

## Literary Reception of Jr.R.R. Tolkien Works in Russian Fantasy of the XX-XXI Centuries: Variations Stage

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**Abstract:** The study considers the issue of literary reception of Jr.R.R. Tolkien researches in Russian fantasy of the XX-XXI centuries which is connected with the process of Russian literature self-identification that started in 1990es. Method of receptive esthetics, used by the authors of the article, allowed to define specifics of perception and adaptation of Jr.R.R. Tolkien experience by modern writers. First stage of Jr.R.R. Tolkien work reception was defined. This stage is characterized by variations on the themes of his researches in Russian fantasy of the XX-XXI centuries. Analysis of works of B. and N. Zhukov, K. Es'kov, N. Nekrasova, O. Brileva allowed to find in them different types of reception: interpretation, concretization, communicative dialogue. Reception dynamics was tracked from domination of its separate types to their joining within the framework of one work. The main object of reception was found picture of world, created by Jr.R.R. Tolkien that allows Russian researchers not only highlights issues of their reality in their works but also consider them in a philosophical and world outlook aspect. Concretization and communicative dialogue as types of reception in variations of N. Nekrasova and O. Brileva mark stiffness of polar picture of world created by Jr.R.R. Tolkien. In this manner they show inner polemics of authors with literature of Soviet time.

**Key words:** Jr.R.R. Tolkien, literary reception, receptive esthetics, variation, fantasy, interpretation, concretization, communicative dialogue

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### INTRODUCTION

Currency of literary reception issue is connected as we see it with the still active processes of self-identification of Russian literature. Beginning from 1990es, it strives in its movement on one hand to incorporate world literary development process and on the other hand to find its own status in regards to the preceding literary epochs.

This creates a vast analysis of literary experience of the past, including the experience of world literature in the most peculiar of its forms. Amineva (2014) notes multi-level character of this analysis: "In this process, there are different world-view systems, value orientations, types of imaginative thinking and idea-aesthetic traditions coexist and interact". Functioning of works by Jr. R.R. Tolkien in Russian cultural and literary space becomes a notable phenomenon within this process. This contributed, among others to creation of a corpus of various texts that demonstrate different levels of Jr.R.R. Tolkien's works adaptation.

This phenomenon became the object of understanding in modern literature science of recent

years. Kovtun (2010) in her article "Following Jr.R.R. Tolkien": tradition of narratives about Middle-Earth in modern home scientific fiction" marked and characterized the main ways and means of Jr.R.R. Tolkien texts adaptation: interpretation, parodying, addition, adaptation for different readers' groups (2). However, the researcher did not set herself a task to consider literary reception of Jr.R.R. Tolkien works in diachronic aspect. S.S. Galiev in his thesis "Function of mythological in works of Jr.R.R. Tolkien and Ivanov" (2012) analyzed mythological constructs in texts of the writers on the basis of their fantastical essence and also on the basis of their related range of problems. He did not set himself a task to find the fact of influence (Galiev, 2012). However, the carried out analysis of typological contiguity of the texts could not but mark this fact. Kambulova (2013) in her article "Influence of Jr.R.R. Tolkien over Russian writers of fantasy genre" considers the issue of English writer influence in genre aspect.

Novelty of our research is in the desire to consider the process of literary reception of Jr.R.R. Tolkien works as a dynamic process that passes certain stages and in an attempt to find reception types of authors of Russian fantasy in the XX-XXI centuries.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Works of Russian prosaists of the turn of the XX-XXI centuries are the object of the research. They show influence of Jr.R.R. Tolkien over their artistic world in particular, literary variations on the themes of Jr.R.R. Tolkien's works. When using conception "literary variations", we dwell upon the definition of Dyurishin (1979) according to which variation is a type of literary allusion, one of the forms of integral literary reception where "reception is done on the basis of identification, "harmony" and consequently, adequacy of the participants of inter-literary connection of elements". Among the analyzed texts are the works of B. and N. Zhukov "Tour", K. Es'kov "The Last Ringbearer", N. Nekrasova "Black Book of Arda: Confessions of a Guardian", O. Brilyova "Beyond the dawn". Subject of research reception of Tolkien legacy on the stage of creation of variations on the themes of his works.

The purpose of the study is to characterize the phase of literary variations creation on the themes of works of Jr.R.R. Tolkien in Russian literary space from the standpoint of the receptive approach; wherein the process of perception is considered in the development. The purpose determines the tasks of the study:

- To characterize the specificity of the reception of Tolkien heritage in Russian fantasy in the XX-XXI centuries, associated with the processes of change in the system of values and rethinking of history on the material of variations
- To designate the phase of the variations as initial in the dynamics of perception of works of Jr.R.R. Tolkien in Russian fantasy of the XX-XXI centuries
- To identify the types of receptions of Jr.R.R. Tolkien in Russian fantasy of the XX-XXI centuries

The research methodology is based on the principles of receptive esthetics (Gadamer, 1988; Iser, 2004; Ingarden, 1999; Jauss, 1995). Among the methods used we can mention the comparative one. Method of receptive esthetics allows to reveal the nature of the interpretation of the writer's works or its components. It is reflected in a situation where authors followers create art space of their works. Listing the types of reception, we focus on the study of Trunin (2008) who relying on the works of the authors of the theory of receptive esthetics highlights: concretization, reconstruction, interpretation, communicative dialogue, parody game, letter reading, hermeneutical analysis. Comparative method involves comparing of the source with secondary works in those

aspects, we can see borrowing in order to clarify the author's attitude with regard to the original. At the same time, we take into account development trends of the method and changes in the terminology (Shaitanov, 2005).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Active creative attitude to the works of Jr.R.R. Tolkien was already evident in their first translations into the Russian language which was noted by researchers. Galieva and Nagumanova (2014) explain discrepancies in the translations and say that this is happening due to differences in language picture of the world, values, priorities and cultural traditions of linguistic communities: "Changes in the concept's information structure are due to mismatch between the language pictures of the world, the value priorities and cultural traditions of language communities". But in this case, there is another reason. Analyzing the various translations of the trilogy by Jr.R. R. Tolkien in the article "The Lord of the Rings" in the mirror of Russian translations N.G. Semionov rightly points: "We are dealing with the conceptual vision of Tolkien's works not so much as a work of literature but with the understanding it as a model of the universe". Thus, at the level of translation an important aspect of the reception of the writer's work in the Russian literary space revealed as material for thought, associated with changes in the value picture of the world, re-interpretation of history.

Actually fictional variations on the themes of Jr.R.R. Tolkien's works demonstrate the same approach principle of their rethinking.

The dominant type of reception becomes an interpretation. Thus in one of the earliest variations the story "Tour" (1993) and Zhukov and Zhukova will play the main picture of the world of Middle-Earth in a way to emphasize the changes occurred in this land. Using Tolkien's names for the names of everyday realities in the world of the Fourth Age (hotel "Romenna" (in Tolkien works Romenna City in Numenor, the stronghold of the Faithful), the hotel "Minas Ithil" (in Tolkien works a fortress during the War of the Ring renamed Minas Morgul, it was a stronghold of Sauron), restaurant "Valinor" (in the primary source the abode of the Valar), and others), the authors show devaluation, they copy the concepts associated with the great events of the past. Noting the change of attitude in the society of modern times, the Zhukov, definitely are oriented to the historical and philosophical concept of Jr.R.R. Tolkien for whom history is a "long defeat". Thus, the interpretation of the works by Jr.R.R. Tolkien by the authors actualizes it in relation to the Russian reality of the 1990s. The story

“Tour” becomes a reflection on the present in which the concept of the English writer acts both as an interpreted object and as a means for interpreting the contemporary social situation of authors.

Another type of reception specification is implemented in K. Es'kov Novel “The Last Ringbearer” (1999). The author uses the form of filling gaps of Jr.R.R. Tolkien's narrative, tying the fate of Mordor with specific climatic conditions. Terminology redundancy of the narrative is aimed to underline reality of the world described in the K. Es'kov's Novel.

The conflict in the novel “The Last Ringbearer” is flipped in relation to the source, revealing the struggle of natural magical powers of Middle-Earth and creative mind, labor and creativity, focusing on Mordor which serves here not as an abode of universal evil but the country that emerged in an unfit place for living. This country embarked on the promising path of evolution and technology development. Linking to Mordor an idea of progress, K. Es'kov characterizes Western countries as the ones that stopped in their development, showing thus the failure of Tolkien created model of the world in which Enemy's passion for technology was shown entirely evil. Such a conclusion can already be drawn from the description of Barad-Dur, the capital of Mordor, “Barad-Dur an amazing city of alchemists and poets, mechanics and skywatchers, philosophers and physicians, the heart of the only one in all Middle-Earth civilization which has made a bet on rational knowledge and was not afraid to oppose its ancient magic with barely fledged technology. It was a challenge to the blunt aggressive West, lousing in their log “castles” for a sad recitatives of scalds telling about peerless virtues of never existed Numenor.

Interpreting Tolkien material K. Eskov in his novel puts challenges urgent for present time: the creation of myths; the impossibility of objective reconstruction of the past; revolutionary attempts to change the world, violent interference in the affairs of nations and states. In his novel, truth is on the side of Saruman, who in dispute with Gandalf says, “But there is nothing worse than a bright-eyed idealist who decided to benefit humanity: a world will be drenched in blood and will not wince”.

The combination of interpretation and concretization in “The last Ringbearer” simultaneously deepens the existing idea of the artistic world of Jr.R.R. Tolkien, giving his works new meanings and also raises important issues of the day, giving them a timeless character.

Nekrasova (2005a) in her book “The Black Book of Arda: Confessions of the Guardian” (2000) connects the interpretation with such type of reception as communicative dialogue. In this work, the history of The

Silmarillion is given from the point of view of Melkor and his followers. It is set out in the legendary “Black Book”.

The structure of the work is complicated by the presence of two discourses: the internal discourse of “The Black Book” in which an alternative view of the world is built with respect to the source and external where reading this book guardian of Kingdom Galdor interacts with her guardian Boromir. External discourse illustrates the controversy with Tolkien concept: in response to the provisions of the “Black Book” Galdor expresses his views, based on a belief in “the canon”. The communicative dialogue with the work thus is introduced in the novel by means of external composition. It allows us to trace its mechanism and the main aspects.

The image of Melkor in the novel gets entirely new aspect. If in “Silmarillion” he Black Vala, the embodiment of darkness, horror and suffering in the “Black Book of Arda” this is the only Vala, trying to bring in the world something of his own, enter into a dispute with Iluvatar.

Author of the novel abandons epic traits inherent in “The Silmarillion”. It depicts the world of individual consciousness in which everyone tries to find his place to implement his plans. This allows Nekrasova (2005b) to focus on an important issue that continues to be relevant in public mind, the problem of freedom in its various manifestations.

First of all, we are talking about freedom of thought, closely connected with the freedom of creativity. Confrontation of Iluvatar and Melkor is presented by Nekrasova as a confrontation between two Creators. According to the will of the first, the existence of the world is to be ordained by his his plan: “Yes, this world would be blind. And the world will know just that I the Creator and its master”. Melkor in his turn claims that first impulse is needed for further free self-movement of the world: “Will it (the world. N.M.E. Sh.) is made of fire and ice of darkness and light and their balance and confrontation will create images more beautiful than the vision born by music of Ainur and Iluvatar. In the duality of its will this world is unpredictable, fiercely free and it will not know the immutability of mindless peace. And those who come into this world will be a match for it they will be free; The eternal flame will burn in their hearts” (Nekrasova, 2005c).

The problem of freedom of choice, acquiring an existential character is also placed in the novel. The choice of ElleriAhe (elves joined Melkor) to be mortal in essence is defined by the desire for liberation from the power of Valar and the will of Eru. As a result, freedom in the gift of death becomes desirable for Gorthauer (Sauron)

but it is unattainable for him. This leads to a conflict between him and Melkor they are both creators with a free will but unlike EleriAhe are not free to choose their path.

However, the problem of freedom in the work of Nekrasova (2005c), is organically linked with the problem of responsibility both of the one who has the gift of freedom and the one who is awarded with it. The image of Melkor embodies not only the idea of free creativity but also the idea of teaching with which he seeks to give freedom to the beings created by him Maia: "not servants, not my tools my extension, other than I faerney children of my spirit. You will be like me but do not like me. You will not be my reflection not a shadow you will differ. Not tools, not servants students".

Later, however, it turns into a tragedy for him, one of his disciples, Orthenner (Sauron in Jr.R.R. Tolkien's works) is reborn: "Some new feeling is rising in him Melkor sees how subtly changed posture of his pupil, making him somewhat similar to the beast of prey. And the orc moves back and his eyes are filled with animal terror (Nekrasova, 2005d).

A synthetic form of reception is presented also by another literary variation dilogy by O. Brilyova (O.A. Chigirinskaya) "Beyond the Dawn" (1999-2002) where an episode of Tolkien mythology is taken as a basis the story of Beren and Luthien.

While maintaining the basic components of the picture of the world of Jr.R.R. Tolkien such as place names and key characters Brileva provides interpretation of the source material in several directions. Following its tradition, she uses the technique of framing in order to underline the point of view. However, while having a similar function the semantic content of the approach is different: in the novels by Brileva presence of person narrator emphasizes anthropocentricity of narrative that defines such its features such as detailing and psychologism. This allows to work out in more detail the image of the secondary world as well as to neutralize high pathos of the original source.

The novel "Beyond the Dawn" is a multi-component thing which interacts not only with the works of Jr.R.R. Tolkien but also with the novel "The Black Book of Arda" by N. Vasilyeva and N. Nekrasova, whose ideas are developed in the analyzed above "Black Book of Arda: Confessions of the Guardian" by N. Nekrasova. Thus in the novel "Beyond the Dawn" double reception takes place: on the one hand, this is reception of Jr.R.R. Tolkien's works, on the other hand it is a literary variation on the themes of the writer's works.

The controversy is implemented through dialogues of elves and Beren and is associated with rationale for the selection of the protagonist: Beren had to understand

why he chose the side of Finrod, not Morgoth. The very "Black Book of Arda" appears in the story as an unnamed book owned by ambassador of Melkor. Beren and elves got the book after her death. Thus, the presence of the text to polemize with is an integral part of the plot of the novel. Its content does not set out, only the specifics is outlined: "No one writes this way people think and feel this way and the one who reads these lines or listen to them is immediately imbued with this idea and these feelings as if he experienced them. Everything is written as if someone was trying to explain creative thinking using words" (Brilyova, 2003a). The image of the Black Vala in author's understanding is related to its image in Galdor's understanding from "Black Book of Arda: Confessions of the Guardian": "This book was trying to create not something but namely, the love of Morgoth. Love and compassion (Brilyova, 2003c). In his dialogue with the elves Beren recognizes that this book puts ready thoughts and concepts in the minds of people that resonate with their current aspirations: "And here you can find very neat yarns and very good they are at playing on today needs of people to stay away from your war" (Brilyova, 2003b). For Beren to read this book is to realize correctness of his choice. The book brings understanding to the hero of the world, he is a part of" I realized that the One is correct for He created this world. He knows better. The book is still challenging his authority as a boy disputing power of his father" (Brilyova, 2003d). Thus, the book by O. Brileva demonstrates a new level of Jr.R.R. Tolkien works reception which in the Russian literary space is being perceived indirectly within the framework of secondary interpretation.

## CONCLUSION

Literary reception of Jr.R.R. Tolkien works in Russian fantasy of the XX-XXI centuries is manifested primarily in the creation of literary variations works written "under the influence" and "based on" his books. Variations refer to the initial stage of receptive development of writer's works.

In the works of Russian writers of fantasy of the XX-XXI centuries different types of reception are present: interpretation, concretization, communicative dialogue.

Dynamics of the reception within the framework of variation creation is shown in its complication: from dominance of its separate types to their connection in a single piece.

Picture of the world created by Jr.R.R. Tolkien is the object of the reception. This allows Russian authors not only to dwell in their works on the problems of contemporary reality but also to treat them in philosophical and ideological aspect.

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