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A Morphological Approach to the Two Worlds of Karolina Pavlova

И женщина видна тамъ молодая,
 Сквозь сумерки ненастливаго дня.
 Бѣдяжечка сидитъ за чашкой чая,
 Задумчиво головку наклоня,
 И шопотомъ, и горестно вздыхая,
 Мнѣ говоритъ: Пойми хоть ты меня! --
 -Павлова

Со стороны все было очень глупо
 (Я факты рассказалъ, видѣнье скривъ).
 Въ молчаньи генераль, поѣвши супа,
 Такъ началъ важно, взоръ въ меня
 вперивъ...
 -Соловьевъ

Russian literary culture of the first half of the 19th century is known for its slow resolution of what would now be considered questions of language – whether this or that case ending is to be preferred, whether a certain word should be in regular literary use, and other such matters. By the second half of the 19th century, most such questions had been more or less resolved in favor of the standard usage we know today. We expect to see *-ой* as a masculine nominative / accusative singular only when the ending bears the speech stress, and *-ыи* with hard stems in other instances. The full and truncated a-declension instrumental singular endings *-ою*, *-ой* (*-ею*, *-ей*), make major changes to their relationship throughout the 19th century and slowly resolve into the present system in which standard speech and writing use the full forms only for some special purpose.

Among the Golden Age of Russian poetry, Karolina Pavlova’s (1807-1893) lyrics have many outstanding features. I am at present taken by how Pavlova makes declensional morphology socially meaningful. Every choice in language carries

information, and mid-19th century Russian overflows with such meaning-bearing morphological choices.¹ Karolina Pavlova displays much attention to the possibilities in these choices in her poetry. I will explore in this paper three poems in which Pavlova uses adjectival endings to contribute to the meaning of her work, and will consider further how these poems have been unhappily altered in the 20th-century collections of her verse (Briusov's edition of 1915 and the *Советский писатель* edition of 1963) – altered in a way that reduces the complexity and visibility of Pavlova's declensional consciousness and flattens the poems to a shadow of what they are in her edition of 1863. I will cite the edition of 1863 and follow Fusso and Lehrman's practice (Fusso and Lehrman 2001, xiii) of using Pavlova's orthography throughout this paper, making reference to later editions only to note their departures from the 1863 texts.

The three poems I examine have obvious religious themes. The first is about a monk, the second about reading and reflecting on a story from the Gospels, and the third about three souls that God sends to earth. I have chosen these poems first for their morphological interest and second for their religious overtones, but after I examine each of the texts separately, I will suggest that the morphological technique and religious content give shape to an object hidden behind them both. But first, the texts.

Pavlova's short poem "Монахъ" is remarkable even at a glance for its compression of thought and its gentle handling of a subject that could be overworked. Sendich refers to it as one of her best ballads (Sendich 202). The text rewards even more careful consideration.

МОНАХЪ.

Блѣдноликій,
Инокъ дикій,
Что забылся ты въ мечтахъ?
Что такъ страстно,
Такъ напрасно
Смотришь въ даль, сѣдой монахъ?

Что угрюмой
Ищешь думой?
Чуждъ весь міръ тебѣ равно;

¹ On becoming acquainted with Pavlova's poetry, the lover of Russian declensional morphology may not be able to avoid recalling the phrase from Psalm 22/23:5 "чаша моя преисполнена" (my cup runneth over).

Что любилъ ты,
Съ кѣмъ грустилъ ты, --
Все погибло ужъ давно.

Бросилъ рано
Свѣтъ обмана
Ты для мира Божьихъ мѣсть;
Жизни цѣлью
Сдѣлалъ келью,
Вмѣсто счастья, взялъ ты крестъ.

Лѣтъ ты много
Прожилъ строго,
Память въ сердцѣ истребя;
Для былова
Нѣтъ ни слова,
Нѣтъ ни вздоха у тебя.

Или тщетно
Долголѣтно
Ты смирялъ душевный пылъ?
Иль въ святынѣ
Ты и нынѣ
Не отрекся, не забылъ?

Блѣдноликой
Инокъ дикой,
Что забылся ты въ мечтахъ?
Что такъ страстно,
Такъ напрасно
Смотришь въ даль, сѣдой монахъ?

Январь. 1840

The poem is a series of questions and statements addressed to a monk who leads a religious life and is cut off from the world, but appears to be yearning for something he has lost. The speaker suggests that the monk is seeking something in his own memory: *забылся, память, не забыл, забылся*. The poem suggests a return to the past in its structure, as the final stanza is a duplicate of the first except for two letters.² Those two letters will allow us to explore the text a in a new way.

² Briusov's 1915 edition of Pavlova's works normalizes these ending to *-iŭ*, as does the 1963 edition.

The first stanza has *Блѣдноликій, / Инокъ дикій* and the final has *Блѣдноликой / Инокъ дикой*. This change in ending from *-iŭ* to *-oiŭ* is suggestive of the tension in the monk – his first appearance is ‘religious’ and *-iŭ* is the masculine ending borrowed from the spelling conventions of Church Slavonic, while the speaker comes to suspect that the monk is searching for something in his memory, in the past, and at the end the poem uses the native Russian ending *-oiŭ*. At the beginning, the monk appears to have left the world behind. Through questioning and examining him (although he gives no response), the speaker demonstrates through this change of ending in an otherwise morphologically and lexically identical stanza that the monk is yearning for the world he left behind. That word is represented by the “secular” morphology we see in unstressed masculine *-oiŭ* in the final stanza.

It is true that by the 1840s, this ending had become much less common in prose. However, if we imagine that the gray-haired monk is about 60 years old, he was a young man forty years before at the beginning of the 19th century, when *-oiŭ* still held a lot of ground in prose as well as in poetry. Without changing a single word, Pavlova turns the expressive potential of Russian morphology into a time-viewer through which the reader follows the monk backwards over his life into the worldly experiences of his youth. The object of the monk’s yearnings is encoded in the very adjectives that apply to him. The remaining adjective that applies to the monk, *сѣдой*, is in standard 19th-century usage always with *-oiŭ* because it is end-stressed. If we wished to include this word in this reading, we might understand that his return in thought to his youth is a function of the same age that has grayed his hair.

Although this distinction now seems to many readers of Russian like a matter of the distant past, long since resolved and no longer important, Pavlova uses it to cast our minds back with the monk’s into that distant past, into a world that exists only in memory – quite a feat to be accomplished by swapping an *i* for an *o*.

While this feat with its remarkable ability to demarcate two worlds may seem like the kind of thing that cannot be repeated, Pavlova’s morphological mentation is not limited to this one “lucky” poem. Let us consider another from two years later:

Читала часто, съ грустью дѣтской,
Сказаніе святое я,
Какъ ночью въ край Геннезарецкой
Неслась Апостоловъ ладья.

И въ переливы мглы ненастной
Смотря, они узрѣли вдругъ
Какъ шель къ нимъ моремъ образъ ясной,
И ихъ сердца стѣсниль испугъ.

И надъ волной неугомонной
Къ нимъ гласъ божественный проникъ:
То я! дерзайте!-- и смущенной
Тогда отвѣтилъ ученикъ:

«Коль это ты, мнѣ сердце нынѣ,
«Учитель, ободри въ груди:
«Вели идти мнѣ по пучинѣ. »
И рекъ Господь ему: ---Иди!--

И онъ пошелъ,---и бездны влага
Въ сплошной сливалася кристалль,
И тяжесть твердаго онъ шага
На зыбки воды упиралъ.

Но бурный вѣтръ взорвалъ пучину;
И въ немочи душевныхъ силъ
Онъ, погибая, Дѣвы къ Сыну
Молящимъ гласомъ возопилъ.---

И мы, младыя, вѣры полны,
По морю бытія пойдемъ;
Но скоро почернѣютъ волны
И дальный загрохочетъ громъ.

И усумнимся мы душою,
И средь грозящей ночи тмы
Къ тебѣ, съ трепещущей мольбою
Взываемъ, Господи, и мы.

Не намъ до Божьяго примѣра
Достигнуть силою святой!
Не наша уцѣлѣть вѣра
Въ грозѣ, надъ глубио роковой!

Кто жизни злое испытанье
Могучимъ духомъ встрѣтить могъ?
Кто жаръ любви и упованье,
Или хоть грусть въ душѣ сберегъ?

Всѣ чувства вянуть въ насъ незримо;
Всѣ слезы сохнутъ какъ роса;
Земля и небо идутъ мимо:
Его лишь вѣчны словеса.

Гирѣво. 1842. Июнь

This poem tells the speaker's experience of reading the account in Matthew 14 of how Jesus walked on water. The first six stanzas appear to be a more or less straightforward verse account of the story from the Gospel. We then read in the 1964 edition:

И мы, молодые, веры полны,
По морю бытия пойдём;
Но скоро почернеют волны
И дальный загрохочет гром.

The poem then continues to show that these “young people” also have weak faith but are not lifted up by Jesus in their moment of doubt and weakness, as we know Peter was. It appears to say that “our” faith in the present is not sufficient to warrant the Lord's attention.

In the 1863 edition, however, we see that the gloss “young people” for *младые* is inappropriate, because that adjective was *младья*, appropriate only for a nonmasculine group. Adults are not neuter in Russian, so this ending, in reference to people, refers to women only. The line *И мы, младья, вѣры полны* should therefore be glossed “We too, young women, are full of faith,” and the poem's conclusion then appears to draw a distinction not between people of old and people in the present, but between the masculine group of the apostles and the feminine group of young women and girls. The final stanza, then, suggests that despite their faith, women's fears are invisible or irrelevant as are heaven and earth when compared with “his” eternal words.

While this is a case of erasure of information through the translation of the text into the modern standard orthography, it is a rather subtle detail even in the 1863 edition. With no noun attached to it, *младья* hardly stands out at a glance. Yet it has central importance to the poem. After all, the first line begins with a clearly marked feminine

singular verb *читала*, so we know that the poem is about a woman's experience as a reader of the Gospel. The final line with italicized *его* suggests some sort of emphasis on "His" words, but that perhaps could be considered a respectful italicization because the word falls at the beginning of a line and would be capitalized even if it did not refer to Jesus.

The substantivized adjective *младыя*, however, is the gender-keystone of the poem. In the female writer's perspective, the focus of the story is on the sinking and the crying out – the portion of the story in which Jesus saves Peter from drowning after he begins to sink is omitted from the poem. In her vision of the story, the sinking (not the rescue) is what causes her to recall "young women and girls" with the adjective *младыя* and to consider their circumstances in the present world. Full of faith, they begin to doubt in difficult times and ask their Lord for help. The poem does not address whether he responds, but the final stanza is not comforting on this point: their feelings fade unseen, their tears dry (unnoticed) like dew. The final two lines of this stanza recall as if in explanation Jesus's words in Matthew 24:35: *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away* (KJV). Here on the strength of what has gone before in the poem, these words sound bitter in the female speaker's paraphrase. Further, Pavlova does not use the "pass away" verb *прейдутъ* from the Synodal translation to which we often refer today, because it was incomplete and probably unavailable in 1842. Pavlova's final two lines recall the Church Slavonic translation of Matthew 24:35:

НЕ́БО ѿ ЗЕМЛѦ МИМОЎДЕТЪ, СЛОВЕСА́ ЖЕ МОѦ НЕ МИМОЎДѸТЪ.

Yet in the context of modern Russian, and especially in the context of this story of Jesus walking on the water, Pavlova's *идутъ мимо* also carries a suggestion of "just walking on by" – the quiet answer to the understood question of what happens when women begin to drown as Peter did. In fact, the same verb is used in the CS translation of the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:

31 По слѣчаю же свѣщенникъ нѣкїй сходяше пѣтемъ тѣмъ, и
вѣдѣвъ єго, мимоиде.

32 Такожде же и левїтъ, бѣвъ на томъ мѣстѣ, пришедъ и
вѣдѣвъ, мимоиде.

The priest and the Levite pass by the man who has been beaten and left barely alive. With this in mind, we see that Pavlova’s recall of the words about Heaven and Earth passing away is quite appropriate to the context. Considering the usage of this verb in the parable in Luke 10 that I have cited above, the sense of Pavlova’s lines “Земля и небо идутъ мимо: / Его лишь вѣчны словеса” is “His words will not pass away [but ours will, and He will ‘just walk on by’]”.

Rather than questioning whether modern times can see such miracles after the Apostolic Age, which we might imagine is the suggestion when reading genderless *младые* in the 1964 edition, the poem draws a distinction instead between men and women – Jesus pulls men out of the water and just “walks on by” when women call out to him. The poem is much more than religiously-flavored greeting-card verse; it is also much more than what we would call today “political.” It is the seed of a revolution, the sea-change in thought that lets a forgotten people remember that they too have a right to exist (*И мы, младыя, вѣры полны...*). But like the women it describes, the piece is quiet and can be passed by – the reader who flips past it thinking the content will be obvious after the first stanza recreates the “passing by” described in the poem. Pavlova’s recognition of forgotten people is itself forgotten, thanks to the subtlety of her work and to the orthographical and morphological reform that have erased key features of verbal art in modern editions.

Let us consider one more poem that fits well with the two we have discussed already.

In “The Three Souls” God sends three women’s souls to earth, each with poetic gifts, and tells them that if they are lax in their activities, they should not blame him, because his love has given them poetic power. The remainder of the poem tracks the activities of each soul during its life.

ТРИ ДУШИ.

«Но грустно думать, что напрасно
Была намъ молодость дана.»

Въ нашъ вѣкъ томительнаго знанья,
Корыстныхъ дѣлъ,
Шли три души на испытанья,
Въ земной предѣлъ.
И имъ рекла Господня воля:
«Въ чужбинѣ той
«Иная каждой будетъ доля
«И судъ иной.
«Огнь вдохновенія святаго
«Даю я вамъ;
«Восторгамъ вашимъ будетъ слово
«И власть мечтамъ.
«Младую грудь наполню каждой,
«Въ краю земномъ,
«Понятемъ правды, чистой жаждой,
«Живымъ лучемъ.
«И если духъ падеть лѣнивый
«Въ мірскомъ бою,
«Да не винить вашъ ропотъ лживый
«Любовь мою».
И на завѣтное призванье
Тогда сошли
Три женскія души въ изгнанье
На путь земли.
Одной изъ нихъ судило Провидѣнье
Впервые тамъ увидѣть дольний мѣръ,
Гдѣ, воцарясь, земное просвѣщенье
Устроило свой Валѣазарскій пиръ.
Ей палъ удѣлъ познать неволи свѣтской
Всю лютую и пагубную власть,
Ей съ первыхъ лѣтъ велѣли стихъ свой детской
Къ ногамъ толпы смиренной данью класть;
Свои нести моленія и пени
Въ житейскій гуль, на площадь людныхъ заль,
Потѣхою служить холодной лѣни,
Быть жертвою безмысленныхъ похвалъ.
И съ пошлостью привычной, безотлучной,
Сроднилася и ужилась она,
Завѣтный даръ ей сталъ гремушкой звучной,
Заглохли въ ней святаго семена.
О дняхъ благихъ, о прежней ясной думѣ
Она теперь не помнить и во снѣ;
И тратить жизнь въ безумномъ свѣтскомъ шумѣ,
Своей судьбой довольная вполнѣ.

* *

*

Другую бросилъ Богъ далеко
Въ американскіе леса;
Велѣлъ ей слушать одиноко
Пустынь святаго голоса;
Велѣлъ бороться ей съ нуждою,
Противудѣйствовать судьбѣ,

Все отгадать самой собою,
Все заключить въ самой себѣ.
Въ груди, испытанной страданьемъ,
Хранить восторга оиміамъ;
Быть вѣрной тщетнымъ упованьямъ
И неисполненнымъ мечтамъ.
И съ даннымъ ей тяжелымъ благомъ
Она пошла, какъ Богъ судилъ,
Безстрашной волюю, твердымъ шагомъ,
До истощенья юныхъ силъ.
И съ высоты, какъ ангелъ вѣры,
Сіяетъ въ сумракѣ ночномъ
Звѣзда не нашей полусферы
Надъ гробовымъ ея крестомъ.

* *

*

Третья — благодію Бога
Ей указанъ мирный путь,
Свѣтлыхъ думъ ей было много
Вложено въ младую грудь.
Сны въ ней гордые яснѣли,
Пѣлись пѣсни безъ числа,
И любовь ей съ колыбели
Стражей вѣрною была.
Всѣ даны ей упоенья,
Блага всѣ даны сполна,
Жизни внутренней движенья,
Жизни внѣшней тишина.
И въ душѣ, созрѣлой нынѣ,
Грустный слышится вопросъ:
Въ лучшей вѣка половинѣ
Что ей въ мірѣ удалось?
Что смогла восторга сила?
Что сказали души языкъ?
Что любовь ея свершила,
И порывъ чего достигъ?
Съ прошлостью, погибшей даромъ,
Съ грозной тайной впереди,
Съ бесполезнымъ сердца жаромъ,
Съ волей праздною въ груди,
Съ грезою тщетной и упорной,
Можетъ, лучше было ей
Обезумѣть, въ жизни вздорной,
Иль угаснуть средь степей.

Ноябрь. 1845.

I will address only the second soul here. God sends her to the American forests and orders that she listen to the holy voices of the desert – “Велѣлъ ей слушать одиноко / Пустынь святыхъ голоса”. The word *святыхъ*, however, seems to have the wrong ending – the –ья ending that we saw in the previous poem should not be applied to a masculine

plural noun. What do we make of this? The 1850 printing in the almanac *Киевлянинъ на 1850 годъ* prints it in the expected masculine form *святые*, but Pavlova's own edition of 1863 and Briusov's of 1915 have the unusual apparently non-masculine ending. The editors of 1850 took *святыя* as a misspelling or oversight. We could, however, take it as a deliberate gender-dysfunction to suggest that God orders this second soul to pay attention to nonmasculine voices. Such disagreement in literary Russian of the 19th century would be highly unusual, of course.

There is another option – we can take *святыя голоса* not as a breaking of literary Russian, but as a Slavonicism in which the ending *-ыя* is a marker of the masculine accusative plural. I suggest that we take both these choices – the striking disagreement in gender catches our attention, and then we see the possibility of a Slavonic-flavored ending for the accusative plural. That ending is identical to the ending we see for non-masculine nouns. That is – a masculine plural as a direct object takes on the appearance of a non-masculine adjective. This reminds us that the entire poem is about women's souls as objects manipulated by God. The apparent gender-dysfunction draws us in to see the foundation of the work given in miniature, in one typo-like declensional choice that could be erased by normalizing editorial practices even in Pavlova's time.³

While this *святыя* focuses our attention on the question of God's manipulation of these women's souls, the poem is also worth examining lexically with respect to this question. While the "character" of God demonstrates power but claims no responsibility for their failure in earthly life, the poem suggests that he is in fact a participant in their failure. In the opening it is not God himself who speaks to the souls, but *Господня воля* (the Lord's will). This "воля" says *Огнь вдохновенія святаго / Даю я вамъ... Младую грудь наполню каждой, / Въ краю земномъ, / Понятемъ правды, чистой жаждой, / Живымъ лучемъ. Воля comes up again in the story of each of the three women. Of the first we read that *Ей палъ удѣлъ познать неволи свѣтской / Всю лютую и пагубную власть, of the second *И съ даннымъ ей тяжелымъ благомъ / Она пошла, какъ Богъ судилъ, / Безстрашной волюю,⁴ твердымъ шагомъ, / До***

³ It also also remotely possible to take this ending as an archaic marker of the feminine genitive singular.

⁴ A similarly unusual feminine instrumental occurs in Pavlova's E. A. Баратынскому (1842) in the line *За мыслей мысль неслась, играя [...]*

истощенья юныхъ силъ, and of the third that she might have been better off dying in the steps, considering that she was *Съ бесполезнымъ сердца жаромъ, / Съ волей праздною въ груди*.

These “gifts” that the women receive from God’s will are slavery, lack of ability to preserve one’s strength, and idleness. The poem itself is an answer to the claim that they “cannot complain” if they fail – the very gifts that were planted in them are inappropriate to their places on earth. The manipulation and “assembly” of these souls, tossed about the world like bits of gravel or seeds (*Другую бросилъ Богъ далеко...*) are the source of their failure. In the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3-9, Mark 4:3-9, Luke 8:5-8) some of the seed fails because of where they were sown; here, the items to be scattered are themselves blamed in advance. As in the last poem we examined, the naked picture (if not statement) of women as so many objects to be called for or ignored is strikingly unusual in religious poetry of the mid-19th century.

These three poems all have religious subject matter. In “Монахъ,” they are secular and religious, and the poem suggests an unusual “nesting” of the worlds – the monk lives in an enclosed space (a secondary, smaller world, cut off from the primary world), but contains the primary outer world again within his memory. In “Читала часто, съ грустью дѣтской” the two states are male and female. In “Три души,” the latest of the three, they are subject and object. The last two in this set are quite unusual in how they see women as forgotten and ill-treated by their Creator and Savior.

Romy Taylor in her article on *Двойная жизнь* (A Twofold Life) notes that the theme of the “second world” in Romanticism is prominent and that Pavlova’s novel of two worlds largely hangs on religious motifs (Taylor 2001, 66). The religious lyrics examined in this paper also push the theme of the “second world.” Christian themes and the morphological riches of 19th-century are of course closely related topics. The Church Slavonic element is unavoidable in literary Russian and often offers the writer a lexical or morphological choice as we see in “Монахъ” and “Три души.” In “Читала часто” the morphological ‘keystone’ of *младья* is not a Slavonicism in itself, but is crucial for this understanding of the poem and gives information necessary to understand the references to the Slavonic Gospels in the final verse.⁵ This set of lyrics offers non-trivial

⁵ It is interesting that orthographic modernization of this poem removes the possibility of this reading, and so recalls to mind Jesus’s citation of Psalm 118:22 -- “The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner.” See also Acts 4:11.

information about Pavlova's use of Christian material in her poetry, with the foundational theme of "what / who is forgotten, ignored, or thrown away." These poems are of wide interest to readers of Pavlova also for their window onto her sharp focus on adjectival morphology as a bearer of meaning.

Works Consulted

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