

THE GENRE TRADITION OF THE BILDUNGSROMAN IN THE NOVELS OF THE PROTOCANON OF SOCIALIST REALISM

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Abstract: The article analyzes the protoconan phase of the Russian novel of education on the material of N. Ognev's "Diary of Kostya Ryabtsev" and A. Gaidar's "School". It is established, firstly, that the genre tradition of the novel of education, represented in these texts, embodies the common universal idea of the socialist realist novel – the education of workers in the spirit of socialist realism. Secondly, the markers of socialist realist consciousness, the carriers of which the main characters become, are: a clearly formed position in relation to the bourgeois class, a heightened sense of justice. Thirdly, A. Gaidar's and N. Ognev's heroes have not yet arrived at exceptional positivity: the trajectory of transformation of Kostya Ryabtsev and Boris Gorikov is identical – it is the path from spontaneity to consciousness, obedience to the Party. Finally, unlike the characters of socialist realism, whose direction of character development is characterized by a consistent upward movement, the trajectory of personality development of A. Gaidar's and N. Ognev's heroes is a downward movement up to the point of symbolic death. A. Gaidar's and N. Ognev's heroes' personality trajectory is a downward movement up to the point followed by symbolic death. Only after experiencing it, they start an upward movement, get a new chance to find themselves.

Keywords: protoconan; literature of socialist realism; novel of Bildungsroman; A. Gaidar; N. Ognev; tradition.

1 Introduction

Before talking about the socialist realist novel of education, it is necessary to clearly define which texts it would be legitimate to refer to socialist realist literature in general. Of interest is the fact that a number of researchers (Clark 2002; Litovskaya 2008; Sinyavsky 1988) call the canonical texts of socialist realism novels written before 1934 – the moment of the official approval of the statute at the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, in which the definition of socialist realism as the main method of Soviet fiction and literary criticism was first formulated (Clark 2002, 716). Thus, M. Gorky's "Mother", D. Furmanov's "Chapaev" and F. Gladkov's "Cement" are referred to the canon. Katerina Clark explains it as follows: "After socialist realism was 'created', many texts began to read differently than when they were written" (Clark 2002, 18). Thus, these novels were not created as models, but were later chosen as such. The charter itself confirms this idea: "During the years of the proletarian dictatorship, Soviet fiction and Soviet literary criticism, going with the working class, guided by the Communist Party, have developed their own, new creative principles", which "have found their main expression in the principles of socialist realism" (First All-Union Congress 1934, 716). However, in our opinion, the lack of a clear periodization in this matter is fraught with confusion in relation to other artistic texts of the 1920s, as a result of which there may be a tendency to artificially "inflate" the boundaries of socialist realism. The process of formation of the socialist realist canon is described most convincingly by H. Gunter in his article "Life Phases of the Socialist Realist Canon" (Gunter 2000). Based on the historical process of development of Soviet society, the researcher identifies five phases that socialist realism passed through in its existence: the preparatory phase of the protoconan, the phase of canonization, the phase of application of the canon, the phase of decanonization and the post-canonical stage (Gunter 1990, 197;

Gunter 2000, 181–182). This division, in our opinion, seems to be very successful, because it delineates the range of texts belonging to one or another phase by chronological frameworks. Thus, if we take into account H. Gunter's periodization, it is more logical to attribute the texts we have chosen to the phase of canon formation, since they "prepared" the universal model of the socialist realist novel.

2 Materials and methods

The material for our study are two texts that continue the tradition of the novel of education – "Diary of Kostya Ryabtsev" by N. Ognev (1926) and "School" by A. Gaidar (1929), which belong to the proto-conan phase by A. Gaidar (1929), which by the time of their creation belong to the protoconan phase. On their example it is most indicative to trace what features of the socialist realist method they contain. The key methods of our study are, firstly, the method of holistic analysis of an artistic work, thanks to which the works of A. Gaidar and N. Ognev are considered in the unity of their poetics and problems; secondly, the comparative-historical method, which allowed us to compare the works of A. Gaidar and N. Ognev to the canonical examples of socialist realism; thirdly, the typological method, with the help of which we identify the works that represent the type of Bildungsroman as the protoconan phase of socialist realist literature.

3 Literature Review

It is well known that the Bildungsroman is a type of novel genre, according to a number of researchers, genetically dating back to the monuments of medieval literature, chivalric tales, the Baroque novel, and received a complete classical form in the work of the German enlighteners – C. M. Wieland and J. W. Goethe. The genre continued its development in the romantic tradition of German and English writers, and then embodied in realistic literature.

The study of Bildungsroman has been the subject of scientific interests of many scholars. Despite the generally accepted opinion that the term Bildungsroman was first used by K. Morgenstern, a number of researchers (Demchenkova 200, 20; Dialektova 1972, 31–32) rightly point to its earlier use in German literary studies. Already in the XVIII century, in particular in 1774, in F. Blakenburg's work "Experience about the novel" the German novel "The Story of Agathon" by K. M. Wieland is characterized by the author as a Bildungsroman. A. V. Dialektova notes that by identifying the signs of the novel genre on the example of "The Story of Agathon", Blakenburg thus connects the first serious study in this field with the German educational novel (Dialektova 1972, 20). In the same year, I. Herder made one of the first attempts to philosophically justify the concept of Bildung (Herder 1977, 701). A few years later, the conceptual interpretation of the humanistic ideal of this concept was formulated by W. Humboldt (Kirchner 2008). Thus, in the early 19th century, K. Morgenstern approached the phenomenon of Bildungsroman as an already known phenomenon, as a result of which he tried to give its genre characterization. The term was introduced into scientific circulation by W. Dilthey, and later he also laid down the tendencies for an in-depth study of the genre of the educational novel. In German literary studies, the first significant monograph devoted to the Bildungsroman, namely, its origins and formation up to Wieland's "Agathon", was the book by M. Gerhard (Gerhard 1926). The next major German study, in which an attempt was made to outline the historical and literary background of the genre and its philosophical justification, was the work of J. Jacobs (Jacobs 1972), which, in addition, contains theoretical remarks (in particular, one of its sections is devoted to the terminological issue). The main driver of the plot, according to the researcher, is the conflict of the educated person with different spheres of the external world. It is also important

that the scientist includes the so-called “novel of anti-nurture” in the variety of the Bildungsroman, considering the hero’s disappointment and loss of illusions in the finale as one of the alternative endings that equalize the finale. The scholar’s idea about the international existence of Bildungsroman is also quite remarkable in this work: while not denying the formation of the Bildungsroman on German soil and noting that “there is a variety of the novel, which, however, is German, typically German, legitimately national” (Jacobs 1972, 327), he considers it necessary to avoid searching for exclusively national features in the general assessment of its artistic uniqueness, and thus expands the boundaries of the study of the genre. The most profound and detailed approach to the study of Bildungsroman in German literary studies is distinguished by R. Selbmann’s monograph (Selbmann 1984), which examines the genre of the educational novel from a historical perspective; however, the undoubted importance of this work still does not exclude the fact that in the summarizing part the researcher fails to clearly classify the concepts he actively operates with: “educational novel”, “educational structure”, “educational history”. It should be emphasized that the review of the history of the study of Bildungsroman in German literary studies reveals an insufficient theoretical basis: this is due to different methodological approaches to the study of the issue, diverse philosophical interpretations of the ideological component of the genre, terminological ambiguity, the desire to cover extensive material, and the lack of a differentiated approach to the study.

In Russian literary studies, the beginning of the study of the Bildungsroman genre model was laid by M. Bakhtin (Bakhtin 1976; 2000). The scientist formulated the conceptual difference between Bildungsroman and other varieties of the novel genre: “The hero himself, his character becomes a variable value in the formula of this novel. The change of the hero himself acquires plot significance <...> Time is brought inside the man, enters into his very image, essentially changing the meaning of all moments of his fate and life. This type of novel can be labeled in the most general sense as a novel of human formation” (Bakhtin 1976, 209). It should be noted that earlier M. Gerhard, defining the “novel of development”, noted only one characteristic feature of its genre: “gradual development and ingrowth into the world” of the individual as the ultimate goal of his journey (Gerhard 1926). Obviously, M. Bakhtin concretizes the definition of genre, believing its basis to be its chronotopic component – time. This observation allowed us to specify the characteristic features of the novel of education, such as the presence of retrospections and introspections represented by the hero’s inner monologues. The works of A. Dialektova, V. Pashigorev, E. Krasnoshchekova, O. Osmukhina and E. Ovsyannikova (Dialektova 1972; Pashigorev 2005; Krasnoshchekova 2008; Osmukhina, Ovsyannikova 2022, 2023) are based on M. Bakhtin’s methodology.

4 Results and Discussions

The genre tradition of Bildungsroman, represented in the works of N. Ognev and A. Gaidar, embodies the common universal idea of the socialist realist novel – “education of workers in the spirit of socialist realism”. This idea was first expressed by A. Sinyavsky: “In a large part of its Soviet literature is an educational novel, which shows the communist metamorphosis of individuals and collectives” (Sinyavsky 1988, 25). K. Clark partly agrees with this idea, but suggests not to take it literally, because “the socialist realist novel is so ritualized that the hero’s progress is deprived of personhood and self-value” (Clark 2002, 134). By the way, if we perceive the novel of education not in its traditional version, but allow its possible transformation and adaptation in accordance with the requirements of its time, then K. Clark’s argument can be refuted. Clark’s argument can be refuted: the novel of education in the socialist realist period takes the form of its variety – “the novel of the figure”, in which, as V. Pashigorev notes, “the development of the character is carried out not so much in its psychological diversity and contradiction, as in the perspective of the evolution of ideas” (Pashigorev 2005, 130). Thus, by becoming a narrative about a figure whose fate is pre-programmed, the socialist realist novel is reduced to a clear

schematization - it presents to the reader the transformation and development not of a hero, but of an idea: the hero initially possesses all the necessary communist virtues, the author’s task is to nurture in him the ideology of Bolshevism and thus popularize it.

One of the main distinguishing features of the novel of socialist realism is a positive hero, which is pointed out by a number of literary critics (Clark 2002; Litovskaya 2008; Dobrenko 2007; Volodina 1998; Shalaginov 2006). Moreover, his typicalization does not allow us to refer him to the heirs of positive heroes of the XIX century. The formulaic “positivity” of the protagonist of socialist realism is so obvious that it became the subject of several barbed remarks by scholars. Thus, A. Sinyavsky in his pamphlet ironizes his increased power: “As he approaches his goal, he becomes more and more positive, beautiful, majestic” (Sinyavsky 1988, 29). K. Clark notes that depriving him of any individual features would allow him to “pass from book to book without loss or special changes” (Clark 2002, 56).

Indeed, Boris Gorikov in A. Gaidar’s work in his hotheadedness, stubbornness, spontaneity, ideological fervor in a few years will be embodied in Pavka Korchagin. Gaidar’s Boris Gorikov in his hotheadedness, stubbornness, spontaneity, ideological ardor will be embodied in Pavka Korchagin in a few years. Not quite ritualized yet, not hagiographically emphasized, he chickens out more than once on the way to his formation, but his “positivity” is set by the author from the beginning and expressed on the first pages of the novel in his aspiration to belong to the working class:

- What are you preparing for? – strictly asks his mother, signing the ballnik. – <...> Why again the inspector writes that you climbed up the roof of the school on the fire escape? What’s that for? That you’re training to be a chimney sweep?
- No. No artists, no writers, no chimney sweeps... I’ll be a sailor (Gaidar 1967, 8).

The origin of N. Ognev’s hero is no less important. Ognev: Kostya Ryabtsev is “the son of a laboring element”. The author does not ignore his position towards the bourgeoisie – resenting the new system of education, he resents only the origin of its creator: “I will say this: why do we need this bourgeois plan? And they also say that this lord was fed only goose liver and jelly when he invented it. We should put him on an octopus and a vobla and see! Or to make him beg in the villages, as we used to do in the colony” (Ognev 1988, 423). The attitude of the hero of A. Gaidar’s hero, Boris Gorikov, to the bourgeoisie, is read in the scene, which is given by the author after the events of the overthrow of the tsar’s power: Boris sits in the attic and looks at the fire of the Polutin’s bar estate: “I smiled through my tears, not yet dried up after the heavy loss, rejoicing that the ‘merry time’ is approaching” (Gaidar 1967, 63–64). But so far the positions of these two characters look only like ill-will, which in N. Ostrovsky will develop into real hatred from the first pages of the novel, when Pavka pours a handful of mahr into the priest’s Easter dough (Ostrovsky 1974, 29).

The positivity of the heroes of A. Gaidar and N. Ognev’s heroes are not only in their origin and clearly formed position in relation to the bourgeois class, they possess a number of typical personal traits. Hotness in relation to the common cause, adventurism mixed with colossal self-confidence are seen in the characterization of Kostya Ryabtsev, composed by shkrabs (Ognev 1988, 457), and Boris, who joined Shebalov’s detachment “When there will be a battle, I will not bend down on purpose, and if I am killed, it’s nothing either. Then they will write to my mother: ‘Your son was a communist and died for the great cause of the revolution’. And my mother will cry and hang my portrait next to my father’s, and a new, bright life will go its way past that wall” (Gaidar 1967, 181). A heightened sense of justice is another marker of socialist consciousness. Ryabtsev’s truthfulness breaks through in the scene when he learns of Lina’s pregnancy and rebuffs Venka Palkin: “No, you drink and debauch with your buddies, but leave our school alone!” (Ognev

1988, 502). The same feeling will be cultivated by N. Ostrovsky in the character of Pavka, who as a young man overhears the sobs of the disgraced Froysa, „shuddering and beating her head against logs“ (Ostrovsky 1974, 39), and after encountering the atrocities of the Petlyurovtsy against Khristina, and the Poles who raped and executed Valya Bruzzhak and Rosa Gritsman: „And, driving away from the gate, Pavel remembered the last words of the order of the Rensovet, read before the regiment: „The Workers' and Peasants' Country loves its Red Army. It is proud of it. It demands that not a single stain be on its banner“. – Not a single stain, – whispered Pavel's lips“ (Ostrovsky 1974, 181).

However, the heroes of A. Gaidar and N. Ognev have not yet arrived at exceptional positivity. The trajectory of transformation of Kostya Ryabtsev and Boris Gorikov is identical – it is the path from spontaneity to consciousness, obedience to the party. The hero's movement from anarchy to discipline, “striving to solve the contradictions between the natural needs of people and the interests of society”, as K. Clark points out, is the task of socialist realism literature (Clark 2002). This is the path that Pavka later takes in N. Ostrovsky's novel. The words of comrade Segal encapsulate the main idea of the novel: “The young man has not yet completely gone from spontaneity. He lives with feelings that revolt in him, and the whirlwinds of these feelings knock him aside” (Ostrovsky 1974, 199). And this, we note, after he consciously renounced his love for Tonya in an effort to belong to the party (Ostrovsky 1974, 191).

Socialist realism requires total discipline not only in personal life, but also the reorganization of the entire inner world of man. Ryabtsev's spontaneity is consistently embodied throughout the narrative: rebelliousness in his relations with shkrabs, stealing apples from Moisey Markelych's garden, participating in a scuffle and beating Grigoriev, and as a result – a problem with his studies, which turns out to be completely unacceptable for a Party member. His path lies through losses and gradual alienation from society. The first major loss for Kostya is Lenin's death, which “made him ten years older”, followed by his breakup with Silva, after which he feels complete loneliness: “And it turned out that I had affairs that I know alone. <...> And now this diary is like a close friend, with whom I talk decisively everything” (Ognev 1988, 508).

Ryabtsev is surrounded by social life: he is appointed to the academic committees, defends the rights of the students in front of Yelnikitka, tries to work with street children, and after receiving a party ticket, he is a member of the school council from the outpost, but being an individualist, he cannot integrate into social life, and therefore feels deeply lonely. Toward the end of the story there are notes that he is shunned by the boys (Ognev 1988, 589), and this culminates in his own confession to Ivanov: “Still, Ivanov, take me off the pioneer work <...>. It's difficult, you know?.. I now see that I am an individualist and that I do more harm than good” (Ognev 1988, 599). Unlike Pavka Korchagin, whose direction of development, according to H. Gunther, is characterized by a consistent upward movement (Gunther 1990, 195), Ryabtsev develops differently – like Nikolai Ableukhov of A. Beloi, whose trajectory of personality formation is a downward movement up to the point followed by symbolic death. Only after surviving it, A. Belyi's hero begins an upward movement, gets a new chance to find himself. In N. Ognev's Ryabtsev also experiences a symbolic death when he recognizes that his individualism harms society – he dies as a spontaneous personality – and also, like Ableukhov, gets a second chance in Ivanov's words: “Stay” (Ognev 1988, 600). But if the tradition of the novel of education in the 1910–1920s was embodied in the hero's desire for individualism, inner development, isolation of his personality from the world outside (the novels “We” by E. Zamyatin, “Petersburg” by A. Belyi), then in 1926 only those who consciously renounced spontaneity and individualism, who were ready to unconditionally obey the party discipline demanded from above, could remain in the service of the proletariat. Thus, the finale of Kostya Ryabtsev's Diary conveys the idea that any individualist is capable of being raised within the framework of socialist realist ideology, of

becoming useful to society, and even more, of unconditionally submitting to the system.

Note that in the Diary it is not the process of depersonalization itself that is important, as it will be in N. Ostrovsky's work; only one thing is required of the hero – his consent. Such consent was also required of Zamyatin's D-503: it is no coincidence that the day before he was so struck by S's message that “there is no infinity”. “Infinity” in Zamyatin's text means soul, while in the socialist realist novel it means individuality. In both texts, agreement is achieved through negation: ‘if there is no soul, there is no need for fantasy’, ‘if individualism interferes with the common cause, there is no place for it’. The novel protocanon brings its hero almost to the finale of Zamyatin's novel “We”: Ryabtsev voluntarily agrees to the eradication of his individuality.

The path of becoming a hero A. Gaidar – the path of mistakes and overcoming them. For the first time he is cowardly in the first task entrusted to him: at the decisive moment he is unable to shoot the White Guard and in confusion drops his rifle. Later, in the captivity of the Whites, he chickens out, not daring to save Chubuk: “No matter what I said, no matter how I roused myself, I finally did not want to go and stand against the wall” (Gaidar 1967, 209). He feels a burning sense of guilt, but even this mistake does not save him from spontaneity – it is followed by violations of Shebalov's orders in Fedya Syrtsov's company, which lead to the tragic death of the company commander Galda. Like Kostya Ryabtsev, Boris sinks into a sense of loneliness: “There is no special friendship with anyone. Not only that, even the guys squint” (Gaidar 1967, 238). Loneliness in the socialist realist novel is a kind of punishment of the hero for his freedom-loving, for the lack of discipline, for the fact that personal interests are put above social ones. In N. Ostrovsky's novel, “like a plague”, they begin to shun the deserter who did not want to sacrifice his health on the construction of the road and refused a party ticket: he is punished precisely by loneliness (Ostrovsky 1974, 228).

In socialist realism, spontaneity must necessarily be defeated, and so Boris's correction begins with his joining the Party: Shebalov becomes his “godfather”. Boris, like Ryabtsev, is given a second chance, and therefore in the final scene he heroically broadcasts the result of the accomplished socialist education: falling from a bullet into the snow, he reflects on only one thing – that “a bright life” can be found only together (Gaidar 1967, 246). This is the path of formation of both heroes – from anarchic, freedom-loving thinking to party personality, strict discipline and service to common ideals. The described formation is always a rejection of the “personal” in favor of the common, a kind of sacrifice made in the name of socialism.

In the novels of the 1920s, this sacrifice is not yet expressed with the convincing conviction with which it will be formulated later, in N. Ostrovsky by Pankratov: no inhuman conditions can cause the cessation of the construction of an access road for the delivery of firewood to the city, because it is “not allowed by the idea and discipline” (Ostrovsky 1974, 238); “die five times, but it is necessary to build the branch line” (Ostrovsky 1974, 238); “five times die, but it is necessary to build the branch line” (Ostrovsky 1974, 238); “die five times, but the branch line must be built. What kind of Bolsheviks we will be otherwise <...>” (Ostrovsky 1974, 226). Personal, and even if objective reasons – cease to be not only an argument, but become a reproach. Thus, the Bildungsroman translates one fundamental idea of socialism – from free-thinking to unconditional obedience and even proactive sacrifice for the sake of common ideas. Education itself – let us agree with K. Clark – can hardly be called personalized, it is ritualized and devoid of self-value (Clark 2002), the ultimate goal of heroes' formation is depersonalization.

Therefore, the novels belonging to the protocanon phase already broadcast a schematism that turns the Bildungsroman into a novel of the figure. It is noteworthy that both works do not give the reader a complete program of the hero's development up to

maturity, do not cover a serious chronological period of the protagonist's life, leaving him as if on the threshold of further exploits in the service of building a "bright future", do not offer a model of this service. Such a remark organically corresponds with the opinion of F. Yost, who called Bildungsroman a pre-novel, a preamble, because it tells about the formation of a man at the very beginning of his journey until he is ready to "continue his novel" (Yost 1969, 99).

5 Summary

The phase of socialist realist protocanon adapted the tradition of the novel of education to the ideology broadcast in the contemporary historical period. In this regard, it seems very fair to note F. Moretti, who called the novel of education a "symbolic form" that served in Europe as a tool for rethinking modernity. The same thing happened in socialist realism. It is established, firstly, that the genre tradition of the novel of education, represented in these texts, embodies the common universal idea of the socialist realist novel – the education of workers in the spirit of socialist realism. Secondly, the markers of socialist realist consciousness, the carriers of which the main characters become, are: a clearly formed position in relation to the bourgeois class, a heightened sense of justice. Thirdly, A. Gaidar's and N. Ognev's heroes have not yet arrived at exceptional positivity: the trajectory of transformation of Kostya Ryabtsev and Boris Gorikov is identical – it is the path from spontaneity to consciousness, obedience to the Party. Finally, unlike the characters of socialist realism, whose direction of character development is characterized by a consistent upward movement, the trajectory of personality development of A. Gailar's and N. Ognev's heroes is a downward movement up to the point of symbolic death. A. Gaidar's and N. Ognev's heroes' personality trajectory is a downward movement up to the point followed by symbolic death. Only after experiencing it, they start an upward movement, get a new chance to find themselves.

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