

Eurasian Journal  
of Humanities and  
Social Sciences



## Transformation of the motif of puppetry in the works of N.S. Leskov 1880-1890s

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### ABSTRACT

The article discusses the motives of puppet theater in the works of NS Leskov in 1880-1890. In order to cover the topic of the article, the research work of art critics of this period was used.

### Keywords:

Puppet theater, classics, Leskov, Shubinsky

In the 1880s, scientists observed new trends in the work of Nikolai Semenovich Leskov, which are associated with a change in the worldview positions of the author himself. His literary work acquires a certain skepticism and criticism of the social system and the political situation in the country. This opinion is shared by such researchers as: V.Yu. Troitsky (Troitsky V.Yu. Leskov-artist. M., 1974), I.V. Nagornaya M. N. Expression of the author's position in the stories of N. S. Leskov in the 80s), etc.

Leskov himself in a letter to S.N. Shubinsky in 1883 wrote: "There are no minds, no characters, and not a shadow of dignity ... With what to go into life for this herd, and in addition to the conceited herd?" [Leskov's letter to S.N. Shubinsky on July 23, 1883]. However, the writer's critical moods only increase his zeal for action and struggle against the decay of spiritual culture and the disintegration of moral principles that are taking hold in his contemporary society. In his work I.V. Stolyarova writes: "The position of the writer is active: he wants to effectively resist the atmosphere of bourgeois predation, "degrading

of souls", "depersonalization", which he sees around him, strengthen his contemporaries "in constancy of loyalty to good ideas", encourage them to staunchly resist the corrupting influence of the environment » [Stolyarova 1982: 790]. The main criterion of the author's creative orientation is the image of truthful, undistorted spiritual morality. Leskov strives to portray all of Russia with all its shortcomings and virtues, to depict in his work all segments of the population and their principles of life, as the writer himself said in relation to himself: "I boldly, even, perhaps boldly, think that I know a Russian person in the most its depth, and I take no credit for it. I did not study the people by conversations with St. Petersburg cabbies, but I grew up among the people ... so it is not proper for me to either lift the people on stilts or put them under my feet.

I was my own person with the people ... I stood between a peasant with horns tied to him. [Grossman 1945: 22]. The people and their spiritual state becomes the main theme of Leskov's work, it is important to note that the "people", in the artist's understanding, is not only the peasants and the lower stratum of the

population, but also the intelligent masses of society and city dwellers: "it's ridiculous to talk about your love for the people, considering the people only a Vyatka or Permian peasant, and remain indifferent to the thousands of families of poor workers suffocating in damp basements" [Gorelov 1994: 9], Leskov argued. With changes in mood in the creative space of the writer, the direction of motive structures is also deformed, in particular, the motif of puppetry.

The appearance in 1893 of the story "Zagon" is completely due to the radical moods of Leskov. This work is a sharp satire on the government of the Nikolaev era. In a short genre of narration, the author fits a broad picture of Russian reality, the stupidity of the authorities, the darkness of the views of the people, the lack of desire for both of them to improve and enlighten the structure of life and the state. With its satirical pathos, the story reminds us of Shchedrin's story about the city of "Stupid". Russia is portrayed by Leskov as a "corral", whose inhabitants are unwilling and afraid to look beyond their four walls, not to mention accepting help from this alien abroad. The motif of puppetry succinctly fits into the artistic canvas of cruel satire, sometimes flowing into farce. The masses of the inhabitants of the corral appear to be just puppets, whose consciousness is completely in the hands of government bodies. Residents blindly trust every invention of the authorities, not having the ability to make their own decisions. They resignedly believe in the rightness and benefit of everything that is approved by the highest ranks. An example is the episode about the benefits of soot. When a pamphlet is launched around the city that the soot from the chicken hut, from which they actually go blind and "suffocate", is useful and suitable for household use, people not only trust what has been said, but also support these empty ideas and even engage in them. distribution "The corral was satisfied: rabid and having lost their shame and sense, people began to describe how soot is treated" [Leskov 1973: 222]. Thus, a picture is being built before us, where people act as puppets meekly fulfilling any whims of the authorities, they are no longer capable of independent thinking activity and

can only live by the rules of their puppeteers. However, not only the people become the subject of Leskov's satire. Almost every character that appears on the pages of the story is a caricature figure. The motif of puppetry receives a special sound in thoughtless veneration of rank. So, in the first chapter of the "fold" the story is told about how the Englishman Shkot tried to teach the peasants to plow the land with new European tools, which would clearly simplify and make the work of farmers more productive. However, despite all the benefits that Shkot brought in the Petrovsky estate, because of one caustic joke of a simple peasant that reached St. Petersburg and the emperor, Petrovsky wants to send the Englishman back. Since he is afraid of the disapproval of the king: "When the emperor, on some occasion, asked: "Does the Englishman still rule over you?" Petrovsky thought that things would again come to a "witty answer," and, just in case, he preferred to say that the Englishman no longer rules over him" [Leskov 1973: 218]. Thus, in one second, the count is ready to say goodbye to the only person who really improves life on his estate. The behavior of the count in this situation turns out to be no better than the puppet people, blindly trusting their guide, because we understand for sure that as soon as the emperor changes his mind, Petrovsky will immediately change it, ready to make any concessions to please the ruler. The same thoughtless puppet character of I.V. Stolyarova also singles out in Leskov's novel "Damn's Dolls", saying that in this work the author, following Hoffmann, actively develops the theme of "man-doll": "extremely impersonal and easily controlled, like a kind of slot machine, by someone else's will" [Stolyarova 1978 : 175]. The novel, published in 1890, was conceived by the writer back in the 70s. What Leskov saw was the vulgar and mediocre worship of officials to their minister D.A. Tolstoy and forced communication with these people brings inner discomfort and irritation to the writer, which receives a response in the form of a novel, according to Leskov himself, similar to his work "Laughter and Sorrow". Describing the duke, the protagonist of "devil's dolls" says the following: "My soul began to love him for his sincere

impulses, testifying to the undoubted nobility of his nature, spoiled most of all by a servile and flattering environment" [Leskov 1973: 354]. Phoebus also describes a case when, from just one unkind glance of the duke in his direction, the entire retinue accompanying them turned away from the artist, the nobles did not even want to ride next to him, but as soon as the duke took the hero by the arm and delivered an exculpatory speech, how the behavior of these kowtowing characters changes dramatically: "This had a magical effect on everyone, and when the duke added that he was sure that whoever loves him will love me too, then there was no limit to the efforts to show me love: all faces shone at me, and all hearts seemed to want jump onto my plate" [Leskov 1973: 355]. Let us note that in assessing the behavior of the duke's environment, Phoebus says that everything is done with them in such a "primitive and simple" way. That is, the environment of the duke is "primitive" dolls, implicitly obeying the will of the duke. However, the motive of puppetry in this work can also be identified in the more exciting topic of Leskov as an artist - the problem of the waste of his own talent by the artist and the purpose of art in general. So in the course of action in the novel, the artist Phoebus, gifted with great talent, turns into a puppet of the duke and subordinates his art and gift to the service of the will and morals of the ruler. At the beginning of the work, the artist's talent was recognized by everyone, and his paintings were highly appreciated, and at the first meeting with the duke, he says the following to himself: "Yes, I am a non-slave copy" [Leskov 1973: 327]. But approaching the ruler and moving after him to a wonderful country, the artist's morals change, in his letters: "he strove to be more beautiful than natural and sincere" [Leskov 1973: 345]. Soon, being under the complete control of the duke, Febus realizes his position, but he cannot do something and somehow fix it: "You need to ask the duke about everything (...) Febus soon realized that the lace on which he walks, rather short" [Leskov 1973: 370]. Not only the will of the artist submits to the duke, but also his talent, because now he can paint only on the orders of the ruler and obeying his views on the goals of

art: "Only old programs were allowed, which did not at all correspond to the new living aspirations already indicated in other European schools" [Leskov 1973: 370]. Selling his talent for the sake of a favorable position in society and a prosperous life, Febus completely loses it. No matter how hard the artist tries and no matter how hard he puts his new paintings, they no longer evoke former praises and are recognized as very primitive. That is, the depersonalization of the artist takes place, from a talented outstanding personality he turns into the same doll as all the duke's subordinates, losing his individuality and following his tastes. So we see that the whole kingdom of the duke is an army of living puppets, whose behavior is completely dependent on the "stomach position" of the ruler, and the great artist independently dooms himself to the role of a palace toy, which by the end of the work loses both humanity (reason) and talent.

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