



CLASSICISM IN FRENCH LITERATURE OF THE 17TH CENTURY

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ANNOTATION

The article examines the history of the formation of genres and determines their specificity in French literature of the 17th century in the context of the development of the political and spiritual situation, historical thought and aesthetics of the period.

Key words: French literature of the 17th century, baroque, novel, tragedy, comedy, memoir and autobiographical genres.

Introduction

French literature of the 17th century, which gave France its great classics, was extremely rich in artistic achievements, exerted a significant influence on other national literatures of Europe, and largely determined the cultural appearance of the century as a whole. This was greatly facilitated by the peculiarities of the country's socio-historical development in the 17th century. It is necessary not only to take into account the active process of centralization of the French state, but also the dramatic vicissitudes of this process throughout the century.

Unlike Spanish, French absolutism was an important progressive factor in the development of the economy and culture of France in the 17th century. Historians speak of it as a political expression of the process of decomposition of feudalism,

however, it is characterized by bureaucratization not only of management, but to a large extent also of the country's social life, the desire of the state to streamline and certain regulation of the cultural, spiritual activities of people. It is therefore natural that modern historians have refused to consider movements, in one way or another, opposition to the absolutism of the 17th century in France, as "reactionary".

It is necessary to learn not only that baroque and classicism were developing in France in the 17th century, but also how they interact and fight with each other, what is the evolution of each of them, etc. It is useful to know that in both domestic and foreign literary studies, the concept of the French Baroque has gone through a particularly difficult formation. This is explained, among other things, by the fact that it was classicism that gave world famous classics in France - Corneille, Racine, Molière, La Fontaine and others, the prevailing scheme of sequential change from one direction to another, the identification of the concept of an integral era with the unity of the artistic direction, style of this era. Getting acquainted with French literature of the 17th century, you can see that, although baroque works predominate in the first half of the century, and classic works dominate in the second half, they not only do not completely displace each other, but exert mutual influence, often enrich the poetics of another direction.

The first stage in the development of French literature of the 17th century

The first stage in the development of French literature is associated with the beginning of the process of strengthening absolutism after the period of religious wars at the end of the 16th century. This is also the time of the formation of classicism in French poetry [1]. Studying the literature of this period, it is necessary to get acquainted with the poetry of F. Malherbe, a poet who played an extremely important role in the formation of the poetic language of the New Age in France, the founder of the school of poets. In his works one can feel the clarity, harmony,

consistency of images and composition, solemnity of intonation and civic pathos. These properties must be associated with the aesthetic principles of the poet, with his striving for the reform of French poetry.

In some studies, one can find the assertion that the classicist poetry of Malherbe was opposed by the realistic satirical work of M. Rancière. However, in fact, both of these poets are the founders of classicism, and the difference between them is dictated both to a certain extent by a different understanding of "correct art" and by the orientation of each of them either towards high (ode) or low (satire) genres. It should be noted that M. Rancière creates not an angry political, but a moral-descriptive satire, guided by the traditions of Horace and paving the way for Molière's satirical comedic types.

In addition to baroque poetry, baroque drama is also developing in France. In the works of A. Ardy, the genre features of the tragicomedy genre characteristic of the Baroque theater are clearly visible: richness with dynamic action, the effectiveness of mise-en-scenes, the complexity of the plot, etc. However, the French Baroque drama is less artistically significant than the classical drama.

The situation is different in the field of fiction, especially the novel. Here, in the first period of the development of French literature, as, indeed, and further, the baroque dominates both in its "high" and in the "grassroots" democratic version, forming a unified and antinomial system of the baroque novel. An extremely important role in the formation of this genre in the 17th century, in the development of a special secular civilization, was played by the love-psychological pastoral novel by H. D'Urfé "Astrea". The influence of "Astrea" on precision culture and literature was very significant, the poetics of D'Urfé's novel is made up of a complex interweaving of manneristic and baroque principles, with a clear predominance of the latter. Roman D'Urfé combines a kind of "historicity" and encyclopedia. The sublime world of pastoral Gaul, a community of loving shepherds who have chosen a pastoral way of life as poetic and ideal, is recreated in a complex labyrinthine

composition of a “novel with boxes” (that is, a large number of inserted stories), which has become a kind of textbook of secular civilization.

French literature 1660-80s

Analyzing French literature of the 1660s-80s, one must bear in mind that the apogee of absolutism, which falls on these decades, coincides with the flourishing of classicist poetics in various literary genres - poetics enriched with the tradition and experience of Baroque literature. You should know that in science for a long time there was an idea of classicism as a "school of the 1660s". It is justly revised in modern literary criticism, but it is obvious that this idea arose not without reason: it was during this period that the generalization and systematization of the principles of classicism took place, the final, so to speak, "classical" formulation of its theory. An expressive evidence of this is the work of N. Boileau. One should have an idea of Boileau's classicist poetry, his satires, but first of all it is necessary to pay attention to his treatise "Poetic Art", which brought the author the glory of the "legislator Parnassus". The authority of Boileau, the theorist of classicism, played a significant role not only in the development of literature in subsequent literary eras, but also in the assessment and reputation of certain authors and works.

It is also important to get acquainted with the work of La Fontaine - the author of poetic short stories, fairy tales and fables. In them it is possible to analyze how the satirical-moralistic and poetic combines in La Fontaine's fable, what kind of transformation in the classicist poet the subjects of ancient fables undergo [2]. In addition, you need to know about the rather diverse genre spectrum of classicist prose in this period: these are maxims (La Rochefoucauld), letters (Madame de Sevigne), memoirs (La Rochefoucauld, de Retz), although the obvious addiction of classicism to generalization, to aphoristic clarity and laconic expression brings to the fore precisely the moralistic aphoristic prose.

The most authoritative modern scholars on the history of the 17th century novel agree today that there was at least one classicist novel in France - M. de Lafayette's *The Princess of Cleves*. It is necessary not only to get acquainted with this wonderful work, which is considered fundamental to the analytical psychological tradition in European literature, but also to comprehend its role in the perspective of the development of the novel as a genre.

When studying the literature of this period, it is also necessary to analyze especially carefully the work of the classic playwrights Racine and Moliere. The study of the main stages and the evolution of J. Racine's work should be associated with the general evolution of classicism and with the strengthening of the role of the category of the tragic in it [2]. One can clearly feel the general classicistic basis and, at the same time, the essential difference between Racine's heroes [3], the artistic world of Racine from the world of Cornelian tragedies, turning to the first great Racine play – “*Andromache*.”

It is necessary to focus on the problem of Racine's choice, on the concept of passion in his tragedy, on a kind of coverage of the conflict of duty and feeling, which is traditionally considered to be the main one in the drama of classicism. While Racine, like Corneille, refers mainly to ancient subjects, he, as can be seen already in “*Andromache*”, prefers Greek antiquity, through which the inner tension and drama of the modern Racine era is captured especially expressively. Racine's drama is not political, but love-psychological: the heroes of “*Andromache*” are overwhelmed by passions, which they cannot cope with, although their mind is capable of “realizing and analyzing their feelings and actions” [3]. Among other tragedies by Racine, written before the famous “*Phaedra*”, one should pay attention to the tragedy of “*Britannica*” and above all to the image of Nero - “a monster in the bud,” “a monster being born,” as the playwright himself defines his character in the preface.

This circumstance introduces certain nuances in the category of time in this tragedy, and in the very character of the character. In addition, although this play, like other Racine works, belongs in general to the genre of love-psychological tragedy, moral and political issues also occupy a very important place in it, which makes some scholars even believe that Britannica is a political tragedy. It is useful to compare the world of political collisions in the tragedies of Corneille and Racine: this will make it possible to more acutely feel how much for Racine politics is more an arena for the collision of selfish passions than a sphere of testing of valor.

Of particular note is, undoubtedly, the tragedy of Phaedrus, which is unanimously considered the most perfect creation of Racine. To see what the changes were made by Rasin, and most importantly, what is their artistic function, it is necessary to recall those ancient tragedies that were written on the same mythological plot and which became the direct source of this work. It must be said that the popularity of "Phaedra" among readers, viewers and philologists does not eliminate, but multiplies the controversy around it.

Molière - the inimitable comedian of his era

Moliere's work allows not only to get acquainted with another powerful creative personality, but also to understand the originality of the genre of classic comedy. It should be borne in mind that in our literary criticism, the comic and satirical orientation of Moliere's work has been identified for a long time with realism, so in the old educational literature one can find an assessment of Moliere's comedy as realistic.

However, one should pay attention to the fact that the playwright, for all the topicality of the themes of his comedies, is attracted by eternal, general typological characters and situations. In his works, the character of the main and secondary heroes is based on highlighting the dominant feature (Tartuffe's hypocrisy, Harpagon's stinginess, Alcest's misanthropy, etc.). It should be noted that a variety of comic traditions - the Italian comedy of "masks", the comedy "dell'arte", the

Spanish comedy "cloak and sword", the ancient comedy, and finally, the folk farcical tradition - were transformed by Moliere in accordance with classicist taste, a sense of proportion, with which the writer seeks to develop the so-called "high comedy".

A special role in the formation of Moliere as a comedian is played by his own life and acting experience, work in an itinerant acting troupe, comprehension of modern social events, especially the Fronde, closeness to the philosophical circle of P. Gassendi. The main stages of Moliere's work are well represented both in the famous novel by M. Bulgakov and in the work of the French Moliere expert J. Bordonov "Moliere". It is necessary to know about the main periods of Moliere's work, about the main genre types of his comedies. Of the early works, the play "The precious ridiculous" deserves special attention, in which the author critically depicts both the very phenomenon of precision and the fashion for precision that has become established in French society.

While independently studying the comedy "Tartuffe", one should comprehend the essence of the dramatic twists and turns of its alterations by Moliere, the difficulties of staging, allowing one to feel the critical acuteness and significance of the play's problems. It is important to emphasize that the writer skillfully builds the composition of the comedy, enhances the reader's interest by not immediately bringing Tartuffe himself onto the stage, but colliding opposite opinions of other characters about him. This is one way of combining the comic and the dramatically serious in a play. The same combination is at the heart of the development of a conflict that is essentially insoluble without outside interference. It is necessary to clarify what the finale of the comedy is, its denouement, which experts call "deus ex machina", why it enhances the feeling of chance of a happy ending.

Another "high comedy" by Moliere, "Don Juan," should be carefully analyzed, and an attempt should be made to compare the legendary image of Don

Juan, his previous dramatic interpretations with the character created by the French comedian.

Reading *The Miser* and *The Bourgeois Gentleman*, one can feel that the avarice of Harpagon is shown as a destructive vice both in the social and psychological sense, while the vanity of Jourdain is funny and touching at the same time.

It is very important to feel the scale of Moliere's influence not only on the subsequent development of the comedy genre in France, but also on European comedy in general. It is also useful to get acquainted with the history of stage performances of Moliere's plays.

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