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## STUDYING THE IMAGE OF THE “OTHER” IN RUSSIAN AND WESTERN LITERARY CRITICISM

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### *Abstract*

The article describes the essential prerequisites for studying the image of the “Other” in Russia and the West. The genesis factors of imagology as a sphere of humanitarian knowledge studying the image of the “Other” have been identified. The status of imagology in modern humanities is indicated. Different approaches to the study of the image of the “Other” in domestic and foreign literary criticism and the conceptual foundations underlying them, primarily two different concepts of the nation, are analyzed. The School of Annals influence in this area is noted since the scientists of this school showed interest in the field of “imaginary,” the study of collective mentalities on the imagology formation. An analysis of the works of one of the founders of the imagology Dyerink allows concluding the “ideological” nature of the imagology and its connection with the postmodern cultural paradigm and discourse analysis. The article assesses the imagology contribution to the actualization of the essential issue of modern humanitarian studies. It outlines the boundaries of the imagological approach on the example of the works of Mikhalskaya updated by Western humanitarian thought, with the methodological culture and traditions of Russian literary criticism is shown. The reasons for the studies relevance of the image of the “Other” in globalization and the issues that it generates, primarily the problems of national-cultural identification and identity, are noted. The article is addressed to humanities specialists dealing with the problems of intercultural communication, mutual perception of different peoples and cultures.

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**Keywords:** Image of the “Other”, comparative studies, imagology, historical poetics.



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## **1. Introduction**

The modern era is the era of globalization, multiculturalism, the growing strength of migration processes, as well as the problems of national-cultural identification and identity that have become aggravated in the context of the above trends. The study of the image of the “Other,” alien people, foreign culture has acquired special significance and relevance in modern humanitarian studies in the modern era.

## **2. Problem Statement**

In modern humanitarian studies, different approaches to the study of the image of the “Other” have been outlined. It seems necessary to identify their conceptual background, scope and degree of effectiveness.

## **3. Research Questions**

The subject of study in this article is the methodology of studying the image of the “Other” with modern humanities.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to outline the most promising approaches to studying the image of the “Other” in literary criticism.

## **5. Research Methods**

The research method is a comparative historical method.

## **6. Findings**

Interest in the "Other" issue in Western culture arose at the turn of the 18th–19th centuries. A significant contribution to the development of the problem was made by Herder, Hegel, and some romantic writers. In the second half of the 19 century some representatives of philological science addressed this problem. Particularly important in this regard are the works of scholars of the cultural-historical school, for example, Ten, who in his work *History of English Literature* (1863–64), based on the material of English literature, stated that there are "well-known common features ... that distinguish people of the same race, one century and one locality" (Ten, 1987, p. 78). In the 20th century, in domestic and foreign literary criticism, the representatives of comparative literary criticism addressed the problems of perceiving the "Other": Zhirmunsky, Bakhtin, Konrad, Likhachev and, of course, Bakhtin with his theory of dialogue. So, discussing the dialogue of cultures, Bakhtin (1986) wrote:

An alien culture reveals itself more fully and deeper only in the eyes of another culture ... One meaning reveals its depths, having met and come into contact with another, alien meaning <...>, between them it begins a dialogue that overcomes the isolation and one-sidedness of these

meanings, these cultures ... With such a dialogical meeting of two cultures, they do not merge and do not mix, but they are mutually enriched. (p. 74)

It is also worth noting the resonance that Gachev's book "National Images of the World" (Gachev, 1988, p. 42) received in its time, which gave a new impetus to studies of the image of the "Other" in Russian literary criticism.

In the West, it was the comparativists who made an individual contribution to the development of the "Other" problem. The French literary critic Jean-Marie Carré in the book "French Writers and the German Mirage" (1947) (Carré, 1947) turned to the study of the formation and evolution of the image of Germany in the French cultural consciousness under the influence of literature. Another comparative, compatriot Carré - Marius Francois Guyard in his work "Comparative Literature" (1951) considered the study of the image of the "Other" as an urgent scientific task. In the preface to the book, which had the character of a manifesto, Guyard (1951) wrote:

We will no longer trace and study the illusory effects of one literature on another. Let us better try to understand how great myths about other peoples and nations are formed and exist in an individual or collective consciousness ... This is the key to updating comparative studies, a new direction of its research (p. 26).

The works of Carre and Guyard were a response to the crisis in comparative studies of the first half of the 20th century, an attempt to find a way out of this situation. Carré and Guyard made a turn to a new problem (they shifted the emphasis in comparative studies from "influences" on the reception) but not to a new methodology.

It took twenty years for a turn to the imagological methodology to study the image of the "Other" in the literature. In the 1960s, the research direction outlined and begun by Carré and Guillard was further developed and theoretically substantiated in the works of the German researcher Hugo Dyserink (1966), who became the founder of the Aachen school and one of the founders of imagology. In the program article "On the Problem of" Images "and" Mirages "and Their Research in the Framework of Comparative Literature". Dyserinck (1966) outlined a new, actually imagological aspect of studying the image of the "Other": "The image of another country is not the subject of comparative studies but it becomes so when the literary image or a mirage affects public opinion" (p. 108). Dyserinck (1966) was even more definite in his later work, "Comparative Imagology. Beyond the immanent and transcendental interpretation" (1982). Here the name of the new discipline appeared – comparativist imagology and its method was described. Dyserinck (1966) rejected the immanent and transcendental approaches to the study of the image of the "Other". By the immanent approach, he understood, in essence, a literary analysis of the image as an aesthetic phenomenon. Dyserinck (1966) declared that the significance of comparative imagology "can no longer be determined by the scale of literary aesthetics" (Polyakov & Polyakova, 2013) and further explained: "A comparative analysis of the corresponding images of another country cannot adhere to the point of view that pursues the goal. First of all, to improve knowledge about the work of a certain author – these are special questions of literature" (Polyakov & Polyakova, 2013, p. 26).

The "transcendental" approach to the study of literature was also criticized. Its essence, according to Dzerink, is that a literary work is an expression of the "soul of the nation," a national character. From Dyzerink, the essentialist ideas that a nation, a people is a particular entity, substance are "irrational". The

goal of imagology is, using the terminology of post-structuralists, their deconstruction, or, as Dyserink put it, "liberation from ideology" (Polyakov & Polyakova, 2013). "There is hardly any direction of research so suitable as to turn over the irrationalist ideas about the "essence of peoples", about the "soul of nations" or even about the noted "heritage of blood" and the transmitted "character of the people," as a comprehensive comparative imagology working on literary material. This "liberation from ideology" is, of course, not carried out by contrasting the "wrong" image of the country with the "right" one but rather by "demystifying", which generally deals with the problem of the existence of such ideas" (Polyakov & Polyakova, 2013, p. 46).

However, rejecting one ideology, Dyserink replaces it with another, considering the nation as an intelligible construct, an "imaginary community", in the creation of which literature plays an important role. The consequence of this concept was a rethinking of the tasks of comparative studies and its methodology. Comparative imagology had to make a turn from "particular questions of literature", from studying the structure of the image of the "Other", and it is functioning in a literary work as an artistic whole, to more general and, from Dzerink, more urgent problems of the present. What are these problems? First of all, it was a question of studying the conditions for the national identity existence, the mechanisms of its formation and methods of construction, the role of literature in this sociocultural engineering.

Another problem that should be the subject of study of imagology is the significance of the images of the Other created by literature "for the coexistence of different groups" (Polyakov & Polyakova, 2013). Thus, imagology should not study the artistic, but the social and even political and ideological functioning of the image of the Other and its "influence on all important areas of intellectual life" (Polyakov & Polyakova, 2013, p. 29). The imagological approach is intended to show how the images of the "Other" created in literature enter the public consciousness, how they are rooted in it, function, contribute to the creation of stereotypes about specific nations, ultimately affect relations between nations, foreign policy ... Going beyond the limits of "literary aesthetics", that is, purely literary tasks, also led to a new methodology of imagology, which Dyserinck (1966) calls a "supranational point of view". Its essence is as follows:

Images should always be considered, in addition to their primary formation in the national literary areas of generation, in their multinational function and their particular multinational context, or rather, taking into account various "national" views without the slightest predominance of any either of them" (Polyakov & Polyakova, 2013, p. 24).

In every word of this passage – the influence of the requirements of "political correctness" and the desire to obscure the existence of separate, distinctive nations and national cultures. There is so much "supranational" and "multinational" that the true intentions of the author leave no doubt, and quoting the word "national" only exacerbates this effect.

Thus, the meaning of the Aachen imagological project led by Dyserink consisted in discrediting the idea of a nation and national identity as an entity historically evolving and taking shape as a result of objective processes of ethnogenesis and replacing it with the idea of a nation as an intelligible construct, a product of discursive practices. In the description of the mechanisms of translation of the literary images of the "Other" into the public consciousness and their functioning in it, which renders Impact on

interethnic relations. The title of the collection "Imagology. Eloquently. Cultural Design and the Literary Representation of National Characters: A Critical Review" (2007), edited by two prominent contemporary imagologists Beller and Leerssen (2007).

At the turn of the 20th – 21st centuries, there was a real boom of rapidly growing interest in both the domestic and Western humanitarian sciences to the problem of the "Other." Studies of the cultures' dialogue, the national identity formation and the forms of its expression are being intensified. Of course, this interest was fueled by the process of globalization, the intensification of intercultural relations, and conflicts in the sphere of interethnic relations. In Russia, radical changes have taken place in recent decades, parting with previous ideological postulates, such as "the formation of a single nation – the Soviet people."

These changes convinced the ethnic differences inevitability, the mentality discrepancy of even those nations that have lived side by side for many years. It is no coincidence that the imagology studying the image of a country, its people, the characteristics of a national character in a foreign-speaking country, foreign-language culture, was so in demand. Representatives of different humanitarian fields converge in this interest: historians, political scientists, cultural scientists, ethnographers, and literary critics. This area of humanities research is certainly multidisciplinary. The specifics of literary studies of an imagological nature is that in them a literary work is studied as a factor in the "Other" image formation in the public consciousness of a given era.

An indicative monograph in this regard is the professor of Moscow Pedagogical State University, Doctor of Philology Mikhalskaya (1995, 2012) "The Image of Russia in English Fiction of the IX–XIX Centuries" (1995) and her manual on the particular course "Russia and England: Imagology Problems" (2012). The works of this scientist played an essential role in the development of domestic studies of the last decade, devoted to the topic of imagology. The fact that the authors of such authoritative works of imagological issues as Khabibullina, Oshchepkov, dedicated to Michalskaya's books testify to the recognition of the significance of their scientific heritage for them in the field of studying the image of the "Other". It seems that for many domestic scientists, the word "imagology" was first spoken from the lips of Mikhalskaya.

The interest of Mikhalskaya in imagological problems was, to a certain extent prepared by the scientific school to which she belonged. This school was created at the Moscow State Pedagogical Institute named after Lenin (now Moscow State Pedagogical University) by such scientists as Elizarova, Purishev. Intercultural relations and intercultural dialogue were actively developed at the department in the second half of the twentieth Century. In essence, separate collections and articles were published, members of the department defended candidate and doctoral dissertations. Nevertheless, as a rule, they covered the reception of individual cultural phenomena, a specific work, author, particular an aesthetic phenomenon, without raising the question of the holistic image of a foreign culture in the minds of another people. Book Michalskaya was already bold and innovative in scale: to study the genesis and formation of the image of Russia in English literature, its evolution throughout a vast, ten-century period, from the 9th to the 19th centuries. We know only one study compared to the work of Mikhalskaya is a monograph by the British scientist Anthony Cross, "Russian Theme in English Literature. From the 16th Century to 1980" (1985) (Cross, 1985).

In essence, the study of Mikhalskaya performed in the tradition of historical poetics Veselovsky. Mikhalskaya solves the problem on the local material of English literature, which the founder of Russian comparative literary criticism and historical poetics considered the most important – to study the evolution of poetic consciousness and its forms.

Mikhalskaya is describing the structure of the image of Russia and its transformation. Mikhalskaya takes into account the idea of Veselovsky about the importance of the "oncoming course" for the reception of the "Other". Mikhalskaya convincingly shows how the image of Russia in English literature of different eras was primarily determined by the position and interests of the British world. For example, the scientist discovers the influence of the so-called "civilizational discourse," a look at Russia and Russians from the position of the superiority of "civilized" Britain over "barbarian" Russia. An example of such a relationship in the book of Mikhalskaya becomes Browning's poem "Ivan Ivanovich."

Another Mikhalskaya's characteristic is the researcher's desire to fit the analyzed texts into a sociocultural context. This tendency is characteristic of the tradition of both the West European cultural-historical school and Russian literary studies. One of the most significant scientists in this area is Bakhtin, Likhachev, Lotman, Averintsev. So, in the monograph of Mikhalskaya shows how, for example, in the 19th century, a change in the political situation, diplomatic conflicts, the familiarity of the British with the works of Russian literature led to transformations in the interpretation of the Russian theme.

However, Mikhalskaya's interest in the sphere of "imaginary" indicates that the scientist has sensitively grasped new trends in world humanitarian studies. French media scientist Jacques Le Goff (2011) writes about the desire of modern science to study the imaginary in his recent works: "The term "imaginary," of course, goes back to the word imagination – imagination but the history of the imaginary is not a history of the imagination in the traditional sense of the word, but it is a creation story and the use of images that encourage society to think and act, for they stem from his mentality, sensory sense of being, culture, which saturate their life. This story began several decades ago when historians learned to extract new meanings from images" (Le Goff, 2011, p. 42). Concluding his judgment, Le Goff rightly recalled the merits of the French School of Annals in rooting the imaginary, inevitable in creating mental images. The image of the "Other" is a kind of imaginary. This image, mainly due to the nature of the perceived subject, and the image of Russia, created in English culture, is no exception. It cannot wholly coincide with the way that is formed in the culture of German and French. The specificity of the national myth also lies in the fact that this mental image is "experienced". In addition to scientific components, this myth thus includes overtone psychological, social, everyday, projecting onto the context of interethnic communication. It is no coincidence that imagology already knows cases when political, military, diplomatic and other departments "ordered" projects of an imagological nature to scientists.

## **7. Conclusion**

Thus, imagology and historical poetics, sometimes coinciding in the subject of research, differ in their approach to studying the image of the "Other." The method of historical poetics is comparative-historical. Both parts are essential in this title. Historical poetics not only compares multilingual literature, but comparisons are made on the basis of the principle of historicism. That is, the "artistic consciousness evolution and its forms" is studied in its conditioning by the dynamics of the historical and sociocultural

process. For Veselovsky and his followers, the artistic image is undoubtedly a reflection (of course, in a specific, artistic form) of historical reality. From historical poetics, the artistic consciousness "each time reflects the historical context of a particular era, its ideological needs and ideas, the relationship of literature and reality" (as cited in Averintsev et al., 1994, p. 10).

On the contrary, the most crucial postulate of imagology is the non-referentiality of the image of the "Other." The modern French imagologist, Daniel Pageaux (1997), maintains, "An image is not a more or less altered reproduction of a certain reality" (p. 376). Therefore, imagology is not interested in the question of how much the image created corresponds to the referent.

The emphasis is on identifying the sources of the image of the Other, the discourses constructing it, the means and mechanisms of its translation into the public consciousness. That is the transformation of the artistic image (in cases where the work of art becomes the object of research) into the image-stereotype of the "Other." The text echoes the text, the image with the image, but they do not correlate with sociocultural reality and are not conditioned by it. The space of texts is detached from the space of history, society. "Imagology studies representations, representations as text strategies and as a discourse" (Leerssen, 2013, p. 34). In other words, the poststructuralist discourse analysis becomes the method of imagology. Poststructuralist discourse analysis proceeds from the fact that the image is not a "reflection" of reality. However, the image is a construct, not related to it at all, studying the image (including the image of the "Other") as a result of various discursive practices, "discourse struggles." Discourse analysis does not deny reality, but marginalizes, virtualizes it, focusing on the "imaginary", giving it independent meaning. The title of one of Daniel Pageaux's articles "Cultural Imaginary: From Comparative Literature to Cultural Anthropology" (1983) (Pageaux, 1983) is indicative. If imagologists carry out contextualization, they connect the image of the "Other" not so much with social, political or artistic transformations proper, but with the history of ideas and mentalities. This is influenced by the French school of the Annals with its interest in this issue. The subtitle of the article Pageaux (1983) outlines the most fruitful, from its author, research director of the Other: comparative literature should drift towards cultural anthropology, that is, study mental structures that set the writer's criteria for selecting material and principles for creating the image of the Other. Pageaux (1983) urges "not to separate the study of literature from the study of mental structures, the cultural field (cultural models and value systems that exist in a given historical era), in short, from the ideas (des ideologies) that form the culture at a given historical moment" (p. 28).

Such an approach can be practical if it does not annihilate the cognitive potential of literature, does not reduce it to a "game of beads," and its study exclusively to the study of the "imaginary", closed on itself and in no way correlated with reality. There is something in this switch to a self-contained and isolated "imaginary" from the intellectual escapism of the postmodernists, leading the world of signs, discourses and upholding the idea of literature's auto-reference. From their point of view, literature does not tell the reader about reality, but about itself, about imagination, its forms, evolution, rhythms. Behind all this is a latent fear of reality, a conviction of its unknowability, unattainability of truth, a desire to lead the reader away from the knowledge of life through literature, to find "traces" of foreign texts in the text, to unravel intellectual puzzles, and literary scholars to study the laws of literature development as social institute and one of the forms of public consciousness to the study of "complex mechanisms of the

imaginary" ("forest délicatsmé canisters del 'imaginaire") (Pageaux, 1983). We are closer to the approach of those modern Western scholars who believe that "aesthetic forms are structured responses to social contradictions" (Moretti, 2014, p. 29) and literature is one of the specific forms of cognition of reality.

In this perspective, the study of the representations of the image of the "Other" in literature becomes to a large extent a study of the West, of how the problems that the West faced at different stages of its historical development, the answers that it gave to the challenges that it faces, reveal themselves in the design of this image, the constants of his consciousness, his cultural codes, manifested in the image of the "Other."

The imagology merit is that it has actualized, indeed, an essential area of scientific research – everything related to the study of the image of the "Other." However, it can be studied in different ways, with different goals and different methods, and above all, in the framework of literary criticism based on the domestic scientific tradition, critically approaching the achievements of our foreign colleagues, taking everything alive and fruitful from there, and ignoring what narrows the horizons science of literature. To distinguish between imagology and the field of poetics that studies the image of the "Other" but does this not from the standpoint of postmodern discourse analysis, but referring to the comparative historical method and traditions of historical poetics, it seems appropriate to use the concept of "imagopoetics" (Trykov, 2017 ).

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