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The Complex Of Environmental Ideas In The Prose Of The 1920s-1930s And Methods Of Its Artistic Presentation

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Abstract

The article is relevant since it studies such an important function of the literature of the first third of the 20th century as its active discussion of fundamental issues, including the role of nature in the Earth development, the attitude of people towards it and ways of raising environmental awareness. The article aims to explore environmental ideas of S. Klychkov's and L. Leonov's prose depicting a folk lifestyle in the context of natural environment and folk culture preserving mythological views on nature, as well as to reveal the artistic implementation of their environmental concepts. The article states that these writers were opponents of the mechanistic worldview (the philosophical basis of technocracy rapidly developing in science and culture); they presented nature as a living organism that can function only as an entity. This idea was considered from different perspectives and was represented as a complex of interrelated aspects. Environmental ideas in the artistic world of S. Klychkov's and L. Leonov's works were expressed in accordance with the depicted layer of national life and culture. The key to their understanding is ideas about the world contained in etiological, cosmogonic and eschatological myths.

Based on these ideas, both writers create their own myth about the structure of nature: its inner organization, natural objects, phenomena and forces. They created the artistic world of their works with the logic of scientific knowledge in order to systematize ideas and mythological projections, restore mythological thinking based on archetypal images, motives and principles of creating the mythological-poetic worldview. Environmental ideas include such aspects as philosophical, aesthetic and ethical, i.e. they are the result of the writers' comprehensive understanding of nature and the person's attitude towards it.

Keywords: environmental idea, mythological images and motives, anthropomorphism, hylozoism, mechanistic worldview.

El Complejo De Ideas Ambientales En La Prosa De Las Décadas De 1920 Y 1930 Y Los Métodos De Su Presentación Artística

Resumen

El artículo es relevante ya que estudia una función tan importante de la literatura del primer tercio del siglo XX como su discusión activa de cuestiones fundamentales, incluido el papel de la naturaleza en el desarrollo de la Tierra, la actitud de las personas hacia ella y las formas de crear advertencia ambiental. El artículo tiene como objetivo explorar ideas ambientales de la prosa de S. Klychkov y L. Leonov que describe un estilo de vida popular en el contexto del medio ambiente natural y la cultura popular conservando puntos de vista mitológicos sobre la naturaleza, así como revelar la implementación artística de sus conceptos ambientales. El artículo establece que estos escritores se oponían a la cosmovisión mecanicista (la base filosófica de la tecnocracia que se desarrolla rápidamente en la ciencia y la cultura); Presentaron la naturaleza como un organismo vivo que puede funcionar solo como una entidad. Esta idea fue considerada desde diferentes perspectivas y fue representada como un complejo de aspectos interrelacionados. Las ideas ambientales en el mundo artístico de las obras de S. Klychkov y L. Leonov se expresaron de acuerdo con la capa representada de la vida y la cultura nacional. La clave para su comprensión son las ideas sobre el mundo contenidas en los mitos etiológicos, cosmogónicos y escatológicos. Con base en estas ideas, ambos escritores crean su

propio mito sobre la estructura de la naturaleza: su organización interna, objetos naturales, fenómenos y fuerzas. Crearon el mundo artístico de sus obras con la lógica del conocimiento científico para sistematizar ideas y proyecciones mitológicas, restaurar el pensamiento mitológico basado en imágenes arquetípicas, motivos y principios para crear la cosmovisión mitológica-poética. Las ideas ambientales incluyen aspectos tales como filosóficos, estéticos y éticos, es decir, son el resultado de la comprensión integral de los escritores sobre la naturaleza y la actitud de la persona hacia ella.

Palabras clave: idea ambiental, imágenes y motivos mitológicos, antropomorfismo, hilozoismo, cosmovisión mecanicista.

1. Introduction

The issue of nature and its connection with people came into sharp focus in Russia at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries (especially in the 1920s and 1930s) when the patriarchal social system was gradually replaced with industrialism. Writers actively discussed this issue: they tried to analyze the national experience of human relations with nature, find valuable components in pagan and Christian, idealistic and materialistic, artistic and scientific ideas about nature. In relation to the scale of discussion, these two decades became direct predecessors of the literary tradition of the second half of the 20th century, while several environmental ideas of that era are now perceived as an intellectual message to a rather distant future. The study of these ideas and ways of their artistic representation is relevant for modern literary criticism and humanities.

It is important to clarify that two opposite positions were formed in the literature of the mentioned period: 1) radical technocratism based on the assessment of nature as inert matter and the nature created by people using science, technology and mechanistic methods as a model of the future “golden age”; this position was based on N. Fedorov’s “The Philosophy of the Common Cause” (Fedorov, 1982) and K. Tsiolkovsky’s treatises (Tsiolkovsky, 1991, 1992), reflected in works of M. Gorky (articles of the 1920s-1930s “On Culture” (Gorky, 1953a), “Drought Will Be Defeated”, “On the Fight Against Nature”, “On the Right to Weather” (Gorky, 1953b), “On Themes” (Gorky, 1953c), A. Platonov (Platonov, 1990), and others; 2) the environmental position realized by two large groups of writers: naturalist travelers (V. Arsenyev, M. Prishvin, etc.) who used the natural-scientific form of substantiating their position, and writers depicting traditional way life and associated folk culture (S. Klychkov, L. Leonov and others)

through the mythological form of explaining their ideas. These writers perceived mythology as a system of universal formulas having an intellectual value and providing the possibility of in-depth logical analysis and synthesis in the artistic depiction of the world.

This article aims to study the content of environmental ideas and their artistic implementation in works of two major writers of this era – S. Klychkov and L. Leonov.

2. Methods.

We used a set of complementary research methods corresponding to the research subject: the analysis of literary texts and journalistic publications, theoretical analysis of works on the theory and history of the literature of the 20th century, natural philosophy, motivational-artistic, structural and typological methods.

The research materials include S. Klychkov's novel "Chertukinskii Bala-kir", L. Leonov's short stories written in the 1920s and united by natural philosophical problems, including "Buryga", "The Case of Jacob Pigunk" and "The Petushihinsky Break", novel "The Badgers" and some other works of the 1930s. The analysis of the above-mentioned works revealed controversy with supporters of the technocratic position (for example, proletarian writers like M. Gorky, etc.).

2. Results.

Overview. Problem statement

While analyzing the writers' literary works, we dwelled on the environmental ideas expressed by S. Klychkov and L. Leonov.

S. Klychkov and L. Leonov who developed the theme of national life and folk culture in literature shared a critical attitude to anthropocentrism which was formed within Christianity and was supported in the framework of radical technocratism.

They criticized anthropocentrism and did not accept the anthropocentric idea of technocratism or its mechanistic worldview introduced in science and culture. The radical transformation of nature was declared by A. Voronskii's words: "... proletarian poets became the first to indicate that the possible way out can be provided by smoky and fummy factories. (...) They ... reshape our rural, rustic, desolate, dark and quiet Russia..." (Voronskii. 1963). Followers of the mechanistic worldview found an authoritative assessment of technocratism as the basis of the modern scientific worldview in K. Tsiolkovsky's treatises, including his article "Unknown Intelligent Forces": "Science first adopted rigidity for a dead nature (for celestial bod-

ies, lower organisms, higher organisms and, finally, people)” (Tsiolkovsky. 1991).

In the 1920s, the mechanistic view on nature and people was reflected by the technocratic group of writers. A remarkable example is A. Platonov’s essay “The Hot Arctic” that describes the radical alteration of the Asian-Siberian climate (Platonov. 1990). A. Platonov’s position is illustrated by the “titles of his essays comprising the following words: “science”, “worker”, “the Earth repair”, “the century of electricity”, “struggle”, “war”, “to liquidate” and “victory” (Gurlenova, 2016). The nucleus of the mechanistic worldview was the setting for the radically reworking natural environment and human nature by destroying “harmful” components and introducing new “useful” forces called the “second” nature.

S. Klychkov and L. Leonov opposed anthropocentrism to pagan pantheism while adapting its content to the new era in the form of neo-paganism. They believed that only this ideology could ensure a durable civilization. Both writers considered this position close to the national consciousness, “whose temple of the pagan faith was nature and space” (Solntseva. 1993). They did not accept anthropocentrism and mechanism and chose the mythological worldview as a philosophical orienting point. These writers built their artistic world over mythological projections as if restoring the logic of mythological thinking based on archetypal images and mythological motives: the image of Yggdrasil, geometric symbols, metamorphoses, images and motives of eschatological myths and lower mythology, and the cross-cutting principle of anthropomorphization. The mythological world model helped them resist the positivistic knowledge based on bare rationalism that did not meet their beliefs.

Many modern scholars confirmed the above-mentioned artistic orientation in the works of L. Leonov and S. Klychkov. Thus, V. Petisheva notes, “... the most important component of L. Leonov’s way of thinking is artistic myth-making” (Petisheva, 2007). R.A. Musienko expresses the same idea about S. Klychkov’s works in the thesis “The Artistic System of S. Klychkov’s Novels in the Mythological-Poetic Context” (Musienko, 2005). N.A. Nepomnyaschikh claims that “...the concept of mythologized poetry can be applied to L. Leonov’s works” (Nepomnyaschik. 2011).

The mythological method of artistic reality representation in V.M. Naidysh’s informative article “Myth-Making and Folklore Consciousness” is regarded as a development vector typical not only of the literature but also of the culture of the 20th century. The scholar called it a “large-scale cultural phenomenon” and “a special way of spiritually mastering the

world” on the eve of the third millennium. V.M. Naidysh considered similar phenomena as “paracultural formations” since they “complete each other like scientific and mythological, logical-evidentiary and mythopoetic, rational-theoretical and irrational-mystical” (Naidysh. 1994).

3. Discussion.

During Within the framework of the chosen ideology, S. Klychkov and L. Leonov expressed several ideas relevant to the environmental agenda and based on the mythological worldview of the Russian and Finno-Ugric population living in the north. As a result, they managed to create their own myth on its basis.

The specifics of solving physico-philosophical issues

Unlike supporters of the mechanistic worldview, the writers highlighted the existence of universal animate matter, i.e. they regarded nature as a living organism (rather than a mechanism), whose inner structure is based on hylozoism (the representation of life as an immanent property of matter and universal animateness) (Ilichev/ 1983). They directly expressed this idea through their literary plots embracing etiological, cosmogonic and eschatological myths, statements (narrators’ thoughts) and the motive-figurative narrative system that requires some interpretation.

This idea is realized through the anthropomorphization of natural images and phenomena, which plays the role of a conceptual narrative model. Thus, the sun “caresses something with a warm paw”, “it purrs a simple song”, “it puts the tongue out at amanitas”; autumn “hangs wet rags across the sky and squeezes them dry”; “wet clouds climb” the sky; spiritualized creatures socialize: a lost crow; a beetle is an idle dresser, a homeless bug, etc. in L. Leonov’s story “Buryga” that can be called a natural-philosophical treatise written in a fantastic manner (Leonov. 1981)

It should be noted that L. Leonov and S. Klychkov aimed their philosophical reflections at general readers since the writers pursued such an important governmental task as developing the person’s respect for nature, which is necessary for preserving civilization. Therefore, the narrative in their literary works is rather fantastic. It helped L. Leonov and S. Klychkov update the form of philosophical narration: they created a special “intellectual epic” with the help of their narrators (Lysov. 1988) where the logic of some serious phenomenon was expressed as if a “children’s secret” (Groznova. 1982). At the same time, the nature of the Russian North played the role of “secret literacy filled with the centuries-old experience of people” (Groznova. 1982).

L. Leonov's early works are "inhabited" by numerous images of lower mythology embodying the spirituality of nature. There are wood spirits, swamp demons and imps in the story "Buryga" (Leonov. 1981); ghosts, hobgoblins, skippers, vegetation and other objects with or without names are mentioned in "The Case of Jacob Pigunk" (Leonov. 1981). Numerous "evil spirits" living in forests are represented as an integral part of nature and demonstrate such qualities as friendliness to all natural creatures, as well as creates an atmosphere of "concord" for everyone in the house. Both writers associated the concept of "concord" with a natural rather than social life.

In L. Leonov's story "The Case of Jacob Pigunk", vegetation comes alive at night and rustles; "everything around and even the sun hidden behind the forest was filled with life-giving green"; "green... has no heart, it has a club root instead of a heart that strikes roots"; "the moon walked over heavenly wastelands, May was leaving and whistling like a nightingale, green crawled in grass heading somewhere"; "quiet green crawls through grass ... this greenery is pure happiness". According to the writers' interpretation, these creatures embody the spirit of nature: "... green is the breath of May trees, old stumps, putrid ground, secret spirit..." (Leonov. 1981). V.F. Savodnik believed these images personified "a spontaneous world life" (Savodnik, 1911).

The creature that L. Leonov in "The Case of Jacob Pigunk" called greenery, A.N. Afanasyev considered a field spirit or herbal: "on the field, a wood spirit stays no higher than grass", field spirits can become as "tiny as a stubble, i.e. their height does not exceed that of cutting stalks" (Afanasyev, 1868). In the "Petushihinsky Break", L. Leonov used the nomination of field spirits (Leonov. 1981).

Characters of lower mythology are depicted as living forms close to people and endowed with spiritual activity. Their relationships are subject to a social hierarchy, but they live forever, i.e. at least have a much longer life span that lasts despite annual "death" (winter). This situation is shown as an opportunity given to nature, including people. Thus, the issue of prolonging a human life is considered not through the confrontation of natural laws (K. Tsiolkovsky's and N. Fedorov's approach) but is understood as undiscovered human laws of natural life.

S. Klychkov's novel "Chertukhinskii Balakir" personifies trees and forest. Here is an extract from the novel: "... Their roots resemble our legs and toes, and the very top of each tree, where the last leaf flutters in the wind or fluffy needles rest on a branch like an eyebrow, has their eyes directed

to the sky. However, people will never see their eyes: if a lumberjack cuts a tree with an axe or a saw and damages its joints, the tree will not utter a single word and will firmly shut its eyes not to see the man and his axe. Only one dewdrop (teardrop) remains in the place where the tree eye was” (Klychkov. 1988).

Both writers described these natural beings as cheerful, friendly, sociable, compassionate and emotional creatures. Due to cross-cutting impersonation, natural phenomena acquire new essential qualities and create a multi-character image of spiritualized nature.

The writers were passionate about the idea of the universal animateness of nature (hylozoism), an ambiguous border between life and death, the possibility of multiple transformations from the “dead” to the “living”. L. Leonov used the “dead-living” metamorphosis in his short story “The Case of Jacob Pigunk” while describing the origin of a bannichek (“blazna”, “nenashik”) Dolbun who grew from a rusty nail (dead matter) thanks to a hex: “...he was naked and brown-skinned, diminutive, indecent, and had six toes on his left foot” (Leonov, 1981, 118). Languishing in the human world, he asks Pigunk to return him to his initial form “without any harm... Therefore, it should be. Pigunk covers Dolbun with a yoke and the blazna disappears, there is only a rusty nail lying on the grass with a bent head. Pigunk drives this nail into a birch tree...” (Leonov. 1981). The transformation of the “dead” (a rusty nail) into the “living” (Dolbun-Kiryushabannichek) and again into the “dead” (a nail) presents a worldview opposed to materialistic scientific ideas. According to L. Leonov, materialistic ideas about the world structure do not reveal real life because they are formulated by a person with limited knowledge. These thoughts let readers understand that people shown as organizers, creators and masters of the world in technocratic theories are far from this belief.

It is no coincidence that the writers introduced into the narrative and pantheistic fictional worldview the idea that nature is the material embodiment of the divine. L. Leonov’s story “The Case of Jacob Pigunk” reads, “Imagine that a light ray flies to you and says, “I am an angel of the Lord. I brought you divine grace”. You respond to him, “My friend, put it on the grass and do not bother me! I am listening to birches singing!”. If “a horse thief comes to a birch grove, his soul will cherish like that of a cherub and he will be saved” (Leonov. 1981).

Their works personify not only natural matter, in which phenomena, objects and beings of the natural world are realized, but also the planet. The Earth is shown as a living being where all components are interconnected

and dependent on each other. It is a living complex that cannot lose anything (for example, elements) or radically change (flatten mountains, level landscapes, change the Earth atmosphere, etc., as supporters of the mechanistic worldview proposed) without tragic consequences.

One of the characters from S. Klychkov's novel "ChertukhinskiiBalakir" has the secret knowledge about the structure of the Earth and space and explains it to his interlocutor based on mythologized images: "The Earth is like a big green cucumber floating in a tub" (Klychkov. 1988). The green color represents the planet as living matter, while the word "cucumber" emphasizes this meaning. In the above-mentioned metaphor, the Earth is interpreted as a living cosmic body and space is represented as a life-giving principle seen as moisture or liquid in conformity with cosmogonic ideas. In this connection, it is important to mention the wisdom contained in the book "Golden Mouths". One of its most important images is as follows: "There is only one secret in the world – there is nothing inanimate in it..." (Klychkov. 1988). Consequently, S. Klychkov's space is filled with life, the Earth as its special form is associated with general space life.

This idea in L. Leonov's prose is realized through a birch, i.e. the tree of life, embracing the Earth with its roots through which tar-blood and tar-milk flows. The birch is the Mother of all things on the Earth, the source of affection, love and compassion. The narrator notes that the birch sings like a mother and makes "tar thicker". The word "birch" refers in the text to the word "life", i.e. "the birch can be translated from the divine language as life". "...And what is strawberry? It is the purest blood taken from the birch". Tar comes out of the ground and flows through the birch like a honey stream (Leonov. 1981).

The author cited a popular belief: a person close to nature can hear the birth of life through a birch (birch grove), including the growth of mushrooms, the appearance of greenery, the movement of a tarry river flowing under the ground into a birch.

The principle of universal animativeness in the organization of natural matter and the representation of the planet as a living being allowed the writers to oppose anthropocentrism and declare that nature possessed enormous possibilities for the existence of matter, knowledge of which could not be obtained by people due to their limited consciousness and perceptive organs. Therefore, people should accept its role subject to nature.

Ethical aspects of environmental issues

The writers established a set of rules regulating person-nature relationships.

L. Leonov's novel "The Badgers" retells a legend about Calafat. The characters recall it and discuss how people (children) treat nature (their mother): "Nature will gain an upper hand over science", ProkhorStakheev said. "I suppose it will...", Petka Ad hesitantly drawled looking askew at Zhiband. "Get the best of it!", EvgrafPodpryatov stepped forward. "Son cannot stand up to his mother". "No matter what, mother will not hurt her son even if he walks over her!", Zhiband grinned" (Leonov. 1982).

People are neither the best nor perfect creations of nature. On the contrary, their mind is a primitive cognitive tool, has an inert material shell and does not fully understand its connection with the natural world, which is evaluated as an external and alien phenomenon. A different form of the person's existence allowing to overcome death is possible only in case of closer links between people and nature.

According to the writers, nature acts like a mother to its creations.

These conclusions let the writers pose a question on a set of basic rules regulating the relationship among participants of natural life. It can be said that the final answer to this question is provided by S. Klychkov in his novel "ChertukhinskiiBalakir". The image of wisdom expressed in the book "Golden Mouths" is introduced into his text. The title appeals to moralistic words of John Chrysostom which were distributed in the Russian collections "Zlatostrui" and "Zlatoust" interpreting the content of canonical church books. In the context of the novel, "Golden Mouths" is represented as a book containing metaphysical knowledge about the creation of the world and human civilization, a compilation of moral wisdom. The book is interpreted as an intermediary between people and the orderliness of the Universe, a certain creative Mind. Based on the book authority, the writer formulates two basic laws of behavior on the Earth.

The first law has a philosophical character that can be formulated as follows: "Grass and trees, animals and birds, fish and people – everything is in its proper place like it is a grand feast, and no one is offended or neglected" (Klychkov, 1988). This figurative formula for organizing natural forms of life presupposes a single-level hierarchy rather than the pyramidal one proposed by Christian philosophy and the anthropocentrism of the new time.

Speaking through his characters, the writer regarded this harmonious organization of life as highly efficient: everything is neat and well-made in the world because "it is created not by some bush leaguers, but by really gifted hands" (Klychkov. 1988).

The second law forms rules of behavior in natural life that people should

follow: “Show your love and care for flowers and trees, take pity on fish, coddle wild animals and stay away from poisonous reptiles!” (Klychkov. 1988).

Both writers tended towards the idea of “all-unity”, understood natural life as “concord” and considered it right for a person to “revere” nature and protect its life forms. Harmony is at the heart of the concept they created. This attitude has not only natural-philosophical significance, but also a sociopolitical one. Likely, the writers were nostalgic for social harmony and concord.

Nature is opposed to the “dead”, i.e. iron that became the subject of poeticization by proletarian writers. In fiction, it is presented as an axe or saw which demolish fairy forests. The axe image is a mythological replacement for the notion of death. According to A.N. Afanasyev’s concept, an axe symbolizes evil spirits in contrast to goblins who are not considered evil. “...Axes ... shook their bluish hands in a cheerful manner and went for a walk-kiss: where they kissed, there was death. The same morning saws gnashed their cruel teeth... An iron groan rose above the forest” (Leonov. 1981).

The so-called “iron power” is headed by an imp whom S. Klychkov called “iron” and connected with the technocratic development of humankind. In “Unhurried Notes”, S. Klychkov reflected, “Many prophecies mentioned a copper sky and iron earth. Did prophets mean industrialization?” (Klychkov. 1989).

The imp is called not just “iron” but also a “decent locksmith”, which makes the creature look like characters from proletarian works creating the grand human/machine parallel. The imp knows laws governing the world, but this knowledge is theoretical, “mechanistic” and technocratic, and suggests the elimination of living nature and the creation of the “iron” world. This worldview reflects the controversy between S. Klychkov as a defender of nature and radical writers and thinkers of the 1920s (O.M. Kultysheva calls V. Kirillov and M. Gerasimov the apologists of “iron”; (Kultyshev. 2013)), and brings his ideas closer to dystopian novels of the 1920s: “Sooner rather than later people will slaughter all the animals in the forest, take all the fish from rivers, catch all the birds in the air... Then the iron imp who cannot wait for it will tie to the person’s soul a cogwheel or screw because the imp is a decent locksmith in spiritual matters.

Having a screw instead of the soul, the person can live in great comfort until the end of the century and do not even notice it!” (Klychkov. 1988). According to S. Klychkov, the “technocratic” path is destructive for hu-

man civilization. This attitude is reflected by the phrase understood as programming for the writer: “Imps and people do not interfere with each other because they live in the situation when the world and life are being destroyed” (Klychkov. 1988). The executor of the plan for destroying life is a person who has mastered the so-called “iron” philosophy and rejected the philosophy of nature.

In the novel, technocratic development is represented as an ecological catastrophe: there will be “nothing on the Earth, except for stumps”, “the Earth as seen from above will resemble not a green bowl, but a bare woman’s knee”, “everything will wither” and “the Earth will turn over to the other side”, “the last man will fall off the Earth as if from a cart” (Klychkov. 1988).

5. Conclusion

L. Leonov and S. Klychkov created environmental concepts based on the universal spirituality of natural matter, including the planet. It is essential that the writers regarded this quality of natural matter as a reflection of the laws of cosmic life. Means of expressing the above-mentioned concepts became a narrative model, whose foundation was the cross-cutting principle of anthropomorphization and the narrator from people (narrative form). This narrator played the role of an intermediary between the author who created a philosophical narrative (“intellectual epic”) and general audience acquainted with mythological ideas about the world. This structure improved the author-reader communication and, consequently, the reader’s acceptance of artistic ideas. Thus, the writers realized one of the main tasks – enlightenment, i.e. return to the era of industrialization and benevolent trust in the environment and natural forces.

The writers created a model of ideal relations for all participants of natural life based on ideas of the organized and unified structure of life. They dispelled the pathos of a radical transformation of nature and presented it as the “iron power” led by a “locksmith” (imp) and considered this idea as a way to an ecological catastrophe.

The ideas about the structure of nature and attitude of people towards it formulated by the writers have long-term value and are still perceived as relevant. As a result, their research is promising in the following aspects: the study of the evolution of environmental issues in fiction, including the literature at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, the search for an effective impact of environmental ideas on the minds of readers to form sustainable environmental morality.

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