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IVAN KRYLOV AS A READER AND KRYLOV'S READERS

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The topics explored in this essay include Ivan Andreevich Krylov's reading practices in his young and mature years, reconstructed on the basis of various sources. The paper recontextualizes Krylov's unique reading trajectory not always comprehensible for his contemporaries. It also highlights numerous links, not accentuated earlier, between Krylov's strategies — in life, writing and publishing — and his service as a librarian in the Imperial Public Library of St. Petersburg. The analysis of several situations showing Krylov as a brilliant reciter of his own texts who smartly deals with expectations and obsessions of his audience allows to affirms the existence a special connection, of his personality, considerably mythologized due to his own efforts, the literary genre of fable and the status of classical writer obtained by Krylov by 1830. *Sub specie* of this connection the transformations of the circle of Krylov's readers are represented, as well as different ways of perception of his fables by children.

Keywords: Ivan Krylov; reading in Russia, 1780—1840s; national canon;

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Introduction

The problematics of a circle of reading, circle(s) of readers, individual reading practices and their correspondence to different modifications of the national and/or European literary canon in Russia turns to be more and more influential, especially in the last two decades (for a thorough review of the topic, as well as bibliography see [Rebecchini, Vassena 2014]). The platform of sources used for such studies constantly enlarges, representing as itself an important object of academic attention.

However, researches of a "readership" are mainly dedicated to different social communities of readers in different periods, such as nobility, workers, clergy, students, peasants, subscribers of a periodical, etc. Historical portraits of a "single reader" are made, as a rule, if there exists either a catalogue or description of his/her collection of books, a massif of bills from booksellers, or a journal (daily notes) concerning these personal reading practices and impressions. Less common are studies intended to define reading manner(s) and experience of a person who *did not leave* any of indicated sources.

This essay tries to reconstruct, on the one hand, reading practices and preferences specific to Ivan Andreevich Krylov (1769—1844) in various periods of his (reader's) life. On the other hand, it is aimed to redefine the circle of readers of his texts, especially fables, and transformations of this circle in 1810—1840s.

Krylov is chosen as a central figure of this essay, firstly, on account of his status — outstanding, unprecedented in the Russian culture of the first third of the 19th century. During his lifetime, he was not only considered as a national classic writer and a living symbol of *narodnost'*, but, simultaneously, "appropriated" by the State as a person fully corresponding to an emerging official ideology represented by Sergey Uvarov's trinary model (*pravoslavie - samoderzhavie - narodnost'*) [Liamina, Samover 2017a; Liamina, Samover 2017b: 100—102]. Secondly, his contemporaries almost unanimously agreed that Krylov's life represented one of the brightest scenarios of "social rise" — not least, due to his talent of a voracious and, in the same time, conscious reader.

Sources of this study are lacunar and mainly indirect: Krylov's letters, the documents concerning his activity as a librarian in the Imperial Public Library (1812-1841), and a corpus of his contemporaries' memories reflecting the image and habits of fabulist, including his manner(s) of reading.

Krylov as a reader

Krylov's social background, in the official documents, is defined as "issued from a staff officer's children" (*iz shtab-ofitserskikh detej*) [Sbornik 1869: 317 (2nd pagination)]. It meant that the future fabulist was the son of a person ennobled due to his services to the State and monarchy. However, it seems that the father's income was too modest to keep his eldest son in a school. Instead, at the age of 8, Ivan was entered in the civil service, having become, nominally, a low-ranking official in one of the judicial departments of Tver province [Ibid.: 346 (2nd pagination)]. After Andrey Krylov died, in 1778, it became obvious that Ivan would continue the real service and would not receive any education, systematic or not.

Nevertheless, having learnt to read early and being constantly praised by his mother, uneducated but "naturally clever and full of highest virtues" woman, according to her son's later opinion [KVS 1982: 51], for interest to books and reading, young Krylov read eagerly. As far as we know, the family library consisted of small amounts of Russian books, "partly religious, partly historical, and also dictionaries" [Ibid.]. (It is worth indicating that even a tiny book collection was not at all typical for the family of such social status.) "Religious" (*dukhovnye*) books certainly included the Bible, the Psalter (according to a source, Krylov's mother, being a widow, earned money by reading psalms for the departed, in rich noble and merchant families of Tver [Zhiznevsky 1895: 3]), complete or abridged version of *Minei-Chetii* (a calendar of the lives of the saints for each day in the year). As for "historical" books, it is more difficult to identify them by this vague notion. It is unlikely that the Krylovs possessed such expensive and rare, especially outside the capitals, books as Vasily Tatishchev's "History of Russia" (1768) or Mikhail Shcherbatov's "History of Russia from the most ancient times" (2 vols., 1770—1771). More likely, this part of the collection may have been represented by less prestigious and more popular books as, for instance, "Calendar, or Historical and Genealogic Monthly reading (*Mesyatseslov*)", annual publication of the Academy of Sciences. "Dictionaries" in this context are even harder to define. The notion may designate randomly acquired and detached volumes of some "lexicons" (mostly Latin, German or French).

One may reasonably suggest that this first stage of Krylov's history as a reader was, given a number of "home" books, relatively short. However, due to his excellent and long-lasting memory, remarked by contemporaries [KVS 1982: 201], it proved to be important as a basis for further development. The next step was made when young Krylov (aged 9 or 10) entered the house of noble and enlightened Nikolay Lvov, president of Criminal Justice Chamber in Tver. Having an unenviable status of semi-servant, the boy nevertheless extracted maximum from this possibility. He attended the classes given to Lvov's children, including French ones, and certainly borrowed or read books from the house collection (its volume and content are now unknown, but the fact of its existence is doubtless).

There, more likely for the first time, he came in contact with another type of keeping and ranging the books, i.e. with some classification: by fields of knowledge, authors, or languages. (It would be relevant to point out that Krylov's father left him a "chest" (*sunduk*) with books: "this collection was placed not in rich book-cases, but in a half-destroyed chest, in dust and disorder" [KVS 1982: 188]). Leaping ahead, we may state that these two types of book holding — a messy pile vs. well-organized, neat collection — would influence Krylov's personal relationship with books.

In July 1782, thirteen-year-old Krylov, together with his mother and younger brother, moves to St. Petersburg, leaving behind Tver as well as Ivan's career started in one of judiciary departments. In the capital, a wider range of possibilities may arise for a talented youngster. One of them was used quite soon. At the end of 1783, Krylov wrote his first literary work, libretto of a comic opera entitled *Coffee Fortune-Teller* ("Kofeinitsa"), and in a few months sold it to Bernhard Theodor Breitkopf, editor and composer. According to information ascending to Krylov himself, Breitkopf proposed him the books from his own bookshop as remuneration. Krylov chose the works of Racine, Molière, and Boileau — apparently, European and, consequently, expensive editions. (Thereby, a widespread practice of payment differed: the authors usually received from editors *the copies of their own publications* and then sold them, in gross or by retail [Zajtseva 2005: 121 passim]. By this way, Breitkopf may have encouraged the young writer, especially taking into consideration the fact that he never published this comic opera). Nevertheless, these were the first books gained by Krylov's own means, but neither them nor other acquisitions ever became a part of his private collection realized as a representative integrality, as he never possessed one.

Indeed, starting from the escape to St. Petersburg in 1782 till January 1812, i.e. during thirty years, Krylov practically did not have at his disposal any stable income[3]. Within this period, he often changed places of residence, never expending means and time on arrangement of his living spaces [Gordin 1969]. More than ten years (1794—1806) Krylov spent outside both capitals, living in the families of his wealthy friends or patrons, such as V.E. Tatishchev or Prince Sergey Mikhailovitch Golitsyn. Or, he travelled from one annual fair to another gambling and in such a way earning money. In those circumstances it was impossible to own not only a collection, but even few random books.

Meanwhile, his reading experience and ability grew wider with a remarkable rapidity. He made a considerable number of important acquaintances in literary and theater world of St. Petersburg, having also become familiar with book collections of such persons as Ivan Dmitrevsky, the famous actor, Gavriil Derzhavin, poet and high-ranking official, and Ivan Rakhmaninov, officer of Horse Guards Regiment, admirer of Voltaire and the Enlightenment, owner of a private typography. The books the young Krylov could find in those collections were mostly the European and Russian editions dated of several decades of the 18th century — i.e. the oeuvres of classicistic theater and poetry, the works in philosophy, poetics, history, among them the translations from Greek and Latin. It is to admit that he read very fast and could also be able to absorb and systematize the huge volume of information.

In 1788, Krylov, already the author of several works for theater, started cooperating with Rakhmaninov's magazine *Morning Hours* ("Utrennie chasy") as a satiric poet. During the next two years (1789—1790) Krylov published in the same typography eight issues of his own periodical, satiric edition *Correspondence of Several Ghosts* ("Pochta Dukhov"). This edition executed anonymously and having not boosted Krylov's notoriety, though served him as an excellent school of publishing and typographic business.

Unsurprisingly, late in 1791, a typographic society named *I. Krylov and companions* ("I. Krylov s tovarishchi"; "companions" were represented by Dmitrevsky, Petr Plavilshchikov, actor and well-known play writer, and Aleksandr Klushin, young dramatist) emerged, having as a goal

[3] The description of his life strategies, concerning service, welfare, writing, acquaintances, house economy etc. see [Liamina, Samover 2017b].

publishing and selling books and a periodical. The capital of the society was joint (for its rules and accounts see [Bystrov 1847]), each companion invested 250 rubles, excluding Klushin, who turned to be not able to gather the needed sum and gave only 65 rubles.

It is to point out that the first place in the title of this enterprise was given to Krylov, though he was the youngest (22 years old) of the four and had the lowest grade (*chin*[4]). This accentuation may be explained by the fact that the other companions recognized and valuated Krylov's erudition and his vision of perspectives of the field not less than his fast development, which allowed him to make a firm step into the book industry[5].

Actually, by the indicated time he already knew French well and translated from it; in a few years he learnt Italian and executed at least one successful translation from this language into Russian[6]. Krylov also read in German and Latin. At the age of 52 he was minded to learn English, in order to read the English books and newspapers, assiduously took classes from an English lady, and succeeded [KVS 1982: 77, 141].

However, his reading and intellectual practices were always distant from usual models. On the one hand, Krylov did not imitate the behavior of a self-made intellectual of a modest social origin — unlike, for example, his neighbor and colleague Nikolay Gnedich, translator of Homer's *Iliad* into Russian. The last was extremely neat, punctual, adored books, kept his apartment and every piece in it, including his desk and documents, in perfect order[7]. Also, Gnedich never missed an opportunity to demonstrate his erudition, refinement and belonging to the highest culture, as well as amount of hard work that he expended to achieve such level. Consequently, he read mostly classical writers, studies on them and other indisputably prestigious texts.

On the other hand, Krylov did not completely follow an amateur, aristocratic way of reading and keeping books. He could be, as an aristocrat, absent-minded, lazy and hedonistic: loved reading in bed or lying on the sofa, day and night, taking coffee and smoking cigars while reading in his gown, leaving books, not excluding the rarest and expensive in-folios, in unsuitable places (in close proximity to his chamber pot, for instance [KVS 1982: 222]), never emphasized his knowledge in public[8]. In his mature years, his circle of reading was extremely wide and, so to say, unscrupulous: antique authors like Sophocles, Euripides, Plutarch, Plato, Aesop, etc. were found side by side with Lafontaine, Racine, Milton, as well as with descriptions

[4] In 1783, Krylov received the first "class" grade according to the *Table of Grades* and became the provincial secretary (*provincialnyi sekretar*). He will obtain the following grade almost in 20 years (sic!) — in 1802.

[5] The company functioned under the indicated title till March 1794, but it is to suppose that Krylov sold his stock only in the end of 1796. On the next publishing enterprise in which Krylov participated see below.

[6] In 1797, being short of money, Krylov engaged to translate (or, rather, to adapt for the Russian theater) the opera buffa *La villanella rapita* by F. Bianchi. The work was done in a year, i.e. in 1798, the text, now entitled *Sleeping Powder, or Kidnapped Peasant Girl* was submitted to Moscow Censure Department. The first presentation of the opera took place in Moscow, in February 1800; during this season, the performance was shown five times [IRDT 1977: 402, 407].

[7] A very specific and rare source illustrates Gnedich's material universe — the list of all his belongings, from paintings, sculptures, and albums to furniture, tableware, and underwear. His will executors made the list after his death (Gnedich lived and died alone). See [Opis 1833].

[8] A unique episode of Krylov demonstrating his knowledge concerns just Gnedich and Ancient Greek. Around 1820, the fabulist aged of 50, decided to learn this language secretly. For this, he used the Russian text of The New Testament, constantly comparing it to the Greek variant and searching all forms the dictionaries. Having realized his intention within two years, Krylov literally pranked Gnedich in presence of Alexey Olenin, their patron and close friend. He opened *The Iliad* and started sight-reading and translating different fragments. Gnedich, admiring his will and labor, understood this step as a sincere wish to help him in his work of *creating the Russian Homer*. He expected that Krylov would translate *The Odyssey*. Unhappily, more reasonable would be to suppose that Krylov wanted, first, to distract himself and, second, to show to Gnedich that the emphasis around his Greek studies is unnecessary. Analysis of this episode and references to the sources see [Liamina, Samover 2015: 15—16].

of voyages, guidelines on sheep-keeping and second- or third-rate novels, European as well as Russian. According to his contemporaries, Krylov often read these "suspicious" works twice or even thrice, having forgotten that he had already read them and saying that "this is rest for the mind" necessary for a poet [KVS 1982: 61, 412]. But, unlike an aristocrat, he owned neither collection of books nor, surprisingly, a desk, an obligatory piece of furniture for a writer, or even a cabinet[9] [KVS 1982: 200, 222].

His papers, including the texts of his precious fables, represented an obvious disaster. As a rule, he wrote lying down and on the first available piece of paper sheet (*na loskutkakh*), often lost them, or allowed his woman servant to use them for the housekeeping needs, etc. While learning Ancient Greek, Krylov purchased several stereotype volumes of classic writers and trained this woman (illiterate, of course) to distinguish them, "as they became, due to the course of time, or maybe because of untidiness, dirty and stained. 'Give me Xenophon, *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey* of Homer', he told to Feniushka[10], and she never made a mistake giving him the necessary book" [KVS 1982: 136]. However, having finished the learning of Ancient Greek, he "did not think any more about the Greek classics. He held the books under his bed, on the floor, and finally, Feniushka <…> fired up the stove with them" [KVS 1982: 78, 203].

Thus, in his manner of reading, Krylov was neither professional nor dilettante, keeping in this sphere, as in other ones, his famous particularity and even eccentricity. On the other hand, one may reasonably describe his practice of reading as a very modern one. He read, in the same time, for pleasure and distraction, for passing the time, as well as in order to have some curious or useful information or to complete / enlarge his writer's competence. In a word, he was capable to act, simultaneously, as several readers, each with his own field of interest — and none assuming that a book is a kind of sacral object.

Krylov as a librarian

On January 7, 1812, Krylov was appointed to the position of the associate librarian of the Imperial Public Library. Recommending him to the Minister of Public Education, A.N. Olenin, then the director of the Library, stated that Krylov "may be very useful to the Library due to his well-known talents and excellent knowledge of the Russian literature" [Delo 1812: Fol. 1v]. So, Krylov's literary reputation and his competence in the sphere of books and publishing already could function as an important argument for his recruiting.

Within the frameworks of the life strategy carried out by Krylov, the service in the Public Library turned to be a unique possibility. It allowed him to combine independence and dignity of a writer with a common career including grades, decorations, etc. which provide their holder with a respectable place in St. Petersburg society. Some previous attempts to obtain such a balance, undertaken with support of S.M. Golitsyn or Olenin (a place Krylov had in the Mint Department, 1809—1810) did not succeed, as they were linked to the random positions devoid of creativity. On the contrary, the service duties in the Public Library were interesting and easy for Krylov. That is why he stayed in the Library for almost 30 years (1812—1841).

[9] Since June 1816 till his retirement on March 1st, 1841, Krylov, who was never married and always lived alone, occupied a spacious rent-free apartment in the House of the Imperial Public Library (the modern address is Sadovaia ulitsa, 18). It consisted of several rooms and a kitchen (for the plan see [Gordin 1969: 228]). Thus, though there was a perfect possibility to arrange the cabinet, Krylov never used it.

[10] A diminutive from Fedossia (from Greek Theodossia).

Krylov became a librarian just in the time of the most active formation of its collections. As a popular Russian poet and successful editor[11] with numerous and well-developed contacts in this sphere, he was charged, primarily, with acquisitions of new and early books for the Russian Department headed by himself. By the 1820s, he succeeded in creating the system of regular purchases and search of the *desiderata*, with the aid of Vasily Sopikov (1765—1818), a famous St. Petersburg bookseller also recruited in the Library. This means that Krylov, with his usual promptness, acquired the competences of a professional bibliographer. It is worth mentioning that he also implemented a system of arrangement and cataloguing the books in his Department[12], worked on the catalogues, systematic and general, drew up the rules of servicing the readers, organized tenders for purchasing the office supplies, etc. [Babintsev 1955: 40—90; Golubeva 1997: 60—93]. The anecdotes describing his alleged laziness and inactivity as a librarian ("Coming for duty after lunch, he usually lied down on the sofa and was reading in that position. When the readers appeared, he, not standing up, pointed at the book-case where the books selected for them were stocked and asked to take what everyone needed" [KVS 1982: 244]) are better to be seen not as direct indications but as one more testimony of Krylov's active participation in shaping of his own mythology and image.

In the Public Library, Krylov obtained open, permanent, and unlimited access to a number of rich and constantly enlarging collections — European (including precious manuscripts and incunabula), Antique, and Oriental, not mentioning his "own" Russian corpus. Having not missed this outstanding possibility to complete and polish his education, he became, without any doubt, a true intellectual of a very high level.

Meanwhile, his reading behavior did not change. He stayed the same, eager and "omnivorous", reader. Many of Krylov's colleagues and friends were surprised or even shocked by his habit "not to neglect novels, including the most stupid or from remote ages", to read them "mechanically", "in order not to think about anything serious and not to be idle" [KVS 1982: 61, 197]. "He passed them page by page, without any involvement, and the more stupid a novel was, the more satisfied he remained, according to his own words", a person of his close circle states, not able to hide his perplexity and a kind of disgust towards this manner of reading, hardly appropriate to the great poet [Ibid: 197].

Indeed, the laboratory of Krylov's brainwork, subtle processes of analyzing and reflection of the read books were always kept closed from the prying eyes. It would be no exaggeration to say that the *modus legendi* adopted by Krylov required such "trash" books contributing for his ambitious work in poetry. Besides, this closedness obviously was a quality of his personality, very perceptive and very sustainable in the same time (for an explanation see [Vygotskii 1986: 157—170]). On the surface only could be seen the specific Krylov's indifference to all literary arguments and scandals, his silence or short remarks, mainly humorous or evasive, in conversations, more or less public, around the literature with the brightest Russian poets and

[11] On return to St. Petersburg in the beginning of 1806, Krylov soon became a close acquaintance and, later, friend of A.N. Olenin, not only a rich and enlightened noble, but a person with an immense influence — he was the State Secretary of Alexander I, occupying simultaneously a number of other important positions. In the second half of 1806, Olenin and Krylov, together with a well-known actor Vasily Rykalov, organize a joint-stock typographic enterprise named *The Imperial Theater Typography* ("Tipografija Imperatorskogo teatra"). There, Krylov did not play a core role, but he certainly participated in elaborating the politics of editing and a magazine (*The Messenger of Drama* ("Dramaticheskij Vestnik"), published during 1808). The partner owned the company till 1815, with stable financial success, mostly ensured by the privilege (monopoly) for printing the theater bills and tickets [Korolev 1999: 29—30].

[12] For instance, in order to keep the leaflets (a printed form in which many Russian works in poetry and prose were published during the first third of the 19th century), he invented a special handy card box "in the form of a thick book" [KVS 1982: 198].

writers, such as Pushkin, Zhukovskij, or Derzhavin. A person of his acquaintance resumed this in the following way: "His silence should be valuated as a consequence not of modesty, but of intelligence. He showed only what could be appreciated, but there we nobody for whom the true treasures of his mind could be wasted" [KVS 1982: 93].

The extreme expression of this distance, always artistically kept, represents the stories about Krylov "naively" sleeping at the literary meetings or readings, especially boring ones. His own manner of reading out loud, on the contrary, deeply impressed his contemporaries. "Oh, how this Krylov reads! Distinctly, simply, without any emphasis, and, meanwhile, with an unusual expressiveness; each verse graves immediately in the memory"; "He was not reading, but telling, not at all forcing his voice, never using the unnatural elongation or amplification of sounds" [KVS 1982: 119, 194]. Besides, Krylov possessed an enormous dramatic talent well developed and formed due to many years he spent in theatrical milieu [Gordin M., Gordin Ya. 1983: 41 passim].

Using these abilities, he could easily perform the reading of a text as a satiric mini-show with obvious allusions to the circumstances or a particular person. Such was the case when he came to a session of a very serious *Society of Lovers of the Russian Word* ("Beseda liubitelei russkogo slova"), having promised to recite one of his new fables. Krylov was late and entered the great hall of Derzhavin's house while a previous text was being read, extremely long and boring. "The chairman of the session <…> asks him, in a low voice: 'So, Ivan Andreevich, have you brought your fable?' — 'I have'. — 'Could you give it to me, please?' — 'A bit later, for sure'. The reading continued, the guests were tired; many of them yawned. Finally, the reading is finished. There, Krylov pulls a wrinkled paper from his pocket and starts reading: 'Demianova ukha'[13]. The subject of the fable so surprisingly conformed to the situation, the comparison was made so smartly that the audience laughed out loudly and acknowledged the author for the fable with which he revenged for boredom suffered by everyone" [KVS 1982: 63—64].

Another case is represented by Krylov's performance of his poem *Thalia* on January 4, 1830, during a closed Court masquerade organized by the Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna. According to her plan, male participants of the show were to wear women dresses *à l'antique*, and Krylov was dressed as Thalia, the Greek Muse of comedy, — in a white tunic and an orange peplum, decorated with silver embroidery, a curled wig and a crown, covered with golden paillettes [Lokotnikova 2000: 182]. It is to stress that for the living classic, 59-year-old and stout, the invitation to this burlesque masquerade was potentially ambiguous, fraught with humiliation. However, Krylov succeeded in getting control over it. For this, he developed a primitive dramatic type suggested to him as a meaningful theater role, composing a long monologue (30 verses). Then, he introduced in it three bright comic points, dividing the poem in three equal parts. The major part of the text is read on behalf of the Muse visiting the family celebration in the Anichkov Palace, but the 1st, the 10th and the 20-21st verses, directly referring to Krylov's own classic fable *The Naughty Bride* ("Razborchivaja nevesta"), stress a comic conflict and remind that the audience is listening not to the evergreen Muse or to a faded beauty, but to a fat old man. The laugh rising in these points turns to be artistically staged by the author who not only *acts* as a funny masked fatty but *plays* this fatty. In the emerging situation of an actor and a role, the quite rude buffoonery, dictated to Krylov, is transferred to an aesthetic plan and becomes harmless.

[13] *Demian's fish soup*, Krylov's famous fable in which a peasant annoys his visitor asking him to eat more and more — sincerely, but excessively.

It would be useful to point out that the fables, the first collection of which appeared in 1809 ("Basni Ivana Krylova"), almost immediately became a highly tradeable commercial product, attractive for readers as well as for editors and book-sellers. Krylov brilliantly realized the goal of promotion of this product. Publishing the fables in periodicals, artistically reciting them in St. Petersburg societies, including *grand monde*, and at the Court[14], he prepared the ground for success of the following, extended, collections of "Basni Ivana Krylova". The execution of these masterpieces by the author strengthened, in perception of the listereners, the link between fable as a literary genre, Krylov's, to whom the Russian fable, so to say, belonged, and his powerful personality. This link, in Russian culture of 19th and 20th centuries, proved to be, in fact, eternal.

Krylov's readers

Consequently, during Krylov's lifetime, his highly recognizable appearance and inimitable charm were not less important for his readers than his fables. That is why many of his admirers, nobles as well as the representatives of other classes, liked to have a personal, though extremely brief acquaintance with the fabulist. They besieged him in the Public Library, in societies, in the club, in St. Petersburg streets and shops. As Modest Korf, a well-informed contemporary, points out, "everyone saw and knew in Krylov only a writer, but this *only a writer* was respected and esteemed not more than a *grand seigneur*. <…> all the high-ranked officials tended him a hand to shake <… > trying to ingratiate themselves with him, to obtain something from him, though a tiny shining of his glory" [KVS 1982: 249].

It would be reasonable to take into consideration that in early 1810s Krylov's fables were mostly read by traditional, though considerably wide, readership, — by adult persons, interested in the Russian literature, i.e. animated by the patriotic ideas, more or less realized and pronounced. But by the end of the decade another tendency has emerged. It may be detected in the editor's, Aleksandr Pokhorsky, foreword to the new collection of Krylov's fables (1819). The book, in two small volumes, was issued in 6,000 copies that was fivefold more than a standard printing run. Pokhorsky pointed out that the earlier, luxury edition (1815) was too expensive "for many persons of the middle class with a moderate income". So, he saw his goal in making the new book affordable for "people of all classes and ages, in particular — for the Russian youth" [SPb Vedomosti 1819: 278]. The price of this edition printed on a high-quality paper and released just before the Easter (and, consequently, positioned also as an admirable gift, especially for a child, on the occasion of this important holiday), was 10 rubles.

Thus, around the indicated date, the readership of Krylov's fables not only grows up in quantity but also enlarges, representing now a new type of reader, such as "the Russian youth" — children and adolescents. Significantly, in 1822, a large amount of his texts[15] appeared as indisputable examples of the national literary canon in a textbook of high authority and success. I am referring to *The Text-book of the Russian literature* ("Uchebnaia kniga Rossijskoj slovesnosti") compiled by Nikolai Grech, philologist and journalist, editor of *The Son of the Motherland* ("Syn Otechestva"), a popular patriotic magazine founded in 1812.

[14] So, in 1813 he was invited to read his fables to the Dowager Empress Maria Fedorovna in the Winter Palace, in 1815 — to Gatchina's summer residence.

[15] The section of the book dedicated to fables (Vol. 4. SPb., 1822. P. 190—274) included 84 texts, from which 39, i.e. almost one half, were of Krylov's authorship.

However, at large Krylov remained an author "for every Russian". "<…> his language is, so to say, an elevated popular language, inimitable in its kind, and as understandable and agreeable for the Russian *grand seigneur* as for a peasant. I. A. Krylov's style <…> represents the Russian mind <…>", asserted Faddej Bulgarin in 1824 [Literaturnye Listki. Part I. P. 62—63]. It is indicative that the same conclusions were made by a much less enlightened reader, Lev Krylov, the fabulist's younger brother, a poor garrison officer. In June 1823, he wrote to Ivan, comparing his works to the works of other Russian poets. "As you, my sweet father [*tiatenka*], write, this is for everyone: for a child and for an old person, for a learned one and for an uneducated one, and all of them glorify you. Your fables are not fables, but *Apostol*[16]" [KVS 1982: 355]. Cf. Olenin's definition dated of 1820, in an official memorandum, mentioning Krylov's "excellent poetic talent which is used with the same profit by children, youngsters, adults and aged people" [Olenin 1830: Fol. 4v]. The availability of Krylov's texts for a representative of each class made possible his later official "canonization" and appropriation by the State (*ogosudarstvlenie*). In the plan of politics and ideology such availability corresponded to the universality of the autocracy.

By mid-1820s, Krylov is already seen as one of the central figures of Russia's modern national culture, given, for instance, numerous translations of his fables into French, English [Bychkov 1869; Dobritsyn 2015; Cross 1993: 180-186], and other European languages, accompanied by his biographies, as well as circulation of his portraits sold separately from editions of his works. And during 1830, a series of symbolic acts transforms Krylov in the living classic.

In April, he signs an unprecedented contract with Aleksandr Smirdin, bookseller - "capitalist". According to the document, Krylov received, at one time, the sum of 40,000 rubles for the exclusive right to print 40,000 copies of the full collection of the fables (in 8 parts) during ten years. In December, Krylov, a person without any officially proved education, was "by exception" granted with the grade of the State Counselor (*statskij sovetnik*, equivalent to the rank of a general in the military service). As the arguments, Olenin relied upon Krylov's membership in the Russian Academy and the fact that "he is for a long time well-known to the amateurs of the Russian literature, in particular by his fables, which brought him a remarkable glory not only in Russia, but also abroad" [Sbornik 1869: 42—43]. Also in December, the Emperor Nicholas I offered a sculpture bust representing Krylov to his 13-year-old son, the Heir of the throne. The gift was made on the occasion of the New Year 1831 — apparently, in order to form a pair with the bust of Peter the Great offered two years earlier [SPCh 1831: Fol. 1 v]. Krylov's fables certainly were the part of the Heir's obligatory reading[17].

The jubilee (50th anniversary) of Krylov's literary career in February 1838 became the apotheosis of recognition of the fabulist's work and cultural importance by the State (for concepts of this celebration and numerous details see [Liamina, Samover 2017a]). The readership of his poetry was represented, during the gala public dinner, by a great number of high-ranking officials and generals, as well as by writers, librarians, journalists, the ladies (as mothers and educators of the next generation of his readers), and even by two young boys from the Imperial family, the Grand Dukes Nikolay and Mikhail, aged 6 and 5 years respectively.

[16] An interesting comparison. *The Apostol* is a liturgical book including the fragments of *The Acts* and *The Epistles of the Apostles*, as well as the verses from the Psalter to be read aloud on the special days.
[17] See, for example, the fable *The Eagle and the Bees* in the list of poems learnt by heart [Stikhi n.d.: 13].

Except for the official awards, Krylov was offered a crown of laurel. After the dinner, he was sitting in a smaller hall of St. Petersburg Noble Assembly receiving compliments. Young writers "started asking him to give each of them a leaf from his crown. With a gentle smile, Krylov started stripping the crown and distributing the leaves" [KVS 1982: 88][18]. The situation was, undoubtedly, emblematic: the patriarch of literature, having received the mark of the highest poetic distinction, blesses his younger colleagues (and, certainly, readers[19]), favoring them with his nation-wide glory. Evgueny Grebenka (b. 1812) described it in the poem entitled *The Laurel Leaf*: "I will tell my grandsons / About this national holiday, / Generous and noble, / Showing to my young descendant / A leaf from Krylov's crown / As a holy thing!" [LPRI 1838: 126].

In this symbolic model, generations of Krylov's readers and admirers represent a sort of an endless chain that begins in the remote times and disappears in the eternity. This seems to guarantee an absolutely stable position in culture and literary history. So, the wish of the persons who organized the jubilee to fix Krylov's triumph in imperishable materials by striking a commemorative medal is, in this context, quite natural. By the end of July 1838, St. Petersburg Mint Department issued the first four medals, for the Emperor, the Grand Duchesses Olga and Maria, and for the fabulist himself. A total of stricken medals amounted to 35 in gold, 20 in silver and 60 in bronze [Sbornik 1869: 314]. The history of numerous transformations of the inscription on the reverse, very interesting by itself, may be resumed by the following. The final inscription says:

1838

February 2

with the permission

of His IMPERIAL Majesty

to I.A. Krylov

in remembrance

of the 50th anniversary

of his liter. career

from

amat. of Russ. literature[20].

It lost the words "famous Russian fabulist" represented in all earlier versions. This definition was an unofficial Krylov's title in literary *Table of grades*, having taken place of the definition "Russian Lafontaine" widely used in 1810 — 1820s. The refusal to use any definition for the name of Krylov meant the next quality move, from a leading figure of the genre of fable to the classic of the national literature.

[18] Later, Krylov willingly sent these leaves to his friends as a souvenir of the jubilee [Sbornik 1869: 310-311]. It is to note here that after the jubilee Krylov received a considerable amount of letters from his readers in both capitals and the province. Having read the description of the anniversary in numerous newspapers, they expressed their admiration to the famous poet (see [Sbornik 1869: 313 passim]).

[19] Cf. the congratulation of Prince Vladimir Odoevsky (b. 1804) stressing that he belongs to a generation that learnt to read with the help of Krylov's fables [Privetstvija 1838: 2 (3rd pagination)].

[20] For a detailed history of the medal, as well as of establishing of Krylov's scholarship with the funds gathered by his readers, see [Liamina, Samover forthcoming].

Meanwhile, just in this period another definition was in process of amalgamating with Krylov's name. The famous surname "Grandfather Krylov", launched in Piotr Viazemskij's greeting cantata written for the jubilee, not only became extremely popular but, in fact, started to lower Krylov's status of classic writer, stripping it from the poetical power. Paradoxically, this switching of mode was one of the consequences of the poet's highest triumph. Appropriation by the State and promulgation to the grade of the national classical writer, thanks to Viazemsky's splendid couplets, led to inevitable simplification of the image. Impossibility to unify in one symbolic figure "the greatest Russian poet" (the opinion of Wilhelm Kuchelbecker, expressed in 1845) and the patriarchal grandfather of the Russian nation rapidly resulted in displacement of Krylov's work in the sphere of reading for children and for learning [Senkina 2011]. The decisive role here belongs to the fact that the concept of "Grandfather Krylov" was tightly linked to the conservative political paradigm that lost his cultural productivity by the middle of the 19th century.

Conclusion: Krylov read by all means

Nonetheless, Krylov's fables (and, it is to stress, only fables) remained a powerful means of education and instruction, not excepting the common people. According to pedagogical and psychological views of 1830—1840s, representatives of lower classes were similar to the children of educated class. So, they could read the same books. In the noble families, Krylov's fables were highly requested for the aim of patriotic education, having become as integral part of it as the Russian red shirts wore by little boys.

Later, the children of all classes were educated with the help of Krylov's fables, as demonstrates the database analyzing the textbooks and books for reading of the 19th century[21]. Memoirs, from their part, also show this process of democratization of education in the Russian empire, mediated, among other things, by Krylov's fables. Mikhail Bubnov, son of a merchant, born in Kiev ca. 1860, says that not yet being able to read by himself (i.e. aged 6 or 7), he easily recited the fables learnt by ear [Bubnov 2000: 327], Pavel Miliukov, later historian and politician, born in 1859 in Moscow in a noble family of ancient origin, confirms that "the earliest book we [the children] loved very much was 'Basni Krylova' (*Krylov's Fables*), in edition of medium format, with the pictures that kept the remains of our first attempts of using the watercolors" [Miliukov 1991: 38]. The use of "Basni" as a coloring book is important as the mark of non-reading perception of these texts, so to say, almost by imprinting. Miliukov also points out that "after Krylov, we were not given any other classical writer. I knew the Russian classics well after my childhood" [Ibid.: 44]. One may reasonably suppose that the content of these fables was seen by some sdults as extremely nutritive, i.e. perfectly representing Russian language and literature.

The remarked phenomenon: merging of Krylov's personality, including a mythologized one, with his fables and creation of a special, slightly emphasized Russian atmosphere adopted from the earliest childhood — also functions in his monument. Executed by Piotr Klodt and erected in the Summer Garden of St. Petersburg in 1855, the monument was not praised unanimously. For those who estimated Krylov as a great poet (amongst them, for instance, Taras Shevchenko), the monument seemed too primitive and even humiliating the dignity of the represented classic. However, almost immediately it became a meaningful center of the Garden,

[21] The base, realized within the frameworks of the project "Russian Literary Canon Formation", is accessible on the Internet (www.ruthenia.ru/canon). See also the monographic research executed for the same project [Lejbov, Vdovin 2013].

which had already been the important place for walks of St. Petersburg children, especially from noble families. To these traditional, private promenades (children accompanied by their tutor, nanny or governess) now added "official" excursions, undertaken by whole classes or groups of pupils of the State schools or institutes[22].

Yet, the monument, the base of which is covered with numerous cast reliefs — images of animals, personages of the fables, par default interesting to children of practically all ages, is peaceful and kind. Two bigger reliefs represent the scenes from didactic fables *Demian's Fish Soup* and *Fortuna and the Pauper*. They are aimed to demonstrate to the polite and well-mannered boys and girls that it is not good to run after the happiness or to be too proud of it, that kindness towards a fellow-Christian is to be moderate. The general tone of this moral teaching inclines to highlight the importance of self-restraint, control over one's behavior, logical thinking, etc. So, the monument functions as a visual compendium and guide to Krylov's fables. And the fable in general is a moral sermon outside the church, told in an understandable way, amusing, not threatening the listeners with the hell and its tortures, and, therefore, very lucid and comprehensible. It appeals to common sense, to something "medium", i.e. accessible for very wide circles of people and unifying them. In other words, the goal of fable is to contribute to forming "elementarily" moral people, pillars of stability sought by every regime, especially conservative. Thus one of the cornerstones of Krylov's eternal popularity in Russia is formed.

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[22] For instance, in July 1855 he Dowager Empress Alexandra Fedorovna permitted to the girls educated in the School of the Order of St. Catherine to go and see the monument to "the Russian fabulist Krylov", at 10 p.m., in the case of good weather (see the document in Central State Historical Archives of St Petersburg (Collection 3. Series 1. № 970).

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