

MAIN ASPECTS OF MODERN COMPARATIVE STUDIES AS A LEADING SCIENTIFIC STRATEGY FOR HUMANITARIAN KNOWLEDGE

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***Abstract** – The article is devoted to the analysis of the main aspects of comparative studies as the leading scientific strategy of humanitarian knowledge. The author defines the concept of "comparative studies", explores various interpretations of the subject and object, as well as the history of the formation of this area of philology in Russia and abroad. The main attention is focused on the consideration of modern comparative theory based on globalization, intertext and dialogue of cultures.*

***Key words:** comparative literature, comparative studies, interliterary relations, intertextual techniques, globalization, dialogue of cultures, topos.*

I. Introduction

One of the most important trends in modern philology is the comparative and contrastive study of literature. M. M. Bakhtin wrote, "a text lives only in contact with another text (context). Only at the point of this contact of texts does the light flash, illuminating both back and forth, attaching the given text to the dialogue" [1, p. 284].

The term "comparative literature" has French roots. There are many synonyms denoting this (or similar) direction: comparative historical study of literatures, comparative literary criticism, literary comparative studies. Such an identification of this concept is presented in the Literary Encyclopedic Dictionary (1987), nevertheless, in the modern scientific environment; the terminological issue belongs to the category of polemical ones.

II. Literature review

Researchers are constantly pointing out the overlap of concepts. In the manual "Graduate Qualification Works in Russian Literature" by L.P. Egorova (2009), the following definition of comparative studies is given:

- 1) a synonym for comparative historical literary criticism;
- 2) that section of it that studies the literary connections of different countries.

After decades of prohibitions and accusations of cosmopolitanism and "joyfulness", comparative studies are actively reviving today [6, p. 263]. The way out of the current situation is the derivation of one of these concepts as a fundamental and systematizing one. Based on this, in our opinion, the following definition is possible: comparative studies are a general scientific discipline based on the comparative method of studying literary facts and phenomena. It, in turn, includes special sections with their own comparative methods of studying texts. For example, the

traditional comparative historical literary criticism, whose roots are in the academic traditions of our domestic science; theory and practice of translation with its own methods of comparative study of texts; literary criticism with specific methods, methods of literary comparison.

One of the main prerequisites for a comparative study of the literature of different peoples is the adoption of the position on “the unity and regularities of the general process of the socio-historical development of mankind, which determine the recurrence of social phenomena in different countries” [9, p. 126].

III. Analysis

The French literary critic Paul van Tiegem believed that the subject of comparative studies “is the study of the relationship between different literatures” [Cit. according to: 4, p. 92]; Marius François Guillard defined the subject as the history of international literary relations: “...comparativeism is awake at linguistic or national boundaries and traces the exchange of themes, ideas, books or feelings between two or more literatures” [Cit. by: Ibid.].

A. Dima singles out “a particular aspect of literary phenomena ... not their study separately or in certain groups within the corresponding historical period, but the correlation of these phenomena ... with similar ones in another national sphere” as the subject of comparative literary studies [Ibid., p. 29]. Consequently, the subject of comparative studies is specific; it is on the borders of the artistic embodiment of the concept of intercultural, interliterary “border” on both sides of it. The object is also subject to change and is characterized by “a tendency towards geographical (comparative analysis of the literatures of East and West) and chronological (activation of mythopoetic research) expansion. This objectively existing trend is explained by the influence of postmodernism and its research strategies, primarily by the intensification of intertextual research” [13, p. 3].

Encyclopedic dictionaries give us information that the first experiments in the field of comparative literature were made in Germany at the end of the 18th century. Comparing multinational cultural and literary traditions, German scientists concluded that there is a single European and world “cultural space”. Comparative studies went through several stages in its development; its formation as one of the schools of literary criticism dates back to the 19th century. “The works of J. G. Herder in Germany and J. Denlop in England are considered the first experiments in comparative literature, but the preface of J. Benfey to the German translation of the Panchatantra (1859) became the true manifesto of comparative studies. In Russia, F. I. Buslaev acted as a popularizer of ideas. The principles of comparative studies were finally formed in the works of H. M. Poznett (“Comparative Literature”, 1886) in Europe and Alexander Veselovsky (“Slavic legends about Solomon and Kitovras and Western legends about Morolf and Merlin”, 1872) in Russia” [14, p. 149]. The central place in their works was assigned to “wandering plots”, or “magical plots”. Benfey, Liebrecht, followed by F. I. Buslaev and A. N. Veselovsky lined up endless series of works in which, in their opinion, there were similar plot situations. But since the content was not taken into account, and only the formal elements of the plot were compared, the similarity always turned out to be very conditional” [Ibid., p. 150]. Veselovsky said, “in the process of research, the plot is left with such an emasculated scheme that it is not difficult to subsume any

work under it” [Ibid.]. A feature of the comparative historical method of Veselovsky is most often called universalism, the desire for the widest possible coverage of all phenomena of world literature.

V. M. Zhirmunsky, developing the ideas of A. N. Veselovsky, emphasizes that the establishment of similarities and differences between historical phenomena and their historical explanation are an indispensable element of any historical research. “Comparison does not destroy the specificity of the phenomenon under study (individual, national, historical); on the contrary, only with the help of comparison ... can one determine exactly what this specificity is” [8, p. 67]. The same idea can be found in the work of Academician of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR N. K. Gudzia: “Any object alone cannot be clear and defined if there are no other objects for comparison” [Cit. according to: 7, p. 177]. However, in Soviet literature, this method inspired distrust in some researchers, Academician V. M. Zhirmunsky in the book “Comparative Literary Studies: East and West” wrote about the reasons for the skepticism of literary scholars, emphasizing that sometimes in comparative historical research there is: “unprincipled empirical comparison of the facts of fiction, large and small, torn out of the historical context and from the system of worldview and style of the writer, on the basis of the presence between them of a purely external similarity, often accidental, sometimes completely imaginary, the explanation of any such similarity by a mechanically understood influence, “a push from outside” [8, With. 66].

Among the main ideas of comparative studies, which inherits the principles of the comparative historical school, is the writing of a "history of world literature" or "universal world literature" (a term by J. W. Goethe). The thesis of the German thinker is based on the unity of many literatures, which is characterized not by the sum of all phenomena, but by a new meaning and new trends that arise during their interaction. Important and promising for modern literary criticism is the idea of “world literature”, which has properties that cannot be derived from its constituent national literatures, put forward and partly implemented by A. N. Veselovsky (V. M. Zhirmunsky saw a similar goal in comparative literary criticism).

IV. Discussion

The study of the history of world literature meets the study of other spheres of the spiritual activity of humankind. This is not just a contact of research areas, not just a reliance on important data from other sciences or an interchange of factual material. The point is that in the process of this cultural exchange there will be a deepening of the theoretical equipment of the comparative method itself in each of the related sciences, its improvement as a tool of knowledge.

The framework of comparative literature is not limited to one national literature; it is possible to compare works of different national literatures. “As you know, not a single significant literature of the world develops in isolation; each of them widely uses the artistic experience of other literatures” [6, p. 26]. D. Dyurishin rightly wrote: “... a consistent interpretation of the meaning of comparative studies does not allow the complete exclusion of any genetic or typological connections from it, regardless of whether they belong to the interliterary sphere or to one national literature. Differences between national-literary and inter-literary relations, of course, exist, but they are not of a fundamental nature” [5, p. 61]. Based on the concepts of modern

researchers, we conclude that comparative literary criticism, in contrast to the traditional comparative historical, is a new, modern stage in the development of comparative studies as a science. There are active processes of “updating the terminological apparatus, which is enriched with universal concepts and categories (archetype, dialogue, types of artistic consciousness, etc.)” [2, p. 302], as well as the assimilation of modern methods, in particular intertextual ones. Revealing the distinctive features, we note the difference in the subjects of study, which are aimed at comparative and contrastive sections of comparative studies. “Comparative literary criticism is more focused on the study of the mechanisms of inclusion of Russian literature in the Western European context” [Ibid.]. When comparing literatures, the subject of analysis is, on the contrary, opposing attitudes, for example, Russian literature and the literature of the East.

The modern researcher M. Y. Osokin, on the contrary, does not agree that the basis of comparative studies comes from comparison: “If we derive the foundations of comparative studies from the idea of “comparison”, among the pra-comparative studies is the comparison of “Phaedrus” by Euripides and Racine in the “Course of Dramatic Literature” I (1814)” [12, p. 62].

And here is a vivid thesis of the French critic and literary historian Ferdinand Brunetière: “comparison of Shakespeare’s drama with Racine’s drama is necessary for the same reasons that it is interesting to compare the platypus and kangaroo” [Ibid.]. The point of view of M. Y. Osokin is based on the proposition that “if comparative literary criticism is understood as a method of understanding and problematizing a foreign text in a writer’s work, in culture... then the question of “otherness” (alterite) becomes a constructive issue of discipline”. Y. I. Mineralov speaks about the peculiarities of comparative literary criticism, which consist in the fact that the corresponding system of methods of analysis is put at the forefront. “It was comparative literary criticism that turned into full-fledged terms such concepts as “eternal images” (world, “universal” images), “wandering plots”, etc. [10, p. 3-4]. Eternal images are characterized by the fact that they can pass from author to author, acquiring new features and meaning.

Speaking of comparative historical analysis, it is necessary to note in general the target task of a comparative study of the world literary process. This is the establishment of its general patterns, most clearly manifested in the typological similarity of literary processes. The well-known literary critic I. G. Neupokoeva notes that such similarities can be traced at different stages and in all links in the development of literature. “Revealing the typologically common in the world literary process, the comparative method, by the very identification of the similar, also reveals how the compared processes that occur on different verticals and horizontals of world literature differ” [11, p. 92].

I. O. Shaitanov, developing the concept of I. G. Neupokoeva, singles out the triad of modern comparative studies, based on the following foundations: globalization, intertext and dialogue of cultures. The author emphasizes that intertextuality becomes the key concept among these. This term “denotes the transition (transposition) of one (or several) sign systems to another” [15]. Due to the frequent, sometimes banal understanding of it in the sense of “study of sources”, Shaitanov expresses a preference for another term - transposition.

V. Conclusion

According to the researcher, the modern program of comparative research is subject to extremes: either adherence to descriptions taken out of the context of connections, echoes, influences, or a broad cultural (culturological) approach that declares literature to be only one of the cultural texts. Important for globalization is to establish a meeting place, to determine where and when the contact that remained in the memory of culture arose, how a new motif arose, which acquired repetition, became a topos. In classical literary criticism, topos is interpreted as a formula, myth, motif, and another kind of artistic image that is regularly repeated in the writer's work and in the system of culture, having special spatial characteristics. O. M. Freidenberg, studying the poetics of the plot and genre, explained the originality of the images created by world literature by "combining new contents with modified traditional forms" [Cit. according to: 3, p. 14]. Cultural space is thus endowed with the ability not only to divide, but also to connect, providing a place for meeting and dialogue. This is the global premise of modern comparative theory.

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