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| **Platonov, Andrei (1899-1951)** |
| **ПЛАТОНОВ, АНДРЕЙ** |
| Born into the family of a railway worker, Andrei Platonovich Klimentov began publishing poetry and essays soon after the 1917 revolution, adopting the pseudonym Andrei Platonov, which was based on his father’s first name. Educated as an engineer, he worked extensively in hydrological projects in Voronezh and Tambov provinces. In 1927, Platonov published a debut collection of stories *Epifanskie shliuzy* (*The Locks of Epifan*)and moved to Moscow to pursue a career as a writer, contributing stories, novels, plays, screenplays and critical essays, most of which were written in an idiosyncratic style and conveyed an odd view of the world. |
| Born into the family of a railway worker, Andrei Platonovich Klimentov began publishing poetry and essays soon after the 1917 revolution, adopting the pseudonym Andrei Platonov, which was based on his father’s first name. Educated as an engineer, he worked extensively in hydrological projects in Voronezh and Tambov provinces. In 1927, Platonov published a debut collection of stories *Epifanskie shliuzy* (*The Locks of Epifan*)and moved to Moscow to pursue a career as a writer, contributing stories, novels, plays, screenplays and critical essays, most of which were written in an idiosyncratic style and conveyed an odd view of the world. Though he firmly believed that his writing furthered the cause of Communism, and though he enjoyed high esteem among fellow writers, Platonov experienced long periods of official disfavor and was unable to publish his major works, the novels *Chevengur* (1929), *Kotlovan* (The Foundation Pit)(1930), *Dzhan* (Soul) (1935) and *Schastlivaia Moskva* (Happy Moscow) (1936?). He enjoyed a modicum of redemption with his stories during World War II and subsequent retellings of folklore in the late 1940s. His reputation has grown steadily since more of his works became accessible to readers, a process that began in the 1960s and continues to this day.  File: Platonov.jpg  Figure 1. Andrei Platonov in 1922  Source: <http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Платонов,\_Андрей\_Платонович> Timeline of Life and Major Works 1899: Born into the family of a railway worker near Voronezh, Russia, on 16/28 August  1918: Enrolls at Voronezh University and publishes first story and poems in local newspapers  1919-1921: Transfers to Voronezh Polytechnical Institute; participates in Russian Civil War as correspondent and then as railwayman in the Red Army  1920: Publishes first book *Elektrifikatsiia* (Electrification)  1921: Meets Mariia Aleksandrovna Kashintseva (1903-1983) who becomes his partner for life, although their marriage is registered only in 1943  1922: Birth of son Platon, publication of book of poems *Golubaia Glubina* (Blue Depth), which receives a positive review from Valerii Briusov  1922-1926: Works in land resource management in Voronezh province, publishes essays in newspaper *Voronezhskaia kommuna*) Voronezh Commune)  1926: Moves to Moscow in June but quickly loses his job, eventually finding work in the People’s Commissariat for Land, which sends him to Tambov until March 1927  1927: Returns to Moscow and publishes first collection of stories *Epifanskie shliuzy* (*The Locks of Epifan*)  1929: Publishes collection of stories *Proiskhozhdenie mastera* (The Origin of the Master), the title story of which is adapted from his unpublished novel *Chevengur*  1931’ Stalin criticizes Platonov’s documentary story ‘Vprok’ (For Future Use), sparking off a difficult period of disfavor and poverty  1934-1935: Joins a writer’s brigade traveling to Turkmenistan, after which he writes *Dzhan* (Soul) and other works set in Central Asia  1937: Publishes *Reka Potudan’* [The River Putudan’], a book of stories; begins contributing critical essays to the journal *Literaturnyi kritik* (Literary Critic)  1938: Son Platon arrested and sentenced to ten years’ hard labor for alleged involvement in a Fascist plot against the Soviet government; Platonov makes strenuous efforts to win his son clemency, and Platon is released in 1940  1939: Prepares a book of critical essays; however, the book is prohibited at the last minute  194:1 Leaves Moscow for Ufa as part of the wartime evacuation  1942-1945: Returns to Moscow in July and begins working as a reporter for *Krasnaia zvezda* (Red Star) and other periodicals with the rank of major, publishing a number of stories collected in three books  1943: Death of son Platon due to tuberculosis contracted in prison camp  1944: Birth of daughter Mariia (1944-2005)  1946: Publishes story ‘Vozvrashchenie’ (The Return), also known as ‘Sem’ia Ivanova’ (Ivanov’s Family), which is heavily criticized  1947: Publishes *Bashkirskie narodnye skazki* (Bashkir Folk Tales) and the children’s book *Finist – iasnyi sokol* (Finist, bright falcon)  1950: Publishes *Volshebnoe kol’tso* (Magic Ring)  195:1 Dies of tuberculosis, allegedly contracted from his son Platon  Andrei Platonov was an idiosyncratic writer who can be claimed equally by modernism and by socialist realism. Born into the family of a railway worker on the dusty outskirts of the south-western Russian city of Voronezh, Andrei Klimentov (his pseudonym Andrei Platonov was based on his father’s first name) began publishing poetry and philosophical essays soon after the 1917 revolution in the spirit of the Proletkult movement, which sought to create a new, working-class aesthetic. His writing career was interrupted by his education and work as an irrigation engineer, although he also published extensively on technical matters. In 1927 Platonov’s debut collection of stories *Epifanskie shliuzy* (*The Locks of Epifan*)was published and he moved to Moscow to pursue a career as a writer. Over the next decades Platonov forged a reputation as one of the sincerest and original voices in Soviet literature, but these very qualities made him a frequent target of ideological watchdogs, and many of his most significant writings were published only posthumously, some as late as the 1990s.  Platonov’s earliest writings reveal the deep influence of cosmism, a wildly speculative trend in Russian philosophy exemplified by the works of Nikolai Fedorov and Aleksandr Bogdanov, often coloured by the philosophical pessimism of Oswald Spengler and Vasily ROZANOV. Platonov’s early work in fiction bears the clear imprint of the neo-baroque style of Boris PILNYAK, with whom Platonov collaborated on a story and a play in 1928. The result of these disparate influences was an odd view of the world communicated in an idiosyncratic style, often via hard-done-by characters marked by a kind of holy foolishness. Platonov’s first run-in with officialdom came after his story ‘Usomnivshiisia Makar’ (‘Doubting Makar’) (1929), which presents a peasant’s dumbfounded view of socialist Moscow. Platonov was subject to an outright ban for several years after his 1931 documentary sketch ‘Vprok. Bedniatskaia khronika’ (‘For Further Use. The Chronicle of a Poor Peasant’), which allegedly attracted Stalin’s personal ire. With his uncomprehending characters and ambiguous narratives, Platonov is sometimes read as a satirist, but he seems to have believed sincerely and ardently that his writing was a constructive force in the advent of Communism (though his repeated attempts to win membership in the Communist Party appear to have been unsuccessful). Nonetheless, his first major novel *Chevengur* (1929) was published only in part, and while *Kotlovan* (*The Foundation Pit*)(1930) and *Schastlivaia Moskva* (*Happy Moscow*) (1936?) remained wholly unknown to readers until decades later. None of his many dramas has been staged; only one of his many screenplays was produced, but the film (*Aina* from 1930) has not survived.  Platonov enjoyed a brief respite in the mid-1930s. In 1937 he published *Reka Potudan’* (*The River Potudan*), a collection of new stories, and in 1938 the central newspaper *Literaturnaia gazeta* published fragments of his novel *Dzhan* (*Soul*). However, Platonov was soon in disfavour again, in part for his work on the theoretical journal *Literaturnyi kritik*, the intellectual leader of which was Georg Lukacs. A collection of critical essays *Razmyshleniia chitatelia* (*Meditations of a Reader*)was prepared for publication in 1939 but withdrawn at the last minute. Platonov enjoyed a modicum of redemption with his stories during World War II and subsequent retellings of folklore in the late 1940s, some of which were published in book form. His reputation has grown steadily since more of his works became accessible to readers, a process that began in the 1960s and continues to this day. Platonov is now widely recognized as one of the major Russian prose writers of the twentieth century. Poetry *Golubaia glubina. Kniga stikhov* (Blue Deep: A Book of Poems, 1922)  (Platonov’s only book of poetry.) Stories Efirnyi trakt (Highway in Space) (1927)  Epifanskie shliuzy (Locks of Epifan) (1927)  Gorod Gradov (The Town of Gradov) (1927)  Sokrovennyi chelovek (The Innermost Man) (1928)  Che-Che-O (with Boris Pil’niak) (1928)  Usomnivshiisia Makar (Doubting Makar) (1929)  Vprok. Bedniatskaia khronika (For Future Use. The Chronicle of a Poor Peasant) (1931)  Iuvenil’noe more (The Sea of Youth) (1932)  Tretii syn (The Third Son) (1936)  Bessmertie (Immortality) (1936)  Sredi zhivotnykh i rastenii (Among Animals and Plants) (1936)  Fro (1936)  Reka Potudan’ (The River Potudan) (1937)  Rodina elektrichestva (The Homeland of Electricity) (1939)  V prekrasnom i iarostnom mire (In a Beautiful and Furious World) (1941)  Odukhotvorennye liudi (Inspired Men) (1942)  Vozvrashchenie (The Return) (1946)  *Finist – iasnyi sokol* (Finist, bright falcon) (1947) Story Collections *Epifanskie shliuzy: Rasskazy* (*The Locks of Epifan: Stories*) (1927)  *Sokrovennyi chelovek: Povesti* (The Innermost Man: Tales) (1928)  *Proiskhozhdenie mastera: Povesti* (The Origins of a Master Craftsman: Tales) (1929)  *Reka Potudan’: Sbornik rasskazov* (*The River Potudan: Collected Stories*) (1937)  *Bashkirskie narodnye skazki* (Bashkir Folk Tales) (1947) Books for Children *Iul’skaia groza: Rasskaz* (July Storm: A Story) (1940)  *Soldatskoe serdtse: Rasskazy* (A Soldier’s Heart: Stories) (1946)  *Volshebnoe kol’tso: Russkie skazki* (Magic Ring: Russian Fairy-Tales) (1950) Novels *Chevengur* (1929; first edition as *The Builders of the Nation, 1927*)  *Kotlovan* (Foundation Pit, 1930)  *Dzhan* (Soul, 1935)  *Schastlivaia Moskva* (Happy Moscow, 1936) Translations (1978) *Chevengur*, trans. Anthony Olcott (Ann Arbor: Ardis).  (2009) *Foundation Pit*, trans. Robert Chandler, Elizabeth Chandler and Olga Meerson (New York: New York Review Books).  (2001) *Happy Moscow,* trans. Robert Chandler and Elizabeth Chandler, Introduction by Eric Naiman (London: Harvill).  (2007) *Soul and Other Stories*, Afterword by John Berger, Trans. Robert and Elizabeth Chandler (New York: New York Review Books). |
| Further reading:  (Brodsky)  (Jameson)  (Platt)  (Podoroga)  (Seifrid) |