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CONTINUITY AS A VALUE IN THE WORKS OF PAVEL V. ANNENKOV
IN THE LATE 1850S AND EARLY 1860S

Abstract: The paper examines the changes in the opinions of Pavel Vasilyevich Annenkov as a literary critic in the late 1850s and early 1860s when his works began to reflect his growing emphasis on continuity in reaction to the growing nihilism of Russian radicals. Indeed, literature was not Annenkov's primary reason for sidelining aesthetics and emphasising the necessity of peaceful social development – the change was prompted by the ideology of the early Russian liberals and his fear of revolutionary tumult and social tension. This emphasis on continuity actually brought some of the early liberals closer to the conservative way of thinking.

Keywords: P. V. Annenkov; Russia; liberalism; 19th century; literary criticism; literature

Today, Pavel Vasilyevich Annenkov (1812–1887) is one of the half-forgotten historical figures of Russian literary circles. However, this lack of scholarly attention is in direct contrast to his key position among the Russian intellectuals of his time. He became famous in the 1840s for the sketches he sent home from his travels around Europe – *Письма из-за границы* (*Letters from Abroad*, 1841–1843) and *Парижские письма* (*Parisian Letters*, 1847–1848), and in the 1850s, became involved in literary criticism and literary history. He was a close friend of Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev, who was highly appreciative of Annenkov's literary taste and critical comments. Annenkov read the manuscripts of most of Turgenev's works and in several cases, Turgenev actually waited for Annenkov's opinion before he continued with his writing (МОСТОВСКАЯ 2005: 284-298). During this period, Annenkov also laid the foundations for Pushkin studies when he compiled the first critical edition of Pushkin's work complete with Pushkin's biography, which comprised the entire first book of the seven-volume edition. This work gained Annenkov widespread recognition among his peers (OFFORD 1985: 136-137).

From the 1860s, Annenkov began to withdraw from his social life in Russia and mostly lived abroad with his family. While he continued his work as a literary critic and followed events in Russian literary circles, he was less prolific as an author during this period. During the 1870s, Annenkov worked on his most famous work: *Замечательное десятилетие* (*The Extraordinary*

Decade, 1880), a literary memoir where he describes the decade between 1838 and 1848. Annenkov's memoirs, which include several shorter texts besides *The Extraordinary Decade*, have since overshadowed the rest of his work.

While Annenkov's works, and especially his travelogues and memoirs, are still quoted today, the author himself and his work have received little attention to date. For example, there is no monograph on Annenkov and only a limited number of studies that focus solely on a specific part of Annenkov's work or a specific period of time. The basic secondary literature on Annenkov's life and work comprises a series of studies by Boris F. Egorov (ЕГОРОВ 1965: 142-160; ЕГОРОВ 1968: 51-108; ЕГОРОВ 2009: 232-282) and a separate chapter in a book on early Russian liberalism by Derek Offord (OFFORD 1985: 106-143). There are also several minor papers on Annenkov that have been published in recent years: a study by Igor N. Suhii (СУХИИ 2000: 3-30), a short biography by Nikolaj G. Zhekulin (ЖЕКУЛИН 2005: 260-283), and an article by Konstantin Shneider (ШНЕЙДЕР 2014). The encyclopaedia of Russian liberalism (БОКОВА 2010: 22-25) includes an entry on Annenkov which, while comprehensive, is also rather short. Besides these studies, the scholars who study Annenkov's intellectual legacy can also use the introductions to various editions of Annenkov's works (especially his literary memoirs) published between the 1920s and 1980s. However, the drawback of using these as sources of information is that all of them conform, to a certain extent, to the ideology of their time.

The existing research and analysis of Annenkov's works are unbalanced and his work as a literary critic has not yet been fully examined. Together with Vasily P. Botkin (1811–1869) and Alexander V. Druzhinin (1824–1864), he was a representative of the “pure” or “aesthetic” school of literary criticism, which was most active in the 1850s. This group of literary critics was against using art for other than aesthetic purposes, such as political or didactic ones, and disagreed with authors who tried to weigh in on the then-current social debates with their works. In this respect, they were in direct contrast to radical literary critics such as Nikolay G. Chernyshevsky and Nikolay A. Dobrolyubov. According to the representatives of aesthetic literary criticism, art should be used to express the innermost human feelings, should be absolutely free, and should not serve for any ulterior motives.

While Annenkov recognised that art is a world of its own and thus separated from the real world, it did not mean they should be completely unconnected. On the contrary, he thought that artistic representations of moral notions were particularly important for society. He also recognised that art and literature can have an impact on society and serve as a means of education – but for the impact to be positive, it must not be premeditated. In his view, a work of art should be a pure product of immanent imagination. All of this was to be achieved by the harmony of all elements of the literary hero's character and by setting a single objective for art: aesthetics (ŠAUR 2017).

Paradoxically, while Annenkov, Botkin, and Druzhinin were against using works of fiction as a platform for addressing political and social issues, their approach to literary criticism helped form the tenets of early Russian liberalism (ШНЕЙДЕР 2015). However, this was a consequence of the specific nature of social and political debates in Russia at the time, since there was no platform for free and public political debate. As a result, Russian literature often served as a means for discussing philosophical, historical, social, and political issues. Authors gave their opinions on the then-current pressing issues through their texts and, in the absence of other media, literature served as a means for disseminating social and political views (OFFORD 1999; MORSON 2010: 141-168).

Despite its important role in social and political debates, literature was not the only platform for disseminating social and political ideas. According to Richard Pipes, there were five types of spaces for political discussion in 19th-century Russia: salons, universities, circles, literary journals, and zemstva (PIPES 2004: 320-323). The bulky volumes of literary journals, in particular, had a wide readership in various places in Russia, which made them unique. In the 1840s, the ideology of these journals was set by their fiction section and literary critiques, while in the 1850s, the opinions of the editors were mostly expressed in the opinion journalism section (together with the newly allowed political section). This was the result of the changes that led to the transformation of these journals of literary criticism into socio-literary journals. The character of the critiques also changed and began to reflect the variety of public opinions while their view of literature served as additional support for the ideology of the journals as a whole (ГРОМОВА 2005: 343, 348). These are the circumstances surrounding the career of literary critics such as Annenkov, Botkin, Druzhinin, and others.

The socio-political aspect was present not only in literary criticism but also in debates on philosophy and history, thereby allowing the authors to circumvent censorship (ŠAUR 2015: 131-135). In other words, early Russian liberalism was shaped by the fact that liberal ideas mostly found their way into Russian society through scholarly works on history and law and also through literature, such as travelogues and literary criticism. This way of spreading social ideas made it impossible to adopt a fully fledged political programme – only individual ideas, values, and motives. This is why early Russian liberalism was a set of values rather than a political programme. Rather like the ideas and concepts of revolutionary democrats, Russian liberalism was also based on westernism. Both groups of Russian intellectuals were united in their key political goals but divided as to the extent of reforms and, most importantly, the way of achieving their objectives. During the last years of the reign of Nicholas I, the line between both camps was still blurred, and as late as in 1855–1858, the representatives of both sides were still looking for ways to cooperate. However, they eventually became ideological opponents (WALICKI 2005: 230-237; КОШИНА 2003: 296-310).

In the late 1850s and early 1860s, Annenkov's approach to literary criticism began to shift. Aesthetics was gradually sidelined and Annenkov repeatedly emphasised the need to maintain continuity as an important value for social changes. The reason for this opinion shift can be found in the total separation of the two wings of Russian westernism – the liberals and the radicals – and the rise of nihilism and radicalism in Russian social thinking. Fear of revolution and social upheaval led Annenkov to defend the continuity of the values and ideas of his generation. This was a generation that joined the Russian intellectual circles in the 1840s, whose philosophy was strongly influenced by idealism – especially by Hegel – and who objected to what they saw as the rather primitive materialism and nihilism of the new young generation.

In 1857, Annenkov published a biographical sketch of Nikolai V. Stankevich (АННЕВКОБ 1881: 268-383), a major proponent of German idealism in Russia, who was seen as a teacher by the Russian westernisers of the 1840s. Annenkov's biographical study can be understood as a response to the utilitarian aesthetics proposed by Chernyshevsky and his take on Belinsky in his famous study of the Gogol Period in Russian Literature. Annenkov was not writing a biography of just one individual; he viewed Stankevich as a representative of the Russian intellectuals of the 1840s and their quixotic efforts and goals. Through Stankevich, Annenkov captured the ideas of one generation along with the events that shaped them (OFFORD 1985: 137). He emphasised that the values of that generation did not deserve the contempt with which they were treated by the radicals. A year later, Annenkov was defending his generation yet again in the article *Литературный тип слабого человека* (The Literary Type of the Weak Man). This was a public response to Chernyshevsky's interpretation of Turgenev's novella *Ася*. Annenkov was not only defending the "weak man" or the Russian liberal of that era but also pointing out the dangerous rashness of the young Russian radicals. (ŠAUR 2017: 81-82).

Annenkov's fear of social instability is most clearly captured in his memoir of the revolutionary year of 1848 titled *Февраль и март в Париже, 1848* (*February and March in Paris, 1848*) (АННЕВКОБ 1877: 241-328). These were written immediately after the events they describe, but – in contrast to his other sketches from his travels – Annenkov only published them in 1859 on the advice of his friends as a clear reference to the potential consequences of Russian radicalism. Even though he conceded that the events of 1848 were less dramatic than those of 1789, Annenkov insisted that they were an important warning for those countries that had so far managed to avoid such tumult (АННЕВКОБ 1877: 311).

Annenkov was most scared of the unbound fury of the crowd that destroyed everything reminiscent of the old regime. The text shows his anti-democratic leanings, his fear of the people controlled by the socialist movement, his aversion to the chaos that brought about the destruction of values, both tangible and intangible, and his condemnation of the moral decay and intoxicated state

of society (Анненков 1877: 268-269, 307-308, 322-328). This is in contrast to his support for reforms; however, he insisted that changes must be made at a suitable time when society is ready for them, but before they become so urgent that they cannot be resolved without resorting to violence.

Annenkov's desire to maintain continuity is very obvious in his literary criticisms of Nikolai G. Pomyalovsky and Aleksey F. Pisemsky, which were published in a journal in 1863. In Annenkov's review of Pomyalovsky's novellas *Мещанское счастье* (*Bourgeois Happiness*) and *Молотов* (*Molotov*), the family drama of Nadia Dorogova and her fight with her father and his patriarchal and despotic rule over the fate of the other family members – representing the fight of her own generation – takes central stage in this duology, with the two generations representing the old and the new principles. At the same time, however, Annenkov complained that the novella attracted public attention for other reasons – due to the figures of Cherevanin and Molotov. The portrayal of these two characters was not accepted by Annenkov, who saw them as false and shallow and compared them to Oblomov and Bazarov. At the same time, Annenkov's text was a reaction to the reviews by Nikolay A. Dobrolyubov and Dmitry I. Pisarev, again rejecting the way the “weak man” was seen by Russian radicals. In his view, both Oblomov and Bazarov were the same literary type, only portrayed in different stages of development and from different points of view. He emphasised that neither Oblomov nor Bazarov denounced their origins and were not ashamed of where they came from (Анненков 1879: 246-247). According to Annenkov, refusing the old and establishing the new, which is seemingly free and detached from the old way of life, was a false understanding of what Russian society needed.

An even stronger defence of continuity can be found in the second part of Annenkov's sketch on Pomyalovsky focused on the first parts of *Очерки бурсы* (*Seminary Sketches*). Annenkov did not reproach Pomyalovsky for his choice of topic or his portrayal of the negative features of the Russian education system, depicted in a way that could be understood as an indirect criticism of the overall situation in autocratic Russia. He did reproach him, however, for the one-sidedness and polarisation of the portrait. In Annenkov's opinion, the author did not scratch beneath the surface. The society that he painted was so affected by various pathologies that there was no space for change and renewal. According to Annenkov, reforms always followed on from the previous state of things without denying it. Annenkov insisted that reform must be the result of a renewal of healthy principles that society was able to maintain. At the same time, he rejected the nihilistic view of progress, which was based on rejecting and denying everything that came before (Анненков 1879: 254-255).

The idea of continuity is used in a similar way in Annenkov's critique of Pisemsky's novel *Взбаламученное море* (*Troubled Seas*). In Annenkov's view, Pisemsky focused on capturing the changes in Russian society. However,

instead of describing the process and the logical ways in which these changes happened, he only showed the polarities and the contrast of two different worlds. Annenkov was convinced that the main ideological source for change in society was not a sudden replacement of one ideal by its opposite, but historical experience. In other words, change did not arise due to an external impulse but rather due to internal motivation (АННЕНКОВ 1879: 317-318).

Continuity was not the only sign of the change in Annenkov's view of literature. Starting in the late 1850s, his literary criticisms began to focus on ethics. However, it is continuity that has to be seen as an attendant symptom of the overall reaction of early Russian liberals to the social developments in Russia during the early years of the reign of Alexander II. Towards the end of the reign of his predecessor Nicholas I, early Russian liberals generally opposed the traditional and conservative schools of thought in Russia. However, several years later, they found themselves in opposition to the revolutionary democrats over issues such as upholding civil liberties and pushing reforms while their defence of a more conservative approach against the radicals pushed early Russian liberals closer to conservative circles. In the case of Annenkov, the development of his opinions described above shows that his approach to literary criticism cannot be summed up as mere aestheticism and that he actually viewed literature from a much wider social context.

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