

# ЛИТЕРАТУРА И ВИЗУАЛЬНЫЙ НАРРАТИВ



## «ТИХИЙ ДОН» М. ШОЛОХОВА В ЖАНРЕ ГРАФИЧЕСКОГО РОМАНА (РУССКО-СЕРБСКИЙ КОМИКС «КАЗАКИ»)<sup>1</sup>

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### GRAPHIC NOVEL ADAPTATION OF “AND QUIET FLOWS THE DON” BY M. SHOLOKHOV (THE RUSSIAN-SERBIAN COMIC STRIP “THE COSSACKS”)

*Abstract.* The article deals with the graphic novel “The Cossacks: A novel about the life of the Don Cossacks” by S. Soloviev published in Belgrade in 1938–1939. This is a kind of adaptation of the first two books of Mikhail Sholokhov’s novel “And Quiet Flows the Don”. The graphic novel under review is one of the first creative products of the ninth kind of art in Serbia and is connected with the emergence of this phenomenon in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Its publication laid the foundation of the famous “Belgrade School”, which developed the European traditions of graphic literature. The interest of the Yugoslavian community in the Cossacks and in Sholokhov coincided with the publication of the graphic novel. The study shows the conditions, under which the Russian-Serbian graphic novel was created, and analyzes its structure, plot lines, characters and etymology of the names. With reference to Sholokhov’s “And Quiet Flows the Don”, the graphic novel “The Cossacks” may be considered as a kind of pastiche – a plot contamination of epic story about real events with an adventurous narrative. Of particular interest is the artistic-conceptual presence of the elements of Sholokhov’s artistic world in the sphere of synthetic art. There are significant esthetic differences between the epic novel of Sholokhov and the graphic novel of S. Soloviev. Still it is possible to find attempts to preserve the language of the characters and the specificity of the author’s speech. The outcome of the adaptation of Sholokhov’s masterpiece can be presented in the following way: a transformation of the literary text into a visual-narrative discourse takes place in its course. The visual-narrative unity of the comics about the Don Cossacks makes it possible to unite separate scenes and dialogues into a holistic picture. A new, postmodern method of packing the meanings – a special form of realization of a folklore mythopoetic kind of worldview – is created. “The Cossacks” is based on the poetics of a comic strip, the essence of which boils down to an adventurous plot focusing on the unity of character and speech. In this interpretation, the graphic novel, being a complete modification of the text of “And Quiet Flows the Don”, remains on the marginal pages of Sholokhov studies. Nevertheless, it contains a significant communicative, cognitive and literary-artistic potential and is a successful attempt to build a certain cultural bridge between the two Slavic peoples.

*Keywords:* Russian emigration; comics; graphic novels; the Cossacks; literary creative activity; Russian writers; Serbian literature.

*Аннотация.* Объектом исследования в статье стал комикс «Казак: Роман из жизни донских казаков» С. Соловьева, вышедший в Белграде в 1938–1939 гг., – адаптация первых двух книг романа «Тихий Дон»

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М. Шолохова. Данный комикс принадлежит к числу первых романов «девятого искусства» в Сербии, связан с этапом возникновения этого феномена в Королевстве Югославия. Его выход закладывал фундамент «Белградской школы», развивающей европейские традиции рисованной литературы. Интерес югославской общественности к казачеству, к Шолохову совпал с распространением комикса в стране. В работе показано, в каких условиях создавался русско-сербский рисованный роман «Казачество», анализируются его структура, сюжетные линии, характеры героев и этимология имен. Графический роман «Казачество» по отношению к шолоховскому «Тихому Дону» можно рассматривать в качестве пастиша, фабульно-сюжетной контаминацией эпического рассказа о событиях с приключенческим и авантурным повествованием. Интерес представляет художественно-концептуальное присутствие элементов шолоховского художественного мира в сфере синтетического искусства. Между эпопеей Шолохова и комиксом С. Соловьева имеются существенные эстетические различия. Однако в русско-сербском комиксе можно найти попытки сохранить строй речи персонажей и особенности авторского повествования. Результат адаптации шолоховского шедевра можно представить следующим образом: в ее ходе происходит трансформация литературного текста в зрительно-повествовательный дискурс. Визуально-нарративное единство комикса о донских казаках позволяет объединить отдельные сцены и диалоги в целостную картину. Создается новый, пост-модернистский, способ упаковки смыслов – особая форма реализации фольклорной, мифопоэтической разновидности мировоззрения. «Казачество» основаны на поэтике комикса, суть которого – занимательная фабула, акцентирующая единство образа и речи. В такой трактовке комикс, являющийся полной модификацией текста «Тихого Дона», остается на маргинальных страницах шолоховедения. Тем не менее, он содержит значимый коммуникационный, познавательный и литературно-художественный потенциал, является удачной попыткой создания своеобразного культурного моста между двумя славянскими народами.

**Ключевые слова:** русская эмиграция; комиксы; рисованные романы; казачество; литературное творчество; русские писатели; сербская литература.

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It is necessary to start with preliminary remarks. It is a well-known fact that the works of M. A. Sholokhov have long been an inspiration for composers, painters, playwrights and film-makers. However, there are few who know that Sholokhov aroused great interest among artists of the ninth art – the comics. Moreover, this happened at the very early stages of the development of this type of publications, which are at the borderline between literature and fine arts. Comics art is one of the forms of modern figurative narrative, the most important part of which is a sequence of picture frames with a supporting text. In addition, the picture and the incorporated verbal text represent a semantic unity including constant ideographic signs – phylacteries ("speech balloons" or "bubbles" next to the character's head with his or her lines).

Long comic narratives are now called graphic novels. The article discusses the problem of translation of the text of Sholokhov's novel into the comics language on the basis of the cultural approach and the principles of thematic analysis.

In order to approach the key task – the study of the world's first graphic novel – the adaptation of Sholokhov's epic novel as a form of new national comics literature, we find it necessary to pay attention to the political, cultural and historical contexts it appeared in.

### **Russian Emigration in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes**

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was formed in 1918 and was subsequently named the Kingdom of Yugoslavia where about 50,000 Russian exiles, who later became emigrants, took refuge from 1918 to 1920 [Jovanović 1996]. This means that almost every 15th resident of the country was Russian. Most of them settled in Serbia. At different times the number of Russians changed, primarily due to the movement of labor and re-emigration to richer Western countries. Along with France and Germany, Yugoslavia was one of the largest and most important Russian centers in the post-revolutionary settlement. It is highly significant that intelligentsia consti-

tuted the major part of Russian emigrants to Serbia. It was the second largest group after the military. There were 60–70% of emigrants with higher and secondary education among them. About three hundred small "Russian colonies" were formed in the Kingdom. Most of the refugees settled in Sremski Karlovtsy, Nis and Belgrade. One can safely say that the Russian post-revolutionary emigration has left a profound imprint on Serbia, which was badly damaged during the two Balkan wars (1912, 1913) and World War I. It should be taken into consideration that Serbia lost almost 30% of its population in those wars, not to mention the huge material damage.

Russian emigrants made a significant, regenerative contribution to the organizational and administrative structure and cultural, educational and scientific life, construction, sports, etc. The Russian diaspora in Serbia was a unique emigrant microcosm in its own way. Many distinguished people and some important institutions of the just-overthrown Russian Empire found refuge here. For example, M. V. Rodzianko, the chairperson at the last meetings of the Tsar's Duma, V. V. Shulgин, the main witness to the abdication of Nicholas II, P. N. Wrangel, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the South of Russia (so-called Volunteer Army). By the way, the headquarters of Wrangel was first located in Sremsky Karlovtsy, while this town was also the center of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, headed by Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky). General M. V. Alekseev, the last commander-in-chief of the Russian Tsar's Army, is buried in Belgrade, and later in the crypt of the Russian church of the Holy Trinity, the same as Wrangel, who bequeathed to bury him "in the fraternal Slavic Orthodox country".

Russian refugees also managed to bring along some relics. Precious Christian relics placed in the charge of the Serbian king were kept in Serbia: a fragment of the True Cross, the miraculous Kursk Root Icon of the Sign, which is still considered the protector of all Russian emigration, as well as the ancient, miraculous icon of Our Lady of Philermos by St. Luka, and the right hand of St. John the Baptist decorated with precious stones. The Russian migrant architects who built magnificent administrative buildings both in the capital itself and in the provinces were especially famous. They built the Holy Trinity Church in Belgrade in 1924

that remains the Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as the Iversky Chapel (in 1931) with a copy of the miraculous Iversk Icon of the Mother-of-God – a replica of the original chapel demolished in Moscow. Moreover, the King Alexander Karađorđević provided financial assistance with building the temple of Russian emigrants in Prague, dedicated to the Dormition of the Mother of God. In 1933, the Serbian government built a unique cultural center in Belgrade, the so-called "Russian House of Emperor Nicholas II" and presented it to the Russian emigrants. In Serbia, the Russians had their own churches, kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, institutions of noble maidens and cadet corps, theaters, culture houses, archives, the cultural society "Matica", and even museums and falcon hunting clubs, charitable societies, poorhouses, hospitals and sanatoriums, the Red Cross society, choirs of singers and musicians, the Union of writers and journalists, numerous literary societies, relatively rich publishing activity in Russian, and their own libraries. The Russian Scientific Institute was founded in Belgrade on the analogy with Paris and Prague institutes. Therefore, naturally, it was in Belgrade in late September 1928 that the First (and only) Congress of Foreign Writers and Journalists took place [Arsen'ev 2011; Iz tajnih arhiva 2018; Jovanović 1996; Kundryuckov 1930; Tesemnikov, Kosik 2008].

The constants of the Serbian-Russian / Russian-Serbian relations, such as: common belonging to the same Slavic tribe, shared Orthodox religion, affinity between the languages and written graphics, "brotherhood-in-arms", historical-political, and specifically dynastic relations, and family ties had an important role to play in the settlement of Russian refugees in Serbia.

Pavel Sergeevich Polyakov (1904–1981), the Don Cossack and emigrant poet, expressed his gratitude to the "second homeland" in a poem written in Munich:

Вот этой родине второй  
Поставлю памятник навеки,  
Я там изведаль, молодой,  
Добро в хорошем человеке.  
И много раз проверил я  
Словцо казачье – братушка –  
Мне лили сербские друзья  
Не в рюмки ракию, а в кружку.

(P. Polyakov. "Muza") [Arsen'ev 2011: 291]

### **Cossacks in Emigration and the Interest of the Serbs in the Cossack Issues**

Among the Russian emigration to Yugoslavia, Cossacks were especially distinguished. It is believed that this country was the center of the Kuban and Terek Cossacks, while Prague and Paris were the centers of the Don Cossacks. In Serbia, the Kuban Cossacks were the most numerous (3,500), and then came the Terek and the Don Cossacks (only about 5,000). It should be noted that the Cossacks did not obey the civilian "Russian colonies" created to preserve traditions and national identities, but they lived separately, forming their free Cossack villages (there were about a hundred of them in total), promoting the idea of the "Free Cossacks" [Kazachi stanicy... 1923: 9]. They attracted attention by their exotic appearance, devotion to peculiar rites and customs, cultural identity, orchestras, choirs, dances and trick riding. Publishing activity was developed (over twenty own periodicals) [Arsen'ev 1999: 22] in the diaspora, where special attention was paid to the history and traditions of the Cossacks. It is also noteworthy that the Commander-in-Chief General Wrangel was always accompanied by a convoy of ten Cossacks in Sremski Karlovtsy.

The interest of the Serbian and Russian-emigrant cultural community in the Cossack problems was quite natural and high. As we know, in the early 1930s, the Yugoslav general public learns about the new Soviet writer – Mikhail Sholokhov. He is written about (we have found fifteen pre-war articles and reviews) and his stories are translated. In 1936 the novel "And Quiet Flows the Don" is translated. White émigrés critics write about Sholokhov's works as well. The fact is that the Russian emigrants recognized themselves in Sholokhov's characters, finding a resemblance between the fate of their relatives and other people and the Don Cossacks depicted so vividly in this epic.

It so happened that the interest in Cossacks, and specifically in Sholokhov's work, coincided with the rapid development and spread of comics in the capital of Yugoslavia, which would become one of the most significant centers of this genre in the world. The Russian emigrant artists Yu. Lobachev, N. Navoev, S. Soloviev, K. Kuznetsov, A. Ranher, I. Shenshin and later V. Gulevich, V. Zhedrinsky and N. Tishchenko represented this new artistic wave [see: Antanasievich 2015]. Since March 1936, the new special comics maga-

zine *Mika Mish* (*Mickey Mouse*, named after Walt Disney, the main character of the first animated films, *Plane Crazy* and *Steamboat Willie*) started coming out twice a month. It was undoubtedly a great contribution to the development and popularity of the comic strip in Yugoslavia. It was published by a capable entrepreneur Alexander Efimovich Ivkovich from Odessa, a Russian emigrant posing as Serbian. Thanks largely to his business sense and advertising activity, the new genre became so popular that the people queued to buy the forthcoming issue of the magazine. A long comic strip (later called graphic novel) "The Cossacks" (Serb. "Kozaci") with the heading "A novel from the life of the Don Cossacks" started coming out in 1938. The structure of the printed publication is as follows: it has three parts ("episodes", according to the terminology of its authors). The first part includes 24 chapters, the second one contains 28 chapters, and the third part (1939) consists of 24 chapters.

By the way, three more comics about the Cossacks were published in Belgrade and all of them became very popular. First of all, it was "The Black Ataman", although the graphic novel "The Cossacks", according to the readers' questionnaire, was more popular than the comic strip about Flash Gordon. Another important fact is that the comics in question have long become a bibliographic rarity. Even the central libraries of Serbia and Montenegro do not possess them.

### **Plot, Themes, Motives and Characters of the Graphic Novel "The Cossacks"**

The first two parts of Sholokhov's novel "And Quiet Flows the Don" served as a kind of pre-text for the graphic novel "The Cossacks". It should be noted that the adaptation was made without any reference to Sholokhov's work as its source. The authors (Sergei Soloviev, the artist, and P. Polyakov, the scriptwriter) left the action time, the main historical events, as well as the Cossack features the same. They partially retained the storylines and the main characters of Sholokhov's novel, similar in psychological details and role in the plot, however, partially renaming them. Taking into consideration the dramatic genre and aesthetic differences between these two works, one could not expect the comics to incorporate Sholokhov's figurative, unique language and style. Nevertheless, one can sometimes find attempts to preserve some features

# 1 КОЗАЦИ

— РОМАН ИЗ ЖИВОТА  
ДОНСКИХ КОЗАКА —



У БОГАТИМ И ПРОСТРАНИМ СЕЛИМА  
НА ОБАЛИ РЕКЕ ДОН СТАЊУЈУ  
МНОГОВРОДНИ КОЗАЦИ !!!



ПОСЛЕ НАПОДНОГ ДНЕВНОГ  
РАДА МЛАДИ КОЗАЦИ СЕ  
ВЕЖБАЈУ И НАДМЕГУ  
У ЈАХАЊУ !!!



ЕЈ, ИВАНЕ, ШТА ТИ ЈЕ?  
ОДАВНО ТЕ НИСАМ  
ВИДЕО ДА ЈАШЕШ.

ОСТАВИТЕ МЕ НА МИРУ !!

ОТКАД ЈЕ ДОБЕО  
ИЗ ПОСЛЕДЊЕГ  
РАТА ОНУ ТУРСКУ  
ЗАРОбЛЕНИЦУ КАО  
ДА СЕ САВ ПРОМЕ-  
НИО.



КАКО БИ БИЛО ДА ВИДИМ  
ТУ ЛЕПУ ЖУЛТУ  
ШТО ЈЕ ТОЛИКО  
ЗАЉУБЕЛА НАШЕГ  
ИВАНА ?

ЗАР ЈЕ ЈОШ  
НИСИ ВИДЕО ?  
ХАЈДЕ ДА ТИ ЈЕ  
ПОКАЖЕМ !!!



ЈЕЛ ИСТИНА ДА ЈЕ  
ТВОЈ СИН НАУМИО  
ДА СЕ ОЖЕНИ  
ТУРЦИЊОМ ?

САМО О ТОМ  
САЊА. АЛИ ЈА  
ТО НЕЋУ ДА МУ  
ДОПРЕТИМ.

ПА ТО БИ БИЛА  
ЕДАМОТА ЗА  
СВЕ КОЗАКЕ.



*Драги Григорје,  
из мене, јер ја сам, кад  
армијом не могу навести  
ваши, некима сам да наставу  
и... мислим да ми одређивања,  
Борис (Дубо)  
Франц Штатнер*



of the characters’ speech and the author’s narrative (folk and poetic basis, naturalness, figurativeness), but in a concise, highly reduced manner.



Picture 1. Honor Guard by the Don Cossacks in Serbia

The graphic novel opens with a picture frame: an idyllic picture of a farm life and a framed comment at the bottom of the page: “The rich and spacious farms on the banks of the Don River are inhabited by numerous Cossacks...”. And the graphic and the verbal components are in close interaction.

The first pages of the graphic novel reveal the main storylines, outline the main characters, and depict the beginning of the love affair. *Zulum*, a Turkish woman and a “damn beautiful” prisoner, appears first (it is noteworthy that the name is completely unmotivated semantically, since in Turkish it means *evil, violence*). The introduction of the name of *Ivan* appearing here is inexplicable; we recognize in him the features of Sholokhov’s Stepan Astakhov and individual character traits resembling Peter Melekhov. *Grigory Melikov* (sic!)

falls in love with *Zulum*, who combines the features of Sholokhov’s Turkish woman and *Aksinya*, thereby becoming *Ivan*’s main rival. *Grigory* saves *Zulum* from enraged horses. The meeting between the Cossack and the Cossack woman turns out the beginning of a love story. *Zulum* immediately falls in love with this handsome and strong guy. But soon the Cossack villagers suspect that the poor prisoner is consorting with evil spirits. Taking her for a witch, they give chase to the young couple and overtake them at a nearby farm, where *Grigory* rescues *Zulum* again. A fierce fight for her with the Cossack villagers ensues. The skirmish is stopped by a suddenly appearing horseman – an ataman messenger who brought the news of the war and general mobilization. The author of the comics stresses the Cossacks’ patriotism: stopping civil strife, they, together, cheerfully and with a song (“*A Cossack went to a distant foreign land / On his faithful horse...*”) join the Russian army. Masterfully painted battle scenes follow, reinforcing the impression of entertainment, and Soloviev shows a special passion for the depiction of horses. *Irina Antanasievich*, a famous researcher of the Russian comics in Yugoslavia, rightfully notes: “These pictures are the only Russian comics in the Great War” [Antanasievich 2015: 204].

Developing the plot, the authors of the comics show that the Cossacks were forced to retreat under the pressure of superior enemy forces. Just at that time, *Grigory* rescues his rival, *Ivan*, but then ungrateful *Ivan* leaves him at the mercy of the Austrians. Then Soloviev complicates the action with new storylines and the introduction of new characters. In the 17th episode of the first chapter, a new character appears, the Pol-



Picture 2. Fight with the Austrians. An illustration from the graphic novel “The Cossacks: A novel about the life of the Don Cossacks”

ish young lady *Yadwiga (Yadya)* – a fantasy of the graphic novel authors. Unlike Gogol's beautiful Polish girl from "Taras Bulba", she sympathizes with the Russians, she "wants to become a Cossack" herself and takes care of the wounded Grigory, falls in love with him, and helps him hide from the Austrians pursuing him. Grigory manages to escape, but he is overtaken by Ivan, whose treacherous shot could have become fatal.

It happens so that Grigory is re-captured by the Austrians. One more twist of the plot is important here. At night Yadya gets into the Cossack camp trying to inform them about an impending attack of the Austrians. (It is not difficult to see a transformation of the motive of betrayal from Gogol's story "Taras Bulba", which can be attributed to one of several precedent texts of the Serbian graphic novel). Further on, the authors of the comics depart from the text of Sholokhov's epic more and more, giving free rein to their imagination. They change their perspective and enlarge the figures of minor characters. In the Cossack regiment, Yadwiga dresses like a boy servant. She meets both Ivan and Zulum there.

"The first episode," that is, Part 1 of the graphic novel, ends with the scenes of Ivan's rescue of Grigory, who is in Austrian captivity again. Much attention is paid to the letter from Zulum who has left the camp. In this letter, Zulum promises to marry Ivan though she does not love him.

Part 2 of the graphic novel "The Cossacks" starts with amazing naturalistic pictures of the battlefield, demonstrating the war cruelty. These scenes are accompanied by a brief author's remark: "The World War was still raging with all its cruelty..." By the way, this remark is one of many examples of the author's skillful combination of pictorial (graphic) and verbal components.

The first two continuations of Part 2 of this graphic novel show the horrors of war, illustrated by the pictures of the Austrian offensive using poisonous gases during the attack. The Cossacks are no longer portrayed on horseback, but in the trenches, where they are depicted as suffering, broken people, dreaming of returning to their homes, to their wives and children. The military scenes serve in the narrative mainly as a background for love affairs. Particularly expressive are the animated drawings that make up the frames, which give an assessment of events and convey the attitude of the comics authors to the war.

So, overcome with jealousy, Ivan deserts and returns to his farm to marry Zulum. But the adventures of the main characters do not end there. On the contrary, their eccentric adventures continue growing more and more fascinating. A new motive has been introduced – Grigory's rescue of a wounded enemy officer, in whose wallet a photograph of Yadwiga is found. Soon, the authorities entrust Grigory to lead Yadwiga's father, Count Potonsky, charged with espionage to the army headquarters. Upon Yadya's request, Grigory releases the count and sends him to his native farm under the protection of his mother, thereby risking his own life. Meanwhile, just before the wedding, Ivan's deceit, who has tried to pass himself off as a wounded soldier, is exposed. He is going to be convicted and then again sent to the battlefield.

The next part of the graphic novel deals with the October Revolution, the collapse of the Russian army and the release of Grigory from arrest. Two different characters – Ivan and Grigory – fight for Zulum, which leads to the complete ruin of their farms. Both women's (Zulum and Yadya) fidelity is put to the test. Finally, Ivan plans a new betrayal: he is going to defect to the Austrians. Zulum and Yadya manage to prevent this. They shoot and wound Ivan.

Part 2 ends with a description of the Cossacks' clever maneuver that forces the Austrians to retreat. But neither of these events resolves the dramatic situation. After many incidents and adventures, Grigory and Zulum remain together, while Ivan and Yadwiga go their own separate ways. Concluding the text of this part of the graphic novel, the words of Zulum promise new challenges: "I foresee that we will not be at rest for a long time. Hard days are coming for the Cossacks... Days of restless struggle".

Looking for other editions of the graphic novel in the libraries, we found its continuation (Part III). This part is about the Civil War. Evil Ivan becomes a Red Army officer, and Grigory becomes a White Army officer. Zulum stays with Ivan only to die by his hands, and Grigory kills Ivan. An interesting coincidence is in the fate of the author of the comics with the events that are narrated in this dramatic "novel in pictures": through Constantinople, Grigory gets to Slovenia where he is hired to serve a baron, an Austrian magnate. There, he twice saves the life of Yadwiga. At the end of the graphic novel, they marry in Poland.



Thus, the novel in pictures ends with a melodramatic triumph of love, which is quite in the spirit of the most popular Hollywood films of that time. Its authors make concessions to the readers of comics, those stories in pictures, fully reflecting the aesthetic tastes and preferences of mass consumers.

By the way, it is worthy of note that this adaptation of the still unfinished novel "And Quiet Flows the Don" was written in compliance with the laws of the comics genre, which was a very young genre of mass culture then. At first, the creators of the graphic novel basically followed the twists of Sholokhov's plot, now moving closer and then deviating from the original source. In subsequent parts / chapters, Soloviev departs from it more and more. The plot intertwines the frames of social and historical nature with expressive love scenes and entangled amorous intrigues. As befits the comics book genre, the author emphasizes the action, captivates readers with intense relations, reflecting them in episodes with dramatic claims: fights, captivity, torture, escape, unmitigated anger, revenge, romantic passions, etc. The visual-narrative unity of the Don Cossacks comics allows one to combine separate, often disparate scenes and dialogues into a coherent picture. The author manages to depict rather objectively the epic and tragic events of the life of the Cossacks during the period of peace and war by graphic means, primarily by dynamic exchange of large horizontal frames (spatial steppes, banks of the Don, battlefield) and skillfully made vertical portraits, reflecting the traits of the main characters. This is facilitated by successful, extremely compressed authored text boxes. But in our opinion, Soloviev's stereotypical interpretation does not reflect the tragedy of Sholokhov's characters, the archetypes of Cossack life, and specifically the depth of the image of the Cossack knight Grigory Melekhov (i. e., Melikov), his discontent, doubts caused by the glaring social and historical antagonistic contradictions and circumstances of his fate and the psychology of the Cossack worker and warrior. And one more thing: the graphic novel "The Cossacks" is contrasted to Sholokhov's poetics and philosophy of being and the concepts of nature and man in many respects. The structure of its text is far from the unique style, colorful plastic language, lexical specificity, and symbols and metaphors of the great epic novel-tragedy by Sholokhov.

## Conclusions

In relation to Sholokhov's "And Quiet Flows the Don", the graphic novel "The Cossacks" can be considered as a kind of pastiche, a plot contamination of realism with an adventurous narrative. In this sense, the conceptual presence of the elements of Sholokhov's novel in another synthetic art is interesting beyond doubt. "The Cossacks" are based on the poetics of a comic strip, the essence of which is an entertaining plot, emphasizing the unity of image and speech. In this interpretation, the graphic novel, which is a complete transformation of the text of "And Quiet Flows the Don", remains not on the mainstream but on the marginal pages of Sholokhov studies. But still it contains significant cultural communicative, cognitive, literary and artistic potential. On the other hand, proceeding from the para-literary nature of comics, researchers put the aesthetic and visual-narrative achievements of this genre to the foreground, especially with regard to successfully applied cinematographic *splicing* techniques. It seems worthwhile to point out that these two forms of art have some features in common. Here we can recall that the first film version of "And Quiet Flows the Don" (I. Pravy and O. Preobrazhenskaya) was also characterized by the scope narrowed to love affairs. According to critics, the aesthetics of S. F. Bondarchuk represented by a compilation of F. S. Bondarchuk Jr. "resembles an American comic book" due to its westernization. Some critics believe that the last film series of "And Quiet Flows the Don" by S. Ursulyak "increases the distance from the literary source" by its de-epization [Udodov 2016: 70–71]. It is necessary to say that according to the theorists of structuralism and post-structuralism, the works of art discussed here enter into intertextual relationships. From the point of view of general diachronic and synchronic planes, the results of adaptations can be schematically presented as follows: adaptation generates transformation of the literary text of a novel into a visual-narrative discourse of a comics or a movie, thereby justifying some new culture discourse – a postmodern way of thinking, a form of realization of a mythological variety of the worldview.

Finally, the historical significance and expressive function of the graphic novel "The Cossacks"

as a new example of mass communication and popularization of fiction, which is at the origins of this new genre in Yugoslavia, cannot be neglected. The graphic adaptation of Sholokhov's epic novel took place with the active assistance of artists of the Russian emigration, who, thereby, built a kind of cultural bridge between two closely related Slavic nations.

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