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## THE THEME OF LOVE IN E. DOLGOPIAT'S STORY "POOR LISA"

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### ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the current problem of interpreting the eternal theme of love in modern Russian literature using the example of the story "Poor Liza" by E. Dolgopyat. The author of the article identifies three models of love in the story through the relationships of the main characters Kolya and Lisa, Stepan Georgievich and Nina Sergeevna. In conclusion of the article, the author comes to the conclusion that the most productive model is creative love, despite the fact that there are two more models: love-insanity and absence of love.

### KEYWORDS

Image, hero, theme, model, mirror composition.

### INTRODUCTION

Modern literary criticism is actively turning to the interpretation of traditional themes in artistic creativity. It is philological analysis that makes it possible to identify models of rethinking classical eternal themes in modern Russian short prose, as well as to determine trends in the development of the modern literary process as a whole.

Within the framework of this article, we turn to the analysis of the story of the Russian prose writer E. Dolgopyat, who in her work transforms the classical images of Russian literature, realizing pressing problems of our time.

The purpose of this article is to identify models of transformation of one of the current themes in Russian

literature - the theme of love in the story “Poor Liza”  
by E. Dolgopyat

E. Tarsier, according to the concept of modern Russian criticism, belongs to magical realism, which is why in his stories, along with the depiction of everyday problems, something fantastic coexists, which penetrates into everyday life.

**Literature review.** A number of critical works are devoted to the work of E. Dolgopyat. Thus, S. Kostyrko notes that “at first her prose was perceived as an almost internal literary phenomenon - prose for a few, despite the fact that this prose actively used the style of popular literary genres: fantasy, detective, strict realistic writing, even reportage, and at the same time - phantasmagoria, up to the use of “absurd literature” techniques. It was prose in which the everyday is always illuminated by the existential, and the phantasmagoric nature of the narrative is perceived by the organic nature of our “everyday life” [1].

In the article by L. Yuzefovich “The Colorful Underside of Life” it is noted that the work of E. Dolgopyat is smart prose. “Its simplicity is deceptive, its apparent artlessness is the result of experience and skill, and the author’s restraint resonates in us with an unexpectedly strong feeling. Each story by Elena Tarsier is unique and can only belong to her. Everyone painfully stirs the soul with a feeling of fragility, and even illusoryness of

human existence in a by no means illusory world. Even those where there is an element of phantasmagoria are perceived not as fantasy, but as everyday life raised to a degree. The techniques by which this effect is achieved are unknown to me. I suspect that the mystery of the impact of these texts on the reader is something that will not be taught in any literature courses.”[2]

Oleg Aronson, who wrote a thoughtful preface to the first book of the young prose writer, especially dwells on the mystery of acquired intonation: “It seems to many that intonation can be found in style, in experiment, in formal search, but the paradox is that where literature achieves brilliance, purity of expression, it inevitably loses something very important. Perhaps a connection with the experience of everyday existence, to which the reader responds instantly, regardless of literary device, genre, or even intriguing narrative. Read at least one story and, I hope, you will feel the special intonation, severity, modesty and strangeness of this literature” [3].

Irina Kasse, author of a deeply sympathetic review of the book “Thin Glasses” (“And neither the bird nor the willow will shed a tear. The Cherry Orchard and global cooling in the short stories of Elena Dolgopyat.” - “Ex libris” dated 02/28/2002), noted an unexpected paradox, consisting in the fact that it is difficult to talk about this transparent and attractive prose: “Talking about the texts of Elena Dolgopyat, it would seem,

should not cause difficulties. Laboratory experiments with mass genres, a little mystical realism, a homeopathic dose of allegory, unambiguous details, cross-cutting motives. <...> Critics, however, prefer to speak of this prose as “strange”, “unusual”, “unlike anything else”. Critics, however, prefer to speak of this prose as “strange”, “unusual”, “unlike anything else”. It is obvious that the “Glass” is made of some thinner material” [4].

Vladislav Tolstov, characterizing the collection of stories by Elena Dolgopyat “Motherland”, notes that “Elena Dolgopyat is an unformatted author, unrecognized, not known to the general readership. Tarsier's stories - I kept trying to find a suitable definition and seemed to have found it - so these are wonderful stories. They are both realistic and somehow magical, otherworldly, mysterious. The best thing you can turn a text into in the format of a short story is to expand some everyday impression, experience, everyday situation into another dimension, turn a fact into a parable, a fairy tale, a dream.” Thus, the researcher notes that “Elena Dolgopyat’s stories have a general mood, atmosphere, a note of longing for something that has not come true, for a failed “real life” [5].

Vladimir Gubailovsky in the article “Open Form” writes: “the experience of studying mathematics and cinema was very important for the formation of the writer Elena Dolgopyat. Mathematics treats reality as a

model. She is much more interested in internal correctness than in the correspondence of her constructions to the only reality of the only world. If internal consistency and completeness are achieved, then the problem is already solved, and whether this model has a real semantic interpretation is not very important. Cinema, especially modern cinema, has powerful means of visually embodying any fiction. He also largely focuses on the visual model. But his language cannot express formal subtleties and particulars that require semantic detail, close listening and slow peering - it is too rapid for this. And here a natural niche arises for formalized film prose, the very one in which Elena Dolgopyat works”[6].

Stanislav Sekretov, in his article “Silent Cinema,” calls “illusion” the leading trend in modern Russian prose: “using the necessary set of tools and sleight of hand, they, with varying degrees of skill, pass off deception as truth. There are few real wizards in modern literature. Denis Osokin or Alexander Ilichevsky know how to create true magic out of thin air, out of nothing. Elena Dolgopyat also has the same talent. Writing and creating heroes that are simple, not noisy, and who love solitude, while at the same time hooking and holding the interest of readers is truly magic” [7].

Thus, a review of the work of E. Dolgopyat in modern criticism revealed the leading features of her works: phantasmagoricity, turning into everyday life, visualization of the formal and meaningful aspects of

works, creating the illusion of hope in prose, expanding space by turning to the past, spiritual focus.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This article uses structural-semantic, comparative-historical methods and techniques of literary text analysis.

Thus, when analyzing critical works on the work of E. Dolgopyat, the comparative historical method and method of systematization were used, which made it possible to identify the characteristics of E. Dolgopyat's short prose as a new trend in the development of the modern Russian literary process.

## **RESULTS**

The theme of love is a traditional theme in Russian and foreign literature, most often manifested through the relationships of heroes. Thus, the modern interpretation of the theme of love in E. Dolgopyat's story "Poor Liza" is depicted through three models of love - the older and younger generations of heroes, which mirror each other: creative love, insanity love and absence of love.

## **DISCUSSION**

In our opinion, the story "Poor Lisa" by E. Tarsier is interesting. The title of the story immediately refers the reader to the sentimental story by N.M. Karamzin, written in the 18th century. According to the traditional

interpretation of the title of the sentimental story, Lisa is characterized as "poor" based on two plans. Firstly, Lisa's social status is of low origin, a peasant. Secondly, according to sentimentalism, in the plot of the story the heroine ends her life by suicide, thus her fate is usually considered tragic. In the story by E. Dolgopyat, the main character also has the name Lisa, but her social position does not correspond to the classical prototype image, the heroine's fate is not tragic, but, on the contrary, accomplished.

The plot of the story, at first glance, is quite simple: Kolya, in love, wins the favor of young Lisa, but fails. The leading theme in the story is the theme of love, presented through the relationships of the main characters, and realized through three models of love. In the story "Poor Lisa" three models of love are realized: creative love, insanity love and absence of love.

The main character of the story, Kolya, realizes two models of love: creative love, and insanity love. Love-madness is completely depicted through the points of view of the boy's mother and Lisa herself on the relationship of the main characters. So, in the first episode of the story there is a conversation between Grandma Fenya and Lisa: "While the boy was washing himself in the bathroom with warm water, the titanium, heated in the morning, had not yet cooled down, Lisa whispered to Grandma Fenya in the kitchen:

“And most importantly, there was no reason to fight, he accidentally knocked me down.” And he fell. And he didn’t shout “cow” on purpose. I would have shouted too. And this one came at him like a crazy person.

-You don’t know his name?

“I don’t know him at all.”[8]. In this conversation, the reader for the first time sees the defining feature of Kolya’s love for Liza - frenzy, obsession with the object of his love. This trait is further proven by the words of the hero’s mother: “I can’t complain about your Kolya,” Stepan Georgievich began cautiously. — He studies well, persistently, he exceeds his abilities very much. If he had more of these abilities, God knows what he could have achieved.

“He’s trying with all his might,” the woman said, “that’s for sure.” Why, you know, yes?

“Yes,” said Stepan Georgievich.

We were silent.

The woman looked around the laboratory.

“I don’t like it,” said Varvara Alekseevna. “I understand that your daughter actually has nothing to do with this.” It’s not her fault that he goes crazy for her. I saw her, by the way, nothing special, a girl and a girl <...>

- I don’t know what’s good here. He has become a stranger to me, your daughter is afraid of him, it seems to me. I heard her talking to him once. Politely, quietly,

as if dealing with a mentally dangerous person. I went into school, they were on duty together in the classroom. Even then I wanted to talk to you, but I didn’t dare. For me, it would be better if he studied somehow in his twenties, raced with the boys and was cheerful. <...>

“I’m afraid it will break eventually.”

“We can’t help him, Varvara Alekseevna.” No action of ours can resolve this situation in anyone’s favor. This area is not in our competence, understand?

- No.

“We can’t make him or Lisa feel differently.”

- I’ll go to the healer.

“Your will”[8].

The hero’s mother, in a dialogue with the teacher, experiences fear for her son: she is afraid that he is becoming a stranger, incomprehensible to her. Her son does not enjoy life, but is tormented by his love: the epithets “he will break in the end”, “he strives with all his might” make one believe in the hero’s love-madness.

In the final episodes - the culmination of the story's love conflict - Lisa admits her fear of the hero's love: “Kolya was nearby. He danced poorly, hit the floor with his shoes and approached Lisa. He advanced, and she retreated” [8]. It is these two antonymic verbs of



movement “to approach and retreat” that directly characterize the opposing feelings of the heroes: Kolya strives to get closer, to capture the attention of Liza, the heroine, on the contrary, tries to run away, hide from the frantic attention of her boyfriend.

- I will never marry you. I can't answer your love. I feel terribly guilty, I really do. I would even like to answer, but I can't. You are somehow already very frantic.

Kolya began to look past Lisa.

“I'm leaving for Moscow tomorrow,” she said. — I'll enroll in economics at MIIT. I don't know anymore. Just you, Kolya, don't come to Moscow, leave me alone, forget about it” [8]. The heroine asks to leave her, to free her from this love-madness. This act of the heroine is determined primarily by her fears from childhood: “She thought that if another child appeared, then the hopes of the father and mother would turn to him, he would, as it were, take over their attention, take responsibility, and free Lisa. From early childhood, Lisa was afraid of both responsibility and attention.

She thought that Baba Fenya was taken for the future child, for whom all hopes were placed. But the other child was never born, no one freed Lisa.”[8]. Lisa's desire to be freed from responsibility prompts Lisa to abandon Kolya's frantic love, which frightens her. It is Lisa's childish infantility that realizes the third model of love – the absence of love. The girl is not able to love because of fear and infantilism. At the end of the story,

Kolya finds out that Liza is getting married, and the hero decides that she, too, has finally fallen in love: “In the spring, Liza wrote that she was getting married.

She thought that Baba Fenya was taken for the future child, for whom all hopes were placed. But the other child was never born, no one freed Lisa.”[8]. Lisa's desire to be freed from responsibility prompts Lisa to abandon Kolya's frantic love, which frightens her. It is Lisa's childish infantility that realizes the third model of love – the absence of love. The girl is not able to love because of fear and infantilism. At the end of the story, Kolya finds out that Liza is getting married, and the hero decides that she, too, has finally fallen in love: “In the spring, Liza wrote that she was getting married.

The first model of love – creative love – is realized through the main character Kolya and Lisa's parents.

Kolya, thanks to his love for Lisa, moves to a stronger school (from 20 to 4), so the hero strives to be close to the heroine: “She studies at the fourth school, in a former gymnasium, there are parquet floors.

- How do you know? - Lisa asked in fear.

“I will also go to school with them next year.” I begged my parents to translate.

- What school are you studying in now?

- In the twentieth.

“Yeah,” said Baba Fenya, “I know that.” From there everyone goes to vocational schools. Or are you too good at studying?

- Not too bad.

- How do you want to move to the fourth? They look at who they hire, they are the best in the city.

“I’ll catch up” [8]. Kolya’s desire to be close to his beloved makes the hero become more educated and better. This is also noted by a physics teacher at school No. 20: “Firstly, he always knows with a B and, secondly, in my opinion, of course, it’s very good that he builds his life this way, even if it’s for the sake of an ordinary girl.” . The hero subsequently, after Lisa’s refusal, develops further and enters the university: “He studied at the road construction institute. He always brought the old woman a gift - shelled pine nuts, a tangerine or a bun.”[8]. Also, the first model of love is realized thanks to the images of Lisa’s parents. Lisa’s parents Stepan Georgievich and Nina Sergeevna met in their youth: “In the earliest days of their acquaintance, they met every day for lunch in the factory canteen (the canteen was near the grocery store). It was a large hall, voices buzzed in it, like in a train station. They usually sat by the window, behind which an old poplar tree grew. It grew so close that when the window was opened in the summer, its branches entered the room. You could reach out and touch.

They sat opposite each other, ate thin soup, a cutlet with gray mashed potatoes, and drank dried fruit compote. In addition, they devoured each other with their eyes.” The heroes had mutual love, but a tragedy happened with Lisa’s father: “During one of the training sessions, Stepan Georgievich jumped for the ball, fell and broke his leg. The leg did not heal properly. He didn't limp, but he had forgotten how to run.

They were both confused. Stepan Georgievich sat at home all day, he smelled of wine every evening, but Nina Sergeevna did not see how he drank. Sometimes he went with her to football matches, but more often he refused. Nina Sergeevna seemed to hope that everything would somehow work out.

And then one day he met Nina Sergeevna, who had returned from work, absolutely sober, clean-shaven, wearing some kind of dark, unfamiliar shirt. He said that he entered the evening ped class. Since then, Nina Sergeevna often thought that she was marrying a completely different person, a simple guy who knew how to run fast and was not afraid of the ball. She began to think so not when he broke his leg, but precisely when he entered the “ped” and began to turn into an educated person, into a physicist. He began to speak somehow differently. Would I really marry an intellectual? - Nina Sergeevna thought to herself. “I would be scared to look at him” [8]. An important aspect in this episode is that it was Stepan’s love for Nina that helped the hero overcome the

trauma and become a better person for his beloved. Thus, the creative love between Kolya and Liza, which contributed to the growth and improvement of the hero, is mirrored in the love story of Liza's parents.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the above analysis of the theme of love in E. Dolgopyat's story "Poor Liza," three models of love have been identified that are realized through the relationships of the characters: Kolya and Lisa, Stepan and Nina. Thus, the first model of love, realized through the image of the main character and the images of Lisa's parents, is the most productive of the three listed models. The second model - love-insanity is also depicted through Kolya and his passion for Lisa. The third model of love - the absence of love - is shown through Lisa, who is incapable of love due to fear, unwillingness to bear responsibility, and the choice of a convenient and suitable life partner.

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