

THE PECULIARITY OF MODERN RUSSIAN ANTI-UTOPIA ON THE EXAMPLE OF TOLSTOY'S WORKS

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ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the genre features of Tolstoy's novel "Kyss". Ideological and purely artistic aspects of the notion "dystopia" are distinguished, the question if the novel can be referred to this genre is raised. Since the very possibility of creating a full-fledged anti-utopian concept in the postmodern era is called into question, alternative genre definitions of "Kysya", such as "dystopia", "kakotopia" and "postutopia", are also examined. The latter seems to be the most preferable: Tolstaya uses in the text of the novel also anti-utopian strategies, but on the whole she is outside the rigid opposition between utopia and its genre antipodes.

Keywords: Image, utopia, novel, genre, question.

The attribution of Tolstoy's novel "Kys" to the genre of dystopia is a very controversial issue. Many researchers recognize "Kys" as a dystopia, but they are based on completely different grounds. For literary critic N. Eliseev, it is plot parallels with famous anti-utopias [2]; for O. Osmukhina, it is an indirect correlation with the contemporary historical context [6]; K. Stepanian [10] and O. Kryzhanovskaya emphasize rather the construction of a negative image of the future: "The author's deconstructive view of the future, in which the vices of the past are exacerbated, are brought to an abnormal grotesque and confirm the belonging of Tolstaya's novel "Kys" to the dystopian genre" [3, p. 118]. It is obvious that the very notion of dystopia needs to be considered separately. B.A. Lanin in his article "Autonomy of Literary Anti-utopia" singles out "a dispute with utopia or with a utopian plan" as the main feature of this genre [4, p. 154]. A similar, though somewhat more radical way of thinking is G. Morson, who considers anti-utopia an anti-genre: "I do not consider a text to be anti-genre unless its author intended to ridicule the very tradition in which the object of his denunciations is written. Controversial utopias are not anti-utopias" [5, p. 234]. Is there a dispute with utopia in Kysi? The only thing that might be considered a dispute with utopia is the ironic portrayal of the former's view of Russia's historical path, Nikita Ivanovich and Lev Levovich. Nikita

Ivanovich wants "brotherhood, love, beauty. Justice. Respect for one another. Exalted aspirations" [11, p. 142], reasonable, honest labor "hand in hand" [Ibid, p. 143] and the fire of "love for one's neighbor" [Ibid]. That is, his views cannot be called ideologically framed; they are precisely "aspirations" rather than any theory. In the case of Lev Levovich, one can speak of a Westernist ideology. He wants to "fight for freedom by fax" and is confident that "the West will help us" [Ibid, p. 233]: obviously, Lev Levovich assumes that the West survived the Bang (the mythologem: "there is always a West" is indicative [Ibid]). And since, in his opinion, Russia will never get out of its Stone Age on its own, it is necessary to establish "contacts with the West". However, in his reasoning Lev Levovich does not go beyond the phrase "come and get it. Volodeite" [Ibid, p. 234] (this is an inaccurate quotation from the Tale of Bygone Years), and in the context of the return of the Dürer album, and Lev L'vovich has no doctrine of any kind. We can say that there is irony in the novel in relation to the ultra-Western aspirations of Lev L'vovich, but it is rather moderate. The other characters do not have any coherent conceptions of the future: the Chief Sanitary Inspector seizes power because of his power hunger, he is deeply indifferent to any theories about the future, the reincarnate Teterja is a lumpen Stalinist (an obvious indication of his preferences is a portrait of Stalin, which he nailed into his sleigh: "In the middle of the idol he nailed a painted one, - moustaches to both sides")

This ideological ambiguity and heterogeneity of "Kys" is noted, for example, by literary critic E. Rabinovich: "for a completely real anti-utopia, Kys' is too literary - in a real anti-utopia the idea dominates after all, an anti-utopia can sometimes (and Orwell always) be referred to as a sociological study or even as a political forecast" [8] - certainly, the concept of the novel does not meet this kind of criteria. T. Tolstaya herself firstly names the genre of "Kysya" as anti-utopia, but then she focuses on historiosophy, which she herself refutes the unambiguousness of her genre definition: "And you decided to show our future? - No. Our eternal present. It's true that when you write an anti-utopia, it is somehow inevitably perceived as political satire, which is not what I wanted. I wanted to write about life and people. About the mysterious Russian people" [Ibid., pp. 331-332]. Indeed, historiosophy prevails in "Kysi"; there are few anti-utopian elements and almost no political satire. In more detail about dystopia as a kind of stable genre tradition, different authors point out different signs that a work belongs to dystopia. For example, Irina Rodnyanskaya sees the following motifs as the most characteristic: "Always the dystopian world, in view of its break with the natural and organic,

has an emphatically industrial face" [9, p. 219]. "Kyss" does not meet this criterion: the doves live in the Stone Age with elements of the Middle Ages, and they have only relatively recently invented the wheel. The second criterion is also irrelevant: "In a given type of society, there must be a doctrine that fully organizes the minds of citizens without being a religious doctrine" [Ibid., p. 222]. There is no rigid ideological control of the totalitarian type. According to the third criterion, "the attitude of the 'new world' to the old, bookish, individual culture is uniform, whatever opus one looks into. In Us historical monuments perish and "ancient books" are not read; in Huxley's novel such books are locked up in the Governor-in-Chief's safe as a kind of special repository" [Ibid., p. 223]. In Kysi the attitude toward old books is negative, but the prohibition is not for ideological reasons. It is said: "Do not keep books at home, and whoever keeps them - do not hide them, and whoever hides them - treat them" [11, p. 247]. First, old books are forbidden because of the superstitious fear of Disease (i.e., because of radiation, the level of which has long been low [Ibid., p. 124]). Secondly, Fyodor Kuzmich still introduces people to the old culture by giving old books to be rewritten under his own name, but this almost does not change the matter: the doves, like Gogol's Petrushka, read for the sake of the process itself. The book as an intellectual product poses no threat, since no one perceives what they read beyond the primitive entertainment-plot level (except in isolated cases, such as Varvara Lukinishna).

One of the reasons for this plot construction may be Tolstoy's desire to play with the genre anti-utopian tradition - that is, to partially discredit anti-utopia as a kind of frozen and standardized genre construct. The fourth point in Rodnyansky's version is personalism: "Utopia is sociocentric, anti-utopia is personalistic" [9, p. 224]. "Kys' completely satisfies this criterion, since the novel is narrated in the form of Benedict's non-personal, direct speech: naturally, Benedict's and the author's points of view are combined in one way or another, but personalism is preserved. The fifth criterion ("home and family in the old sense of the word are excluded here - man has no right to be special" [Ibid., p. 226]) and the sixth ("Collective labor takes flow-conveyor forms and at the same time ritual-pathetic - as a means of absorbing the individual into the whole" [Ibid.]) does not correspond at all to Kyss. Social labor institutions, as well as the family, are arranged very traditionally in the novel. The seventh point concerns the traditionally unfree position of art in a dystopian society: "This is what happens to art. It finally gets rid of its autonomy, of its 'shabby freedom,' which it has found in recent times, and returns, as the 'theurgist' symbolists dreamed, to a kind of public

action. In other words, art, which has become a cynical "technology of feelings" (Huxley), as if parodying the archaic, takes on pseudoritual, pseudo-carnival, pseudo-folklore forms" [Ibid., p. 227]. In "Kysi" nothing of the kind happens: there is no creativity as such, the dove culture absorbs fragments of the old culture, and this collage becomes part of the folk-type culture at the perceptual level. But no one essentially understands the old culture, so it is not dangerous and is not perceived as a possible tool for manipulating public consciousness. After the coup, the Chief Sanitary Inspector even says of the old books: "You can. Fuck them. It makes no difference now. Let them read" [11, p. 305]. The eighth feature of an anti-utopian work is its anti-traditionality: "The general idea is to start from scratch, breaking with blood tradition, cutting off organic continuity; after all, parents are the nearest link to the past" [9, p. 228]. Kyss" also meets this criterion only partially, as the break with tradition occurs not for ideological reasons, but "for technical reasons": because of the Explosion. Perhaps, just as in the case of the book ban, Tolstaya here plays with the genre tradition of dystopia, not taking it seriously and literally. According to the ninth criterion, "the proclaimed goal of social utopias is the common welfare, but the remaking of man for its sake soon reveals itself as the only real goal" [Ibid., p. 235]: this is, for example, the "double-mindedness" and "new language" of 1984, the "opacity" of human consciousness. Curiously, human nature in the novel Kys' does change, but not as a result of purposeful "remaking," but because of an atomic explosion. Perhaps this plot twist related to the global mutation of humanity and the natural world is Tolstoy's ironic response to the corresponding utopian projects, so that in one way or another the ninth anti-utopian criterion is played out in the novel. The tenth point highlights such a feature of the social structure as "self-occupation" [Ibid., p. 236]. In Kys', self-occupation is not as accentuated as in totalitarian societies of dystopian novels, but the bureaucratic system of the dove men and the repressive power of the orderlies certainly meet this criterion. Obviously, the novel Kys' satisfies less than half of the attributes of a classic dystopia. However, in most cases the nonconformity to the "canon" is due either to the writer playing with anti-utopian clichés, or to the fact that in the postmodern context it is simply impossible to use the techniques of classical anti-utopia. Consequently, Kyss is a postmodern variation of the dystopia genre. Within dystopia, two main varieties are usually distinguished: dystopia and kakotopia. Despite the vagueness of the use of these two terms, we can try to relate the novel in question to them. First, according to Chalikova, dystopia "is not an enemy of utopia, not an enemy of paradise, or rather, it cannot dare to denounce

paradise when hell is on earth" [13]. In other words, dystopia lacks an accentuated dispute with utopia.

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