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#### METAPHYSICAL ASPECT IN A.P. CHEKHOV'S POETICS: QUEST FOR "OTHER KINGDOM"

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#### *Abstract*

The article is devoted to the metaphysical aspect of Chekhov's stories. Much attention is paid to the words of Mandelstam, Gippius, Bryusov and Tsvetaeva. These writers looked at Chekhov as a realistic writer. In the article the question of ontological and metaphysical aspect in Chekhov's works is raised. The stories "The Steppe" and "The Black Monk" are reviewed in the framework of one plot. Perception of Chekhov's works in the Silver Age is reinterpreted. The parallels with Yesenin's poem "The Black Man" and Khlebnikov's "The Stone Woman" are drawn. The article uses historical and functional, historical and genetic as well as systematic and typological methods. The folklore commentary on Khlebnikov's and Yesenin's texts allows us to see the imagery of well-known poems in a different way and address the plot about "the Polovets woman" which is also actualized in Chekhov's story "The Steppe". Review of Chekhov's works within a large literary and cultural context extends our vision of him as a master of the pen, a writer of not a simple trivial level. Such literary context allows us to raise the question of metaphysical sense in Chekhov's poetics. The folkloric comments to the text allow identifying the peculiar features of the national axiology in the novel, penetrating into the mystery of Chekhov's "Russian sole". The aim of our article is to reveal the hidden forms of folklore and mythology in Chekhov's "The Steppe". The methodology of our research assumes the use of historical-functional, historical-genetic, system-typological and structural methods.

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**Keywords:** Chekhov, Silver Age, Symbolists, "The Steppe", metaphysics.



## 1. Introduction

Despite the rich history of science associated with Chekhov's works, we understand that Chekhov is not really fully discovered. Of course, this is also because Chekhov's works coincide with the turn of the century and the fact that the twentieth century has mainly grown out of "Chekhov's thinking", but at the same time it did not accept the traditions which were relevant for the previous century. Besides, while speaking of the theme "Chekhov and the Silver Age", the concept of the "Silver Age" also needs to be explicated and clarified and this entails another problem: what epoch and trend should we refer Chekhov's works to and on which grounds. However, here we face quite a different task not concerning the complex problem of understanding the Silver Age concept. None of this, the author himself and his time can but be of interest for a modern researcher who tries to think systematically and understand what exactly the poets at the beginning of the 20th century were attracted in Chekhov's artistic consciousness. What could they accept and what have they accepted? What did they understand and what did not they understand? This allows us to approach theoretical problems and realize the literary process and features thereof at the turn of two centuries which were not only diverged but also largely coincided. Here, as an example, it is possible to cite some contradictory statements about Chekhov and his works. "... Once some Anton P. Chekhov's letters came to my hand – Let him come to the Heavenly Kingdom but if he has been alive, I would have hung him up" (Khodasevich, 1997, p. 135) - Khodasevich spoke quite harshly, in the spirit of the Silver Age pathos. Tsvetaeva (1995) wrote, "Since my childhood I hate Chekhov together with his jokes, humorous sayings and grins" (p. 53); Mandelstam (1994) noted, "Chekhov cripples people" (p. 70).

"The attitude to Chekhov of many artists, whose names were associated with the birth and final formation of Russian modernism, was tense and often even aggressive and hostile," (Kapustin, 2007, p. 90) the experts who studied Chekhov's works noted. However, some of citations of the well-known poets of the early 20th century mentioned that an impression was created that they did not accept them. They did not like Chekhov – just without any reason, without gaining an insight into him. Therefore it should be noted that judgments taken out of context of their letters, articles and notes do not reveal their real attitude to Chekhov. So, Tsvetaeva (1995), in her letter to Boris Pasternak dated July 1, 1926, wrote about her negative attitude toward Chekhov (see above quotation). But at the same letter she, as a master of the pen, noted something important about Chekhov, imperceptible for a common reader: "What is Schmidt - according to your documentary poem he is a Russian intellectual living through the year of 1905. Being not a sailor, he is so intellectual (let us remember Chekhov's "In the Sea"! ) that many years of sailing did not wean him away from intellectual jargon" (Tsvetaeva, 1995, p. 43). This remark about Pasternak's Schmidt tells us perhaps much more than about Tsvetaeva's personal attitude (as a poet) toward Chekhov and his works than her phrase "Since my childhood I have hated him" because while analyzing someone else's text she addresses Chekhov's story and this demonstrates her good acquaintance with his works. Here a number of logical questions arise: why did not the Silver Age "accept" Chekhov? How deep is their comprehension of his works and conscious "rejection"? And it should be noted that many cultural figures of the Silver Age primarily drew attention to Chekhov's dramas. Mandelstam (1994) sharply criticized "inaction" of Chekhov's dramas: "There is no action in his dramas, but there are only troubles resulting from it" (p. 90). This is mentioned in the note with the well-known phrase "Chekhov cripples people". Sologub (1913) also addresses Chekhov's plays and notes "absence of a storyline" and predominance of internal action over the

external one. But is this unilateral interest in the reason for misunderstanding of Chekhov's works? It will be enough to take as an example V. Bryusov's attitude toward Chekhov's dramaturgy. Here we should mention Bryusov's unfinished hand-written review of the first staging of Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard" (1904) based on the author's impressions as a viewer <...>. This review was written for the "Novy Put" (New Way) editorial board at Z. Gippius personal request who asked Bryusov to do it "without smiles to Chekhov", i.e. to show discrepancy with the newest aesthetic quests of both the play itself and the way of scenic comprehension thereof by the Art Theater." It is worth noting that Gippius (2002) herself always treated Chekhov as a person who is "a stranger to age": "Born being forty years old and died being forty years old..."; "the basis of his being is statics". Here we see a negative attitude to and rejection of Chekhov not as a creator but as a person: "a man without age" seemed ordinary and normal to a poet of the 20th century and this, in her opinion, contradicted the real original talent and incipience of Logos. Gippius treated Chekhov's "normality" as a defect (as cited in Kapustin, 2007). However, despite all anti-Chekhov moods, Chekhov attracted the Symbolists; his dramaturgy was constantly in the center of different active polemics and comparisons.

If we perceive Chekhov's works immanently, then his stories, novels, plays and even "notebooks" create the complex organic poetics. As for Chekhov's "notebooks", Paperny (1976) wrote quite to the point, "Each word expresses not only itself but something more <...> Chekhov's notebooks bring to mind the expression: one can hear how the grass grows" (p. 107). If the poets-Symbolists were imbued with the creative laboratory of the Russian genius and they heard *from where and how* the Chekhov's hero grows, then they most likely would have a different attitude to his work. "Both Turgenev and Tolstoy associate Chekhov's works with Maeterlinck and Hamsun. Due to spontaneity of his works, he can be equally referred to the old writers and the new ones: the eternity was reflected in his images too much", - A. Bely wrote about poetics in Chekhov's works. In them he captured both the classical tradition of the nineteenth century and new principles and discoveries which somehow anticipated the poetics of the beginning of the next century. Of course, much can be said about Bely's views of Chekhov's "symbolism" but this requires a separate study since Bely himself, being not only a poet but also the Symbolism theorist, wanted to show that the writer at the turn of the century was *also* a Symbolist or a Symbolist *first of all*. The researchers of Bely's works point out that the poet in his articles about Chekhov did not practically consider another realistic side of the writer's works (Losievsky, 1996). However, despite some excessive focus on symbol theory, the Symbolist noted one important feature of Chekhov's poetics: every moment in Chekhov's works can become a symbol and an imaginary chance event is associated with the ontological world. A chance event means invasion to the world of Nothingness. In light of this, the question of semantic function of a chance event is relevant. Does a plot (or "absence of plot" about which Mandelstam and Sologub wrote) always subdue to or coincide with a storyline?

## 2. Problem Statement

While putting the question in such way, it seems that simple listing of "quotations" and phrases from letters, articles and essays of the early 20th-century writers is not so much important as a comparative analysis of separate fragments from Chekhov's works. There is an examination of principles of his poetics and those ideas which are in tune with and continuation in the culture of modernism, and something perhaps

even manifested itself on an implicit level not sometimes immediately apparent to the researcher. Many contemporaries saw in Chekhov's works a certain system of clichés (see details in Gitovich's (2005) works) perceiving the author himself as a singer of "twilight moods". However, the Silver Age with its decadence was partially "sick" of so-called "Chekhovschina" behind which a whole series of motives is concealed: from Chekhov's image to details and heroes of his works. So, Bondarev (2008) proposed to classify "Chekhov's stereotypes": "Chekhov's appearance was preserved in our mind with "pince-nez" and "beard" (the well-known portrait on the wall of the school literature room). Besides, the mythologem "Doctor Chekhov" plays a special role. His works are represented by a set of potentially mythological signs: Kashtanka, gooseberries, a man in a case, a house with a mezzanine, a cherry garden, a seagull, three sisters, "To Moscow ...", a sky in diamonds, a sound of the broken string, "everything in a human being should be beautiful", "to squeeze the slave out", "ich sterbe", a rifle on the wall, a sound of an axe, etc." (Bondarev, 2008).

*The significance of Chekhov "on the way" to the culture of the twentieth century is probably that he captured the symptoms of [...] "opacity" and unexplained things. And, trying to remain externally within rationalistic frameworks, he rooted, wishing or not wishing, those foundations of "irrationality" which will become the subject of figurative reflection in literature of the following epochs. (Koshelev, 1994, p. 6)*

He became the "starting point" for poetry of the 20th century. Chekhov's closeness to a new culture is not only in the motives of decadence, depression and melancholy which later on turn out to be significant for the Symbolists and poetry of decadents but there is much more deeper, which is sometimes realized or sometimes not, continuity in the poetry world relatively to Chekhov.

The beginning of the twentieth century is characterized by flowering of lyrics, drama and small forms and on the basis of this it can be assumed that the Silver Age did not accept Chekhov because it did not know, did not read or did not understand Chekhov's late complex stories. It is a paradox that Chekhov's stories and novels "without a plot" proved to be so close to poetics of the early 20th century and factually stayed "in the background" of modernists' attention. So, Freize (2012), a well-known German Slavist, notes, "In his stories "without a plot" A. Chekhov resorts to an alternative method of creating an atmosphere not requiring transformation of the storyline. All phenomena turn into "endless moments" existing at the same time and simultaneously affect the atmosphere. For example, the plot of "The Steppe" is constructed from the very beginning in such a way (Freize, 2012). If they addressed "The Cherry Orchard" and "The Seagull" quite often, then it seems that they did not address "The Steppe" at all; otherwise the Symbolists could not but pay attention to this "unrealistic" prose. In this context it is strange that Mandelstam (1994) responded to A. Serafimovich's works written on the theme of "steppe" and explained in details rejection of his "steppe". "Serafimovich's descriptions of nature (the famous "steppe") are covered with treacle for conversations "to sit" on it"; further Mandelstam (1994) speak against all the writers of "daily life" and oppose them to symbolism: "the writers of "daily life" being envious of the Symbolists' broad cultural horizon, created their own canon of "mysticism for generic use". It would seem that Chekhov and Serafimovich are two writers who turned to the same landscape and psychological state of man in the

steppe, that both masters of the pen even visited the same places. (While creating his biographical sketches, Serafimovich traveled along the steppes of the Don and the Caucasus, watched the same landscapes that Chekhov saw in the late 1980s from which he took the idea of his story (Mikhailova, 1986)). But what different pictures were created by these writers. In one case, we can agree with Mandelstam's hard assessment of excessive "routine" in Serafimovich's works, but in the other case, the reader not only faces the steppe as a scene and a landscape but that very steppe which Chekhov himself tried to depict: "I used the steppe which nobody described for a long time. Each separate chapter is a story <...> I try to make them having a common smell and a common tone ..." (Chekhov, 1974, p. 55); in this statement and intention expressed in his letters to D.V. Grigorovich there is one of the basic principles of poetics - immanent perception of his own works. The third and the fourth parts of the story make us fall to thinking in which tradition Chekhov continues to write. Description of the steppe itself and people being there is so fantastic and symbolical that the steppe performs the function of a special topic. That is, reality on the verge of the ontological world is that "The wide shadows are walking on the plain like clouds in the sky and, if you peer into it for a long time, you can see that in a vague distance some foggy and bizarre images rise and pile up on each other... It's a bit uneasy" (Chekhov, 1974, p. 55). "You go and suddenly see a silhouette looking like a monk in front by the road; he does not move, he waits and holds something in his hands ... What if he is a robber? The figure is approaching and growing; it is already near the road cart and you see that this is not a man but a lonely bush or a large stone" (Chekhov, 1974, p. 56). Yegorushka is in a borderline state, he comprehends reality in a different way than Kuzmichov, Moisey Moiseych and others. It is the boy's imagination that both "a black monk" and "a stone woman" are relating to. But a logic question arises: "Where do such comparisons appear in Chekhov's creative thinking from? Can they be conditioned by cultural paradigms and his creative laboratory?" Strange to say but we'll find the answers to these questions in the figurative system of the Silver Age poets. In this case, we can analyze in detail some fragments of the story "The Steppe", "The Black Monk" and Khlebnikov's poem "The Stone Woman".

### 3. Research Questions

V. Khlebnikov had a fine appreciation of Chekhov and peculiarities of his poetics (as cited in Loshchilov, 1999). In his poems there is both a direct reference to Chekhov's stories and commonality of the image that may have been found by writers due to their "intuition" (a detailed analysis of Khlebnikov's poem "The Dog Wags its Tail and Barks", in which reminiscence to Chekhov's creativity and personality is concealed, is presented in I.E. Loshchilov's article). In this context, Balmont's (2007) remark about Chekhov is insightful: "<...> Chekhov's spiritual guessing has become more visible and charming for the decades and it acquires a greater and greater force of good magic" (p. 298). Turning to another two well-known texts - Chekhov's "The Steppe" in which the main principles of his poetics are expressed, and Khlebnikov's poem "The Stone Woman", we can see that one thing which is only a detail in Chekhov's story and an element of the steppe landscape (let's call it like this) is the core-forming for the figurative system of Khlebnikov's poem. In the Khlebnikov's same-name poem, the main character is a stone woman. What can it be associated with? Let us turn to an ethnographic commentary without which it is difficult to understand the poet's works. Khlebnikov who certainly knew myths and folklore borrowed certain images from ancient culture but he always created his own world and his own myth (Vykhodsev, 1983). The

researchers, while analyzing the so-called “mythological poems” by Khlebnikov, often come to conclusion that this is one whole but not finished “epic poem” (D. Mirsky). The artistic fabric of the poem “The Stone Woman” is fastened by the image of a stone maiden, an idol which connects two realities - one of them is cosmic which leads to the eternity (combination of lyric and epic) and the second one is ontological and secular:

And maiden stone glades -  
Like fairy tales of a stone board.  
An ancient need erected you.  
You’re stretching from sky to heaven.  
.....  
Old man with twisted stick  
And the delighted stillness. (Khlebnikov, 1986)

The chronotope - “stillness” and steppe; upon opening the space the hero disappears, then the description of “a stone woman” follows, but here the question arises which at first sight does not fit into the artistic fabric of the text:

Each day I’m waiting for a shot to me.  
For what? For what? In fact I lived before  
These days with love to all  
In this true steppe between the stones. (Khlebnikov, 1986)

From these lines, the images of the old man and the maiden begin to acquire clarity. The old man is a traveler striving to heaven:

Over the silvery words of mouth?  
Shall I sob that this Milky Way is not mine? (Khlebnikov, 1986)

What is “a stone woman” in Chekhov's story “The Steppe”? Is it just a road mark or is it culturally associated with Polovets sculptures, sacrificial rituals? This may be so in Khlebnikov’s poetics for which synthesis of “Balkan and Sarmatian artistic thought” was possible. However, is this a characteristic feature of Chekhov's artistic system when many researchers “refuse” to see any folklore tradition in his works (Emelianov, 1978, p. 174)? “On my way a silent old mound or a stone woman installed here by somebody unknown appears, a nocturnal bird will noiselessly flies over the ground; and gradually the steppe legends, stories told me by a passersby, a steppe nanny's fairy tales and everything that I managed to see and my soul perceives come to my mind” (Chekhov, 1974, p. 71). In this case a stone woman is a kind of “a landmark” for Yegorushka who observes the surrounding reality, and it is associated with “steppe nanny's fairy tales.” Such parallels allow us to suppose that this image came to both masters of the pen involuntarily; probably, here we may talk about the female archetype associated with burial rituals. This is primarily

indicated by the fact that in the Slavic tradition a stone woman was for spirits-ancestors as a totem-guide appearing before a shaman, a mage or a cultural hero.

In another Khlebnikov's poem called "A Shaman and Venus", Venus comes to the shaman in the cave, but the action is developing between "this was / this was not". The similar ritual situation is depicted in Pushkin's fairy story "The Tale of the Golden Cockerel". In "The Stone Woman" as well as in "A Shaman and Venus" "the eastern philosophical plot develops against the South Russian nature background" (Alfonsov, 1982) (Khlebnikov uses the Eastern archetypes and plots to simulate the Slavic tradition). Moreover, if we speak about receptions and typologies with regard to Chekhov's works in the 20th century poetry, we can note that Yesenin's complex and mysterious poem "The Black Man" is often compared with the story "The Black Monk". It appears that this is acceptable; however, in this case it is important to percept the whole immanent of Chekhov's works and ask the question whether two late complex stories "The Steppe" and "The Black Monk" were created within the framework of a similar plot. And here is why. Look just at some details in three texts - the hero's encounter with a black man / monk / woman (the latter occurs at Moisey Moiseych's inn). Let us start with the fragment of Yesenin's poem which is often interpreted by the researchers identically. The second part of the poem is notable for its tone painting:

Somewhere crying  
Night feral bird.  
And wooden horsemen sow  
The rattles of the hooves. (Yesenin, 1997)

From the point of view of folklore traditions, here the ritual behavior of spirits-ancestors who visit the hero is revealed in order to lift the veil to the other world (see Z.I. Vlasova's monograph "Skomorokhs and Folklore" for more details about "dying" and the rituals of volochebnichestvo and skomoroshestvo). The black man in Yesenin's poem appears before the patient in the night when "the night feral bird is screaming" and "the wooden horsemen sow the rattles of the hooves" laughing at his chosen one. And Chekhov's Yegorushka, being in Moisey Moiseych's house, feels the presence of some strange bird: "Yegorushka felt the slight breeze blowing and it seemed to him that some big black bird swept past and waved its wings just near his face." How to explain "such" similarities in the plot? Of course, you may ignore this detail by accepting all this only as the boy's "fantasies" (about which the experts of Chekhov's works often write). But here there is some archetypal model which is associated with the cult of a woman and attracted to ritual reality through initiative dream, sleepy imagination of a soul that happens with Yegorushka in reality.

In addition to basic similarities like "appearance" of a night bird, the hero's sleepy state, a man in black and the time of day, we are interested in metaphysical meaning of the situation expressed in a laughter principle: in Solomon's evil laughter and the Countess's smile. We see that the boy overcomes cheerful chaos and meets a beautiful lady; and all this occurs in the steppe, in the "flat space". This cannot but lead us to the idea that such Chekhov's situation is not accidental and that this is a characteristic sign of poetics. In "The Black Monk" the main character Kovrin meets the Black monk outside the garden, at the exit from it: "Having let Tanya go to the guests, he came out from the house and walked near the flower beds. The

sun was already going down. Flowers, being watered, exuded moist and irritating smell.” The garden smells the other flavors than at the first time but it makes Kovrin irritated. However the new space where he found himself gives the hero a sense of freedom and space; and this space is a field: “Now the large field is lying before him, the field covered with young and still not blossoming rye <...> “How spaciouly, free and tranquil is here!” - Kovrin thought walking along the path. And it seems that the whole world looks at me, hides itself and waits for me to understand it ...” (Chekhov, 1974, p. 71). It is in this very topos with Kovrin where the miraculous will happen; the hero, like Yegorushka in “The Steppe”, enters into a natural-philosophical dialogue: “... the whole world looks at me, hides itself and waits for me to understand it ...”; besides, let’s pay attention to the fact that nature also interacts with Kovrin: “Suddenly the waves went through the rye and a light evening breeze gently touched his uncovered head” (Chekhov, 1974); and in the “The Steppe”: “Something warm touched Yegorushkin's back, a strip of light, having sneaked up behind him, ran through the road cart and horses <...> 40 Let’s recall that this is in the steppe where Yegorushka meets some mysterious figures: Solomon and a lady in black, and finally he arises in the steppe as a cultural hero. As for Kovrin, he meets the Black monk in the field (the structure of the space model of a field/steppe is one and the same). It is characteristic that at first the image of the Black monk is somehow vague, not clear: “A tall black pillar like a whirlwind or a tornado rose on the horizon from the earth up to the sky. Its outlines were unclear but in the very first instant one might understand that it was not standing still <...> (Chekhov, 1974), and in “The Steppe” – here is a scene at Moisey Moiseych’s house: “In the middle of the room there stood a real grace in the image of a young, very beautiful and stout woman in a black dress and a straw hat. Before Yegorushka could distinguish her features, for some reason that lonely, slender poplar he had seen on the hill this afternoon came to his mind” (Chekhov, 1974).The lady appeared quite unexpectedly (about which we also judge from Moisey Moiseych’s reaction who, at the moment when the countess appeared, noticed neither “Kuzmichev nor Father Christopher”) (Chekhov, 1974); she was moving to the boy to kiss him: “She stood in the middle of the room and, watching him leaving, smiled and friendly nodded her head at him “ (Chekhov, 1974); the Black monk is also moving to Kovrin: “<...> moved here directly to Kovrin and the closer he was approaching the lesser and clearer he became. The Black monk, like the lady in black, came up to Kovrin, it was to him that he smiled, like the countess giving kisses and a smile to Yegorushka: “Having already flied about six meters, he looked back at Kovrin, nodded his head and smiled at him tenderly but cunningly at the same time” (Chekhov, 1974). We can suppose that Yegorushka and Kovrin appeared to be in one and the same position as evidenced by the archetypal structure of the plot: both heroes meet the figures, which are significant to them, in the open space (a field / a steppe) and being in a “half asleep” and sick state, and they enter into dialogues with these figures which are different from all other heroes: a woman in black and a black monk. In this context, it seems necessary to turn to the unusual landscape in “The Steppe” in general. Gromov (1951) draws attention to the importance of Chekhov’s image of the steppe the essence of which can be clear only by revealing “not only features of Chekhov’s landscape but all ideological and symbolic associations which Chekhov’s steppe brings to a thoughtful reader. The depth of the “inner content” of “The Steppe” is precisely that the pictures of the steppe nature are full of great social and philosophical content. 47 Here it is worth mentioning one more important feature of Chekhov's poetics which the Symbolists for some reason passed by: it is musicality despite the fact that the beginning of the 20th century was marked by *synthesis of arts* as

represented in the works written by Bryusov, Bely, Gippius, Sologub and Tsvetaeva who did not accept Chekhov.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The aim of our article is to reveal the hidden forms of folklore and mythology in Chekhov's "The Steppe".

#### **5. Research Methods**

The methodology of our research assumes the use of historical-functional, historical-genetic, system-typological and structural methods. Folkloristic comment of the works of Russian literature will allow revealing complexity of the image.

#### **6. Findings**

The architectonics of Chekhov's works, plays, stories and novels, is conditioned in many respects by the rhythm of special arrangement. Here, while speaking of musicality, the researchers connect this with his biography - the role of music in Chekhov's life and works (I. Eiges, E.B. Balabanovich), on the one hand. But on the other hand, this musicality is treated as special poetry (N.Y. Berkovsky, T.K. Shah-Azizova). "Musicality" appeared to be not only in the center of literary works but, which is especially important, within composers' line of sight. D. Shostakovich defined "The Black Monk" as a special "sonata form". Moreover, the literary critics, while comparing "The Steppe" with the film adaptation thereof, note that the filmmakers managed to show true nature of musicality in Chekhov's poetics: "The equivalent of the musical motif of a quiet song has been found in the film very well and precisely." Theaters and cinemas captured the most characteristic sign of Chekhov's poetics, rhythm and "underflow", which was not perceived by the Symbolists. Is not this one of discoveries of Chekhov who predicted many principles of the early twentieth century poetics and was even ahead of his time? The statement in A.N. Panamareva's works about connection of Chekhov's musicality with ontological views of the writer himself seems very interesting. From these positions that not only Chekhov's dramas which have already been thoroughly studied in the *intermedial aspect* are illustrative but also his stories, especially "The Steppe" which always caused philological discussions. "A.M. Linin who studied Chekhov's work on "The Steppe" came to the following sound conclusion: "Cordial lyricism, pervasive emotionality of descriptions, "warm" and gentle words and subtle musical tectonics of the phrase make "The Steppe" to be an artistically harmonious poetic composition. Chekhov's selection of words which are very precise and in harmony with the general lyrical tone of descriptions is highly illustrative" (as cited in Gromov, 1951). The lyricism of "The Steppe" was expressed in special musicality manifested in style. "It is likely that Chekhov had in his mind this very feature when saying that his "The Happiness" is "a quasi-symphony" and that in his "The Steppe" there is something like "poems in prose" (Gromov, 1951). "The Steppe" is interesting due to both its special rhythm and its "inner plot" connected with the composition reminding structure of a lyric song as the famous folklorist as Medrish (1978) noted.

## 7. Conclusion

Chekhov's poetry anticipated many of poetics principles of the Silver Age and, perhaps, those of the twentieth century as a whole (if turning to his dramaturgy and film adaptations of his works which discover new laws of Chekhov's works not seen by the Symbolists). They are generally treated as modernistic as, for example, synthesis of the arts is associated with musicality, or epicism and historiosophicity of his stories (according to Chekhov's contemporaries, "The Steppe" could be transformed into a novel). And finally, Chekhov is compared with the Theater of the Absurd.

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