

SALTYKOV-SHCHEDRIN AS A MASTER OF SATIRE

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Abstract. *The purpose of the article is to show the skill of the unsurpassed artist of the word in the field of socio-political satire, the successor of the traditions of Gogol-Saltykov Shchedrin, for whom the main weapon of satire that exposed human vices was laughter, and the social ideal was the future society of equal and free people. Shchedrin, like Gogol, became an outstanding master of irony. He widely used it in his satirical works, knowing perfectly well that irony is a "terrible tool". Saltykov was called a brilliant artist, a master of psychological analysis, who surpassed even Dostoevsky in this respect. Saltykov-Shchedrin could clearly see things as they really were, and it was this state that was reflected in many aspects of his satirical poetics and style.*

Keywords: *Saltykov-Shchedrin, master of irony, laughter, satire, sense of humor, talent, comedy.*

There are writers by the very nature of their talents who are prone to wit, that is, to unexpected, sharp comparisons and comparisons that instantly expose the comicality of certain aspects of reality. One of them is Saltykov-Shchedrin-an unsurpassed artist of words in the field of socio-political satire [4, p. 43], who made a huge contribution to both Russian and world literature. This is a satirist of universal significance, who has always had his own individual vision of the world, his attitude to it, whose works, while remaining a valuable means of education, are still an indispensable source of knowledge by the power of his gift [2:6:9], and by the scale of satirical creativity. Yeliseyev G. Z. noted that Shchedrin was "a man of remarkably bold and strong thought", that his journalistic speeches "were masterpieces of their kind" [8, p. 349].

To understand Saltykov-Shchedrin, to feel him, can only be someone who seriously, not hastily, not on the move, will try to read him. He devoted almost all his conscious years to writing, native literature, and satirical art. No wonder Dobrolyubov said that "our literature began with satire and continued with satire and still stands on satire [8, p. 4].

Saltykov-Shchedrin's artistic talent and satirical skill are appreciated by the largest Russian writers. Turgenev I. S. believed that he dissociated himself from our literature an entire area in which he was "an indisputable master and an advanced person" [6, p. 5]. Tolstoy L. N. found in Shchedrin "everything that is needed" to win the recognition of the people: "a concise, strong, real language", character, "cheerful laughter", "knowledge of the true interests of the people's life" [6, p. 5]. Gorky M. considered Shchedrin more "instructive and valuable writer with a surprisingly wide creative scope than they talk about him" [6, p. 6].

Shchedrin's sharp and penetrating mind penetrated into the phenomena, into their innermost essence, he never stopped on the surface of life. "Saltykov, knowing perfectly well the psyche of the representatives of the cultural society of his time, which was formed before his eyes, was smart, honest, harsh, never hid the truth, no matter how deplorable it was" [6, p.7]. His ideals were "the ideals of the future" [8, p. 54], "to the pain of the heart" [10, p. 4]. He believed that, in the end, freedom, equality, justice would prevail. Everything that came into conflict with living life caused him to laugh angrily. Everything that was afraid of laughter became the subject of his satirical denunciation.

Shchedrin was an advanced figure of his time, a preacher of high social and ethical ideals, a passionate fighter against everything low, deceitful and mean, as well as a brilliant artist who created such satirical works that represent enduring aesthetic values [4, p.43].

Shchedrin's satire is highly intellectual, it is not just saturated, but oversaturated with thought, which is the source of its immortality. This is a vast and extremely diverse field of art, which has given people a lot of aesthetic masterpieces, striking with the depth of its thought. The purpose of satire is to expose vices. Even in Ancient Rome, Diomedes emphasized that "satire was born to fight against human vices" [8, p. 37].

The Russian critic N. K. Mikhailovsky, considering that "talents are bright, strong, so to speak, one-color, called Shchedrin's talent iridescent. The iridescence of this brilliant rainbow is as beautiful as it is rare in literature" [8, p. 5]. His talent was surprisingly multifaceted, versatile.

Shchedrin was a great satirical writer, an outstanding life writer, critic, publicist, playwright. Working tirelessly in literature for more than forty years, he created diverse, unique, bearing the indelible stamp of his genius, satirical worlds that reflect real life, but born of the

unrestrained imagination of the writer. The worlds are scary and at the same time funny [2, p. 112].

Shchedrin's artistic mastery of satire originates from the progressive traditions of Russian satirical literature of the XVIII century and from Gogol [4, p. 43]. Shchedrin, like Gogol, was reproached for showing only negative, bad things, although he could also depict the bright, gratifying things in life [4, p. 44].

Shchedrin himself believed that "satire will become satire if, having achieved its goal, it, firstly, gives the reader a sense of its ideal, from which its creator departs, and, secondly, if it is fully aware of the object against which its sting is directed" [7, p.228]. Belinsky V. G. characterizes Gogol's humor as "calm in his indignation, good-natured in his cunning", at the same time there is another humor, "formidable and open", "bilious, poisonous, merciless" [5, p.227]. This is Shchedrin's humor. If the formula "laughter through tears" can be applied to Gogol's humor [1, p.65], then the formula "laughter through contempt and indignation" corresponds to Shchedrin's humor [5, p. 228].

Saltykov - Shchedrin, like other major writers of his contemporaries, focused on a person. All of them were interested in the question of the free development of a person, about the maximum identification of his potential qualities and properties. However, every outstanding writer has his own "approach" to a person, his own angle of his artistic research.

Saltykov-Shchedrin saw his creative task not in "justifying the humiliated and rejected pariahs of society" [10, p. 86], but in studying the diverse manifestations of human dehumanization. Perhaps someone will find such a task too simple and narrow. In fact, however, it is so broad and complex that the great writer did not have a whole lifetime to fully solve it. After all, in essence, this is the task facing all satire, facing many generations of satirists. But each of them solved it to the best of their talent and their understanding.

Chernyshevsky N. G. wrote that Shchedrin is "a writer mostly mournful and indignant" ... "No one punished with a more bitter word and did not expose public sores and vices with such ruthlessness" [7, p. 23]. When you get acquainted with Shchedrin's works, at first it seems that the writer does not really go into the details of the inner world of his characters. Here we can see brilliant examples of his deep psychological analysis [4: 9].

We meet in Shchedrin's work with a variety of types of satirical images, such as: Judushka Golovlev and Surly-Burcheev, pompadours and toy people, the wise minnow and dried roach, to make sure that we really have different artistic structures in front of us. Saltykov was called a brilliant artist, a master of psychological analysis, who surpassed even Dostoevsky in

this respect [4:9]. "For this" Judushka", – V. Garshin wrote – - I will give three Dostoevsky ... " [8, p. 89].

In Saltykov-Shchedrin's novel "Gentlemen Golovlevs", an unusually typical personality appeared in the image of Judushka, in which there is a remarkable artistic combination of two opposite elements: almost ridiculous comic with deep tragedy [1, p. 65]. The qualities peculiar to the whole class were manifested in him with greater force and intensity, so the writer sought to reveal his psychology as deeply and thoroughly as possible. Shchedrin's collection of hypocrites is quite original and unique. The first place in it, undoubtedly, is occupied by Judushka Golovlev. It will not pale from our comparison with the best works of this kind of European writers.

Porfiry Vladimirovich Golovlev – "the last representative of the vymorochny family..." [8, p. 107]. Despite the fact that he moves and performs the usual actions, he has long been not only a "living ghost", but also a "living corpse". Being among living people, he is at the same time separated from them by an invisible wall, on one side of which is life, and on the other – death [8, p.110].

The writer deliberately wants to show us that before us is a figure (Judushka) morally ugly, terrible, but at the same time comic, funny. Drawing the image of Porfiry Vladimirovich, the author rarely resorts to external comedy. He purposefully and consistently exposes the inner comic discrepancy between the hero's words and his deeds, between his sermons and his actions, between his statements and his behavior.

Dostoevsky F. M. once said that "satire ridicules vice, and most often-vice under the guise of virtue" [8, p. 114]. We see an inert, deadened creature trying to pass itself off as a living person. The writer reveals the comedy of hypocrisy and moral ossification, which appear before us in all their ridiculous and at the same time disgusting, terrible essence [4, p. 45].

Another kind of satirical image that we meet with in Shchedrin is a collectively caricatured image that embodies a certain social group. So, a well-intentioned person is a person who leads a vegetative lifestyle; a person who eats, drinks, reproduces, enjoys, but does not think; a person who is unable to distinguish good from evil. In other words, we are again faced with a dehumanized person [4, p. 44].

Saltykov is well aware that the reality surrounding him is full of contradictions, not only tragic, dramatic, but also comic, which are also the subject of his constant attention. And next to this continuous drama, which often turned into a tragedy, comedy was still going on, because the servants of ghosts were beings who were internally incompetent, flawed, comical. They, as

before, were characterized by empty talk and empty-bragging, and besides, many other equally unattractive qualities. It is this complex combination of different life collisions inherent in real reality that Shchedrin introduced into his satire. In his writings, we encounter conflicts not only comic, but also dramatic, tragic. In almost every work of the writer, we encounter both a life drama (tragedy) and a comedy, which determines the amazing "volume" and depth of his satire.

Shchedrin urged readers of Russia to "cultivate the ideals of the future...not to let their hearts turn to stone. He believed that "it will be terrible to live if the time comes when the most modest references to the ideals of the future will only excite unabashed laughter" [10, p.3-4].

Shchedrin's originality as an artist is most clearly manifested in such features of his satirical poetics as the art of using humor, hyperbole, grotesque, fiction, allegory [3, p.67].

The peculiarity of Shchedrin's style lies in its allegorical nature, on this occasion he wrote: "I am a Russian writer and therefore have two slavish habits: first, to write allegorically and, secondly, to tremble [8, p.315]. In the "Provincial essays" and the works adjacent to them, you can also find images and paintings that acquire an allegorical meaning.

Shchedrin's laughter [4, p. 45] is surprisingly rich and diverse. He possessed all the shades of the ridiculous. In his writings, humor and irony are interspersed with wit and caustic sarcasm [3: 11]. Turgenev I., admiring Shchedrin's "flight of crazy - humorous fantasy", noted that the power of his comedy [11, p.10] "was nowhere shown with greater brilliance than in the "Modern Idyll" [7, p. 67]. This is the "laughter that exposes the "heroes" of political and public reaction to shame and arouses the energy of public protest towards them; laughter that straightens the oppressed and shackles the oppressors; laughter that awakens a sense of shame in people who have not yet lost everything human" [5, p.180].

According to Saltykov, if "we untie a person's hands and give him the opportunity to freely express his thoughts, then we will see not the person we knew, but another. Without this exposure, he believed, it is impossible to reproduce the whole person, a truthful trial over him is impossible" [7, p. 231].

Panaeva A. Ya. writes about him that "I have never seen Saltykov calm, he was always annoyed. The contrast was striking when he was sitting at dinner with Ostrovsky, who portrayed calmness itself, and Saltykov was boiling with nervous irritation" [8, p. 251]. Complacency, like indifference, has never been characteristic of a writer. Wherever he was, whatever he was doing, he always stood up for justice, and therefore he was constantly irritated by something, he was at war with something.

The heart of Saltykov-Shchedrin responded to any pain, to any injustice. "...I can't achieve the indifference that is necessary," "I'm shaking all over with indignation," he wrote in his letters " [8, p. 254]. "The further away, the more dreary it is to live. Every little thing is annoying, and then writing has become attached, and I can't get rid of it" [8, p.255]. Shchedrin does not have a single page that would be written with an impassive, indifferent hand. The satirist himself once said: "I swear, the minute I feel that my insides are no longer trembling, I will throw down my pen, even if the beggars have to die" [8, p. 255].

So, Saltykov-Shchedrin, in the words of L. Tolstoy, was indignant, bilious, angry all his life. It was this state that helped him to "clearly see things" as they really were, and it was this state that was reflected in many aspects of his satirical poetics and style.

Many contemporaries of the writer emphasize in their memoirs that Saltykov had an organic, natural sense of humor [3, p. 70]. A. N. Pleshcheev in one of his letters noticed that Shchedrin "has his own special humor... that involuntarily makes you laugh", and in another letter he was happy to report that Saltykov visited him: "So snide that it's lovely. Love to listen. I love his conversation terribly" [8, p. 255].

Burenin V. P. writes in his memoirs about Shchedrin's natural, organic humor that he "did not belong to the category of brilliant storytellers-writers, as Turgenev and Grigorovich were considered. His humor and wit [1, p. 68], escaped involuntarily, it was felt that he did it without preparation, ... involuntarily carried away and caused laughter with his humor and sharp, sometimes even rude in form, but witty antics, ...no matter how much he joked, he kept his seriousness and never laughed himself. This, they say, is a trait characteristic of true satirical talents: Gogol and Swift were also distinguished by seriousness and rarely showed gaiety... " [8, pp. 255-256].

Shchedrin admitted that humor can not be "forced", "strained". It should flow naturally, naturally. And for this, "gaiety" was required: "without gaiety, there can be no freedom in writing" [8, p. 261]. Skabichevsky A.M. testifies that the writer had an "organic aversion to everything vulgar, false and insincere". Seeing this, he could not help but express to the person in the eyes the impression that he makes on him, and express it with all his sarcastic wit. It was not his anger that was terrible, but rather those jokes with which he was able to destroy the interlocutor, for one purely external sign, in one or two words, he could very correctly show the personality in the most comical form" [8, p. 256].

Sometimes Saltykov-Shchedrin wanted to be frivolous, but it turned out to be serious. In fact, he managed to preserve, of course, not frivolity at all, but a deep, organic sense of humor,

which helped the writer throughout his life to courageously endure the blows raining down on him, did not allow him to fall into pessimism, supported faith in a better future, dispelled fears, fed the main pathos of Saltykov's satirical work – the pathos of ridicule. Of course, Saltykov did not immediately have his own "satirical voice", his own manner of ridicule. On many pages of the "Provincial Essays", the influence of Gogol's manner of narration, Gogol's style was clearly felt [4, p.48]. Shchedrin, like Gogol, became an outstanding master of irony [11, p. 10]. He widely used it in his satirical works, knowing perfectly well that irony is a "terrible tool" [8, p.268].

Shchedrin's main weapon in the fight against the evil of life was laughter. The writer emphasized that "this weapon is very strong, since nothing discourages vice so much as the consciousness that it has been guessed and laughter has already been heard about it" [8, p.260]. Turgenev wrote that " Shchedrin's laughter is both bitter and sharp, often ridicule offends him, very often his indignation takes the form of a caricature, which is divided into two kinds. One exaggerates the truth, as if magnifying the glass, but without completely distorting its essence, while the other more or less consciously deviates from natural truth and real relations. Saltykov resorts only to the first kind, which is the only one that is permissible" [6, p. 112].

The creative task of the writer is to debunk the vicious, evil, terrible in every satirical work, to make it contemptible and untenable in the eyes of the reader. And it was impossible to solve this problem without a deep, organic sense of humor [4, p.48]. "I cannot treat such phenomena with "proper seriousness", because it is impossible to feel anything but contempt for them, and it should not. For me yet... It's lucky that I have a large stock of humor, " he admitted [5, p. 173-174].

In order to truly grasp and expose internal comic contradictions, it is necessary to have not only a sense of humor, but also an extraordinary mind [4, p.49]. Lunacharsky called Saltykov (along with Chernyshevsky) "the most intelligent writer of that era and one of the smartest in all world literature" [5, pp. 230-231]. "His insight, the correctness of his assessment of the surrounding events are amazing" [8, p. 263]. The satirist stressed many times that " laughter was never an end in itself for him. It was a form of revealing the truth, a means of distinguishing the truth from a lie, "no matter how deplorable it may be" [8, p. 263].

Saltykov-Shchedrin has always been among those in whom the desire for independent identity has not died out, who did not succumb to oppression, but opposed it [8, p.31]. "Art, he believed, should 'serve society'. He should use all his efforts, all his energy to establish good and truth in the world, and to eradicate evil" [8, p. 33]. All his life, the writer was worried about a

variety of phenomena of the rapidly current modernity. And they not only excited, but also fed his creativity, became an impulse to create new and new satirical works. Taras Shevchenko wrote: "I am in awe of Saltykov. Oh, Gogol, our immortal Gogol! With what joy would your noble soul rejoice, seeing around you such brilliant students of your own" [7, p. 24].

And every time you read and reread his satirical works, which are "art for art's sake" [8, p. 3], you are amazed not only by their depth and ideological uncompromising nature, but also by their artistic richness and diversity. Saltykov-Shchedrin was and remains not only a great satirical writer, but also an outstanding thinker. Rather, he became a great satirist because he was an outstanding thinker.

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