

School as a subject of image in the Russian literature of the 1930's

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Abstract. This article explores new approaches to the implementation of "school" theme, realized in the works of Russian literature of the 1930's. It is proved that the first decades after the revolution can be considered with regard to the XIX century as a kind of "antithesis": statics is replaced by dynamics, instead of monster teacher we see teacher-father, truly goodie, prison-type school is converted into a home-type school. Analysis of literary writings about school by Makarenko, Belukh and Panteleev, as well as Kassil suggests that debunking of school institution, peculiar to the XIX century, is replaced by poeticizing. The authors underline that the interest of the literature of these years is focused on correctional institutions. On the one hand, such an interest was prompted by the post-revolutionary reality, when the problem of combating homelessness was one of the most pressing; on the other hand, it reflected one of the main ideas of socialist realism about "alteration of human nature".

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Introduction

In the literature of the XIX century the school theme, being at this time on the periphery of the literary process, is developed within genres of autobiographical story about childhood, growing-up novel and a series of essays. Gogol, Dostoyevsky and Chekhov introduce into their literary works motives associated with the school [1, 2], though the detailed description of educational institutions arises only in the prose of the second level writers (Pomyalovsky and Garin-Mikhailovsky) [3]. Key "school" literary work of that period is Pomyalovsky's "The Essays about the Life at Bursa" whose repercussions were found later in the works of many authors. This literary writing was distinguished by succession, ultimatism and some straightforwardness of social criticism. Critical pathos of Pomyalovsky is peculiar to almost all of his contemporaries, who portrayed the Russian pre-revolutionary school as a space of bondage. In Russian classical realism of the XIX century we never meet goodie-teachers, portrayed close up, though we see a lot of teachers belonging to the kind of "monsters".

Methodology

Research methodology is determined by the principles of historical and typological analysis, as well as structural and semantic analysis techniques of literary works.

Main part

Quite different approaches to the school theme are implemented in the post-October period of literature, especially in literary works created in the

1930's. The changes can be explained by the transformation of the described object image: Soviet writers have dealt with a very different reality, other than the classics of the XIX century. Everything that was clearly and distinctly perceived and seemed unchanged (and, hence, from the author's point of view, was ossified and lifeless), was replaced by something unstable, uncertain, emerging in full view out of the revolutionary chaos [4]. New Soviet school was created, built on different principles than the pre-revolutionary educational institutions. Though change of accents when discovering school theme is explained not only by this fact, but the overall change in the ideological and aesthetic guidelines [5].

The whole literature of the first post-revolutionary decades is suffused with the spirit of world reconstruction and creation of the new man [6]; therefore not coincidental is the fact of actualization in this period of growing-up novel tradition. However, now the structure-forming motive concludes not in mentoring human in the "school of life", but his redemption, or according to A.A. Fadeev, "alteration of human nature". Literary works about schools alongside with sappy novels are organically embedded into the new coordinate system; the situations, familiar from the literature of the XIX century, are comprehended from a different perspective.

One of the key literary texts of socialist realism is "Pedagogical Poem" by A.S. Makarenko (1933-1934), a documentary novel, in which an outstanding educator, who has developed his own system to socialize troubled children, tells about his successful experience in organizing penal colony for

juvenile offenders in the Kovalevka village near Poltava. "Pedagogical Poem" perfectly fits into the socialist-realist paradigm and has become a classic of Soviet literature, though it does not mean that its text was created by preconceived ideological recipes. Makarenko's book differs from the "school" literary works of the XIX century, in particular, by the fact that the narrator (he is called Anton Semenovich that underlines the documentary nature of the story) not only reflects upon the existing order of things, but creates a new reality through trial and error in full view of the reader [7].

A number of situations and details in "Pedagogical Poem" brings us back to "The Essays about the Life at Bursa" (representation of life asceticism and severity of manners, the authors concern towards the problem of punishment, and a distinct grouping of foster-children into certain psychological types) that gives the opportunity to discover the intertextual relations between the books that are separated by more than 70 years.

In one of the episodes of "Pedagogical Poem", Makarenko directly refers the reader to essays of Pomyalovsky: young, romantically-minded colony teacher Lidochka rebukes Anton Semenovich, who hit a pupil, desperate to influence him in another way, that his method is "as in Bursa" [8]. But the principle, which in the Bursa world is a fundamental rule, for the narrator of "Pedagogical Poem" is an exception that deeply saddens him and throws into painful reflection.

The opposition "school - home" that is inherent for Pomyalovsky and other authors of the XIX century is not relevant for Makarenko, because the pupils do not have their home; the only alternative to colony is the street. Writer and teacher shows how Home is gradually built in a deep sense of this word. The same way suspicious, violent, and anarchic-minded colonists consistently create a team, which is increasingly perceived by them like a true family. This is all the more noteworthy, because virtually the colony is a correctional institution; with much greater reason it can be considered a prison, jail, where from one wants to run away to find desired freedom. But if for Bursa seminarians the most severe punishment is not letting them go home, for the colonists this is the expulsion from the team.

It is important to note that home and family emerge not spontaneously, but thanks to diligent, tireless work of teachers working at the colony, and especially its leader, i.e. Makarenko.

Positive image of the leader and the facilitator, under whose influence the spontaneous mass is converted into a conscientious team, is very typical for the art of socialist realism. It would be inappropriate to state that Makarenko, following the

directions of the party, deliberately creates an image of the goodie; he just tells about his personal experience, making this with a charming self-irony, not hiding mistakes, not leaving "behind the scenes" the most dramatic episodes of his teaching activities (e.g., the episode when he was on the verge of suicide and has held a revolver to his head, but the crowd of children did not let happen irreparable disaster). But objectively, the narrator himself, being a courageous man, able, if necessary, be very tough, but at the same time wise, creative and humane, is just such a goodie and an ideal role model. In some literary works, created after the "Pedagogical Poem", the subject matter is based on the conflict of internally liberated, talented innovation-oriented teacher and dogmatic official bureaucrat (school principal, or deputy principal). Makarenko harmoniously combines in his person the administrator and teacher; he solves economic and human resource problems no less creatively than properly pedagogic problems.

It is crucial that the head of the colony is not alone in his endeavors; he manages to create a close-knit team of like-minded people, infinitely loyal to the common goal. The XIX century literature shows many strange and extravagant teacher characters, though really bright, extraordinary personalities among them are extremely rare (e.g., Tomylin and Shatrov in Garin-Mikhailovsky's stories), and their sad fate underlines the inappropriateness of such people in the teachers' environment. The situation is opposite in "Pedagogical Poem": out of the total number of enthusiast teachers, each of whom is unordinary individual, a nationalist Deryuchenko, who is unworthy to hold a title of teacher, as well as Rodimchik, who is trying to profit at the expense of the colony, stand out; but they both soon find themselves forced to leave the pedagogical field.

"Pedagogical Poem" can be considered not only as a growing-up novel, but also as a fictionalized presentation of pedagogical theory that was formed and sharpened in the course of solving practical pedagogical problems [9]. It is no coincidence that even now Makarenko's book draws attention of specialists in the history of pedagogy to a far greater degree than literary historians.

In the late 1920's, another literary piece on correctional institutions for homeless children drew the attention of teaching community. It was "The Republic of SHKID" by B. Belykh and L. Panteleev (1927), similar to the "Pedagogical Poem" by its documentary basis, subject matter, certain common motives, detailed description of school life, and optimistic ending, which reports that ex-offenders became worthy members of society. The tendency, denoted in "The Republic of SHKID", has given to this literary writing the opportunity to fit into the

context of the era. Not coincidentally, Gorky, in one of his letters to Makarenko, wrote that he has better realized the relevance of his creativity, having acquainted with the book by Belykh and Pantelev [10].

However Makarenko did not share Gorky's enthusiasm about the composition of former SHKID-team members, though rather expressed his most critical opinion about their creation: "Strictly speaking, this book is a conscientious expression of pedagogical failure. The book is filled from the beginning to the end by very unsympathetic descriptions of "SHKID-team" adventures, from pilfering to beating teachers, who are called in the book not otherwise than "Chaldeans". Pedagogic method of Vikniksor, the head of "SHKID", and his aides is quite clear. It includes lockup, locked doors, and suspicious diaries, very similar to the conduit. This shows complete impotence of pedagogical "mastership" in the face of a relatively small group of "compliant" and gifted children. Supposedly, amusing tricks of feral pupils are shown to reader up to the very last page [11]"

Criticism of Makarenko, primarily aimed at pedagogical methods, depicted in the novel of Pantelev and Belykh, also makes one to take thought about the different artistic strategies, implemented in the "Pedagogical Poem" and "The Republic of SHKID." It seems that these literary works, being close to each other in terms of the writing time and the subject matter, indicate the different trends in the representation of the school.

Differences lie even in the author's definition of the genre: the word "poem" in the headline of Makarenko's documentary book, emphasizes the author's striving for poetization of teacher's selfless effort and the transformation process of unruly teenagers into the worthy citizens of their country. Despite the fact that there is humorous coloration in Makarenko's palette, brighten up and warming the narration, "Pedagogical Poem", as a whole, is a serious book. Described critical situations, related to the daily life of the colony, reveal painful problems of society in general (hunger, devastation, widespread poverty, mutual bitterness, loss of moral compass, typhus epidemic, drunkenness, prostitution, etc.). Ultimately, as the problems are overcome, the author's voice, providing narration, sounds more solemn and pathetic. Being unprofessional writer, Makarenko puts into the word "poem" metaphorical nature rather than a strict literary sense. Nevertheless, his book fully presents the allegation of lyric and epic principles, peculiar to poem as a genre.

Pantelev and Belykh call their considerable writing a story (this definition has entrenched in the

scientific literature). This corresponds to the representation breadth of reality in "The Republic of SHKID": the school is shown through the perception of ordinary pupils, former street kids, who, without claiming for broad generalizations, brightly and expressively portray the years spent in school. «The Republic of SHKID" is a merry and mischievous book. The authors at the time of writing were still quite young (Belykh was nineteen and Pantelev eighteen years old) and hardly thought about ideological and pedagogical problems, facing young Soviet art. It is difficult to say how clearly aspiring writers imagined the potential readers, but it is no coincidence that the book became a classic of children's literature. Pantelev L., one of its authors, made subsequently children's audience main target of his literary activities.

Belykh and Pantelev do not embellish the current picture, but on the contrary, make it clearly understandable, how strong and scary are destructive instincts of SHKID-team members, who had a criminal past under their belt. It is no coincidence that Gorky called "The Republic of SHKID" a book not only "most original, lively and funny", but "terrible" at the same time. For example, the authors show "riot" caused by the dismissal of teacher, who won authority among pupils by worthless trick [12].

Despite the fact that the authors of the story perfectly understand not only the "senseless and merciless" of school riots, but their groundlessness, the war itself with teachers, whom SSKID-team members call "Chaldeans", is shown as a cruel but exciting game, a kind of adventure. However, the conflict between teachers and pupils turns out to seem that is recognized by youngsters.

All these "flowages" of school life beyond the shores of what is permitted, reflecting in some way the turbulent atmosphere beyond the walls of the educational institution, do not prevent the pupils against respecting their teachers, first of all, headmaster Vikniksor (Viktor Nikolayevich Sorokin) and perceive the school as a family home. Literary scholars, reasoning about the story in different contexts, do not forget to make an emphasis on this circumstance. For example, L.G. Golovina writes: "The school named after Dostoevsky - SHKID, appears before the reader ... as metaphor mythologem of home, showing the tragic situation of the family institution destruction" [13]. Ostrovatikova G.A. develops the idea of the school-home image in "The Republic of SHKID" and convincingly argues that in this text, one can see the transformation of the parable of the prodigal son:

"Stories of many SHKID-team members, presented in their recollections, start with voluntary departure from their native paternal home, sometimes

even abruption with it ... Dropped to the most "lowlife" and becoming juvenile gangsters and hijackers, they start to return to normal life only in SHKID ... However, after leaving their native homes, the "SHKID" characters return not to their paternal home, but to the *other* unusual home that is typical for a new culture, a *common home*, to *another* father, whose image is embodied in Vikniksor" [14].

All of this can be fully attributed to Makarenko's "Pedagogical Poem" as well. Both literary works reflect in their own way the spirit of the time, however "The Republic of SHKID" marks also a new important trend: school theme is gradually moving to the children's literature that entails corresponding changes in the field of poetics.

Characteristic style of children's literature is palpable in the story by L.A. Kassil "Conduit and Shvambrianiya" (1928-1931), written in the same years as "The Republic of SHKID", but representing a normal school for trouble-free children, rather than correctional institution. It is difficult to find other literary work about school, so clearly depicting the breath of history: like extended metaphor can be interpreted the scene, where official, hiding from mobilization in 1914, teaches "tedious algebra lesson", while war songs of the soldiers, preparing to go to the front, are wafted through the open window [15]. The action increases in the course of events; school space is transformed in the full view of astonished disciples powerfully influenced by revolution, invading into the gymnasium walls. Chekhovian laconic item suggests about changes occurred: unfaded spot on the place where just recently hung the emperor's portrait [15].

From the perspective of our theme, Kassil's book is quite interesting, in particular, by the fact that it captures both the pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary school. Old gymnasium is displayed broadly in line with the traditions of the XIX century classics, which are slightly corrected by the children's literature rules. The author of "Conduit and Shvambrianiya" shows essentially the same vices of gymnasium system as his predecessors (scholastic teaching, formalism, end excessive severity of discipline), though dramatic and sarcastic intonations, peculiar to Pomyalovski, Garin-Mikhailovsky and Chekhov, in Kassil's stories often give place to humorous inflections; monster teachers sometimes resemble the negative characters in children's fairy tales, their appearance show grotesque features, whereas the narration in general is characterized by the buffoonery elements. For example, we learn about Caesar Karpich, nicknamed Tsap Tsarapych (*that in Russian means to scratch*), that he was lopsided with a glass eye. Headmaster nicknamed Rybyi Glaz (*Fish eye*) is described in the same style.

As a result (again in accordance with the children's literature poetics), negative characters are defeated, revolution puts everything in right place; Fisheye, shifted from his post, shamefully runs forgetting galoshes, followed by laughter of gymnasium children and thoughtful comments of watchman.

Negatively marked space of the gymnasium is contrasted in Kassil's story not so much to the parental home, as in the novels of the XIX century writers, but to Shvambrianiya country, the territory of happiness and freedom, invented by Lelka and Oska. Researcher of Soviet era S.M. Loiter wrote: "Unknown countries of Kassil turned up in our children's literature as the embodiment of the dream on people's happiness, on the "good life"; they are associated with the writer's desire to see future" [16].

Contemporary theorists of literature, authors of the new textbook on Russian literature of the XX century, do not deny this optimistic interpretation, but fairly complement it by the remark that "Shvambrianiya of Oska and Lelka is not only a country full of justice, but also a country of permitted *mistake*, which has the full right to exist and for which one should not be ashamed". At the end, gymnasium has converted into a Unified labor school, and then the need for Shvambrianiya, as a counterweight to the deadly spirit of pre-revolutionary school, disappears. Following the logic of the writer's theme, the destruction of Shvambrianiya should be construed as a positive fact, though the denouement tonality gives grounds for other interpretations as well, especially the one that is offered in the new textbook: "Real life requires abandoning from own unique world and subordination of a human to the world of "sociability and collectivism " <...> At the end of the story adult writer looks at the globe and grieves not finding there Shvambrianiya. This episode symbolizes not just going beyond the children's imagination, but also the realization of the fact that in a new life there is no more space for free and individual dreams".

Conclusions

Thus, the first post-revolutionary decades can be considered in relation to the XIX century as a kind of "antithesis": statics is replaced by dynamics, instead of monster teacher we see teacher-father, truly goodie, (Makarenko's "Pedagogical Poem" is particularly revealing in this regard), prison-type school is converted into a home-type school. Thus, debunking of school institution, peculiar to the XIX century, is replaced by poeticizing. Remarkable is that the interest of the literature of these years is focused on correctional institutions. On the one hand, it is prompted by the post-revolutionary reality, when the problem of combating homelessness was one of

the most pressing, while on the other hand, it reflects one of the main ideas of socialist realism on "alteration of human nature".

Despite the obvious changes both in the described subject matter, and the approach to its interpretation in terms of a structure of the literary writing about school, written after the revolution, are similar in many respects to the texts of the XIX century realists. The most famous works of this period about the school, ("Pedagogical Poem" by A.S. Makarenko, "The Republic of SHKID" by G. Belykh and L. Pantelev, and "Conduit and Shvambrianiya" by L. Kassil) as well as the books by N.G. Pomyalovsky and N.G. Garin-Mikhailovsky, are autobiographical that entails chronicle type subject of a story; each of the narrated stories, interrelated by the time sequence, has the beginning and the end.

Growing-up novel still remains a topical, as well as the interest towards depicting various types of teachers and pupils. An important tendency that emerged in these years and developed in the future, is a gradual transition of the school subject towards children' literature institution that primarily manifests itself in the field of poetics.

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