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**FIGURE AND IMAGE IN CONTRADICTION  
OF THE FIGURATIVE AND EXPRESSIVE\***

*SUMMARY.* In this paper the category of a “figure” is explored from the aesthetic point of view. This kind of method makes assertions about a figure as a particular type of an image. Thus, the figure, figurative, and “figural” go beyond the limits of sculptural embodiment and image of pictorial art. Literary image is reviewed in terms of its “figural” capabilities. Correlation of the literal and figurative is conducted against the background of logic and aesthetic-anthropological rules of sense formation. It is underlined that aesthetics is not simply opposed to logic. The dialectics of literal and figurative is represented as one of the main factors of the development of literature, which is detected in opposition of trends, genres and styles of literature. “Figural” capacities of the image are portrayed as existing both in a figurative and in a literal utterance. Figural nature of the image is analyzed through an example of the fable “The Crow and the Fox”. The fables by J. La Fontaine and I.A. Krylov are compared; an analogy between cultural, historic, and mental peculiarities of deceit in two cultures is shown.

*KEY WORDS.* Figure, image, literal meaning, figurative meaning.

In one of his articles M.N. Shcherbinin [1] raises the question of figurality of the social, making us look at the opposition of “a figure — a face” and “a figure — a person” in a new way. An interesting aspect of the esthetic perception of human values is revealed. History of esthetics detects cross-points of “dominating” arts and “configurations”, such important values as kindness, justice and beauty. But configuration as a space location, accommodation, decoration, etc. can be present only in figurative arts. Sculptural and architectural constructions can be concerned herein as the evidence of “space” intelligence development, not just intelligence based on imagination, but configuration of the abstract (in Shcherbinin’s work, the Statue of Liberty is particularly referred to as the configuration of freedom).

Thus, a contradictory nature of relations between the categories “figure — image” is found out; it can be explained by a more fundamental difference — the difference between sculpture and oil painting. The image has two dimensions, the figure has three dimensions, the image is a window to another reality, the figure is an addition to the actual reality. But introduction of “a figure” into the general esthetic-anthropo-

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logical discourse not only opposes it to the image, but allows us to estimate it as having peculiar figurative nature. "A figure" as an estimation of a social role, status, influence in the space of a literary novel (or in the game field) is a special, important (not secondary) image making up the most important link of the whole. Such understanding of a figure is probably just, first of all, in relation to works of literature, whose figurative nature is not evident, but with this the spectrum of possibilities of representation of the social-typical is wider.

It is difficult to speak about figurality of a literary work — the word is imponderable and intangible. But it has an image. Figurativeness of literature is speculative and it is more difficult to assess the nature of speculative figurativeness, since the imaginative has a deep individual imprint. Some images look like schemes, they are "blurred" and do not cause emotional involvement, they appear to be faceless and lifeless; others are dynamic, energetic and possess features of a person, thoughts and emotions, "the inner world" and leave a bright imprint in the memory. If we refer the last ones to "figures", their fullness, "corporality" is in expressiveness, in the ability to appeal to sympathy, to form up a bright emotional attitude to themselves. A figure is imposing and influential, its shifting or disappearance may result in a serious narrative turn. The ludic beginning in the literary text is realized by means of such figures: they provide feasibility of the literary world. In the popular contemporary saga "A game of thrones" by G. Martin, those characters in whose hands there is a power to completely change or control the political situation, to act not only according to the circumstances and the social role, but to change these circumstances in accordance with their own wishes (it should not necessarily be a monarch or a Crown prince) become the figures of this game.

In literary theory, there are a number of set categories that are linguistically allied with "the figure". Figurality should be distinguished from allegory and figurativeness. Figurativeness has a methodological nature, it is a means of narration; figurality reveals social essence of an image. If figurativeness of an utterance is the signifier (a figure of speech), then figurality is the signified. This is that very thing which is socio-typically metaphorically imagined or, in other words, it is "seen" (and from the author's point of view — hidden) behind the allegoric plot of a fable. "The figural" is first of all an attribute of oil painting portraying real subjects and in this sense it is opposed to the abstract; it denotes figurative and figural. The figurative is the feature of a text, of words, phrases or utterances. These categories can be divided into characteristics of different types of art — portrayal is figural, language expression is figurative. If the figural is opposed to the abstract, the figurative is opposed to the literal. But the literal word has a figural-expressive nature. There are both figurative and figural elements in it: the image can be valued as self-efficient, but at the same time it points at something different: thus, the index itself is a figurative constituent; the social context read in it, cultural-historical characters are figural constituents. The dynamics of the development of the genre, plot, style, etc. also allow us to judge the development of artistic (in our case literary) exploration of the social area via the development of figurality as a capability of spatial intelligence. Thus, the figurality is the sphere of

something imagined and speculative; but also of something more archetypical or socially typical than concrete and bizarre; more responsible for the connection of the image with reality than for its surreal nature.

Figurativeness, undoubtedly, is a facet of figurative discourse.

The figural and the figurative can be thought as characteristics contradicting each other. The figurative is traditionally presented as a category of fictional discourse; the literal is a category of factual discourse. In epistemology the fact and fiction are connected with the classical opposition “the truth-the lie”; and the fictional discourse is quasi-scientific discourse. But when talking about works of art in literature, first of all, complication of the opposition “the myth-the truth” — “the myth — the lie” [2] takes place and the text does not fit the scheme of opposition of the actual to the illusory, as the classical criteria of verity are not applicable here. Moreover, opposition of the literal to the figurative can be found everywhere. These qualities characterize the method of expression (the appeal to the direct or allegoric meanings of words). The literal and figurative are the methods of connection of thought and utterance exceeding the boundaries of the explanation of formal logic.

However, the literal (a description, for example) can also be figural.

The literary text has both meanings — literal and figurative. It can be stated that these characteristics of understanding do not exclude, but complement each other. Ordinary word usage presents these meanings as mutually excluding — either it refers us to reality (literal) or to allegory (figurative). In arts, understanding is an endless process of the meaning creation both at the literal level (facts and events) and at the figurative level (worries, emotions, rationalization and conceptualization of reality). In epistemology and in ordinary word usage, understanding is comprehension of the meaning. Comprehension presupposes the pre-given meaning, whereas the creation emphasizes its primary incompleteness and expands the meaning.

It goes without saying that a work of art has an idea, but our understanding of a work of art is not limited by its idea; moreover, its comprehension remains inaccessible for the reader. A work of art has neither the only true meaning (which is connected with the idea of “the death of the author”), nor the only target of comprehension and the only true interpretation.

But literature cannot be limited to the sphere of figurative meanings. Literary texts are extremely non-homogeneous, there are many different movements, directions, styles, genres, types of writing, to say nothing of the uniqueness of an author’s vision (the literary genius is always unique). But nevertheless, definite typical tendencies are highlighted by literary theoreticians, and the opposition of the literal and the figurative in the word acquires new meanings. This opposition forms the basis for such oppositions as the opposition of realism and romanticism, acmeism and symbolism (acmeism and imaginism), critical realism and social realism, neorealism and psychedelics [...] [3.4] Thus, innovation in literature can be explained as an expansion of possibilities of the figurative — the expansion of tools, meanings and images.

Only in Russian literature the dynamics of the development of the figurative (functional) include such tendencies as wide usage of allegory and metaphor; in this

case, emphasis is placed on imagery, ideal and ideological conceptualization, delusiveness and distortion of reality.

The aesthetics of post-modernism opposes neorealism with virtualistics, an art formed on the platform of the virtual. But figurativeness and fiction of the virtual are not of the same nature as psychedelic vision. This delusiveness is technically created, not tangible, but evident (factual, but not only speculative).

In connection with this, the literal obtains a new meaning. Its development has revealed and developed the factual, historical and literary “truth”; the “truth equal to facts, historical events with possible manifestations and consequences, and the “truth” equal to possible events with possible variants of development; the “truth” reconstructing the spirit of the epoch and the cultural situation, the “truth” that does not break the natural consistency, and truthfulness as conspicuity or perception.

With the appearance of the virtual the literal became equal to reality, materiality.

The “thing” and the “fiction”, the “thing” and the “model”, the “image” and the “simulacrum” — the projection of this opposition on literature puts different instrumental accents: the literal tends to become expressive, the figurative tends to become pictorial (figurativeness in a certain sense goes back to its primary meaning, to the tangible figure taking a definite place in space and opposed to the flatness of the picture, image).

Figurality as a message to social reality, to things, phenomenon and even persons that became the prototype of a literary statement, (as it is presented in dictionaries of figurative art) also changes during the development of literature: from the direct mention of names, dates, circumstances to a serious separation from reality with all the spectrum of natural and social consistency. Figurality as portliness and influence of the literary image is achieved by different means and speech figures. Allegory in fables highlights faults, and lyrical metaphor highlights uplifting and cleansing emotions.

In this connection a fable is a curious phenomenon [10]. Being related to the oldest literature genres, it, nevertheless, was seen by theoreticians as a primitive sub-genre, and therefore, it was put out of the boundary of the regular trine of the epic, the lyrical, and the dramatic. Both Lessing and Potebnya, as founders of the traditional fable theory, denied its connection with poetry, denying the fable characters’ expressiveness and picturesqueness. That is why Lessing severely criticizes La Fontaine [5], A.A. Potebnya criticizes I.A. Krylov [6.7]. But L.S. Vygotsky [8] occupies the position according to which the poetic fable is one of legitimate historical ways of the genre development and he suggests the “psychological” theory of the fable. From then on it became possible to assess and analyze fable characters, whereas initially the choice of imagery was predetermined by the fact that “every animal represented a stereotypical way of behavior, it was first of all the acting character not because of a number of character traits, but because of common properties of its life [...]”. The psychological understanding of images in fables makes it possible to see in them such traits as portliness (or pettiness), power (or weakness), business (or passiveness) — all those traits that can be defined as constituents of the character, his/her life activity and energy, which, in our opinion, allows likening the image to the “figure” [9].

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In the world literature heritage there are many recurrent plots among which there are a number of fabulous ones. Owing to the fact that every literary interpretation is cultural-historical, it is possible to reconstruct a figurative row standing behind it. Thus, the sources of the most famous fable — “The Crow and the Fox” — are in the ancient Indian story. In the European tradition the first edition of this fable is connected with the name of Aesop. Later the fable was retold by Phaedrus, Ignaty Diakon, a Byzantine, J. de La Fontaine. In Russia V.K. Trediakovsky and A.P. Sumarokov retold it before I.A. Krylov.

The main tool of a fable is allegory, the basis of which, as a rule, is the situation borrowed from animal life. In its essence the fable is a hint at this situation, a new look at the already known life circumstances. An attempt to “become relatives” with poetry replaces the moralizing aspect of a fable by pure non-judgmental portrayal; and images acquire features, ideas and even a social status. For a real work this is interesting due to the fact that a possibility to see “figures” behind images appears.

It goes without saying that the image of the lion or the eagle always hints at a tsar/king, the fox hints at a clever cunning fellow, the wolf hints at a villain. In all known versions of “The Crow and the Fox” there are two characters: in La Fontaine’s work they are the raven and the fox, in Krylov’s fable they are the fox and the crow. The change of the masculine gender into the feminine one reveals different allegoric hints (predetermined not only by the text of the fable, but by the general mythological and fairy context): so, if the raven (of the masculine gender) symbolizes wisdom (and in the fable he turns out to be a foolish sage), the crow (of the feminine gender) is the implementation of naivety and foolishness. The same is with the second participant: the French fox (of the masculine gender) is the implementation of a tricky mind, he is a dealer and an adventurer; the Russian fox (of the feminine gender) is cunning, but not always clever and far-sighted. The general sense of the situation is similar: the flatterer deceives the simpleton and takes the cheese — it was so in Aesop’s and Phaedrus’ fables. But in La Fontaine’s fable the event acquires an instructive-didactic character: the fox teaches a lesson to the raven, who in general is not stupid:

*The Fox catches it (the cheese) and says:*

*“My dear master, you should know that any flatterer*

*Lives at the expense of the one who listens to him.*

*This lesson costs cheese, without doubt”.*

*The ashamed and confused raven*

*Swears that he will never behave like that.*

Krylov’s fox was not going to teach anything, she just took what she liked:

*[...] The cheese fell out of the crow’s beak and the rogue ran away.*

Flattery is one of the universal ways of acquiring wealth. But its tools are not universal and can indicate the difference in social relations. Addressing the raven, La Fontaine’s fox underlines his social status. The direct address “Maître” hints at a high position of the raven and even at his juridical status that gives the lie a character of a juridical and even political precedent. In a similar situation it is important not to lie, but to “legalize” the lie and this is a real fraud. The fox is presented as socially de-

pendent on the raven; that is why he is so scrupulous in the treatment. The reader's attitude to such a cunning creature is dual — he causes indignation and a certain degree of admiration simultaneously. By the way, in Europe people always treated adventurers with a tinge of glorification of the deed.

Krylov's fox creates her own approach not by means of distancing from the crow, but, on the contrary, by means of reduction of the social distance. The direct address "dear", "sister" equals the participants at the moment of the monologue and such an address can be flattering only in the case if it is aimed at a representative of a lower origin, class, position or status. Under such circumstances it is already not a political or juridical, but a common, everyday sketch:

*The world has been told for many times*

*That flatter is vile and harmful;*

*But all in vain,*

*And a flatterer will always find room in one's heart.*

L.S. Vygotsky, comparing "the canons of the fable" worked out by G.E. Lessing and A.A. Potebnya, is thinking about the dual nature of allegory in fables: what should it be — criticism or simple description of social faults? Should it be didacticism and moralization or revealing ("clearing out") of images? In the theory of literature, as a result of similar arguments, fables were divided into poetic and prosaic fables; poetics in this division emerged as an "alien" tendency.

La Fontaine and Krylov present the poetic fable and "clear up" the images, filling them with colours, expression and life energy. The presence of this factor allows speaking about characters not only as images but also as figures (thinking, purposeful, wishing and acting creatures, whose life is not limited by the boundaries of the plot).

Flattery and the desire to be deceived by it are incurable faults, which is evidenced by the topicality of the plot. In France (as in Europe in general and in America) adventurers and swindlers are often treated with a certain romantic delight — people admire their refinement, courage, greatness of the deed verging on nobleness. The same is in the French fable — the fox shocks and delights simultaneously and the deceived raven causes a smile. It is not by accident that adventurers and swindlers become characters of books and films; their biographies are included into the series of biographies of famous people. The life and adventures of Alessandro Cagliostro inspired many artists; Arsène Lupin turned into the common name meaning "the gentleman thief". It is possible that La Fontaine's fox became the prototype of Br'er Fox from children's folktales by Joel Harris. But Harris describes another model of relations "for a tricky man there will be found another cunning man" or "one nail drives out another". In Hollywood movies about adventurers and swindlers, adventurers are searched for and can be caught or fooled only by people thinking like they do.

In Russia clever cunning men are just liars and robbers, and the moral estimation of their actions always overweighs the aesthetic estimation; both the fox and the crow in Krylov's fable deserve condemnation, and neither of them causes sympathy or compassion. Deceit of a person who is unequal to you and who is not of a higher rank

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but, vice versa, a representative of lower intellectual abilities, or of lower social position, cannot be labeled an adventure and cannot cause admiration.

The comparison of great adventurers of Europe and Russia seems to be symptomatic: the former deceived and robbed affluent people, the royal treasury (for example, John Law, a Britisher who disrupted the economy of France; or Victor Lustig best known as “The man who sold the Eiffel Tower. Twice”); the latter preferred to take money from ordinary not very well-off people (numerous financial pyramids at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can serve as an example: many people incurred financial loss as a result of their activity). The founders of such pyramids got into numerous “tops” of dozens and hundreds of the most famous adventurers and scoundrels of the world. The scheme of such financial pyramids emerged from the social conditions in Russia in the 1990s, reflecting the national passion for everything that is “free”.

Thus, when considering images of literature as figures, as “alive”, energetic, acting social types, we can find conventional boundaries of location of these or those faults, moral and ethic values. The scene of “the description of animal world as it is” symbolizes trickiness, greediness, stupidity, etc.; but the image that “comes alive” (that acquires shape, form, weight [...] i.e. a figure) with the help of poetic means goes further creating social reality. And this can serve as food for thought about the spirit of the epoch, culture, civilization, people and mentality.

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