

H. DE BALZAC – LITERARY CRITIC

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The article is an attempt to make a general picture of the evolution of the artistic and aesthetic principles of H. de Balzac, to find out the specifics and function of his literary reflection, to reveal the desire of the French writer of the XIX century to create an individual and integral paradigm and to verify the results of this aspiration based on the often disparate judgments contained in the letters, prefaces, and articles by Balzac on literature, the genre of the novel, the relationship between literature and journalism, about the individual works and writers.

Having begun his literary work in the 1820s, Balzac initially published his works under pseudonyms, and subsequently refused to consider them as his own, recognizing only those works that were signed with his own name. Up to a certain time the writer did not speak with a certain creative programme or with criticism of the poetic principles of his predecessors and contemporaries. The early experience of «frantic romanticism» appeared to be important for the gestation of the literary-critical concept of the writer. Thus, in several notes for the magazine «Silhouette» (February – April 1830), he, in the spirit of romantic «messianism», places the artist above royal persons. At the same time, the artist himself is a controversial figure, combining a powerful creative force and the insignificance of existence. Creative power is variable, the artist depends on inspiration. The conflict between the artist and the «crowd», society, and power is interpreted in a romantic way.

On the one hand, Balzac had been recognized as the author of the novel «Les Chouans» (1829), «Scènes de la vie privée» (1829–1830) by the 1830s. And on the other, he turned to journalism and became the editor-in-chief of the weekly «La Caricature». He had already been acutely aware of not only general tasks of literary activity, but also of the need to raise the question of the writers' earnings. In the beginning of November, 1834 Balzac published «Lettre Adresséeaux Écrivains Français du XIXe Siècle» in «Revue de Paris», where he spoke about the «republic of literature», moreover, he united poets, musicians, playwrights and at the same time urged them to protect copyrights and fight against devastating violations by publishers. It was Balzac's idea to protect copyrights by the joint efforts of the «Republic of Literature» that stimulated the creation of the «Society of Writers» in 1838, which included, besides him, V. Hugo, F. Soulié, G. Sand, and others.

Balzac's literary and critical heritage includes three main themes: a reflection on the work of the novelist and the genre of the novel; portraits of individual writers and analysis of their literary works; observations of the relationship of literary creativity and journalism.

The constant and main goal of Balzac in his literary reflection was the desire to create a holistic system of views on literature, its tasks and place in society. However, it cannot be said that this goal was achieved. Balzac's reflections are not only scattered in various articles, prefaces, but also marked by a distinct individuality, a desire to define not so much the general principles of the artist's work in general, as to find his own way of the novelist.

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