest in the context of the general cultural problem of the transformation of "elite" texts into "apocrypha" upon their transmission into a "heterocultural" milieu. S. M. Loiter's article, on children's "scary stories," also deals with children's myth-making. She interprets these stories as mythological tales whose main theme is death. Loiter devotes most of her attention to characterization of mythological characters in the "strashilki" [scary stories], the manifestation in the texts of archetypal motifs and archaic mythological concepts (such as shape-shifting, "armlessness-leglessness," or zoomorphic survivals). This section ends with an index of types and plot-motifs for children's scary stories ("strashilki"), which will be useful to researchers beyond their study of children's mythology. One particular discovery is that this collection is the first to treat children's family stories as folkloric texts. The author of this section, I. A. Razumova, establishes the basic thematic varieties and narrative forms of family stories (such as legends about a family's history, the origin of the family's name, or stories about children that resemble jokes), and characterizes their functions in family tradition.

All the research materials in the collection, articles, and commentaries to the texts are compiled in a professional manner, without the slightest attempt to shock the reader or force any ethical ("pedagogical") evaluation.

The anthology ends with a republication of two articles by G. S. Vinogradov (1887-1945), the foremost investigator of Russian children's folklore ("Children's satirical lyrics" [1925] and "Children's secret languages" [1926]), prepared by A. F. Nekrylova and V. V. Golovin.

(Translated by Sibelan Forrester)