

Alexander Veselovsky

“From the Introduction to Historical Poetics: Questions and Answers” (1894)

Translated and edited by Boris Maslov<sup>1</sup>

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This publication dates from the period when Alexander Veselovsky, following two decades of mostly empirical philological and historical work, returned to theoretical issues in literary history. It is one of his most wide-ranging and ambitious pieces. Committed to a vision of literature as a social phenomenon, and thus to a definition of literary scholarship as social science, Veselovsky poses questions, daring in their overt generality, about the history of culture and seeks to provide answers that appeal to a soft version of the scientific principle of law-like regularity. In place of unequivocal causal linkage, he seeks to indicate a set of preconditions; instead of regular recurrence, a suggestive pattern; and the argument’s validity is tested by cross-cultural and cross-historical comparison. Poised on the border of historical determinism, Veselovsky’s proposed correlations between social and literary history are marshaled to explain the rise and fall of particular literary forms in particular historical periods.

In this essay, Veselovsky transfers his focus away from the paradigm shift that would prove to be a constant concern in Russian Historical Poetics – the change from communal (folk) to individuating (literary) culture. Instead, he puts forward a new fundamental mechanism of cultural history: the encounter between an imported and a native cultural impetus, which is often manifested in collaboration or confrontation between the elite and the larger populace. This proto-dialogic encounter between the alien and the indigenous also instantiates a dynamic that Veselovsky appears to have regarded as a historical universal: the ever present combat between old (perceived as conventional) and new (perceived as free) cultural elements.

In the following piece, a cultural-historical analogue of *dvoeverie* (coexistence of the Christian and pagan religions) thus becomes constitutive of both cultural and literary history. In contrast to Veselovsky’s early methodological pronouncements, in which he effectively restricted cultural history to inter-cultural encounters, he gives more room

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<sup>1</sup> The original publication appeared in *Zhurnal ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia* 293 (1894, № 5), Otd. 2, 21-42. In compiling the explanatory glosses, I have drawn on the commentaries by V. M. Zhirmunsky (*Istoricheskaia poetika* [Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1940] 617-618) and I. O. Shaitanov (*Izbrannoe: Istoricheskaia poetika* [St. Petersburg: Universitetskaya kniga, 2011] 74-80). Thanks to Robert Bird, Jennifer Flaherty, and Michael Kunichika for many improvements, and Thomas Kitson for outstanding editorial work.

here to the possibilities of a single people's organic evolution.<sup>2</sup> Some contrasts and connections that he draws – especially those that rely on organicist rhetoric – now appear irrevocably outdated (such as a value-ridden comparison between a lucid Latin humanism and a fictitious Northern European Romanticism), while others retain their force and freshness (such as the analysis of animal mock epic or the identification of a transitional period between communal and individual art as a precondition of national epic). More generally, what makes this essay a classic of Historical Poetics is the determination and insight with which Veselovsky pursues one of his major scholarly ambitions: to supplant theoretical and evolutionary-teleological accounts of the supra-genres of Western literary history – epic, drama, and the novel (lyric is conspicuously absent from this essay) – with a historical examination of the social preconditions for their (re)emergence and efficacy.

Literary history recalls a geographical strip that international law has consecrated as *res nullius*, where a historian of culture and an aesthete, an erudite and a student of social ideas all come to hunt. Each carries away what he can, according to his abilities and views; the goods or the quarry display the same tag, but their contents are far from identical. There is no agreement about a common standard, for otherwise we would not return so insistently to the question: what is the history of literature? One of the views to which I am most sympathetic can be reduced more or less to the following definition: literary history is the history of social thought in its imagistic-poetic survival [*perezhivanie*]<sup>3</sup> and in the forms that express this sedimentation. History of thought is a broader notion; literature is its partial manifestation. Such a specification presupposes a clear notion of what poetry is, what the evolution of poetic consciousness and its forms is, for otherwise we would not speak of history. Such a definition, however, also calls for a mode of analysis that would be adequate to the goals that have been set.

My lectures at the University and at the Women's Advanced Courses a few years ago, which concerned epic and lyric, drama and the novel in relation to the development of poetic style, had as their aim the collection of materials for a methodological inquiry into literary history, for an inductive poetics that would do away with speculative interpretations, for an elucidation of the essence of poetry derived from its history. My audience will recognize, in the generalizations that I shall propose, much that is old, but now formulated with less assurance, more doubts than

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<sup>2</sup> See A. N. Veselovsky, «Envisioning World Literature in 1863: From the Reports on a Mission Abroad», Forthcoming in *PMLA*; translation by Jennifer Flaherty. Footnotes belong to the translator, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>3</sup> *Perezhivanie* is one of the key concepts in Veselovsky's theory of literary form; it is indebted to the ethnographic notion of survival, as used by Tylor, which Veselovsky generalizes to a broader idea of cultural continuity as "survival" of previous social/cultural forms; at the same time, the verb *perezhivat'* is used in this essay in its common meaning 'to experience'. This terminological nexus suggests a particular mode of historically-anchored experience, understood as recycling – and perpetuation – of inherited cultural forms. Veselovsky also uses the metaphor of cultural "deposition" or "sedimentation" (*otlozhenie*) with a meaning similar to that of 'survival'.

affirmations, and even more queries: there is no harm in asking questions, whereas there is harm in arguments constructed on a weak factual basis.

Since the time of my lectures, Scherer's *Poetics* has been published, a formless fragment of an undertaking conceived both with talent and on a grand scale, as well as with the same objectives [as my undertaking]; the tendency of several German studies on particular issues in poetics is another indication of a lively interest in the same project. Evidently, there arose a demand for it, and along with it an attempt at systematization in the book by Brunetière, a classicist in his tastes, a neophyte of evolutionism, fanatical, as are all new converts, in whose consciousness, somewhere in a small corner, the old gods still tacitly reign – a book that reminds one of those sinners in Dante who walk forward with their faces turned behind.

Such is the literature on the subject: there are more queries than axioms. Have we, for example, reached a consensus on how poetry is to be understood? Who will be satisfied with the vague formula that was recently proposed by Brunetière: poetry is “metaphysics, revealed in images and in this way made comprehensible to the heart” (*une métaphysique manifestée par des images et rendue sensible au coeur*)?

Let us leave this general question open for the future; its solution depends on a whole series of systematic studies and solutions of particular problems that belong to the same field. It is on some of these problems that I would like to dwell.

French journals on folk [*narodnaia*] poetry<sup>4</sup> and antiquities include an appealing section: “Les Pourquoi?” Why? Children pester us with such questions; humanity posed them at its simplest stages of development, posed them and gave extrinsic, sometimes fantastical answers that calmed by being definite: Why is the crow black? Why does the sun grow reddish before sunset and where does it disappear for the night? Or why does the bear have a short tail? Answers to such queries lie at the basis of ancient myths, which historical development has introduced into a system, into a genealogical linkage, and the result was mythology. The survival [*perezhivanie*] of such answers in contemporary popular religion shows that they were once an object of belief and imagined knowledge.

In literary history there is a whole set of such *les pourquoi*, which at some time were posed, answered, and these answers still exist in survivals [*v perezhivanii*] at the basis of certain literary-historical views. It would be useful to reconsider them, so as not to find ourselves in the position of a man of the common people who is convinced that the sun spins and plays on St John's Eve. It would be useful also to propose new “les pourquoi,” because there is much that is still unexplored, which often passes for something already solved and self-evident, as if we were

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<sup>4</sup> *Narodnyi* is here usually translated as ‘popular’, except in the collocations *narodnaia poezia* ‘folk poetry,’ *narodnaia epopeia* ‘national epic,’ *narodnye osnovy* ‘national foundations,’ *narodno-psikhologicheskie* ‘ethno-psychological’ (keeping to the accepted English translation of *Völkerpsychologie*). Note the contrast between *narodnoe soznanie* ‘popular consciousness’ and *natsional'noe samosoznanie* ‘national self-consciousness.’

already in agreement as to what, for example, Romanticism and Classicism, Naturalism and Realism are, what the Renaissance is, and so on.

These are the questions I would like to engage. I will take my examples not from the contemporary world, although everything leads up to it. Antiquity [*starina*], for us, has settled [*otlozhilas*'] into a perspective in which many details are blurred and straight lines predominate, which we are prone to mistake for conclusions, for the simplest contours of evolution. And, in part, we are correct in doing so: historical memory overlooks minor facts and retains only those that are significant and contain the seeds of further development. Yet historical memory can also be mistaken; in such cases, that which is new and present to observation serves as a criterion for what is old and has been lived through outside our experience [*perezhitomu vne nashego opyta*]. Solid results in research on social – and that means, also on literary-historical – phenomena are obtained precisely in this way. The contemporary world is too confused, too exciting for us to be able to examine it holistically and calmly, searching for its laws. We are more composed in our attitude toward antiquity and, whether we wish it or not, we seek lessons therein, which we do not follow, and generalizations, to which we are drawn by antiquity's apparent finality, in spite of the fact that we ourselves half inhabit it. This is what gives us the right to voice an opinion and verify it. Only recently, questions pertaining to the development of religious consciousness and language were discussed solely on the basis of ancient documents. We became fascinated with the Vedas and Sanskrit and constructed the edifice of comparative mythology and linguistics, relatively coherent systems in which everything was in its proper place and much was conventional. Without these systems, criticism, the practice of verifying the past against the present, would not have appeared. We were constructing the religious worldview of the primitive human without having cross-examined the experience that was close at hand, whose object is our common folk as well as ourselves; we were constructing phonetic laws for languages whose sounds had never reached us, while next to us dialects thrive and develop in accord with the same physiological and psychological laws that held in the times of our Aryan progenitors. Progress in the field of mythological and linguistic scholarship requires us to test systems that were constructed on the basis of facts from the historical past against observations about the reality of contemporary popular religion and dialects.

The same applies to literary history: our views on its evolution have been founded on a historical perspective into which each generation has introduced corrections arising from its own experience and from accumulating parallels. We relinquished the notion of an individual – in our sense of the word – author of the Homeric poems because observations on the reality of folk poetry, which was superficially equated to the conditions that held for its most ancient manifestation, revealed the hitherto unknown processes of mass, non-individuated [*bezlichnoe*] creativity. We relinquished, in turn, the extreme aspects of these views that had been inspired by Romanticism, such as the imaginary nation-poet [*narod-poet*], because in folk poetry the individual aspect was revealed to be more prominent than we had previously thought. Homeric

criticism has accordingly made a concession, and an individual author or authors of the Homeric poems once more step forward before us, albeit in a new setting.

I brought up Romanticism, and I would like to demonstrate with reference to it how often old formulas are corrected and illumined by new ones, and vice versa. There are plenty of definitions of Romanticism, beginning with Goethe, for whom the classical was equal to the healthy, the romantic to the sick. The Romantics found their definitions of Romanticism in boundless subjectivism, in “the realization of beauty through the expression of character” (le réalisation de la beauté par l’expression du caractère); for Brunetière, Romanticism, individualism, and lyricism are essentially one and the same thing: if you start with one, you end with another, etc. A single shared trait can, nevertheless, be emphasized both in the phenomenon and the definition of Northern European Romanticism: the striving of the individual to shed the oppressive bonds of social and literary conventions and forms; the yearning for other, freer forms, and the desire to found them on tradition [*predanie*]. Hence the idealization of national antiquity, or what seemed like nationality: a fascination with the Middle Ages, including a fantastically-colored Catholicism and chivalry, *moeurs chevaleresques* (M-me de Staël); a fondness for folk poetry, in which so much proves to be alien, and for nature, in which the individual could develop egoistically, in the pathos of self-sufficiency and naive self-adoration, oblivious of social interests, sometimes in reaction to them.

Do these shared tendencies not throw a light on some aspects of Italian humanism? The foundations of Latin culture and its worldview had long been buried in Italy under the alluvial soil of the Medieval Church’s ideas and institutions, and were struggling to the surface, until they made themselves known openly, consciously, in response to the same kind of demand for renovation based on the bedrock of popular principles, in this instance not fictitious or fantastical. Humanism is the Romanticism of the purest Latin race; hence the clarity and the transparency of its formulas, compared to the vagueness of the Romantic ones. Yet in both cases there are similar formations [*obrazovaniia*] in the domain of individualism and the same retrospective stance in literature and in *Weltanschauung* [*mirovozzrenie*].

This is the kind of parallel that I will have in mind in the following exposition.

Let us begin with epic. At a certain stage in a people’s development poetic production is expressed by songs of a half-lyrical and half-narrative character, or songs that are purely epic.<sup>5</sup> They are occasioned by remarkable events of the day, military exploits of the tribe or the clan, they celebrate heroes who are the bearers of its glory, and they cluster around several names. In some cases, creativity [*tvorchestvo*] went further, and there are epics [*epopei*], behind which one perceives collective folk songs; these poems, on the one hand, attest to a coherence resulting from individual design and composition, and, on the other, are not individual in their style, and bear no author’s name, or bear it only fictively. We have in mind the Homeric poems and the

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<sup>5</sup> An example of such lyrico-epical songs with local-historical content is presented by the Kartvelian songs (Sbornik materialov dlia opisaniia mestnostei i plemen Kavkaza. XIX. Otd. 21). [Veselovsky’s note.]

older French *chansons de geste*, represented by *chanson de Roland*; both have historical legends as their content. What provoked this peculiar poetic evolution and *why* did some peoples remain content with shorter, *bylina*-type songs [*bylevye pesni*]? First of all, individual impetus [*pochin*], in the absence of any explicit mention of it, indicates a stage of development, when the individual poetic act is already possible, but is not yet perceived as such, since it is not yet objectified in consciousness as an individuated [*individual'nyi*]<sup>6</sup> process that separates the poet and the crowd. The gift of song comes not from him, but from without: one shares in it by partaking of a wondrous drink or else it is a delusion induced by the nymph-like Muses (from the viewpoint of the Greek language, *nympholeptos*, a poet and one possessed, seized by the nymphs, are one and the same thing<sup>7</sup>). This is the period of great anonymous undertakings in the domain of poetry and representational arts. National epics are anonymous like medieval cathedrals.

There is an additional ethno-psychological issue. At the basis of the French *chansons de geste* one finds old *bylina*-type songs about Charlemagne and his contemporaries, which had superseded and engulfed more ancient sung legends of the Merovingian period. They existed, possibly in clusters, like our [Russian] *byliny*, subject to forgetting and generalization: this is the usual mechanical process of popular idealization. Two centuries later, *chansons de geste* will renovate these plots [*siuzhety*]: the same names and similar exploits, but the mood is new. We are in the heat of the Feudal epoch, filled with the din of swords and of popular-heroic, uplifted self-consciousness, supported by a sense of a united political power: *douce France* is on everyone's lips. An individual poet would have selected imagined character-types or contemporary historical actors modified to fit the style of the character-type in order to express this national self-consciousness. For the half-individual poet of the old epic [*epopeia*], as we have characterized him above, this would have been psychically unthinkable; indeed, he would not even have been understood. Unconsciously, he latches onto material from the old legends and character-types contained in songs that generations of poets and audiences have gradually brought closer to their own notions, to the level of their own time. Charlemagne the emperor will become a popular ruler of France in the same way that Ilya of Murom became a peasant *bogatyr*<sup>7</sup>; the Saracens and the Saxons became the enemies of France conceived generically. The poet had only to master this idealization that had been accomplished without his participation, yet also within him – and there appeared French historical epic. It was historical not in the sense that it represented real historical personages, but that in forms of the past it expressed the popular sentiment of the present.

Thus the conditions for the appearance of large national epics would appear to be the following: an individual poetic act without the consciousness of individual creativity; the rise of national-political self-consciousness, which demanded expression in poetry; continuity with a prior

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<sup>6</sup> Here and elsewhere, *lichnyi* is rendered as 'individual', *individual'nyi* as 'individuated'.

<sup>7</sup> Based on Plato, *Phaedrus* 238d, yet the Platonic view should not be equated with the common perception of the poet in Archaic and Classical Greece.

tradition of sung legend that included character-types capable of being transformed with respect to their content, in accord with the demands of society's advancement. Wherever these conditions do not coincide for any reason, the production of national epic appears unthinkable. Let us imagine that the individual developed before national self-consciousness—a sense of a historical fatherland and pride in one's people—had ripened. In this case, the evaluation of the present will differ from one person to another; their attitudes toward memories of the past will likewise vary; there will be no common ground of enthusiasms and idealities on which the poet's intuition would have merged with the people's sympathies. The history of German literature demonstrates such a phenomenon. Both the Germanic peoples and the Romanized Franks equally possessed historical memories of an epic quality; among both, Charlemagne left echoes in legend and song, but at the time when France was coming together as a state and its national objectives and vernacular literature were being defined, the politics of the Ottonians once again turned Germany to the non-national objectives of a world empire, and the first shoots of German literature were lost in the new rise of the Ottonian "Latin" Renaissance. The empire and its abstract ideals of peace and culture could fascinate the poets at Charlemagne's table, as it would later fascinate theoreticians, but these ideals suggest nothing to the people. For them, the empire was the same kind of abstraction the church had once been, yet while the latter came to possess the people's consciousness and similar forms [*vstrechnymi formami*] of its beliefs, the former always remained a mere formula. It was the empire, not the German nation, that undertook the Italian expeditions, and they did not sediment [*otlozhilis*'] in epic memory. The struggle with the Hungarians, it seemed, was a fact of national life, yet it was expressed only in historical song and did not raise sentiment to the height of epic idealization because the sense of political, self-determined [*samoopredelennoi*] nationality was undeveloped. Compared with the concentrated energy of the French kingdom, the German empire was a giant oppressed with sleep (Schultheiss). The Minnesingers have patriotic motifs, the lyrical outcry, "*Deutschland über Alles!*" is audible, yet individual consciousness is not reflected in epic sentiment. Its bearers are Spielmanns, wandering clerics, *vagi*, such as Lamprecht, Konrad, etc.; their themes are borrowed from everywhere: French romances, and Oriental legends, permeated by the apocrypha's fantastical poetry, and old legends of the Franks, the Lombards, and the Goths. Their geography exceeds Germany as a political entity: Italy and Bari, Constantinople and Palestine, including Jerusalem; this is not the geography of the Crusades that effectively united East and West, but a theoretical horizon of the Empire, in which separate nationalities disappeared, as indeed the German nationality disappeared. In such an outstanding poem as the Nibelungen, historical memories of the Burgunds and the Huns, renewed with the appearance of the new Huns (the Magyars), and the mythological tale of Siegfried do not lead to the kind of militant consciousness that would answer to "sweet France" in the song of Roland. German epic is Romantic, not national-historical [*narodno-istoricheskii*].

We [in Russia] had neither one nor the other, although epic songs existed and even had time to group around the figure of Prince Vladimir. *Why?* An answer to this question is provided by the foregoing comparison. There was, that is to say, no consciousness of national-political unity, for

which a consciousness of religious unity did not compensate. *The Song of Igor's Campaign* is not a national-epic poem, but a superb lyrical lament on the fate of Orthodox Rus'. When the Tatar epoch passed and political unification came to support national consciousness, the time for epic had been missed, because individual consciousness had already come into its own, even if not yet in the domain of poetic creativity, as was the case in the West.

The emergence of national epics composed with plots from a people's history and expressive of the national consciousness sheds light on a different question: *why* did animal epic appear precisely in *feudal* France, since the German Reinhart is only a revision of a French original? At the basis of this epic are ubiquitous animal tales with their typical animal characters. Latin apologues and fables and the miracles of the Physiologos, which penetrated the Medieval monk's cell, acquainted the Northerners with unheard-of animals and the lion-king; they also, perhaps, supplied the first occasion to retell and recast native and imported tales, which up until that point had been irrelevant to literature. These animal tales form cycles, like *bylina*-type songs, around their heroes; one, with another in view, picks up the tale; the result is not a coherent whole, like the older Carolingian poems, but something tied together by unity of content and viewpoint. The so-called *Roman du Renart* is the heroic epic turned inside out, with the same character types, now captured from their negative sides, with a feudal suzerain, the lion king, with a savage and stupid wolf for a feudal lord, and the merry and malicious adventurer Renart, a bourgeois learned in law, who decomposes the unity of the heroic worldview. This unity that had already found an expression in song is exactly what animal epic presupposes: folktales provide its material, literary fable served as its motivation [*povod*], whereas the heroic poem gave it a scheme; the aims of satire will arise only later.

And here, by the way, is *why* no animal epic could arise among us, although we are no poorer, if not richer, than other peoples in our animal tales, and the most recent European scholars researching this issue have been turning to us for material and discussion. Animal epic needed to lean against heroic epic, which did not have time to emerge. Satirical tales with animals for actors, such as the tale of Ersh Ershovich, already stand outside the zone of epic's development.

I mentioned that literary fable could have constituted one of the first motivations to write down a popular animal tale. This thesis can be generalized in order to provide answers to a whole series of questions called forth by the development of European vernacular literatures.

It is difficult to conceive theoretically how and under what conditions the process that we might designate as the manifestation in consciousness of the poetic act as an individual act came about. Ancient literatures shed no light on this: we do not know under what conditions they emerged, what foreign elements participated in their creation, and we are too poorly acquainted with the processes of popular psychology to draw inferences about the past from the phenomena of contemporary folk song. The most ancient songs of ritual or epic character belonged to common cult and tradition; every one of their words was preserved. We can imagine that intellectual and cultural evolution left them behind; that they were being repeated, half understood, and thus

corrupted and transformed – in both cases, however, unconsciously, without attributing the changes to individual intent or merit, or perceiving the emergent self [*ia*]. Yet this is precisely where the question lies.

With reference to European culture, with its characteristic two-sidedness of cultural principles, this question finds an easier and more tangible solution. When the northern Viking saw on an Irish church a fanciful Romanesque depiction of a cross and the symbolic attributes that revealed behind themselves a legendary background, he confronted a tradition unknown to him, which – in contrast to his own – carried with it no obligation of faith, and was imperceptibly drawn to the free exercise of his fantasy. He interpreted and explained, engaging in idiosyncratic creativity. Thus a Russian spiritual verse imagines Egor the Brave alive, clad to his elbows in gold, as on an icon.

European poetry developed precisely in this way: poetic intuition was incited to become conscious of individual creativity not by the immanent evolution of popular-poetic foundations, but by extrinsic literary models.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> c. William of Malmesbury recounted a poetically dark legend, which Heine would incidentally recollect: a certain noble young Roman invited friends and acquaintances to his wedding; after the feast was over, everyone being a bit drunk, they went out into the meadow to dance and play ball. The young man was an accomplished ball player; preparing for the game, he removed his wedding ring and placed it on the finger of a bronze classical statue that was standing there. It happened to be a statue of Venus. When the game was over and he came to get his ring, he found that the finger with the ring was pressed against the statue's palm. Following his futile attempts to reclaim the ring, the young man withdrew without saying a word to anyone else for fear that they might ridicule him or steal the ring in his absence. He returned with some servants during the night and was astonished to discover that the finger had straightened out, but was missing the ring. From that time on, some kind of spectral being, unseen, but sensed, always came between the young man and his wife: "You are betrothed to me," a voice could be heard saying, "I am the goddess Venus, I have your ring, and will never relinquish it." These torments lasted for a long time. They were forced to have recourse to the priest Palumbo's magical formulas in order to be rid of the devilish delusion.<sup>8</sup>

The Western church likewise exorcised the charms of Classical poetry that beckoned Medieval man, but the spells did not help, and their union was accomplished. Western literatures emerged from this coupling; so-called pseudo-Classicism is nothing but a one-sided development of one of its immanent elements, contradictory yet unified, at first, by the needs of literacy.

The people sang their ancient songs, including cult songs with their pagan residue, love songs (*winiliod*), women's songs (*puellarum cantica*), which they also naively brought into the church.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. the legend of a youth from Cnidus, who was in love with Praxiteles's Aphrodite. Cherbuliez, *L'art et la nature*, p. 11. [Veselovsky's note.]

It either inherited them or created them unconsciously on the model of earlier ones, without associating them with notions of creativity or individual worth; the Church, for its part, devalued them in the people's eyes, pointing to their pagan content and sinful temptation. Yet the same Church spread literacy by using Latin books; for the sake of rhetorical exercises, it took a peek into the few classical poets whom it allowed to be read, taught its students to admire their beauties and bypass their temptations through allegorical interpretation. That was enough to excite curiosity; even poets who lacked the seal of approval for school use were clandestinely read. Thus, using alien models, readers were educated to the consciousness of what had not yet been elucidated along the paths of ethno-psychological development. They began to create by imitating. To achieve this, it was necessary to study the language, master the poetic vocabulary, to penetrate the style, if not the spirit of the author – does this not amount to an individual's exploit? In the ecclesiastical schools, the notion of *dictare* developed, first in the meaning of an exercise, composition in general, and only later contracted to mean poetic conceit: *dichten*. The notion of a labor for which only a few were fit passed into the notion of creativity, at first – and naturally so – in the language of the models, in meek imitation of their manner, with the gradual intrusion of personal and contemporary motifs. When popular speech had matured and turned out to be suitable for poetic expression, not without the influence of the Latin school, and when the development of individual consciousness came to seek such expression, an impulse had already been given. Chivalrous lyric, with its individual poets and tendencies, emerged only to express anew the blending of what was native and popular with what was imported and cultured. This blend accelerated the evolution of a people's poetry and set serious tasks before it.

That was the situation in the West, with its Latin school that imperceptibly cast the rays of classical culture, and with its Scripture that was obstinately guarded against vernacular intrusion. Christian thought perhaps gained little from it; the people were served by the priest's catechesis, sermon, legend, and Biblical commentaries; yet even as the people stagnated in double-belief [*dvoeverie*], a Latin school was created and maintained around the Latin bible, which yielded weak, followed by bright revelations of ancient poetry. When, in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> c., translations of Scripture into the vernacular languages appeared, the Latin school had already achieved its task.

Why did the Slavic East not produce in the Middle Ages its own refined literature, its own individual poetry, and so failed to create a literary tradition? Much can be explained by the belated entry of Slavdom on the soil of cultural history, by its geographical position, obligating it to struggle with the alien East, etc.<sup>9</sup> Let us focus on schooling, on the two-sidedness of educational [*obrazovatel'nykh*] elements, which also here, as in the West, determined the character of the new development (in contradistinction with the – apparent, at least – wholeness of the old). Here also there is, on the one hand, the folk, pagan, ritual, or *bylina*-type poetry, the

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<sup>9</sup> I. I. Sreznevsky, *Mysli ob istorii russkogo iazyka* (St. Petersburg 1849), 115-116, takes a different position: He believes that the lack of versification among the Slavs is explained by an exclusive demand for Byzantine literature, which lacked artistic versification. [Veselovsky's note.]

wealth of which causes us to marvel to this day, especially in its Serbian and Russian examples, a poetry that was original both in its color [*kolorit*] and meter, unforgettable in the common chord of European songs; on the other hand – there is the Church, behind which stood the poetic as well as the philosophical tradition of Greek culture. The Church, however, had relinquished this tradition on Slavic soil; the objectives and the success of preaching called forth the principle of vernacular churches, popular with respect to both the language of exhortation and the Old Church Slavonic translation of Scripture, which believers could comprehend more easily than the Latin Bible. This was an advance in terms of the assimilation and the thriving of Church doctrine, even though the double-belief of Slavic folk poetry differs in no way from similar phenomena in the West, and is perhaps more overt. The Slavic Bible defined, to a certain extent, the character of the educational process: the impulse that compelled the Westerner to study Donatus in order to learn the language of the Bible and the mass, but at the same time the language of Virgil, did not exist. There were no models, no foreign exemplar that would have invited imitation or the attempt to bring to light the hidden treasure of native folk poetry. Whereas European literature can be regarded as a result of the blending of vernacular and classical Latin components, in the Slavic East such a blending took place in narrower confines, defined by the objectives of literacy and Church enlightenment. That is why there was also no poetry.

How the development of European literature would have proceeded left solely to the evolution of its own national foundations is a question that, while apparently fruitless, invites some theoretical observations which are met by actual facts. Obviously, organic evolution would have proceeded at a slower pace, without skipping stages, as often happens under the influence of an alien culture that compels, sometimes at the wrong time, the maturation of what is not yet mature, to the detriment of the internal progress. At the basis of Greek drama are ritual choral songs, comparable to our [Russian] spring-time choruses [*khorovody*]; their rudimentary religious content was generalized and opened up to broader human ideas in the cult of Dionysus; artistic drama attached itself to this metamorphosis of the popular agrarian festival. Let us turn to the West. Here, too, popular choruses existed as the rudimentary bases of dramatic actions, yet we see no further development on this ground; if there were any seeds of a corresponding, generalizing cult, they died away without bearing fruit. The Church appeared and created out of the everyday reality of the mass a kind of religious stage: a mystery play; this, however, lacked a popular basis that would have nourished and transformed it, evolving alongside the dogma and going beyond it: the church basis came from without, unbreakable, not subject to development. The urban square setting, which this religious theater came to inhabit later on, could introduce into it some everyday scenes and comic types, but not psychological analysis or a notion of inner conflict. Even here the school education supplied its extra measure [*lishkek*] of progress, having accustomed its students to figurative language [*inoskazanie*], to allegorizing Virgil, and to generalizations which it routinely tricked out as personifications: to the figures of Vices and

Virtues, Philology and Humanity, “*Every Man*”<sup>10</sup>. The junction of these generalizations with the epically-unchangeable figures from the mystery plays indicated the possibility of further development, a potential for dramatic life. In the meantime, already in Medieval – even in women’s – monasteries, Terence’s comedies were being read and Seneca was remembered; along with him, the tradition of ancient drama returns to circulation. In the 14<sup>th</sup> c., there appears the first explicit imitation of Seneca; from the 16<sup>th</sup> c., drama was established as a legitimate literary genre, having already won sympathy all around: behind Shakespeare stands the English drama of the Senecan type.

*Whence* this resurgence and popularity of drama? If literature reflects life’s demands, then it is permissible to postulate a certain correlation between these demands and particular poetic forms, even if both have not emerged at the same time: only that is assimilated for which there exists a premise in consciousness and in the immanent needs of the spirit.

Drama, we infer, is the inner conflict of a personality that is not only defining itself, but also decomposing itself through analysis. This conflict can become manifest in external forms that objectify psychic powers and beliefs in living mythological personages or in divinities that determine a fate hostile to the person’s self-determination. This conflict can also, however, be represented as taking place inside the person, at a time when the belief in external ruling powers slackens or is transformed. That is the essence of Greek drama from Aeschylus to Euripides.

Let us verify these theses by examining the vicissitudes of European drama in the period of its birth as an artistic form.

As for the development of individual personality, in Italy, drawn along the national paths of humanism, it was expressed earlier and more brightly than anywhere else; it made itself known both in particular human actors and in new forms of political life, as well as in the flourishing of literature and art. Italian drama, however, was limited to external imitation of classical models and produced nothing independent that testified to the heights of individual elevation.

*Why is this?* For reference we turn to Greece, to the conditions of the Athenian polity, we link the development of the individual personality with the demand for a free political constitution, and we transfer these conclusions onto the splendid period of the Elizabethan drama, in which both conditions were united, it would appear, to bring about the same outcome. Yet we are not able to reconcile this conclusion with the concurrent flourishing of Spanish drama, in a suffocating political atmosphere, under a religious oppression that bound the individual personality’s freedom and forced it into the narrow path of enthusiasms and falls. Clearly it was not the qualities of the social milieu that brought forth drama, but a sudden rise in national self-consciousness, nourished by recent, and confident in future, victories, broad historical and geographical vistas that had set new universal-human goals for the nation’s development and

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<sup>10</sup> Veselovsky refers to an English 15<sup>th</sup> c. allegorical drama which contains a disputation between the hero, his virtues, and his vices.

new objectives for the individual personality's energy. Behind Greek, English, and Spanish drama stand the victory of Hellenism over the Persian East, the triumph of popular Protestant consciousness that filled English society in the Elizabethan age with such vivacity, and the dream of the Spanish monarchy's world dominion, on which the sun never set.

In a milieu in which the individual disappeared without a trace into the undifferentiated mass, the joys of victory would be expressed in folk epic song, in which a common sentiment, a shared assessment of what had been experienced would be given voice by glorifying a typical hero. In a personality that is already individuated, a striking historical moment, the very incommensurability of events that surround it, will occasion a need for analysis, interrogation of the self and of life's guiding principles, and – in view of the demand for action – will exacerbate the inner conflict that emerges as both a condition and a product of individuation. The dramatic form, as extrinsic performance [*deistvo*] and as scene-setting, already existed. Now, in response to the demand of the time, it emerges as drama. The following, as it appears to me, represent the conditions of drama's emergence as a distinct artistic entity [*khudozhestvennogo obosobleniia*] and of its popularity: the development of individual personality and resonant events of a national-historical character that open new paths and distant vistas to the people.

If Italy failed to produce drama, it was because it did not experience precisely such events. The phenomenon of humanism, which it bestowed as a gift to Europe, is not an event, nor is it a revolution or a sudden revelation, but the slow advancement of forgotten national principles. It nourished in the educated part of society a consciousness of cultural unity that failed to blossom into national-political unity. Italy, as a totality, was an abstraction; there existed a mass of small republics and tyrannies, with their local interests and struggles, with their tragic court anecdotes, episodes of humanity and, at the same time, pettiness; they lacked a broad national background. The idealization of humanity in the abstract only became possible in our bourgeois times, not in the time when European artistic drama was born. Yet one may ask: Could it develop at all under the conditions of a small nationality that stands outside of broad universal-human tasks, and whose interests reach only as far as what can be surveyed from its bell tower? (This, of course, does not exclude bookish, armchair drama.)

When I addressed drama's origins, I distinguished between drama as action on the stage from drama as a certain mode of perceiving the world, as a demand for action and for conflict. This thesis brings us face to face with a series of further questions that have not yet been, and perhaps cannot be, solved.

The history of Greek literature's development offers us, tentatively, a picture of literary genres consecutively differentiated; we are drawn, in spite of ourselves, to generalize from this picture, descrying in each genre that enters the scene of history a reflection of certain social or artistic demands, which have sought and found adequate expression in epic, lyric, drama, and the novel. The literatures of modern Europe offer, apparently, the same sequence, but the question is whether or not that sequence was organic. We know already that our [European] literatures

emerged under the impact of alien, classical literatures, that, for example, modern European drama had a popular basis but matured under the influence of ancient drama. There can be no firm conclusions here, the more so as the study of folk poetry opens new perspectives that cast doubt on possible conclusions. It turns out that in ritual poetry [*poeziia obriada*], the most ancient indicator of poetic development, all genres of poetry – to the extent that they are defined by extrinsic marks of form – are united in a naïve syncretism: there is drama in action, the dialogue of the chorus, epic story-telling [*epicheskii skaz*], and lyrical song. Moreover, all of these are united with music, which will for a long time yet accompany the production of particular poetic forms that consecutively emerge out of the undifferentiated state of ritual poetry; both epic and lyric will continue to be sung, and there will also be a musical element in drama. The separation of music from the lyrical text and the latter's one-sided development took place in Greece in the period postdating Alexander. We are not in a position to determine what principle guided this individuation; questions of genesis, always murky, are best left to a future poetics that will be based on a rational-historical basis.

Let us turn to modern Europe, with the doubleness of its cultural-formatational and poetic elements. Here, epic and lyric had been present for a long time, beginning in the Middle Ages; drama had also developed, undergoing, from the 14<sup>th</sup> c., the influence of classical drama; from the 14<sup>th</sup> c., the artistic novella, the prototype of our modern novel, takes its place. From that time, we possess all the chief forms of poetry, and historical experience again and again convinces us that there is a certain alternation among them, a sort of natural selection at the level of the content of consciousness. Perhaps this is a false impression, but it inevitably comes to mind. *Why* was drama the dominant poetic form in the 16-17<sup>th</sup> c.? *Why* did the novella-novel enter the field beginning from the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> c. to become modernity's dominant literary expression? The last question has been posed repeatedly in expectation of an answer, which we, also, are unable to provide. I will limit myself to furnishing a parallel, which will, perhaps, explain to us not the origins of the novel, but the quality of the societal milieu capable of cultivating it.

In Greece, drama still belongs to the zone of national historical development; the novel belongs to the period when Alexander the Great's conquests disrupted it, when independent Greece had disappeared into a world-wide monarchy that mixed East and West, the traditions of political freedom had faded along with the ideal of the citizen, and the personality, which felt its loneliness in the wide spheres of cosmopolitanism, retired into itself, developing an interest in interior life for lack of social life and constructing utopias for lack of living tradition [*predanie*]. These are the chief themes of the Greek novel; there is nothing traditional in them, instead everything is intimately bourgeois. This is drama transferred from stage to hearth, into the conditions of domestic routine. It remains, nevertheless, a drama, an action; this was indeed the name of the Greek novel.<sup>11</sup> Ancient Greeks spent their lives in public, more on the agora than at home; at a time when home life was simple and modest, temples were a miracle of art, while theater was a popular [*narodnoe*] institution. Medieval Florentines loved the splendor of public

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<sup>11</sup> Gr. *pragma*.

festivals and triumphantly carried Cimabue's Madonna through the streets, because they saw in her the ideal of beauty. Back at home, the customs of the clan, sung by Dante, reigned: men rarely washed and had no use for forks at the table. We, by contrast, have replaced the artistically variegated clothing of old with a black frock-cloak, and the grandeur of our public buildings is marked by an artisanal tinge. Art and poetry in miniature, for all that, have descended to domestic use, and we experience [*perezhivaem*] drama in the forms of the novel intended for reading in a setting of domestic comfort.

This perhaps is not an answer to the question that was posed above regarding the correspondence between a particular literary form and the demand issuing from social ideals. This correspondence probably exists, although we are not able to identify the law that regulates the correlation. One thing is undoubtedly confirmed by observation: certain literary forms decline when others rise, sometimes, in turn, only to yield their places once more to the antecedent forms.

Not only forms decline and arise, but also poetic plots and types. Germanic songs about Charlemagne were resurrected in the forms of feudal epic. In periods of national disaster or excitement, either democratic or mystical, the very same fears were perceived, and hopes were clothed in the same or similar images: the last hour was expected, or the last battle, when a redeemer would make his appearance, whoever he might be, a Byzantine emperor or Dante's *il Veltro*,<sup>12</sup> Friedrich Barbarossa or Napoleon III. In 1686, the summer promised a bountiful harvest, but the inhabitants of Graubünden still vividly remembered the horrors of the Thirty Years War; the religious politics of Louis XIV induced them to be apprehensive: something, surely, was about to happen. And lo and behold, two travelers along the road to Chur discover a swaddled baby in the hedge. They take pity on it and bid the servant take it along, but in spite of all their efforts, he could not, alone or with help, raise the child from the ground. "Touch me not," the infant's voice was heard to say, "it is not for you to lift me (recall the bag that cannot be lifted in our *bylina*), but I will tell you the following: this year there will be a great harvest and bliss, but not many will live to see it." The year 1832 takes us to the time of the July Revolution, the Junges Deutschland and the Bundestag. The plague is raging and the same troubling expectations are widespread in the populace. In the Hardtwald near Karlsruhe, a hunter encountered three white female figures in the evening after sunset. "Who will eat the bread that will be harvested this year?" said one of them. "Who will drink the wine that will be in abundance?" said the other. "Who will bury all the dead whom death will carry off?" finished the third. In 1848, the same sentiment prevails, and a similar legend arises in Anhalt: in the course of several nights a guard in Klein-Köthen saw a house with three lighted windows on a field where there were no buildings at all; disturbed by this vision, he communicated it to the priest, and they

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<sup>12</sup> Veselovsky interprets Virgil's prophesy to Dante (*Inferno* 1) that he would be saved by *il veltro* ("a hound") in the context of the legend of the emperor who returns to save his people; see his "Opyty po istorii khristianskoi legendy. I: Otkroveniia Mefodiia i vizantiisko-germanskaia imperatorskaia saga," *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia* 178 (1875), April, 283-331.

went together to find out what the issue was. In the house, a small man was sitting at a table and writing; he nodded to the priest at the window, and when the priest entered, silently led him to each of the three windows in turn. Looking out the first window, the priest saw a splendid field and heavy-eared wheat growing densely to the height of a man; the second window gave onto a different view: a field of battle filled with corpses, and a sea of blood; from the third, he saw the field he had seen at first, half-reaped, but with only one person visible in the field's entire strip.<sup>13</sup>

I believe there are no theoretical considerations to hinder us from transferring this iterability of popular legend to the phenomena of self-consciously artistic literature. Self-consciousness does not rule out patterns that reveal regulating laws [*zakonnost'*], just as statistical curves do not rule out consciousness of self-determination. I will only sketch a few facts. The old Titanic legend about the knowledge of good and the evil was reflected in Medieval stories, and we encounter its poetic apotheosis in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries: in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Calderon's *El magico prodigioso*. In these works the tenor of the epoch is expressed, an epoch of hitherto unfathomed intellectual vistas, which it seeks to master in the youthfully self-confident awareness of its own powers. Faust is the type of the thinking man in the Humanist age, who has entered the arena against the old worldview that allotted to the individual only the modest role of a performer moving according to a predetermined lot. Such people existed, and they either succeeded or perished without ceding ground; their achievement lies not in what they accomplished, but in the struggle's objectives, in the inner need for liberation ("Wer immer strebend sich bemüht, den können wir erlösen"<sup>14</sup>). Others at first embraced the new sentiments, became fascinated with them to the point of a downfall, succumbing to a sense of their own impotence and the futility of their hopes, and reverted back to their earlier beliefs and to its simple-heartedly bourgeois quietude. And that is why in the literature precisely of the 16<sup>th</sup> c., often reflecting the facts of personal life, the gospel legend of the prodigal son, who sought for something better but returned back under his paternal roof, was renewed. Everyone was seeking something: a better social organization, freer conditions for individual thriving, new ideals. An amusing fairy tale was known of old (already to Dion Chrysostom) about a fantastical land where everyone is happy, no one lacks anything, rivers flow with milk, shores are made of jelly, and roasted game flies by itself into their mouths. This realistic fantasy now serves to express the ideal [*ideal'nykh*] needs of the spirit: social utopias appear, beginning with Rabelais's Abbey of Thélème and Thomas More's utopia, going on to Cyrano de Bergerac, the Robinsoniads of the 18<sup>th</sup> c., and well-intended dreams about what will happen so many thousands of years in the future. There follow the epochs of societal weariness, and the pastoral plots are renewed, the times when people are drawn to unmediated nature, to simplification (be it only in the style of

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. similar legends from the areas around Smolensk and Ekaterinoslav [modern Dnepropetrovsk] in *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie* VI, 212; XIII-XIV, 250; XV, 189; XVI, criticism, 193 (from Kovenskie gubernskie vedomosti); XVII, 188. [Veselovsky's note.]

<sup>14</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, Part II, Act V.

“lady into lassie”<sup>15</sup>), to folk song and to popular antiquity. These are the epochs of narratives drawn from peasant life and of archeological tastes.

It appears that this alternating renewal of plots is not always a response to the organic demands of societal-poetic development. A talented poet may happen upon this or that motif accidentally, provoke imitation, and create a school that will follow in his tracks without responding to these demands, sometimes even going at cross-purposes to them. In this way, the feudal epic and Petrarchism outlived their time; likewise, there existed belated classicists and romantics. But if we look at these phenomena from a distance, in historical perspective, all the minor nuances, fashions, schools, and individual-initiated movements will become scarcely distinguishable in the broad alternation of societal-poetic demands and proposals.

Plots are renewed, but subject to conditions that distinguish, for example, A. K. Tolstoi’s *Don Juan* from its many predecessors, an ascetic legend about a proud king from its reworking in Garshin;<sup>16</sup> the theme of fathers and sons in its many instantiations up until Turgenev’s novel.

Let us take an example from the distant past: Apuleius overheard some Milesian folktale and retold it for us in the charming tale of Cupid and Psyche, in which reality is rendered so poetic and spiritual that in Christianity’s early period, Psyche became a symbol of the soul that has parted with its divine source and is anxiously seeking to reunite with it. What that Milesian folktale was, we do not know, but its plot is widespread among different peoples and contains details that indicate in what simple conditions of life it was composed. There used to be, and still are, exogamic races that derived their descent from a natural object, such as an animal or a plant. Every such tribe honored this progenitor as a sacred being, as its totem, and they prohibited marriage between those who worshipped the same totem and carried the same symbolic marker expressing it. Marriages of this kind were beset with hindrances and restricting conditions whose reflection we observe in the condition Cupid imposes on Psyche; transgressing them led to reversals of fortune.

Such is the content of the exogamic folktale; in Apuleius, it is impossible to recognize its everyday substratum. Or let us recall some further motifs: carrying-off a wife, capturing the bride, recognition or meeting – often hostile or transgressive – between close relatives, such as father and son, brother and sister. We encounter these motifs in Medieval romance as interesting formulas, as material for poetic development, whereas in their basis they reflected real facts: marriage by capture, or the epochs of massive intermixing and migration of peoples, which separated kin over large distances; hence the element of recognition in the Greek novel, in the broad expanses of Alexander’s monarchy, and the universally familiar legends of the battle between father and son.

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<sup>15</sup> The reference is to Pushkin’s novella *Baryshnia-krest’ianka* (1830).

<sup>16</sup> Vsevolod Garshin’s “Skazanie o gordom Aggee” (1886) is based on a legend whose versions were published by Afanas’ev (*Russkie narodnye legendy*, 1860) and Veselovsky himself (*Razyskaniia v oblasti russkogo dukhnogo stikha* 1881, v. III-V, 147-150).

Between these real formulas and their later poetic reproductions, between the Milesian folktale and Apuleius's narrative, centuries of development passed, enriching the content of societal and individual ideals; hence such a difference in the way they are presented. Is it not precisely the evolution of these ideals that conditions the recurrent demand for this or that literary plot and the renewal of old ones?

We perceive this evolution as something organic and integral, sufficing the ends of human development, but we should not forget that it recycled a whole series of influences and international admixtures, with which, for example, our European culture is so well-supplied. Into our notions of morality and family, beauty and duty, honor and heroism, a great deal of elements has entered from alien sources. In our view of love, a layer of Christian spiritualism spread over the indigenous conditions of everyday life; when classical influences penetrated this mixture, the result was that idiosyncratic combination of concepts that provided norms not only to the emotional life, but also to entire domains of morality, a combination that we are able to trace from the chivalrous lyric and romance to the various imitations of *Amadis*<sup>17</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> c. salon. Our notions of human and natural beauty are similarly liberal and their development was aided by racial and cultural intermingling perhaps no less than the development of literature. When the type that represents unmediated popular heroism, with its brute force and devious craftiness, ignorant of conscience's accounting, such as we find in the figure of Ulysses, first encountered the type that represents Christian self-renouncing, suffering heroism, this presented a contrast comparable to that between Dante's "spirit of love" and the naïve conception of uncultured peoples that the liver is the source of love. And yet these two understandings grew accustomed to each other, mutually penetrated one another, while the development of social consciousness set ever new objectives for the exploit of renunciation – in the service of an idea, a nation, or society.

But let us leave behind the period of origins and intermixtures. Let us imagine that the evolution of societal and individual ideals proceeds evenly, that it contains moments of transition from the old to the new, when this novelty demands expression in the forms of scholarly reflection or poetic generalization – that is what interests us. Popular memory has preserved sediments of images, plots, and types, which were once alive, evoked by a famous individual's activity, by an event or an anecdote that excited interest and took possession of sentiment and fantasy. These plots and types were generalized, the notion of particular individuals and facts could fade, leaving behind only common schemas and outlines. These exist in a dark, hidden region of our consciousness, like much that we've undergone and experienced [*perezhitoe*], apparently forgotten, but then they suddenly overwhelm us as an inexplicable revelation, as a novelty that is, at the same time, an outmoded antique, something we cannot fully account for, because we are often unable to define the essence of the psychic act that unpredictably renewed in us these old memories. The same holds true in the life of literature, both popular and self-consciously artistic:

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<sup>17</sup> Veselovsky refers to imitations of *Amadis de Gaula*, a Spanish knight-errant romance whose first edition dates to 1508.

old images, echoes of images, suddenly appear when a popular-poetic demand has arisen, in response to an urgent call of the times. In this way popular legends recur; in this way, in literature, we explain the renewal of some plots, whereas others are apparently forgotten.

*What explains this demand, and also this oblivion? Perhaps it is not merely oblivion, but even extinction. Analogous phenomena in the history of our poetic style could have served as an answer, had such a history been written. In our poetic language, and not only in turns of phrase, but also in images, a gradual series of extinctions occurs, even as much is being resurrected for new use; the fascination with popular and Medieval poetry since the time of Herder and the Romantics testifies to such a forceful change in tastes. I will not speak of contemporary phenomena, more or less close to us, that we are already beginning to perceive as archaic, but we do not consider the Homeric comparison of a hero with an ass and the attacking enemies with obnoxious flies to be poetic, whereas other images and similes are still in circulation, hackneyed, but comprehensible; it appears that they bind us like the fragments of musical phrases that memory has made our own, or like a familiar rhyme, but at the same time they incessantly elicit new suggestions [*podskazyvaniia*] and intellectual work on our side. A German erudite has dedicated a special monograph to a single poetic formula, tracing it from popular song to new manifestations in refined literature: *Wenn ich ein Vöglein war!* There are many formulas like this.*

*Podskazyvanie* is what English aesthetics has christened (unless I am mistaken) *suggestiveness* [*suggestivnost*']. Those formulas, images, and plots that at a given time suggest nothing to us and fail to respond to our demand for imagistic idealization become extinct or are forgotten (until their turn comes); those, however, whose suggestiveness is fuller, more diverse, and longer-lasting are preserved in memory and renewed. The correspondence between our growing demands and the fullness of suggestiveness creates a habit, the assurance that precisely this and nothing else serves the actual expression of our tastes, our poetic desires, and so we deem these plots and images poetic. A metaphysician will respond to this historical-comparative definition with an abstract notion of beauty and will even attempt to generalize it, comparing it with the impressions that we carry away from the other arts. And he will convince us, provided that before these arts he poses the same questions of stability and suggestiveness that define the norms of the beautiful and their inner enrichment on the path to that *science des rythmes supérieurs* that distinguish our tastes from the tastes of the primitives (Jean Lahor). Until this work is done, those who seek to extract a notion of what is specifically poetic not only from the processes of poetry's perception and reproduction, but also from an inquiry into those special means of which poetry disposes and which, as they accumulate in history, bind us, dictating norms to individual symbolism and impressionism, will have taken the correct approach. We said: processes of perception and reproduction, because these two are essentially the same thing, differing only in an intensity that creates the impression of creativity. We are all more or less open to the suggestiveness of images and impressions; a poet is more attuned to their minute nuances and combinations; he apperceives them more fully. And so he complements us and

exposes us to ourselves, enlisting our understanding to renew old plots, enriching familiar words and images with a new intensity, and drawing us for a while into the same unity with ourselves in which the anonymous [*bezlichnyi*] poet lived during the unconsciously-poetic epoch. But we have experienced too much in separation, on our own; our demands for suggestiveness have grown and become more individuated and diverse. Moments of unification occur only in the epochs when a living synthesis has achieved tranquility and sedimented in common consciousness. If poets of great stature are indeed becoming rarer, we have here answered one of the questions we have repeatedly posed for ourselves: *why?*