

CRITICAL REALISM IN FRENCH LITERATURE

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INTRODUCTION

Literature of France in the 1830s reflected those new features of the social and cultural development of the country that took shape in it after the July Revolution. Critical realism is becoming the leading trend in French literature. In the 1830-1840s, all significant works of O. Balzac, F. Stendhal, P. Mérimée appear. At this stage, realist writers are united by a common understanding of art, which boils down to an objective reflection of the processes taking place in society. For all their individual differences, they are characterized by a critical attitude towards bourgeois society. In the early stages of the creative development of artists, their close connection with the aesthetics of romanticism (often called "residual romanticism" (The Charterhouse of Parma by Stendhal, The Magic Skin by Balzac, Carmen by Merimee) is clearly visible.

In the 1830s and 1840s, especially in the works of Balzac, the characteristic features of realism appear. Realists see their main task in the artistic reproduction of reality, in the knowledge of the laws that determine its dialectics and variety of form.

Features of the works of Stendhal and Balzac

The features of nascent realism are immediately manifested in different ways in the work of various writers. Despite the fact that the problematics of the works of Balzac and Stendhal are in many ways similar, the individual characteristics of their creative method differ significantly: Stendhal is, first of all, a master of the psychological novel, striving to deeply explore the inner world of individuals. Balzac creates a huge canvas of French reality, a whole world inhabited by many figures.

The theoretical works of Stendhal (1783-1842) played a significant role in the formation of the aesthetics of critical realism. In the era of the Restoration, fierce disputes unfolded between romantics and classicists. He took an active part in them, publishing two brochures under the same title - "Racine and Shakespeare" (1823, 1825), where he outlined his views on literature, which, in his opinion, is an expression of the interests of the current society, and aesthetic norms should change along with the historical development of society. For Stendhal, epigone classicism, officially supported by the government and imposed by the French Academy of Sciences, is an art that has lost all connection with the life of the nation. The task of a true artist is to "give the peoples such literary works that, given the current state of customs and beliefs, can give them the greatest pleasure." Such art Stendhal, not yet knowing the term "realism", called "romanticism". He believed that imitating the masters of previous centuries is to lie to contemporaries. Coming closer to romantics in his rejection of classicism and reverence for Shakespeare, Stendhal, at the same time, understood the term "romanticism" as something other than them.

For him, classicism and romanticism are two creative principles that have existed throughout the history of art. "In essence, all the great writers were at one time romantics. And the classics are those who, a century after their death, imitate them, instead of opening their eyes and imitating nature." The initial principle and the highest purpose of the new art is "truth, bitter truth." The artist should become a researcher of life, and literature - "a mirror with which you walk along the high road. It reflects the azure of the sky, then dirty puddles and bumps." In fact, Stendhal called the emerging trend of French critical realism "romanticism".

In the artistic work of Stendhal, for the first time in the literature of the 19th century, a new approach to man is proclaimed. The novels "The Red and the Black", "Lucien Leuwen", "The Charterhouse of Parma" are full of deep psychological analysis with an inner monologue and reflections on moral problems. A new problem arises in Stendhal's psychological skill - the problem of the subconscious. His work is also the first attempt at artistic generalization of the national character.

The generally recognized pinnacle of critical realism in France was the work of Honore Balzac (1799-1850). The early stage of his work (1820-1828) passes under the sign of closeness to the romantic school of the "violent", and at the same time, some of his works reflect the experience of the "gothic novel" in a peculiar way. The first significant work of the writer - the novel "Les Chouans" (1829), in which the romantic uniqueness of the characters and the dramatic development of the action are combined with the utmost objectivity of the depiction, was later included by the author in "Scenes of Military Life".

The second period of Balzac's work (1829-1850) was marked by the formation and development of the writer's realistic method. At this time, he creates such significant works as "Gobseck", "The Magic Skin", "Eugenie Grandet", "Father Goriot", "Lost Illusions" and many others. The dominant genre in his work was the socio-psychological novel of a relatively small volume. At this time, the poetics of these novels underwent significant changes, where a socio-psychological novel, a novel-biography, sketch sketches and much more are combined into an organic whole. The most important element in the artist's system was the consistent application of the principle of realistic typification.

The third period begins in the mid-1830s, when Balzac conceived the idea of a cycle for the future "The Human Comedy". In a memorable for the history of the creation of the cycle of 1842, the author prefaced the first volume of the collected works, which began to be published under the general title "The Human Comedy," a preface that became the manifesto of the writer's realistic method. In it, Balzac reveals his titanic task: "My work has its own geography, as well as its genealogy, its families, its localities, settings, characters and facts; he also has his own coat of arms, his nobility and the bourgeoisie, his artisans and peasants, politicians and dandies, his army - in a word, the whole world. "

This monumental cycle, which acquired its complete structure - as a kind of parallel and at the same time opposition to Dante's "Divine Comedy" from the point of view of a modern (realistic) understanding of reality, includes the best of the already written and all new works. Seeking to combine in "The Human Comedy" the achievements of modern science with the mystical views of E. Swedenborg, to explore all levels of life of the people from everyday life to philosophy and religion, Balzac demonstrates an impressive scale of artistic thinking.

As one of the founders of French and European realism, he thought of "The Human Comedy" as a single work on the basis of the principles of realistic typification developed by him, having set himself the majestic task of creating a socio-psychological and artistic analogue of contemporary France. Dividing "The Human Comedy" into three unequal parts, the writer created a kind of pyramid, the basis of which is a direct description of society - "studies of morals". Above this level there are a few "philosophical studies", and the top of the pyramid is made up of "analytical studies". Calling his novels, novellas and short stories included in the cycle "sketches", the realist writer considered his activity to be research. "Studies on Morals" consisted of six groups of "scenes" - scenes of private life, provincial, Parisian, political, military and rural. Balzac considered himself "the secretary of the French society" depicting "modern history". Not only the very difficult subject, but also the methods of its implementation made a huge contribution to the formation of a new artistic system, thanks to which Balzac is considered the "father of realism".

The image of the usurer Gobsek - "the ruler of life" in the novel of the same name (1842) becomes a household name for the miser, personifying the forces prevailing in society and superior to Harpagon from Moliere's comedy "The Miser" ("Scenes of Private Life"). The first work in which Balzac consistently embodied the features of critical realism as an integral aesthetic system was the novel "Eugene Grande" (1833). In the characters deduced in it, the principle of the formation of a personality under the influence of circumstances is realized. The author acts as an outstanding psychologist, enriching psychological analysis with the techniques and principles of realistic art.

For "Scenes of Parisian Life" the novel "Father Goriot" (1834) is very indicative, which became the key in the cycle of "studies on morals": it was in it that about thirty characters of previous and subsequent works had to "come together", which was the reason for the creation of a completely new the structure of the novel: multicenter and polyphonic. Without singling out a single protagonist, the writer made the central image of the novel, as if in contrast to the image of Notre Dame in Hugo's novel, the modern Parisian boarding house of Madame Boquet - a model of the modern French Balzac.

One of the centers along the descending line is formed around the image of Father Goriot, whose life story resembles the fate of Shakespeare's King Lear. Another, ascending, line is associated with the image of Eugène Rastignac, who came from a noble but impoverished provincial noble family, who came to Paris to make a career. With the image of Rastignac, who is an active character in other works of The Human Comedy, the writer laid the theme of the fate of a young man in society, which is relevant for French and European literature, and later the character's name became a household name for the upstart who achieved success. Based on the principle of "openness" of the cycle, "overflow" of characters from novel to novel, the author depicts the flow of life, movement in development, which creates a complete illusion of the authenticity of what is happening and forms the integrity of the picture of French life. Balzac found a compositional means of connecting heroes not only in the finale, but throughout the entire novel and subsequent works, while maintaining its polycentricity.

In the novels of The Human Comedy, various facets of Balzac's colossal talent, including the unprecedented richness of the vocabulary, were manifested.

Insightful analytical thought, the desire to systematize observations of the surrounding life, to express its laws historically and socially through the typification of characters were embodied in an immortal cycle - in the whole world, built on the basis of a serious scientific aesthetic study of society, built on the basis of close observation and the synthesizing work of thought, which explains the many-sided and at the same time unified panorama, Balzac's work is the highest point of the versatile possibilities of realism as an artistic method.

CONCLUSION

It should be noted that the path of the early French realists was far from smooth. Bourgeois society persecuted and persecuted those who wrote the truth about it. The biographies of Beranger, Stendhal, Balzac are rich in facts that testify to how cleverly the bourgeois ruling circles used the most various means in order to get rid of the writers they disliked. Beranger was put on trial for his works. During his lifetime, Stendhal was almost unknown, Balzac, widely known abroad, died without receiving proper recognition in France. Merimee's service career was quite successful, but he was also assessed as a writer only after his death.

The 1830s and 40s represented an important period in the history of France and its literature. By the end of this period, that is, by the eve of the 1848 revolution, it had already become clear that the most essential, the newest in the rich literary experience of the 1930s-1940s is connected with the realistic trend, whose representatives were able to create the most vivid and truthful pictures of French life between the two revolutions, to lay solid foundations for the further development of national French literature.

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