

# The Creative Replica of L. Tolstoy to M. Kostomarov

In the Genre of Midquel

Inna Volkovynska

Accepted for publication on 07/20/2017

# Contents

References	10
Contact	12

**Abstract.** The article is devoted to an actual problem of genres in perspective of supertext relations. In particular, the functionalities of midquel as one of the genres based on intertextual relations are regarded. The subjects of the study were features of interaction of midquel texts of L. Tolstoy “The End of the Little Russian legend ”Forty years”, published by M. Kostomarov in 1881” and its pretext – stories by M. Kostomarov “Forty Years”. Deep philosophical and theological questions in unison with spiritual and creative pursuits of the Russian classic are considered through the grid of raised moral and ethical problems in the story of M. Kostomarov. The motif of punishment, which takes a key place in the story “Forty Years” of M. Kostomarov, is embodied through the loss of God by a man, leading to his moral decay. The lack of faith creates emptiness and spiritual blindness. Punishment is unnoticed for a man in this life. Tolstoy interprets the motif of punishment, he puts new meanings, entering with the author of pretext into polemics. In the interpretation of Tolstoy the lack of faith raises no emptiness but the feelings of constant fear and loneliness. Thus, awareness of punishment comes to a man in this life. The motif of punishment is combined with the motif of insight that opens a person who has lost God. So the pretext of M. Kostomarov “Forty Years” and the midquel of L. Tolstoy “The End of the Little Russian legend ”Forty years”, published by M. Kostomarov in 1881” are based on the same philosophical grounds, but have different ideological orientation. The problem of God’s punishment is solved by writers in different ways, and their texts form a dilogy, which aims to demonstrate ambiguity and unpredictability of the laws of human being and to give the reader a space for reflection and research.

**Key words:** genre, intertextuality, midquel, supertext, M. Kostomarov, L. Tolstoy.

---

At the current stage of text research, new insights about intertextual transformations and their effects on the genre system of literary works appear more and more often. The concept of ”overtext” is actively used in scientific terminology in the works of N. Mednis [7], L. Ivanova [2; 3], O. Shurupova [12], L. Shilina [11] and others. Through the media space, new genres penetrate into literature - remake, sequel, prequel, midquel, spin-off, crossover, etc. However, the peculiarities of these genres have not yet received adequate coverage in literary studies. However, the relevance of such research is conditioned by literary development. In addition, some literary facts testify that genres based on intertextual interaction existed long before the appearance of concepts, but were not recorded by literary critics. Therefore, the study of such genres from the modern perspective of understanding text relationships is intended to fill the gaps in the literary discourse.

R. Barth’s thesis about the multiplicity of the text and its movement through the multiplicity of meanings is vividly illustrated by the creative dialogue between L. Tolstoy and M. Kostomarov, which took place already after the death of the Ukrainian writer. As noted by R. Barth, ”every text is an inter-text in relation to some other text”

[1, p. 418]. With regard to L. Tolstoy's creative reply to M. Kostomarov, these words of R. Barth can be understood almost literally, because the text of the Russian writer did not simply enter into a dialogue with its pretext, but entered into its fabric, formed with it an inseparable tangle of meanings, a kind of "supertext".

M. Kostomarov's short novel "Forty Years", defined by the author as a "Little Russian legend", became the subject of L. Tolstoy's interest not by chance. In M. Kostomarov's story, deep philosophical and theological questions are seen through the prism of the raised moral and ethical problems, consistent with the spiritual search of the Russian classic.

M. Kostomarov's novel "Forty Years" was published in Russian in 1881 by a separate publication in Moscow. The author's note to the text states "Written in Little Russian in 1840. Translated into Russian in 1876" [4, p. 753]. Only a part of the first Ukrainian edition survived, which was copied by hand by O. Korsun, the publisher of the "Snip" almanac. Despite M. Kostomarov's statement that the Russian-language novel is a translation of the Ukrainian-language version, we note that the text of the work, published in 1881, is significantly different from the fragment that remained from the Ukrainian-language edition (differences are observed not only at the level of artistic expression, but also in the system characters, in plot details). In addition, the Ukrainian-language edition is defined by M. Kostomarov as a "Little Russian fairy tale", while the novel "Forty years" has the subtitle "Little Russian legend". As V. Smilyanska, a researcher of M. Kostomarov's work, claims, "this is, in fact, a completely new work, written on a common plot motif with early Ukrainian prose" [9, p. 32]. It can be assumed that the change in genre features of the work was dictated by a deeper understanding of the problems raised by M. Kostomarov in the story "Forty Years". This is evidenced by the appearance of the epigraph from the book of Job, which not only refers the reader to the sacred writings, but also emphasizes the acuteness of the problem:

Why do the lawless live, reach old age, and are strong? Their children are with them before their faces, and their grandchildren are before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, and there is no rod of God on them... They spend their days in happiness and instantly descend into the underworld. Meanwhile, they say to God: "Get away from us, we don't want to know your ways!" What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what is the use of resorting to him?.." But is it possible to teach God wisdom when he judges those above too! [4, p. 350].

In addition, based on the autobiography of M. Kostomarov (see: [6, pp. 126–127, 135–136]), it can be argued that the story contains autobiographical elements (the events that happened on the path of the central character are very similar to tragic circumstances of the writer's father's death).

The motif of punishment, which occupies a key place in M. Kostomarov's story "Forty Years", gets a rather original plot embodiment. The mercenary and orphan

Trofim Yashnyk falls in love with the daughter of his wealthy landlord Shpak and above all else seeks to get rich in order to get permission to marry his beloved. Seduced by the godless Prydybalkin, the boy commits a crime - the murder of merchants. Having become rich, Trofim gets married, moves to the city, then to the capital, becomes first a merchant, later a tycoon, acquires nobility. His cloudless existence is only occasionally overshadowed by the memory of God's promise to punish him after forty years, which he once heard at midnight at the grave of the murdered. It culminates on the day that marks exactly forty years since the murder. Trofym Semenovych awaits punishment with fear. However, his son Alexander, an outspoken atheist and nihilist, soothes with words about the absence of God, and therefore the impossibility of God's punishment. Trofym Semenovych spends the night at gatherings at the noblemen he knows. In the morning, Trofim realizes that everything is over. He ceases to be afraid of punishment and is convinced that there is no God. He lives the rest of his life in complete godlessness and dies an easy death in honor and honor.

The motive of punishment embodied in the work of M. Kostomarov does not coincide with the general ideas about God's punishment. The story caused mixed readings and even the wariness of the tsarist censorship. And although M. Kostomarov added his own explanation to the story, the essence of which was reduced to the fact that "the beginning of the promised punishment was ego [Trofima. - I. V.] long-term earthly prosperity, and its end - the loss of God", yet the writer began to be accused of atheism and immorality.

The impetus for the creative dialogue between L. Tolstoy and M. Kostomarov was the request of M. Kostomarov's widow to L. Tolstoy to write an explanation for the story "Forty Years" and protect the late writer from accusations of atheism. However, instead of such an explanation, L. Tolstoy works on improving and even reworking the text. In a letter to his friend and editor V. Chertkov, L. Tolstoy wrote: "I am sending you Kostomarov's legend "Forty Years." This is an excellent composition. <...>The legend itself is very dangerous for censorship, and therefore one should try to pass it in the form in which it is" [10, vol. 85, p. 317]. From the words of L. Tolstoy, it follows that his revision was not intended to polish Kostomarov's text for the sake of censorship. The problems raised in the story of the Ukrainian writer worried L. Tolstoy himself for a long time. The artist was painfully searching for answers to questions about the essence of religion, faith, the meaning of human life, and the relationship between finitude and infinity. Therefore, the work on M. Kostomarov's novel became for L. Tolstoy an opportunity to convey to the reader, through a creative dialogue, his own vision of philosophical problems. The highest stage of this work is the original text of the Russian writer - "The End of the Little Russian Legend "Forty Years", published by Kostomarov in 1881." And although a small creative fragment of L. Tolstoy is defined by the author himself as

the "end" of the pretext, according to the content of the plot, it should be classified as a midquel - "the development in a separate film and television work of one of the side storylines of the original picture, or the "sideways" development of one of the

middle episodes" [8, p. 37]. Leaving the "framing" of the pretext, L. Tolstoy fills it with a different meaning, while shifting the main ideological accents.

In L. Tolstoy's midquel, Trofim, after talking with his son Alexander about the absence of God on the fateful night of waiting for punishment, does not go to his noble neighbors (as in M. Kostomarov's story). He remains alone in his room and spends the whole night in thoughts, which rapidly change their direction from the realization of relief and victory over superstitions ("There is no God, no soul, no punishment! How good, how peaceful! And how much and long I tormented in vain seba. <...>Struggle for existence: this is the law!" [10, vol. 26, p. 114]) to understanding the precariousness of one's existence, to feeling panicky fear and depression

("And suddenly it occurred to Trofim Semenovich very clearly that his son should want his death. "Fight to be a winner. I fought - I killed the merchant; I needed his death, and I took his life. And to him, my son Alexander, whose death is needed?" He stopped and stood up in horror on the bed. "Whose death? - Mine! - Yes, I am standing in his way. No matter how much I give him, it is better for him that I die, and he would be the master "" [10, vol. 26, pp. 114-115]).

Fear for his life overcomes Trofim. It seems to him that everyone - his children, his wife, his servants - all want him dead. And most importantly, nothing can prevent them from committing murder, because since there is no God, no one will punish them for what they have done. Trofim L. Tolstoy spends the rest of his life (in contrast to the carefree Trofim M. Kostomarov) in the torment of constant fear and suspicion. While M. Kostomarov's Trofim no longer goes to church, does not give alms, L. Tolstoy's Trofim pretends to be extremely pious so that those around him do not become aware of permissiveness in a godless world. The character of L. Tolstoy, like M. Kostomarov, dies an easy death, and his body is also seen off by people with honor and respect.

However, let's pay attention to the last words of both texts. In M. Kostomarov : "No one knew about the crime committed by Trofim Semenovich in his youth, and to this day no one knows about it, except us and you, sympathetic readers." L. Tolstoy's midquel ends like this: "No one, except God, knew about Trofim's crime, nor about what punishment befell him from the moment he lost God in himself." As we can see in L. Tolstoy's midquel, the presence of God is clearly affirmed, and the punishment for the crime comes to the character even in his earthly life. In M. Kostomarov's story, the person of God remains "behind the scenes", and the punishment comes to the character, but Trofim does not realize it and does not feel it.

Both works are united by the motif of punishment due to the loss of the character of God. But in M. Kostomarov's story, the loss of God leads to the character's moral decay. Lack of faith creates desolation and mental blindness. M. Kostomarov probably draws such an understanding of punishment from the sources of folk beliefs. In the work "On the Historical Significance of Russian Folk Poetry", describing folk religious beliefs and ideas about the most terrible punishment, M. Kostomarov writes:

Only a person should not forget God in happiness: woe to him, "if there is anxiety, then go to God, but in anxiety forget about God." Whoever has no God in his head, let God give in." These are the concepts of the South Russian about the relationship of man to God [5, p. 58].

The essence of the punishment in the story "Forty Years" is based on these ideas - the character refuses God in earthly life, thereby losing God's protection in eternal life. It is notable that two worlds - the earthly world, finite, and the extraterrestrial, infinite world - in M. Kostomarov's novel are located in two different planes and do not intersect.

L. Tolstoy interprets the motif of punishment, puts new meanings into it, entering into a kind of polemic with the author of the pretext. In L. Tolstoy's interpretation, the loss of faith does not create a wasteland, but a feeling of constant fear and loneliness. The motive of punishment is combined with the motive of enlightenment, which is revealed to a person who has lost God. Denying the existence of God, Trophimus in the midquel

L. Tolstoy is simultaneously aware of all the horror of existence in godlessness, where only force and animal instincts reign. L. Tolstoy came to this understanding of punishment through his own experience and philosophical and religious searches. In his autobiographical work "Confession", the writer shares the feelings that worried him during the most spiritually difficult period of his life: "this search for God was not reasoning, but a feeling, <...>It was a feeling of fear, loneliness, loneliness among all the strangers and hope for chyuto pomoško" [10, vol. 23, p. 43-44]. In the article "About Life", L. Tolstoy describes the worldview of a person who has no faith in himself:

A person feels life only in himself, in his personality, and therefore at first it seems to a person that the good that he desires is the good of only his personality. <...>...a person sees that all of them, both people and even animals, have exactly the same idea of life as he does. Each of these beings <...>considers only his own life to be important and real, <...>each of the living beings, just like him, must be ready, for his own small good, to deprive the greater good and even life of all other creatures, including him [10, vol. 26, p. 325].

It is this feeling of fear and despair that L. Tolstoy invests in understanding the punishment that awaits a person who renounces God. The earthly and extraterrestrial worlds are not separated, as in M. Kostomarov. The character, contrary to his godlessness, tries to create an illusion of his own religiosity for those around him, precisely because of false faith, in order to protect himself from cruelty. And although the extraterrestrial world merges into earthly existence in the form of a game, these worlds intersect on the same plane.

Also worthy of attention is the fact that, in addition to reworking the finale of the novel "Forty Years", L. Tolstoy also resorted to reworking a small fragment of the novel, which depicts the episode of Trofim's stay at the grave of the people he killed. This revision was not published separately, only now it is printed in the comments to "The End of the Little Russian Legend "Forty Years", published by Kostomarov in 1881." It is noteworthy that the motif of fear develops in the pretext and in the midquel according to the principle of chiasmus. Kostomarov accompanies the episode of Trofim's stay at the grave of the merchants he killed with a description of the central character's inner hesitations. These doubts are caused by the dialectic of fear and the desire for enrichment. Fears are caused by the expectation of punishment: "There was no way and nothing Trokhym could drive away from himself the oppressive thought of God's punishment. The closer he got to the fateful place, the scarier it became for him" [4, p. 365]. In L. Tolstoy's midquel, the character's experiences in the same episode are based on remorse: "He remembered that they (killed. - I.V.) had mothers, wives, children..." [10, vol. 26, with. 696], and fear takes a secondary place. Fears take over Trofim in L. Tolstoy's interpretation only at the end of his life, become his fixed idea, poison his existence. Whereas in the pretext of M. Kostomarov, Trofim at the end of his life, on the contrary, loses his fear and falls into the darkness of delusion: "The son silenced in the heart of the parent the last remnants of that childish fear, which the Holy Scripture calls the beginning of wisdom" [4, p. 407]. The opposition of the absence / presence of the fear of God becomes decisive for the internal transformations of the character in both texts. Trofim's spiritual wanderings in M. Kostomarov's story are directed from fear to complete elimination of fear at the end of life, which is accompanied by inner relief. The vector of Trofim's spiritual wanderings in L. Tolstoy's midquel is directed in the opposite direction - from the almost absence of fear (he is drowned out by the voice of conscience) to the character's complete capitulation to fear, accompanied by internal suffering. Pushing the character to suffer, L. Tolstoy raises the complex philosophical problem of catharsis. After all, only after experiencing suffering, a person is purified. In the article "About life" L. Tolstoy notes: "everyone deep down knows that all suffering is always necessary, necessary for the good of their life" [10, vol. 26, p. 425]. The author of the midquel, due to the need for the character to go through suffering in his earthly life, leads him to the possibility of understanding faith. M. Kostomarov outlined the same position (that suffering leads to faith): "There is only one hope, one joy for a sufferer in faith" [5, p. 57]. True, the Ukrainian writer expounded this opinion only in scientific works and did not transfer it to the novel "Forty Years".

So, the pretext of M. Kostomarov's "Forty Years" and the midquel of L. Tolstoy's "The End of the Little Russian Legend "Forty Years", published by Kostomarov in 1881." have the same philosophical basis, but different ideological direction. The problem of God's punishment is solved by writers in different ways, and their texts form a kind of dilogy, which demonstrates the ambiguity and unpredictability of the laws of human existence, and gives the reader space for reflection and searching. Through the genre



of the midquel, a "supertext" is formed, capable of uniting different semantic fields, creating for the reader the possibility of non-linear penetration into the text.

The study of genres based on intertextual relationships is not only promising, but also acutely relevant. The nature of the connections between the pretext and the "posttext", the forms of intertextual inclusions, the means of influencing the recipient - all this is still waiting for the researcher.

# References

1. Bart R. Ot proizvedeniia k tekstu [From work to text]. In: Bart R. *Izbrannye raboty: Semiotika: Poetika*. Moscow, 1989, pp. 413–423. (in Russian).
2. Ivanova L. P. Sverkh tekst kak eksplikator mental'nogo prostranstva [Supertext as an explicator of mental space]. *Uchenye zapiski Tavricheskogo natsional'nogo universiteta im. V. I. Vernadskogo, Serii "Filologiya"*, 2006, vol. 19 (58), no. 2, pp. 209–213. (in Russian).
3. Ivanova L. P. Funktsii artefaktov-sverkh tekstov v poliloge kul'tur [Functions of artifacts-supertexts in the polylogue of cultures]. *Kul'tura narodov Prichernomor'ia*. 2008, vol. 2, no. 137, pp. 60–62. (in Russian).
4. Kostomarov M. I. *Tvory* [Works]. Kyiv, 1990, vol. 2, 780 p. (in Ukrainian).
5. Kostomarov N. Ob istoricheskom znachenii russkoi narodnoi poezii [About the historical significance of Russian folk poetry]. In: Kostomarov M. I. *Slov'ians'ka mifologiya*. Kyiv, 1994, pp. 44–49. Available at: <http://litopys.org.ua/kostomar/kos02.htm> (accessed 10 Mai 2017). (in Russian).
6. Kostomarov N. I. *Avtobiografiia N. I. Kostomarova* [Autobiography of N. I. Kostomarov]. Moscow, 1922, 440 p. Available at: <http://elib.shpl.ru/ru/nodes/22615-kostomarov-n-i-avtobiografiya-n-ikostomarova-m-1922-biblioteka-memuarov#page/5/mode/inspect/zoom/4> (accessed 10 Mai 2017). (in Russian).
7. Mednis N.E. *Sverkh teksty v russkoi literature* [Supertexts in Russian literature]. Novosibirsk, 2003, 169 p. Available at: <http://rassvet.websib.ru/text.htm?no=35&id=3> (accessed 10 Mai 2017). (in Russian).
8. Parkhomenko Ia. A. *Tipologiya remeika* [Typology of the remake]. Moscow, 2010, 41 p. (in Russian).
9. Smilianska V. L. Literaturna tvorchist' Mykoly Kostomarova [Literary works of Mykola Kostomarov]. In: Kostomarov M. I. *Tvory*. Kyiv, 1990, vol. 1, pp. 5–37. (in Ukrainian).
10. Tolstoy L. N. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [Complete set of works]. Moscow, 1928–1958, vols. 1–90. (in Russian).

11. Shylina A. H. Typy supertekstiv i systema supertekstovykh vidnoshen' u rosiiskomovnomu zhinochomu zhurnali Ukraïny [Types of supertexts and system of supertext relations in the Russian-language women's magazine of Ukraine]. *Movoznavstvo*, 2013, no. 4, pp. 57–66. (in Ukrainian).
12. Shurupova O. S. K voprosu o sverkh tekste [To the question of a supertext]. *Filologicheskie nauki. Voprosy teorii i praktiki*, 2012, no. 7 (18), s. 1, pp. 225–227.

# Contact

[orcid.org/0000-0002-6247-8996](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6247-8996)

[innavolk.ovi@gmail.com](mailto:innavolk.ovi@gmail.com)

Candidate of Philological Sciences, The Chair of Ukrainian Literature and Comparative Studies

Kamenets-Podolsk National University named after Ivan Ohienko

St. I. Ogienko, 61, 32301, Kamenets-Podolsky, Ukraine

The Ted K Archive

A critique of his ideas & actions



Inna Volkovynska

The Creative Replica of L. Tolstoy to M. Kostomarov

In the Genre of Midquel

Accepted for publication on 07/20/2017

Pytannia literaturoznavstva, 2017, no. 95, pp. 78–89. (in Ukrainian).

<[oaji.net/articles/2017/4067-1524148429.pdf](http://oaji.net/articles/2017/4067-1524148429.pdf)>

This is a poor google translation, feel free to edit this text to provide a better translation.

**[www.thetedkarchive.com](http://www.thetedkarchive.com)**