

Russian Emigration of the 20th Century – the Artistic World of Works

Gulnara DIASAMIDZE^{*}

Khatuna TABATADZE^{**}

Abstract

The work of famous writers of the Russian emigration of the twentieth century has always found its devoted reader. The purpose of this article is to determine the integrity of the concept of their literary heritage. After some transformations, the creativity of word creators gained great popularity.

A writer's artistic picture of the world is a complex phenomenon, the content and structure of which depend on a significant number of factors, among which there are objective (scientific ideas, historical and cultural situation, national traditions) and subjective (belonging to a subculture, individual experience, specificity of a creative personality). It is indisputable that any literary movement creates and transmits to subsequent generations a certain artistic picture of the world, which is reflected in the language of the era. The era of Russian modernism is no exception in this regard.

The poetics of writers' works has its own characteristics, its originality is noted in those stories and stories that are thoroughly permeated with emigrant experiences in connection with the loss of their homeland. And events that contain an artistic and aesthetic essence are relegated to the past. After all, it was they who remained in the memory of emigrant writers. Their creativity is perceived as a connection with the lost homeland, as the deepest moral value.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, Orthodoxy, Russian Emigration, lost homeland

^{*} Assoc. Prof. Dr., International Black Sea University, Tbilisi, Georgia. E-mail: gdiasamidze@ibsu.edu.ge

^{**} Assoc. Prof. Dr., Georgian Technical University; International Black Sea University, Tbilisi, Georgia. E-mail: ktabatadze@ibsu.edu.ge

Introduction

As you know, Russian literature abroad is a branch of Russian literature that arose after the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. The gloomy fact is that about 2 million people left the country. In total, there are three periods or three waves of Russian emigrant literature.

In the centers of dispersion – Berlin, Paris, Harbin – “Russia in miniature” was formed, preserving all the features of Russian society. The concept of “Russian diaspora” appeared. The flower of the Russian intelligentsia left Russia. More than half of the philosophers, writers, and artists were expelled from the country or emigrated for life. Religious philosophers N. Berdyaev, S. Bulgakov, N. Lossky, L. Shestov found themselves outside their homeland. The emigrants were F. Chaliapin, I. Repin, K. Korovin, famous actors M. Chekhov and I. Mozzhukhin, ballet stars Anna Pavlova, Vaslav Nijinsky, composers S. Rachmaninov and I. Stravinsky.

Among the famous writers who emigrated: Iv. Bunin, Iv. Shmelev, A. Averchenko, K. Balmont, Z. Gippius, B. Zaitsev, A. Kuprin, A. Remizov, I. Severyanin, A. Tolstoy, Teffi, Sasha Cherny and many others. Young writers also went abroad: M. Tsvetaeva, G. Adamovich, G. Ivanov, V. Khodasevich. Russian literature, which responded to the events of the revolution and civil war, depicting the pre-revolutionary way of life that had collapsed into oblivion, turned out to be one of the spiritual strongholds of the nation in emigration.

It is noteworthy that Russian newspapers and magazines were published abroad, schools and universities were opened, and the Russian Orthodox Church was active. But, despite the persistence of the first wave of emigration, the situation of the refugees was so tragic that, due to their tragic fate and past, they had to get used to a reality alien to them. The hope for a quick return did not materialize; by the mid-20s it became obvious that Russia could not be returned and that Russia could not return. The pain of nostalgia was accompanied by the need for

hard physical labor and everyday instability: most emigrants were forced to enlist in Renault factories or, what was considered more privileged, to master the profession of a taxi driver. Almost none of the younger generation of writers could earn money through literary work: G. Gazdanov became a taxi driver, D. Knut delivered goods, Y. Terapiano worked in a pharmaceutical company, many earned a penny extra.

It is worth recalling that the “unnoticed generation” included young writers who did not have time to create a strong literary reputation for themselves in Russia: V. Nabokov, G. Gazdanov, M. Aldanov, B. Poplavsky, N. Berberova, I. Odoevtseva and others. Their fates turned out differently. V. Nabokov and G. Gazdanov won pan-European, and in Nabokov’s case, even world fame. The most dramatic is the fate of B. Poplavsky, who died under mysterious circumstances.

Research Methodology

In literary studies, the period of the first wave of Russian emigration of the 20th century has been studied in detail in relation to the “older” generation of writers. In comparison, the work of “young” authors who emigrated while still teenagers and whose worldview were formed abroad is generally less studied.

The article will mainly examine the creativity of representatives of the first wave of emigration. First, let’s look at the writer Ivan Shmelev, and then we’ll touch on the work of B. Poplavsky and other writers.

The emigrant period of I. Shmelev is quite fruitful. Realistic tendencies are observed in his work of the 1920s. Shmelev creates autobiographical books in which the world of childhood and youth, not yet affected by the great catastrophe, is seen “from the other shore” as idyllic, enlightened: he poetizes the past. The problem of inheriting spiritual traditions is considered in the novels “Pilgrim” (1931) and

“Summer of the Lord” (1933). Unfortunately, the author could not finish the novel “Heavenly Paths” as the result of Shmelev’s creative and spiritual quest.

“The Summer of the Lord” is the main and best novel of education in Russian, a phenomenal insight into the inner world of a child, which cannot be achieved based on childhood memories alone.

“The Summer of the Lord” is one of the most important Russian religious texts of the 20th century (it was not without reason that Balmont, Nemirovich-Danchenko and even Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) read it on their deathbeds); already Ivan Sergeevich) of that God whom he lost in the steppes of Crimea in 1921 (Korolev, 2018).

The novel constantly contains descriptions of noteworthy Orthodox traditions. The work itself is divided into three main chapters (Holidays, Holidays – Joys, Sorrows), which, in turn, are divided into subchapters. They describe in detail the Orthodox holidays, starting with Lent, or more precisely with Clean Monday. In fact, this novel resembles the Orthodox calendar. And the essence of the work lies in the endless praise of Orthodoxy. After all, for Shmelev, this religion contains the basis of life.

It is also worth carefully delving into the epigraph of the novel “The Summer of the Lord”: Two feelings are wonderfully close to us - / In them the heart finds food - / Love for the native ashes, / Love for the tombs of our fathers. (A. Pushkin) (Shmelev, 1989, p. 176). Here, as an argument, we can use the expression of the Russian emigrant writer Evgeni Zamyatin, who believed that emigrant writers “are still drawing juice from that box of Russian soil” (Zamiatin, 1911, p. 60) that they brought with them from Russia.

Let us note that each writer embodies biblical motifs in his own way in the texts of his works. However, they are always filled with great semantic load. As for Shmelev’s work, any use of biblical motifs is intended for a reader who is fully familiar with the Bible and the Orthodox religion, and also knows how to draw certain conclusions based on the context of the work. Thus, the culture of Russian Orthodoxy

becomes the main source of inspiration for the works of I. Shmelev.

The writer’s memoir-autobiographical prose, permeated with the national-religious model of the past, can also be seen in the works of other emigrant writers.

The artistic synthesis of realism and modernism was characteristic not only of the work of I. Shmelev, but also of I. Bunin, A. Remizov, A. Kuprin, D. Merezhkovsky and G. Ivanov and V. Khodasevich, etc. It is noteworthy that in the work of these writers there was the gradual displacement of concrete historical principles of writing by mythopoetic ones.

In almost all works of this period, there is a tendency towards historical, cultural, literary, as well as in-depth metaphysical and existential issues.

Writers of the younger emigrant generation depict Russian people in a foreign cultural environment. This image is successfully recreated in the works of G. Gazdanov (“Night Roads”) and B. Poplavsky (“Apollo Bezobrazov”, “Home from Heaven”). The literary fate of the last artist of the word was also successful. An extensive corpus of his works was published in Paris in the late 1920s and 1930s, that is, during the life and after the death of the writer.

Although the younger emigrant generation was in a more deplorable state than their older brothers. The “compassionate sympathy” that V. Khodasevich had for the author of “Apollo Bezobrazov” was, to one degree or another, inherent in the emigrant “masters” in relation to the “children” of emigration. This feeling was intensified by a complex of guilt along with the noble experience of the responsibility of the “elders” to the generation of “children” who ended up “in emigration as half-educated teenagers” (V. Varshavsky). “A real sufferer,” N. Berdyaev said about Poplavsky, and this awareness of the painfulness of his lot was always present in reviews of him, leading to special sensitivity towards him. Even such homeless peers as G. Gazdanov were moved by “piercing pity” for the

poet-passion-bearer; “we all feel the presence <...> of a lonely and unhappy being” (Varshavskii, 1956).

In turn, articles by G. Gazdanov and B. Poplavsky on the situation of young emigrant literature contributed to the understanding of the literary process abroad. In the article “On Young Emigrant Literature,” Gazdanov admitted that the new social experience and status of intellectuals who left Russia made it impossible to maintain the hierarchical appearance and artificially maintained atmosphere of pre-revolutionary culture. The absence of modern interests and the spell of the past turns emigration into a “living hieroglyph.” Emigrant writers are engaged in a kind of search for an “artificial paradise.”

G. Adamovich in his poem rightly noted about the vein search for Paradise by the authors of emigration:

**Dreamer, where is your world?
Wanderer, where is your home?**

**Is it too late to look for an artificial
paradise?** (Adamovich, 1939).

B. Poplavsky, in his article “On the mystical atmosphere of young literature in emigration,” said that “exiled Paris” was supposed to become “the seed of future mystical life,” as well as the cradle of the revival of Russia.

Results of Analysis

Thus, the culture of Russian emigration of the twentieth century splashed out into the European cultural space a “wave” of such force that it now, in turn, influenced many features of Western culture (Megrelishvili, 2005). The older generation of emigrant writers sought to “keep that truly valuable thing that inspired the past” (Adamovich, 1955).

If the older generation was inspired by nostalgic motives (remember the same Shmelev), then the younger generation left documents of the Russian soul in exile, depicting the reality of emigration. Their works describe a utopian life-

creativity with a tragic ending. Individual mystical experience is viewed. A specific modification of the “poet’s prose” is shown. Existential search for a hero of new times – a hero of the “unsung generation”.

Poplavsky’s mythological model of space has the following structure: it distinguishes between the spheres of the “underground” (the space of Paris, more precisely Montparnasse) and the “heavenly” (the space of Russia). The spatial sphere of Russia for the writer, represented by Heaven, the path to which, due to “reverse” logic, runs through Hell. The search for an unattainable Eden remains only in the writer’s fantasies (Табатадзе, X., 2012, p. 159, 160).

Shmelev’s mythological model differs from the Poplavsky model. After all, in Shmelev’s text of works only the realities of Zamoskvorechye emerge, instead of the space of European Paris (Montparnasse). The spatial sphere of Russia is represented by Paradise. After all, for Shmelev, Eden was accessible only in his homeland, living only in memories. This novel is entirely built on the main character’s perceptions of the outside world. Perhaps because of this, Shmelev “was reproached for being “provincial,” for being excessively “Russian,” and for immoderate admiration for the wasteful “breadth” of Russian nature” (Ctruve, 1996, pp. 75-76).

Although for Poplavsky emigration represents chaos, he sees its meaning in the path of transformation. Poplavsky’s existential thinking can be forever in search of mystical consciousness. The emigrant writer tries to realize the secret meanings of existence in his own way. After all, the literature of Russian diaspora is inseparable from the existential worldview. Back in 1930, G. Adamovich wrote about the end of the period of “litigation with God” in Russian literature and the advent of a new era in it, one that obliges literature to “be with a person eye to eye.” And young authors from abroad had an existential view of the world organically. And it is not without reason that, already in the mid-1950s, looking back at the “experience of the young,” V. Varshavsky calls their creativity “existential anxiety.” It is precisely

“existential anxiety” that is inherent in Poplavsky’s work.

It is worth noting that in the work of the emigrant writer, these models, along with eschatological features, also introduce a deeply nostalgic element into the literature of the Russian diaspora.

Conclusion

Thus, in Shmelev’s works the religious theme is mainly realized in the motives of personality transformation, where biography is the main component of his works. All works combine time layers that connect the past and the present. Events move freely in them, in different connections and relationships dictated by the creative concept. Basically, they are associated with memories of yesterday, of old times. And also, Orthodoxy takes over with all the subtleties of its description. As a result, the relationships of the heroes are explored

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and learned in manifestations that bring a new vision of man, pushing his spiritual boundaries.

All this testifies to the fullness of Shmelev’s writing with traditional Orthodox connotations, with an amazing ability to realistically describe Russian patriarchal life.

The existential version of the worldview of young foreign writers (B. Poplavsky, G. Gazdanov) lies in the formulation of painful existential questions related to the problems of faith and unbelief, the relationship between the “purpose of life” and the “meaning of death.” Their work reflects on the traditions of M. Proust, J. Joyce, and F. Kafka. A new hero, deprived of a future, moving away from reality into the world of mystical visions and dreams, into the “inner dimension.”

Thus, the work of emigrant writers can be attributed to the phenomena of Russian consciousness, which is found in the mode “European culture – Russian Silver Age – emigration culture.”

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