

## “THE SEMANTIC ENVIRONMENT” OF THE LATE DRAMATIC WORKS OF A. PLATONOV\*

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This review raises a set of important issues. The use of contextual, motif, and “evidence-based” methods make it possible to identify hidden semantic layers which are hard to discern in Platonov’s late plays at first. The authors manage to demonstrate both the peculiarities of the plot of Platonov’s late dramas and their connection with the writer’s creative work as a whole. Particularly important is the autobiographical context which significantly enriches the “semantic environment” of the works analysed. It is based on Platonov’s family drama related to the arrest and premature death of his son Platon. The study reveals various ways of inclusion of the “son motif” in the plays *Voice of the Father*, *A Magical Being*, and *A Student of the Lyceum*. The analysis of the play *Noah’s Ark* turns out to be less interesting, which is largely due to the fact of its being unfinished and, thus, lacking artistic perfection. The stylistic originality of Platonov’s late creative work and its artistic distinction from the works of the 1920s – 1930s remain outside the authors’ framework of reflection. This range of issues may serve as a future focus of study.

*Keywords:* plays of A. Platonov; plot poetics; context; intertextual dialogue; biography and creative work of a writer.

Освещаемая монография поднимает комплекс важных проблем. Обращение к контекстуальному, мотивному, «уликовому» методам анализа позволило определить потаенные смысловые слои в поздних платоновских пьесах, которые остаются незамеченными при первом впечатлении. Авторами

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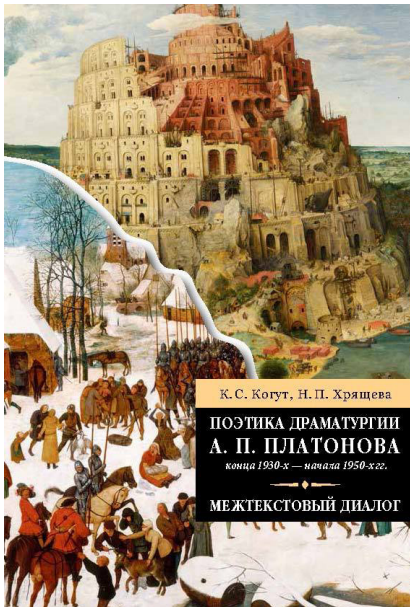
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рецензируемой книги показано как сюжетное своеобразие анализируемых драм Платонова, так и связь произведений с творчеством писателя в целом. Особого внимания заслуживает автобиографический контекст, существенно обогащающий «смысловую среду» проанализированных текстов. В его основе – семейная драма Платонова, связанная с арестом и ранней смертью сына Платона. Выявлены разные способы включения «сыновнего сюжета» в пьесы «Голос отца», «Волшебное существо» и «Ученик лица». Менее интересным представляется анализ пьесы «Ноев ковчег», что во многом объясняется незавершенностью произведения, его художественной недовполненностью. За пределами рефлексии авторов монографии осталось стилистическое своеобразие позднего творчества Платонова, его художественное отличие от произведений 1920–1930-х гг. Данный спектр проблем определяется в рецензии как дальнейшая перспектива.

*Ключевые слова:* драматургия А. Платонова; поэтика сюжета; контекст; межтекстовый диалог; биография писателя и творчество.

Platonov's late dramas have become an object of research interest in the last decade. This includes, for example, Issue 7 of the collected articles *The Land of Philosophers of Andrei Platonov: Issues of Creativity* (2011) devoted to dramatic art. Nevertheless, it is hard to overestimate the importance of



the first attempt at a holistic interpretation of the late dramatic works of the writer undertaken by K. S. Kogut and N. P. Khryashcheva, in their complex monograph *Poetics of A. P. Platonov's Dramatic Works in the Late 1930s and Early 1950s. Intertextual Dialogue* [Когут, Хрящева]. Having chosen the late plays as an object of analysis, the authors have entered a difficult research area, since these works can hardly be considered among the writer's literary masterpieces.

A positive aspect of the study is the authors' ability to reveal hidden meanings within the plays, which remain unnoticed at first sight. In their investigation, the researchers reasonably use intertextual analysis with the accent on contextual, motif and “evidence-based” methods, which have not been comprehensively employed

in previous studies of Platonov's dramatic works. The substantial character of this scientific approach, the meticulous formulation of methodological aspects and the appeal to the latest studies of the writer's creative activity demonstrate a high level of scholarly reflection on the part of the mono-

graph authors. It is also necessary to note that the notorious "difficulty of reading" (A. Bitov) Platonov's texts is done away with in the plays under consideration. We come across an absolutely different language and new stylistics in them. But this aspect of Platonov's poetics dealing with the problem of the author's writing strategy is left beyond the scope of the monograph, which brings about new questions and challenges, and formulates a new area of scientific interpretation of Platonov's late dramatic works as a part of his creative activity in this period.

Chapter 1, dealing with the play *Voice of the Father*, convincingly shows the relationship between the poetics of the work and the graveyard elegy via a specific set of motifs: empty graveyard, evening graveyard landscape, and a talk with a dead person on a grave. This atmosphere is enhanced by the appeal to the genre of elegy in classical poetry and in the works by A. S. Pushkin. The interpretation of the play *Voice of the Father* as a "dialogue between a genius and a villain" through the allusion to Pushkin's *Andrei Chenier* is an original research finding. The authors present Father Yakov impersonating the "genius", whereas the villain is personified by Servant, a representative of the generation of forgetful sons, which is supported by the presence of demonic elements in the structure of his character. On the level of auto-dialogue, K. S. Kogut and N. P. Khryashcheva report the relationship between the play and Platonov's short story *The Happy Root-Crop*, in which there is a character with a similar function, and the novel *The Foundation Pit*, where traces of the "petty demon" can be seen in the character of Activist. It should be noted that the image of the evil force first appears in the early short story by Platonov, *Erick*. In future research, it would be interesting to study the movement of this chain of characters from its source to the final appearance in the play *Noah's Ark*.

The authors demonstrate a likeness between *Voice of the Father* and the lyrical miniature of Ignatiy Bryanchaninov's *A Voice from Eternity (Meditation at the Grave)* (1848). The words of the dead man, 'I can't speak!' and 'I can speak as yet!' [Брянчанинов], the motifs of infancy of the living, eternity, silence, and life-sleep kind of drift from the utterances of the lyrical character Saint Ignatiy into Platonov's text, transforming it in accordance with the author's intention. The genre of the first person narrative connects the words of Father Yakov in the play and *A Voice from Eternity* with confession and sermon, as well as with a dirge characterized by ambivalent subjectivity (the voice of the deceased is built into the voices of the praying): 'Сам Един еси Безсмертный, Сотворивый и Создавый человека, земний убо от земли создахомся, и в землю туюжде пойдем, якоже повелел еси, Создавый мя, и Рекий ми: яко земля еси, и в землю отыдеши, аможе вси человецы пойдем, надгробное рыдание творяще песнь: аллилуиа, аллилуиа, аллилуиа'<sup>1</sup> [Псалтирь, с. 402]. The author's

<sup>1</sup> 'You only are immortal, the creator and maker of mankind; and we are mortal, formed of the earth, and to earth shall we return. For so did you ordain when you created me, saying, "You are dust, and to dust you shall return." All of us go down to the dust; yet even at the grave we make our song: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia' [The Book of Common Prayer, p. 499].

remark ‘And then follows a dialogue between the son, Yakov, and his Father speaking through Yakov’s heart with the voice of the son’ is rather important for this comparison [Платонов, 2006, с. 210]. In this way, literary intertextuality is interwoven into the sacred text, originating from a biblical archetype and epitomizing the basic theme of the whole creative legacy of Platonov: memory and forgetfulness.

Now let us focus on some aspects of this motif of duality in the play. The genealogical branch of the Father’s father (‘My father begat me’ [Платонов, 2006, с. 213], says Yakov’s father) – Father – Son is correlated with the biblical formula “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”. The words “My father begat me” symbolize male priority in procreation (*begat* means *gave life*) originating from the Old Testament and associated in Christian consciousness with the New Testament formula “*Abraham begat Isaac*”. The name of the son, Yakov (Jacob), is a sign of this spiritual continuity opened up with the name of the God-Father-Life-giver and of the inclusion of his family into it. The Christian tradition is indicated by denoting the Father’s life as “holy existence” on his tombstone: Aleksandr Spiridonovich Titov. All this emphasizes the value of both family continuity and the father’s course of life. This detail expands the contextual field of *Voice of the Father* and serves as a contrastive marker of the nominative row in *The Foundation Pit*, where characters are given only surnames with fuzzy etymology (Zhachev, Chiklin, Voshchev), which demonstrates their unrooted existence. It is revealing that, while portraying Voshchev, the author removes all traces of his former life outlined in the sketches *The Teenager* and *The Gift of Life* [Корниенко, с. 118–130; Проскурина, с. 176–188].

The generational conflict between father and son is presented as a conflict of moral-ethical and scientific-technological views, where family memory is disrupted at the stage of the son. For Yakov, his own spiritual family history does not start from his birth father but from the “father of nations”, Joseph Stalin. The father’s realization of this difference is marked in the text by the stage remarks “silence”, “short silence”. The dialogue pause is enhanced after the son’s confession of his loyalty to Stalin. Thus, the love of the father and the act of missing him are rather natural filial emotions, whereas the Stalinist “doctrine” is for Yakov a source of knowledge about life and the birth of a “new man”. What has remained a mystery of life for the father and his generation appears to be a problem solved for Yakov’s generation. The Stalinist “doctrine” feeds his vehement desire to “rush” “the enemies of the people”. Thus, as K. S. Kogut and N. P. Khryashcheva rightly put it, between the lines of the dialogue, we can feel the writer’s concern about the spiritual health of young people, whose rootless nature might turn them into blind power executors (compare the elements of travesty in the character of Servant) and make them both part of the punitive system and its victims: the phrase “enemies of the people” sounds like the tragic formula of the Stalinist epoch.

Here, the monograph authors enter the autobiographical context of *Voice of the Father*: its connection with Platonov’s family drama – the ar-

rest of his 15-year-old son Platon in 1938 — which creates new semantic overtones in the plot. A detailed analysis of the text, and the political context in which it was written, allow the researchers to come to their conclusion about the motivated concern of the father over the fate of Yakov. The inclusion of Platonov’s letters to his wife Mariya Aleksandrovna into this context, overlooked by the authors, might have enhanced the dramatic effect of the plot collision of the play. Separated from the family, Platonov asks his wife to look after their son, to take care of him and to keep him out of trouble. This anxiety grows as Platon gets older. Thus, Platonov writes in the letter dated 25 February 1937: ‘Send me a telegram poste restante and let me know: if all goes well with you, if not, tell me (in detail) what has gone wrong’ [Платонов, 2013, с. 421]. A day later, on 27 February 1937, he writes in a highly depressed mood: ‘A hard unusual premonition troubles me. I feel as if something bad might happen to you and Platon in Moscow’ [Там же, с. 423]. This letter is published in a collection of Platonov’s letters and is the last one written before Platon’s arrest. That is how the political situation in the country and the juvenile age of his son, a boy with unstable behavior, are intertwined in a tragic way. Addressing his son, Platonov often asks him to obey his mother and not to fight with her. In the letter of 28 April 1934, Platonov asks his wife: ‘Ask Platon to be a good boy, avoid getting into any *<part of the sheet is lost>* let him obey and protect you, and you protect him’ [Там же, с. 362]. The lost part of the sheet may contain information about bad company and the risk of unfavorable influence upon the boy. Platon’s wife, Tamara Grigoryevna Zaytseva (Platonova), writes in her recollections about him: ‘He was a very unbalanced person after all’ [Платон, сын Платонова]. The unbalanced temper may explain that, under somebody else’s influence, Platon wrote those two “funny” in his opinion, letters addressed to a German reporter, which were the reason of his arrest [For more detail see: Платонов, 2013, с. 430–431]. Thus, the motif of the forgetful generation in *Voice of the Father* stems from the biographical plot of the author that performs the implicit frame function. The plot of the play creates its own dramatic effects, the basic one of which is the talk between father and son on the more distinct pattern of *quid pro quo* in contrast to the merger of the positions of Yakov and Servant. The fact that Yakov can be easily associated with the tempting pictures of the future drawn by Servant — a leisure park in the place of the cemetery — brings into the motif of collapse of the generation of fathers the semantics of a vain sacrifice.

On the level of intertextual dialogue, the assumption about the universal character of the issue of memory and forgetfulness in Platonov’s creative activity is marked by the allusion to the novel *The Foundation Pit*, in which this issue is put into the upper layer of the plot in the dialogues between Voshchev and the diggers. The non-viability of the project of a common proletarian house is mainly determined by the characters’ refusal from memory. As a result, their immersion in continuous “digging” turns into digging a common grave. Associated with the novel, the grave

of Yakov's father becomes a realized metaphor. According to the researchers, the play obtains a tragic ring, interpreted by the writer not only as an historical but also as a spiritual catastrophe. In view of this, the interpretation of the dialogue between the father and Yakov in the drama – as an inner dialogue between Platonov, who had gone through a lot in his life, and the younger Platonov, infatuated with the ideas of technical reformation of the world, which is saliently shown in his earlier plot of “rebellion against the universe” – becomes an important element of research reflection.

In the chapter devoted to the analysis of the play “The Magical Creature”, K. S. Kogut and N. P. Khryashcheva carry out a detailed study of the historical context, showing how the situation of warfare influenced a new turn in the theme of memory so significant for Platonov. The researchers made the first attempt to thoroughly analyze this work about which “only separate remarks had been made... on the level of comments on various publication” (c. 165). Of particular importance is the conclusion about the transitory nature of the artistic potential of the play, which forms the features of new poetics fully realized in the short story *The Return* – a key work of the postwar period of the writer's creative activity. This change is associated with Platonov's realization of the difficulties of transition from warfare to peaceful life, overcoming deformation of the human soul, which had lost hearty feelings during the terrible years of the war. The chronotope of *A Magical Being* is clearly divided into two poles: war and peace. It was a difficult task for the heroes who had got used to living in the trenches to go back to a peaceful situation. The comparative analysis of the two literary works shows their close ideological and poetic relationship. Nevertheless, as distinct from the plot of the short story *The Return* and its focusing on the problems of the character's coming back to peaceful life, the plot of the play is developed around a love collision moving in two directions: sacrificial love and love as self-indulgence. I believe that this collision allows one to speak of *A Magical Being* as an original work of fiction disregarding its “boosting” function in the direction of the short story *The Return*.

Investigating the plot situation of the wife lost and regained, K. S. Kogut and N. P. Khryashcheva discover its source from the fairy tale archetype, which is part of the universal idea of death-resurrection. It is worthy of note that interest in this cultural universal was in line with the creative tasks of literary activity of the war period, and specifically of poems, including lyrics, where the theme of protective memory overcoming separation and death was the leading one (*The Small Light* by M. Isakovskiy, *Dark Is the Night* by V. Agatov, *Wait for Me* by K. Simonov, etc.). A study of the poetic corpus of the literary environment of the play might have expanded its contextual field and have shown the specificity of Platonov's creative perspective consisting in an indirect method of the realization of ideas. This would have also facilitated the discovery of the reason why *A Magical Being* was regarded as an ideologically unclear play with a “fuzzy” and “blurred” plot.

A closer analysis of the plot structure of the play shows that, permeating the whole plot, the situation of the loss and regain of the wife is "submerged" by the author in other plot lines. And even the joy of the family reunion is immediately muffled by the wish of General Klimchitskiy, tired of forced rest after being wounded, to return to the front line in the finale of the play. Such a finale heightens the heroic and patriotic pathos of the play, but the motif of the search for the wife driving the plot line of the main character loses its organizational function. We cannot but mention that the situation of peace in which the larger part of the plot develops, emphasizing the scenes of eating, holiday and romantic dreams, undermines its ideological content. The episode of an untimely holiday in terms of intertextual dialogue contains allusions to *A Feast in Time of Plague* or to the scene of untimely holiday in *The Cherry Orchard* by A. Chekhov. An analysis of this similarity might have expanded the reception field of Platonov's play beyond the frames of auto-dialogue where, apart from *The Return*, the monograph authors refer to the play *A Hut at the Front Line* and the short story *Aphrodite*.

K. S. Kogut and N. P. Khryashcheva distinguish a Biblical layer in the poetic structure of the play, which is a result of an application of the "evidence-based" method of analysis. Evangelical allusions contain an analogy between the description of the fate of martyr Maria and the apocryphal story about the *Descent of the Virgin into Hell*. *An intertextual connection via a chain of signals (meaningful utterances, bows, kisses) between the acquaintance of Maria with Natasha, and the evangelical scene of the meeting between Virgin Mary and Elizabeth (known in iconography as "Kissing St. Elizabeth")* has been discovered by the monograph authors. These details, built into Platonov's drama, grant the archetypical plot of death-resurrection an evangelical ring. The authors discern references to Pushkin expressed by micro-poetical allusions to *Boris Godunov*: the motif of the *Massacre of the Sons merged into the motif of the holy fool*. *It is shown in the next chapter of the monograph that both motifs will go on to play an important role in the "son plot" of the play A Student of the Lyceum*.

Conducting a detailed analysis of the folklore and fairy tale elements in *A Magical Being* the authors, nevertheless, overlook the specificity of their creative application. The specificity of the functional meaning of fairy tale motifs in the case in question consists in their functions which are far from those of a fairy tale. Thus, the resurrection of Klimchitskiy's wife is not miraculous at all; what was believed to be death turned out to be just a severe wound. The reference to the fairy tale character soldier Ivan is also expressed in the play without magic; the skill of the girl Anyuta to do many things at the same time can be explained by her proletarian origin and wartime upbringing. The "Non-miraculous nature of magic" is Platonov's conceptual position, which also found its realization in his retelling of Russian fairy tales [e.g. see: Минеев]. At the same time, while analyzing the situation of the search for new shoes and a good dress for the deceased Maria, the researchers rightfully note its relationship not with fairy tale motifs but with

the Russian Orthodox funeral tradition through Christ's promise: 'In whatsoever things I shall take you, in these I shall judge you' [Dialogue of Justin, Philosopher and Martyr, with Trypho, a Jew]. New burial clothes symbolize the idea of a new life in the new body. On the basis of these arguments, the authors arrive at the conclusion that the accent is shifted from the fairy tale dress semantics to the ecclesiastical ("wedding") one for Maria.

While carrying out a functional analysis of fairy tale elements in Platonov's creative activity it should be taken into account that in Soviet times the fairy tale was regarded as an ideologically hostile genre, for preventing the normal upbringing of the younger generation whose purpose was 'to make fairy tales come true'. Is not it why 'A. Platonov created a text which is not only an example of leveling the cult nature of the fairy tale but also of reduction of everything magical and miraculous? Instead of miracles, A. Platonov introduces into his text detailed realistic descriptions and provides rational logical explanations of the "fairy tale reality"' [Минеев, с. 117]. Such specificity of fairy tale narration corresponds to the theme of the nation of 'jacks of all trades', which is important for Platonov. Thus, 'in Platonov's fairy tales, there are no foxes, bears and hares that work hard to bring justice and happiness to the people; the people achieve them on their own: through persistence, sacrifice, and wit', wrote S. Zalygin [see: Залыгин]. This peculiarity of Platonov's fairy tales determines the function of the fairy tale elements in his plays, consisting of the intention to portray the spiritual power of the people and its consolidation in the ancestors' experience of many centuries. The power of the spirit of the people is, according to Platonov, the real miracle capable of overcoming death. This power is personified in the play by Maria, which, I believe, constitutes the main sense of the title *A Magical Being*.

The theme of love and fidelity in the play has a biographical background that becomes clear if we compare the plot line of Klimchitskiy–Maria with the wartime letters of Platonov. This might have contributed one more aspect of the contextual analysis of *A Magical Being*, where the writer creates the image of an ideal lover using the device of twin characters (Maria and Natasha) and simultaneously portrays an ideal variant of marital relationship. Platonov makes an artistic correction of the line of his own fate, in which the "impossible" love of his wife did not get a mutually deep response. This spiritual conflict was a sore point for the writer, found reflected in his letters, and was realized in his creative activity in many different ways.

Among Platonov's late dramatic works the play *A Student of the Lyceum* was especially significant for the writer. The authors of the book rightly note that its plot has little to do with the real biography of Pushkin. Behind its text we can see the tragic fate of Platon Platonov. The supposition that, in this play, Platonov-playwright realized his long-cherished intention to write a piece of literature about his son is beyond doubt and is even indirectly corroborated by the title of the play. The parallel hidden in it is an emblem of the writer's intention: a student of the lyceum – a pupil of the school, which equates the fates of the student of the lyceum, Pushkin, as he



is portrayed in the play, and the schoolboy, Platon Platonov. It was not by chance that the author altered the title of the play several times. Its variants were *Pushkin in the Lyceum*, *Young Pushkin* and *In the Lyceum Gardens*. However, none of these alternative titles served the writer's intention. It was only the last variant that expressed his intention implicitly.

It is worthy of note that the motif of the execution of the sons associated with the future fate of the students of the lyceum found by the monograph authors possesses even more powerful potential than the motifs of exile, indefinite future and imminent death in the plot line of Pushkin. This is one more evident advantage of the work demonstrating Platonov's poetics of hint in a new light. The authors of the book emphasize a peculiar artistic power of the plot line of Fekla – a grieving mother whose son was beaten to death during physical punishment 'carried out according to the established rules'. It was in this subsidiary plot line that Platonov stresses the parallel with the fate of his own son driven to death by "the established rules" of the contemporary brutal power. The graveyard scene of the talk between Aleksandr and Fekla in which she tells him at the grave of her son about her life, how she lulls him 'to sleep a long sleep' with a lullaby, is the most tragic one, which is suggestive of the amount of grief Platonov himself felt about the death of his son. In the monograph, this is demonstrated by quoting the letters to Mariya Aleksandrovna written from 1943 on (from the time of Platon's death), permeated with the heartbreaking motif of sorrow 'about a little hill of land on the Armenian cemetery' [Платонов, 2013, с. 531]. Thus, Platonov's letters uncover the autobiographical basis of the motif of life at the grave, as it is there that his own soul rests; and the image of Fekla is a personification of Platonov's soul nourished with the memory of his son and mourning his underlived life. According to K. S. Kogut and N. P. Khryashcheva, this forms a variative turn of the plot situation of "father and son" in the play *A Student of the Lyceum*.

Had the monograph authors included the wartime prose of Platonov in their intertextual analysis, they would have managed to show the leading role of the motif of life at the grave. Variations of this motif can be found in the short stories *The Seeking of the Lost* and *On the Graves of Russian Soldiers*. In the first story, a grieving mother weeping over her children lost in the war dies on their grave. The second story narrates about a grieving mother singing a song at the grave of her son, which is a salient parallel to the image of Fekla:

In the dusk, a lonely woman came to the desolate military cemetery of the former concentration camp No 352. She went down on her knees near a grave with the names of those buried on the plaque.

At first, the woman kept silent, then she started singing a lullaby for her son sleeping there for the coming eternal night [Платонов, 1985, с. 139].

Let us look at one more probable correspondence between the text and the context of the play. I believe that the character of the girl next-door, Masha, who is not biographically correlated with the wife but with the

daughter, serves as a substitute for the dead son in the creative consciousness of the writer. This assumption can be corroborated by similarities between the words of Aleksandr and Platonov's letters of 1948 sent to little Masha from a sanatorium. The motifs of beauty and intelligence are the common motifs characterizing both his daughter and the main character of the play: 'Hi... my dear beauty!', 'Hello my most beautiful and most loving daughter little Masha... I am looking forward to seeing you, my beautiful and smart girly...' [Платонов, 2013, с. 622–623], etc. In the play, Masha is called "smarty", "witty", "flower", and the like. The time of the play creation (1947–1948) coincides with the time the letters to the daughter were written.

Special attention should be paid to the leitmotif of the "weak power" revealed by the researchers, which can be considered an element typical of Platonov's poetics. It sounds rather like the evangelical maxim 'my power is made perfect in weakness' (2 Corinthians, 12: 9), which is one more proof of the Christian orientation of the writer's consciousness. In the works under analysis, this leitmotif becomes one of the metatextual "assemblage points".

Platonov's last play *Noah's Ark (Cain's Bastard)* seems to stand apart from the rest of his dramatic works. The analysis of this play is the least interesting, the same as, by the way, the play itself, which remained unfinished. Its incompleteness is demonstrated, specifically, by the absence in the plot of some characters appearing in the beginning: Charlie Chaplin, Bernard Shaw and Albert Einstein. The monograph successfully compares *Noah's Ark* with the short story by L. Leonov *The Departure of Ham* in terms of similarities and differences in depicting one and the same situation: The Flood. The analysis itself is built not so much around a poetic principle as around a descriptive one. We cannot but note that after the first publication of the play, which took place in 1993, it aroused a heated scientific discussion reflected in Issue 5 of the collected articles *The Land of Philosophers of Andrei Platonov: Issues of Creativity* (2003). Only two articles are devoted to the play in Issue 7 of the collected articles dealing specially with Platonov's dramatic writings. This waning interest in the final work of Platonov may be attributed to its poetic "immaturity", emblematic nature of the characters, and the geopolitical conflict with a clearly-marked anti-American accent, triggered by the US dropping nuclear bombs over Japan in the late 1940s, brought up to the surface of the plot. The active nature of the outer plot and its leading position with reference to the inner one testify to the fact that the talent of the gravely ill writer was waning. The implicit semantic layer in his best works is much richer than the explicit one. The remaining potential of this key property in *Voice of the Father*, *A Magical Being* and *A Student of the Lyceum* ensures their structural and poetic multilayer organization, which might allow them to be presented as a dramatic trilogy.

The semantic field of Platonov's late plays revealed by the monograph authors turns out to be much wider than their plot. It must be acknowledged that, being the basis of their research strategy, immersion into the poetics of the plot puts aside the poetics of style as radically different from the stylistic arrangement of the works of the earlier period. And here we cannot do

without some brief reflections about the potential for further research. The elements of the inner layers singled out in the monograph (folklore, Biblical, fairy tale and the motif system) in fact overlap with each other according to the principle of interference. This enhances the main theme, which distinguishes the literary style of Platonov’s later plays and provides them with a homophonic ring. In *Voice of the Father*, we can still clearly see the typical author’s poetic devices of the literary period of the second half of the 1920s, to the early 1930s, which argues that this work occupies a special place among others. Thus, theoretical interpretation of Platonov’s later creative activity constitutes a special problem of literary studies and may become the subject of serious analysis. It is not by chance that neither *A Magical Being* nor *A Student of the Lyceum* aroused any interest both among publishers and theater directors, evidence of which can be found in Platonov’s letters. There is no sense in trying to find hidden ideological motifs in all this, as long as both plays conform with censorship requirements, as it has been convincingly shown in the monograph under review. Additionally, in *A Student of the Lyceum*, the socialist realism canon in terms of ‘class sensitivity and orientation towards the people’ is realized with distinct emphasis. The significance of this play is not heightened by the theme of Pushkin but by the family tragedy of Platonov built into the background of the plot. The enigma and controversial interpretations typical of Platonov’s best literary works as their generic feature turn out to be lost in his late dramas. Platonov’s authorship is recognized in them by the poetics of the “high primitive” and by the presence of purely Platonov motifs (sorrow, memory, poverty, and holy foolishness), but not by those elements of stylistic poetics, which are part of the master’s “patent” devices. A comparative analysis of the poetic thesaurus of the writer in late dramas might constitute a separate monograph chapter discovering the dynamic movement of its leading motifs and demonstrating a diagram of change in its dramatic artistic language.

On the whole, the monograph by K. S. Kogut and N. P. Khryashcheva is undoubtedly a successful literary study, outlying non-evident comprehensive vectors of interpretation of Platonov’s late dramatic works and simultaneously opening up rich perspectives for future scientific research.

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