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The Concept of Literature in Historical and Phenomenological Perspective

The delineation of the concept of literature is incomplete and, hitherto, is still in progress because of quantitative and qualitative criteria are continuously changing. The definition of literature is determined not only by the genealogic characteristics of literary art, aesthetic doctrine of the epoch or literary canon, but is primarily correlated by the concept of human being, varying with each period of time. Phenomenology underlies the concept of literature, and at the same time, is an outgrowth of the phenomenon of literature.

Keywords: concept of literature, the criteria of high artistic merit, cultural and historical epoch, canon, poetics.

The definition and boundaries of fiction are still uncertain today, despite the long existence of the phenomenon. Pluralism of the literary interpretation confirms the thesis that the "basic questions" are both the most controversial and difficult.

The question "What is literature?" accompanies it from the outset. Though for a long time this question was hidden and diffuse it acquired an increasingly distinct shape in the formation of the science of literature. In the nineteenth century this question was not clearly posed because literary critics were focused on asserting their own scholarly field. In the twentieth century the question resounded in many different ways.

In 1991 G. Genette drew attention to this question in his "Fiction et diction", opening it with the following words: "If I were not so afraid of looking ridiculous, I could bestow this job with a title, which had already provided one famous text disservice: 'What is literature?'; there, as you know, the issue remains essentially unanswered – that, in general, is quite reasonable: how one should answer stupid questions? And probably it would be truly wise not to ask it at all" [2, p. 346].

Genette alludes to Sartre's book with a relevant title published in 1948. Despite the irony and self-irony, Genette was still looking for the answer to the question that should not be asked. Despite the warnings of the esteemed theorists, the question "What is literature?" is posed, and, thus, new answers are provided hitherto. The scope of research on the concept of literature indicates the importance of the problem. The study, the results of the researchers' job, stimulates an interest in a phenomenological aspect of literature, because sometimes it looks as if some literary critics are never certain about the object of their science... Very often the creators of the

object, the writers, put a question mark where there has been a full stop for a long time, declaring something literary as not literature, while elevating something casual to the rank of fine art.

Edward Kaspersky believes that the answer to the question "what is literature and what are its features?" belongs to the main goals of literature, because it defines its subject matter and interests [5, p. 9]. This statement in the XXI century does not seem anachronistic or rhetorical because, in fact, the diversity of literature definitions increased and they became more differentiated. "The concept of literature" itself (Ts. Todorov) has different names – from text to discourse.

We do not set the task to answer the fundamental question of the whole science (or a complex of sciences) within the article. Let's focus on those aspects that cause, and, at the same time, hamper theoretical definitions of literature.

Literature as a process that takes place in space and time, is constantly changing. Accordingly, its definitions change as well and the attributive set is augmented and specified. Considering the diversity of distinctions between the definitions of literature, the theorists of the 20th century offered to shift the central focus of the issue. In the early 1920s R. Jakobson proposed the formula: "The subject of literary theory should be not literature but the literariness", i.e. the quality of the text, through which it (the text) is identified as belonging to literature. The literariness is historically variable. For some texts it means one thing for others it means something different. Such mobility of the criterion creates a theoretical prerequisite for a controversy over the status of literature and constant attempts to assign this or that phenomenon to literature or to non-literature.

Extending the concept of R. Yakobson, G. Genette offered to distinguish between two types of literary – constitutive and conditional, literature proper and literature due to circumstances [2, p. 348–349]. Literature has a center and a periphery. In the center there are texts that are always recognized by the speakers as literary (not necessarily of a merit). On the periphery there are the same texts that may be literary due to certain circumstances. Genette's theory rests N. Goodman's opinion, who, considering this problem within a framework of art in general, offered to replace the traditional issue of aesthetics "What is art?" with another question, "When there is art?". In other words, instead of looking for constant essence of art, this scholar offered to clarify the circumstances and conditions under which certain artefact, text, or even a natural object can get into the orbit of art. Whereas a constitutive the literariness can be determined by such criteria as functionality or organization of the text

according to definite canons (for example poetic), conditional literariness appears as a result of the combination of lots of variable historical factors.

Cicero's speeches were political performances at the time of pronouncing and were not regarded as literary texts. However, at a distance of two millennia these samples of rhetorical skills are perceived as landmarks of literature, perenials of literary art, and eventually cultural heritage of mankind. There was a shift in the assessment of the text: initially as not a literary text, it gained conditional literariness in the course of time. The same happened to David's psalms, manuscripts of Kievan Rus and Augustine's sermons...

The following regularity is observed: the longer is a temporal distance between us and the text the less time we need to include a non literary fact in a literary discourse. The domains the text originate from before they enter the field of literature are also different: politics, religion, science, everyday life. In the article "Literary Fact" Y. Tynyanov explored the way the non-litarary phenomenon can gain or, conversely, lose their literary function. In the course of time, one of his examples is correspondence. In Russian literature of the first third of the XIX century private letters often performed the literary function. They were considered as samples of style. They were distributed, shown to third parties, gathered in collections and published. In the second half of the century even the most prominent writers' letters were not treated as the fact of genuine literature, but as literary document: with the passage of time, the literary function, the literariness of this genre disappeared. Thus, the "literary fact" is constantly changing its boundaries. This variability of the literature borders shows its life. Perhaps if these boundaries were locked literature immediately would have died of ossification.

Y. Tynyanov proves that a literary fact is a variable category that is why it is possible to give a static definition of literature, "all its solid static definitions are swept by the fact of evolution" [9, p. 257]. Hence, by changing the "literary facts" literature constantly changes its boundaries, and, as a result, lives and evolves.

The concept of literature is, in fact, the question of the literature limits (quantitative indicators of the object of the research) and the artistic criteria (evaluation of the quantity of the object). The openness of the definitions of fiction is caused by a constant modification of the criteria (which would enable us to ascribe the status of literature to some texts or to reject this status to others) and by a reassessment of these parameters in the course of time.

In the history of the development of any science there is an empirical or a descriptive phase. A mature science is moving in the depth of the object and comes in contact with the adjacent sciences. Literature has been an independent and self-sufficient science for nearly two hundred years and its object seems to be self-evident. It grows like everything in culture, eventually extending its limits due to replenishment of new works. One would assume that at such a high stage of the development of literature and literature-related research the problems of its limits and criteria would have to be resolved at an axiomatic level. The paradox is that so far the concept of literature is controversial and is still at the epicenter of the literary studies.

Those who research literature have to inevitably explore the issue of artistic criteria. We can say that long tradition of direct or indirect research of the criteria of the artistry has seen embodied in several approaches: semiotics foregrounds a semiotic (based on signs) and symbolic form of art as a criterion of artistry; a sociological approach emphasizes national and cultural characteristics of a piece of art; formalists draw attention to the aesthetics of form as a key criterion of art; the advocates of a diachronic approach explore the criteria of art in the lens of dynamics of a historical development of literature. The above approaches exemplify most general critical approaches to literature and at the same time, respective research approaches to fiction.

The problem of criteria arises at any level of art exploration. Polish philosopher Vladyslav Tatarkevych outlined the concept of art from the perspective of its two-millennium history. Defining art through its orientation or impact, the thinker formulated its definition with a double alternative: “Art is a reproduction of a thing or a design of forms, or transmission of feelings, if a piece of art as the result of such a reproduction, construction, transmission is capable of capturing, exciting and shocking the reader” [6, p. 41].

Summarizing the previous experience of the aesthetic and philosophical research the authors of the two-volume “Theory of Literature” offer three laws of art (artistry): the law of conventionality, integrity, originality and internal addressee-orientation and generalization [7, p. 51].

Ukrainian literary theorists are also involved in the research of artistry (the literariness). Peter Bilous identifies the following main criteria of the artistic literary work: imagery, imagery form, emotional expressiveness and convention [1, p. 64].

Based on V. Tatarkevych's theoretical generalizations about the concept of art and taking into account its national existential expressive potential, Petro Ivanyshyn points to the following three major (attribute) artistic criteria: technic associated with the assessment of the external form of a literary work; eulogy (writer's creative and expressive skills); spiritual teleology of a literary text (basic) [4].

Declaring different approaches in understanding and assessing basic criterion of art, Vasil Ivanyshyn, however, comes back to two defining aspects of art: aestheticism and intentionality. The aesthetic level, respectively, is represented by the sublevels of an external and internal form; the level of intentionality is represented by the sublevels of content and sense (meaning) of a literary work [3, p. 94].

Tsvyetan Todorov tried to find an original route in the research "What is Literature" discourse. He did it in his essay "The Concept of Literature". Proceeding from so-called functional and structural approaches, Todorov inserts that neither of them provides the accurate definition of the phenomena "that are considered as literature from different points of view" [8, p. 6].

Exploring the criteria of literature in terms of its functions and he organization of literary works one has to keep in mind the following aspects: constructionally, the scope of fiction is both broad and internally heterogeneous; it depends on genealogical characteristics and is sensitive to the modifications of aesthetic doctrines.

The authors of various types of poetics, treaties and manifests tried to define the constructive principles of literary texts at different periods of history. The attempts to codify these principles and, on this basis, to conduct research into the organization of a piece of fiction resulted in such tendencies of literary criticism in the 20th century as structuralism (R. Yakobson) and phenomenology (R. Ingarden). Emphasis on functional determination of literature contains a hidden danger of normativeness and limitations, even if it concerns such a polyphonic phenomenon as aesthetics. Aesthetic norms vary not with different nations but also within a particular ethnic group at a certain period of time.

Besides, we must take into account the fact that each of the three major literary genres has its own millennia-old criteria and boundaries of literature: lyrics were primarily associated with poetry; drama was designed for performance in the theatre; narrative (prose) was inconceivable without rhetoric and make-believe (the latter was characteristic of romanticism). A tripartite object is much more difficult to be delineated and to be correlated with the same criteria.

Each era provided its own significant adjustment to a catalogue of literary works and individual authors who were ranked as exemplary and classical. Originality for example, was not perceived as a criterium of artistic quality until as late as the 20th century. Dante (at the time he pursued his literary career) was not reputed as the author of original poems. In the minds of his contemporaries his art was conventional. Similarly, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Goethe originally interpreted as fairly traditional Harold Bloom characterized the aforementioned authors as representatives of the Western Canon (this opinion was subjected to adverse criticism). The critics, scholars and eminent figures in the world of art elaborate specific principles of hierarchy and set and upgrade the canonical lists. It is obvious, however, that any author recognized by a culture as a classic or a person of genius (even if he or she combined the talent of both a scholar and an artist, like Goethe and Franko) was too subjective to define the concept of literature. None o the author's definitions of literature can be generalized and transferred to the domain of universally-acknowledged truths.

Very often an epoch may negate or abolish the literary merits of the predecessors: romanticists opposed the genre completeness and any formal criteria of classicists; realists challenged the merits of non-representational art. In the era of modernism the artistic criteria and boundaries set by the predecessors were interrogated and disrupted. The standards of modernist literature were totally revised in a postmodern era.

In the 21st century literature has become a category of verbal production designed to meet the demands of the market and its almost classically rigid genre requirements and rules of craftsmanship. Everyone knows, however, that these rules and conventions do not apply to the so called elitist or genuine literature is a matter of individual value judgments. The story, as it were, has ended in the same situation in which it began: we still are doubtful (as we initially were) of what literature is and what it should be.

Literature is a variable phenomenon that is molded by and correlated with the concept of the human being. This concept is changing: it is different at each period of time. The value of everything a person creates directly depends on his or her self-awareness and self-assessment. The changes of human values are determined by the changes of the human being.

To conclude, the concept of literature is historically motivated to a greater extent that it is postulated by the authors of the books on historical poetics. The concept of literature is not a result of adding one newly open

entity to the other known entity (the way it works in a natural or exact science).

The concept of literature is generated by each particular epoch as a result of centripetal and centrifugal movements around the concept of human being. To reduce all the epochs to a common denominator is a problem of fruitless debates. Each era is trying to evolve its own understanding of literature with the previous ones, but attempts to find its own position in terms of the awareness of the following questions: why are the boundaries blurred? Why are these or those criteria shaken loose?

The concept of literature is subject to numerous definitions provided by different epochs. It requires a diachronic generalization at the present day stage of history. No matter how controversial were the definitions of literature or, in other words, how self-evident and conventional they might seen, each culture has to make its own contribution to refining the concept of literature. This goal is attained by joint efforts of writers, readers, scholars, as a result of intensified reflection on a literary tradition, modern literature and its functions as well as on the process of creative activity, the nature of literary art and a lot of other aspects. Phenomenology underlies the concept of literature and, at the same time, is an outgrowth of the phenomenon of literature proper (whatever name we give to it).

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Тереза Левчук. Понятие литературы в историко-феноменологическом срезе. Понятие литературы претерпело многочисленные дефиниции различных эпох и требует диахронического обобщения на современном этапе. Определение литературы является незавершенным и до сих пор процессом, поскольку количественные и качественные показатели явления постоянно меняются. Дефиниции литературы обусловлены не только генологическими особенностями произведений, эстетической доктриной эпохи или литературным каноном, а прежде всего коррелируются концепцией человека, в каждом времени другим. Каждая культура делает собственный вклад в углубление понятия литературы. А это осуществляется суммарным усилиям писателей, читателей и ученых в результате усиленной рефлексии над литературной традицией, современной литературой и ее функциями, процессом творчества и природой произведения и многими другими проблемами. В понятие литературы заложена феноменология, которая является следствием феномена самой литературы.

Ключевые слова: понятие литературы, критерии художественности, культурно-историческая эпоха, канон, поэтика

Тереза Левчук. Поняття літератури в історико-феноменологічному зрізі. Поняття літератури зазнало численних дефініцій різних епох і вимагає діахронічного узагальнення на сучасному етапі. Окреслення поняття літератури є незавершеним і до сьогодні процесом, оскільки кількісні та якісні показники явища постійно змінюються. Дефініції літератури зумовлені не тільки генологічними особливостями творів, естетичною доктриною епохи чи літературним каноном, а насамперед корелюється концепцією людини, в кожному часі іншою. Кожна культура робить власний внесок у поглиблення поняття літератури. А це здійснюється сумарним зусиллям письменників, читачів і науковців унаслідок посиленої рефлексії над літературною традицією, сучасною літературою і її функціями, процесом творчості і природою твору та багатьма іншими проблемами. В поняття літератури закладена феноменологія, яка є наслідком феномену самої літератури.

Ключові слова: поняття літератури, критерії художності, культурно-історична епоха, канон, поетика

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Марія Моклиця

Метафорична, алегорична й символічна інтерпретація тексту: до питання універсальних методологій

У статті йдеться про необхідність актуалізації й розрізнення трьох потужних дискурсів культури – метафоричного, алегоричного й символічного – важливих у процесі аналізу та інтерпретації літературних текстів. Ці дискурси сформувалися в надрах середньовічної герменевтики на основі інтерпретаційних моделей грецько-римської античності. Названі способи інтерпретації тексту – це методи питомо філологічні, вони не дозволяють літературознавцю втратити з поля зору специфіку свого об’єкта. І це, вочевидь, найбільш універсальні з відомих моделей аналізу й інтерпретації вербальної сфери культури, бо підтвердили свою дієздатність у процесі апробації протягом тисячоліть.

Ключові слова: метафора, алегорія, символ, аналіз, інтерпретація, герменевтика.

Разом із тим, як розростається інструментарій літературознавця, загострюється питання дієвості й ефективності обраних методів