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Rozprawa: *Правда и вымысел в образе провинциальной России в прозе Бориса Екимова*

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Summary

The research presented in this dissertation is devoted to the problem of truth and fiction in the realistic prose of contemporary Russian writer Boris Yekimov (born 1938). The problem of truth is not an easy one due to the theoretical and methodological complexity of this issue and the prevailing skepticism towards it today. Nevertheless, this issue is central in the works of Yekimov, who has been justly awarded many prestigious national literary prizes, but who is still unjustly overlooked and underestimated by the wider reading public. This is, among other things, because the author of more than two hundred short stories about the Russian province has, as it were, consciously remained in the shadow of famous names, carefully nurturing the tradition of realism in Russian literature, seeking answers to the eternal questions of truth, goodness and beauty. The present study analyzes a selection of Yekimov's works published since 1999, with the aim of determining the relationship between truth and fiction in them; whether in the fictional world of a work, in addition to aesthetic truthfulness, one can also find a truth of a higher order, a metaphysical truth, which in turn allows one to transcend the boundaries of literary reality and possess knowledge of extra-literary reality. The tools for an in-depth study of works in light of the issues under study are offered by Roman Ingarden's phenomenological method. One can see many correlations between Yekimov's key considerations on literature and Ingarden's concepts, laid out in detail in the fundamental treatises *The Literary Work of Art* и *The Cognition of the Literary Work*.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a summary and a bibliographical index. The introduction presents the rationale for the choice of the research problem, defines the objectives, subject and methodology of the study, the scope of the material studied and the structure of the work.

The theoretical part of the dissertation includes the historical background of the research topic since antiquity, as well as an overview of contemporary positions towards the perception of the issues of truth and fiction in literature. However, it should be mentioned

that it is not exhaustive due, of course, to the multiplicity of existing approaches. The first chapter also presents the Polish phenomenologist Roman Ingarden's concepts of the literary work, still little known to the Russian-speaking public, which form the methodological basis of the dissertation. These include the concept of the ontological structure of the literary work, the concept of metaphysical qualities, the concept of points of indeterminateness and concretization. Based on these, the chapter defines the basic terminological tools that are necessary for, it seems, an in-depth analysis of the texts in light of the issues under study. These include, first of all, such concepts as "truth" and "truthfulness", *quasi-judgments*, *metaphysical qualities*, *the idea of the work*, *aesthetic concretization*, *aesthetic experience* and others.

The biographical chapter attempts to introduce the profile of Boris Yekimov as an artist for whom truth in the broadest sense (and with it the other components of the classical triad, i.e. goodness and beauty) is of paramount value both in the context of literary creation and human existence in general.

The analytical section consists of two chapters. The first analytical chapter is divided into two subsections. They analyze Yekimov's key stories *Pinochet* (*Пиночет*, 1999) and *Autumn in Zadonie. The story of the land and people* (*Осень в Задонье. Повесть о земле и людях*, 2008), in which the author draws an insightful and reliable picture of the modern Russian province, which consists of characters, related situations and events, and the depicted space. The purpose of the first analysis based on Ingarden's concept of "truthfulness" is to determine how the writer achieves the effect of extreme authenticity in the portrayal of the main character (the strict and conscientious chairman of a failing cooperative farm with the nickname Pinochet) and the overall aesthetic "truthfulness" of the work in question. If in the first subsection the analysis is mainly concerned with the silhouette of the titular character, in the second subsection further research focuses on the space of the depicted world in order to determine the conditions conducive to the evocation of the metaphysical quality of the Tragic. In this analysis we risk stating that it is primarily in the depicted space that the conditions for its making itself present in the story can be found.

The second analytical chapter deals with the occurrence of numerous places of underdetermination in Yekimov's stories and attempts to find an answer to the question of why, despite their presence, these works characterized by schematicism appear to many readers as real, depicting the recognizable reality of the Russian countryside. The chapter

discusses the types of areas of indeterminateness and the factors that affect making the concretization as correct as possible.

On the basis of the conducted research, the following conclusions are presented in the conclusion: the concept of the literary work of R. Ingarden provides a useful tool for the study of realistic works in the key of the problem of truth and fiction. The effect of "truthfulness" achieved by Yekimov in approximating the image of the modern Russian province and its inhabitants can be ascertained on the basis of several criteria of "truthfulness" fulfilled, including the deluding similarity of the objects depicted to those existing in the extra-literary world, the effective selection of means of representation, the sincerity of the author's expression in the work, etc. However, despite the fact that, according to the author of *Controversy over the Existence of the World*, the prerogative of works of art, including literary works, is to perform an aesthetic function, the phenomenologist also admits the possibility of a literary work performing a cognitive function, consisting in providing readers with knowledge of extra-literary reality, provided that a certain deeper sense (idea) of the work is taken into account, which is revealed in it with the unveiling of metaphysical qualities. In the analyzed works of Yekimov, these qualities include such qualities as the weight of the protagonist's situation (conditioned by his being among provincial society) and the tragedy that characterizes the depicted space. Through them, we reach the idea of the works, that is, the metaphysical truth that transcends the depicted world of a quasi-real nature. Thus, the truth about the state in which the modern province of the former empire finds itself becomes the idea of crisis caused by unfavorable political changes, pervasive decay, demoralization of a society burdened by lack of prospects and loss of values. The analysis of the places of understatement occurring in Yekimov's stories allows us to reveal, the mechanism of including the reader in the co-creation of the work. Filling the points of indeterminateness in the depiction of the image of the Russian province, the viewer turns not to his own experience, but relies on the "full" elements, which allows not to go beyond the strict boundaries set by the author of the work. The reader's attentiveness and ability to correctly read not only the concretely presented content (descriptions of characters, events, places), but also to grasp hidden content (symbols, metaphors) as well as the author's intentions ensures the most correct concretization of the work.