
© OLGA K. LAGUNOVA, ELENA L. YUDINTSEVA

elshenka@yandex.ru

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**V.G. RASPUTIN'S ONTOLOGICAL NARRATIVES OF THE 1970-S:
THE PHENOMENON OF SILENCE IN "FRIEND OR FOE" OPPOSITION**

SUMMARY. The article for the first time presents the phenomenon of silence as a typological quality of Valentin Rasputin's ontological narratives.

KEY WORDS. Valentin Rasputin, ontological narrative, the phenomenon of silence, friend or foe.

V.G. Rasputin is one of the most important figures in the national culture of the other half of the 20th century. The outstanding writer of Russian ontological prose will celebrate his 75 birthday in 2012. The phenomenon of silence is a constructive feature of the writer's image of the world, which has not received a systematic and philological description yet.

The researches present the role of silence in Russian communication differently. On the one hand, it is highly valued, on the other hand, it is condemned (M.N. Epstein) [1]. The specialists note a communication activity of the Russians. In Rasputin's narratives the negative and positive sense of silence is represented.

Silence is negative, when the communication among people is broken. The ties are weak; people are under the stress, which is caused by the life circumstances: the war, difficult post-war time, qualms about the future, perplexity. A new generation is growing up, and it has any connection neither with the past, nor with the future. The new generation lives only in the present. People are drifting apart in such conditions and the communication among the strangers is complicated. You can admit a person as a friend only when you live with him side by side all life long and share all the misfortunes and joy. The communication with this person will be slick and pleasant; there is no need to drag word by word from you. The word unites, that is why we pronounce it, but it divides as well.

Silence brings together stronger than the word, you can speak of everything only with the dearest person and be silent with him (her) either. This is a positive sense of silence. You can speak to anybody but be silent only with friends. To make a person a friend, it is necessary to overcome the silence threshold (foreignness), to take a person to bosom, revealing the soul, you can keep silence; continue the communication at a new level. Such were the relationships of the old woman Anna and Mironikha. They had lived all the life side by side and even now on the threshold of life Anna says Mironikha: "*It seems that we have lived long, but haven't told everything to each other, haven't talked to death*" [2].

Besides, according to Rasputin, a person should communicate with himself. Not many people are able to do it. Nastena, the old woman Anna and Daria can

do it. Nastena stops in expectation of the meeting with Andrey: *"I should do my soul, make it be in perfect harmony and only then move on"* [3]. But this time the desired peace did not come, there was an anxiety in her soul. She thinks that people, who cannot look inward, are stone-like inside. They do not have an occasion for rejoicing; they gladden nobody by their presence in the life.

The village is one big community. Everybody knows each other; they are tied with each other. Nastena feels these ties: *"Nastena was tied down to the village, home, job for so many years, knew her place, saved herself, because she was a part of it"* [3; 50]. The inhabitants of one village are "friends" among themselves. The people from other villages are considered to be "foreigners"; the communication between them is attended by the silence. They just live nearby. When they meet each other accidentally, the inhabitants of the neighboring villages greet each other, talk about weather, but all this is just politeness. According to M. Epstein, these talks contain no information that is why they can be equated with the silence [1]. K. Parte also notes that the inhabitants of the neighboring villages treat each other almost with animosity [4]. People know everything about everybody, living side by side. According to Nastena, Daria and the old woman Anna it is a normal life. That, who lives honestly, has no secrets (except private things). It allows a person to feel the ties with the others and not to feel lonely and to have a holy fear.

"Friends" in the village will not be left in the lurch. The foreigners are treated cautiously: *"The foreigners were not likely to be accepted"* [3; 226]. Nadya and Nastena were at first treated as foreigners. Andrey pushes Nastena forward in the society: *"You were not boasting of me, so that I get to know people in order not to be a foreigner"* [3; 98]. The communication between the "friends" should be based on the word, which is simple and goes from heart. Also the silence with the "friends" is simple and joyful.

In the sense of what has just been mentioned, the silence is the feature of abnormal course of life, irregularity of communication. Let us consider how the life of the characters of V. Rasputin's narrative is covered by the silence.

The silence enters the life of Andrey Guskov and Nastena as an indicator of foreignness. Andrey Guskov considers himself as a friend. All the rest also consider him as a friend, but that's not the case. Andrey felt out of place. So he goes off to the war: he said good-bye to the relatives, but he was the one in the crowd of those who were taking leave. In the war he left the people at his own will, sought solitude. His constant striving for loneliness led to the fact that he pulled himself out of the common life. It seems to him that everybody around is guilty in it.

From the beginning of the narrative Andrey falls out from the category of "friends". His appearance in the village is connected with several losses: *"nobody from the village would take the skis"*; *"who from foreigners would come up with idea to look under the board"* [3; 7, 8], they think about a foreigner, the friend far less would take them. Everybody was considering him as a friend that is why nobody accuses him. He came at night (the time for communicating with the power of evil) in the Russian sauna, banya, (the place for communicating with the power of evil), he looked as a werewolf (the power of evil), and this seems to suggest that he is ever more a foreigner. Agapkina's article said that in case of communication with the power of evil it is necessary to be silent not to do harm to yourself and wider public. He says Nastena: *"be silent!"* Andrey's appearance intensifies

the similarity with the power of evil: *"If I could make you shave your beard, you are a foreigner with it"* [3; 96]. Nastena wants to escape this sense for him not to look like a foreigner no to be silent with him.

Only Nastena guessed who should be blamed for losses, this allows supposing that they were not close ones (because she excluded him from the category of "friends"). During one of the conversations Andrey says: *"Why have we never talked like this before? №...Ë We have not, for sure, we have not. We just exchanged a few words; who needs what, talked about any nonsense, every day about nonsense"* [3; 96]. Maybe they were foreign to each other not knowing it and only when they passed through those bitter experiences they could become "friends". Andrey had been out for three years, they became "foreigners" again: *"He is familiar, close, kin person for Nastena, but foreign and hazy again; he was not a person whom she knew what to tell and how to ask and whom she sent off three and a half years ago"* [3; 38]. Nastena understands that he is her close person with whom she should talk and whom she should love, but she cannot overcome the foreignness of Andrey, they behave as foreigners. *"They left only a jar of kerosene in the sledge, the rest was brought to home. Then they lead Karka up the river around the corner, unharness it there and allowed it to approach the hay. We did that speechlessly as foreigners, we needed only words like "take" and "give" "*[3; 39]. Here Nastena resembles Lyusya from "The Last Term", who also get off her mind that her friends are foreign. But Nastena always makes an effort to get closer. She says: *"For God's sake! What are you talking about? I am not a foreigner to you"* [3; 39].

After Andrey saw his father, he finally understood that all the ties with that he considered as dear are broken with bell. Andrey considers the side of his previous village to be foreign: *"Today it does not do any good: he is on the foreign side. On the foreign side? Guskov grinned and agreed: yes, on the foreign side, here you should keep your eyes open..."* [3; 116]. And he argues with himself: *"He is not a foreigner here, no"* [3; 117]. As the result of his thoughts about fate Andrey finally concluded that he is a foreigner to himself: *"See how it goes: one memory fell to two people who are completely foreigners, and they can't divide it"* [3; 118]. As if he consists of two people: the early Andrey and the present Andrey, they are divided by the moment of escape. That was a friend and this is a foe. That one could live among people, but preferred to be lonely: *"It would be better to go down and join friends; he was not the one who felt sick"* [3; 22]. This one wants to be among people, but he cannot, he is forced to keep silence alone.

Nastena feels how the return of Andrey affects her ties with the society, they become weak. There appears freedom, which she doesn't want, because this leads to the fact that she will be forced to *"spy how the other live and live on her own, secretly"* [3; 59]. She can't live this way. It seems as if she is excluded from the common life.

Getting closer to Andrey, Nastena step by step becomes a foreigner to people: firstly the ties with the society are getting weak, and then she understands that she is not able to gladden the common bliss, after that she begins to feel loneliness, the sense that was earlier foreign to her. Then finally she suddenly understands that she is a "foreigner" in the village: *"She was habitually accepted as a kin one, but she had been already a foreigner, a stranger"* [3; 69]. And she takes

them as “foreigners”: *“She should go; maybe that is why the weather is nasty today in order to hide her from foreigners’ eyes”* [3; 74]. She was one of them, over 8 years she managed to do it, and now the ties are broken.

The life in the village is a community life. Here everyone is tied with the other, if one is out, it painfully influences every person. The inhabitants of the village instinctively feel their tie with the common world. The only representative of this life was Nastena. She lives for the people, she cannot live out of this world: not hiding, with everyone to see, that everybody knows everything about her and she knows everything about the others. So the communication is simple and there’s no place for the silence. But her husband, she is a part of him, fell out from the common life. And from that time her life step by step is covered with silence, which is the consequence of deception, lie and concealment. The first meeting of Andrey and Nastena after long separation is illustrative. It should seem that they have so many things to say, explain, calm your loved one. Meanwhile, the meeting begins with the words “be silent”. The life of Nastena in the village is programmed to silence with Andrey’s return, she is not allowed to speak about the husband, herself, there’s some necessity to hide something from the fellow villagers, and she is forced to deceive people that is not in her nature.

“It seems that she anyhow fell asleep, because she did not hear his steps. The door suddenly opened and something scraping and rustling crept in the banya. Nastena sprang. — Oh my God! Who is there? — she cried, dying of fright. A big black figure froze for a moment near the door, and then made a dash for Nastena. — Be silent, Nastena. It’s me. Be silent”. [3; 10]. These words are repeated in the text again and again:

“The voice was gruff, rusty, but the gut stayed the same and Nastena recognized it. — Andrey, is that you? Oh my God! Where did you come from?! — From there. Be silent. Have you said anyone that I am here? — Nope. I did not know myself” [3; 16].

Nastena estranged herself from the people more and more, and that’s why these words (“be silent”) reveal the character of her present relationships with the fellow villagers. Her relationships with Andrey are not easy also; their conversations are frequently attended by the silence. It was necessary in order to hide from people to understand how they love each other, in secret, in darkness, without a sound and without light. This silence is attended by fear, darkness, and also dead silence, bottomless gloom, qualms about the world, which suddenly became foreign.

It seemed that they have being apart for many years. Despite the things that happened, there should be at least a flash of happiness from the meeting, not for nothing Andrey shot Niagara. And now when he came to his wife, he is mostly silent and forces her to be silent. Nastena does not live well with her mother-in-law, only Nastena’s great patience allowed them to get along.

There are also minutes of peace, when the silence is the consequence of their union: *“And during this quiet hour Andrey and Nastena looked not natural, foreign. So quietly, calming all around, full of forgiveness before saying good-bye went this hot day off. And they spoke quietly, almost whispered. The conversation was not vivid, but unembarrassed, wagging as a pendulum, which could pause on the one side more than on the other, could stop whatever it wanted and began to move again”* [3; 93]. Here the quietness is close to the silence.

A possible tie with the quietness of the nature is described by the author. Here Andrey and Nastena are foreigners, but not for each other, but for the others, and are foreigners for themselves, they are not the same. It is important for an individual that his past, present and future are the parts of each other, and not the pieces and bits.

Still the coming closer together should begun with a tender word of encouragement. And the silence will be afterwards, when this unity is reached. You also should know how to keep silence together, it can be done only by the people who are really dear and (or) close. In the first conversations Nastena is afraid of silence, because it shows how far they are from each other, she is angry with herself because could not find the right words for her husband to come into contact with him to feel that they are close. It is very important for her because this is a feature of normal life: *"Nastena answered and could not understand that she can use these casual and fluent phrases, which do not mean a lot. After three years of being apart, when every day could be the last one and after breaking this time off, that had dropped on them now"* [3; 17].

Finally it seems to Nastena that she took somebody's place. It seems to Andrey that somebody lords over him. Nastena to the bitter end tries to be a friend: visits people, though she understands that she must not, because she is a foreigner. She keeps silence: it seems to her that she deceives everyone and keeps silence not to tell a lie. Unlike Andrey Nastena has not become a foreigner to the full to the fellow villagers: *"And she was rendered to the mould among the friends, only a little bit on the edge of it, near the rickety fence"* [3; 200], despite the fact that Nastena accepted her foreignness (made a hole in the water).

The relationships of foreignness cause silence. It is attended by the anger on people, on yourself, perplexity, offence (and by the shame in case of Nastena)

In "The Last Term" Anna felt alienated, the old woman, who lived her long life among people, fully dedicated herself to work. She feels lonely when she is in one house with her children. It seems to the old woman that she is alienated from herself (not from this world, but from "the other"): she lives someone else's life, has an alien body, and takes somebody's place; the last day is needless and alien. It is proved in Lyusya's words: *"And you won't say again that you live someone else's life. — I do live someone else's life, the old woman repeated"* [2; 302].

Her children, who are officially relatives, almost do not communicate: they are together for three days, but nobody tries to break the silence, all of them leave things to take their own course. Everybody from them is intrinsically lonely. Mikhail understands it spontaneously, Lyusya consciously speaks about it, but the first abates the anxiety with the help of alcohol and the other drives the bad thoughts away ("bad" means that these thoughts make Lyusya look inside her and see that she lived wrong and in the long run it will be necessary to change her everyday life), tries to pay herself off (I am a stranger here). She is tinged with her own sense of guilt, but she does not want to change anything in her life. As S. Semenova notes, "Anna's children got used to live a mechanically wound up life".

As a result, silence was set in the relationships between generations. They don't have common words. Anna's children do not want to interfere, but in reality they do not know what to talk about with their mother: *"Ilya came to his mother before Stepan, she felt asleep and didn't hear him or pretended not to hear, and, maybe, she watched him over surreptitiously. He was pleased to see it, because*

he didn't know what to tell; he wasn't so drunk to tell about everyone and his dog" [2; 359]. The fact that silence serves their turn terrifies.

Tanchora was the closest child to Anna, but the reason why she did not come is not recorded by the author. Tanchora was not a foreigner to the people; she strained after communication and people. But it is she who borrowed a lot from the foreigners: "As if there was no word like this [*"maaammy"*] — only if she borrowed it from foreigners or heard it in her dream?" [2; 370]. She moved to the foreign side. There was a moment when she almost moved to the foreign country, abroad. And even after these events she is the closest to the old woman. The other children are nearby, but they are foreigners. They cannot stay alone with the mother unwittingly.

The moment where the old woman teaches Varvara to sing a loath to depart is the moment of possible coming together of mother and daughter, but it is broken by Lyusya bitterly: "The way that Lyusya said it, her voice, it was impossible not to obey her voice, made them freeze and the old woman stop: she was fearfully quiet..." [2; 377]. The death is an organic continuation of life for the mother and something horrifying for Lyusya. The mother is not afraid of the death, it is very important for her that she will be bidden farewell, wept for properly. Lyusya was afraid even to think about herself, people, and her own life. And if a person did not live properly, honestly, but was afraid of people's blame, what they would say (Lyusya always thinks of what is decent and what is not), then the death is frightful for its impudence, necessity to make some conclusions.

Anna's children are not foreign for the mother only, but for each other as well. They meet after long separation, and they have no emotions: "At night Ilya and Luysya came by boat, which went only twice a week. Mikhail met them on the quay and led them into the house, where they were born and grew up. They went silently: Lyusya and Ilya went on narrow wooden sidewalk, Mikhail went near on globs of consolidated mud" [2; 258].

When they are in the mother's house, in the house that was made by their father, not a word of encouragement was said: they are either silent or argue. The conversation comes to nothing: "Ilya asked Mikhail when he should return to job and Mikhail answered that he obtained permission to be absent these days. The words were bland, did not form the conversation" [2; 275]. As S. G. Semenova notes, they are afraid to stay alone and that is why everyone is busy with something [5]. The have been nearby for three days, but you cannot say that they are close. There is no happiness from the meeting, all their movements, gestures, behavior are the due, about which Daria argues. Lyusya even thinks that she came for nothing.

Anna's children are of one generation with Pavel, but there is a huge difference between them. Pavel talks about what is going on in the world, is torn between the two sorts of truths, but he thinks, and does not delude himself: "Maybe, we'll find a way out — with luck or without. We'll bear it. We yield a little bit and then turn it back. If a man only had powers, he would sneak out of danger. Am I right? Why don't you say a word, Pavel? Pavel was smoking, listening and lost even more not understanding and hating himself. When the mother was speaking he agreed with her and now when Afanasy said something he agreed with him too because he had nothing to say" [2; 297].

Anna's children are worrying and do not want to think about it, because it requires soul pains to do it, and it is more than they are capable of. It seemed that

they would have a better life than their mother had, she could save all the best in her despite all the cruelties of the war and post-war time. The older generation is forced to look after themselves all alone. Their ideas about life, standard, due were formed in the conditions of the war. And their children do not have a clear picture of life. Their life was relieved by their parent's labor. As a result an easy perception of life was formed; a consumer attitude towards the prizes of life appears. The older generation took care about better future for their children, the present generation lives as for the last time, they don't care about the world and how their children would live in it. The younger generation lives at breakneck speed, they don't consider anything for their transitory pleasures.

The silence is connected with the eternity; it contains the mystery of eternity versus short human being, which has no mystery: a man comes to earth and will pass away silently. According to Rasputin's thought, which is reflected in the thoughts of Anna and Daria, the tie with the eternity is achieved by being a part of the family. A person is tied with his family as the ties are strong with the whole world. A man leaves his mark in the memory of his descendants. Mikhail and Andrey Guskov think so, but in contrast to the older generation's thoughts, their mind is directed at future only, the ties with antecedents are lost. Mikhail spontaneously feels these ties:

"It is not necessary, but still. As if you came to an open place and you should be seen from every corner. — Mikhail looked around and was silent. — And again if we speak about our guys. They are like small kids, and you are young, and if she dies the guys will definitely push you forward. They are growing up, deuce take it! You can't stop them" [2].

Mikhail also considers himself as a foreigner in the village, now everybody is a foreigner to each other, and he does not see the previous unity of the people: *"And now everyone is on his own. What do you want: the friends move out, the foes move in. Now I don't know many of the villagers. Who are they? It seems that I also became a foreigner, I moved in the unknown place" [2; 314].* Mikhail seems to understand what goes on and can explain it to himself and to Ilya, but he prefers to fight the pain and desperation as all the others: he drinks to kill the pain. His mother always thinks about the future, about other people and how she will cope with them. It doesn't bother Mikhail: everybody is alien to him, he is an alien himself. Life is a burden to him. He as well as the old woman is keen on work, but the work is no longer the one it had been. Earlier it was a matter of joy and now it is a liability. We notice that he, as well as Nastena, speaks about the ties of people in the village: *"So many things link us to the job and home" [3; 312]*, but he perceives these ties as burdens, while Nastena needs them, she feels herself of use this way.

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