

VALUE OPPOSITION IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE MODERN STORY OF THE VOLGA REGION (ON THE MATERIAL OF THE MARI, CHUVASH AND TATAR LITERATURES)

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Abstract

The compositional basis of the majority stories of the Volga region's modern writers is made by the opposition based on contrast images and concepts: old and new ways of life, parents and children, traditional and modern morality, water and electric mill, girls' voices during the haymaking and noise of a car, etc. The antithesis is defined by conceptual and semantic opposition and appears as the method or the principle of composition of the artistic work.

Two oppositions come to the forefront in the story of the Volga region's peoples. The first opposition is «parents and children», which is realized through the value-significant and emotionally colored motifs of abandoned forgotten or misunderstood old people and their self-occupied, soulless (ungrateful) children. The second, more generalized, socially significant opposition is the traditional and modern Mari village with their diametrically opposed ideological and value attitudes.

In this context, it is easy to correlate between themselves the stories of multi-national writers, in whose artistic works the antithesis is presented as the main method of composition: Mari (Gennady Gordeev, Valery Berdinsky, Gennady Alekseev, Yury Artamonov, etc.), Chuvash (Arseny Tarasov, Denis Gordeev, Svetlana Azamat, Valentina Taravat, etc.), Tatar (Rif Rahman, Zinur Husniyar and others). The basis of this research is a comparative analysis of 2 groups of stories: 1) three stories, united by the theme of parents and children, which is solved within the axiological art paradigm (Valery Berdinsky's «My Children», Arseny Tarasov's «Two in old age» and Rif Rahman's «Cricket») 2) two stories based on the opposition of the outgoing (traditional) and new ways of life of the Mari village (Gennady Gordeev's «Water mill» and Denis Gordeev's «Time by Yakrav»).

The authors actualize in them the most important ethnic and eternal moral values (memory of the past, harmony life with nature, people's ethics, family traditions, spirituality, care, fellowship, duty, responsibility, etc.), opposing them disvalues (oblivion of the foretime, ignoring of traditions, egoism, spiritual poverty, etc.).

The attention of the authors is focused on dramatic nature of the real-life situation of the key (positive) characters of the former Mari world, on research of the psychological component of their existence.

The images of old men and old villages, created by writers, not only fix the state of modern reality, but also contain nostalgia of the authors on the inviolable value priorities of human existence in the world, the authors' thoughts about improvement of the world through the memory of the past.

Keywords: modern Mari literature, modern Chuvash literature, modern Tatar literature, story, art axiology, poetics, opposition.

1. INTRODUCTION

The compositional basis of the majority stories of the Volga region's modern writers is made by the opposition, based on contrast images and concepts: old and new ways of life, parents and children, traditional and modern morality, water and electric mill, girls' voices during the haymaking and noise of a car, etc. The antithesis is defined by conceptual and semantic opposition and appears as the method or the principle of composition of the artistic work.

Two oppositions come to the forefront in the story of the Volga region's peoples. The first opposition is «parents and children», realized through the valuable and emotionally colored motifs of abandoned forgotten or misunderstood old people and their self-occupied, soulless (ungrateful) children. The second, more generalized, socially significant opposition is the traditional and modern Mari village with their diametrically opposed ideological and value attitudes.

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2. OPINIONS AND DISCUSSION

The conceptual and semantic antithesis in the Valery Berdinsky's story is already designated in the very title of his work, which, because of its polysemy and metaphoricality, is almost impossible to translate into Russian adequately substantial context of the work. In translation from Mari «иге» (a literary form) is a cub (in the animal world), in a spoken language it is a child, a baby, in a possessive case «игем» is my child, my kid. At first glance, «игем-шамыч» is the resort the main character of Krgory to the dogs, whose are not only waiting for his care, food, but also share together with him his misfortunes, experience, his pain («very attentively look into the eyes of the owner», guard his hospital door). Their devotion and attention, which are so necessary to the hero, not so much from the dogs as from his children, are great force, capable to roust him, the dying, out of bed. And the hero, really, gets up on his feet, overcoming all ailments, approaches the window, towards his faithful «children».

The words «игем-шамыч» (my children, my kids) in relation to the Krgory's children are an expression of deep author's irony. Their semantics is following: offsprings, descendants, cubs, preoccupied only with their egoistical, material interests, forgetting about their parents, who are forced to live out their days alone in a modern «unpromising» village, off-road, near «orphaned» farms.

Rif Rahman's and Arseny Tarasov's stories, as well as Valery Berdinsky's story are constructed in such way, that the reader's gaze «clings», mainly, not so much to the events, fixing direct communication of old men with their children (children's letters, their expectation, fleeting meetings), as much as the actions, connected with communication of heroes with the living beings, replacing their children and loved ones. If in the Valery Berdinsky's story between the heroes, representing the disunited in the modern world generations, «human» dogs are friends, then in the Rif Rahman's story they are little mouse Petya and a cricket Petya, and in the Arseny Tarasov's story it is cat Myarik. By the way, these characters (the only interlocutors of old men), like the dogs of the Mari writer, have names, which are similar to human. They are, indeed, more humane, than the children of old heroes, they are able to empathize and sympathize, being «a living soul at their side» (Rif Rahman). Introducing them into the narration enhances the value antithesis of characters and the motive of lonely old age.

In the dramatic content of the Rif Rahman's story there is opposition of immense motherly love and carelessness of her son («He remembered, that he *forgot to inform mother* about the extension of a service»; «No, no, I will not leave anywhere, – he told after a while, *only to calm her*» (Rahman, 2007, p. 353. Italic type is our – R.K.). It is enhanced by the images of a mouse and a cricket, which are given by Klavdia Petrovna. After death «Petya's soul returned» in the cricket's image, according to a remark of the heroine. For Klavdia Petrovna the living beings, surrounding her, are the part of her life. At first, the mouse and then the cricket she calls the younger brother of her son, a man in her house. She buries the mouse as a member of the family, in a small grave, with prayers and commemorations, and for the «new tenant»

(cricket), who divided her loneliness at the memorial table, prepares «the bed on the stove, beside herself». Reflecting on his son fighting in the war in the Afghanistan's mountains and his long-drawn return home, Klavdia Petrovna repeats the phrase «Our Kostya» many times, including herself and a cricket in the concept of «our». She compares the cricket with the child, calls it «comrade» and «new owner of the hose»: «Petya has grown, his voice has become louder, eyes are bigger. <...> Klavdia Petrovna got used to the new owner of the house: she dandled it in her arms or forced to jump from one wall to another, blowing off it from the palm» (Rahman, 2007, p. 352). The death of the cricket, whom Klavdia Petrovna's son during his short period staying at home «mildly, as if effortlessly» «slammed» and «thrown into the oven» (as it prevented him to sleep because of loud singing), heralding her full loneliness, it becomes the cause of her deep despair, physical suffering, and then death. At the end of the story, the author returns to the dramatic intonation, which was in the beginning of the story, and which prevailed in all its initial parts, to portrait descriptions and details with tragic sounding: «the mother's dried hands»; «cheekbones, acted on the thinner face»; «Klavdia Petrovna's thin shoulders grew cold, her look became meaningless» (Rahman, 2007, p. 353).

In the Arseny Tarasov's «Two in old age» story, as in Valery Berdinsky's and Rif Rahman's artistic works, the creature, living with a lonely old woman (the cat Myarik), is the only thing, that brightens her daily sad everyday life, and therefore very darling and familiar; its loss is similar to death.

In the Rif Rahman's and Arseny Tarasov's stories phrases of old men repeat almost literally: sick Klavdia Petrovna, who was in the depth of despair after the Petya's loss and farewell the son («And with whom will I stay? Tell me, with whom will I live?» (Rahman, 2007, p. 353)), and the old woman, who carefully brings up and protects the old cat from unexpected misfortunes («With whom will I stay then?» (Tarasov, 2001, p. 291)). For the heroes of all three stories the living being (animal) warms the soul, it is «exactly little baby, small infant» (Tarasov, 2001, p. 291), hence in that part of the narration, where there is verbal or silent communication of old men with such characters, all authors have the same major intonation.

The title of the Arseny Tarasov's story, in comparison with the title of the Valery Berdinsky's story, is not many-valued, but fully reflects the absurd (foolish) situation, which is been the basis for his plot. The storyline holds in it on the saving communication of two living souls in old age (man and animal).

Absurdity, creative play, experiment, laid down, in fact, in all three considered stories, but in Chuvash writer's prose they are most expressed; in the «Two in old age» story they are clearly strengthened by introducing of unusual narrative perspective (focalization) – it is the cat's point of view. Actually, through the perception of the animal, which is equated to human, all actions and movements of the characters, including the old women, are presented in the artistic work (we will notice, that the auctorial narration predominates in the Rahman's story, in the Valery Berdinsky's story it is accompanied with the experienced speech of old Krgory).

Such form of narration, based on anthropomorphism, is, of course, not new in Russian literature. It is clear that, Arseny Tarasov appeals to the traditions of Lev Tolstoy («Holstomer»), Anton Chekhov («Kashtanka»), Mikhail Bulgakov («The heart of a dog»), Georgy Vladimimov («Faithful Ruslan»), Chingiz Aitmatov («Farewell, Gulsaru!»), Gavriel Troyepolsky («White Bim and Black Ear») and others. But he enriches this art trend. If the Russian authors used this form of narration, mainly in a drama (Bulgakov – also in a satirical), then Tarasov – in drama and at the same time major-humorous.

Continuing the tradition of his predecessor Ille Tkhti, Arseny Tarasov constructs an absurd picture of life through the image of a cat, having an internal life, according to human standards, and the absurd situation of its empathy for a man. In a such case the reification becomes the main principle of the composition, and the Cat begins to apply the role of the main character with a narrative perspective, with reported speech, close to the oral-narrative manner.

Humor is achieved thanks to comic situations and their unusual interpretation by animals. But each time they are filled with dramatic meaning. So, the story begins with the following situation: the cat is guarding her old mistress, washing in the bathhouse, trying to «listen to every sound in the bathhouse, trying to guess, what the old woman is doing» (Tarasov, 2001, p. 284). At the same time, the inner state of the cat itself, in fact, expresses the condition of the old woman and the position of the dying old village: «Silence. It is neither rustle, nor sound around. And from where they may especially take <...>. It is very uncomfortable because of such silence. It is boring at heart sadly» (Tarasov, 2001, p. 284).

Already in the first situation, through the cat's experienced speech, the dramatic motive of a lonely and sad old age is indicated, it is amplified in subsequent situations: «It seems, that the old woman began to rub with a bast wisp. She sighs heavily over and over again, mumbles words, mutters something under her breath.

As the Cat strained hearing, it couldn't understand the words. However, it is clear without words, what she complains about – old age, ailment, lonely life» (Tarasov, 2001, p. 286).

The combination of humour and dramatic nature is fully testified by two situations of the same type (the cat sings with the old woman), one of which (retrospective) is given in the major-humoristic manner, and the other (connected with the main time of the narration) is given exclusively in drama. The second situation comes to the end with despair and almost human crying of an animal («The cat cried, shuddering a little all over. It was intolerably pity for the Old Woman, for itself, it was a pity for life, as it is already had fled, it was a pity for the village, becomes deserted and dormant, as if it was in a sickness» (Tarasov, 2001, p. 287)). The drama lies in the subtext or the final «strokes» of all subsequent, seemingly light pictures (with elements of humorous comment of a cat): the old woman's meetings with her neighbor Prasuk («It wasn't very often, that goodness met in life...» (Tarasov, 2001, p. 289)) the cat's sleep (a mouse, caught by it, with a wrinkled face, fallen eyes, that looked «sadly, thoughtlessly», suddenly turned into an old woman, who had outlived her life, that is why «the Cat's heart was filled with habitual pity, pain» (Tarasov, 2001, p. 290)), daily accompaniment to the hospital, combined dinner and morning waiting for Kestenti's son arrival, who, as it happens, «comes only three times for all year» (Tarasov, 2001, p. 292).

Tarasov represents absurd pictures of the person and the animal communication, reflections of the last as «the result of deep social disappointments», as an expression of his own «despair, hopelessness» (Borev, 2001, p. 8) in the conditions of modern life of mankind.

Hence, it is no coincidence, that the Chuvash writer, like the Mari storytellers, periodically paying the attention of the reader to social changes with their terrible consequences, expands the framework of his, in general, the household narration: «Nigh on, and there is no village left any more. The houses are become empty all but through one» (Tarasov, 2001, p. 284); «and the village itself had forgotten everything long ago, and it stopped to believe, that times, full of prosperity and noisy polyphony could return...» (Tarasov, 2001, p. 287).

So, having begun with understanding of the dissociation of parents and children, the discrepancies of their life principles, moral and value orientations, Arseny Tarasov contradistinguishes the old and new village, comes to a problem of tragic impending doom of former way of national life.

The opposition of the outgoing and new ways of life of Mari village was most brightly shown in the story of the Mari writer Gennady Gordeev and Chuvash prose writer Denis Gordeev.

This antithesis in the Gennady Gordeev's «Water Mill» short-story becomes already the principle of composition. The water mill in it is the symbol of the people's experience, that has been forming for centuries, it is opposed to modern, electric one. And the main character, soldier Pavyl, who grew up and died together with it, is like the personification of the progressive folk traditions, national ethics, based on the harmonious relationship between man and nature. The soul of this person is tightly connected with the former world, with the old village: «Yes, Pavyl was born and grew up in another life, in another world. That world is dearer to him, more intimate, it is merged with his soul» (Gordeev Gen.).

Everything «works» in the short-story for opposition of old and new ways of life: the character trait of the main character, art time, all the compositional-style means and methods, and dialogue, and landscape. According to the principle of opposition present and past tenses are given in the short-story. Numerous flashbacks of the hero's remembrance about what was before, are given in a light iridescent, in emotional lyrical stylistic tone, while the present is marked by deep drama; hence all the narrative moments, reflections, connected with the main time of the action, are characterized by dramatic, and at the end of the work by tragic intonation.

The similar opposition between the old and the new ways of life, the keeper of old traditions and his «modern» children we can find in the Denis Gordeev's «Time by Yakrav» short-story. The fable part of his plot is connected with the organization and holding of a holiday in honor of the 80th anniversary of Yakrav Mucha (old man), on which his children and grandchildren gathered. Another event layer is superimposed on, it connected with the «journey» of the hero with his granddaughter to valuable places, to the bell («to two columns with a crossbar with an iron semantron», which once informed the «village, that one more hour is passed» (Gordeev Denis, 20001, p. 133)), which is remained from the fire station, which has been rotting «for more than a decade» and is now sorted out for firewood. Event outline is complemented with the hero's memories of antecedents.

If for the little granddaughter an hourly «walking tour» to the «piece of iron on the crossbar» and hammer blow with a semantron is something like a new children's game, then for her grandfather Yakrav it is a

reminiscence of old good tradition. After all, beating time in this way, he gathered people together for work and united them in a single labor rhythm. The image of this bell, as well as the image of the old mill of the Mari writer Gennady Gordeev, becomes a symbol of the former way of life and the key image-tenor of the short-story. The hero is ready to defend and maintain customs, «rotten» in the opinion of his younger son, no matter how his relatives laughed at him («And Yakrav Mucha will clang a bell until this ring will be necessary for the girl» (Gordeev Denis, 2001, p. 134), because he is convinced, that there are a lot of positive and useful in them for the future.

In the collision of the hero with his children and through his memories, the meaning of opposition of new and the old ways of life in its working, household, ethical, aesthetic and worldview plans is gradually highlighted. For former order and responsibility of people the author opposes modern mismanagement, uncontrollableness, impunity and carelessness: «there is no order in the collective farm. They go to work, whenever they like. And if someone drunk in the evening, he may not get out at all, he isn't afraid of anyone, he is not ashamed for it before people too. The sun «bakes» in full force, and they have already finished their work. Bread is abandon under snow – was it possible to imagine such a thing earlier? There were not so many cars in our time, but we reaped, mow corn with scythe by hand, took out harvest from the field on bulls and horses, and sometimes on ourselves, but it isn't a sheaf we didn't leave a spikelet in the field» (Gordeev, 2001, p. 125–126); «Wages was paid out, premium was distributed. The board buzzed like a bee swarm, you couldn't wriggle way into the shop. Is this your new custom?»; «It isn't old people, our youth is thriftless, careless. Even if you take across the fields, and you stumble. Somewhere a band tyre lies about, somewhere a cultivator rusts: worked and threw. It doesn't come into Yakrav Mucha and his coevals mind to leave the necessary thing in the field. If it was happened, that cogs of a harrow broke, and they didn't threw out: perhaps, it might be useful in life. <...> The whole wire reels, heaps of metalware didn't knocked around anywhere anyhow» (Gordeev, 2001, p. 130); «In all centuries young people were hesitated of old men. Before they do or say anything, they thought: what will the old men say? Do not consult with old people was considered shameful. <...> Young people made it a rule to shame old men» (Gordeev, 2001, p. 129). In the new world, as Yakrav notes to his son, even the attitude towards food is different, which doesn't make fine the modern person at all: «You will not be able to get through the door soon. Food is necessary to gather momentum, and strength is necessary to work, so we were taught to it from childhood. So, you live in a new way. So, what are you eating for? To get fat?» (Gordeev, 2001, p. 133).

In the context of the main antithesis the bell and the modern transistor, the traditional harmonica and guitar, on which one of Yakrav's sons «bang out», wadded harem trousers and fashionable second-hand (jeans), which is «against the grain» of the old person and which are delivered in big bags by the children instead of harem trousers, asked by father, are opposed in the story. And, at last, the relation to the organization of the anniversary itself is contradistinguish: for the person, connected with former way of life and with traditional worldview, the holiday during harvest time is shame before people while for young people it is just another and necessary reason for careless fun.

The antithesis, which is widely used in the Mari and Chuvash story, is, certainly, connected with opposition of two models of the world, past and present. One of them is romanticized to a large extent (and even idealized in some places), while the other is not so much criticized how much it is dramatized. For example, Denis Gordeev in the story «Time by Yakrav» conveys the dramatic nature of the situation and the internal state of the old Yakrav, who watched how the fire station is taken to pieces: «insufferably painful to watch how it is taken to pieces, to small boards and small beams. And he knows, that he has no power to stop it. <...> Logs fall with a crash. Tainted, rotten, abutting end of the log building dust. It would be better not to see it, but how can you take away Anyurk from here? <...> something very dear and familiar to him in the habitual world crumbles away, and it is restless, uncomfortable on his heart» (Gordeev, 2001, p. 122). And the old parents do not want to criticize their children, who have departed from values of the past, rather it is painful to watch them. All the authors' attention is focused on dramatic nature of the real-life situation of the key (positive) characters of the former Mari world, on the research of the psychological component of their existence.

3. CONCLUSION

So, in the architectonics of the story of the Volga region's peoples, the antithesis predominates (it is the opposition of two world models). There is doubtless axiological relationship between the artistic works of multilingual authors considered by us. The question of the person, investigated by them in his attitude towards ethnic and universal traditions – labor, ideological, moral, family, ethical, aesthetic, etc. – is directly connected with value system about human life in human society.

The authors actualize in them the most important ethnic and eternal moral values (memory of the past, harmony life with nature, people's ethics, family traditions, spirituality, care, fellowship, duty, responsibility,

etc.), opposing them disvalues (oblivion of the foretime, ignoring of traditions, egoism, spiritual poverty, etc.).

The images of old men and old villages, created by writers, «not only fix the state of modern reality, but also carries idea of improving the world» (Belaya, 1986, p. 328), contain the nostalgia of the authors on the inviolable value priorities of human existence in the world, the authors' thoughts about improvement of the world through the memory of the past.

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