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International Conference «Humanity in the Era of Uncertainty»**TOWARDS UNCERTAINTY: A.P. CHEKHOV AND A.K.
GOLDEBAEV**Kseniya I. Morozova (a)*, Mikhail A. Perepelkin (b)
*Corresponding author(a) Samara National Research University, 443086, st. Moscovsskoe shosse, 34, Samara, Russia,
kseniamorozowa@gmail.com(b) Samara National Research University, 443086, st. Moscovsskoe shosse, 34, Samara, Russia,
mperepelkin@mail.ru**Abstract**

Alexander Kondratyevich Goldebaev (1863–1924) was a writer and journalist whose name was practically erased from the pages of the history of Russian literature. Meanwhile, the literature of the Russian province was assigned a significant role in the formation of “big” literature. Thus, N.K. Pksanov believed that it was impossible to understand a lot in the movements and turns of Russian (all-Russian) metropolitan literature without studying the regional culture. On the creative path of Goldebaev there were many teachers, and the first one was A.P. Chekhov, who edited the story “Quarrel” sent to him by the aspiring writer. Thus, in 1903, the publication of this work in “Russkaya Mysl” became Goldebaev’s “honorable entry” into “big” literature. The authors of the article established the vectors of influence of the Chekhov’s literature (first of all, the speech about uncertainty as a characteristic feature of his work) on the worldview of the aspiring writer Goldebaev and his first published story “Quarrel” based on the synchronic and diachronic, structural-semiotic and comparative-historical methods of analysis. The authors have drawn the conclusion that the uncertainty in the early work of Goldebaev manifested itself in the character system, as well as on the ideological, syntactic and stylistic levels of the text.

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1. Introduction

The name of Alexander Kondratyevich Goldebaev (1863–1924) is one of the names of forgotten writers, very rarely found in historical and literary studies and even in reference literature. However, both the personality and the creative work of Goldebaev left a more or less vivid imprint both on the literary process of his time and the work of contemporary writers. Perhaps the most important role in Goldebaev's creative development was played by A.P. Chekhov, who provided the access to “big” literature at that time for the aspiring writer when Goldebaev's story “Quarrel” being carefully edited appeared on the pages of the magazine “Russkaya Mysl”. Goldebaev's mentors were A.M. Gorky, A. R. Krandievskaya and others as well. However, Goldebaev's worldview was mainly formed under the influence of the views of his first and main mentor being A. P. Chekhov.

2. Problem Statement

The first and so far the only researcher who paid attention to the personality of A.K. Goldebaev and to his work was A.P. Chudakov, a famous scientist and expert on the Chekhov's creative work, who, painstakingly recreated albeit brief and not absolutely accurate Goldebaev's biography, and, analyzed the story “What is the reason?” (“Quarrel”) edited by AP Chekhov. However, the peculiarities of the problematics and poetics of this Goldebaev's work formed directly under the influence of Chekhov were not revealed. In addition, the philosophical context of the writer's work was not studied.

3. Research Questions

The subject of the article is the originality of the category of uncertainty in A.P. Chekhov's creative work and its impact on A.K. Goldebaev's creative work.

- 3.1. The categories “uncertainty” and “certainty” belong to the field of philosophical discourse. Thus, space and chaos contain order and disorder, but are not reduced to them. Chaos is the ultimate manifestation of uncertainty; space is a certain order of things (Sagatovsky, 1999).
- 3.2. In artistic discourse, the functional-semantic category of uncertainty is a generalized manifestation of the ignorance of communication participants/non-participants (Voronovskaya, 1989), which in fiction is meaningfully connected with the lack of information about the object, differences, boundaries between phenomena, processes, states. The plan for expressing uncertainty includes a wide range of lexical, grammatical and syntactic means that imitate the natural movement of thought from the abstract to the concrete, contributing to the mediality of presentation, specifically, the apparent absence in the narrative of the author who creates the world (Konstantinova, 2015).

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the article is to reveal the features of the influence of Chekhov's poetics of uncertainty on the earlier creative work of A.K. Goldebaev.

5. Research Methods

In order to determine the main vectors of A.P. Chekhov's influence on A.K. Goldebaev, it is necessary to take into account the peculiarities of the writer's worldview. Therefore, the methodology of scientific research is complemented by philosophical and psycholinguistic approaches. Thus, in this article, the main research methods are as follows: synchronic and diachronic methods studying a cultural phenomenon and a literary text at a certain stage of their development and in their temporal development or chronological sequence; structural and semiotic methods interpreting the cultural environment and artistic text as a special sign system; comparative-historical methods enabling to highlight the recurrence of their constituent elements and generalize the data obtained by comparing different artistic phenomena.

6. Findings

Chekhov's creative work very accurately reflects the crisis of consciousness of the 19th-20th centuries when faith in the former eternal ideals was undermined. Being a writer of a transitional period, he became a reformer of themes, plots, conflicts, in general, the language of Russian literature of his time (Kataev, 2004).

Dolzhenkov (2003) arguing that the artistic world of Chekhov was built on the principle of uncertainty noted that the complex of agnosticism, hypothetical nature and relativity of knowledge was characteristic of positivism and its constituent parts at about the same time started to appear in works and statements of Chekhov. The presumptive nature of human knowledge about the world is perhaps one of the main characteristics of Chekhov's artistic epistemology. According to the scientist, it is comparable with the ideas about the hypothetical nature of our knowledge of positivism.

Thus, a person facing difficulties when comprehending the world and at the same time basing his judgments only on a small fragment of reality often became the hero of Chekhov's works. In this regard, the story "Lights" is very indicative while the image of the seeker of the meaning of the unknown world is correlated with the image of the lights flickering in the darkness. People live in the dark, and all that they see is "just a tiny piece of life illuminated by the fire of their barracks, people try to judge the whole world and all people based on the knowledge of this tiny piece of the world. Likewise, human thoughts are lights in the darkness, incapable of dispelling the darkness of life (Dolzhenkov, 2003).

Indeed, the era of crisis, which Chekhov's work was part of, is associated, among other things, with the period of the formation of non-classical philosophy being the period of intellectual thought that arose at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and was caused by the crisis in the natural sciences and "the search for new forms of methodological self-awareness" (Lektorsky, 2009, p.117). Thus, Chekhov's worldview was formed largely under the influence of the philosophy of positivism, which asserted that knowledge was positive only in case of being obtained empirically.

Conservative and reactionary leaders perceived positivism as “a threat to the doctrines of the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, free will, and transcendental ethics” (Utkina, 1992, p. 143). In the context of these issues, it seems important to clarify the positions of F.M.Dostoevsky and L.N. Tolstoy being significant both in the literary and in the philosophical and religious terms.

The Christian faith cleared from everything irrational, mystical, mysterious should become a guide to universal happiness and harmony. “Only reason can prevent a person living in a rational world (whose order and structure he is not able to comprehend) from choosing the true path. In such a world, it is enough for a person to listen to his inner feeling, follow traditions, take ready-made forms, as it was in *War and Peace*” (Linkov, 1989). For example, “every time Pierre or Andrei are unhappy, the world loses order and structure in their eyes” (Linkov, 1989). And, in general, Knyaz Andrei’s death is caused not so much by the wound he received during the battle but by the inability to achieve high spiritual human values.

Dostoevsky, on the other hand, had a “focus on the paradoxical, fantastic but the only truly real choice between truth and Christ” (Dzhaparov, 2020, p. 67). In the novel “*Crime and Punishment*” a new hero appears – “a hero-ideologist; the essence of his life is the solution of problems that determine the fate of mankind. This, of course, can characterize the clandestine one but the latter only rejects the world and the order of things in it, and Raskolnikov openly enters into single combat with God seeking to assert his truth instead of God’s truth” (Stepanyan, 2017, p. 247).

Thus, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky are seeking the triumph of order in their artistic worlds deciding to kill characters who dared to oppose God’s truths. Chekhov realized that order and man were incompatible, thus, he did not even try to restore order and depicted life as it was. Thus, Arthur Luther wrote: “Chekhov’s heroes dine in order not to talk about God” (Luther, 1924). Chekhov, in contrast, for example, to Dostoevsky, did not even create such situations, in which heroes “could discuss, find out everything that tormented them” (Chudakov, 1971, p. 87).

One of the first literary critics who supported the talent of A.P. Chekhov was D.S.Merezhkovsky, being one of the founders of the Russian symbolism. He said that, “We had to say away as much as we said, we had to sin as much as we sinned with holy words in order to understand how he was right when he was silent about the saint” (Merezhkovsky, 1991, p. 62).

Goldebaev occupying a somewhat intermediate position in literature largely due to his provincialism was unable to understand Chekhov’s philosophy. He could not calmly watch how the world was slowly going crazy, and in continuation of Tolstoy’s and Dostoevsky’s ideas he tried to put things in order. However, having entered the literature 20-30 years later, it was already difficult for Goldebaev to understand the cause of the world disorder, and he desperately started looking for it. Thus, at the very beginning of the 1900s, he wrote the story “What is the reason?”

The plot of the story is quite simple. Vasily Petrovich Marov is “the first-class driver of the Krivorotovo depot” and is so demanding that the assistants cannot work with him in any way. Only Savva Khlebochuk, a “heretic-renegade” and Uke is able to find a common language with the stern engine driver. One day, a train driven by friends almost hits a little girl. Passengers express a desire to reward Marov but he modestly refuses the award. Khlebochuk reacts painfully to this, and then the news about Marov’s nomination for a medal resonates even greater with the relations of the characters. Khlebochuk having learned about this writes a report to the chief outlining his version of what happened on the railway. Marov,

in turn, also writes a report refusing the medal but asking not to award Khlebopchuk either. As a result, no one gets the medal; Khlebopchuk quits his job and leaves Krivorotovo forever.

Before we move on to the study of the poetics of the story, let us carry out a comparative analysis of the original text of Goldebaev sent for publication in *Russkaya Mysl*, and its version published after Chekhov's revision.

Thus, on July 24, 1903, having sent the story "What is the reason?" to the editorial office of *Russkaya Mysl* addressed to A.P. Chekhov, A.K. Goldebaev made the following postscript: "Hoping (not without reason) that you took the fictional part *Russkaya Mysl* upon yourself, I am sending my story "What is the reason?" and I ask you not to refuse to help the aspiring <...> The story publication in *Russkaya Mysl* is doubly necessary for me as an earnings and as an honorable first run, which cannot but cheer me up. I take this opportunity to inform you that the undersigned sincerely loves your talent and has known you since that distant time when you were naughty and humorous and were A. Chekhonte; I have known and love you for so long" (Chekhov, 1982, p. 34).

The original manuscript with Chekhov's revision has never been published; it is kept in the Manuscript Department of the Russian State Library. The first researcher who paid attention to this typewritten document was the famous scientist and expert on Chekhov's work A.P. Chudakov, who compared the same typewritten text and its journal publication.

According to Chudakov's observations, while editing Goldebaev's story, Chekhov carried out complex work on the text not only eliminating lengths, repetitions, and excessive detail. The first thing Chekhov turned his editorial attention to was the composition of the text. It was "inverted": the text began with the parting of the main characters. Chekhov, on the other hand, corrected the logic of the narrative, arranging the events in a natural-chronological order. Thus, the first chapter of Goldebaev's text was replaced by a calm narrative opening typical of Chekhov. In addition, the final part of the text was shortened.

Further, as Chudakov showed, Chekhov moved to the ideological, stylistic and even syntactic levels. The original Goldebaev's text was oversaturated with narrative forms in the first person and passages "depicting a certain generalized image of the narrator, confirming his clannishness" (for example, "from our brother, Krivorotovites", "according to our Krivorotov standards"). Chekhov kept a single use of the first person, reduced the number of generic generalizations and completely removed the narrator's philosophical reflections on eternal topics. He also intervened in the thoughts of the heroes eliminating the fourfold repetition of the phrase "what is the reason", and at the same time, replacing it in the title of the text with a neutral "Quarrel" "sustained in the spirit of the poetics of Chekhov's titles".

Chekhov did not accept the careless manner of Goldebaev's writing, which was characteristic of stylistic eclecticism, when "one phrase could combine an inverse emotional syntax with a clerical turn. For example a colloquial phrase "lived in the Germans" could coexist with "the degree of development and political coloring"; "Budara-gas chamber" – with a completely literary "boundless ocean of life"; "Mother faith" was on an equality with the "ground for an appeal"; suddenly there a driver and his assistant were compared with "two celestials who visited the earth" (Chekhov, 1982). A firm editorial hand more or less put things in order in the style, namely, in a number of cases the stylistic play was disturbed, some vernaculars and all dialectisms were either deleted or replaced by the corresponding forms of the literary

language, and vulgarisms, some highly specialized terms and the most harsh syntactic constructions were excluded.

It is worth noting that four months later, on November 28, Goldebaev sent another story (its title is illegible) to Chekhov, accompanied by another letter. Today it is kept in the archives of the Russian State Library (f. 331, room 58, item 33) and is published for the first time:

“Dear Anton Pavlovich!

Forgive me for starting to bother you with frequent sending! - here <...>, which I submit to your approval ...

If you find it appropriate for “R.M.”, then I humbly ask you to dispose of the manuscript as you please: shorten, change, etc., without wasting time on inquiries.

Please accept the sincere respect of your reader, admirer and humble servant.”

What Chekhov replied to Goldebaev and whether he answered or not is unknown. However, it is clear that Goldebaev tried with all his might to approach the great Chekhov but did not realize that this was impossible not so much because of inexperience, but because of unwillingness or inability to accept the point of view of his “teacher” on the world structure.

Despite the fact that Chekhov intervened in almost every layer of Goldebaev’s literary text, the main complaint against the novice author was the senselessness of his text. The reason for the unsettled life of the heroes was that there was no need to look for a reason, since it was simply difficult to interpret. A quarrel is a quarrel, and it does not require any kind of explanation.

Further, let us turn to the story “What is the reason?” focusing on the analysis of the character system. The engine driver Vasily Petrovich Marov occupies a central position in the story. He, like the author of the story, Goldebaev, lives in a world approaching the apocalypse. Marov is surrounded by events that disrupt the usual course of things and disturb him. “There a rich young man interrupted a happy life with a bullet; here a husband and wife who had lived in perfect harmony for hundreds of years parted; there the son of a respected father turned to be a villain and a convict, here a godly husband and an exemplary family man, honestly living to old age, began to drink and debauch ... Why? What is the reason?” (Chekhov, 1982), reasons the stern machinist. He sees the cause of all troubles in people, in their irresponsible and unscrupulous attitude towards their official duties, towards other people and technology. In this ever-increasing chaos reigning day by day, Marov creates his own zone of calm and order being a steam locomotive, where “everything is primly, everything is in order, everything shines and rejoices.” It is his “heart friend, therefore, it will never betray or let him down.” The engine driver did not feel as much tenderness, attention and care for his children and his wife as for the steam locomotive. Sometimes he “looks around with a gentle parental glance” at its booth, “listens with a sophisticated ear to the even and confident move of a pet, in whose metal body every vein is familiar to him, with all its virtues, desires, fancies and whims, and breathes in gratefully from the fullness of his heart, feeling envy of his own happiness” (Chekhov, 1982). According to Marov, life organized according to a clear schedule and algorithm of actions, sensitive and almost tender care for his mechanical companion are able to protect him from troubles and all kinds of hardships, i.e. to become exactly that “ark”, keeping faithful to which he will be saved from the inevitable flood, in which the rest of the world will perish.

However, these hopes of Marov doom to disappointment. And he believes that the blame for everything is Khlebopchuk, who at first becomes his close friend, and then – the worst enemy. The rapprochement of Marov with Khlebopchuk occurs due to the fact that the latter is also trying with all his might to save himself from the apocalypse. He believes that “there are good deeds accomplished only with the participation of hellish forces, by the devil being the primordial man-hater and aimed to destroy people. And they lead people to the loss of happiness” (Chekhov, 1982, p. 72). The driver’s young assistant sees salvation in the rationalistic faith and therefore belongs to a “special sect of spiritual peasants” being the kulugurs or admirers convinced that “any external God worshiping has no meaning” (Prugavin, 1905). “Correct”, real faith gives Khlebopchuk confidence in the future.

The onset of the Apocalypse is also felt by another no less important character in the story being the locomotive of the series “I” number fortieth. If at the beginning of the story its life like the life of the engine driver Marov is organized according to a clear plan that saves against getting into serious road troubles, then the case with the “damned girl” wavers this clear plan too.

Along with those who anticipate the onset of the apocalypse, specifically, Marov, Khlebopchuk and a steam locomotive, there are those who do not feel that something is wrong in the world, these are the Krivorotovites. Their level of aspiration is limited to betting, stupid gossip, drunkenness and craving for easy money. Marov’s colleagues sincerely believe that “God tolerates sins”, and, therefore, shift all responsibility for their lives and the lives of other people onto God. “Sometimes it seems that a crash cannot be avoided but the God has mercy” (Chekhov, 1982), they are sure. Marov is proud to be one of the Krivorotovites but unlike his matchmakers, kums and brothers-in-law, he believes that the mission of the drivers is to take responsibility for human souls before God and before conscience. An accident that nearly happened destroys Marov’s confidence in the future and his faith in God. Why this accident had to happen to them? They are God-fearing and conscientious people. “What is the reason?” Goldebaev could not but raised this question, but he was also unable to find an answer to it.

7. Conclusion

Thus, the uncertainty inherent in Chekhov’s work was clearly manifested in Goldebaev’s early story “Quarrel” and, first of all, in the fact that the writer did not divide the heroes of the work strictly into positive and negative ones (Marov is a “faithful comrade sticking to his word, who hates and suppresses quarrels, squabbles and bickering but ready to play foul in order to marry his daughter to the kulugur Khlebopchuk. Khlebopchuk tries to live according to the laws of morality but gets around to meanness with writing denunciations), since “none of the parties has the complete truth or is not completely mistaken” in their views on the surrounding reality. And the Krivorotovites drink, steal, deceive each other, but at the same time they are friendly and ready to stand up for each other in difficult times. Goldebaev like Chekhov portrays people as they appear in real life, with all their pluses and minuses.

Secondly, Goldebaev’s uncertainty can be traced at the ideological level of the text and is generally associated with his somewhat loss in modern realities. This concern about his incomplete knowledge about the world is embodied in the artistic canvas of his work. He saw all the imperfections of the world around him and tried to restore order in it with all his might. Thus, the theme of progress (one of the heroes of his story is not incidentally a steam locomotive) is traced in his work.

Thirdly, ambiguity is found at the stylistic and syntactic levels of the text. As evidenced by the careful editing of A.P. Chekhov, this uncertainty is explained by the intermediate position of Goldebaev in literature: the writer was in search of his own artistic language.

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