

Formal characteristics of translingual poetry by Kosta Khetagurov

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Abstract - V.I. Abayev once mentioned that the Ossetian philology discusses primarily the social content of Kosta Khetagurov's poems, while the formal part of his poetry and his lexical mastery were almost neglected. Actually, the argument was referred to "Iron Fandyr" ("The Ossetian Lyre"), however, it is reflective of the general attitude to Kosta's Russian-language heritage. As of now the language of "Iron Fandyr" has been studied quite thoroughly and individual attempts to comprehend Kosta Khetagurov's Russian-language poetical form have also taken place. Still, we can hardly speak of considerable progress. Here, taking into account the general Ossetian and, specifically, Khetagurov's bilingualism, we propose the overall accelerated observation of Khetagurov's translingual poetic form: specific compositional practices, motivic structure, lexical and stylistic peculiarities, key features of stropping, rhyming, stanza, syntaxes, punctuation and genre modifications. This allowed, among other issues, to outline the comparative (with "Iron Fandyr") distinctness of Kosta Khetagurov's Russian language cyclus, the specific character of his lyrical hero and his obvious and latent intentions.

Keywords - Kosta Khetagurov, Ossetian literature, bilingualism, translinguism, lyrics, form, stanza, rhyme.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Ossetian literary criticism achieved considerable success in studying the Kosta Khetagurov's heritage. At the same time, it is evident that the declarative ideological spirit which was penetrating Human Sciences during the Soviet period affected a Khetagurov's studies. Axiomatic and natural for aesthetics of materialism, but a simplified statement about the primacy of content over form had a significant impact on this passive process. It is not a coincidence, that as for the Khetagurov's poetic technique, V.I. Abayev pointed: «...in the vast amount of references devoted to Kosta Khetagurov, the interest of researchers is concentrated primarily on his social and civic position, on... contents of his works. (...) But other aspects of the Kosta Khetagurov's poetic genius without which he would not be who he is, should not be forgotten. I mean the aspect called verbal mastery of the poet...» [1]

Abayev's opinion refers primarily to the "Ossetian Lyre"; but the situation with Kosta Khetagurov's "Russian Lyra" is generally similar. The studies of his Russian-language poetry were held concerning problem-thematic content, but the comprehension of his formal-technical and

compositional-stylistic characteristics is currently at an unsatisfactory level. Here we propose to indicate the key parameters of Kosta Khetagurov's translingual (Russian-language) poetry.

First of all, we emphasize that Kosta's poetry should be thought within the limits of, firstly, Ossetian literary, secondly, individual Khetagurov's bilingualism, that Kosta Khetagurov is the first Ossetian bilingual poet and his works can serve as a model of Ossetian literary bilingualism [2]. Only such an approach guarantees an adequate academic character to the consideration of the Russian-language lyrics of Kosta Khetagurov. It is clear that it can be actualized and evaluated exceptionally in the context of Ossetian culture and Ossetian philology, as Guigo Dzasokhov rightly noted, still, without distinction between a Russian author and a Russian-speaking one "in the rich treasury of Russian poetry a collection of Russian Kosta Khetagurov's poems is a drop in the ocean" [3].

Kosta Khetagurov's poetic heritage in Russian has more than 160 poems written from 1885 to 1902. During his life, they were published in the periodical press of the Caucasus, and some of them were published as a separate book in 1895. What do they represent in terms of form, or by actualizing the distinction between the spiritual and the plastic [4], also relevant for poetry and Kosta Khetagurov's plasticity? Guigo Dzasokhov records that all Khetagurov's poems belong to lyrics, highlights three of its main themes: love (to a woman) - death - homeland, and suggests that "with the image of sincere feeling and artistic appearance many of these poems are worthy of becoming on par with the best poems of Russian classical lyricists" [3].

Obviously, there is a stretch; in this case, the question arises about the algorithm of such a high estimate. Evaluation characterizes the evaluator; criticism characterizes the critic. As well as criticism in general, and Guigo was her pioneer in Ossetia. Guigo allowed himself to proceed in his assessment from the fact (the logic is paradoxical) that Kosta Khetagurov was not a Russian, and all Russian poets, therefore, had that indisputable initial advantage in front of which Kosta Khetagurov has the equal result.

Today, in assessing "artistic appearance" of Khetagurov's poems, we must remember that we will not overestimate his merits because we love him. Kosta

Khetagurov was not a great master in Russian versification. We find the clue to his correct and efficient assessment in Sh.F. Djikayev who, considering the poetry of Inal Kanukov (the closest translanguing precursor of Kosta), indirectly defines in it a good content and only a satisfactory form [5]. Of course, such a distinction is permissible only for analysis, since “there is no content outside the form” and “there is no form outside the content” [6]. Obviously, the higher the poetry is, the less opportunity there is to separate one from the other. But if this conditional evaluation is true to Inal Kanukov, then it is possible to say about Kosta Khetagurov’s Russian-language poetry that it is characterized by the unity of good content and good (not excellent) form.

Despite its preliminary nature, external-thematic analysis of Guigo Dzasokhov is also useful in fixing the basic concepts of the poet’s psychology and worldview and hinting thereby at their dynamic correlation. Khetagurov’s poetic “nerve” can be conditionally reduced to the following formula: a woman (poetically synonymous with home) forever “promises” happiness to a character in reality condemning him to loneliness and death (as long as the impossibility of continuing himself in future generations) — but his homeland remains (“Aul”, “native people”, Ossetia), in the face of which death retreats and the dreams of personal happiness take on the character of selfish aspirations to petty-bourgeois well-being and are therefore strongly rejected. Thus, if a woman and death provide only a lyrical register, then the homeland regulates the transition to a social and political, civil register, - this is our private revision of the classification of Dzasokhov.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Consideration of the lexical stylistic aspect of this poetry identifies a paradigm of enlightening, revolutionary romantic and real critical categories, images and oppositions: love, work, fatherland, people, thought, shrine, pledge, freedom - chains (slavery), lira, victim (altar) - executioner, beacon, light - darkness, truth - lie, fight, song, champion, reason, thorns, (thorny path, crown of thorns), testament, temple, mausoleum, genius, hero, banner, fate, prophet, poet - crowd, creator. This is the same vocabulary characteristic of nineteenth-century Russian Democratic poets — Pushkin, Lermontov, Nekrasov, and others. Khetagurov’s poetry is full of stylistic allusions of Russian literary history in terms of its democratic, “ideological” direction. It is notable that the Russian language has predetermined largely the thematic priorities: we observe a clearly expressed national theme only in the poems “Don’t Believe What I Forgot ...”, “To the Death of the Mountain Woman”, “The Song of a Slave”, “The Overnight stay”, “The Testament”, “Khetag”.

The average volume of a poem as a *monologue* of a lyrical hero is an indicator of the way of poetic breathing. A. Blok said that the optimal volume of the lyric work is 12-16 verses (3-4 quatrain), and all world poetry confirms this idea. Kosta Khetagurov is no exception: where are three, four, and five stanzas poems often found. The stanza is usually a quatrain with cross rhyme and couplet (enclosed rhyme is rare), but five and six stanzas are widely represented here (with a various rhyme).

Compositionally, *rounding* through a literal repetition or a version of the first stanza (or couplets) in the final describes Khetagurov’s poem. Such are “Yes, I am old ...”, “Do not ask, you will not understand, dear ...”, “Do not blame ...”, “To a friend”, “You will not help with tears ...”, “To Friends...” and others. This is a creative expression of his affection (“I cannot live without affection, without a deity ...”), his doom to an eternal return to home (where he, however, does not open the doors). Costa’s lyrical hero bends his monologues into ringing arcs and rings: the desire *to embrace* and *to envelope*, and make poetic speech *beginningless* and *endless*, these are the psychological motives of the Khetagurov’s composition. There is always something deeply lyrical in it but note that great masters rarely descend to such simple decisions of the final.

The size of the verse of K. Khetagurov is always easily identifiable. Here Kosta Khetagurov did not experiment; all of his poems belong to five canonical metres, excepting the acrostic “GRUNE”, representing a heteroaccentual dolnik and written by the Mayakovsky’s “ladder”, and the only blank vers libre that constitutes the final thesis of the short poem “The Meeting of the New Year”. Of the 164 poems included in the last complete collection of works (Vladikavkaz, 1999-2001), 61 poems are written in iambus, 38 poems in trochee, 33 in amphibrach, 27 in anapaest, 4 in dactyl, 1 in dolnik. Kosta Khetagurov uses metres of different complexity: from two-syllable to six-syllable. It is worth noting that Kosta Khetagurov rarely refuses to perfect rhyme (including “unstressed” intermediate lines) - even when it created technical difficulties for him but did not guarantee the effect (as in the “Incomplete couplets” and “Sing to you couplets ...”).

Kosta Khetagurov’s rhyme is typical for all Russian poets, he rhymes *любовь* and *кровь*, *свободу* and *народу*, *слезы* and *грезы*, *лиру*, *миру* and *кумиру*, *поэта* and *света*, etc. But Kosta Khetagurov is more cautious with unreliable and fragile verbal rhymes than Inal Kanukov; in general, he clearly understood that the rhyming of identical grammatical categories sounds fake and *does not reveal* anything (poetically). Nonetheless, there are problematic rhymes (like Kanuk’s “осетин – грузин”, “Иван – Степан”): “каков – таков” (“Vladikavkaz”), “несчастье – счастье” (“To sister”), “прекрасна – ужасна” (“The Forgiveness”), “тогда – всегда” (“The Rush”), “его – кого”, “телят – ягнят”, “козленок – ягненок” (“The Overnight stay”), etc. In most cases, Kosta Khetagurov strives for a clear, distinct rhyme that leaves no doubt, and it is strange to see some of its assumptions (hardly *omissions*), such as “рабства – декадентства”, “аккорды – свободы” (“In memory of M.Yu. Lermontov”) or “храня – нельзя” (“Behind the gate”), “базару – управу” (“I will sing couplets to you ...”), “свободу – Голгофу” (“The Holiday morning ...”). Kosta Khetagurov also abuses rhyme which has no legal basis in poetic speech, because it is associated with a dialect-speech phonetic phenomenon: “вслух – недуг” (“A.G.B”), “ночлегу – смеху” (“The Last meeting”), “их – миг” (“The Magic Fairy Tale ...”), “интриг – стих” (“In memory of M.Yu. Lermontov”), etc.

The syntax of the poetic sentence of Khetagurov also has nothing special, it is worth to indicate the presence of *repetitions* and *periods*. The poet tends to the stanzas form, although this is not necessarily expressed by punctuation.

The most popular punctuation marks in his poetry are *commas* with *dashes* and *ellipsis dots*. In most cases, a comma could be without a dash, but it is used as an additional, *contrary to* a comma, syntactic and volitional vector; a comma here is like a bow, a dash is an arrow: "That's why congratulations // I send you, my friend Andri, - // Eat weed without constraint, // Be healthy and not depressed!" ("The Happy angel's day"). Kosta Khetagurov has a special relation to the ellipsis dots inherent in the early experience of various poets (one of his poems is called "The dots"). Only every eighth poem avoided dots; in the rest it (with a question and exclamation marks) is often found many times (which we will not see in "Iron Fandyr"). Both Inal and Kosta prefer to use ellipsis dots in writing instead of a dot. Such punctuation occurs not only where Inal Kanukov and Kosta Khetagurov *do not want* to speak, but often where they *cannot* or *do not know how* to do it ("I don't know what to call, // How to explain, I do not know ..."). It is enough for them that the ellipsis expresses a dramatic confusion of thought. Dots is also an image, but in the poetic Khetagurov's heritage there is a case when the ellipsis is used not as a graphic tool, but as a tool of *hiding* the image: "Your treasure is // // Twirling ... // Fly into the wild, - // Turn them without restraint! (it was published in the 1895 and 1909 editions).

If we add to this "unknown" two risky Rabelaisian "Riddles" - and, thus, we will see again the conceptual difference between the Russian and Ossetian Kosta Khetagurov's Lyra ("Iron Fandyr" also included several riddles, however, it is written for children and has completely innocent character). Kosta Khetagurov was not a hypocrite and moralist; his relationship with muses and graces is characterized by a high degree of freedom (which he could not afford with women) - Russian-language Kosta Khetagurov was certainly modern in this, and it was a measure of his "modernism." The Russian-language Khetagurov's poetic form is open to *joke*, *play* and *exercise*, as well as *idle*, *shocking confessions* (like "In a fit of sincerity"), *frivolity* and *playful eroticism* ("The Portrait Gallery", etc.), and thus his credo, stated in the famous letter to Gappo Baev ("I write that is no longer in force to hold back in my heart ... "[7]), cannot be attributed to its Russian-language poetry - even because that it also belongs to the Khetagurov. Because here another hero lives and operates. He is in a different relationship with the outside world; in any case, this hero has closely acquainted muses and specific friends and girlfriends with whom he spends his leisure time and who can sometimes (as opposed to "tinsel light" and "crowd") evaluate his improvisation, half amusing messages (including loved ones) and will be happy for his congratulations on the day of the angel or on New Year.

III. CONCLUSION

This position forms a whole genre cycle in Khetagurov's poetry. About a third of all Russian-speaking Kosta Khetagurov's poems are written *in the occasion, on-demand* or because of *personal* circumstances of a close circle of friends (*album* verses). It is significant that every tenth poem of Kosta Khetagurov either in the title or in the text - contains the name or initials of the real addressee: "A.Y.P.", "A.G.B.", "B.G.S." (4 poems), "E.E.N.", "To Sana and Mila B.", "U.C." (2 staples), "A.C.", "To Vitya", "The

Confession", (In the text - an appeal to *Annette*, Anna Tsalikova), "A.A.T." (here civilian initiations should be formally attributed - "In memory of M.Y. Lermontov", " ... Griboedov", etc., written on the occasion); 7 poems including the dedication to the poem "Fatima" Khetagurov's acrostics extend this series: "Oh, with what infinite delight, child ..." (ANYAIDISAMNOY), "Conditional offers" (ELENAFEODOROVNAKREK), "The Acrostic" (POZDRAVLYAYU), "The Writing on the card" (KOSTAGLAFIRU), "N + N + N, or 2N + N" (NNNOVITSKAYA). In a word, the Khetagurov's love for poetic exercise is so obvious that it seems odd that there is no *sonnet* in his literary heritage.

So, Kosta Khetagurov's Russian-language poetry as a phenomenon of the Ossetian bilingual culture has, compared to its Ossetian-speaking poetic heritage, its special properties due to the conjugate and dynamic influence of the ethnocultural "substrate" and dominant Russian classical literary tradition. Kosta Khetagurov's translanguing poetry does not reach the level that characterizes the "Ossetian Lyre", there the poet, "bypassing the level of primitives, (...) one fell swoop, achieved the purity, strength and clarity of the true master" [8]. The material examined allows us to conclude that if the "Ossetian Lyre" is written mostly by blood and tears, then the "Russian Lyre" by Kosta Khetagurov is not so dramatic, even though minor moods are inherent in it. The Ossetian national theme in this poetry is as muffled as possible; if the lyrical hero "Iron Fandyr" is most often a mountain peasant, then the hero of the "Russian Lyre" is an enlightened representative (sometimes also a mountain) of the urban age, a *raznochinetz*, appealing to diverse youth, and his "muse" often shows all the signs of "minx" ("The Last meeting") and *foolish* ("My foolish muse ..."). In reality, the Russian-language poetry Kosta Khetagurov refutes his famous declaration "... *Seduced by a dream, I do not play lightly with a verse ...*" ("I am not a poet ..."). The specificity of these texts lies in the presence of a large number of games and journalism and relatively easy relation to the tasks of poetry.

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