

THE PROBLEM OF READERS' PERCEPTION OF "DIFFICULT" LITERARY TEXTS

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Abstract:

The paper is devoted to consideration a problem of reading as important cultural and didactic phenomenon. The different types of reader's perception of modern fiction literature are characterized, which allows the author to reveal features of the reading of the difficult Russian postmodern texts. The conclusions are interpreted in the framework of didactic intents.

Keywords: Aesthetic resonance, reader's intention, reader-researcher, critical-skeptical perception, abstract-logical perception.

ПРОБЛЕМА ЧИТАТЕЛЬСКОГО ВОСПРИЯТИЯ «ТРУДНЫХ» ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННЫХ ТЕКСТОВ

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Аннотация:

В данной статье рассмотрены проблемы чтения как культурного и дидактического феномена. Характеристика различных типов читательского восприятия современной художественной литературы позволяет выявить особенности чтения «трудных» текстов русского постмодерна. Полученные результаты интерпретируются в контексте дидактических задач.

Ключевые слова: Эстетический резонанс, интенция читателя, читатель- исследователь, критически-скептическое восприятие, абстрактно-логическое восприятие.

The problem of reading as a cultural and didactic phenomenon is directly related to the totalitarian nature of any literary text, manifested in its natural attitude to be perceived in one way or another. The act of perceiving a text, in a certain sense, is an act of forcing the reader to perform the necessary operations to decode textual information and interpret it, an act of violence of the perceived against the perceiver. A reader who has entered into an aesthetic resonance with a literary text follows the textual imperative without being indignant at its rigidity, often without noticing the dictates of the text at all, and, moreover, experiences the power of the text as aesthetic pleasure. Thus, violence can turn into the most powerful intellectual and emotional charm of a truly artistic text. A reader who aesthetically distances himself from the perceived literary text resists its influence, rebels against what shocks his literary taste, and contradicts his behavioral attitudes. The extreme form of such rebellion is



refusal to read. Much more often, rejection of the aesthetics of a work of art is expressed in a critical-skeptical attitude towards it, which retains its relevance until what seems unacceptable, anti-artistic is subjected to aesthetic re-evaluation and, as a result, receives the status of a new aesthetic norm.

Each of the three “participants” of literary communication - the reader, the text (work) and the author - in modern philology is recognized as having specific intentions (intio lectoris, intentio operas, intentio auctoris, respectively).

The reader's intentions are to decode, decipher, that is, read, understand, and interpret the text. In the philological era preceding the modern one, the above list of participants in aesthetic communication had the reverse order: author (creator, creator, demiurge), text (work), reader. The modern primacy of the reader is determined by the fact that it is precisely and only the perceiver who is considered today the subject of interpretation as the only possible form of revealing the meaning of a work. It is the reader who is recognized as the subject of concretization as the process of “recreating a work of art, filling the framework of the artistic structure with meaning by filling empty spaces and areas of uncertainty with their ideas and emotions based on their own horizon of expectation” [1, p. 57]. The horizon of expectation (in other words, the reader’s ideological, linguistic “anticipations”) is inextricably linked with the type of reader: it is narrower and tougher for the naive, simple-minded, ordinary, ordinary, mass reader, contemplative reader, who “is looking for... thoughts and images familiar to him, does not know how to motivate his... literary preferences” [2, p. 180-181]. Wider, more flexible, and richer are the receptive capabilities of the so-called sophisticated, insightful, ideal, exemplary, absolute, critical, powerful, coherent, competent, aristocratic, super- or arch-reader, reader-friend, “providential interlocutor” (O. Mandelstam) , which “experiences the creative moment in all its complexity and poignancy” [Ibid.].

In modern Russian prose, different types of readers are represented with all expressiveness. Thus, the reading heroes of L. Ulitskaya and T. Tolstoy should be recognized as unconditional antipodes. Sonechka from Ulitskaya’s story of the same name at different periods of her life seeks and finds attractive beauty and all-conquering love in books. A zealous and intoxicating passion for reading (20)1 possesses the main character of the story:

...Sonya shepherded her soul in the vastness of great Russian literature, now descending into the alarming abyss of the suspicious Dostoevsky, now emerging into the shady alleys of Turgenev and provincial estates, warmed by the unprincipled and generous love of the somehow second-rate Leskov (8-9).

Immersion in the book world helps Sonechka survive the collapse of her personal female destiny:

Completely devastated, light, with a transparent ringing in her ears, she entered her room. She went up to the bookcase, took a book off the shelf at random and lay down, opening it in the middle. It was "The Young Lady-Peasant". Lisa had just come out for dinner... and from these pages Sonya shone with the quiet happiness of a perfect word and embodied nobility... (102) Sonechka whiles away her long old age with the book: In the evenings... she goes headlong into the sweet depths, into the dark alleys, into the spring waters (127).



For Sonechka, reading is a possible world, the attraction of which is inescapable, and this world is erotically colored. Indeed, in addition to lexical components that are neutral in this regard (reading, great Russian literature, Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Leskov, book, “The Young Lady-Peasant Woman,” library, catalogue, reading room), the vocabulary of “reading” includes the phrases dark alleys, erotically marked in the vertical context of culture, spring waters, which the Russian reader does not perceive as purely free due to the obvious allusion to the corresponding literary works (and dark alleys - to the whole cycle). As a result, the phrase spring waters explicates the recklessness and uncontrollability of the erotic element, and the phrase dark alleys - the unknowability and irresistibility of sexual urges. The exquisite aroma of eroticism that these phrases exude is enhanced by the semantics of the free phrase sweet depths. Thus, in the text of the story, the vocabulary of “reading” becomes an explicator of conceptual information.

What type of reader can Sonechka be classified as? Who is she - a simple-minded reader-contemplator? Most likely, yes, but it is also obvious that she has the aristocracy of reading preferences (let’s pay attention to what kind of literature Ulitskaya’s heroine reads) and the ability to admire words, characteristic of a discerning arch-reader. In our opinion, Sonechka deserves the high (albeit paradoxical) “title” of a naive arch-reader, that is, she represents a type of reader who breaks the classification framework.

The type of barbarian reader represented by the hero of T. Tolstoy’s novel “Kys” is also not taken into account in the above typology. The catastrophe, the consequences of which are described in Tolstoy’s work, led to the breakdown of the cultural vertical and the birth of a mutant hero with a defect in the cultural genetic program - a literate barbarian, a werewolf, whose terrible animal form inevitably suppresses all that is best in him and aggravates all that is vicious. At the beginning of the novel, there is nothing in the copyist of books and their grateful reader that resembles a predatory cat, since the intentions of Benedict the bookworm are quite traditional: he is irresistibly attracted by the possibility of familiarizing himself with literature as a source of the new, unknown and fascinating:

So you read, you move your lips, you understand the words, and it’s like you find yourself in two places at once: you’re sitting or you’re lying with your legs bent, you’re rummaging around in a bowl with your hand, and you see other worlds that are distant or never existed at all, but still as if they were alive. You are running, or swimming, or jumping in a sleigh, fleeing from someone, or planning to attack yourself - your heart is pounding, life is flying, and it’s miracles: how many books you read, so many different lives you will live! (219)2

Benedict has little characteristic of theoretical thinking, aimed at understanding the essence of phenomena and reflecting reality in the form of abstract logical concepts, but his passion for reading is still fueled by the intellectual need to find the treasured Book, which conceals answers to the fundamental questions of existence:

...maybe there is somewhere...maybe a treasured little book!..where it says how to live...where to go!..Where to turn your heart!.. (345)

Tolstoy's hero perceives texts primarily through emotional thinking, based on images and representations, in a concrete sensory form. At the same time, Benedict, the bearer of pre-



theoretical, everyday consciousness, for the time being is endowed with extra-theoretical, artistic consciousness:

Benedict has everything in his books, as if in secret boxes, folded up and buried: the sea wind, the meadow wind, the stormy wind, the snow wind, the wind that is called marshmallow, the blue wind, and the sandy wind! Starless nights and passionate nights, velvet nights and sleepless nights! Southern, white, pink, sweetest, drying! The stars are golden, silver, blue, green, and like sea salt, and running, and falling, and ominous, and diamond, and lonely, and threatening disaster, and guiding, hear, and guiding (237).

As can be seen from the example, registration and listing (accounting) of book treasures still turn into admiration in words, an aesthetic experience of images. Exacerbation of the disease of cultural savagery

Benedict manifests itself in a darkening of artistic consciousness, in which the reading process is distorted into the mechanistic consumption of the printed word, the filled is replaced by emptiness: “.....,” Benedict read, running his already accustomed eyes over the lines, “.....” (241).

In the speech behavior of the main character of T. Tolstoy’s novel “Kys”, in his embodiment of the “reading” scenario in an exaggerated form, symptoms of a cultural illness are manifested, largely characteristic of today’s mass reader, mass consumer of culture. The reading barbarian is an ominous kitty who incessantly looks into the back of great literature and centuries-old culture.

The reading practice of the heroes Ulitskaya and Tolstoy represents, respectively, the positive and negative poles of the competence of the “non-professional” reader. We are interested in the problem of educating a “professional” reader, which a philologist certainly should be. It is well known that developing the skill of philological reading is not an easy task when applied to any literary material, but this task becomes extremely complicated when it comes to qualified reading of literary texts of the postmodern era. Why does reading books by many authors who are not alien to postmodern aesthetics turn into almost backbreaking work for many not just beginners, but fully formed readers-researchers? There are many reasons for this. Let’s name the main ones:

- 1) the liberation of the reader from the violence of the stereotype, from the deadening automatism of perception, proclaimed by the theorists of postmodernism, turns out to be fraught with new violence against the reader - violence, the linguistic tools of which are obscenities, excremental and other “nauseating” vocabulary, total cliché of speech or its extreme primitivization;
- 2) areas of semantic uncertainty present in the works of any literary era can grow in postmodern works into vast “nebulae” that prevent the birth of a clear interpretation;
- 3) commitment to affirmation through an extreme form of denial, to shock and brutal poetics creates ethically uncomfortable conditions for the reader;
- 4) the extreme saturation of postmodern works with intertextual reflexes gives rise to intricacies in which it is so easy for the reader to get lost.



During the learning process, philology students must be prepared to understand the above-mentioned features of modern literature and overcome the resulting difficulties in reading postmodern texts. At the same time, we should not forget that literary texts of the postmodern era have the same intention as texts of other cultural paradigms. This intention consists of “producing one’s own exemplary reader, that is, a reader capable of revealing the meaning programmed by the text, and thereby reducing the infinite number of possible readings to several interpretations provided by the text itself” [3, p. 162]. The text as a guarantor of interpretation prevents with its textual strategies the growth of the “cancerous tumor of interpretation” (U. Eco), limits the interpretive field, guiding the reader in the search for “a certain invariant” (N. S. Bolotnova), “invariant core” (A. I. Domashnev) meaning of the text. We agree with the opinion of N. S. Bolotnova and her co-authors that “at the level of the whole text, we can talk about its regulatory function and methods of regulation, that is, methods of organizing text microstructures, taking into account the general communicative strategy of the text” [4, p. 31]. This thesis sounds especially relevant when applied to the modern stage of the cultural process, which is characterized, in the words of J. Baudrillard, “ecstasy of communication.” The author is free to deceive the reader’s aesthetic expectations, undermine his confidence in his own linguistic, literary and everyday competence, provoke his irritation with zones of semantic uncertainty in the text, cause indignation at ethically prohibited storytelling techniques, but cannot help but give the reader the key to understanding the work, cannot help but indicate one or another linguapoetic “milestones” is the path to decoding a literary text. Finding such a key and being able to use it is a necessary skill for any reader, but above all for a philological reader. Developing this skill should be one of the main tasks of such academic disciplines as “Stylistics”, “Text Linguistics”, “Philological Analysis of Literary Text”.

G. O. Vinokur in his still relevant work “Culture of Reading”, listing such techniques and means of organizing reading as notes and notes during reading, making various inquiries about ambiguities in the text, wrote about the problem that interests us: “Depending on , what we read and for what purposes, we use various reading techniques for interpreting and critically illuminating a given text. <...> The culture of reading is the problem of the conscious and purposeful use of these techniques” [5, p. 88]. To what G. O. Vinokur said, it should be added: understanding and reasoned interpretation of the content of objectively “difficult” postmodernist literary texts are possible only with clear professional motivation and with the developed skill of patient, attentive, careful, not so much evaluative, but studying reading. The success of such reading can and should be ensured by multidimensional and systematic both theoretical and practical philological “pre-training”.

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