

THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF CRITICAL REALISM IN THE ARTISTIC PERCEPTION OF REALITY

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Abstract

The article analyzes the distinctive features of artistic perception of reality in critical realism. The main goal of critical realism is to depict society and human life as close to reality as possible. The author examines the process of perceiving reality through artistic observation and reflection, highlighting the elements of realism and criticism in literature. The study also explores how literary characters' psychological and social states are revealed, their responses to life situations, and methods of realistic representation of events. This research sheds light on the essential characteristics of understanding and artistically shaping reality within critical realism.

Keywords

critical realism, artistic perception, reality, literary analysis, representation of truth, character psychology.

INTRODUCTION

Art is a form of social consciousness, and one of its unique ways of portraying and expressing reality is through literature. Its main tool – the word – allows it to depict, in rich detail, anything from human imagination and inner life to the grandeur of nature or tragic events, conveying them to the reader in a way that evokes unparalleled wonder. Unlike other forms of art, literary works have a relatively broader ability to communicate and express any feelings, experiences, or moods occurring in the human soul to the reader. Therefore, a reader can fully grasp the reality presented in a literary work, sharing in the joys or sorrows of the characters' pasts. Sometimes, the tragic outcomes of events or characters' fates in a work can sadden the reader and provoke countless questions. For example, the tragic fate of the character Kumush in the novel "Past Days" still sparks discussion and debate among many readers. However, a literary work is valuable primarily because it can reflect true reality, allowing the reader to observe, study, and

contemplate real life authentically. For this reason, literature is an exceptionally effective means of education.

The realism movement in literature is characterized by its faithful depiction of all aspects of reality. By artistically expressing all the vices and contradictions of social life, it brings critical judgment of reality to the attention of a broad audience. This literary trend, which emerged and developed in Europe during the 18th-19th centuries in novels focusing on social and everyday life, can be said to have led world literature to great heights.

MAIN PART

In particular, the 19th-century Russian literature offers outstanding examples of critical realism, where the harsh and relentless exposure of negative conditions in reality earned it the name "critical realism". During this period, the works of A.S.Pushkin, I.Krylov, N.Nekrasov, A.Ostrovsky, L.Tolstoy, F.Dostoevsky, A.P.Chekhov, and especially I.S.Turgenev, can be cited as prime examples of Russian critical realism. Naturally, Uzbek readers are also well-acquainted with the works of these great Russian writers; many readers even revisit their favorite works annually.

Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev, one of the prominent figures of Russian critical realism, refrained from narrating the lives of Russian aristocrats and wealthy families. Instead, he spent most of his life observing ordinary people, portraying their difficult, impoverished lives and strenuous labor without embellishment or exaggeration. Alongside being a masterful writer, Turgenev was also a kind and modest person, earning the deep respect of poor peasants and laborers.

His famous work, "A Hunter's Sketches", born from his careful observation and study of the lives of peasants and neighboring nobles, gained widespread acclaim among readers of his time. Audiences eagerly awaited his new works, discussing each newly published novel, story, or tale with great enthusiasm. Readers were amazed as if they had just discovered the human face hidden in the frail body of ordinary people, exhausted by the relentless blows of poverty and heavy labor.

Let us recall the story "The Beggar" (Chup-Ustikhon): The writer went hunting with his servant Yermolai, and, caught in a sudden downpour, they sought shelter in a nearby place where bees were kept – a small shed where beehives were stored in winter.

"I looked inside through the slightly open door: the shed was dark, silent, and unpleasant; it smelled of mint. In the straw, wrapped in a little blanket, lay a tiny corpse... I was about to leave when suddenly I heard a faint, weak, quivering

sound, like the rustling of grass growing in a swamp:
– “Barin, barin! Petr Petrovich!”

I went closer, and there I stood, dumbfounded. In the straw lay a human-like figure, but what kind of person was it?” [1, 390].

The way this wretched scene is described naturally horrifies the reader, yet it does not provoke disgust; on the contrary, it evokes growing feelings of sorrow and compassion. The continuation: “His head seemed almost shrunken, extremely thin, bloodless, with a liver-like hue... his nose was sharp and knife-like, his lips so thin they were barely visible, and only his teeth and eyes stood out in whiteness... He slowly moved his two tiny, stick-thin hands under the fold of the blanket in front of his chin. I stared at him: his features were not ugly, perhaps even somewhat delicate, yet utterly terrifying, overwhelmingly so...

– Barin, don’t you recognize me?’ – the voice whispered again...

– Lukerya!” I shouted [1, 390].

Lukerya was one of the household servants who had worked on the estate where Ivan Sergeyevich spent his childhood (the village of Spasskoye Lugovino in Mtsensk Uyezd, Oryol Governorate). She had once been a lively, young, exceptionally cheerful, and beautiful girl. Seeing her in this wretched state – debilitated, ugly, helpless, and in the most pitiable condition – was a cruel testament to the mercilessness of human fate. The writer himself, who had once secretly loved her in his childhood, was astonished by what he saw.

Turgenev wrote this work in 1874 and, in general, during the years 1847-1851, he had written about thirty sketches and stories. In a letter to Y. Polonsky dated January 13, 1874, he wrote: “Out of all the pieces, twenty-two were published, though about thirty had been prepared. Due to the risk that the censors would not allow publication, some sketches remained incomplete and unfinished...” [1, 432].

All of these works, based on the lives of serf peasants, were included in *A Hunter’s Sketches*. The writer recalled in his diaries that for the second edition – published without censorship approval – he had been arrested in 1852 and later exiled to the village of Spasskoye-Lugovino in the Oryol Governorate. The works clearly exposed the oppression of peasants by large landowners (pomeshchiks) and the extremely harsh life of ordinary people. Naturally, such depictions were not pleasing to those in power. Characteristic of critical realism, these works illuminate reality truthfully and leave the judgment to the reader alone; there is no fabricated plot or idealized character – only objective reality and compassion.

Turgenev concludes “Chup-Ustikhon” as follows:

“A few weeks later, I heard that Lukerya had died. At last, death had come... just as it comes ‘after the feast of St. Peter’... People say that on the day she died,

she kept hearing the sound of church bells. Lukerya said the sound was not from the church, but 'coming from above.' Perhaps she could not bring herself to say that it came from the sky."

Yes, the story does not have a traditionally happy ending, but it offers a kind of relief and hope to the reader: this unfortunate person, left entirely to her fate by everyone, finally escaped suffering and left this world with her death. By presenting reality in this honest, unembellished way, the work encourages the reader to perceive life accurately, without romanticization, and fosters respect for universal human values.

Another major representative of Russian critical realism, the brilliant writer Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy, left behind a monumental ninety-volume body of work for the world to read and love. Among these, his critical essays are particularly noteworthy. Relying on at least fifty years of thought, he published in 1906, in the newspaper *Russkoye Slovo*, his critical essay titled "On the Famous Shakespeare" at the age of seventy-five.

"I remember, when I first read Shakespeare, I was extremely astonished. I thought that reading him would bring me great aesthetic pleasure. However, when I read what are considered his greatest works – King Lear, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Macbeth – I did not feel pleasure at all; instead, I felt an unbearable sense of disgust. I was crushed and dumbfounded while reading; the entire educated world might consider these works flawless and perfect, yet I found them directly tasteless and trivial"[2, 94].

In this essay, L.N.Tolstoy, in his own words, sharply criticizes Shakespeare's greatest works, which the "entire educated world considered flawless and perfect." Tolstoy points out that the reality depicted in these works, the plots, the compositions, and the dialogues between characters are unreliable, contrived, and fanciful. In short, he relentlessly "examines" Shakespeare for these faults.

Tolstoy, who always examined reality to its deepest core, analyzing it profoundly and portraying only truth – real reality – in his own works without letting emotions interfere, could not accept Shakespeare in the same way.

The two world-renowned geniuses – Tolstoy and Shakespeare – were the mature, exemplary figures and writers of their times. While romanticism, full of heightened emotion, dominated in Shakespeare's era, Tolstoy's works emphasized seriousness, realism, and authenticity. Of course, the final judgment belongs to the reader, who evaluates their value personally. It is worth noting that among Uzbek literary enthusiasts and readers, there are many who re-read Tolstoy's works every year and gain fresh moral and spiritual pleasure from them.

It is also important to emphasize that our great writer, the founder of Uzbek national literature, A.Qodiriy, held I.S.Turgenev and L.N.Tolstoy in high regard. He studied their works carefully, learned from them, and translated their writings into Uzbek. In his work "About My Father", Habibulla Qodiriy recalls that his father, Abdulla Qodiriy, once had a dream in which Lev Tolstoy appeared and gave him advice. Qodiriy fondly recounted this dream to his children: "Create a garden, raise a cow in it, drink its milk, and then write!" said the great writer.

The lesson is clear: the garden represents honest labor, study, and research; the cow symbolizes the means of livelihood – truthfully and fairly depicting the difficult, laborious life of the people on paper. Throughout his life, our great writer followed this advice and left behind immortal works deeply rooted in critical realism.

CONCLUSION

The unique place and, it can be said, extraordinary significance of critical realism in literature lies in the fact that such works vividly depict the extremely harsh and laborious lives of ordinary people. They encourage readers to engage in self-reflection, to think critically, and to view life through a realistic lens. In societies shaped by totalitarianism, the government's lies and corruption are exposed openly, and the problems present in society become tangible through vivid characters, their thoughts, and their words.

However, the fate of the writers who created these works was not always peaceful. Specifically, I. S. Turgenev faced persecution for all his works and lived much of his life in continual exile; Lev Tolstoy ultimately withdrew from public life and died at a railway station while traveling; and Abdulla Qodiriy was accused by the Soviet totalitarian regime of being an "enemy of the people" and was executed.

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