

## Transitions of Diverse Precedent Phenomena in the Poetic Cycle of Dmitry Bykov "Citizen Poet"

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### Abstract

The article considers a precedent phenomenon system illustrated with satirical texts of Dmitry Bykov "Citizen Poet". It reveals complex transitions between diverse precedent phenomena outside uniquely qualified types of precedents, there are: precedent situations and precedent names, precedent statements and precedent names, etc. Overlays, inclusions and transitivity of different precedent types have metonymic nature and generally lead to the formation of text meta-precedents. Use of the last mentioned in intra-cultural aesthetic communication indicates a potential unity of cultural space of the author and readers.

**Keywords:** Dmitry Bykov, poetic cycle "Citizen Poet", linguo-cultural community, precedential phenomena, precedent statements, precedent situation, precedent texts, precedent names, meta-precedent.

### 1. Introduction

In the world today the distinctive features of almost any information are accessibility, diversity and a growing trend towards identity (Kornilov, 2003; Dasenssen, 1977). This public mood contributes to the emergence of various original projects in media- and cyberspace: blogs, flash mobs, social and political events, performances. Creators and inspirers of such projects are the people familiar with various spheres of life and, having an active social position. D. Bykov is one of these people.

D. Bykov is a Russian writer, poet, journalist, film critic and public man. He publishes journalistic, literary, polemical articles in numerous journals and newspapers although not being their staff writer but writing little notes of current interest (Bykov, 2012). According to the results of the Internet voting on "Facebook" D. Bykov entered the "Top 10" people wanted to see and listen at protest rallies. Special popularity he gained after his cycle of poems entitled "Citizen Poet".

The cycle represents a satirical imitation of famous poets and writers styles. Poems from "Citizen Poet" are devoted to political situation in our country around the election of the President of the Russian Federation in 2011 and are a cultural allusion to all famous works, a kind of artificial response to the events taking place in Russia. Dmitry together with producer Alexander Vasilyev and actor Mikhail Efremov materialized "Citizen Poet" project on "Echo of Moscow" radio station and "Dozhd" TV channel now ceased broadcasting to a wide audience.

"Citizen Poet" poems were satirical mocking topical issues in Russia expressing a unique attitude of the author. Furthermore, they were also a kind of political act of protest against the current Russian political system (pseudo-democracy) and inconsistencies of legislative system with common sense. Among the functions of such campaign can be identified: the socio-political exposure of vices of society; assessment of the current situation in Russia; promotion of alternative worldview, including political one; as well as additional functions – accumulative feature (Maslova, 2001; Nakhimova, 2007; Yukhanov, 2008), i.e. culturally-relevant information retrieval for its further submission to readers.

In the aspect of style, "Citizen Poet" can be referred to artistic and journalistic works. Poetic cycle, on the one

hand, is dedicated to topical issues and current events in the society, it plays an important political and ideological role as a medium of public opinion, and on the other, this cycle is a product of the author's intent (Kuzmin, 1999), it meets certain categories of aesthetic value.

Poems of "Citizen Poet" are built in accordance with the general principles of postmodern text creation specified by F. Christie in his work (Christie, 2006), that is significantly made up of allusions, explicit and implicit polemic, stylization (Ritchie, 2004) and other content and genre and stylistic features allowing the text to enter the space of culture and exist in it due to integrated precedent phenomena - a kind of text-in-text (terminology of Lotman (Lotman, 2000)). These texts-in-texts (Fateeva, 2007) in Bykov's cycle of poems are precedent texts and other precedent phenomena, the use of which becomes a sign of the author's style and a leading compositional principle that requires a special approach to interpret complex "multi-layer" texts (Gregory, 1978).

## 2. Methods and Materials

According to Yu.N. Karaulov, the case should be considered as phenomena, "relevant to a particular person in cognitive and emotional matter, having supra-character, i.e. well-known in the environment of a person including its predecessors and contemporaries, and, finally, those, repeatedly addressed to in the discourse of the linguistic identity" (Karaulov, 2010, p. 126). Four types of precedent phenomena are assumed to be distinguished (Krasnykh, 2003), each of them is presented in the cycle of Bykov in a relatively pure form, fragmentary description of which is given in our previous work (Gladkikh, Khokhryakova, 2013).

## 3. Results

Therefore, the following precedent phenomena types can be distinguished in the poetic texts of Dmitry Bykov:

- 1) precedent text – an independent and complete result of verbal and cogitative process generally familiar to each member of the national linguo-cultural community. Various jokes, text versions of advertisements, songs, works of art (see. anecdotes periphrases in Bykov's poetic texts "That's what happens in tandem," "Shizorvanka", "Homeric") are among the precedent texts;
- 2) precedent name - a complex sign when using which you appeal not to the referent but to a set of differential (Dobrosklonskaya, 2008; Murray, 2005) features of precedent name; one- or supra-word proper name associated with precedent case (Putin, Onishchenko, Angela Merkel, Mubarak) or the well-known text in the broadest sense (Hamlet, Elvis Presley, Mickey Rourke, "Dozhd");
- 3) precedent statement – a reproducible product of verbal and cogitative process which includes quotations from texts of different nature: "Raven somewhere God ..." (Bykov, 2012, p. 15) (a quote from the fable of Ivan Krylov "The Raven and the Fox"), "Insomnia. Prime. Tight frame "(transformed lines from the poem of O.E. Mandelshtam "Insomnia. Homer. Tight sail") (Bykov, 2012, p. 73), "The time is out of joint—O cursèd spite," (a quote from Shakespeare's tragedy "Hamlet") (Bykov, 2012, pp. 95-97);
- 4) precedent situation – a real unique situation at least a little familiar to almost all members of linguo-cultural community: "Kick your ass for Putin" campaign with the participation of girls from "Putin's Army" association in the poem "Shizorvanka" (Bykov, 2012, p. 67); Ivan Ohlobystin run for president of the Russian Federation in the poem "Your Father" (Bykov, 2012, p. 87); former Colonel Yuri Budanov being murdered in Moscow in the poem "Killing theme" (Bykov, 2012, p. 49).

We reiterate the Bykov's texts include all types of precedent phenomena. At the same time, our material shows no impassable boundaries between various precedents, and this can be explained as follows. In traditionally accepted precedent phenomena classification (see, for example, work of Yu.N. Karaulov and V.V. Krasnykh mentioned above), each type has a number of distinctive features which can not be mixed up with precedents of other types. As a rule, when analyzing precedent phenomena scientists fragmentary exemplify intracultural (Greenbaum, Kugelmass, 1980) and cross-cultural, but not aesthetic, communication, and conceptualize only folklore texts (proverbs, riddles, jokes) or names become paradigmatic (Nakhimova, 2007) as a precedent without regard to the specific texts ("Who will do it? Pushkin?", "Trick or Treat?", "Cinema and the Germans!"), but do not use this approach in literary texts analysis known to be much wider and more complex than any typology. When analyzing the cycle of Bykov's poems we found qualification of certain precedent phenomena a little ambiguous. The only exception of this cycle is the anecdotes texts which, as known, have no author (Graham, 2001) and are therefore invariant. All other precedent phenomena, as we see it, involve a diverse types interaction: precedent text and precedent situation; precedent text and precedent name, etc. We will characterize some of them.

### 3.1 Rhetorical construction: precedent text, precedent situation and precedent name

Complex interaction of precedent text, precedent name and precedent situation is shown in the poem "Uncle Styopa - bilyaner" (Bykov, 2012, p. 39) which D. Bykov made of the poem "Uncle Stepan - policeman." Original poem is familiar to most readers since their childhood, it can be easily recognized in the text of Bykov due to rhythmical and melodic structure and partial preservation of vocabulary. Both texts present general semantics: opposition of life of hypothetical "Uncle Styopa" "before" and "after", the result of a long find-yourself-journey: for Mikhalkov - proper service of Stepan Stepanov in police force, in "his" proper place, filled with patriotism and commitment; for Bykov - Mikhail Prokhorov attending interests of higher authority, deciding to head the "Right Cause" Duma party, taking his "own" second place in the election of the President of the Russian Federation in 2011.

Poems "Uncle Styopa - bilyaner" and "Uncle Styopa - policeman" united by a common commitment to patriotism conventional signs of which are the following precedent names: true patriotic car "Moskvich", football clubs "Spartak" and "Dynamo", the Baltic Fleet, the city of Moscow ( in child poem); caricature patriotic as being only in Prokhorov's possession, the Russian gold mining company "PolyusZoloto", energy company "Quadra", advertising and consulting media group RBC, LED plant "Optogan" and his milestone "Yo-mobile" (electricity vehicle), Amsterdam, Paris, Cannes (in the poem of Bykov).

The link between the precedent situation and precedent name is also presented by precedent statement "Yes, sir!". Traditionally, this is a form of response in the police and the army to the order from a superior. But such "blind" obedience we can see only in response of Prokhorov to a proposal-order "from above" to participate in the election race and take a pre-determined place to create an effect of integrity of the electoral system in Russia. Styopa of Mikhalkov, on the contrary, answers to all questions and suggestions carefully, judiciously and detailed avoiding formal "Yes, sir!" and adhering to his personal opinion only. Such rhetorical comparison of these two poems, when Bykov's word is an echo and dissonance to the word of Mikhalkov, and the boundaries between "our" and "foreign" are blurred, becomes a source of infinite possibilities to find another, deeper meaning of the Bykov's message. A similar metonymy between precedent situation and precedent name occurs in the poem "Tell me, Dima" (Bykov, 2012, pp. 9-11), "Distress and cleverness" (Bykov, 2012, pp.11-14), "Moscow Venture" (Bykov, 2012, pp. 62-65), "The Internationale" (Bykov, 2012, p. 69).

### 3.2 Explicit and implicit: precedent statement and precedent name

Ambiguous relationship of case statement and case name, for example, in the poem of Bykov "I do not regret, do not call, do not cry ..." (Bykov, 2012, p. 33) where the precedent statement is expressed explicitly, and the precedent name – implicitly. "I used to be a president, I think it will take me there!": a quote from an interview of President Dmitry Medvedev where he says that he plans to do a research and educational activities in Skolkovo leads the reader to the name of a politician, Dmitry Medvedev. Bykov's text is based on the famous poem "I do not regret, do not call, do not cry ..." of S.A. Yesenin. Only one line of the poem, the original one, is preserved completely by Bykov: "I do not regret, do not call, do not cry...". It sets the tone for the further narrative character, as not only things said are important but also the author of this quote. D. Bykov managed to keep an essential logical sequence. The similarity of these two poems of Yesenin and Bykov is easily guessed in the text melody and rhythm. At semantic level, poems are united with a topic of upcoming leaving, disappearance, hopelessness, old age and even fading. But at the same time lyrical hero of S. Yesenin draws a line following his personal crazy youth, and the hero of Dmitry Bykov, Dmitry Medvedev, sums up his work as the president of Russia on the scale of the whole country. This, at first ridiculous ratio of priorities set, on the one hand, fills the cycle with comedy, and on the other - reveals the true horror of the situation on the contemporary political scene of Russia, blasphemy in judgment of people having the power ("Soon I'll have the last year wasted / of my regnal life", "I really do not remember what it was, / Essentially, no matter ..."). As in the original Yesenin's poem, the hero of Bykov speaks in first person which is remarkable. It produces peculiar confession of the president feeling sunset of his career, and perhaps falling into oblivion. Precedent situation ("Technical inspection for pedophile", "Casino castration") might be justly regarded as appeal to the name of Medvedev. Proposals introduced into draft laws under Dmitry Medvedev sometimes were so foolish and illogical that even Bykov's deliberate negligence in their description makes ex-president political initiatives easy to remember (forced chemical castration of pedophiles, compulsory technical passport for every casino). The interview to "Dozhd", famous for its alternative view of events in our country, has become one of the most outspoken interview of Dmitry Medvedev, and this very interview gave a rise to the creation of "I do not regret, do not call, do not cry ...". The last phrase of that Bykov's poem deeply adjoint to Yesenin text: "Or anyone else had me as a horse?" (S. Yesenin: "Rode on a pink horse"). This is a kind of quintessential reflection of a politician about who was really in power during his presidency, and who just formally held a senior position. Thus, even without mentioning the name of

Dmitry Medvedev, Dmitry Bykov could give a delicate hint at who is a performer of this touching tirade. Similar connection between precedent statement and precedent name is in the poem "Do not dirt" (Bykov, 2012, p. 59), "Performance of the Year" (Bykov, 2012, pp. 95-97), "The Giant Seliger" (Bykov, 2012 p. 55).

### 3.3 Reversible character of precedents: precedent name and precedent text

Interaction of precedent name and precedent text is evident in the poem "Performance of the Year" (Bykov, 2012, pp. 95-97). The name of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, leads us to the events of William Shakespeare's "Hamlet". In this case, the leading way to actualize precedent situation is by the names (Hamlet, Acheron, Elsinore, Polonius, Kudrin) and the precedent text itself (the tragedy "Hamlet"). Transformation of precedent name into precedent situation in the text, not only mentally, but also formally, is a fact of particular interest. This happens when a dialogue of Hamlet and his shadow mentioned neighbor noble king Polonius (in the original "Hamlet"). But the Shadow says that "the British have Polonius" indirectly pointing to the case of poisoning of A.V. Litvinenko, FSB officer, with radioactive polonium in the UK in 2006.

We can observe the reverse process: precedent texts smoothly transit into specific precedent names with a certain weight in a particular linguo-cultural community (Vereshchagin, 1980; Zimnyaya, 2001). This process can be exemplified: "Good bye, the Danes. Then silence. / The Seaman's Silence, as some sailors say" (here you can see an appeal to the conditions of the detention facility called by its location – Seaman's Silence street); "Yes, I did go and stare there / As I am a fighter of invisible front" (appeal to Vladimir Putin, to his status - during the creation of the poetic text – "invisible man," "grey cardinal" temporarily gone like a ghost in "Hamlet" in hiding, but then returned to become even more powerful); "I'm afraid, my son, in twelve years / Country here will be a pure shadow" (a reference to the economic and political forecasts related to Russia). Such metonymic connection between precedent names and precedent texts can be found in the following poem of the cycle "Citizen Poet": "Reports from the Front" (Bykov, 2012, pp.37-38), "Kalina yellow" (Bykov, 2012, pp. 83-86), "Your Father" (Bykov, 2012, pp. 87-90), "That's what happens in tandem" (Bykov, 2012, pp. 15-20).

## 4. Conclusion

Analysis of D. Bykov's cycle of poems "Citizen Poet" gives us a reason to believe that traditional typology of precedent phenomena does not allow to clearly delineate in practice the types of precedents. The same poetic context may include various types of phenomena interacting by metonymic principle and being an integral part of a whole, part of a precedent. That is why it is extremely difficult and sometimes almost impossible to isolate and unambiguously designate a specific precedent phenomenon type.

Bykov's texts included in the cycle "Citizen Poet" are pragmatic, topical but at the same time ulterior - thanks largely to the precedents used. The perception and understanding of the same precedent phenomenon is different for different language personalities which is quite natural and is due to the individual characteristics of thinking. As a result, poems of "Citizen Poet" become a kind of "communicative lottery" and can only be correctly interpreted by that part of the country which has the same cultural knowledge fund as D. Bykov. The cycle "Citizen Poet" becomes a kind of "message for the elite," not only a satire, but also a political propaganda addressed to those who possess erudition similar to D. Bykov, education, membership in a particular social group, the personal interest to contemporary social processes, those who profess close political views.

Precedent phenomena are phenomena organically included in the text canvas of "Citizen Poet" engendering desired association for the "favorites" which generally runs on communicative success of the text. A metonymic connection of different types of precedent phenomena, their transience, overlap between rhetorical relation, the attraction to the explication of the same type of precedent phenomenon and implicitness of phenomenon of a different type, reversible precedents lead to formation of meta-precedents in poems. The latter can be considered as indicators of complex meta-symbols which are a distinctive feature of Bykov's satirical cycle.

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