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Russian Literary Process in the 1760-1770s: Novel as a Representative of Interconnection of Epistemic Reproductive Models

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Abstract

The paper deals with the Russian literary process in the middle of the 18th century and correlation of the genre of a novel with the system of classicistic genres. The emphasis is placed on the novel as a representative of the epistemological transition from the dual philosophical literary reality patterns having a monolingual code to the ternary bilingual model of interconnection between non-literary reality and its literary model. This resulted in the durable idea of identity and replaceability of literature and reality in the Russian aesthetic consciousness.

1. Introduction

The literary process in the XVIII century, defined as a whole body of texts written from 1700 till 1799, has been traditionally studied on the basis of the monographic principle or historical and literary one and has been considered as a sequence of change of literary methods used in the works of different authors. The methodological principle on the basis of which the literary process is being addressed in the present article is determined by the idea once expressed by the French philosopher M. Foucault: the principle of the nomination and intended nature of the relations between the nominee and the nominate (words and things) serves as a universal basis forming a single

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model of all types of reproductive world images in every historical and cultural period (episteme).

Foucault defined three major new periods in the European culture as the Renaissance episteme (the nominative principle, i.e. the identity of words and things; the word, i.e. a symbol of things); the episteme of classical rationalism (the word and the thing identified in the representation space, where the word acts as the image of the thing), and the modern episteme (the language is positioned between the word and the thing; in this case it went beyond the representation space and became the object in need of nomination, that is, the language includes the features of both words and things; the word acting as a sign of things) (Foucault, 1966).

In this cornerstone of Foucault's theory our attention is drawn to two points: 1). If two early epistemes are defined by terminology and meaning, and the definition is based on general cultural (Renaissance) and philosophical (rationalism) concepts, the third is correlated only with a more or less certain historical period. 2). The latter differs from the previous two in structural terms: both Renaissance and rationalist epistemes are dual models, each having one exclusive code description. As it concerns the modern ternary structure, it has two independent coding systems collocated using a mid-level (the language) which partially combines the features of both codes and acts as the independent and original coding system (Lotman, 1992).

Taken from this perspective, the aim of the article is to analyze the regularities of the Russian literary process in the late XVIII century in view of the epistemological turning point which determined a change in aesthetic criteria for the literary works and the readership' reception of the literary text.

2. Methodology

2.1. The Structure of Analysis

After establishing the parameters of regular correspondence of the reproductive models of the modern episteme and the features of the philosophical and literary world modelling (an abstract conceptual image of the reality and thingish-substantive image of the reality, correspondingly), we further highlight the role of literature for the Russian aesthetic consciousness as not only an image of reality but also its equivalent. Innovations in the genre repertoire in the late XVIII century allow to trace the process of change in the understanding of the aims that the new genres which became alternatives to the genre system of the classic rationalism episteme sought to achieve. A new representational genre for the Russian literary process of the XVIII century proved to be the novel which infiltrated the Russian literature at that time as a representative of the modern episteme world-image and an indicator of the new perception of the world and its modelling.

2.2. The Interaction of Philosophy and Literature as Reproductive Models

From a historical perspective, the epistemological turn in the European aesthetic consciousness, i.e., complexity of a binary structure and its transformation into a ternary one, can be called a short period, and its change can be described as a process because chronologically it covers at least two centuries (the XVII and the XVIII). Their historical and cultural content can be described as "explosive" in all respects: first, this period is likely to be event-driven (the English and the French Revolutions, the reforms of Peter I); secondly, it is very rich in scientific terms (the age of the "universal encyclopaedia"), and it is undoubtedly impressive from the aesthetic viewpoint (literature-centricity and rapid flowering of liberal arts).

This period is determined by a semantic intersection of two main philosophical currents of the period: the classical rationalism (Cartesianism that represents a dual monolingual model prevailing in the XVIII century, i.e. 'mind-feeling') and sensationalism (a ternary structure with two coding systems that started to dominate in the XVIII century, i.e. 'feeling-emotion-thought'). Their co-existence is fraught with semantic explosion depending on which particular philosophical current currently has an ideologically central or a peripheral position. This causes a modification of the epistemological structure as a whole and its transformation coding system when a polymorphic syncrisis of the Renaissance Culture and a dual, but monolingual universe of rationalism are transformed into a new unity of a higher order.

From this perspective, the exclusive role of belles-lettres becomes apparent, with its immanent use of language as a means of reverse translation and the intermediate coding system. Thus, belles-lettres initially enjoys the kind of