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**“BEAUTY” IN WORKS OF I. SHMELYOV AT THE BEGINNING
OF XX CENTURY**

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Abstract

The paper is devoted to the study of literary works of I. Shmelyov at the beginning of the 20th century in terms of the concept of “beauty”. The understanding of this problem is traced back to deep and hidden influence of F. Dostoyevsky. The novels and stories by I. Shmelyov of the 1910s reflect the concept of “beauty”. Beauty is connected and corresponds to the human realm, characterizes the world of animals, the world of nature and the world of art. However, the development of I. Shmelyov’s literary heritage at the turn of the century was not the object of study in terms of the concept of “beauty” in his works *Hassan and His Jeddi*, *My Mars*, *Mary*, *Fever*, *Inexhaustible Chalice*, *The Hidden Face* and others. This makes the study relevant and important since it allows specifying the author’s ontology of world perception. Programmatic opuses of this kind include *Mary*, *Inexhaustible Chalice*, *The Hidden Face*. They fully embody the variable representation of this concept. In *Mary* the beauty changes the world and is accompanied by death. In *Inexhaustible Chalice* the beauty is life, joy and artistic inspiration. In *The Hidden Face* devoted to war events the beauty is embodied and extended within the natural space and portraits. The title of *The Hidden Face* illustrates the fact that every life has secret related to the “fundamental law of life”. The tragic finals reflect the failure of a person and the mankind to accept the beauty beyond the benefit and calculation.

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1. Introduction

The literary works of I. Shmelyov focus on the eternal issues of social being (as cited in Tucker, 1991). In fact, according to H. Troyat, this feature made him not a mere Russian writer, but a globally renown person (as cited Shmelyov, 2005). The literary heritage of Shmelyov (2005) is based on two principles – Orthodoxy and creativity of classical writers, which he reflected in his autobiography. The same thought was also expressed in the memories of Shmelyov (2005), in his words: “I believe that a person is the means of changing the world, making it a truly God’s Face – Visible God. The mankind is only a tool. The purpose is Beauty and Harmony of everything real” (p. 83). The Dostoyevsky’s influence at the turn of the century was obvious. The literary critics saw the Dostoyevsky’s influence and penetration of his ideas in the writings of V. Solovyov, Z. Gippius, A. Dobrolyubov, D. Merezhkovsky, L. Andreev, I. Annensky, A. Belyi, B. Zaytsev, I. Shmelyov (as cited in Dunaev, 2002; Lyubomudrov, 2010). Each Shmelyov’s work is directed not only to social pathos, but also to philosophico-esthetic and Christian patterns (as cited in Schriek, 1987). For Shmelyov (2005) the concept of “beauty” is one of the secrets and miracles, which is hidden, wiped out, not visible in real life, but internal and spiritual endeavors of a person are defined by it. Dunaev (2002) fairly notes that I. Shmelyov always sees “the hidden beauty under the face of life”. In the story of *Hassan and His Jeddi* (1903) the beauty is a secret, it attracts and is accompanied by death: Jeddi – a granddaughter of the Turk Hassan – has the transcendental beauty. Jeddi is organically embedded into the world of nature, she is its part, she understands and feels the sea. She lives in the world of a society under fear and fright since her beauty could be turned into commodity, into an object of purchase: a rich Greek Nikapullo wanted to buy it to his daughter, but the old man Hassan did not allow him. When Jeddi got sick, she “went” to the country of “eternal light and truth”. Through such final Shmelyov shows on the one hand, the unwillingness of the world to accept the beauty, and on the other hand, death – a way to protect Jeddi from the evil of life (Lyapaeva, 2015). The novel *My Mars* and the story *Mary* are antithetic compared to the previous example. Both works disclose the beauty of animals – Mars the dog and Mary the horse. Mars was so beautiful that an old woman in a boulevard stopped and bought wafers especially for him, and during a trip the passengers are united by the fate of Mars which appeared behind a vessel board. In the story *Mary* (1905), Shmelyov seems to embed the Dostoyevsky’s idea on the beauty as on the force transforming the world: Mary is depicted in two worlds – in the world of animals and in the world of people, for them she personifies the ideal, the beauty. Shmelyov (2008) made the animals, from a sparrow to an old horse, able to understand each other and when Mary appears, her beauty strikes them (“you are so beautiful ... Ah, how beautiful you are ... I’ve never seen such a beauty”). In the world of people Mary is “a picture, a pearl” (Shmelyov, 2008). But in the world of people her beauty turns into commodity. The jockey Chislov buys Mary to win a horse race though he understands that Mary is only an incarnate harmony, a striking beauty, and she is not designed for races, where a horse shall possess other physical qualities, but he is tempted with Mary’s beauty. Chislov understands that in practical life Mary is a useless being, she is not a plough tail animal, and each element of his life “shouted” a financial shortage: old boots, a faded jacket, a pale face of a daughter, a leaking roof. Chislov tries to combine benefit and pleasure by buying Mary for races. When Mary is taken away, all inhabitants of a house and yard feel that Mary will not come back any more, and a grandson cries: “Please, granddad, leave Mary, we don’t need money, don’t do this” (Shmelyov, 2008). In this episode we clearly see the Dostoyevsky’s “trace” in

the understanding of force and power of the beauty, which is more important than satiety. Leave and death of Mary are associated with emptiness, cold, gloom, “timid silence” – the world is becoming so defective without the beauty. In the story *Inexhaustible Chalice* (1918) the beauty is connected with creativity, spirituality, with acts of people, but the main thing is that the beauty is associated with pleasure depicted by a serf artist in his portraits of a mistress that embodies light, good, beauty, joy (Rudneva, 2007). The heroes are no longer alive: an artist Sharonov died in oblivion and poverty, a mistress died even earlier, a manor is destroyed, but the only thing that is still alive are the portraits of mistress Lyapunovka, where the visitors come to look at and take the joy of a portrait. This is a true incarnate eternity.

2. Problem Statement

Researchers were considering the literary heritage of I. Shmelyov from the perspective of poetics, a genre, realistic esthetics, worldview, Christian motives, ecphrasis thus contributing to objective and deep understanding of his works (Dunaev, 2002; Lyubomudrov, 2010; Lyapaeva, 2016; Rudneva, 2007). However, the problem of understanding I. Shmelyov’s concepts is only at its initial stage. Researchers identified certain critical concepts of his works – “sea” in the epic *The Sun of the Dead*, “a church” in the novel *God’s Summer* (Zhavoronkova, 2007). However, the concept “beauty” was never an object of the study within the considered works, which makes the chosen aspect of the analysis quite relevant.

3. Research Questions

The subject matter of the study covers the works of I. Shmelyov’s pre-emigrant period with the key focus on ethic and esthetic issues related to the concept of beauty – *Hassan and His Jeddi*, *My Mars*, *Mary*, *Fever*, *Inexhaustible Chalice*, *The Hidden Face*.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to reveal the originality of the concept of “beauty” in I. Shmelyov’s works (*Hassan and His Jeddi*, *My Mars*, *Mary*, *Fever*, *Inexhaustible Chalice*, *The Hidden Face*) in particular identifying different content-related layers (ethical, esthetic, orthodox). The analysis covers the understanding of the Dostoyevsky’s “trace” within the concept of beauty.

5. Research Methods

The study of the concept of “beauty” within a dialogue with Dostoyevsky, defined as the “trace”, appeals to Derrida’s (2000, 1967) system of signs, his theory of binarity, according to which all relations “between signs are narrowed to binary models”. I. Shmelyov portrays this as beauty/disgrace, beauty/deception, beauty/death, beauty/joy. In order to understand the methodology of the study it is important to define the “concept” itself used in different disciplines within the paradigm of knowledge in human sciences. The study of works in terms of the concept has become relevant since the second half of the 20th century, though the term itself was introduced at the beginning of the 20th century and is linked to S. Askoldov in domestic literary criticism and E. Sepir in Anglo-American literary studies, for whom the

concept represents the “capsule of thought” defining and marking the ethnic picture of the world (as cited in Langacker, 2000; Fauconnier, 2003). According to Evans (2007), a concept is a fundamental unit of any knowledge having its specifics. In domestic science the concepts are considered as cogitative blocks, which reconstruct imaginative thinking thus ensuring the perception of new links, new thoughts (Sidorov, 2013). Modern domestic researchers developed the classification of concepts, defined the frequency of their use (Stepanov, 1997). However, the technique of the analysis of works through the lens of concepts still seems insufficiently developed (Zusman, 2001). All this confirms the relevance of the problem.

6. Findings

The study allows confirming that the concept of “beauty” in each of the above early works of the writer functions and is being filled with new content and meaning. The revealed range of interpretations of the concept of “beauty” is as follows: beauty – a secret associated with death (*Hassan and His Jeddi, Mary*), beauty changes the world thus making a person different (*My Mars*), beauty – a temptation associated with death (*Mary*), beauty – a joy of life associated with creativity, eternity (*Inexhaustible Chalice, Fever*).

7. Conclusion

The study allows concluding that in the early period of his works the imaginative worldview of I. Shmelyov is formed under the dominating concept of “beauty”. The understanding of beauty within the considered works of I. Shmelyov “is penetrated” by Dostoyevsky’s ideas (“beauty will save the world”, “beauty is more important than bread”) and Orthodoxy (understanding of the zest for life).

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