

## **THE POETIC INTERPRETATION OF HELPER AND OPPONENT CHARACTERS IN UZBEK AND KYRGYZ FAIRY TALES**

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**Annotation:** The article analyzes the poetic interpretation of leading and supporting characters in Uzbek and Kyrgyz folk fairy tales. Also, although magicians are often depicted as helpers, in some fairy tales they are embodied in the form of rivals, for example, in fairy tales, the motif of transformation, magical objects and animals (wolf, bird) help the hero or play an important role by helping him pass trials.

**Keywords:** magical fairy tale, auxiliary character, rival character, motif of transformation, magical object, mythological image, antithesis.

### **Leading and Supporting Characters in Fairy Tales**

The leading and supporting characters in magical fairy tales can consist of supernatural beings who either live in a parallel world or do not live there at all. These are traditional characters. Often, they are depicted as helping a human who is the hero of the fairy tale, representing the real world.

The magician, as the most widespread epic helper character, holds an important place in the magical fairy tales of both the Kyrgyz and Uzbek peoples, just as in the fairy tales of all nations. For example, this can be clearly seen in the Kyrgyz folk tale **“The Child and the Magician.”**

In this tale, an old man and woman who live in extreme poverty have only one son. They spend all their remaining wealth, sometimes laughing and sometimes crying, helplessly. Eventually, they are forced to send their son to the city as a servant (malay). At first, no one comes to help the boy. After several days, the old man becomes very tired and sits down on a boulder by the roadside, sighing deeply, “Oh-h!” Suddenly, an old man with a beard appears mysteriously before him and asks, “Why did you call me!?” The father replies, “I did not call you; I just sighed from exhaustion.”

It is worth noting that in Kyrgyz fairy tales, the utterance of “Oh” or “Ohh” often leads to the sudden appearance of a powerful helper or assistant character before the epic hero. This exclamation is usually spoken by the hero at a moment of great exhaustion or boredom. At that moment, the epic helper unexpectedly appears.

It should also be mentioned that in Kyrgyz fairy tales, the epic helper or magician is often depicted as an old man — a bearded elder. He appears mysteriously, either by a spring or along a roadside. Sometimes, their names are even given. For example, in the fairy tale “The Boy and the Magician,” the mysterious old man introduces himself as “My name is Okish!”

The magician asks the old man about his situation. The old man sighs again and says, "What can I tell you? My household is empty, and I am searching to give my son's strength to someone." Then the magician asks for the boy and promises to teach him. He says he will return to take him

exactly one year later. Agreeing to this, the old man receives a gold coin, and the magician disappears with the boy.

The boy studies under the old magician and meets his daughter. The daughter calls the boy “her apprentice” and tells him about her father’s magic, but warns that her own skill is superior. She warns that her father has no intention of letting the boy leave and plans to keep him a slave forever. Secretly, the daughter teaches the boy her own magic.

A year later, the old man returns to the magician and says, “The time has come, give me my son!” But the magician whispers something, and seven black cats appear. The magician says the old man can find his son among them. The old man cannot recognize his son and returns crying. He comes again the following year. This time, when the magician whispers, seven red foxes appear. Again, the old man cannot identify his son and returns empty-handed.

At this point, the mysterious image of the magician is marked by his power to transform a person, by a single prayer, sometimes into a cat, sometimes into a fox. Moreover, the black color of the cat symbolizes evil and misfortune [6, 95], while the red color of the fox symbolizes blood and death, indicating that the magician embodies the evil desire for death. Thus, in this tale, the magician is portrayed as an antagonist to humans.

Six years later in the story, the magician says: “You have not recognized your son for six years. If you fail again this year, your son will belong to me forever.” The old man weeps and begins to leave when suddenly a black horse gallops after him. The horse introduces itself, saying, “I am your son,” and tells him that next year, among seven black horses, he will be the third from the right before disappearing.

Here, the black horse taking human form corresponds to the poetic traditions of Turkic folk tales, where the color black symbolizes grandeur. A human is regarded as the most magnificent of all creatures created by God.

Among the Uzbek and Kyrgyz peoples, there exists a taboo against selling an animal together with its belongings. The above passage depicts a negative situation arising from the violation of this taboo. Specifically, an old man took a horse to the market and sold it for a large sum of money, then tied the saddle around his waist and returned home. The boy transformed into a bird and flew back to his father’s house. The old man took his son to the market a second time. While no one was raising the price, a merchant came to the old man and offered to buy the horse for a thousand times the price, provided he would also sell the saddle along with it. Left with no choice and tempted by the money, the old man sold the saddle as well. It turned out that the merchant who bought the horse was the magician O’kish. The magician returned home and instructed his daughter: “Tie the horse to the palace!” When the daughter was leading the horse away, the boy begged her: “Help me one more time, let me go,” and she let the horse go and lied to her father, saying: “The horse slipped from my hands and ran away.”

At this point in the fairy tale, the motif of transformation serves to ensure the climax of the story. Specifically, when the magician chased after the boy in the form of a black stallion, the boy transformed into a tiger and fled.

In the fairy tale, the transformation is depicted based on the following opposition:

<b>Sorcerer (Opponent)</b>	<b>Boy (Protagonist)</b>
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Sorcerer (Opponent)	Boy (Protagonist)
Black steed (weak, can be preyed on by tiger)	Tiger (strong, can eat the horse)
Tiger (weak, can drown in water)	Water (strong, can trap or wash away tiger)
Young man (user)	Ring (object used)
Chicken (consumer)	Wheat (consumed item)
Sparrow (small, low-flying consumer bird)	Tariq (small grain consumed)
—	Kite (large, high-flying bird)

In the tale, when the sorcerer was chasing after the boy Ökish in the form of a tiger, Ökish turned into a ring and fell near two girls who were washing their hands by the river. One of the girls found the ring, put it on her finger, and went home. The sorcerer then turned into a young man and followed the girl to a rich man's house.

The rich man asked, “Where are you headed, young man?” The sorcerer replied that he had come from far away and had taken off his ring while washing in the river, but had forgotten it there. He said the rich man’s daughter had found it and asked for it to be returned.

The rich man called his daughter and told her to give the ring back to its owner. As the girl took off the ring to hand it to Ökish, the ring suddenly turned into wheat and scattered on the ground. Ökish turned into a chicken and frantically began pecking and eating the grains. When he was about to eat the last grain under his foot, it transformed into millet.

The sorcerer turned into a sparrow and started picking up the millet seeds. But just then, the last millet seed, which had fallen into the heel of the rich man’s slipper, turned into a hawk. The hawk swooped down and struck the sparrow on the head.

In this way, the boy escaped from the sorcerer, married the sorcerer’s daughter, held a grand wedding at his own home, and lived happily ever after.

In Uzbek fairy tales, such transformations and chases are typically portrayed between a witch-like creature (*yalmog‘iz*) and a child. In English fairy tales, they usually occur between a giant and a young man.

Thus, in the tale cited above, the sorcerer is portrayed not as a patron or helper, but as an antagonist. However, this is not a fixed or absolute role. In many tales, the sorcerer typically serves as a guide or protector, offering assistance to the main character, rescuing them from difficult situations, providing advice, and sometimes even gifting them with magical items.

An example of this can be found in the Uzbek folktale *Zumrad and Qimmat*. While the sorcerer appears as a man in the earlier story, in this tale, the magical figure takes the form of an elderly woman — radiant, beautiful, and full of light — who offers wisdom and **support**.

In the folktale “*The Golden Bird*” (“*Oltin qush*”), there appears a magical wolf capable of

transforming from one form into another. According to the story, there once lived an old man who had three sons and a large apple tree. Each year, the old man would eat the fruit from this tree and regain his youth.

But one year, before the apples could fully ripen, someone stole them. Having missed the life-giving fruit, the old man began to grow older and fall ill more frequently. He instructed his three sons to guard the tree and find out who was stealing the apples.

The eldest son took the first turn, but failed to catch the thief. The following year, the middle son watched over the tree, but the same thing happened again. In the third year, the old man gave the task to his youngest son. The boy stayed awake all night, playing his flute.

At midnight, a golden bird appeared and began eating the apples. The boy quietly crept up, trying to grab the bird's wing, but it flew away—leaving behind a single feather in his hand. The next morning, he brought the feather to his father.

The old man said, “Use this feather to find the bird!” The two older brothers set out on a journey in search of the golden bird. The youngest begged to go with them, but they refused, saying he was still too young.

A long time passed with no word from the older brothers. Finally, the old man sent his youngest son after them, giving him a yellow colt to ride.

In the folktale “*The Golden Bird*” (“*Oltin qush*”), there appears the image of a magical wolf capable of transforming from one form to another. The story tells of an old man who had three sons and a large apple tree. Every year, the old man would eat the fruit from this tree and grow younger again.

But one year, before the apples had even ripened, someone came and ate them. Having missed the life-giving fruit, the old man began to age even faster and started falling ill more frequently. He ordered his three sons to guard the tree and to catch whoever was stealing the apples.

That year, the eldest son kept watch but was unable to catch the thief. The following year, the middle son took his turn, but the same thing happened again. In the third year, the old man gave the task to his youngest son. The boy stayed awake through the night, playing his flute.

At midnight, a golden bird came and began eating the apples. The boy quietly crept up, hoping to grab the bird by its wing. But just as he reached out, the bird flew away—leaving behind a single feather in the boy's hand.

The next day, the boy brought the feather to his father. The old man said, “Use this feather to find the bird!” The two older brothers set off to search for it. When the youngest begged to come along, they refused, saying, “You're still too young.”

A long time passed, but there was no news from the older brothers. So the old man sent the youngest son after them, giving him a yellow colt to ride.

The boy walked and walked—long and far—until he came to a place where he saw an inscription carved on a black stone. It read: “*If you turn left, you will die; if you turn right, your horse will die.*”

The boy chose to go to the right. At one point, a hungry wolf appeared in his path. The wolf told the boy to give him his horse, or else there would be consequences. The boy gave his horse to the wolf.

After devouring the horse, the wolf said, *“I have eaten your horse, but now I will help you reach your goal.”* *“I’m searching for the golden bird,”* the boy replied. Then the wolf instructed him: *“Now climb onto my back and close your eyes.”*

The wolf carried the boy on his back, flying over mountains, deserts, and forests until they reached a city. When the boy opened his eyes, they had arrived at a city. The wolf said, “The bird is in this house. Go in quietly and catch it by its wing, not its leg, and bring it out.”

The boy entered the house, but forgot the wolf’s advice and grabbed the bird by its leg. Immediately, the bell on the bird’s leg rang, and the city guards seized him. The next morning, the guards brought the boy before the Khan. The boy honestly told the whole story.

Seeing the boy’s sincerity, the Khan made a deal with him. He said, “I have a horse with a golden mane and golden tail. If you bring me that horse, I will give you the golden bird.” The boy returned and told the wolf what had happened. The wolf said, “Do not be afraid. Climb on my back again and close your eyes.”

After a while, the boy opened his eyes and found himself in another city. The wolf said, “After forty palaces, there is a forty-first palace. Inside that palace is the horse with the golden mane. Enter quietly and take it by its tail, not its neck.”

The boy entered the palace and was so struck by the horse’s beauty that he forgot the wolf’s warning. He grabbed the horse by its neck, and the bell on the horse’s neck rang. The palace guards caught him again and brought him to the Khan the next day.

The boy again told the story honestly. The Khan said, “You are a boy who keeps your word. I have one more task for you: if you complete it, the horse will be yours.” He ordered the boy to bring the Khan’s beautiful daughter from the other Khan’s palace.

The boy went again to the exhausted wolf. The wolf took the boy to where the Khan’s daughter was walking in a garden early in the morning with her forty maidens. Because the guards watched her very closely, the boy said he could not bring her himself. This time, the wolf carried the girl away himself.

On the way, the young man and the girl fall in love. The young man does not want to give the girl to the Khan. Upon learning about their love, the wolf tells the boy to bring him before the Khan. The wolf transforms into the beautiful girl and, together with the boy, enters the Khan’s presence. The Khan, overjoyed to have the beautiful girl, rewards the boy by giving him the horse. The boy and the girl continue their journey. Soon after, the wolf catches up with them. The young man, now with the girl and the horse, says he does not want to give the horse to the Khan either. Then the wolf transforms into the horse and goes with the boy to the Khan. Seeing the horse, the Khan is delighted and gives the boy the golden bird. The boy returns with the girl, the horse, and the bird. The wolf returns to his original form, catches up with the boy, and helps him find his two lost older brothers.

This tale resembles the plot of the Uzbek folk tale “Bulbulig‘o‘yo.” However, in that story, a magical monkey fairy helps the youngest son find the magical bird, the beautiful girl, and the

magical horse. In the tale above, the task is fulfilled by a marvelous wolf figure endowed with human speech, reasoning ability, guidance, and advice.

Ancient peoples deified and sanctified certain animals, birds, trees, and plants at the level of cults, turning them into symbols of faith. Based on this, such beings were personified and interpreted as magical helpers in folk tales.

K. Imomov emphasizes that magical objects also serve as auxiliary forces around the epic hero. According to V. Y. Propp, once the hero obtains a magical object or helper, he tends to become somewhat inactive.

The patronage of the Simurgh bird is typical in many Uzbek and Kyrgyz tales. For example, the Kyrgyz tale “The Slave’s Son and the Simurgh Bird” tells how a Khan once had a Simurgh bird that every morning reported to him everything happening on earth.

In some tales, the hero rescues a dog, cat, or mouse from evil. In return, with their help and magical objects, the hero completes complicated trials set by the king and marries the princess. However, after losing his ring, the secret is revealed, and the animals help the hero recover the lost magical object (usually the magic ring).

Sh. Shomusarov notes that heroes in magical-adventure tales acquire marvelous objects in several ways: 1) as a gift from a patron; 2) as a reward for a good deed; 3) as an inheritance from parents; 4) as an item brought from another world during epic trials. Z. Rasulova suggests classifying the services magical helpers provide to the hero as follows: a) bringing distant things close; b) taking the hero into another world; c) enabling the hero to meet the princess; d) resolving difficult problems; e) helping the hero defeat a terrifying enemy; f) rescuing the hero from dangerous situations; g) transforming the hero from one form to another, and so on.

The scholar also explores the hero’s acquisition of “marvelous objects” as: a) items inherited from deceased parents; b) objects seized from defeated adversaries; c) magical items provided by totemic or cult animals; d) items given by mythological characters.

In conclusion, the poetic interpretation of helpers and adversaries in Uzbek and Kyrgyz magical tales deserves special attention. Helpers can be mythological figures, animals, birds, or humans. The hero and the antagonist are usually portrayed in opposition, employing the art of antithesis.

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