

PETERSBURG IN THE WORKS OF RUSSIAN PROSE OF THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Annotation

St. Petersburg is an amazing city, Northern Palmyra. What a significant mark he left in our Russian history. How strongly and diversely influenced our society, our lives. Both as a theme and as an image, Petersburg left a deep mark on Russian literature. The formidable element, clad in granite, inspired many writers. Petersburg as a living being, as a literary hero is presented in different ways in the works of the classics.

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Petersburg for Pushkin is the embodiment of the spirit of Peter, "Peter's creation". The majestic, terrifying creation, built on a swamp and on bones, spread out menacingly and beautifully. In the works of N.V. Gogol's image of Petersburg seems to be bifurcated: its splendor fades into the background, receding before the problems of depersonalization of a person. Cold, indifferent, bureaucratic, it is hostile to man and gives rise to terrible, sinister fantasies. Petersburg of Dostoevsky is, first of all, a city associated with the tragic fate of his heroes. It crowds, crushes a person, creates an atmosphere of hopelessness, pushes to scandals and crimes. The beautiful panorama of the Pushkin city almost disappears, replaced by a picture of deprivation, despair, a picture of hopeless and meaningless suffering. [1. p. 198]

The theme of St. Petersburg leaves few people indifferent. How does it find its continuation in Russian prose of the late twentieth century? Petersburg as the most mystical and mysterious city, a ghost town, a city that lives a special nightlife, a city located on the edge, above the abyss, opposed to Russia and especially Moscow - these and other features of the Petersburg text are realized in many works of modern literature. In St. Petersburg, the ability of the city to turn any of its contents into symbols is striking. Both the light and the color of St. Petersburg turn into a symbol. Legends and myths about St. Petersburg organically enter the St. Petersburg text, which itself continues to create a myth about the city. The city itself, filled with historical memories, suggested similar themes to writers of different eras.

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city. The city itself, filled with historical memories, suggested similar themes to writers of different eras. [2. p. 82]

For my research for this article, I have selected several works of modern literature. These are V. Pelevin's story "Crystal World", T. Tolstoy's story "Okkervil River", "Legends of NevskyProspekt" by M. Weller.

The action of V. Pelevin's story "Crystal World" takes place on the evening of October 24, 1917 on "deserted and inhuman Petrograd streets." The main characters - two young cadets - Yuri and Nikolai, are on guard on Shpalernaya Street, sandwiched between Smolny and Liteiny Prospects, following the order not to let anyone in towards Smolny. The writer of the late twentieth century is trying to explain for himself and his generation the reason for what happened on the night of October 25, 1917. Yuri and Nikolai are typical young people from intelligent families of the early twentieth century. Perceiving the order as a routine, they drive through Shpalernaya Street many times from end to end, talking about the death of culture, about Nietzsche's superman, about Spengler's "Decline of Europe", and reading Blok. These topics are typical for discussions of the Silver Age: "Well, look," said Yuri, pointing to something ahead with a gesture similar to the movement of a sower, "somewhere there is a war going on, people are dying. They overthrew the emperor, turned everything to hell. On every corner, the Bolsheviks are cackling, eating seeds. Cooks with red bows, drunken sailors. Everything began to move, as if a dam had burst. And here you are, Nikolai Muromtsev, standing in the wading boots of your spirit in the very middle of all this turbidity. How do you understand yourself? [3. p. 124]

A city bursts into their dialogue, mythologically narrowed by Pelevin to one street: "the street seemed to have died out, and if it weren't for a few burning windows, one could decide that all its bearers disappeared along with the old culture." Three times in the story the street is called "a dark cleft leading to hell." Here V. Pelevin clearly resonates with the perception of St. Petersburg, traditional for the Silver Age, as a city on the edge, a city above the abyss (A. Bely wrote: "There is nothing beyond St. Petersburg").

With Pelevin, the dream city turns into a ghost town, where everything is fake, artificial, gloomy: "The junkers slowly drove along Shpalernaya towards Smolny. The street seemed dead for a long time, but only in the sense that with each new minute it became more and more difficult to imagine a living person in one of the black windows or on the slippery sidewalk. In another, inhuman sense, she, on the contrary, came to life - completely inconspicuous during the day, the caryatids now only pretended to be numb, in fact they saw off their friends with attentive eyes. The eagles on the pediments were ready at any moment to take off and fall from a height on two horsemen, and the bearded faces of the soldiers in plaster cartouches, on the contrary, grinned guiltily and looked away. Again, howling in the drainpipes - despite the fact that no wind was felt on the street itself. And in this sound one can hear a premonition of future upheavals.

And the city continues to conduct an inaudible conversation with its heroes: "What a gloomy city," thought Nikolai, listening to the whistle of the wind in the drainpipes, and as soon as people give birth to children here, give flowers to someone, laugh ... But I'm here I live...". This foggy, cold city is changeable and phantasmagorical. Strange things happen in the city when it is impossible to distinguish the real from the ghostly. Mythological figures appear and disappear in the fog of St. Petersburg: Lenin appears to Yuri and Nikolai three times in the guise of an intellectual, then a fat woman, an invalid in a wheelchair. In the story, the opposition "LiteinyProspekt" (as an image of the old world, the world of culture) - "Smolny" (as an image of the new world, to which this strangely burrowing person is constantly striving) is designated more and more rigidly. Yuri and Nikolai live in their own world, where a person is "not the king of nature at all", and on the other hand, they believe that every person has a mission that he most often does not know about.

At the end of the story, when it gets lighter, the morning comes, and with it the new world, Shpalernaya

suddenly transforms: "It was hard to believe that an autumn Petrograd street could be beautiful... Russia was so beautiful that Nikolai had tears in his eyes ...". [3. p. 144]

Pelevin narrows St. Petersburg to one street, which in the hero's view becomes a symbol of all of Russia: "In front of Nikolai, overlapping with Shpalernaya, the roads of his childhood flashed by: the gymnasium and flowering apple trees outside its window; rainbow over the city; the black ice of the rink and the swift skaters,

Illuminated by bright electric light; leafless century-old lindens, converging in two rows to an old house with a colonnade. But then pictures began to appear, as if familiar, but in fact had never been seen - a huge white city was imagined, crowned with thousands of golden church heads and, as it were, hanging inside a huge crystal ball. And this city - Nikolai knew it for sure - was Russia...". And this "white city" is being replaced by a new era that looks like "a monster in which the most terrible thing was the complete obscurity of its outlines and sizes: a shapeless club of emptiness exuding icy cold."

The semantics of the title of the story is deeply symbolic: while the characters talk about the death of culture and the coming "great boor", their mirage, fragile, so dear to them "crystal world" collapses.

Thus, Pelevin's Petersburg is a living being, a literary hero. Pelevin continues the tradition of Gogol, for whom Nevsky Prospekt is the personification of all of St. Petersburg, and for Pelevin Shpalernaya is the personification of St. Petersburg and all of Russia. In Gogol's story, he appears as a dual city. The writer emphasizes the contradiction between his appearance and essence: "everything is a lie, everything is a dream, and everything is not what it seems." So for the heroes of Pelevin in this city, everything is ghostly and transparent.

If the action of Pelevin's story "Crystal World" takes place at the beginning of the twentieth century, then together with the hero of T. Tolstoy's story "The Okkervil River" we find ourselves in St. Petersburg at the end of the twentieth century. It is "windy, dark and rainy" outside. From the very first lines, the city bursts into the narrative not as kind, friendly, hospitable, but "wet, streaming, beating the wind on the windows", it appears as "an evil Peter's intention, the revenge of a huge, bug-eyed, with gaping mouth, toothy carpenter king, catching up with everything in nightmares, with a ship's ax in a raised hand, of his weak, frightened subjects.

These lines of T. Tolstoy's story bring us back to Pushkin's "The Bronze Horseman", where the image of the city is the source of trouble, it is devoid of mercy, it is laid "for evil". T. Tolstaya draws the element of the flood: "The river, having reached the swollen, frightening sea, rushed back, with a hissing pressure they snapped off cast-iron hatches and quickly raised water backs in museum cellars, licking fragile collections falling apart with wet sand, shaman masks made of cock feathers, crooked overseas swords, beaded robes, sinewy legs of evil co-workers awakened in the middle of the night." [4. p. 24]

The protagonist of Tolstoy's story is the middle-aged Simeonov, for whom it becomes bliss on such a cold damp Petersburg evening to lock himself in his room and extract Vera Vasilyevna from the torn, yellow stained envelope - an old, heavy, anthracite cast circle, not split by smooth concentric circles - with each side one romance. For Simeonov, the old record is not a thing, but Vera Vasilievna herself, who has been enchanting him for many years with her voice: examined an old sticker: eh, where are you now, Vera Vasilievna?

"It was good for him in his solitude, in a small apartment, alone with Vera Vasilyevna, and the door was firmly locked from Tamara, and the tea was strong and sweet, and the translation of an unnecessary book from a rare language was almost completed." Simeonov does not need anyone, neither Tamara who loves him, nor work, nor friends - only peace and will, and his myth about the disembodied Vera Vasilievna, who will sing for him, "merging into one yearning voice."

St. Petersburg trams passed by the Simeon window, the final stop of which beckoned Simeonov with its

mythological sound: “The Okkervil River”. “Simeonov never went there. The end of the world, and there was nothing for him to do there ... without seeing, not knowing this, almost no longer the Leningrad river, one could imagine anything: a muddy greenish stream, for example, with a slow, muddy floating sun, silvery willows, .. red brick two-story houses with tiled roofs, wooden humpbacked bridges - a quiet, slow-moving world, like in a dream; but in fact, in fact, there are probably warehouses, fences, some nasty factory spitting out mother-of-pearl-poisonous waste ... No, no need to be disappointed, go to the Okkervil River, it’s better to mentally line its banks with long-haired willows, arrange steep-topped houses, let unhurried residents ... , but it’s better to pave the Okkervil embankments with paving stones, fill the river with clean gray water, build bridges with turrets and chains, level granite parapets with a smooth pattern, put tall gray houses with cast-iron gates along the embankment, ... settle young Vera Vasilievna there, and let her go, pulling on a long glove, along the cobbled pavement, placing his feet narrowly, narrowly stepping black blunt-toed shoes with round, like an apple, heels, in a small round hat with a veil, through the hushed drizzle of a St. Petersburg morning, give them blue fog on this occasion. So Simeonov "embeds" Vera Vasilievna in the scenery of St. Petersburg of the Silver Age. [4. p. 114]

Vera Vasilievna's enchanting voice, St. Petersburg phantasmagoria, the strange mysterious name of the Okkervil River (it's so strange to imagine it real) - all this makes Simeonov feel like a director and a myth-maker at the same time: “Submit a blue fog. The fog is set, Vera Vasilievna passes, tapping her round heels, the entire paved section, specially prepared, held by Simeonov's imagination, here is the border of the scenery, the director has run out of funds, he is exhausted ... and only the Okkervil River, convulsively narrowing and expanding, flows and cannot choose self-sustainable form.”

Tatyana Tolstaya leads her hero to the tragic destruction of the myth. It turns out that Vera Vasilievna is alive and living in Leningrad, “in poverty and disgrace, and for a short time she shone and her time, she lost diamonds, her husband, an apartment, a son, two lovers and, finally, her voice, in that exact order , and managed to meet these losses until the age of thirty. Simeonov is faced with a painful choice: “Looking at the sunset rivers, from where the Okkervil River originated, already blooming with poisonous greenery, already poisoned by the living old woman’s breath, Simeonov listened to the arguing voices of two fighting demons: one insisted to throw the old woman out of his head ..., the other demon - an insane young man with a consciousness darkened from the translation of bad books - demanded to go, run, find Vera Vasilyevna.

“Everyday, insultingly simple - for a nickel - I got the address of Vera Vasilievna in a street booth; my heart thumped: not Okkervil? of course not”. The meeting with the myth turned out to be just as offensively everyday. Vera Vasilievna, Verunchik, as her fans called her, turned out to be a fat, noisy, rude, healthy aunt - "the magic diva was kidnapped by the mountaineers." “Simeonov trampled down the gray tall houses on the Okkervil River, destroyed bridges with turrets and threw chains, covered the bright gray waters with garbage, but the river again made its channel, and the houses stubbornly rose from the ruins.” And in the story of T. Tolstoy, the “little man” Simeonov, under the influence of the city, creates his own myth about Vera Vasilievna. It is no coincidence that T. Tolstaya begins the story with a description of the flood in St. Petersburg, which so reminds us of the fate of the “little man” from Pushkin’s “The Bronze Horseman”. The city rejects Eugene, he is accepted by the elements that have broken out, destroying his dreams, fate, life. In T. Tolstoy's story, the “little man” Simeonov lives in an “abstract city” created in the hero's imagination, in a dream city, a myth city that collapses when it collides with reality. “Flood” occurs in the soul of the hero, he himself “crushes, throws, fills up with garbage a bright dream, BUT ...” this opposing union “but” and the second part of the sentence “the river again made its way, and the houses stubbornly rose from the ruins” can be interpreted according to in different ways. This “most intentional and abstract city in the world”, as Dostoevsky believed, ruined, destroyed another fate of the “little man”, continuing to amaze with its grandeur and beauty. But I want to believe in the optimistic ending of the story. One of the hero's myths, the myth of the inaccessible Vera Vasilievna, is collapsing, but the myth of the city on this mythical Okkervil River will

withstand all the floods and help the hero find comfort in real life, help him see that there is Tamara who loves him, work, and friends.

The theme of the “little man” in the big city is also continued by M. Weller in the collection “Legends of NevskyProspekt”, which immediately resembles Gogol’s “NevskyProspekt”. Gogol's story begins with an enthusiastic anthem to NevskyProspekt (“There is nothing better than NevskyProspekt ...”), but the farther, the more distinctly the satirical notes sound in this festive description of the falsely ghostly metropolitan splendor. NevskyProspekt for the writer is the personification of the whole of St. Petersburg, of those life contrasts that it includes. Weller, like Gogol, begins his story with an enthusiastic, somewhat ironic, hymn to NevskyProspekt. “The first and most glorious of the streets of the Russian Empire, a symbolic street, a sign of the capital's caste, whose capital is not in an exaggerated decree, but in a deep and stubborn communion with the spirit and glory of history, is NevskyProspekt. The tsar’s perspective, a tar beam in the sovereign’s heart, and all sorts of other beautiful and lofty words - NevskyProspekt, in itself, is already a homeland, state and destiny, where they go at 17 to partake of something that can only be here, to bring a thoughtful gloss on puppyish angularity, like a London dandy dressed and finally saw the light ... learn fashion and manner, get to know, secular underground - cinema - theater - shop - news - connections - goods - money - goods - faces and other parts of the body, coffee and wheel, jeans and strength - in short, Nevsky, of course, has its own language, its own law, its own history (which is by no means all that the public history of St. Petersburg and Leningrad), its own subjects and its own folklore, as befits, of course, any more or less decent country.”

Weller's Leningrad is as fantastic as Dostoyevsky's Petersburg, although the characters in the stories are famous and recognizable people. In Weller you will not find descriptions of the beauties of the city and its nature, the usual features of the “Petersburg text”, the city appears in the realities of everyday life, in the feeling of the “spirit of the times”. Just look at the table of contents: “The Legend of Fartsovka Founder FimBleishitz”, “The Legend of the Lost Patriot”, “Legends of Saigon”, “Legend of the Naval Parade”, “Ballad of the Banner”, “Ambulance Tales” and others to understand that an anecdote, a tale, a case is the basis of M. Weller's poetics. Weller's anecdote is aimed at the listener, who understands perfectly. For example, the hero of the “Legend of the Lost Patriot” Makarychev from the Karelian Isthmus, where the labor collective of the “Sickle and Hammer” plant spent the day of health, accidentally ended up in Finland. When he returned to Leningrad after all sorts of adventures, they immediately became interested in him “from Liteiny”, he was fired from his job, evicted from his living space, even removed from the military register. “What is called, “Motherland” opened her arms, and in each hand she had a knockout. Makarychev was not in the weight category to compete with his motherland.” Weller does not specify what is located on Liteiny and embodies the “motherland”. In the Leningrad folklore on which Weller relies, LiteinyProspekt and the Big House, which has become a symbol of lawlessness and terror, a sign of trouble, have grown together. “The Big House is the tallest building in Leningrad: Siberia is visible from its windows,” the townspeople joked like that.

“I will never return to Leningrad. It is no longer on the map. The gray lump melts, dissolves, and the dirt flows onto the walls of palaces and sheets of hysterical newspapers. In this fog, we guessed to determine the space of our life, calculated and believed, paved the way, smashed our faces on granites; and, of course, they were happy, as all the living were happy in their time ... And there was a good word - over the blue of granite waters, over greenery in cast-iron patterns - a golden chased spire: Leningrad. A ghost town, a mythical city - it still owns our memory and will survive it. The end of an era has struck, the state has cracked and disappeared, and the barbed wire of the borders has come out of the faults. Painfully opening our eyelids from sleep, we woke up as emigrants... The city of my youth, my love, my hopes has sunk, disappearing into History. Names have been replaced on maps and signboards, shiny cars drive through the ruined streets of St. Petersburg, and new generations commendably forge wealth and careers behind colorful storefronts - they’re drifting down NevskyProspekt.” In these words of Weller, one can feel sadness and regret. It is not by chance that he

chooses these verbs - rod, forge, channel, thereby showing the discrepancy between the high name of the city and the fussy crowd with petty problems, in which its greatness, legendariness and illusoryness disappear. [5. p. 101]

After conducting this study, I was convinced that the traditions of Russian classical literature can be traced in the image of St. Petersburg by modern writers. Just like Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, in the stories of Pelevin, T. Tolstoy, M. Weller, Petersburg appears as a city-myth, which is often hostile to the "little man" living in it. Writers of the twentieth century continue the theme of the "little man" in the big city. Both Nikolay, And Simeonov, and Weller's heroes are trying to survive in this city, retaining their human dignity, but Petersburg suppresses them, destroying his dreams and soul. And in this, too, the traditions of the classics are felt.

Thus, the theme of St. Petersburg still excites writers. This city is ambiguous, its opposite assessments coexist. "Petersburg was loved and hated, but they did not remain indifferent," one cannot but agree with these words of the critic of the Silver Age N.P. Antsiferova. The writers showed that St. Petersburg is still memory and associations. A city that lives its own life and dictates its own rules to everyone who enters it.

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