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K.M. Fofanov and V.A. Zhukovsky (on Peculiarities of Literary Reflection of Pre-Symbolist Time)

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The article traces Konstantin Fofanov's perception of V.A. Zhukovsky's poetical heritage. As it is shown in the article, Fofanov's understanding of "the first Russian romanticist's" literary biography contains genre, motif and life-creating aspects. Their analysis leads to the conclusion about a forging influence of Zhukovsky's artistic world on the lyrical system of Fofanov as a pre-symbolist. Fofanov's musings about Zhukovsky caused an occasion to express his understanding of the Russian literary classics and to put a crucial question about the correlation between verse and prose as two different types of the writer's self-affirmation. Another set of motifs associated with Zhukovsky derives from Fofanov's visit to the ceremony of the opening of Zhukovsky's monument in 1887. This fact was rethought by Fofanov in the perspective of a famous poetic theme – exegi monumentum. Finally the "ballad fear", introduced to Russian literature by Zhukovsky, acquires distinct social connotations in Fofanov's interpretation while the ballad genre starts functioning as a part of socially-oriented literature.

Keywords: Zhukovsky, Fofanov, literary jubilee, canonization of the classics, biography, aesthetic perception, motif, ballad.

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Introduction

In his report "O prichinakh upadka i o novykh techeniyakh sovremennoi russkoi literatury" ("On reasons of decadence and new tendencies of modern Russian literature") (1892) D.S. Merezhkovsky pointed out to a landmark nature of his time, as if crowning a rich but, to his mind, close to exhaustiveness historic-and-literary period: "No historic epoch, no matter how fruitful it was, as well as no nation can continuously produce geniuses" (Merezhkovsky, 2007, 429). Focusing his attention

upon a typologically close situation in French literature, the critic opposed naturalistic writers to writers-ideologists. According to Merezhkovsky, the role of the latter was not so much in creating masterpieces as in a feasible approach of art to the aesthetics of artistic idealism (Govorukhina, 2012, 163-164).

Theoretical prerequisites

In Russian literature of the end of the 80-s – the beginning of the 90-s of the XIX century

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there appeared a new generation of poets, not top ones yet, but paving the way to the top ones to appear. This period was similar to the situation of the 1790-1810-s. “Combination of ‘already not’ and ‘not yet’” was the main peculiar feature of the epoch (Lotman, 1971, 6). The period between the years of 1887 and 1895 witnessed some decisive events. These were S.Ia. Nadson’s death, on the one hand, and the advent of modernists’ first editions, on the other hand. P.P. Pertsov called this period a “Fofanov’s” one (Pertsov, 2002) and so it was called after. It was at that time when a new round of romanticism was spinning up. With reference to K.M. Fofanov it was termed “neo-romanticism”, or “naïve romanticism”. The fact of Fofanov being a central poet of that transition epoch was particularly mentioned in Merezhkovsky’s aesthetic manifesto, and namely in the part about modern literary generation. Regarding their historic-and-functional perspective, such transition periods in culture became “the time of soul-searching” (Lotman, 2007, 8) when the “reflexivity” of literature grew and the search for both predecessors and lines of further development intensified. Thus, it is natural that there was a special place for V.A. Zhukovsky, a father of Russian romanticism, in the creative consciousness of Fofanov, a “neo-romanticist”.

Unpublished rough copies of Fofanov’s article “Zhukovsky and Gogol” and the poet’s diary notes, as well as pieces of fiction bearing the evidence of Zhukovsky have become the material for this article. A comprehensive analysis of Fofanov’s texts has enabled us to single out a set of Zhukovsky-oriented topics and motifs and understand what “shifts” actualize new meanings in them. Among key directions in Fofanov’s perception of Zhukovsky’s creative work there have been distinguished the “poetry – prose” antithesis, the topic of monument, and complication with social motifs of “ballad fear”.

“Poetry” and “prose” in Fofanov’s understanding

The “poetry – prose” opposition has become meaning- and structure-forming for those Fofanov’s text, which are regarded as key “Zhukovskian” ones. They are “Poeziia – Bog” (“Poetry is God”) poem and “Zhukovsky and Gogol” unpublished article. The article was planned and roughly written for Zhukovsky’s and Gogol’s jubilees in 1902. This year united the names of two Russian classics through the date of their death and provoked the authors of jubilee works to bring their biographies and creative work in correlation one way or another. Fofanov also started his article with this correlation. Recollections about Zhukovsky and Gogol were the grounds for Fofanov not only to express his thoughts about Russian classical tradition but also to raise a key question about the correlation between *the poetic* and *the prose*. He premised a critical review of these persons, celebrating their jubilee, with a quatrain, “finishing” a famous line of Zhukovsky’s “Kamoens” (“Camões”) – “Poetry is God in holy dreams”. A possible reconstruction of the “epigraph” is the following one: “Poetry is God in holy dreams. / While prose is also God, prostrated in the *dust, / Embraced with thorns, offended by *contempt / And dying with a silent blessing” (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art. Stock 525. Inventory number 1. Document number 407. P. 1.).

This unpublished poem distinctly (like in a drop of water) reflects the message of the article about Zhukovsky, a poet, and Gogol, a prose writer. In Fofanov’s interpretation the meaning of the “poetry – prose” dichotomy was not as much in presence/absence of a rhythmic organization of the artistic speech as in rather broad, mythologizing interpretation of “prose” and “poetry” as two opposite life styles and, consequently, two different types of an artist’s self-affirmation with respect to it. Thus, Fofanov

made an aesthetic antithesis a key component of a poet's self-affirmation in the epoch of "rough positivism", approaching a set of problems to be solved by the next generation of poets.

In the perspective of stylistics an attempt to "finish" Zhukovsky's works seems even more characteristic to Fofanov, especially if his passion for poetic comparisons is taken into account. According to S.V. Sapozhkov, "comparison in Fofanov's artistic world is not only an ontological category, but also an epistemological one; it is both an object and an instrument of poetic knowledge of the world" (Sapozhkov, 2001). As for Zhukovsky, he found an appropriate comparison to define the gist of *poetry*. As for Fofanov, he took on the task to similarly define *prose*, at the same time clarifying interdependence and difference between these concepts as well as literary traditions backing them.

A line from "Camões", engraved on Zhukovsky's monument in Aleksandrovsky sad (Aleksandrovsky garden), was a subject of Fofanov's reflection even before this engraving. The poet was present at the opening of Kreitan's monument to Zhukovsky on the 4th of June, 1887 and made a note about it in his diary the same day (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art. Stock 525. Inventory number 1. Document number 8. P. 128 (reverse)-129). Later the poet's recollections about the opening of this monument – the first one in the bust alley in Aleksandrovsky sad – repeatedly echoed in his creative work, having gained a paradigmatic character. Besides, Fofanov's visit to the unveiling of the monument is around the beginning of his poetic activity: it was the year of 1887 when his first collected poems "Stikhotvoreniya" ("Poems") were published. Later a famous lyrical topic of a "monument not build with hands" was assigned with features of this ceremonial event (Fofanov, 2010).

Fofanov defined his poem "Poetry is God" "an abridged line of "Camões". If the paraphrase

in the title was taken out of it, the line "Poetry is God in holy dreams of Earth" is repeated word for word seven times in the poem and is polemically overwritten by the poet once. Moreover, the image of Zhukovsky's bust with the inscription on the pedestal ("And, bowing his head as if afraid of distance, / A minstrel of "Svetlana" is here. Stop, listen! / You see the letters on a grey pedestal: / "Poetry is God in holy dreams of Earth" (Fofanov, 2010, 328)) appear in the text. Thus, the second motif-thematic section, genetically tracing back to Zhukovsky and clearly apparent in Fofanov's texts, is connected with the variations on the topic of a monument to a poet and comprises a set of clichés of "*exegi monumentum*" poetic topic. It should be also noted that the work at "Poetry is God" was carried out during the period of a "jubilee-mania" that began in Russia after Pushkin's holiday in 1880 and was the evidence of understanding of "ideological potential" of such official events (Vdovin, 2010) with opening a poet's monument as their apogee. In this regard Fofanov gives a double interpretation of the "*monument not build with hands*" topic. It is close to Derzhavin's one. Thus, it implies the meaning of an "eternal monument" as a piece of creative work and that of a "copper monument" included in the official state pantheon of the classics. Another Fofanov's "eternal" topic is involving poetry in commercial relations and professionalism of the poet himself. It is embodied on both levels of the poem: semantic and stylistic ones. The dialogue between a hero and a publisher represents the intrusion of prosaic style into poetic speech. Thus, aesthetic and ideological opposition of prose and poetry is also supported stylistically.

Incorporation of the line from "Camões" into the poem led to their metric and rhythmic closeness. By doing so Fofanov resorted to "semantization of the plane of expression in a poem" (Levin, 2000, 291) and provoked a reader to search for the analogy with Zhukovsky's

poem. Both poems (Zhukovsky's and Fofanov's ones) were autobiographical. O.B. Lebedev mentions: "The beginning of drama is mostly direct translation from German; but towards the end Zhukovsky added so much of his own to the original and, thus, gave a clear hint on himself. In Camões's stories he omitted the circumstances that didn't correspond to the events in his own life" (Lebedeva, 2011, 650). Zhukovsky's "Camões" underwent such impressive changes that the poet himself didn't call the poem a translation, but characterized it as an "imitation of Halm". Owing to these circumstances Camões's speculations about a poet's mission and his place in society were understood not as much as this Portuguese poet of the XVI century's words but as Zhukovsky's thoughts. Thus, it's not accidentally that it was a final line from "Camões", one of two of his poetic "auto-characteristics" (along with the part from "Undine"), that was engraved on the pedestal of the poet's monument in Aleksandrovsky sad.

In spite of the fact that "Poetry is God" poem was devoted to A.S. Slutsky, Fofanov's acquaintance, it covered not only the poet's life circumstances, but also contained his universal speculations about the role of a poet and poetry in society. Moreover, the text was autobiographical and even prophetic for Fofanov himself as it touched upon his personality's "dark" and "bright" sides. Thus, the "poetry is god" idiom was close to the poet's attitude to literary work. Ilya Repin, the painter of Fofanov's famous portrait, wrote about the poet: "The feature of almost a religious cult of serving the poetry was the brightest in him. <...> I was always pleasantly thrilled by the tone of his conventional majesty when he crossed the threshold of his place of worship... Transfiguration took place. The times of Zhukovsky, prince Odoyevsky, Ogarev, Herzen, and others from the glorious constellation of the Decembrists came back" (Sapozhkov, 2002, 147-148). At the same time the "Poetry is

an animal frightening people!" paraphrase "was implemented in the fate of the poetic leader of Repin's circle of writers with literal accuracy" long before the publication of Fofanov's poem (Sapozhkov, 2002, 145).

Fofanov was attracted by "Zhukovsky's special attention to a poet's social status" in "Camões", and it was the dialogue with the Russian romanticist per se that formed a dramatic layer of "Poetry is God" poem. A final line from "Camões" is repeatedly "verified" in Fofanov's poem and sounds in the descriptions of various life circumstances of its hero. Two out of eight citations of Zhukovsky's poem are given "pre-reflexively" (childhood and days of the first fame). The next four citations are presented ironically and built in the narration about numerous burdens of the poet's life, such as poverty and parting with the beloved, cold and hunger, editors' refusals and getting into the "police house". At that the uniqueness of a hero's position is eliminated by the poet's visits to several of his colleagues, whose very poor conditions stroke him. It is significant that Nekrasov's social note, sounding in Fofanov's poem, isn't focused traditionally to the public. It is focused to the poet himself.

The ironic citation is followed with the polemic reinterpretation of "Camões": "And weakly shaking hand in rage / He throws notebooks of previous years in fire. / And laughing, says: "Well, Muse, the dear, – / The poetry is an animal frightening people!.." (Fofanov, 2010, 329). It is indicative that in his rough copies to "Zhukovsky and Gogol" article Fofanov resorts to similar strategies of description of *the poetic* and *the prose*. He starts his article, citing Zhukovsky on the heart of poetry which was never clarified later as for Fofanov it was a peculiar ideal formula of poetry. The article further dwells upon the poet's speculations about the prose – first in verse, then in the form of a critical review. From all Zhukovsky's texts the

critic cited the line “Poetry is God in holy dreams of Earth”. As for Gogol’s text, he cited “It is a depressing world, gentlemen!” which is a final line from the story of two gentlemen landowners “The Tale of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarreled with Ivan Nikiforovich” (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art. Stock 525. Inventory number 1. Document number 407. P. 2-2 (reverse)).

In the final octave of “Poetry is God” poem the autobiographical hero overcomes his despair. He clearly sees real spheres of poetry, which are far from the vale of life, and returns to the initial meaning of Zhukovsky’s phrase but on a new level of its interpretation. It is significant that all the events in Fofanov’s poem are timed to Christmas, when, according to the legend, the contact with the other world (that of the evil spirit, according to folklore ideas; and that of the transcendent, according to romantic and modernist versions of the double world) is significantly eased. Together with the first stars the poet is as if born again: “And there, in the skies, in the constellation of the Bear, / In radiant beads, in sparkling dust / Of silver worlds the psalmist heard: “Poetry is God in holy dreams of Earth!” (Fofanov, 2010, 329). The final lines of the poem actualize a martyred, sacrificial meaning of Camões’s words. It intersects with Merezhkovsky’s aphoristic statement about a poet’s fate in Russia (Vasil’ev, 2009, 116-117) and about Fofanov, in particular: “A writer in Russia is a Russian martyr! <...> Fofanov, like Garshin, fell in martyred love with beauty and poetry. It was a matter of death and life for him” (Merezhkovsky, 2007, 485, 491).

**Zhukovsky’s image
as a crown prince’s tutor
in Fofanov’s poetry**

In “Ocharovannyi prints” (“The Enchanted Prince”) (1897), a work of literature published with the subtitle “ballad”, Zhukovsky becomes one of the “characters” of this Fofanov’s text.

The story of the text creation is clearly preserved in the rough copies of “The Enchanted Prince” ballad we can witness now. The dialogue between a crown prince and a tutor, biographically close to Zhukovsky, appears one of the first in them and is the only episode finally written right away: “With the stare of a kid, with the soul of a poet, / A humble tutor told him, / That there, behind the wall, / A crowd of radiant, mysterious forces is hidden from the light” (Fofanov, 2010, 284). A crown prince’s journey in his country is a central event in the ballad. Fofanov brings it together with both the social plot of the “inspection” of the province and historically real journeys of Alexander Nikolaevich and Nikolai Alexandrovich, the crown princes, who travelled far inland (Uortman, 2002; Anisimov, 2002). The crown prince’s tutor is associated with Zhukovsky due to several circumstances. The first one is a genre marking of the text. It was Zhukovsky who formed a ballad canon in Russian culture (Katz, 1976, 37-138). That’s why Fofanov’s genre mark inevitably provoked the readers to search for similar parallels. The plot of “The Enchanted Prince” is directed towards the modification of a ballad scheme of a “terrible journey” with the effect of a ballad fear, which is the most important in Zhukovsky’s programme works (Ryan, 1992, 647-669).

The second one is Fofanov’s description of the prince’s tutor. The image of a “humble” prince “with the soul of a poet”, “with the stare of a kid” accurately coincides with Zhukovsky’s stereotype image created by his contemporaries and doesn’t associate with G.G. Danilovich, a tutor of Nicholas II. In 1880-s, the period of celebration of the first centenary of Zhukovsky’s birth and understanding the reign of Alexander II’s who died in 1881, the question of a beneficial nature of the tsar’s tutelage by the poet, which was unprecedented in Russia, was often put. The memoirs of those who belonged to Zhukovsky’s

nearest circle contained numerous comparisons of the poet with a child. Thus, F.F. Vigel wrote: “He embodies the mixture of a child with an angel; and his life seems to be a long-lasting transformation from the first state directly to the last one” (Vigel, 1999, 164). This image of Zhukovsky can be compared his image in A.O. Smirnova-Rosset’s recollections: “Zhukovsky is often taken in; he is as naïve as a child” (Smirnova-Rosset, 1989, 24). The epithet “humble” with regard to the poet is well-known thanks to A. Turgenev’s poem, devoted to him, that starts with the line “Covering a humble way of life with flowers...” (Turgenev, 1971). Resignation becomes the main feature in Zhukovsky’s words addressed to the heir in his famous message “To Grand Duchess, princess Alexandra Feodorovna, on birth of Grand Duke Alexander Nikolaevich” (Zhukovsky, 2000, 197-198).

“The Enchanted Prince” is attracted to the plot schemes, widespread in folklore and literary tradition. The schemes include the motif of an unrecognized emperor. By the XIX century the plot scheme of a royal person’s “meeting with people” was strongly modified; and in comparison with the first stories about Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great new historic anecdotes often represented the deeds of those in power as their “rhetorical gestures” (Nikanorova, 2009, 41). Fofanov includes two journeys in the ballad. The first one is the heir’s official voyage around the country for which citizens thoroughly prepared and, thus, met the prince triumphantly. This journey finishes with the hero’s “political fiasco”. Contrary to the readers’ expectations injustice is not eliminated, and rendering of mercy is limited to the “velure handed out”. The second journey is implicitly introduced to the final part and is based on the motif of an unrecognized crown

prince: the crown prince remains unrecognized not only by the people, but also by the court and family members (Kovtun, 2005). This brings the ballad and the plot scheme of “the savior in hiding” together. But for all that an optimistic variant of reading the final part is complicated by the following: Fofanov’s ballad portrays both the source of injustice (traditionally a venal official, a cruel general, a greedy police officer, etc.) and the people as non-personalized; and as a result the plot gets the meaning of historical regularity which can’t be bridged over by the effort of one person only, even if he is a heir to the throne (The fate of the reform, 2013). In further reference to Zhukovsky’s ballad works Fofanov sticks to the analogous strategy, attaching realistic (physiological and social) justifications to the events.

Conclusion

The phenomenon, called “tessera” (rethinking and “finishing” of a topical poet-forerunner) by Harold Bloom (Bloom, 1998, 18), became Fofanov’s main strategy in respect of Zhukovsky’s works. Fofanov was attracted to the understanding of poetry and *the poetic* in general as nearly religious, mystical and often martyred service, that he noticed in creative heritage of the author of “Camões”. Fofanov enriched it with his understanding of *the prose*, contrary but at the same time inevitable side of life. To describe it Fofanov resorted to the techniques of poetics of Zhukovsky’s ballads, adding acute social meanings to this genre form. In Fofanov’s perception, the nature of Zhukovsky crystallized into a psychologically close image of the poet “with the stare of a kid”, on the one hand, and into a figure of an unquestionable and “cast in copper” classic, on the other hand.

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К.М. Фофанов и В.А. Жуковский (об особенностях литературной рефлексии предсимволистского времени)

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*В статье исследуются закономерности рецепции К.М. Фофановым поэтического наследия В.А. Жуковского. Осмысление Фофановым творческого пути “первого русского романтика” включает в себя, как показано в статье, жанрообразовательный, мотивологический и культурно-биографический аспекты, анализ которых позволяет сделать вывод о моделирующем характере воздействия художественного мира Жуковского на лирическую систему поэта-предсимволиста. Для Фофанова размышления о Жуковском стали поводом высказаться о русской классической традиции, а также поставить ключевой для него вопрос о соотношении поэтического и прозаического как двух разных типов самоутверждения художника. Другой рецептивный блок связан с посещением Фофановым торжественного открытия памятника Жуковскому в 1887 г., творчески воспринятого им в русле поэтической темы *exegi monumentum*. Наконец, балладный страх, введенный в русскую культуру Жуковским, приобретает у Фофанова четко выраженный социальный характер, а балладная форма начинает выполнять функцию прикрепления к литературе остросоциальных тем.*

Ключевые слова: Жуковский, Фофанов, литературный юбилей, канонизация классики, биография, рецепция, мотив, баллада.

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