

DOI: 10.7596/taksad.v6i4.1188

Citation: Cherkasov, V., Demicheva, V., Eremenko, O., Yakovleva, T., & Petrova, S. (2017). Theoretical and Literary Studies of Goncharov's Works by Russian Emigrants: Biographism versus Antibio-graphism. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 6(4), 1325-1332. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v6i4.1188>

**Theoretical and Literary Studies of Goncharov's Works by Russian
Emigrants: Biographism versus Antibio-graphism**

**Valeriy A. Cherkasov¹, Vera V. Demicheva²,
Olga I. Eremenko³, Tatyana V. Yakovleva⁴, Svetlana V. Petrova⁵**

Abstract

The article analyzes the main methodological approaches to the study of I.A. Goncharov's personality in literary criticism and in the criticism of Russian emigrants (1920s - the early 1930s). It was revealed that along with existing authoritative, methodologically cultural, historical and immanent concepts of I.A. Goncharov's personality a morphological and psychoanalytic trends emerged describing the writer's life and work. The biographical method used by the critics in the process of the writer's work analysis was significantly transformed without the loss of its meaning.

Keywords: Biographism, Antibio-graphism, Biographical method.

¹ Belgorod State University, 85 Pobedy St., Belgorod, 308015, Russia. E-mail: cherkasov@bsu.edu.ru

² Belgorod State University, 85 Pobedy St., Belgorod, 308015, Russia.

³ Belgorod State University, 85 Pobedy St., Belgorod, 308015, Russia.

⁴ Belgorod State University, 85 Pobedy St., Belgorod, 308015, Russia.

⁵ Belgorod State University, 85 Pobedy St., Belgorod, 308015, Russia.

Introduction

The problem of biographism in the creation of writers and poets continues to remain in the works of many scholars [1-7]. Russian pre-revolutionary literary criticism was dominated by a positivist attitude toward the study of a writer's biography, regarded to understand his artistic works. In addition, it is considered as a source of information about a writer's biographical personality, or about his empirical individuality. However, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the presumption of causality, which is relevant for the biographical method, existing between the artistic statements of a writer and different extraliterary aspects (sociological, philosophical, psychological, metaphysical one, etc.) which are directly or indirectly related to the biographical personality of the same writer, was criticized by the representatives of newly developed literary criticism and literary-critical currents and, therefore, it ceased to exist. In this paper, we intend to characterize the main methodological approaches in the study of I.A. Goncharov's personality by literary criticism and the criticism of Russian emigrants during 1920s and early 1930s.

Methodology

This research implements biographical methodology and source analysis.

Discussion

The essay by Yu.I. Aichenwald "Goncharov", included in the collection of his works "The silhouettes of Russian writers" (v. 1-3, 1906-1910) is of the main importance for our paper. His views on the problem of the writer's biography and creativity ratio were expressed by Yu.I. Aichenwald in the so-called "Introduction" to the first issue of "Silhouettes ...". A positive program of the critic is largely based on the principle of the above mentioned positivist attitude to the writer's biography study, considered as the main means for his artistic works understanding. In his opinion, the real goal of the research is the writer's spiritual individuality, manifested at an unconscious level. The biographical approach with its special interest in the facts of the empirical order is not practical here. The necessary data on "an inner man" of the writer can only be taken from his works. Parallel biographical facts are acceptable provided they have an analog to the literary version. Otherwise, they are ignored, and an artwork remains the only source of reliable information. In this regard, the critic states: "... every creation of art is nothing but the autobiography of its creator" [8, 23]. Apparently, Yu.I. Aichenwald is more interested not in the spiritual individuality of the writer, understood as an objective fact, but in his own subjective ideas about this individuality, obtained in the process of empathy with its inner world.

A powerful tradition of the preceding Russian criticism, which goes back to V.G. Belinsky, to consider I.A. Goncharov's novels as an objective narrative, which does not reflect the personality of the writer, is refuted by Yu.I. Aichenwald as a contradiction to his original thesis by psychologizing of an epic, calm, dispassionate style, which served as the main argument for his opponents. The critic develops the concept of I.A. Goncharov's personality, based on his own impressionistic perception of the writer's novels. The methodological attitudes by Yu.I. Aichenwald exclude the writer's biographical personality from the subject field of the analytical discourse.

The most prolific of the authors who wrote about I.A. Goncharov among Russian emigrants is E.A. Lyatsky, who gained fame with his works in this historical and literary trend even before the revolution. In 1920, the scholar re-published his book of essays about I.A. Goncharov [9] for the third time (1st ed. - - 1904, 2nd ed. - 1912). In 1922 he published the essay "Goncharov in the circumnavigation" [10], and in 1925 - a fictionalized biography of the writer "Roman and Life. The development of I.A. Goncharov's creative personality. Life and household affairs. 1812 - 1857" [11].

In the first of the abovementioned works EA. Lyatsky formulated his methodological approach to the study of I.A. Goncharov's personality and creativity. The initial premise of his reasoning was the following testimony of the writer, made in the article "Better Late than Never" (1879): "The things which did not grow up and mature in myself, the things I did not see, did not observe and experience are not available to my pen! I have (or had) my own field, my soil, my native land as it is, my own air, friends and enemies, my own world of observations, impressions and memories - and I wrote only what I experienced, that I thought that I loved, saw closely and knew" [12, 59]. Hence E.A. Lyatsky concluded that I.A. Goncharov "is one of the most subjective writers, for whom the disclosure of his "I" was more important than the picturing of the most burning and interesting moments of contemporary social life" [12, 58]. Since the subject of E.A. Lyatsky's study was just I.A. Goncharov's personality, taken in its spiritual and moral aspect and the facts of the external biography (respectively, their sources, such as letters, documents, memoirs, etc.) had only an auxiliary significance, then the declared autobiographical nature of the writer's novel creation corresponded to this subject as best as possible, which became the main source for the scholar's conclusions and statements. E.A. Lyatsky wrote the following about this: "... the side that we would like to explain in his work does not need [...] these letters [...]. The things that make an exhaustive material in our evidence and reasoning are open to everyone: these are his writings, which he cherished in his soul [...]. He left a living imprint of his personality in them, told his life in detail, and that "he was adhering to it" [12, 60]. As can be seen, the last

methodological attitude by E.A. Lyatsky is similar to the attitude discussed above by Yu.I. Aichenwald. However, unlike Aichenwald, Lyatsky did not deny the importance of the documentary literature to study I.A. Goncharov's personality at all. He appreciated very much the biographical studies by A. Mazon and M.F. Supernansky, calling them "a solid foundation" [12, 52] of his own concept. In order to confirm the conclusions, the scholar constantly compares the factual material contained in documentary sources with the realities created in Goncharov's novels. In a word, he uses a peculiar biographical method for the cultural-historical school to study I.A. Goncharov's personality and creativity. And only when there is the lack of archive materials, E.A. Lyatsky resorts to a "special method of critical intuition" [13, 446], psychologizing and mythologizing the fictional text written by I.A. Goncharov and creating the image of "his Goncharov" like Yu.I. Aichenwald. This "method of critical intuition" applied by E.A. Lyatsky, along with the traditional biographical method, allows us to talk about the presence of an immanent antibiographic tendency in his literary approach to the study of I.A. Goncharov's personality and creativity, and his methodology as a whole is characterized as a synthesizing, absorbing experience and the achievements of various trends of literary thought at the turn of 19-20th centuries [14] and, as such, very relevant, or, according to Czech scholars Ivo Pospisila and Milos Zelenka, "inspiring" for modern study of Goncharov's creativity with its powerful traditions and no less grandiose prospects for future biographical study [15].

A fundamentally different position in relation to the biographical concept by Aichenwald and Lyatsky was presented by I.N. Golenishchev-Kutuzov as the author of the article "Two Goncharovs" (1932), in which he attributed the first one to the number of "too prosperous biographers and commentators" of I.A. Goncharov's life and work, and the works of the second one devoted to Goncharov's creativity study he described as "not always contributing to a better understanding of the writer's spiritual image, so ambivalent and contradictory one" [15, 3]. The title of the article by Golenishchev-Kutuzov is a transparent allusion to the very popular Veresayev's concept of "two aspect Pushkin", and, in accordance with this meaning, he points to the critic's antithesis of Goncharov's two "guises", created on the basis of his novel work and revealed as the publication and the study of documentary sources. According to Golenishchev-Kutuzov, the latter one is the "genuine" one. In this regard, the biographical studies by A. Mazon and L.S. Utevsky first of all as the author of the book "The Goncharov's life" (1931) deserve the highest rate on his part. His article is written on the basis of the data taken from L.S. Utevsky's work, with its characteristic attitude on the factography and "academic criticism" as belonging to the genre of installation [16, 144] in the selection of materials. The considered concept by I.N. Golenishchev-Kutuzov with its attitude for the study of literary morphology, that is "the real existence of literature [...] affecting the origin

and the genesis of the artifact" [14, 53] (I. Pospishil, M. Zelenka) adjoins this tradition of biographical research objectively. And the critic was not alone in the circle of emigration, in his total interest in the everyday and psychoanalytic aspect of I.A. Goncharov's personality. For example, the reviewer of the Prague publication "The wills of Russia" N. Koptev worked in the same trend, explaining the contradictory I.A. Goncharov's attitude towards I.S. Turgenev by "the painful aspects of Goncharov's psyche" [17, 119]. N.N. Berberova admitted in her interpretation of the relationship between I.A. Goncharov as a censor with N.A. Nekrasov as an editor of "Contemporary" the application of the everyday rule "to me - to you" ("Like all real writers and poets, they were not only writers and artists, but also the personalities of their time". Both searched for the "right people" in hostile camps: Goncharov needed Nekrasov, because liberal readers were behind him. Nekrasov needed Goncharov, because he was looking for the relations in censorship") [18, 119].

Thus, the Goncharov's creativity study by the Russian emigrants during 1920s and the early 1930s represents a contradictory picture of literary and theoretical studies aimed at an actual differentiation problem solution between the author and the hero. Along with continuing authoritative, methodologically irreproachable cultural, historical and immanent concepts of I.A. Goncharov's personality, there were morphological and psychoanalytic trends in the coverage of the writer's life and work. At the same time, the biographical method was substantially transformed, however, it did not lose its significance. Goncharov's creativity study by Russian emigration gives remarkable examples of this transformation and, as such, can and should serve as the subject of study not only for the experts in the field of I.A. Goncharov's life and creativity, but also for the historians of Russian literary criticism.

Conclusion

1. The studies of I.A. Goncharov's life and work by Russian emigrants during 1920s - early 1930s represent a theoretical and a literary quest, aimed at the solution of actual problem of differentiation between the author and the hero.
2. The morphological and the psychoanalytic trends in the coverage of I.A. Goncharov's life and creativity affirmed along with continuing authoritative, methodologically flawless cultural, historical and immanent concepts of the writer's personality. At the same time, the biographical method was transformed substantially, however, it did not lose its significance.

Footnotes

1. Kolesnikov, S. A. & Cherkasov, V. A. (2012). The theme of the poet's service in the life model of Gumilev through the eyes of Khodasevich. *Scientific bulletins of BelGU. Series Humanities*, 12 (131), 14, 44-56 (in Russian).
2. Cherkasov, V. A. (2013). Crisis of Biographical Methodology in Russian Science and Criticism of 1920-1930. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 27(1), 66-69 (in Russian).
3. Vancu, R. (2014). Biographism, confession, individuation. Poetry between psychocriticism and sociopoetics [Biografism, confesiune, individualitate. Poezia între psihocritica și sociopoetica]. *Revista Transilvania*, 3, 54-58.
4. Vancu, R. (2012). Mircea Ivănescu. The radicalization of absolute discretion [Mircea Ivănescu. Radicalizarea discreției absolute]. *Revista Transilvania*, 10, 43-47.
5. Bung, S. (2015). Score of a late work. Eugenio Montale's aesthetic of the mezzo parlare [Partitur eines Spätwerks. Eugenio Montales Ästhetik des mezzo parlare]. *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*, 65(2), 185-202.
6. Herráez, M. (2014). Parisian references in the mythical imaginary of Julio Cortázar [Referencias parisinas en el imaginario mítico de Julio Cortázar]. *Revista Letral*, 12, 21-31.
7. Pacheco, M. R. (2013). The sul-mato-grossense oral community: A comparative study among taunay and serejo [A comarca oral sul-mato-grossense: Um estudo comparativo entre taunay e serejo]. *Revista Letral*, 12, 21-31.
8. Aykhenvald, Yu. I. (1994). *Silhouettes of Russian writers*. M.: Respublika, (in Russian).
9. Lyaczkiy, E. A. (1920). *Goncharov. Life, personality, creativity. Critical biographical essays*. Stockholm: Severnye ogni, (in Russian).
10. Lyaczkiy, E. A. (1922). *Goncharov in the round-the-world voyage. (Historical and biographical sketch in connection with new materials)*. Praga, (in Russian).
11. Lyaczkiy, E. A. (1925). *Novel and life. Development of I. A. Goncharov's creative personality. Life and household affairs. 1812-1857*. Praga: Flame, (in Russian).
12. Lyaczkiy, E. A. (1912). *Goncharov: Life, personality, creativity. Critical biographical essays*. Spb.: Ogni, (in Russian).
13. Gracheva, A. M. & Matrenina, M. M. (1994). *Lyaczkiy Evgeniy Aleksadrovich*. In *Russian Writers 1800-1917: Biographical Dictionary*. M.: Scientific publishing house The Great Russian Encyclopedia, (in Russian).

14. Pospishil, I. & Zelenka, M. (1998). The inspiring literary concept of Evgeny Lyatsky. *Slavic Studies*, 4, 52-59 (in Russian).
15. Golenishchev-Kutuzov, I. N. (1932). Two Goncharovs. *Revival*, 2466, (in Russian).
16. Sergievskiy, I. V. (1933). The agony of the genre. *Literary critic*, 3, (in Russian).
17. Koptev, N. (1924). New about Goncharov and Turgenev. *The will of Russia*, 18/19, (in Russian).
18. Berberova, N. N. (2012). Goncharov and Nekrasov. In *Master of Russian novel I. A. Goncharov in the literary criticism of the n abroad: A collection of documents and materials: [On the 200th anniversary of I. A. Goncharov's birth]*. M.: Book Center Rudomino, (in Russian).

References

- Aykhenvald, Yu.I. (1994). *Silhouettes of Russian writers*. M.: Respublika, (in Russian).
- Berberova, N. N. (2012). Goncharov and Nekrasov. In *Master of Russian novel I. A. Goncharov in the literary criticism of the n abroad: A collection of documents and materials: [On the 200th anniversary of I. A. Goncharov's birth]*. M.: Book Center Rudomino, (in Russian).
- Bung, S. (2015). Score of a late work. Eugenio Montale's aesthetic of the mezzo parlare [Partitur eines Spätwerks. Eugenio Montales Ästhetik des mezzo parlare]. *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*, 65(2), 185-202.
- Cherkasov, V. A. (2013). Crisis of Biographical Methodology in Russian Science and Criticism of 1920-1930. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 27(1), 66-69 (in Russian).
- Golenishchev-Kutuzov, I. N. (1932). Two Goncharovs. *Revival*, 2466, (in Russian).
- Gracheva, A. M. & Matrenina, M. M. (1994). Lyaczkiy Evgeniy Aleksadrovich. In *Russian Writers 1800-1917: Biographical Dictionary*. M.: Scientific publishing house The Great Russian Encyclopedia, (in Russian).
- Herráez, M. (2014). Parisian references in the mythical imaginary of Julio Cortázar [Referencias parisinas en el imaginario mítico de Julio Cortázar]. *Revista Letral*, (12), 21-31.
- Kolesnikov, S. A. & Cherkasov, V. A. (2012). The theme of the poet's service in the life model of Gumilev through the eyes of Khodasevich. *Scientific bulletins of BelGU. Series Humanities*, 12 (131), (14), 44-56 (in Russian).
- Koptev, N. (1924). New about Goncharov and Turgenev. *The will of Russia*, 18/19, (in Russian).

- Lyaczkiy, E. A. (1912). *Goncharov: Life, personality, creativity. Critical biographical essays*. Spb.: Ogni, (in Russian).
- Lyaczkiy, E. A. (1920). *Goncharov. Life, personality, creativity. Critical biographical essays*. Stockholm: Severnye ogni, (in Russian).
- Lyaczkiy, E. A. (1922). *Goncharov in the round-the-world voyage. (Historical and biographical sketch in connection with new materials)*. Praga, (in Russian).
- Lyaczkiy, E. A. (1925). *Novel and life. Development of I. A. Goncharov's creative personality. Life and household affairs. 1812-1857*. Praga: Flame, (in Russian).
- Pacheco, M. R. (2013). *The sul-mato-grossense oral community: A comparative study among taunay and serejo [A comarca oral sul-mato-grossense: Um estudo comparativo entre taunay e serejo]*. *Revista Letral*, (12), 21-31.
- Pospishil, I. & Zelenka, M. (1998). *The inspiring literary concept of Evgeny Lyatsky*. *Slavic Studies*, (4), 52-59 (in Russian).
- Sergievskiy, I. V. (1933). *The agony of the genre*. *Literary critic*, (3), (in Russian).
- Vancu, R. (2012). *Mircea Ivănescu. The radicalization of absolute discretion [Mircea Ivănescu. Radicalizarea discreției absolute]*. *Revista Transilvania*, (10), 43-47.
- Vancu, R. (2014). *Biographism, confession, individuation. Poetry between psychocriticism and sociopoetics [Biografism, confesiune, individualitate. Poezia între psihocritica și sociopoetica]*. *Revista Transilvania*, (3), 54-58.