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On the Eve of Dostoevsky ("Tales and Stories" by Platon Smirnovsky)

This article discusses the life and creative biography of one of the representatives of Russian popular literature – Platon Semenovich Smirnovsky. Particular attention is paid to the writer's debut book *Tales and Stories*. As it turns out, some of its parts, first of all the preface to the book – "A Miniature Sketch of Six Years of My Life as a Prose Writer" – are typologically close to the St. Petersburg poems *The Double* and *Notes from the Underground* by Fyodor Dostoevsky. This refers both to the paradoxical main characters and to the narrative, which exhibits the typical features of the dialogic verbal style, characterized by a painful concentration on extraneous opinions, the constant expectation of hostile attacks and evaluations, and the striving to retain the "final word" for oneself. The emergence of this style in literary criticism is commonly associated with Dostoevsky (Mikhail Bakhtin), but it was anticipated in Smirnovsky's confessional preface.

Key words: Smirnovsky, Sękowski, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Bakhtin, popular literature, internal dialogue.

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In the spring of 1838, the printing-office of the *Zhurnal Obshchepoleznykh svedenii* (*The Journal of Useful Knowledge*) published a book *Tales and Stories* (*Povesti i rasskazy*) by Platon Smirnovsky, an author whose works, life and even his name are virtually unknown today. In fact, when his debut book was published the situation was no different.

Platon Semenovich Smirnovsky was born in 1808 in St. Petersburg into the family of a small landowner of Cherepovets Coun-

ty, Novgorod Province. Smirnovsky's father began his service as a soldier, attaining the rank of lieutenant. In 1818, together with his children, he was listed in the Noble Genealogical Book of St. Petersburg Province. However, later Smirnovsky Jr. had more than once to confirm his noble origin.

At the age of fifteen, Platon Smirnovsky enrolled in the Naval Cadet Corps, but soon withdrew because of his poor health. In 1825, he joined the Vyborg Infantry Regiment as a warrant officer and a year later was transferred to the 46th Jaeger Regiment, stationed in Finland. In 1828, he retired and returned to St. Petersburg, where he served in various departments, first as a clerk, and, from 1831, as a collegiate registrar (the lowest status for civil service officials, which is the 14th class according to the Table of Ranks). At the time of his first publication, he worked at the Engineering Department of the Ministry of War, since 1835 as a province secretary (12th class). The further career of Smirnovsky, accompanied by a slow growth, is associated with the Ministry of War, the Department of Public Education, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. He died in St. Petersburg in 1857 with the rank of court counselor [see: 11; 12].

Materials and methods

Smirnovsky's first collection of stories included five works of different genres. Two of them had a distinctly lyrical character. The allegory "The Divine Statue" developed the themes of the imperfection of the world and the tragic uniqueness of the author as an individual. The statue of Fate explains to the narrator: 'Individuals, like you, live and die like orphans in the world [...] their life and their end is a chain of sufferings [...] if they experience enjoyment at some point, their enjoyment is not accessible' [18, p. 28]. The fantasy "The Musician and the Songstress" revealed the extreme aesthetic sensitivity of the autobiographical protagonist: "Sometimes, occasionally, very occasionally, I forgot myself in concerts, flying away from the prosaic world into the world of the elegant, heavenly, divine" [18, p. XVI]. The book also included three stories with a plot, "Prescience", "The Drowned Man", and "The Ataman's Love", united by the themes of the tragedy of human fate, the unattainability of happiness and, in the words of the author, "tears of pity for people" [18, p. XVIII].

It is noticeable that the author of the collection of stories does not have the skill of storytelling. His stories are almost eventless; they are extensive amplifications, wordy discussions of few insignificant facts and problems, and their purpose is to fill the necessary volume of the text. Each of the stories alludes to one or more literary sources. Thus, "Prescience" reiterates with variations the theme of prediction and prophecy, very popular in Russian prose and translations (on similar kind of stories see [13, pp. 591–597]). "The Ataman's Love" is very similar to the final part of Charles Nodier's novel *Jean Shogar*. Both tell the story of a leader of robbers who falls in love with a young woman who lost her love, and consequently her mind in the course of her capture. At the same time, stylistically, Smirnovsky's story reminds one of the so called "lubok novel", a sort of popular literature. The story "The Drowned Man", the longest in the volume, is a paraphrase of Alexander Pushkin's poem "The Bronze Horseman", which was published in the journal *Sovremennik* in 1837.

The most curious and, as it seems, the part of the book most important to the author, was a kind of preface to it – "A Miniature Sketch of Six Years of My Life as a Prose Writer". From it we learn that at the time of writing his stories the author was twenty-five years old, that he was a minor official and at the same time a writer with experience, that his book originally included not only prose, but also poetry, which due to some obscure "circumstances" is now hidden from the eyes of the public. It also turns out that the author is a resident of St. Petersburg, who was away from the capital for some period of time, and consequently the publication of his collection of stories was delayed for three years.

However, the value of the preface is not only and not even very much related to this factual information. The leading theme of "A Sketch" is the author's unquenchable need (obsession) for poetry absent from the world and his unsuccessful search for it. "Quid verum atque decens curo" ("I attend to the true and proper") [18, p. VII] – with this Latin epigraph Smirnovsky forewords his address to readers, emphasizing its programmatic nature, defining his life credo (Smirnovsky attributed this sentence to Virgil, whereas it belonged to Horace, *Epistularum liber primus*).

The confusing, full of excitement, pleonastic, confessional preface is a mixture of self-humiliation and arrogance, a resentment of people and a longing for them, a sense of vulnerability and a bold challenge to the world. Smirnovsky claims, “let them, for a trifle, nip my sad thoughts; let them laugh at my tears, at my wild timid imagination that lives among rocks and in dark far woods; mock even at my soul, chilling in mundane clothing, at my *loneliness among people*. But I *will take revenge on you*, you mocking writers, I will call you to the mirror of my flaming imagination and I will place a stamp or a metal label of prose and, in spite of you, I will try to show you from a deep distance, to reflect into your eyes the bright rays of the graceful and the poetic as well as their kin – peace and virtue... [...] I have sworn a vow of revenge upon you, and here is the first, shaky, timorous step towards revenge for my tears and your ignorance of me, *a being that is equal to you*” [18, pp. XVI–XVII] (Here and hereafter, unless otherwise specified, the italics are mine).

Smirnovsky’s pathetic recitations combine his ego and awareness of his own superiority with complaints about loneliness, his desire to judge with readiness to be judged: “[...] have you, surely, already judged me, decided what I was and what I am? If you have, you have decided too hastily” [18, pp. VIII–IX]. The writer states, “I am an open person, as simple as nature, I will speak out *myself*, evaluate myself, *display myself*, and will sum up the results in order that you affirm them; you will still have time to destroy both my book and my poor name; you can burn, lacerate, tear them to pieces; but I ask now only for your attention” [18, p. IX]. The contradictory psychological portrait of the author, who describes himself as a petty official of a “minor class” [18, p. VII], complements the motif of social humiliation.

On the whole, however, the nature of the confrontation that worries the author is not socially colored. It is a conflict between the artist and his hostile environment that has become trivial, but nevertheless is sincerely and intensively experienced, presented in forms typical of the late Romantic era, when the figure of its participant largely loses its halo of exclusivity. We see not a genius or a chosen one, but an aesthetically receptive individual who meets the coldness of everyday prosaic reality: “[...] I was born a poet. But people, as soon as they saw me in their

society, forcibly seized me, dragged me into the world of prose, pasted, paneled, wrapped me up in prose” [18, pp. IX–X]. He continues, “For six straight years, like crazy, I have been running around St. Petersburg; as a hungry dog that looks for food, I am looking for poetry, elegance, entertainment, for at least a moment of pleasure. No! Nothing in six years!” [18, p. X].

The author realizes that he is not very gifted and even criticises his own writings (“there is too much boredom, too many sighs and tears in them” [18, p. VIII]), and at the same time states that he is endowed with a tremendous imagination and compares it to gunpowder and dry straw [18, p. XII]. He speaks of an unquenchable thirst for creativity (“A long-standing passion for writing has exploded up in me like Vesuvius”) [18, p. XIV], anticipates accusations of being derivative, and insists on his independence. “Some of my acquaintances to whom I have read my manuscript”, he declares in a special note, “have found that I have imitated sometimes one of our most famous writers. I answer them here what I answered then: that the road of poetry goes almost across the whole world, and it is natural if ideas collide; but this sketch, like everything I have written, is unique. I confess that since my childhood I hate copies and copyists! In my eyes, a bad original is hardly worse than the best copy” [18, p. XVIII]. The desire to preclude accusations of imitation, apparently, explains Smirnovsky’s statement that his book was prepared for printing already in 1834, i.e., several years before its publication. However, the comparison of the stories included in the volume with the later writings of his contemporaries casts doubts on his claim.

Results

But whom could “some acquaintances” of the literary debutant have in mind, speaking of his affinity with “one of our most famous writers”? The preface to *Tales and Stories* provides an answer to this question. Critically assessing the state of contemporary Russian literature here, Smirnovsky nevertheless makes an exception, noting in it “[...] glimpses of the names of Brambeus, Marlinsky, Lugansky [pen names of Józef Sękowski, Alexander Bestuzhev, and Vladimir Dal], though they appeared in the world of printed words in masquerade costumes, to-

gether with no more than a dozen other names worthy to be called writers” [18, p. XIV]. In “A Sketch” the influence of at least two of those authors could be felt. Thus, the expressiveness of Smirnovsky’s preface, its broken syntax, metaphorical style, hyperbolism and extravagance of images reveals the influence of the style of the prominent romanticist Alexander Bestuzhev-Marlinsky.

There is a similarity between an episode from Józef Julian Sękowski’s novel *The Fantastic Voyages of Baron Brambeus* (1833), which is titled *The Sentimental Journey to Mount Etna*, and a passage from “A Sketch” by Smirnovsky. In Sękowski’s novel Brambeus falls into the depths of the hollow Earth and spends several years there among antipodes, in a society existing “upside down,” and then, swept up by a stream of gases, flies back to its surface. Smirnovsky depicts the cosmic confrontation of the narrator of “A Sketch” to banal reality: “By the power of my will <I> threw myself away to a harmless distance from the planet of all kinds of prose, having previously filled its prosaic, *hollow inside* with all deadly gases, and other inflammatory, combustible substances [...] and watched with laughter how the world was agitating (disturbed?), how prose was agitating” [18, p. XII].

The parallels between the opening parts of Sękowski’s novel, “The Autumn Boredom” and “A Poetic Journey Across the World”, and Smirnovsky’s “A Sketch” are even more evident. The works of both authors share an interest in colloquial speech, are addressed to unimagined reader, are a combination of mockery and self-irony, and “boredom” and the longing for the “poetic” are the leading motifs. Already the first lines of “A Sketch” – “I offer a prelude, do not be frightened, it is not a preface; I give you the honest word of an official of a minor class; put away your patience and read further. I myself can’t stand prefaces [...] No! This is not a preface, this is a little optical journey back through my life” [18, pp. VII–VIII] – are a reminiscence from “The Autumn Boredom” by Sękowski. Thus, Sękowski writes, “I know that you do not like reading prefaces and always omit them when reading books. That is why I resorted to cunning and decided to hide it in this article. Do me the favor of reading it carefully. Without a preface noth-

ing is now published, and a good reader is bound to sacrifice some of his patience in favor of these literary proclamations” [17, pp. XXXVII-XXXVIII].

But while Sękowski speaks ironically about the petty official's dissatisfaction with St. Petersburg and his search for “poetry”, Smirnovsky develops these themes with the utmost seriousness. Thus, Baron Brambeus in Sękowski's novel laments, “When I was a collegiate secretary, the world seemed very boring to me; I disliked everything – high society, ranks, decoration ribbons and humanity. [...] I felt myself created for higher ranks and higher sensations [...] I was already convinced [...] that humanity had stopped in its development and was standing still; that its enlightenment and education were even going backwards. Disappointed, I became a radical free-thinker, and looked at things and at my fellow men through a dim glass of pity. *I was born a poet, a romantic, and my soul necessarily demanded strong impressions.* [...] I hungrily read the works of the new school of poetry, dreamed day and night of the terrible, gloomy, disgusting, and horrible, and was in despair that neither on Nevsky Prospect nor on the Chyornaia Rechka I found anything like it” [17, pp. 3–6]. An unusual situation arises: the comic lamentations of Baron Brambeus in the interpretation of his follower, who has either misunderstood or consciously reinterpreted the source, acquire a tense and dramatic sounding, and Sękovsky's text, written several years before “A Miniature Sketch”, looks like a parody of it...

“A Sketch” is in a similarly complex relationship to another of its probable pretexts, Gogol's “Pieces from Diary of a Madman”, published in 1835 as a part of the collection *Arabesque*. It seems that Sękowski alluded to the similarity between the preface to *Tales and Stories* and the diary of Poprishchin when he abundantly and ironically quoted from “A Sketch” in his review and called its author “the third Gogol” [16, p. 18] (Note: In the announcement of the 1838 collection of stories published by V. Vladyslavlev, mockingly reproduced by Sękowski in the same volume of the Library for Reading, Evgenii Grebenka, who, like Gogol, developed the Ukrainian theme, was called ‘the second Gogol’). The ending of Sękowski's review speaks in favor of such an assumption. Sękowski accompanied the quotations from

Smirnovsky's lyrical fantasy "The Musician and the Songstress" with the mocking comments and provided in the end the address of a "beautiful institution", the well-known mental asylum, managed by the famous psychiatrist Johann Georg von Rühl [16, p. 21].

Indeed, Gogol's novella and "A Miniature Sketch" are similar in their confessional form, in the images of their narrators who seek to assert themselves and suffer from loneliness and misunderstanding, who agonize over their human and social humiliation and challenge the unjust world order. But again, as with Sękowski's novel *The Fantastic Voyages of Baron Brambeus*, Smirnovsky transforms his source: in Gogol these properties are inherent in the grotesque madman Poprishchin, while in the preface to *Tales and Stories* they take on a personal meaning.

"A Miniature Sketch of Six Years of My Life as a Prose Writer," which is inherited from the work of Smirnovsky's contemporaries, at the same time anticipated some literary phenomena of the era that followed. We are talking first of all about *The Double* (1846), a Petersburg poem by Fyodor Dostoyevsky and, to an even greater extent, about his *Notes from the Underground* (1864).

The narrator of "A Sketch" is close to their central characters by his inconsistent personality, the loneliness that he acutely experiences and that is associated, as in *Notes from the Underground*, with a sense of his own uniqueness. Smirnovsky complains about his loneliness not only in the preface to his book ("... for the winter, in the damp, stuffy, boring autumn, they threw me into four walls, into the grave [...] I was absolutely alone, like a lonely Etna in Sicily" [18, p. X, etc.]); similar complaints appear in the fantasy "The Musician and the Songstress" ("I was home alone... alone, as *always!*" [18, p. 61], and in an allegory "The Divine Statue" ("At 25, at the age of heavenly pleasures, to be alone [...] absolutely alone [...] in a myriad of families [...] to search among them for people and not find them!" [18, p. 22], "No shelter for the homeless!" [18, p. 24]). Compare to Dostoyevsky: "Another circumstance, too, worried me in those days: that there was no one like me and I was unlike anyone else. 'I am alone and they are *everyone!*' I thought - and pondered", "My schoolfellows met me with spiteful and merciless jibes because I

was not like any of them” [10, p. 125, 139]. (Italics in Dostoevsky). At times, this similarity is revealed in the textual juxtapositions of self-characterizations: the narrator of “A Sketch” speaks of his “timid” imagination [18, p. XVI], the “underground man” in *Notes from the Underground* speaks of his “timid, wounded and disproportionate pride” [10, p. 139], Smirnovsky’s narrator insists on his simplicity and sincerity (“I am a frank ordinary man” [18, p. IX], “I am frank” [18, p. XVIII]), which are the same traits that Goliadkin repeatedly emphasizes (“I’m a simple person, and not ingenious, and I’ve no external polish”, “I don’t act on the sly, but openly, without cunning” [9, p. 116, 117 etc.]). The similarity of the works is strengthened by the underscored Petersburg nature of the conflicts of the protagonist and the world: “For man’s everyday needs, it would have been quite enough to have the ordinary human consciousness, that is, half or a quarter of the amount which falls to the lot of a cultivated man of our unhappy nineteenth century, especially one who has the fatal ill-luck to inhabit Petersburg, the most theoretical and intentional town on the whole terrestrial globe. (There are intentional and unintentional towns.)” [10, p. 101]. But most interesting in this respect is the specific way the narrator in “A Sketch” expresses himself.

In his polemically colored confession one can clearly detect the typical features of the dialogic style of speech, defined by a painful concentration on outside opinions and the constant expectation of hostile attacks and assessments. The emergence of this style is commonly associated with Dostoevsky. “In most cases,” Mikhail Bakhtin remarks about the writer’s debut novel, “Makar Devushkin’s speech about himself is determined by the reflected discourse of another, ‘other person’, a stranger [...] A poor man, but a man ‘with ambition’ – such as Makar Devushkin [...] constantly senses the ‘ill look’ of this other upon him, a glance which is either reproachful or – perhaps even worse in his eyes – mocking [...]” [2, p. 230]. In *The Double*, Bakhtin writes, these characteristic traits of speech and consciousness are “expressed with a sharpness and clarity, not found in any other work of Dostoevsky’s” [2, p. 235]. They are vividly manifested in *Notes from the Underground*, what the hero of which “thinks about most of all is what others think or might think

about him, he tries to keep one step ahead of every other consciousness, every other thought about him, every other point of view on him. At all the critical moments of his confessions he tries to anticipate the possible definition or evaluation others might make of him, to guess the sense and tone of that evaluation, and tries painstakingly to formulate these possible words about himself by others, interrupting his own speech with the imagined rejoinders of others” [2, p. 62].

Like the aforementioned works of Dostoevsky and long before them, “A Miniature Sketch” is precisely such an example of an internally dialogized “hidden-polemical word”, most reminiscent in this respect of *Notes from the Underground*. While Baron Brambeus’s authoritative constant references to his audience are rhetorical in nature, with no implied response, the preface to *Tales and Stories*, starting from the very first lines (“I offer a prelude, do not be frightened [...], etc.) [18, p. VIII] literally imposes a dialogue on the imaginary reader that sounds even more decisive in *Notes from the Underground*: “I want now to tell you, gentlemen, whether you care to hear it or not [...]” [10, p. 101]. The narrator in “A Sketch” anticipates hostile evaluations, not yet expressed but coming, and he anticipates aggressive actions (“[...] you will still manage to destroy my book and my poor name, you can burn it, tear it to pieces, tear it to pieces” [18, p IX]) and threatens imaginary offenders with retaliatory aggression: “But I will *avenge* you, you mocking prose writers, I [...], to *your spite*, will [...] force you [...] I have vowed to *avenge* you [...]” [18, pp. XVI-XVII]. Bakhtin reveals in *Notes from the Underground* a similar “gradual increase in negative tone (to spite the other) under the influence of the other’s anticipated reaction” [2, p. 254].

Bakhtin’s comments on *Notes from the Underground* that Dostoevsky’s narrator ‘passionately seeks “to retain for oneself the final word [...] what he fears most of all is that people might think that he is repenting before someone [...] that he is reconciling himself to someone else’s judgement or evaluation, that his self-affirmation is somehow in need of affirmation and recognition by another” [2, p. 256]. Smirnovsky’s narrator behaves similarly: “[...] have you, surely, already judged me, decided what I was and what I am? If you have, you have decided too hastily

[...] You are reckless, I asked you to stash away your patience in the empty wallet of your pocket [...] I will speak out myself, evaluate myself, display myself, and will sum up the results in order that you affirm them” [18, pp. VIII–IX]. Compare to *Notes from the Underground*, “Now, are not you fancying, gentlemen, that I am expressing remorse for something now, that I am asking your forgiveness for something? I am sure you are fancying that ... However, I assure you I do not care if you are....”, “You imagine no doubt, gentlemen, that I want to amuse you. You are mistaken in that, too” [10, p. 100, 101].

Discussion and Conclusions

How can we explain the similarity between the works of a representative of popular literature, on the one hand, and one of the most prominent Russian writers, on the other? Despite the considerable time distance and the artistic insignificance of Smirnovsky’s book, the possibility of Dostoevsky’s acquaintance with it cannot be rejected a priori. The writer’s unique erudition and exceptional familiarity with Russian literature are well known. Moreover, this applies to authors of the most diverse scale. “Dostoevsky received Gogol’s legacy not only directly”, Alexander Zeitlin noted, “but also indirectly, through Dahl, Grebenka, Mikhail Dostoevsky, Butkov and a *hundred insignificant writers* with whom Dostoevsky was undoubtedly familiar, whom he read, and who, in their mass, produced an influence on him no less than Gogol did” [19, p. 2] (Note: on the connection of Dostoevsky with Russian literary tradition see, for example [5, pp. 206–218; 7, pp. 16–33; 8, pp. 5–26]). That Dostoevsky had an extraordinary memory as a reader is supported by the discovery of Natalia Lvova. She noticed that an essay, which was included in Dostoevsky’s *St. Petersburg Chronicle* (May 11, 1847), is reminiscent from Sękowski’s essay “Chelovechek” (The Little Man) published in the *Severnaia pchela* in 1833 [14, pp. 172–177]. The assumption that Dostoevsky could have paid attention to Smirnovsky’s book does not therefore seem so impossible. Still, the main thing here is not the admissible genetic, but the undoubted typological proximity of the works discussed.

In a comment to *Notes from the Underground*, Dostoevsky emphasized, “The author of the diary and the diary itself are,

of course, imaginary. Nevertheless, it is clear that such persons as the writer of these notes not only may, but positively must, exist in our society, when we consider the circumstances in the midst of which our society is formed. I have tried to expose to the view of the public [...] one of the characters of the recent past. He is one of the representatives of a generation still living” [10, p. 99].

Vissarion Belinsky commented about the prototype of “the underground man” that “The novel’s protagonist, Mr. Goliadkin, is one of those resentful individuals, obsessed with *ambition*, who are so often found in the lower and middle classes of our society. He thinks that every other person wants to offend him by words or looks, and gestures, that intrigues and underminings are made against him everywhere [...] The morbid sensitivity and suspiciousness of his character is the black demon of his life, destined to make a hell out of his existence. If you look around carefully, how many Mr. Goliadkins, poor, rich, stupid and clever here are!” [3, p. 140] (*Italics in Belinsky*).

Comparison of the autobiographical fragments of Smirnovsky’s book, especially “A Miniature Sketch”, with the works of Dostoevsky confirms the historical embeddedness of the great writer’s literary types.

Smirnovsky’s fears about the sad fate of his book were fully justified. “The Tales and Stories” provoked mocking responses from various literary journals. Following Sękowski’s pejorative review, several other similar reviews of *Tales and Stories* appeared; in their assessment of the book they drew mainly from “A Miniature Sketch of Six Years of My Life as a Prose Writer”. Belinsky ironically wrote about “the wild un governability [...] of the author’s imagination”, his “claim to be recognised as a genius”, and insisted “that the originality of his literary works, his talent and, what is most important, his way of expression are not open to the slightest doubt, and that no writer, however famous he might be, would dare to call him his imitator” [4, p. 128]. The journal *Severnaia pchela* mockingly advised Smirnovsky to continue the search for “poetry” that he had not discovered in the capital somewhere in the provinces – “in Arzamas or Poshekhon” [1, p. 734], and a reviewer of the *Literary Supplements to the Russian Invalid* (a newspaper of the Russian mili-

tary which was published in St. Petersburg) warned readers: “The relentless strained sighs, cries, complaints about destiny, about prose, about lifeless life will bore you so much, if you come across this little book, that you will leave it without having read until the middle: all this is so exquisitely, so violently connected, that it is difficult to read even two pages in a row” [6, p. 428].

The destructive criticism of his first book for a long time discouraged Smirnovsky from writing: his name reappears only in the second half of the 1840s. By all accounts, he did not want to be a writer any longer. Literary pursuits for Smirnovsky become just a means of additional income. His further activity in this field was mainly connected to one of the most popular periodicals of the era – the newspaper of the St. Petersburg municipal police. In 1847–1848, Smirnovsky was a regular contributor to its section “Feuilletons of the City Police”. He published there, in particular, several articles devoted to his favorite Finland, and a series of ‘sketches of Petersburg’. At that time, he was also one of the leading feuilleton writers for A. A. Kraevsky’s literary periodical. His writing comprised light chitchat about the various events of life in the capital, quippy comments about its inhabitants, humorous descriptions of urban situations and types. He regularly incorporated advertisements of shops, goods, parties, and restaurants in his articles and essays that put in question his disinterestedness and objectivity.

Probably, from commercial deliberations, he published in the series ‘Children’s Library’ four issues of “Luchshie skazki iz ‘Tysiachi i odnoi nochi’, pereskazannye detiam Pl. Smirnovskim (The Best Tales from ‘A Thousand and One Nights’, adapted for children by Platon Smirnovsky) (St. Petersburg, 1848–1850). His other book, “Na vsiakoe vremia v dobryi chas (Nechto vrode fel’etona)” (For Any Time at a Good Hour. Something Like a Feuilleton), published in St. Petersburg in 1855, was composed of works of various genres containing banal moral, religious, and loyalist sermons.

The exaggerated hopes for success with which the writer once entered the literary field were not justified. The resulting reputation of Smirnovsky as a writer and a man was entirely

unenviable. Ivan Panaev, discussing in his memoirs the moral decline of the literary and journalist Vasilii Mezhevich, cites as evidence the fact of his connection “with some Mr. Smirnovsky, who composed in competent articles in menial language” [15, p. 139].

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А. А. Карпов

Накануне Достоевского («Повести и рассказы» Платона Смирновского)

В статье характеризуются жизненный и творческий путь одного из предшественников русской массовой литературы – П. С. Смирновского. Особое внимание уделено дебютному сборнику писателя «Повести и рассказы». Как выясняется, некоторые из составляющих его сочинений, прежде всего, предисловие к книге «Миниатюрный эскиз прозаической шестилетней моей жизни», типологически близки «петербургской поэме» «Двойник» и «Запискам из подполья» Ф. М. Достоевского. Это касается как парадоксальных образов главных героев произведений, так и манеры повествования, обнаруживающей характерные приметы диалогического речевого стиля, определяемого болезненной сосредоточенностью героя на стороннем мнении, постоянным ожиданием враждебных выпадов и оценок, стремлением оставить за собой «последнее слово». Возникновение этого стиля в литературоведении принято связывать с именем Достоевского (М. М. Бахтин), однако он был предвосхищен в исповедальном предисловии Смирновского.

Ключевые слова: П. С. Смирновский, О. И. Сенковский, Н. В. Гоголь, Ф. М. Достоевский, М. М. Бахтин, массовая литература, внутренне-диалогический речевой стиль.

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