

Russian Literary Historiosophy on the Boundary of XX-XXI Centuries: Problem of Moral Potential and Religious Contacts

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Abstract.

The main problem of the given article is the traditions of national historiosophic idea. Literary material for the analysis is broadly represented in the works of V. Lichutin and V. Pelevin, A. Prokhanov and D. Bykov, Z. Prilepin and V. Sharov, A. Ivanov and V. Sorokin. The absolute majority of these literary works possesses deep didactic potential as authors pay their attention to the long history of national formation. Such plots and stories stand aside from modern mass arts. Nowadays Russian historiosophy, though understood from different political and ideological points of view, tends to solve one common problem – estimation of Russia's place in the world history. Such tendency helps readers to develop independent and free view on different historic processes. The given article also touches the problem of religious component of historiosophic idea. It occurs as national self-determination is mostly regarded through the deep religious aspect. Russian historiosophy can be understood only if the reader knows Christian world model. Starting from the 80-es of XX century when religion was again allowed and accepted on each level of social life, Russian culture came back to its Christian traditions. Another aspect of “religious question” is the process of state rethinking when the whole country feels the crisis of Soviet mentality and tries to get back to its traditional philosophy and world perception.

Key words: modern literature; fiction historiosophy; liberation didactics; religious didacticism; postmodernism.

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1. Introduction

Fiction historiography is a subject of modern literature study that tends to pay attention to the text level which is able to raise the topicality of literary work and involve it into the context of social, moral and philosophical processes. Problems of fiction historiography are performed and in their own ways solved by the literary texts of Vladimir Lichutin and Viktor Pelevin, Alexander Prokhanov and Dmitry Bykov, Zakhar Prilepin and Vladimir Sharov, Alexey Ivanov and Vladimir Sorokin. Moral and didactic aspects of fiction historiography discourse are of special interest.

Each literary work possesses its own didactic potential. Even when the author strives to correspond to some value system and exact ethical basics, his literary work follows its own logic of literature moral freedom and remains to be an individualized phenomenon in the didactic sphere. Obviously, we can only anticipate the didactic potential of literary work, determine the direction of its possible development, outline the image of implicit reader but keep understanding the fact of ultimate unpredictability of interaction between the text and the reader whose contact is minimum in theoretical sphere and maximum in the field of inimitable practice. Our aim is to make assumptions about general didactics of literary work related to historiography.

2. Body of paper

Russia in its historical formation occurs to be the center of reader's consciousness who is obliged to appeal to the plot of national formation in the process of reading. Modern literature has to take into the consideration the increasing influence of mass art and therefore decrease both psychological tension of the text and intellectual level of the plot. But mass art influence does not deprive fiction historiography of its didactic meaning. Presence of historiographic problem increases the seriousness of the text, raises the reader above the standard level of mass plot structures. "Disputes among the authors – sometimes rather severe – largely touch upon political and ideological subjects. However, despite visible differences in conceptions and ideological controversies, we may notice that the angle of subject viewing is common for their creators – "they try to figure out the place of Russia in the world history and substantiate its specific (civilizational, national-cultural) identity", - says G. Zvereva (6). In this "common angle" moral aspects of "Russian issue" are significantly stronger than "political and ideological subjects".

Fiction literocentrism immerses the reader into the problems of history philosophy and allows to overcome the pressure of "political consciousness" that tends to ideological unambiguity. "Didactics of literocentrism" is a specific method of language arts that involves the readers into the serious and high problems not demanding an obligatory trust in that happening in the text. Cognition of history is performed, but without those official senses that can't be avoided when the contact with "history" occurs as a form of reality. We may say that the reader is learning to speculate about history without stress, to regard one of its interpretation variants. We consider this as a positive sign of independent consciousness strengthening, sometimes even despite facts and estimations received from mass media that lack ideological pluralism. "Serious Russian writer of 90-es anyway – to a greater or lesser extent, consciously or unconsciously – is focused on self-reflection and confirmation of valuable status of literature. Thought about person's saving in its struggle against evil powers (both external and penetrating into human's soul; both socio-political and metaphysical inevitably turns into language arts apologia (pronounced or implied)", - says A. Nemzer (4).

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Rhetorical integrity of fiction history versions performs cathartic function as it leads to literary explanation of past/present and helps the reader to relieve “historiosofic stress”. If literary plot doesn’t aim at absurdity of depicted reality, it features integrity, creation of world model which affects the recipient harmoniously without regard to optimistic or pessimistic plot development. Last fifteen years turned out to be utterly tense for those who consider Russian history to be their personal problem. Chaos of multiple opinions, calamity of external state sociality, loss of territory is opposed by relative harmony of fiction versions. “Popularity paradox of “post-apocalyptic”, post-catastrophic fantasy is connected with the fact that it performs the same function as futurology. It calms down: even in the most disgusting future variant nothing unpredictable will happen; we’ll perish in the result of processes which are already occurring today. And the most important thing is that after the calamity you may return to what you’d been doing before – you may restore good old civilization. The weakened variant of such “calming” set we may notice in modern Russian “utopia”, - considers L. Fishman. (3)

In the frames of general literary “liberation didactics” we may watch accustomization to “non-normativity” as to the principle of estimation of crisis situations. Lexical non-normativity of modern literature is obvious and it makes sense to be discussed regarding fiction historiosophy of V. Erofeev, V. Pelevin, V. Sorokin. But in this case, we mean “non-normativity didactics” which gives a reader the opportunity to experience other estimations of past events that can be far from “canonic”. This important moment of interaction between the text and the reader specifically touches the depiction of events connected with “perestroika” and its consequences. Literature is far from striving to fit into the prevailing versions. Writers who represent different literature projects (“patriotic” or “liberal”) do not show respect to the authorities and offer their own grotesque estimations of historical crisis. Non-normativity lies in the absence of external and internal censorship, in writers’ desire to solve those problems in fiction that were not solved in the socio-political reality. Even the insult of famous politicians appears in the literary context as some stereotypical “revenge” for expectations deceived in reality.

We cannot say that the critics appreciate the didactic aspects of fiction historiosophy very high. For instance, G. Zvereva considers that the didactics coincide with primitivization: “Procedure of “historiosophic” plot simplification is often undertaken by the author to make it easy to understand and to grasp “history lessons” (the didactics). That is why they use the methods of stereotyping and application to habitual oppositions “own-someone else’s” (“other”)(6). M. Remizova places emphasis on negative motives of creation of politicized texts: “All literary products of pillars of our political opposition, such as Alexander Prokhanov and Eduard Limonov, suffer from one common flaw – feeling of deep personal offence and personal defeat in rights becomes initial creative motivation for both of them” (5). E. Ermolin is sure that modern literature does not possess the didactic potential of language arts of previous epochs: “There is a fundamental trick in the challenge of present moment. Glamour epoch gave the writer a lot. I would say, almost everything. Live as you want, say what you want, enjoy as long as you want. It took only one thing from him – almost automatically given responsibility to be always right, to feel like teacher or prophet” (2). V. Berezin insists that struggle of ideas, and as a consequence predicant influence on the reader, has disappeared from literature: “When they asked me about ideological confrontation in literature, namely in modern literature, this question seemed to me very boring. Modern preaching, even if hedonistic, finds little response. There is no confrontation anymore; those literary men who sought it transferred the struggle into the pure politics” (1).

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The debates are still possible in the reader's consciousness, but in the external reality the confrontation has subsided, as G. Kruzhkov considers: "Actually after initial severe debates between essentialists and other writers, they just parted and start pretending they don't notice each other" (1). Critics and researchers admit that constant ideologemes still remain in "patriotic project", but in "liberal" one, as T. Bek says, there is an obvious crisis: "I think that temporary compromising of liberal ideas took place in local domestic practice, and liberal classics – outstanding philosophers and theorists, often dissidents, spiritual strugglers – are not responsible for this. Neoliberals of post-Soviet type are totally different, they are fresh "pseudo" in old-liberal "packing" that falls apart at the seams and comes to pieces" (1).

All judgements given above are, first of all, about the literature crisis that shows itself as a crisis of influence of fiction world on reader's moral world. Five Russian poets and writers (Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy) are constantly involved into the formation of national idea. If to speak about modern fiction historiosophy, Dostoevsky exerts the most significant influence. We should point out main forms of "Dostoevsky didactics" presence in fiction historiosophic works on the boundary of XX-XXI centuries: 1) historiosophic conversation as a way of raising and solving of contemporary key problems; 2) performance of national spiritual archetype, reconstruction of concepts and practical anti-utopias hazardous to the world; 3) detailed fiction depicting of creators of historical and metaphysical evil; 4) appeal to utopias and anti-utopias (in persons and destinies, among others); 5) review of versions of potential totalitarianism forms, with active involvement of religious material which actualizes issues of "salvation" and "perdition"; 6) eschatological vector of author historiosophy resisting progress theory in the frames of positivist world organization.

Specific problem is religious aspects of fiction didactics of the texts related to literary historiosophy. Let us mark the main reasons of such considerable attention to the religious problems in the frames of modern literature.

Following the traditions of national historiosophic idea which regards destiny of Russia in obligatory religious context. Despite numerous systematic differences, literature and history form a complex whole in the broad frames of national language arts. Russian philosophy has seldom applied to ontology and epistemology problems paying more specific attention to history philosophy. On the one hand, Russian idea focuses on its national self-consciousness. On the other hand, Russian historical destinies are closely connected with the general world development. Undoubtedly Russian historiosophy is distinctive but this fact does not impede its entering into the Christian context. No matter how original or non-ecclesiastical historiosophic positions of D. Merezhkovskiy and N. Berdyaev, N. Fyodorov and V. Soloviev might seem, they can be understood only with knowledge of Christian world model which is constantly specified, commented, transformed in Russian idea, but it still saves its archetypical traits. In this component Russian literature striving for national self-identification often regards historical and pseudo-historical problems in the contact with religious thinking.

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Effect of widening of “history” definition and its numerous images through the attraction of constant concepts for religious thinking. Starting from the second part of 80-es of the previous century, when the rehab of religious consciousness started to progress, Russian culture actively came back to the traditions of Christian faith. One of the levels of coming back is an individual movement towards the spirituality in ecclesiastical variant, personal churching. The second level is a process of church attachment of the whole statehood system which feels the crisis of Soviet mentality and actively tries to correlate itself with the proven national patterns, especially Russian Orthodox ones. National history of the previous century may be perceived both as a severe tragedy and as an absurd self-destruction that led to major crisis in different humanitarian and political spheres. Reference to the Christian idea complicates and spiritualizes the history of the XX century which is not locked in the “communist chronotope” and starts to be regarded in the context of religious “eternity” that requires complex view upon the historical problems. Literature values religious aspect within historiosophy. It gives the writers opportunity for different fantastic assumptions often concerted with multiple variants of religious consciousness, both classic and marginal, sectarian.

Religious didacticism as a form of actualization of fiction material in the reader’s consciousness: question about the “truth” that raises the status of literary text appears on one of the most significant perception levels. We cannot disregard popularity of game technologies in modern language arts, emphasis on postmodernist aloofness from seriousness. At the same time even the appeal to “game of history”, well-balanced stylistics of ironic reasonings and fable courses do not exclude the influence of religious archetypes on reader’s consciousness. It often seems that author strives to stress literariness, imaginary nature of the created world and at the same he wants to focus on correlation of text plot with what can happen to flaming religious person. Text which externally corresponds to postmodernist poetics also starts to solve didactic problems. When the author has its own sustained historiosophic view of the world, religious component of the text gives it a higher status.

Eschatological thinking that gives an opportunity to strengthen cathartic effects of literary work, and active use of external (not internal) religiosity that allows to appeal to theological settings of nations and world outlook systems. Internal religiosity (which is at the climax in the works of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy) is not often interesting for writers who solve problems of fiction historiosophy. Modern writers are masters of external religiosity which touches personal imprints and allows to organize the text in accordance with motives that define religious plot structure. Religious motives of modern novel do not move utterly away from character’s problems and formation of person’s concept, but more often they create fiction concepts of state, ideological development of nation, key conflicts that push together Russia and Western countries, Christianity and paganism. Thereby, we should note the increasing interest in eschatology, the most dynamic system of motives representing “external religiosity”. Appeal to apocalyptic images, despite its considerable frequency, remains one of the most demanded sighs of religiosity in the literature on the boundary of XX-XXI centuries.

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Religious component of fiction text provides presence of classic material for disputes of character's and writer's opponents. We have already mentioned above that pathos of ideological struggle started to decline in modern Russian literature. Though it's a worldwide tendency. And still there is some kind of ideological concernment that remains, for example, in novels of A. Prokhanov and becomes dominant in almost direct author's appeal to the readers. "Religious" correlate with "true"; sometimes they unite in joint conceptual image. The very relative sacredness of religious discourse, even if to mind the imaginary nature of the literary plot, elevates the status of author's words, allows him to merge with the authority of Tradition, speak on its behalf and make judgements denying this or that historical reality.

3. Conclusion

Russian historiosophic tradition is regarded in modern language studies as one of the ways to solve social, historical and moral problems of the society. It gives answers to nowadays readers relying on many centuries of history experience. Historiosophic component makes the literary work deeper and wider: it involves not only characters and their life but also a vast canvas of national ideology and development.

Religious component of fiction text also gives authors wide opportunities to speculate about destinies in the historic perspective. We even can say that historical philosophy and religious perception should not be separately regarded in historiosophic texts as they reveal Russian national self-determination process on each level of its development.

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