



APPROACHES AND PROBLEMS IN MODERN LITERARY CRITICISM

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the study of the genre of the historical novel and its evolution poses a number of problems for researchers: in particular, the question of defining the concept of "historical novel" has not been resolved at the present time. Despite the many points of view expressed, it was not possible to derive a single definition. Nevertheless, literary critics are gradually "expanding" the genre framework, in modern works the question of the "decline" of the genre is touched upon less and less, questions are increasingly raised about the reasons for the undying popularity of the genre in the book market, about the connection of the historical novel with other novel forms.

KEY WORDS

Antiquity, literature, psychology, era, color, historical, novel, tradition, character, attribute, author, etc.

Introduction

The birth of the historical novel as a genre is associated primarily with the name of Voltaire Scott and his novel "Waverley", published in 1814. However, it seems expedient to pay attention to the literature of the Enlightenment that preceded romanticism, since already at that time works were created that told about the past. In addition, it is not unreasonable to believe that a historical novel could not have arisen without any basis.

With the appearance of Voltaire Scott's historical novels, the genre acquired its distinctive features, a tradition was formed, which would later be adopted, comprehended and developed by French historical novelists of the first half of the 19th century (A. de Vigny, P. Mérimée, O. de Balzac, V. Hugo), and later would be reflected in the novels of the middle of the century (E. Sue, A. Dumas, J. Borbet d'Ourévilay). First of all, it is the presence of local color, the description of manners and customs - what contributes to immersion in the era, the recreation of a true picture of time. In addition, historical figures in the course of the narrative actively interact with fictional characters, and the main character is drawn into the whirlpool of history, forced to unwittingly take part in historical events. What exactly techniques in the depiction of the past are inherited by French novelists from Voltaire Scott, and how the tradition laid down in the 20-30s of the XIX century is transformed by the 40-50s, it is planned to consider in this work.

Classic works in the field of research of this genre are the monograph by L. Magron "The Historical Novel in the Era of Romanticism. An Essay on the Influence of Voltaire Scott" [1:56] and G. Lukacs "Historical Novel" [2:8,12]. The theory of L. Magron fits into the concept of understanding the literature of the cultural-historical school: the researcher relies on the idea of the literary genre as a

living organism that is born, develops and dies. In this regard, he considers the French historical novel of the 1820s-1830s as a genre whose development coincides, chronologically and ideologically, with the development of romanticism itself: "There is a close and indisputable connection between the preparation of such a trend as romanticism and the overwhelming success of the historical novel" [2:7]. The period of development of the historical novel of the romantic period turned out to be quite short: by the 1820s, the historical novel was developing as a genre and by 1830 it began to fade away. An important place in the study of the genre is occupied by the work of Boris Georgievich Reizov "The French Historical Novel in the Era of Romanticism" (1958). A literary critic defines a historical novel as "an artistic narrative about a more or less distant past" [3:3]. In his opinion, to a significant extent, the emergence of a new genre was prepared by Chateaubriand's poem "Martyrs" (1809), and the work of W. Scott had a huge influence on its development. The novel drew a new life from history: "History gave him general events, the idea of the era, the local flavor - a guarantee of truthfulness. The writer's imagination could surround these historical facts with events and people who agree with them, entirely imaginary, but dressed in the costume of the epoch and excited by its passions" [3:80]. At the same time, Boris Georgievich Reizov emphasizes that there is a fundamental difference between a "romantic story" and a historical novel. The difference between the historical novel of the early 19th century is that it is closely connected with the problems of social life, the tasks of historical formation, philosophy and science of the era" [3:152]. The literary critic noted the years 1829-1830 as a period of crisis in the historical novel of the romantic period.

It is worth noting another work by Boris Georgievich Reizov, "French Romantic Historiography. 1815-1830» [3:535] (1956), where the literary critic examines the process of formation of romantic historiography, the struggle with the preceding tradition of the XVIII century - "enlightenment" historiography, as a result of which a new historical worldview was developed. In the historiography of the period under study, Boris Georgievich Reizov singles out the symbolic (Michelet, E. Quinet), morphological (Balanche), narrative school (Prosper de Barant), separately considering the views of the historians of the French Revolution (Mignet, Thierre). The most characteristic feature of the new school of historiographers was "the notion of evolution, of the firm interdependence between all epochs of human history, or, to use a modern term, of its 'identity'" [3:484].

In his work, the literary critic also pays attention to the problem of the relationship between the genre of the historical novel and the "mass" in the literature of the XIX century, which in the middle of the XX century acquired special relevance. In the literary and literary areas proper, "there was a consolidation of thematic modifications of the genre in the sphere of mass literature. French literary criticism unanimously attributed to this layer, in particular, the novel-feuilleton" [3:20]. In Russian science, there is a tradition of approaching the historical novel as a genre, if not unconditionally, then mainly mass. N.A. Litvinenko emphasizes that it is important to "unbiased study of the historical, functional and aesthetic semantics of works belonging to the sphere of mass consciousness, especially since the historical, literary and socio-cultural significance of some of them anticipated the significance of certain masterpieces. This was the case, for example, with the novels of A. Dumas and Stendhal. The principle that has become constitutive in the historical novelistics of the XIX century is noted: a novel about a particular era borrows from its material not only characters, facts, certain features of local color. He "recreates the "spirit of the epoch", using stylistic resources accumulated in various, primarily literary and artistic monuments of its thought" [3:67]. In conclusion, N.A. Litvinenko notes that "the historical novel draws its topic from the topic of genre

modifications and forms of thinking of the corresponding recreated era" [3:161]. For example, Chateaubriand in "Martyrs" uses the genre theme of the epic and the ancient novel, A. Dumas – the chivalric novel, P. Mérimée – the chronicle, Victor Hugo – the medieval legend. The researcher also expresses an interesting idea that the novel discourse, "which does not neglect fiction, gravitates towards the implementation of an experiment – for the history of the unthinkable, in which both "real" and fictional characters inevitably participate, has more diverse and wider resources than the historical discourse proper" [3:161].

Most of the studies are devoted mainly to the coverage of the work of specific writers-historical novelists. Thus, the general trend indicates that the problems associated with this genre are not sufficiently studied in Russian literary criticism.

As for the works of Western literary critics, it is worth noting the studies of Gilles Nelo and Jean Molynot. Gilles Nelo in his work "Panorama of the Historical Novel" (1969) offers the following definition of the genre: "A narrative consisting of the real and plausible, written in prose, in which the author seeks to recreate the image of famous personalities of the past, the spirit of the time, the aspirations of people of the past, in a word, to recreate the era. He also tries to attract the reader's attention by describing the passions, morals or the unusualness of the adventures described" [4:17]. One of the foundations of the historical novel, according to Gilles Nelo, is "the restoration of details that are different from our modern life" [4:19]. After the death of Volter Scott, the historical novel gradually becomes more and more "fictional": even if there are characters in the narrative who really played a big role in the story, they are also "distorted". However, be that as it may, with the advent of romanticism, history "shows man in the thick of events, the people who themselves create history, the relations between social classes" [5:165]. Gilles Nelo distinguishes several types of historical novels:

- a novel with a historical context, where fictional characters act with their adventures, hopes and disasters;
- a novel with historical characters, in which the freedom of the novelist is limited by how well the historical facts and events described in the work are known.

The 19th century and the historicism that appears with it begin to see traces of the past everywhere, to realize that the past surrounds us. As J. Molyno notes, "the historical novel of the romantic period finds pleasure in emphasizing the connection that exists between the past and the present" [5:235]. Creating a historical novel, the writer creates an imaginary world, the world of the novel, consisting at the same time of fictional and real elements: "The real story turns out to be immersed in a novel, where it is intertwined, connected with a fictional story" [5:235]. The writer accepts and even deliberately seeks a direct clash between the real and imaginary worlds within the novel. As for the time frame for the development of the genre, the researcher writes: "The historical novel was not born with Voltaire Scott and did not die in 1830 or 1848" [5:240]. Thus, the boundaries become more flexible.

The International Dictionary of Literary Terms [6] gives the following definition of a historical novel: "A historical novel combines two opposite principles: truth and fiction. The novel narrative is opposed to facts, scientific manner of presentation, fiction is combined with the results of documentary research, fictional characters coexist with historical characters. This is a world in which the real becomes possible, the truth becomes verisimilitude" [7]. In the Romantic era, writers were

no longer content with a simple, static description of history. They strove to create a "local color", picturesqueness, movement.

In search of an adequate genre definition of the historical novel, literary critics in one way or another turn to the problem of correlation between the concepts of history and fiction. For example, Pierre Ronzo in the preface to a collection of articles on the historical novel defines how these two concepts are interconnected: "The novel and history are not abstract categories invariably present in each other, rather, they are two different ways of perceiving and representing, depicting reality. The novel and the story must be considered separately, even if they often intersect with each other, in order to complement and change each other" [7; 7]. A historical novel is "a way to shed light on history, not a way to distort it" [8]. Interestingly, various researchers (P. L. Rey, N. A. Litvinenko, P. Ronzo, J. Jeanjambre) express a similar idea: the novel discourse helps to clarify the past, moreover, it is not inferior or even superior to historical and scientific in an attempt to achieve the "truth about the past". In modern foreign literary criticism, an important place in the study of the genre is occupied by the works of Claudie Bernard [9]. The researcher notes that the historical novel is characterized by "duality, in the sense that two concepts combined in the phrase, "novel" and "history", refer us to traditionally opposed realities: fiction and the science of man" [10; 99]. After the French Revolution, a new vision of Time emerged: an emphasis on the role of change, which is understood as progress or decline. A similar feature is noted by other researchers, in particular, by J. Jeanjambre (Historical Novel, 2006): "With the advent of the Revolution, History acquires a new meaning, forces individuals and collectives to think about themselves historically, and radically renews the genre of the novel" [10; 23]. The present begins to realize the distance between itself and the past, even if it is recent. The past begins to arouse interest, admiration, condemnation, and nostalgia. Bernard puts forward the idea of a constant "reconstruction", "re-compilation" of the past (*le passé recomposé*), which links history, historiography and the historical novel: "history is composed, then recreated again by historiography, and then reconstructed once again by the historical novel" [9; 12]. She defines a historical novel as "a novel, or fictional history (English story), which deals with real History (English history), that is, recreates a certain slice, a part of History, the past, inevitably passing through historiography, and this in full view of the readers of the public, who at the same time share their modern History" [10; 20]. Bernard pays special attention to the figure of the author of the historical novel, focusing on his dual role: the scribe, who seeks to be as inconspicuous as possible, recounting the events of the past, and the author, who creates fiction.

According to the French Dictionary of Literary Genders and Concepts,[12] history has always been for the novel "a source from which it drew inspiration for its plots, and a way to make the narrative more believable" [8; 12]. The historical novel brings to the fore "the connection of this or that individual with the course of history, where the enmity of peoples, religions, class enmity creates, overthrowing some and bringing others to power, truly dramatic situations" [8; 12].

The study of the genre of the historical novel and its evolution poses a number of problems for researchers: in particular, the question of defining the concept of "historical novel" has not been resolved at the present time. Despite the many points of view expressed, it was not possible to derive a single definition. Nevertheless, literary critics are gradually "expanding" the genre framework, in modern works the question of the "decline" of the genre is touched upon less and less, questions are increasingly raised about the reasons for the undying popularity of the genre in the book market, about the connection of the historical novel with other novel forms.

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