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Ahead, to ... Rozov ("Meeting-Farewell" Dichotomy in Russian Drama of the end of the XX – Beginning of the XXI Centuries)

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The article deals with the prospects for contemporary dramaturgy of inheritance of traditions of Russian psychological drama of 1950-1970, particularly its special kinds realized through the dichotomy "meeting-farewell". In this connection, the influence of the so-called "Rozovskaya" tradition is considered in this context.

A special position in contemporary plays is occupied by the motive of meeting of classmates and fellow students. It gives the psychological drama some special material, due to the comparison of "then" and "now".

According to the author of the present article, Russian psychological drama written in Rozovskaya tradition, plays a special role, in overcoming the crisis that arose in the Russian theatre of the 1990s.

Keywords: modern dramaturgy, psychological drama, meeting-farewell dichotomy, Rozov's tradition.

Introduction. After multiple attempts of reforming the post-revolutionary Russian theater, the Soviet ideologist of those times, Soviet People's Commissar of Enlightenment A.V. Lunacharsky, in a series of articles published in those times called out to return to the traditions of Russian psychological drama, the peak of which he saw in the plays by A.N. Ostrovsky.

Theoretical framework. In the epoch of cheap melodrama (to which, by the way, Lunacharsky as a playwright had paid his tribute himself) and the growing sensation of approaching post-modernism crisis, the return

to quality psychological drama is extremely necessary.

We see its origins in Rozov's "family play" with its protest against conformism and petty bourgeoisie, young rebellious characters and the motive of reappraisal of moral values. As we see it, having gone through the temptation of bare absurd, "remakes and sequels", modern dramaturgy and theatre are slowly, without extra enthusiasm deviating from the "ideal" development scenario and are again approaching Russian humanistic traditions of the mid XX century dramaturgy, some of which are identified

as parable tradition (E. Radzinsky, A. Volodin etc.), melodramatic tradition (A. Arbuzov) and the tradition of psychological family drama (V. Rozov).

Statement of the problem.—The main “component” of Russian psychological drama is the “meeting-farewell” dichotomy.

Meetings of the characters after decades is the compositional and narrative base of “Five Evenings” by A. Volodin and “Warsaw Melody” by L. Zorin. In the dramaturgy of the second half of the XX century, this dichotomy was also the base for the plays “Tanya”, “Years of Wandering”, “My Poor Marat”, “Cruel Games” and “The Winner” by A. Arbuzov, “House, Overlooking the Field”, “Farewell in June” and “Duck Hunting” by A. Vampilov (and also the plot of the earlier unfinished plays by the Irkutsk playwright, attributed by the compilers and commentators of the book “Dramaturgic Heritage” as two “Untitled Plays”) (Vampilov, 2002, 703-715).

From the very opening of these plays it is evident that the main action should take place at a student dormitory and a railway station, which allows us to suppose that the “meeting-farewell” dichotomy is the key motive of the plot.

Discussion. The drafts of the first unfinished play were made by Vampilov in the very beginning of the 60-s. Its text is presented by three variants of handwritten draft (22 pages) of a play about institute graduates, with lots of alternations introduced by the author and quite detailed explication of the action. As the names of some characters (Tanya, Zina, Vikin) repeat, it is clear that these are different variants of the beginning of the same play, very likely the one preceding “The Fair”. It is remarkable that none of the memoirists, along with Vampilov himself, ever mention this unfinished work. However, some remarks from it (for example, “a semi-party

table with some bottles, abandoned for the sake of dance...”), and some lines can be found in “The Fair” and “Notebooks”.

We regard five extracts from this play as a sort of an “embryo” of Vampilov’s dramaturgy, according to which it is already possible to judge about the main principles of his creative laboratory, and the outlining tendencies of his creative process. (Turning to the manuscripts of such plays by Alexander Vampilov as “The Fair”, “Rafael”, “Duck Hunting”, does confirm the stable integrity of these principles along the whole creative career of the playwright).

The first extract (10th page of the manuscript), is the list of the play characters consisting of four main and four episodic characters, which once again proves the seriousness of the initial idea of the author.

What supposed conclusions can be arrived at, if, according to the absence of any corrections or alternations, this “opening” was written as a clean copy? The play was to be written about *two pairs* of institute graduates, graduates of *different* institutes (as the author’s remark on the right from the bracket that unites two pairs of the main character states, “young people, graduates of *institutes*”).

While writing this, Vampilov was already committed to the main principle of naming his characters, which he followed in *all* of his plays: he calls male characters by their last names (Nikiforov, Vikin), and female – by their first names (Zina, Tanya). According to the “pairness” of the antagonist characters, they were meant to be antipodes in their world outlook.

“Meeting-farewell” dichotomy takes an important place in the first finished one-act play by Vampilov “House, Overlooking the Field”.

Special attention is drawn to the initial and eternal (unlike the majority of other dramaturgic incentives of Vampilov) constant of the play title, that has become the concept of the play, that has

an open space-time structure and that includes a special archetypal set of image-symbols, directly connected to the “meeting-farewell” dichotomy (“house”, “windows”, “door”, “doorstep” etc.). Let us remark, that this openness is opposed by the locked and nailed up house of Tretyakov, his temporary shelter.

The encounter of the play characters, that conditions the structural specificity of the play, takes place to the permanent accompaniment of the Choir behind the stage.

In the majority of the variants of his play “Farewell in June”, the playwright “loops” the plot by the “meeting-farewell” of the main characters, Kolesov and Tanya.

The “meeting-farewell” dichotomy was also supposed to take a significant place in the little-known unfinished play by Alexander Vampilov called “The Last Summer Day”, which is confirmed by some explications, that remained intact in the author’s archive.

1. Farewell, wait, encounter.

2. Field before rain, conversation.

Unfinished house. Rain»...

11 (roman) <Park, encounter> room 25.

Rain, conversation

111(roman) Park, encounter

Rain. <conversation>...

Y111 (roman.) Accidental meetings

11. <Rain> End of the rain (cit. Smirnov, 2005, 122-123)

The key motive of the scene “Farewell, wait, encounter” was a confession, accompanied by the following remark: “All ridiculous”.

This is the scene, which, according to the initial idea of the author, was supposed to be the exposition to the further development of the action.

Under the plan, the playwright makes one more important characterological note: “the same jokes, one and another”, anticipating the future monologue of Zilov in front of the locked door

in the “Duck Hunting”, and in the “plan” itself this “significant character” is also granted to the word “reality”, numerously emphasized by the author, which acts as a compositional antipode to the “mirage” being.

As it is clear from the examples shown above, Vampilov was very much involved into the work on the play, and thought over its compositions in an extremely detailed way.

However, the play remained unfinished. It is hard to say, whether the playwright was going to return to this idea or not. In any case, nothing from the “The Last Summer Day” drafts, besides the character names, café name “Nezabudka” (“*Forget-Me-Not*”), the rain motive and two lines of the characters was used in “Duck Hunting”; it allows us to consider the play to be an absolutely independent unfinished work, not an early variant of “Duck Hunting”, as it was first stated in the remarks to the “Selected Works” published in Moscow (Vampilov, 1999, 736).

Classical Russian and foreign dramaturgy gives us a lot of examples, where the author selects a “crossroads” of the life journeys of the characters as the main action place. In some variants of “Farewell in June”, just like in “Untitled Plays”, the action takes place at a railway station. Vampilov selected a hotel as the action place of “Provincial Anecdotes”; the place that unites the characters of “Duck Hunting” is “Nezabudka” café, and for “Last Summer in Chulimsk” it is a tea-house.

The choice of a temporary shelter for the characters also conditions the opposition of arrival/departure, that became widely spread in the further works of the playwright.

The clash of the past and the present in Russian psychological drama often served the purpose of revealing the level of moral consistency of the characters. The playwrights turned to the recurring motive of a meeting (after many years?) (of friends, classmates etc.), that we

define as a “meeting-gathering” and its invariant, a “meeting-concourse”.

Concerning this, in her monograph “Paradox of Drama, Drama of Paradox” S.M. Kozlova spoke of Volodin’s “neorealism” and Arbuzov’s “avant-gardism” (Kozlova, 1993, 43), and connected them to the “crisis” of faith and hopes, that broke out in the prose and drama at the turn of the year 1967. It was this year, when such plays as “The Happy Days Of An Unhappy Man” by A. Arbuzov, “Warsaw Melody” by L. Zorin, “Traditional Gathering” by V. Rozov, “Long Time No See” by V. Panova – confession-plays, retrospection-plays, the plays of bitter hopeless conclusions, broken illusions, misty worries – were written. These plays seem to be the end of the ideological and aesthetical reconstruction process of the Soviet drama that manifested itself, first of all, in the final reappraisal of all moral values. Good marks received for “intensive social activity” are decisively crossed out and erased, and new “fives” are given for strong family hearth, for sympathy and mercy in “Traditional Gathering”. For the sake of only two days of simple human happiness, long and hard ascension to the peaks of science is reduced to zero and loses all its value in “The Happy Days Of An Unhappy Man” (Kozlova, 1993, 51-52).

And, for real, the gatherings of “classmates” and “groupmates” are a special and fruitful material for psychological drama, in the aspect of comparing of “then” and “now”. As we can see from the context, the characters of “Duck Hunting” (1968) by Alexander Vampilov are also classmates (or former students of the same school), as it is evident from the line of Sayapin about Dima, the waiter: “Look, what he is like. At school he used to be a quiet lad. No one could ever imagine that he would become a waiter” (Vampilov, 2002, 537).

The characters of “Duck Hunting” are people in their thirties, while the characters of the play

“Traditional Gathering” by Rozov, who also meet in the mid 60-s, quarter century after their prom, are already 42 years old.

The invariant of friendly encounter is the “meeting-concourse”, as in plays by L. Petrushevskaya (“Raw Leg or Friendly Encounter”) and Yu. Polyakov (“Homo Erectus, or Wife Exchange”).

In both plays we see the typical Vampilov’s “company” and its modifications, as it was defined by director Anatoly Vasilyev.

Let us remark, that in the play “Friendly Encounter...” by L. Petrushevskaya, the word “company” is mentioned twice in one dialogue:

Natasha. A usual Serezhka’s company it is... An old company of his. They didn’t accept me in.” (Petrushevskaya, 1996, 77).

As it is known, V. Rozov set a moral dilemma in his dramas: “Who to be and what to be?”, V. Slavkin in “The Adult Daughter Of The Young Man”, A. Galin in the play “Eastern Tribune” reconciled the moral values of the past with the modern days of the seventies.

In his drama “Classmates” (initial title: “Classmate Girl”) (2008), Yu. Polyakov is openly guided by Rozov’s tradition.

Dramaturgy of Yu. Polyakov naturally continues his prosaic path (moreover, many works by Polyakov as a prose writer exist in the form of successful stage versions and movies).

At the meeting that took place in the Scientific Library of Irkutsk State University (October, 2004), responding to the question about the theater and cinematographic destiny of his books asked by the author of the present article, the writer answered with great surprise, saying that the volumes of his plays are published in quite large circulation.

And in the year 2009, anticipating the publication of the next selection of his plays under the general title “Classmates”, the author named

his performance in a quite ambiguous way: "The Prose Writer's Dramas".

The introduction to the public speech, written with a glimpse of bitter irony, just like all the speeches of the writer, told about the relationship of the writer with the theater, and was later characterized by Yu. Polyakov as defenselessness of a stranger, who accidentally walked in the zone of an counterterrorist operation.

Mark Rozovsky, Igor Gorbachev, Andrey Goncharov, who one by one threw their cards up in the face of the "authorities" and "liberal protests", and Mikhail Ulyanov, the art director of a suburban Moscow theater and an actor of the Satire Theatre who once refused to play the role of a swindler deputy "for the sake of ideology", made their contribution into the "theatre novel" of Yu. Polyakov.

In the opinion of Yu. Polyakov, it was in the 1990-s theatre that was considered an "outlaw" in the world of ideological and censure taboos, when one could often see "corpses of classics dishallowed in an innovative way, or a modern drama about inhabitants of the urban dump, who toss about promiscuity, eternity and drugs, and curse all around. Quite often it was possible to fall across some foxy amateur anti-Soviet performance. In the best case they would give an imported comedy, but alas, its plot would be totally forgotten at the moment when the cloakroom attendant would take my check in her hand and walk to the hanger, with which the theatre starts" (Polyakov, 2009, 6).

"I think that the theatre has totally lost the play, realistic in a good sense. The problem of the modern playwrights is that they have totally lost the skill of constructing plots and dialogues. It is just some unintelligible avant-garde. First, write a play like Rozov did. Then write a play in the way you want it. And they cannot do it in Rozov's way. And my play is a *family play in Rozov's tradition*, good humour (speaking about

"Confirming Kill" play – S.S.) (Polyakov, 2004, 333).

Responding to the question about the theater destiny of his plays, asked by one of the journalists, Polyakov said the following: "I do not complain. Six of my plays are on in Moscow only. "Kid In Milk", for example, has been played at Ruben Simonov's Theatre for 330 times in 10 years, and always with full audience. My plays are widely performed in Russia and CIS countries. Recently I have been to Erevan. It was the first night of "Aphrodite's Left Breast" in Stanislavsky Russian Theatre, brilliantly produced by Alexander Grigoryan. But, to tell the truth, there is one problem. For some reason, many modern directors prefer some *gloomy classics remakes or dump-and-drugs gore*. The viewer does not go to the performance, it does not remain in the repertoire for too long, but the "Golden Mask" is already there. They are afraid of smart, modern, social tragicomedy, that the audience likes so much. When Stanislav Govorukhin brought our "Confirm Kill" to one art director, a holder of the Order of Merit for the Motherland, he read it and cried: "Stasik, do you want me to fight with all my sponsors?" That is how it is! In the Soviet Age, they were afraid of Central Committee. Now, of their sponsors..." (Polyakov, 2008).

Just like he does in prose, in dramaturgy Yu. Polyakov intentionally provokes the reader and the spectator with common literature and theatre clichés, remaining absolutely serious as an author. It is like he consciously starts an "away game", luring the audience from the Western "situation comedies" built on risky plots, the examples of which, like plays by R. Cooney, have captivated the Russian stage

Plays by Polyakov are totally filled with allusions to the modern Russian reality, which sometimes looks like mockery, if not to say absurd.

The play “Classmates” was characterized by the author as a *melodrama*. “...However, it is not a pure melodrama, there are many funny moments, though sad ones are more common. The life is like this. The play is subtle, “near miss”, and, of course, malignant... Directors are a bit afraid of it, they have lost the skill of producing challenging plays, where one genre is slightly turning into another, and the level of its criticizing the modern life feels threatening. But these are the plays the audience likes; these are the books the readers buy...” (Polyakov, 2008).

Even the place of action itself bears significant character: “a provincial town on a great Russian river”; the last name of the main character, a handicapped Afghan War veteran, is Kostromitin. (Let us remember that the action takes the same place in “The Storm” and “Without a Dowry” by Ostrovsky, in “The Wedding Day” (“...on the high bank of the Volga”). The characters (that include the representatives of almost all strata of the modern society: an oligarch, a sottish homeless poet, a priest and an emigrant to Australia, Boris Lipovetsky, top-model Anna Falikova and teacher Svetlana Pogozheva) celebrate the 40th birthday of the handicapped Afghan War veteran. The introductory remark is significant by itself: “A typical three-room flat, furnished in a quite decent way according to the standards of the 80-s of the past century”... On the wall, there is a photograph of a smiling internationalist-soldier, wearing a sandy camouflage and a tropical panama. In one hand he is holding

a “Kalashnikov”, and a guitar in another”. (Polyakov, 2009, 221).

The characters’ last names, that are, no doubt, charactonyms, are selected according to the rules of classicism poetics (oligarch Chermet (*Ferrous Metal*), poet Strochkov (*Lines*), major Okopov (*Fire Trench*) etc.).

The traditions of psychological drama are, to our mind, still alive. The time is changing, and so are the values, characters and ideals. We can prove it by turning to the plays written for two actors, the ones that resemble some modern variations of Vampilov’s “House, Overlooking The Field” (for example, the plays “Esenia” by Andrey Ivanov” and “The Whistle-Stop” by Alexei Scherbak, presented at Alexander Vampilov All-Russia Festival Of Modern Dramaturgy in 2011).

Psychological drama traditions are followed in the play “Exhibits” by Vyacheslav Durnenkov, that tells the story of inhabitants of an old provincial town, who, against their will, have turned into live “masker exhibits”, that play out the past life for the visitors.

Psychological drama (to the authors of which we should probably add Ekaterina Narshi and Elena Erpyleva, and a whole constellation of other, less known playwrights) enters a challenging fight with the “gores” by followers of Nikolai Kolyada’s school, that have already bored the audience. For this reason it is still possible that the present decade will become the period of rebirth and blossom of psychological drama, including the ones based on “meeting-farewell” dichotomy.

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«Вперёд к... Розову!»

(Дихотомия «встреча – прощание»

в русской драме конца XX – начала XXI в.)

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В статье говорится о перспективности для современной драматургии наследования традиций русской психологической драмы 1950–1970-х гг., в частности ее особой разновидности, реализованной через дихотомию «встреча – прощание». В этой связи рассматривается в данном контексте влияние так называемой «розовской» традиции.

Особое место принадлежит в современной пьесе сюжетному мотиву встречи одноклассников и однокурсников. Он придает психологической драме особый и благодатный материал благодаря сравнению «тогда и теперь».

По мнению автора статьи, именно русской психологической драме, написанной в розовской традиции, принадлежит особая роль в преодолении кризиса, возникшего в русском театре рубежа 1990-х гг.

Ключевые слова: современная драматургия, психологическая драма, дихотомия «встреча – прощание», «розовская традиция».
