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Reviews

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Moscow, Russia

NEW ASPECTS IN RECENT ANDREI PLATONOV` STUDIES

Abstract: The paper deals with the interpretation of biography and writings of A. P. Platonov in the works of Russian and English literary critics — L. Shubin, N. Poltavtseva, N. Kornienko, E. Yablokov, N. Malygina; O. Meyerson, T. Langerak, A. Teskey, M. Jordan, and others. The authors focus on the monograph by N. Malygina, a well-known Platonov scholar. The study traces various types of literary connections (contact, genetic, comparative-typological) of Platonov's work with writers and critics of the 1920s and 40s, including those from RAPP, 'Pereval' (Pass), and the 'Literary critic' magazine. The paper also highlights the influence of the philosophical concepts of A.V. Bogdanov and N. Fedorov on Platonov's work and stylistic affinity of Platonov as a prose writer with the masters of "ornamental prose" such as B. Pilnyak, Artem Vesely and young symbolists. For the first time in Russian Philology Platonov's and A. Voronsky connections mentioned by M. Jordan in 1973 came under close and thorough observation. The dialectic of M. Gorky's attitude towards Platonov's work is recreated from support of the collection "Epiphany locks" (1927) to reluctance to assist in publishing the novel masterpiece "Chevengur". The authors believe that confronting Platonov's work with the prose of S. Budantsev, B. Pasternak, and V. Grossman has high potential in terms of research and give a higher appraisal to Platonov's war essays and stories of 1930s and 40s than earlier studies.

Keywords: literary relations, literary process, Personalism in RAPP, "Pereval" (Pass), creative biography, reception, Andrei Platonovich Platonov, Voronsky, Pasternak, Pilnyak, Grossman.

Information about the authors:

Tatiana T. Davydova — DSc in Philology, Professor, Institute of Publishing and Journalism, Moscow Polytechnic University, Bolshaya Semyonovskaya St. 38, Moscow, 107023 Moscow, Russia. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9924-503X>. E-mail: t.t.davydova@gmail.com

Elena V. Kulikova — PhD in Philology, Associate Professor, A. N. Kosygin State University of Russia (Technologies. Design. Art), Sadovnicheskaya St. 33, bldg. 1, 119071 Moscow, Russia. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9175-0429>. E-mail: elena@kulikova.pp.ru

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НОВОЕ В РОССИЙСКОМ И ЗАРУБЕЖНОМ ПЛАТОНОВЕДИИ

Аннотация: В статье рассматриваются интерпретации биографии и творчества А. П. Платонова в трудах российских и англоязычных литературоведов — Л. Шубина, Н. Полтавцевой, Н. Корниенко, Е. Яблокова, Н. Малыгиной, О. Меерсон, Т. Лангерака, А. Тески, М. Джордан и др. В центре внимания авторов статьи научная монография Н. Малыгиной, известного специалиста по биографии и творчеству Платонова. Прослеживаются разные виды литературных связей (контактные, генетические, сравнительно-типологические) творчества Платонова с писателями и критиками 1920–1940-х гг., в том числе из РАППа, «Перевала», журнала «Литературный критик». Показано влияние на платоновское творчество философских концепций А. В. Богданова и Н. Федорова, раскрыта стилистическая близость Платонова-прозаика с мастерами «орнаментальной прозы» Б. Пильняком и Артемом Веселым, младосимволистами. Впервые в отечественной филологии обстоятельно исследованы связи Платонова с А. Воронским, о которых в 1973 г. писала М. Джордан. Воссоздана диалектика отношения М. Горького к творчеству Платонова: от поддержки сборника «Епифанские шлюзы» (1927) до нежелания помочь опубликовать романский шедевр «Чевенгур». Перспективно в научном отношении сопоставление творчества Платонова с прозой С. Буданцева, Б. Пастернака, В. Гроссмана. Дана более высокая, чем прежде, оценка платоновским очеркам и рассказам 1930–1940-х гг. о войне.

Ключевые слова: литературные связи, литературный процесс, РАПП, «Перевал», творческая биография, рецепция, Платонов, Воронский, М. Горький, Пастернак, Пильняк, Гроссман.

Информация об авторах:

Татьяна Тимофеевна Давыдова — доктор филологических наук, профессор, Московский политехнический университет, ул. Б. Семеновская, д. 38, 107023 г. Москва, Россия. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9924-503X>. E-mail: t.t.davydova@gmail.com

Елена Вячеславовна Куликова — кандидат филологических наук, доцент, Российский государственный университет им. А. Н. Косыгина (Технологии. Дизайн. Искусство), ул. Садовническая, д. 33, стр. 1, 115035 г. Москва, Россия. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9175-0429>. E-mail: elena@kulikova.pp.ru

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The work of Andrei Platonovich Platonov has always drawn the close attention of both domestic and foreign Russian literature researchers of the post-revolutionary period. His works are widely published in mono-editions and in collections over the past twenty years in Russia. To date, a collection of his works in 8 volumes has been published at the Vremya publishing house (Moscow, 2009–2012), 5 editions of “The foundation pit” were published between 2009 and 2016 in English, a lot of doctoral theses were presented on the writer's work, articles and monographs by L. Shubin, N. Poltavtseva, N. Kornienko, E. Yablokov, N. Malygina and other domestic literary scholars are devoted to his heritage. The activities of Andrei Platonov are so multifaceted that people's interest in his work does not fade today, but rather, researchers find more and more new aspects of analysis that are important for understanding the great heritage of this original writer.

Dozens of articles and books on the Platonov's works have been published abroad. First of all, it should be highlighted the monograph of the American Slavic Olga Meyerson “Apocalypse in everyday life. The poetics of re-familiarization of Andrei Platonov” [8]. The book is devoted to the analysis of the role of eschatology, the idea of the end of the world among the heroes of Platonov, and its connection with the method of non-exclusion in his work. Olga Meyerson considers the theme of eschatology in Platonov as the main and important for understanding his poetics. O. Meyerson examines the texts of Andrei Platonov from the point of view of the creative method of non-elimination opened to her.

Among the latest foreign studies the analysis of translations of Platonov's works into the Mongolian language and their publications in Mongolia, made by C. Onon in his Ph.D. thesis in 2019 [9], is also notable.

The monograph of the famous Russian literary critic, a specialist in Russian literature of the 20th century Nina Mikhailovna Malygina, published in 2019, opened a new page in the study of the writer's work [7].

N. M. Malygina — a well-known expert in biography and work of A.P. Platonov in Russia and abroad. For many decades she has been studying his life and literary heritage, and the result of this study was the monograph “Aesthetics of Andrei Platonov” (1985) and “Andrei Platonov: the poetics of “Return” (2005). N. M. Malygina is also the author of the tutorial “The Artistic World of Andrei Platonov” (1995), many articles published in the magazines *Znamya*, *October*, *Russian Literature*, *Literature Issues*, *Philological Sciences*, etc. and eight editions of collections “The Land of Philosophers” by Andrei Platonov: problems of creativity” (1989–2017), as well as “Moscow and the “Moscow Text” in Russian Literature of the 20th Century” (issue 3/2007 and others). In the above mentioned works, the main areas of research by the literary critic have already been determined: the biographical, literary process of the 1920s and 40s, poetics, literary criticism and Platonov's aesthetics. In the book “Andrei Platonov: The Poetics of “Return” (2005), the analytical dominant is a look at the prose of the writer as a kind of meta-text included repeated plot motifs, types of heroes, and imagery. These directions are deepened in the new monograph of the scientist.

The new book by N. Malygina is not about the poetics of Platonov's works, nor about the unique language of his prose — all this can be found in previous works of both Nina Mikhailovna herself and other Platonologists. In this book Platonov is presented in the context of the literary process in the broad sense of the word, his relationship with the writers

is considered in the context of the literary life of Moscow in the 1920–1940s. It turns out why Platonov occupied a special place among “professional writers”. The creative dialogue of A. P. Platonov with contemporary writers is still observed, since so far the work of Andrei Platonov has not yet been considered in this aspect. The introduction of this invaluable material into scientific circulation is a priority. As the professor of Moscow State University named after Lomonosov Vladimir Novikov noticed, the book is devoted to the study of the writer's work in the context of its interaction with other writers, literary associations, and the authorities. Such material, according to V. Novikov, should primarily be introduced into the process of teaching a course of Russian literature in higher education.

The usefulness of studying A. Platonov's creative career and course of life in the context of his literary connections was realized quite a long time ago. Natalia Kornienko in 2013 in the preface to the collection of letters of Andrei Platonov of the 1920–1950s “<...> I have lived my life” drew attention to the fact that the study of the literary environment of the writer remains an urgent task of Platonology [3]. She focused on the relations of Platonov with D. Bedniy, A. Fadeev, V. Shklovsky, L. Timofeev.

According to N. M. Malygina, she began to study the literary connections of Platonov in the late 1970s, when it turned out that the writer was interested in the works of M. Gorky, V. Mayakovsky, A. Voronsky, A. Bogdanov, A. Lunacharsky, N. Zamoshkin, N. Chuzhak, B. Arvatov, A. Lezhnev, V. Polonsky, D. Gorbov, L. Averbakh, I. Kataev, A. Gurvich and others [7, p. 9].

Much attention in the work of N. Malygina is paid to the way how Andrei Platonov “absorbed and passed through himself the work of proletarian writers” [7, p. 38]. Also, the author of “Pit” “accepted the ideas of “General Organizational Science by Alexander Bogdanov” that were consonant with him” [7, p. 39], who, as M. Yudin notes, “with the capitalist development, the proletariat becomes more and more cultural and intelligent, rises culturally above the bourgeoisie and overthrows it, advocated cultural transformations, the development of socialism in an evolutionary way” [12, p. 61]. Since the position of V. I. Lenin, whose attitude to the works of A. A. Bogdanov was steadily hostile since 1908–1909 [12, p. 58], was considered to be absolutely true in the field of culture and cultural policy in the first post-revolutionary years, and in the following decades of Soviet power, Soviet platonologists did not have the opportunity to conclude that “the images of proletarian creativity and the speculative pictures of the future from the utopias of Alexander Bogdanov in the art world of Platonov were filled with incomprehensible multi-layered content” [7, c. 39]. For obvious reasons, objective, not ideological studies of both the creative and life paths of A. Platonov, when the writer was not yet recognized and remained semi-forbidden, there was practically no way to publish. Malygina's book also gives an idea of the close genetic connection of Platonic creativity with the Russian avant-garde, with the philosophy of the “common cause” of N. Fedorov. According to the English researcher A. Teskey, it was N. Fedorov who had the most significant influence on the formation of Platonov's philosophical worldview [11]. More details about the influence of philosophical doctrines on Platonov's work in the assessments of Russian and foreign critics are written in an article by E. V. Kulikova [5]. The presence of such features of avant-garde poetics, literature and twist of the tongue, “confusion” and “chaos” brought Platonov — prose writer closer to the masters of “ornamental prose” B. Pilnyak and Artem Vesely caused Platonov's love for V. Mayakovsky and V. Khlebnikov [7, ch. 3]. The unusually possessed, “syncretic” prose by Andrei Platonov is also a kinship with the aesthetics and poetics of the younger symbolists, as described in the book under review. In addition, the writer's prose is characterized by the emphasized philosophical nature of his science fiction

novels and short stories of the 1910s, the synthesis of utopianism and anti-utopianism in the novel “Chevengur”. This indicates the presence of a single, neorealistic, beginning in the creative method of the writer [1, p. 138–225; 4], on the aesthetic “polyvalency” of his innovations.

Monograph of N. M. Malygina has a special density, due to the fact that it contains a large number of texts by Platonov and his contemporaries — writers, critics, editors of magazines and newspapers — A. Voronsky, Vyacheslav Polonsky, A. Fadeev, K. Simonov, D. Ortenberg, relatives, wife, friends of the writer and even informants of the NKVD (secret police — People's Commissariat of Internal). These are versions of the literary works of A. Platonov, his articles, letters, applications for joining the MAPP dated 19.01.1929, documents, published or lost in the archive and press in the 1920–1940s, but extracted by researcher and put into scientific use.

In her PhD thesis (1982) N. M. Malygina has already traced the images and motives of A. Blok, V. Khlebnikov, V. Mayakovsky's, view of the writer was revealed in the theoretical and literary-critical works of A. A. Voronsky, who then remained a semi-forbidden critic. The study of Platonov's connections with him started in the thesis and then continued in the monograph becoming a huge contribution to the internal research of Platonov science and there are practically no other researchers. Foreign researchers, in particular, Marion Jordan, managed to mention this name in her works and point out the fact of the influence of the theoretical works of A. Voronsky on Platonov's work [2, p. 12–13]. But, of course, this interaction is not explored by Marion Jordan in such detail as in the book by Nina Malygina. In her monograph “Andrei Platonov: The Poetics of “Return”” (Moscow, TEIS, 2005), N. Malygina already addressed the issue of Platonov's position in relation to RAPP and “Pereval”. N. M. Malygina touched on the topic of relations between the writer and the authorities, and, in particular, quoted one of the dialogs between L. A. Shubin and M. A. Platonova, where the situation that played a significant role in the life of the writer is presented: “<...> Pavlenko said that Stalin asked: are there a writer Platonov among you? Pavlenko immediately drew conclusions: it is necessary to give a cottage. They printed several stories” [6, p. 87]. Subsequently, B. Sarnov, the author of a series of works “Stalin and Writers”, cited this work that “this Stalinist replica became Platonov's security certificate”. Most likely it was because of it he was not touched even in the years of the Great Terror” [12, p. 756].

N. M. Malygina, recreating the ideological situation in Russia in the 1920s and 40s, widely quotes materials from lawsuits, congresses and plenums of the Communist Party and the USSR Writers Union, her conversations with the widow and relatives of the writer. Among the undoubted advantages of the book, one should also note the constant appeal of the author to archival documents in particular OGPU documents, because, as the author himself claims, informants of the OGPU secret-political department “turned out to be the most attentive biographers of A. Platonov” 7, p. 16], while even the writer's relatives, when the archival documents were opened, did not know much about him.

The book fully describes the Russian literary process for thirty years thanks to the mention of well-known and little-known historical and literary facts. It is known that the theorist of the “Pereval” A. Voronsky was accused of belonging to Trotskyism, dismissed from “Krasnaya Nov”, and at the beginning of 1929 he was exiled to Lipetsk. But Malygina explains this turn in the fate of the editor of “Krasnaya Nov” and the fact that in 1927 he could not secure the support of Gorky for publishing in his journal the Platonic novel “The Concealed Man” that he liked. In addition, the researcher brings new archival materials on the Voronsky's personal case, which clarify the chronicle of the last ten years events of the disgraced writer's life.

The history of Russian literature in the book about Andrei Platonov is closely connected with the history of Russian journalism, the magazines “Press and Revolution”, “Krasnaya Nov”, “Russian Contemporary”, “New World”, “LEF”, “Literary critic” and “Literary Review”. At the same time, psychological portraits of the leading editors of three decades are drawn — A. Voronsky, V. Polonsky, A. Tikhonov, A. Fadeev, K. Simonov, their exaltation, ideological struggle and rivalry are recreated, and then often eliminated from the publishing process. The relationship between the editor and the author is traced in the work with the attention that was not often paid to this problem in Russian literary criticism. In general, the category of authorship received a new historical and literary content in N. Malygina’s work: Platonov is studied as the author of poetry, prose, dramaturgy, criticism and journalism, the atypical author of the journal “Literary critic”, where his stories “Fro” and “Immortality” are printed along with the articles of the writer (1936, no 8).

Journal and newspaper discussions on the vulgar-sociological, formal, “Lefovskaya” and “Perevalskaya” aesthetics are presented in a monograph with all the vicissitudes, in connection with the aesthetic tastes of Platonov and his like-minded writers, with his activities as a literary critic. The documents printed in the facsimile monograph, photographs and portraits of Russian writers by N. Altman, as well as the illustrations of the artist L. Saksonov for “The Foundation pit” (“Kotlovan”) give the researcher a special authenticity and clarity, expand the idea of Russian culture of the 1920s and 1940s.

The dramatic fate of Platonov and his creative evolution are revealed by Malygina in a way that is rare for academical research work in literature — through contacts with writers and critics of the 1920s and 40s: A. Voronsky, M. Gorky, B. Pilnyak, P. Pavlenko, B. Pasternak, Artem Vesely, S. Budantsev, V. Grossman, other personalities in the publishing process. Accordingly, in each of the five chapters of the monograph, except for Platonov, there is a main character or characters. The first chapter tells about the contacts of Platonov with Gorky, Voronsky, Pilnyak; the acquaintance and communication of Platonov with B. Pasternak for the first time in Russian literary criticism became the subject of analysis in the second chapter; the friendship and creative dialogue of proletarian writers Platonov and Artem Vesely are discussed in the third chapter; the fourth examines the relationship of Platonov with the forgotten writer S. Budantsev, whose work has not attracted the attention of domestic scientists; in the fifth chapter attention is paid to the friendship and cooperation of the author of “Chevengur” and “The foundation pit” (“Kotlovan”) with V. Grossman. The author analyzes the history of publications of the main works of the writer, which often did not take place during his lifetime.

The monograph details the participation of Platonov in the Voronezh group of the RAAP and the literary group “Pereval”. The history of this group and the tragic fate of its leader Voronsky, as well as Gorky’s activity from 1927 (the year the collection of Platonov’s prose “Epiphanic Gateways” was released) and until the end of his life, friendship and cooperation of Platonov with B. Pilnyak, B. Pasternak and V. Grossman — the main problematic and compositional “nodes” of the monograph. A huge piece of historical and literary material is organized both chronologically and by personalities.

N. Malygina recreates the dialectic of Gorky’s attitude to Platonov’s work: from the enthusiastic perception of the prose collection “Epifan Locks” and its popularization in letters to various recipients, to the ambivalent review of the novel “Chevengur” and unwillingness to help in publishing of this masterpiece.

The cooperation of Platonov and Pilnyak are presented in a new way. In the history of their cooperation, until recently, the fact of joint work on the “Che-Che-O” essay on the

Voronezh province was irrefutable. But the researcher claims that Pilnyak's participation in the work was limited to editing this text, Platonov took the leader of Moscow young writers as a co-author, as he wanted to publish his essay in the "New World", and Pilnyak had strong links with the Vyacheslav Polonsky that was the editor-in-chief of the magazine [7, c. 105]. Another common place of Russian literary criticism is cited: Andrey Platonov had so called proletarian, so in 1929, at the height of the persecution of Pilnyak in connection with the publication of his novel "The Red Tree" abroad, they began to consider Platonov to be a writer, "spoiled" by Pilnyak, perceived him as a companion and attributed to him the flaws inherent in fellow travelers (L. Averbakh, D. Talnikov and others). But here a different attitude is also given to the influence of Pilnyak on Platonov: later B. Pasternak will treat Platonov favorably first of all as a follower of Pilnyak [ibid, c. 222].

One of the best sections of the first chapter is "The installation principle in the prose of Platonov and Pilnyak" and "The Motive of the Apocalypse in the novel "The Naked Year" and "The Story of Many Interesting Things", where comparative-typological and genetic similarities in the style of two authors are established: diversity literary sources of prose, expressionism, inheritance of Blok symbolism in relation to the image of the Russian revolution, appeal to the crisis of 1919. In the figurative system of Platonov's prose, continuity is established with respect to Blok "Beautiful lady" and her reduction options in the poem "The Twelve": Caspian Bride, Sonia Mandrova and Klavdiusha from "Chevengur". The researcher's assertions about the mutual influence of Platonov and Pilnyak are convincing: at first Platonov depicted the realities of the post-revolutionary years in "Chevengur" as critically as Pilnyak, and showed the idea of revolution "as a catastrophe that cleared the place for building a new world" [7, c. 185], then Pilnyak used the experience of the author of "Chevengur" in the novel "The Volga flows into the Caspian Sea." However, Platonov did not accept everything in the work of his friend, so he parodied him (and Pavlenko) in the play "Fourteen Red Huts".

A new approach to Platonov comes to life thanks to his comparisons with Pasternak. Here, the history of their friendship is traced, parallels are established in creative evolution (starting as poets, then they began to write prose), the prose of both is poetic, both took to the heart the reproaches of Soviet critics for incomprehensibility and tried to "reforge", to develop a new style. In Pasternak's "general prose", the novel "Doctor Zhivago", as in Platonov's short stories, novels, and tales, the technique of "auto-intertextuality" often can be found.

The central personalities of the third chapter of the monograph are Artem Vesely and Platonov, their thoughts and works on collectivization, the story of the defeat of the "poor chronicle" "For the Future". Common in the stories "Barefoot Truth" by Artyom Vesely and "Makar the Doubtful" by Andrey Platonov was the deepest disappointment of their heroes in the results of the 1917 revolution. According to Malygina, the author's views of the "poor chronicle" are ideologically close to the positions of repressed agrarian economists N. Kondratiev, A. Chayanov et al [7, p. 383]. This caused fierce rejection of the literary creativity of Andrei Platonov by I. Stalin and, for the most part, criticism of the early 1930s, which labeled the writer as the class enemy on the writer, and made impossible the lifetime edition of the novel "The Foundation Pit" ("Kotlovan") to be possible. It also discloses comparative typological similarities in the plots of Artyom Vesely's short story "Rivers of Fire" and Platonov's novel "The Innermost Man", and the writings who sought to "be honest chroniclers of events" are also related [7, p. 420].

In the fifth chapter of the book, the Platonov's writing activity of the 1940s is rethought and presented in a new way. During the years of the war, he experienced working with extraordinary productivity, creating essays and stories on the military theme, since he felt that his works were finally in demand by society — they were eagerly published in "The Red Star". The monograph proves the sincerity of the writer's position and his skill. Malygina's much-discovered story of Platonov's work on the "Black Book", which includes a wealth of documentary material on the extermination of Jews in the Nazi-occupied territories of the USSR, deepens the characterization of this stage in Platonov's activity. There is not much confirmation for the participation of the Russian writer in this work, but the author of the monograph has found and published in the "Black Book" archival fund Grossman's handwriting, providing Platonov with a task to work on it [7, pp. 542–543]. This episode in the creative destiny of Platonov is organically connected with the Jewish theme in the stories of Platonov in the late 1930s and 1940s — "Alterka", "Ivanov's Family". Platonov appears in this section as a humanist who sympathized with the suffering of people, an adversary of wars and an adherent of the unusually sincerely accepted Soviet idea of internationalism.

In conclusion, we note that Nina Malygina revealed in her monograph the main insufficiently resolved problems of Russian Platonovlogy: the first Platonologists had not enough data for analyzing literary relations, for example, Platonov and Voronsky, who certainly had a huge influence on the work of the author of "The Innermost Man", "Chevengur" and "The Foundation Pit", due to the ban on the mention of his name, and for the new generation of Platonists, this name did not mean anything, since it was forgotten due to the efforts of the Stalin era censors.

As for foreign Platonov studies, its development had its own reasons. Acquaintance with the work of Platonov in the West began with a reading of his main works, which were published there much earlier than in the writer's homeland, but the archive data, on the contrary, was inaccessible for a long time, therefore foreign academicians had to concentrate more on researching the creativity, philosophy and the works of Platonov, than on his personality and the much less literary connections.

Besides that, in the Nina Malygina's book Andrei Platonov is revealed both as a unique writer and as a publicist. The author of the study pays a lot of attention to journalistic activity and public life of Andrei Platonov, describes his participation in the fight against the effects of hunger, in the development of agriculture. N. M. Malygina also shows how the ideas of Platonov the publicist and the social activist, were reflected in his work, for example, in the novella "Epifan Locks". The talent of Platonov the engineer reflected on his work, that the writer perceived as a project of real life development. The peculiarities of Platonov's participation in the literary process, as Nina Malygina shows [7, p. 23], was determined by his ideas about a new type of a writer. In the monograph on Platonov and literary Moscow, one often encounters the highest rating of his literary gift as ingenious, and it is not overpriced — almost every page of the study confirms it.

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