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CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN PROSE: THE POETICS OF INTERTEXTUALITY

According to Yu.M. Lotman, *cultural history of any people can be examined from two points of view: firstly, as an immanent development, and, secondly, as a result of diverse external factors. Both processes are closely intertwined and could be separated from each other only for the purpose of scholarly abstraction* [Lotman 2001: 63]. These two approaches are actively followed by contemporary scholars, and the latter includes a link with the problem of intertextuality, which – as indicated by the very title—is addressed in the present article.

The term "intertextuality" is used both as a category of poetics and as a designation for the fundamental characteristic of literature as such; in addition, it could designate the principle applied to textual analyzes. Building on Laurent Jenny's article entitled *The Strategy of Form* (1976), G.K. Kosikov distinguishes the following three main goals facing the theory of intertextuality: *firstly, it is necessary to restrict the very object of intertextual theory: intertextual theory should be focused on the direct, indisputable, and provable relations existing between different texts rather than on the subjective-associative semantic reverberations* <...>; secondly, it is important to study the relational aspect of intertextual theory; thus, intertextuality should be described as *a totality of relations with other texts, which, for their part, could be found in a certain text* (the "text-in-text" problem); thirdly, intertextual theory should take into account *the creative, "transformational" changes in the intertext: at this point, the phrase "a totality of relations with other texts" implies precisely the intense transformation of the original texts rather than their mechanical apposition or combination* <...> [Kosikov 2008: 39].

This restriction of intertextual theory—or, more correctly, the limitation of its very object—impoverishes it in a way, deprives it of those semantic breadth and philosophical profundity which are peculiar to the theoretical conceptions of Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes [Barthes 1989; Kristeva 2004]—but, at the same time, allows to set clear principles for textual analysis when implemented in this aspect. Accordingly, we think it would be justifiable to consider the classification suggested by the famous French literary theorist Gérard Genette in his book entitled *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (1982). As can be seen below, this classification provides different types of textual interaction:

1) Intertextuality as a "copresence" of two or more texts in one and the same text (as in the cases of quotation, allusion, plagiarism, etc.);

2) Paratextuality as a text's relation to its title, afterword, epigraph, etc.;

3) Metatextuality as commentary and often critical reference to its own avant-text or foretext;

4) Hypertextuality as a derision and parody implemented in one text with regard to another text;

5) Architextuality understood as a genre relationship between different texts.

The author of the monograph *Introduction à l'intertextualité* (*An Introduction to Intertextuality*) Nathalie Piégay-Gros develops the conception of Gérard Genette and, as a consequence, points out that *the notion of intertextuality covers a broad range of practices and forms* (quotation, allusion, plagiarism, rewriting, parody, stylization, collage), suggests to treat them as *intertextual phenomena* and raises the question of the characteristic features peculiar to every of these forms, considering that *all of them equally have their origins in the device which presupposes that act of writing when the author bears in mind certain previous texts* [*for the Russian translation see:* Piégay-Gros 2008: 45].

Building on the definitions of intertextuality provided by Laurent Jenny and Gérard Genette in the 1970s—as well as proceeding from the theoretical status of intertextuality as scholarly discipline, the so-called "intertextual studies"—G.K. Kosikov describes this field of knowledge as increasingly trending towards *identification of those* ***universal*** *principles according to which the interaction between different texts takes place* (the emphasis is made by the author—*A.S.*) [Kosikov 2008: 41], which, in its turn, allows to consider intertextual studies as an integral part of poetics.

The "copresence" relations. In this case, the differences between **implicit** and **explicit** types of intertextual relations are reflected in the implemented forms of intertextuality. Thus, **quotation**, being **an emblematical form** of intertextuality, refers to the explicit type. Through typographical devices (i.e., through the use of quotation marks, cursive or spaced-out quotations) **the method of including one text into another** is conveyed. At the semantic level, the reference to another text may be shaped as an allusion to a title of a certain literary work or to the name of its author.

Speaking about the creation history of the novel entitled *Sad Detective* (1985), Viktor Astafyev pointed out that he had designed this work as connected with the book *The Letters of a Portuguese Nun* written by Gabriel de Guilleragues: *As the years passed, I reread these letters over and over again, unlimitedly, "up to the end"—to the point of that self-oblivion which was peculiar to the loving woman-and-nun, and again* (i.e., as with his story *Shepherd and Shepherdess—A.S.*) *I felt my heart aching, and there was the anguish over something lost to us forever. Again, I wanted to recreate in writing something like the impossible love… In the novel "Sad Detective," only a quarter of the initial old manuscript remained, and many new personages appeared—too many, unfortunately—which, as I see it now, are sometimes almost uncontrollable. And only a few pieces from the "lonely nun" story remained here—a remembrance of*

the book written by Guilleragues that I love devotedly [Astafyev 1987: 4]. *The Letters of a Portuguese Nun* were written in the 17th century by Gabriel-Joseph de Lavergne, comte de Guilleragues; he, however, was long regarded only as a person who translated this work from Portuguese into French. The quotations from *The Letters of a Portuguese Nun* are included into the fifth chapter of the novel *Sad Detective* where the family life of the protagonist Leonid Soshnikov is described, as well as his complicated relationship with his wife Lera. In **contrast** to Leonid Soshnikov's personal life, the author includes into the text of his novel the excerpts from the first letter written by *the lonely nun*: *Mine eyes, alas! have lost the only light that gave them life, tears alone are left them, and ceaseless weeping is the sole employment I have given them since I learned that you were bent upon a separation so unbearable to me that it must soon bring about my death* (trans. by Edgar Prestage) [*for the Russian translation see:* Guilleragues 1973: 9]. This passage—of course, in Russian translation—was textually included into the novel *Sad Detective* [see: Astafyev 1997: 69]. The writer primarily chooses those excerpts where the suffering and self-abnegation of the heroine (who, as is known, became a nun) are depicted: *It was as though I refused to come back to a life which I feel bound to lose for you since I cannot preserve it for you. I flattered myself with the feeling that I was dying of love…* (trans. by Edgar Prestage) [*for the quotation as included into the text of the novel "Sad Detective" see:* Astafyev 1997: 69–70].

Along with passionate love declarations, the letters of Marianna are suffused with reproaches, resentment, and despair but for the author of *Sad Detective* all these passages are insignificant: he is interested in the strong amorous feelings of the nun, in her selfless *eternal love*: *…can I ever be well again until I see you? And yet I am bearing it without a murmur since it comes from you. What! is this the reward you give me for loving you so tenderly? But it matters not; I am resolved to adore you all my life and to care for no one else, and I tell you that you too will do*

well to love no other. ... ***Good-bye. Love me always and make me suffer still more*** (trans. by Edgar Prestage) [*for the quotation as included into the text of the novel "Sad Detective" see:* Astafyev 1997: 70].

The quotations from Guilleragues's book are not only semantically opposed to the relationship between Soshnikov and Lera, but are **antithetical** to the realities of modern life, to the *criminal chronicle* of the City of Veysk which symbolizes in the novel *a rotten corner of Russia*. That was precisely why Astafyev included the quotations into the central chapter of his novel, thereby compositionally emphasizing their importance in the structure of his literary work: the elevated, self-sacrificing love of *the lonely nun* incarnates the aesthetical ideal of the writer. Thus, the following words from Guilleragues's book can well be treated as a leitmotif of the Russian novel and, moreover, as an impetus for its very creation: *But how could you be happy, if you had a true heart?* (trans. by Edgar Prestage; with our minor corrections according to the Russian translation—*A.P.*) [*for the quotation as included into the text of the novel "Sad Detective" see:* Astafyev 1997: 71].

The plot of the story *A New Moscow Philosophy* (1989) by Vyacheslav Petsukh may be ironically associated with the events rendered by F.M. Dostoevsky in his famous novel *Crime and Punishment*; the quotations taken from this classical work are a characteristic feature of the contemporary story and contribute a lot to its poetics. Thus, at the very beginning of *A New Moscow Philosophy*, there is a quotation from the novel *Crime and Punishment*—the one where the death of the old woman money-lender is described: *She cried out, but very faintly, and suddenly sank all of a heap on the floor, although she still had time to raise her hands to her head. ... The blood gushed as from an overturned glass, the body fell back. ... She was already dead* (trans. by Constance Garnett; with our minor corrections according to the Russian original—*A.P.*) [*for the quotation as included into the text of the story "A New Moscow Philosophy" see:* Petsukh 1989: 220]. When this

quotation is provided, the narrator remarks that there are a lot of similar scenes in one's life and that another such scene, although not so bloody, quite recently *repeated itself once again*—this time, however, in Moscow. It is the disappearance and death of Alexandra Sergeevna Pumpyanskaya who had lived in the communal flat number 12 (as is known, the story is set in 1988). Nevertheless, *A New Moscow Philosophy* can hardly be regarded as a parody of the novel *Crime and Punishment*; here, more likely, *life itself is rendered as a parody—as a degraded version of a literary work, which, in addition, is suffused with daily existence* [Nefagina 2003: 202].

In the case of Petsukh's story, the events of "Petersburg text" constantly "rhyme" with those of "Moscow text": thus, the murder of the old woman money-lender correlates with the image of the *self-sacrificial old lady* Pumpyanskaya who was deliberately driven to her death, and the funeral dinner scene from the novel *Crime and Punishment*—with that one rendered by Petsukh (*But otherwise the similarity between this and other funeral dinners was striking or, at least, extraordinary* [Petsukh 1989: 322]). The emphasized parallelism between these two scenes—between the funeral dinner organized by Katerina Ivanovna (*Crime and Punishment*) and the one taking place after the funeral of Pumpyanskaya—is important for the author: *The funeral dinner which was held in the flat number 12 didn't begin with the words: "'It's all that cuckoo's fault! You know whom I mean? Her, her!' Katerina Ivanovna nodded towards the landlady" —but with the few steps which Zinaida Petrovna Kuznetsova made towards the centre of the kitchen so as to whiningly proclaim that…* (the words from the novel *Crime and Punishment* [in quotation marks here] trans. by Constance Garnett) [Petsukh 1989: 322]. Throughout his literary work, Vyacheslav Petsukh focuses on the two versions of the same narrative, which could be defined as the Petersburg and the Moscow ones. At that, the former version is more profound, more serious than the latter since the ontological basis of the "Moscow narrative" is not a

bonapartism but a certain kind of "philosophy" deriving from those narrow-mindedness and spiritual misery which are typical for the inhabitants of the communal flat.

Along with quotation, **intertextual reference** belongs to the explicit form of intertextuality. Its difference from quotation is that the referenced text here isn't directly included in the second—the so-called "referencing"—text. In other words, intertextual reference is used when it is necessary only to refer the reader to another text without literally quoting it. Thus, the heroes of the story *A New Moscow Philosophy* are compared with the heroes of Dostoevsky (namely, with Porfiry Petrovitch and Marmeladov), and, during the funeral dinner for Pumpyanskaya, Pyotr Petrovitch Luzhin appears quite unexpectedly in the flat number 12: *It was all the more strange that the classical story repeated itself—very generally, however—in our emotionless days <...> And it repeated itself so fully that even a Luzhin showed up out of the blue on Monday morning, and not just a Luzhin but precisely Pyotr Petrovitch Luzhin himself...* [Petsukh 1989: 307]. In this case, intertextual reference serves to make a parody of another text, or more correctly speaking, provides its ironical representation. Thereby the successive connection with the "avant-text"—F.M. Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment*—is emphasized once more.

Allusion, unlike quotation, *does not imply any straight-forwardness and explicitness, and so may be perceived as something more delicate and fine* [*for the Russian translation see:* Piégay-Gros 2008: 91]. Allusion presupposes not only intertextual relations, but, when treated as *a kind of intertextuality, it necessarily functions—and its specificity lies precisely in this—as an indirect reference to literary texts, the one providing impetus for the reader's memory* [*for the Russian translation see:* Piégay-Gros 2008: 91–92]. By way of example, let's consider the story *Gogol's Head* (1992) written by Anatoly Korolev in the form of a **postmodernist collage**, where all sorts of realities are mixed together: epochs and

styles, real historical figures and fictitious characters, the quotations from Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Gogol. This literary work presupposes Gogolian images and plots (interpreted, however, in an original way), as well as the "biographical" facts (real or legendary) of Gogol's life. The characters of *Dead Souls* are actually represented here as **dead souls**: according Anatoly Korolev's design, they are the victims of Stalin's terror, which—as the real historical figures during that time—are included into the notorious kill lists.

The story written by Anatoly Korolev develops a number of Gogolian motifs (including, for example, the motifs of high boots, nose, corpse, devil and devilry, etc.), which, in their turn, are functionally realized by the means of allusion. Among other things, this literary work describes the reburial of Gogol's remains that took place in the 1920s. A phantasmagoria in the spirit of Gogol already begins with the mere fact of writer's grave being opened, with the description of the two *commissioners* who are present during the exhumation: one of them is *a certain official, as if a commissar in charge of all Moscow cemeteries*, while the second is characterized as *a literary man of sorts* [Korolev 2000: 14]. The allusion to "Gogol's text" is provided by the fact that the surname of *the cemeterial commissar was, indeed, quite Gogolian, Nosov* [from the Russian noun *nos* meaning *nose—A.P.*], *and his name and patronymic were exactly the same as classical writer's, except that they were arranged upside-down* [Korolev 2000: 15], as well as by the following characteristic of the literary man Lyalin who, although *an extremely bad writer*, is labeled as an author of satirical writings. During the exhumation, the both commissioners decide to avail themselves of this opportunity, each, however, in their own way: thus, the commissar takes writer's brand-new high boots, while the literary man, *an old cynic*, helps himself to a piece of the fabric from Gogol's frock coat, which he, even before the occasion, has decided to use to decorate the first—published, as is well known, during Gogol's lifetime—edition of the novel *Dead Souls*. The very description of this absurd

situation is a **paraphrase of Gogol's original texts**: thus, Nosov shook the bones from Gogol's left boot out into the coffin only to *admire the* ***finely stitched heel***, and, then, he *reached for the right one.* ***This boot was even better than the left*** (the emphasis is ours—*A.S.*) [Korolev 2000: 17]. Subsequently, the narrator remarks that the image of boots is among those leitmotifs which are peculiar to the novel *Dead Souls* and remembers how the lieutenant admired his boot and scrutinized its *elegantly and* ***finely stitched heel*** [Korolev 2000: 20]. The actions of the commissioners are explained further in the text, and this explanation may be perceived as quite Gogolian too: the literary man—this one who carried out his plans and decorated the volume of *Dead Souls* with the stolen fabric—died thirty years later after a successful operation, since *a surgical scissors were forgotten in his belly* [Korolev 2000: 22] (let's remember the scissors by which Lyalin cut open the flap of Gogol's frock coat). The story written by Anatoly Korolev is also interesting from the viewpoint of **derivational relations** which manifest themselves here in the imitational "hypotext" rendered, accordingly, as a type of stylization.

Paratextuality. The phenomenon of paratextuality—treated in our article as text's relation to its title and epigraph—may be illustrated by the novel *The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years* (1980) written by Chyngyz Aitmatov. According to the author, the **title** of his literary work is a Shakespearian line as introduced into Russian literature by Boris Pasternak. The meaning of the line *The day lasts more than a hundred years* (*I dolshe veka dlitsya den*) can be understood only in the context of the whole novel, being, at the same time, realized in its structural organization (through the development and interaction of the several plotlines set at different chronological levels). The events occurring during a 24-hour period (the death and burial of Kazangap) reveal themselves as strongly linked with what was happening both in ancient times (the story of the ancestral cemetery Ana-beyit, mankurt, Nayman-any, and the white-headed she-camel

Akmai known as a progenitor of Koronar) and in the recent past: the story of the teacher Abutalip and his family, the life of Yedigei at the Burannyi junction, and the building of a spaceport on a place of destroyed ancestral cemetery.

The text of the novel is preceded by the epigraph taken from *Book of Lamentations* (also known in English as *Book of Prayers* or *Book of Sorrow*) written by the Armenian poet of the 10th century Grigor Narekatsi*: And this book is – instead of my body, / And this word is – instead of my soul* (trans. by John French) [*for the Russian translation see:* Aitmatov, 1983: 195]; these lines not only express the innermost meaning of the novel *The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years* but also that of Aitmatov's woks at large. Grigor Narekatsi, a monk of the Narek Monastery, appeals to God with the following words: *The voice of a sighing heart, its sobs and mournful cries, / I offer up to you, O Seer of Secrets* (trans. by Thomas J. Samuelian) [*for the Russian translation see:* Narekatsi 1988: 29] and then speak about his poem as intended for the rider:

> *May this book of prayers*
> *I have undertaken to compose*
> *with the strength of the Holy Spirit*
> *and with a view to the multitudinous needs of all*
> *serve for some as heartfelt pleas of intercession and*
> *for others as counsel toward virtue*
> *that through this book they might constantly*
> *appear before you, Great Mercy.*

(trans. by Thomas J. Samuelian) [*for the Russian translation see:* Narekatsi 1988: 37].

In the case of the novel *The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years*, the epigraph highlights the moral and spiritual values implied in this literary work as well as the scale of the depicted events and their space-time dimension. The theme of space, for its part, correlates with the refrain *In these parts, trains went from east*

to west... which, being graphically emphasized by the author, not only performs a structural function [Smirnova 2009], but also may be regarded as a semantic dominant of the text. The novel *The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years* covers a wide range of subjects, including life and death, the past, present and future, the relationship between generations and the continuity of spiritual experience, the humankind and the universe, wildlife and technological progress.

In the case of Ales Adamovich's story *The Last Pastoral* (1987), **the system of epigraphs** acts as an important meaningful and aesthetical component of the artistic structure. Each of the sixteen chapters of the work is preceded by its own epigraph, and thus the cultural context—this one essential for the understanding of the author's design as incarnated in the text of his story—is formed purposefully. At that, Ales Adamovich quotes a number of literary monuments, including the most ancient one, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (4000–3000 BC), the one of the earliest examples of ancient Indian prose, the sacred treatise *Shatapatha Brahmana* (800–600 BC), the one of the most revered books in the Indian culture, *The Bhagavad Gita* (300 BC), as well as the Old and New Testaments, and other monuments of the world culture, right up to the literary and scientific texts created as late as the 20th century.

Those epigraphs whose content is **antithetic** to the chapters preceded by them play a special role in *The Last Pastoral*. All such cases could be found in the first part of the literary work (chapters 2–6). In particular, Ales Adamovich uses epigraphs in order to quadruply emphasize the plot link between *The Last Pastoral* and the poem *She and I* written by Yanka Kupala. But if the poem *She and I* is an exultant song of *earth and life*, then *The Last Pastoral*, a story about a nuclear apocalypse, is, on the contrary, a requiem for *earth and life*. The two texts, though united by the common theme of the love between a man and a woman (both in the story and poem, the main characters are just He and She), are diametrically opposed in terms of their main content: if in the poem, the lovers are rendered as

integrated into natural environment, are, so to speak, its inseparable part, then, in the case of *The Last Pastoral*, the nature, being permeated with radiation, becomes dangerous for mankind and, ultimately, can't support life.

Intertext is a part of that intentional strategy chosen by the author which is focused on the literary works well known by a certain people or nation and, consequently, capable to enter into a "dialog" with the reader, to awaken his or her memory. If it is correct that paratextuality implies the active participation of the reader in *that process which generates the meaning of a certain literary work* [*for the Russian translation see:* Piégay-Gros 2008: 139], then epigraph excites one to thought, interpretation, and rereading.

Contemporary Russian prose, although changing and developing, is permanently characterized by the active use of different explicit and implicit intertextual forms, the meaning, functioning, and poetics of which are determined by the specific nature of a certain literary text. Contemporary authors' interest in these forms is due to the fact that *the conception of intertextuality responded to the fundamental aspiration of the world culture in the 20th century, to its, overt or covert, quest for spiritual integration. After gaining exceptional popularity in the world of letters, intertextuality influenced—like no other category or conception—both the literary practice and the self-consciousness of contemporary writers* [Ilyin 2004: 165–166].