



## Axiological Values in L. Borodin's Story "the Visit"

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### **Abstract**

Leonid Borodin is a well-known writer in the West. He is a laureate of the French Freedom Prize, the Italian Grisante Cavour. His books have been translated into many languages of the world, including English, German, French. Borodin began writing in the late 1960s, but remained unknown in Russia for a long time. The first publication took place in the Motherland 25 years after the creation of the text. The article analyzes the story of L. Borodin "The Visit", in the aspect of understanding the eternal spiritual and aesthetic "models of God-seeking", actualizing in the artistic consciousness of mankind through a new reading, a look at the concept-forming complex of problems "God-Being-Man".

**Keywords:** *Value; Prose; Theme; Religion; Truth; Harmony; Peace; Personality; Humanism*

### **Introduction**

Determining the historical-literary and theoretical-analytical features of the development of the modern literary process is one of the most urgent tasks of modern literary criticism. In the field of systematization of the key criteria of the directional system of modern Russian literature, there is also no clearly developed theory today. Determining the logical patterns of constructing a system of aesthetic and worldview coordinates and the actual categorical apparatus of the poetics of modern literary trends and trends needs to develop a serious methodology.

It is within the framework of this research direction that it seems relevant to study such a bright in its spiritual and cultural significance in modern Russian literature and ambiguous from the point of view of the artistic and direction organization of the phenomenon as religious prose-quite complex both in terms of the direction definition and theoretical and analytical interpretation.

It is within the framework of works of religious prose that the artistic and moral comprehension of new spiritual and aesthetic "models of God-seeking" is presented in modern Russian literature, actualizing not only in artistic consciousness, but also in modern cultural studies as a whole and a new look at the concept-forming complex of problems "God-being-man", the analysis of which will reveal

the specifics of the evolution of the spiritual and cultural consciousness of the “crisis” era of the twentieth century.

Starting from the second half of the 20th century, interest in religious issues intensified in society, at the same time, public religious consciousness was also revived, but in a completely new spiritual and ideological quality. The religious renaissance is a unique phenomenon, but not an isolated one. In the history of the development of human society, as a rule, it is preceded by a certain spiritual exhaustion of social consciousness, which inevitably accompanies the transition from one system of social relations to another, from one system to another.

The religious revival of the second half–the end of the 20th century was caused, first of all, by the collapse of old ideals based on an atheistic worldview, when religion was interpreted as an atavism, useless in the age of technical and cosmic progress. However, time has proved the fallacy of such a statement, because no society can see its future without developing and strengthening the spiritual potential, spiritual and moral values in people’s minds.

The central theme of L. Borodin’s prose can be designated as a person and his place in the world of eternal truths. On this basis, the stories of this author are regarded as religious. It should be noted that within the emerging trend of religious writers, Borodin has his own path: he is interested not so much in the unshakable transpersonal truth, but in the movement towards it, as well as the path of a person to himself, to truth, harmony in his own soul. Consent with oneself becomes for Borodin the key to orderliness in the world as a whole.

The plots of Leonid Borodin, according to the definition of A. Ageev, are “spectacular”. The writer owns an art that is very rare in Russian literature–the art of dynamic, eventful narration” (Ageev, 1991, p. 202). Borodin’s prose is captivating. Once you get to the first plot node, you will inevitably want to come with the hero to the finale, regardless of whether you like or dislike the ideas that the author professes.

Borodin is a writer, by nature, a moralist. In his works ideas are always primary. For the sake of ideas, checking their quality in all conceivable “modes”, the author twists his plots, not shying away from relying on the “three whales” of entertaining fiction–science fiction, detective story, melodrama. Ideas undergo various adventures in Borodin’s works, it is ideas that allow us to call him a novelist and entertainer, make him take his prose seriously.

Borodin puts all his heroes in a situation of moral choice. “The fact is”, Ageev points out, “that the author of this energetic, authoritarian, tightly orchestrated prose, if you read it carefully, stands in front of the sphinx and painfully thinks, unable to make a choice, in the name of which it’s still worth “laying down your life”, in the name of what values?

Personality, Freedom, Culture, Law, Reason, Progress, Civilization...

Justice, Goodness, God, Fatherland, Nature...

Here are two rows of words with a capital letter, two incomplete lists of symbols, behind which are real values. The first row lists values, relatively speaking liberally–humanistic, in the second, speaking also conditionally–soil–national.

As long as these values remain in the abstract ether, in the realm of pure meanings and ideal models, there is nothing easier than proving their magnificent compatibility and mutual necessity. But as soon as you descend from the ethereal heights to the sinful earth, categories and concepts immediately

become goals and means, arguments and banners in the hands of specific people, parties or groups. And the choice—if, of course, a person lives in the human world—is inevitable (Ageev, 1991, p. 203).

Borodin's prose is polarized to the same strong degree as modern public consciousness; it is built on antitheses, clashes of ideas that exclude each other.

According to the writer, a person in the world is designated a strictly defined place. The truth is ultimately beyond his comprehension. The world is wiser and fairer than even the most moral of people. In turning to oneself lies, according to Borodin, the truth of human life. "The last value of life, he proclaims" the fullness of self-consciousness" (Klimenko, 1991, p. 98).

In the story—parable "The Visit", the central issue in which is the question of the essence of a miracle in the context of an endless process of self-knowledge.

A miracle can be defined as an extraordinary event in human life, caused either by the direct intervention of Divine Providence, or by prophets and saints with God's help. From the point of view of reality, miracles contradict the laws of nature. "Miracles are amazing events that have no scientific explanation, benefit individual human beings and resemble beneficial interventions..." (Sartre, 1998, p. 22). In Borodin's story, a miracle becomes a moral test to which the characters are subjected.

The protagonist of the story, the village priest Veniamin, is tormented by the important question of what needs to be done to preserve spirituality in the world. He notes with sorrow that people live without faith: "... there was no Russian lordship, but only fear, despair and torment of God—forsakenness. They were completely different people. And they spoke in some foreign language, in which the words are either bayonets or gnashing of teeth" (Borodin, 1998, p. 46). For Father Benjamin, it is very important to communicate with Alexei, a man of exceptional spiritual fullness.

But when Father Benjamin interprets the miracle as "the manifestation of the existence of our Lord, a sign of His presence in the world" (Borodin, 1989, p. 48), then the young man is frankly bored listening to the answer he knows, because, as it turns out from the confession that followed soon, he received a philosophical education, went through a passion for philosophy to recognize the correctness of Christianity, but faith as a feeling that directly connects man and God, and did not find: "I announced that I believed", says Alexei, "I thought it was one and the same. Recognize the correctness of Christianity and believe in God..." (Borodin, 1989, p. 52). And suddenly a real miracle happened to Alexei, which radically changed the whole course of his thoughts - he suddenly gained the ability to fly.

But this feeling not only did not strengthen his faith, on the contrary, it caused him even greater doubts about the existence of God: "Do you think", he addresses the priest, "this happened during prayer, or during blissful reflection, or while reading Holy Scripture? It was on the beach, when I was lying on the sand and I had neither good nor sinful thoughts... Notice, father, while I did not even think about God" (Borodin, 1989, p. 53). The physical transformation with the hero corresponds to the spiritual transformation, the basis of which is superhuman pride, the feeling of the superiority of one's own "I" over others, and as a result—the universal "orphanhood".

No matter how the priest fights, he is unable to convince the young man that the opportunity to fly, the miracle that happened to him, is a special favor of God to him and the result is the tragic death of Alexei.

The sin of Alexei is heavier—he challenged God. Exorbitant pride, "acquisition of the meaning of the world to the freedom of his "I"" (Ageev) leads him away from faith, from the idea of God as a whole. He perceives the miracle, sent as a sign to everyone, as an individualist: "To appear to me means to turn into a guinea pig of science or into a deified rabbit of the Church! I am proud! And I can't afford to be

studied! (Borodin, 1989, p. 55). The flight is transformed in the consciousness of the young man literally into a manic addiction, which destroys not only all ties with the outside world, but also the inner world of the hero. He feels his superiority over other people, unlimited and autocratic freedom.

The feeling of “abandonment” (Heidegger’s favorite expression) fills his entire inner being, in other words, he is close to a complete denial of God. With the absence of God, any possibility of finding any value in the intelligible world disappears. There can be no more a priori good, since there is no infinite and perfect reason to think it.

Dostoevsky wrote that “if there is no God, then everything is permitted”. In fact, everything is permitted if God does not exist, and therefore a person is abandoned, he has nothing to rely on either in himself or outside. First of all, he has no excuses. “If existence precedes essence, then nothing can be explained by reference to a given human nature once and for all. In other words, there is no determinism, a person is free, a person is freedom” (Sartre, 1998, p. 327). On the other hand, the absence of God as a moral force that keeps a person from the final transformation into an animal without reason implies the absence of moral values or precepts that would justify our actions.

“Thus, neither behind ourselves, nor in front of us—in the bright realm of values – we have neither excuses nor apologies. We are alone and there is no excuse for us... man is condemned to be free. Condemned because he did not create himself; and yet free, because, once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does, saying there is no determinism, a person is free, a person is freedom “saying there is no determinism, a person is free, a person is freedom” (Sartre, 1998, p. 327).

The main idea of the story is the moral changes in society – “damage to morals”, the disappearance, drying up of the “animal feeling” (Ageev), the ability to childishly, directly, sincerely love the world and be surprised at it.

“The experiment that Leonid Borodin performed on his heroes showed the unpreparedness of that “human material” that was formulated by the modern history of Russia, for a miracle, for the manifestations of God” (Ageev, 1991, p. 114). It is no coincidence that Father Benjamin himself, in a conversation with Alexei, bitterly exclaims: “But what happened to people! They accept neither punishment nor grace!” (Borodin, 1989, p. 54).

## **Conclusion**

The miracle becomes a test and both heroes cannot stand it, but the reasons and the “price” of their sin are different. The priest serves his service without joy, without the feeling of a special sacrament, which is transformed into wisdom, mechanical logic. The sermon of a priest should be turned not so much outward to the parishioners, but first of all, inward. Having received a divine gift—the ability to fly – Alekseyne was delighted with him, but frightened. He perceives the miracle sent to him as a sign as an individualist: “To appear to me means to turn into the guinea pig of science or into the deified rabbit of the Church! I am proud! And I can’t afford to be studied! (Borodin, 1989, p. 55).

The flight is transformed in the consciousness of the young man literally into a manic addiction, which destroys not only all ties with the outside world, but also the inner world of the hero. He feels his superiority over other people, unlimited and autocratic freedom.

Having received the desired absolute freedom, metaphorically embodied in the story in the loss of any landmarks in the night starry sky, when “there were as many sides as thoughts about them”, Alexei was unable to cope with it, since such unlimited freedom is unbearable for a person born on Earth.

Forgetfulness of the place allotted to man in the world, loss of connection with God leads to death, which in this case is predetermined and inevitable: “God gave him wings, and the earth refused to attract” (Borodin, 1989, p. 59).

Thus, “The Visit” is a story about a terrible sin—the pride of its perniciousness for Man, about the need to accept a miracle as God’s mercy and a sign from Above, which contributes to the understanding of the author’s idea.

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