

**Artículo de investigación**

**Media discourse of russian literature and literary criticism at the beginning  
of the 21st Century**

**МЕДИДИСКУРС РОССИЙСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ И ЛИТЕРАТУРНОЙ  
КРИТИКИ НАЧАЛА XXI ВЕКА**

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**Abstract**

The purpose of the article is to identify and justify the media functions of fiction and literary criticism in the conditions of transformation of the Russian cultural space. The relevance of the work is due to the need to update the methodological apparatus of the analysis of modern literary text. These issues are most appropriate to study in the context of the problems of literary critical discourse and the editorial policy of literary and artistic journals. The characteristics of the communicative aspects of fiction, a description of the specifics of the publishing activities of modern literary and fiction magazines, and the definition of the role of literary criticism in the process of interpreting fiction allow to propose a new paradigm of analysis of the latest Russian literature, as well as to describe the characteristics that enable it to be included in the structure of the information space. The study is based on an integrated interdisciplinary methodology. The theoretical significance lies in a comprehensive analysis of the functioning of postmodern literature and literary criticism as part of a communicative system. The practical significance of this aspect of the study of literary

**Аннотация**

Целью статьи является выявление и обоснование медийных функций художественной литературы и литературной критики в условиях трансформации российского культурного пространства. Актуальность работы обусловлена необходимостью обновления методологического аппарата анализа современного художественного текста. Наиболее целесообразно данные вопросы исследовать в контексте проблем литературно-критического дискурса и редакционной политики литературно-художественных журналов. Характеристика коммуникативных аспектов художественной литературы, описание специфики издательской деятельности современных литературно-художественных журналов, а также определение роли литературной критики в процессе интерпретации художественного текста позволяют предложить новую парадигму анализа новейшей российской литературы, а также описать характеристики, позволяющие включить её в структуру информационного

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space consists in the development of a new methodological apparatus of literary criticism, focused on the analysis of Russian postmodern texts. The results of the work consist in the selection and systematization of analytical tools taken from the Western postmodern model, productive for the analysis of Russian texts, if they are combined with the existing practice of literary analysis.

**Keywords:** Literature, literary criticism, media, literary communication, literary and artistic (thick) journal, methodology for the analysis of literary text, the paradigm of postmodern criticism.

## Introduction

In the Soviet era, literary text played the role of cultural and artistic dominant, while retaining the functions of classical Russian literature. During the period of literature-centrism, the writer was a kind of sacred figure, and his worldview and ideas had a significant impact on the mass consciousness. Soviet ideologists, realizing the role of fiction in the formation of the spiritual and socio-political guidelines of the individual, built it into a comprehensive program of manipulating the mass consciousness. Literary critics mainly through thick magazines carried out the interpretation of literary works. Thus, the media in the Soviet era, which belonged entirely to the state, including literary and art magazines, together with fiction formed a common information space that performed the main function of forming a communist worldview. This was facilitated by the situation of the one-party system, information isolation, strict censorship and the dominant of the only officially recognized artistic method - socialist realism, dictating to artists the principle of communist partisanship of literature.

The system of literary communication underwent global changes in the 80s of the XX century. Today, literary criticism is increasingly turning to the most important function of literature - to the role of a mediator between the spiritual state of society and the inner world of the individual. A modern view of the text as a medium of information and an intermediary in its

пространства. Исследование проводится на базе интегрированной междисциплинарной методологии. Теоретическая значимость заключается в комплексном анализе процесса функционирования постмодернистской литературы и литературной критики как части коммуникативной системы. Практическое значение данного аспекта изучения литературного пространства состоит в выработке нового методологического аппарата литературной критики, ориентированного на анализ российских постмодернистских текстов. Результаты работы состоят в отборе и систематизации аналитических средств, взятых из западной постмодернистской модели, продуктивных для анализа российских текстов при условии их сочетания с существующей практикой литературоведческого анализа.

**Ключевые слова:** литература, литературная критика, медиа, литературная коммуникация, литературно-художественный (толстый) журнал, методология анализа художественного текста, парадигма постмодернистской критики.

transmission allows to include fiction in the general system of media space.

The relevance of the study of the domestic literary space of the postmodern period as an important component of the communicative space is determined by the implementation of the following factors:

- Cultural significance, communicative and socio-ideological significance of the phenomenon of literary text;
- Insufficiently developed analytical paradigm for the interpretation of modern literary text in literary criticism and the particular problems of the functioning of literary and artistic magazines in the post-Soviet media system.

## Materials and Methods

The approach involving the inclusion of fiction in the general media space of postmodern culture raises the main question - the need to use an integrated interdisciplinary methodology to study the specifics of the functioning of a literary text in the general communicative system. We consider these problems from the point of view of the media, theoretical and methodological, system-typological, literary and cultural aspects. In theoretical terms, an integrated approach will allow us to consider the functioning of

postmodern literature and literary criticism in the whole variety of internal system-forming links with other components of the communicative system, in particular, the media system, and to correlate the features of new literature with the specifics of the Russian cultural paradigm.

The practical significance of this aspect of the study of literary space consists in the development of a new methodological apparatus of literary criticism, focused on the analysis of Russian postmodern texts. An integrated approach in this research direction involves the selection of analytical tools taken from the Western postmodern model, which are suitable for the analysis of Russian texts, provided that they are combined with the traditional practice of literary analysis.

To justify the need to update the analytical apparatus of Russian literary criticism, we propose a model that combines the methodology of foreign deconstructivism / poststructuralism with Russian historical poetics (a traditional model of Russian literary criticism). We consider the following theories of Western and Russian literary criticism as the most productive for solving this problem: the method of artistic poetics, dialogueism and polyphony of M.M. Bakhtin, the method of structural poetics of literary communication of Yu.M. Lotman, deconstructivist method (philosophy of literature, text structure), post-structuralist method (philosophy, text language), post-Freudian method (schizoanalysis theory) - J. Baudrillard, J.-F. Lyotard, F. Jamison, J. Deleuze, F. Guattari, R. Barthes, U. Eco, J. Kristeva, P. de Man, J. Derrida and others.

The study is based on fundamental Russian and foreign studies in the theory of journalism, communication, the history of literature and literary criticism, semiotics, cultural studies, sociology, psychology, and philosophy. The interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of the modern postmodern literary space in the system of its communicative connections led to the use in the study of the methodological tools of the above humanities, as well as general scientific methods of analysis and synthesis, generalization and extrapolation. The interdisciplinary approach used allows us to consider postmodern literature as an integral part of the modern media space and analyze the media components that serve as communicators of the literary process. The historical-typological, comparative-typological and structural research methods are involved.

## Results

A model that combines the techniques of a foreign postmodern analytical model with the traditions of Russian literary criticism is acceptable for the Russian literary system.

The most productive theories for the theoretical understanding of Russian media culture are the concept of the language of culture Yu.M. Lotman, the theory of dialogue and polyphony M.M. Bakhtin; theories of poststructuralists and deconstructivists to explain changes in the language and structure of media texts. Such a complex of multidirectional scientific research forms an integral metatheory of postmodern media.

The editorial and publishing policy of literary and artistic journals in the process of literary communication has changed strategies. In the situation of the transition to the postmodern paradigm, journalistic activity has undergone significant changes. Magazines of a new type appeared (which continued and developed the traditions of samizdat), focused on an interdisciplinary approach in identifying artistic phenomena and the movement of the entire postmodern culture.

The orientation of new publications on the scientific style of presentation, the analytical understanding of new phenomena in culture, changes in the structure, which becomes mobile and open (like Deleuze Guattari's rhizome), in the language, selection of material allow us to introduce a new definition - "intellectual journal". The style, language and structure of intellectual journals are built in the paradigm of postmodernism, in accordance with the principles of dialogism, plurality, nonlinearity of structure, "language game", and deconstructive practice. It should be clarified that the definition of "intellectual" journal implies a horizontal expansion of typology.

"Thick" journals of the "Soviet format", in accordance with the requirements of the modern literary market, also undergo significant transformations, changing the language, style, structure of the publication. The target group has changed; magazines are becoming elitist. When changing the target group of publications (targeting an elite, intelligent reader), the crisis in the field of literary criticism leads to a decrease in reader interest, as a result of which the need to revitalize and update the methodological apparatus of modern criticism is updated.

The question of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of postmodern phenomena is directly related to the problem of the formation of a “new” postmodern criticism.

I. Ilyin notes the existence of a specific post-structuralist - deconstructivist - postmodern complex of general ideas and attitudes (Ilyin, 1998). Thus, a new artistic phenomenon can be represented in the form of a multicomponent structure consisting of a post-structuralist theory of language, a deconstructivist theory and practice of text analysis, and the very object of scientific research - postmodern art.

Based on the theoretical and methodological principles that we have identified, we consider it possible to formulate a set of basic criteria for postmodern criticism, the movement of which towards interdisciplinarity is obvious.

## Discussion

### Media Character of Literature

The characteristics of the literary life of the Soviet period indicated in the introduction reflect the general trend. However, not all writers and literary critics saw the world through the prism of communist ideology. A superficial review of the literature of the Soviet period gives the impression when only the works censored by censorship reached the reader. In general, these were texts with one reading, but outside the official mainstream there was also “other” literature that developed in line with the underground (Soviet conceptualism), self-published, as well as literature from the Russian foreign countries (returned literature), which penetrated the official press at the end The 80s. It is important that these works received new distribution channels — through publishing houses of a new format, the Internet, magazines of a new type, in contrast to the Soviet period, when the latest texts reached the general reader primarily through “thick” magazines, and this fact significantly increased the popularity literary and artistic publications. Reader culture, understanding of the literary process, fashion for writers were also dictated by authoritative magazines. The literary-centricity of the Soviet system rejected the active role of the reader, literature had to teach and retrain / re-educate, that is, dialogue relations were excluded. This interpretation, which was also expressed in literary and critical discourse, excluded texts that did not pretend to be the omniscient teacher, but which activated the consciousness and analytical capabilities of the individual, for a rather long

period of time from the array of Russian literature.

These reflections lead to the problem of the need to revise the interpretation of the literary text, characteristic of literary criticism of the Soviet period, as a special autonomy that has a one-vector orientation and does not imply discrepancies. The media character of the literary text was originally discovered in Western European and American postmodern concepts. M. McLuhan’s famous phrase “Media is content”, made it clear that the role of the literary text is as an information intermediary between the author / scriptwriter and the reader. In Russia, such an approach became possible only after perestroika. The problems of the transition to a market economy have led to significant structural changes in the media and communication system. In the Soviet period, the vertical of media based on the right of state ownership of all media, including literary and art magazines, did not provide an opportunity for an objective analysis of the artistic space. During this period, literary criticism was a significant and influential part of philological knowledge, and specialized sections of literary criticism were present in every thick publication, such as “Banner”, “New World”, “Friendship”, “Foreign Literature”; specialized journals (Literary Issues, Literature at School, etc.) were also published. Under such a system, media channels, as thick literary, artistic, and specialized magazines, formed a corps of recognized authoritative writers and literary critics.

After the collapse of the USSR, the entire mass communication system underwent a global restructuring, the most significant changes include the departure from vertical to horizontal, rhizomatic structure - “undifferentiated integrity” (Deleuze, Cuattari, 1976) (liberation from the dictates of the central press and the acquisition of autonomy by separate publications), the abolition of censorship, the emergence of new media publications in terms of goals, the development of market relations that put non-state media in a highly competitive environment, Ball extension information space. In this space, literary criticism, which has a special status that has formed in the culture of the turn of the 19th-20th centuries, should play a significant role as a connecting component of literary communication.

Birgit Menzel, author of the fundamental monograph “Civil War of Words. Russian literary criticism of the perestroika period”, noted that “... literary criticism plays a key role, since criticism reflects all the changes that take

place in literature, and not only in literature - all the significant changes that take place in society and culture” in the process of literary transformation spaces (Menzel, 2006). In the process of analyzing the post-perestroika situation, Menzel states that most critics, regardless of their worldview or political orientations, generational affiliations, were not ready to answer the aesthetic and cultural “challenge” of “other literature”. The problem is that the ideological approach, productive for the literature of socialist realism, turned out to be untenable when applied to texts of a different artistic and aesthetic affiliation. A statement of the crisis situation in Russian literary criticism leads to the need to review the functions and analytical apparatus of the institute of literary criticism. This question logically leads to the problem of information intermediaries between the literary text and the reader, whose format, typological characteristics and publishing goals have changed dramatically.

The mediator between the text and the reader becomes, first and foremost, a literary and artistic magazine, since the path of texts in book form to the reader goes most often through approbation in the journal, comprehension and interpretation in literary criticism.

The modern approach, which involves the inclusion of Russian postmodern literature in the general media space of postmodern culture, raises the main question - the need for an integrated interdisciplinary approach to studying the specifics of the functioning of a literary text in the general communicative system, and literary criticism is engaged in this problem.

Consideration of the literary space as a system involves the identification of the main components of this system, which are considered: author - text - intermediary (journal, book, Internet) - interpreter (literary critic) - communicant (reader).

The media aspects of literary communication in a postmodern situation raise a number of problems in terms of their theoretical understanding: the question of the specificity of a postmodern text actualizes the problem of the methodology of its analysis; Significant changes in the role of media in the process of literary communication put forward the task of creating a new scientific paradigm of journalistic activity in a postmodern situation.

### **The question of an interdisciplinary approach in literary criticism**

To date, the tasks of literary criticism formulated in terms of an interdisciplinary approach are to bring the conversation into the field of related disciplines in the context of the apparent failure of the traditional and habitual method of philological text analysis. Recent literary studies give a fairly representative picture of the really relevant areas of analysis of a literary text: M. Lipovetsky, I. Skoropanova, V. Kuritsyn, M. Epstein, M. Berg, A. Zholkovsky, I. Smirnov, M. Weisskopf go beyond exclusively “ literary ”analysis, involving the material and logic of related sciences, in particular the theory of structural analysis and semiotics. M. Lotman wrote about this: “Semiotics is the basis not only of the theory of culture, but also the methodology of any cultural studies. Culturology is a product of the reflection of self-description of culture <...>, i.e. is a metasemiotic formation. Culturology operates with signs of signs, creates texts about texts. Since there are no pre- or extra-character formations in culture, the interpretation of any cultural phenomena should begin with their semiotic analysis, decryption” (Lotman, 2002).

Thus, an interdisciplinary integrated approach seems most appropriate to the study of postmodern literary texts in the context of the study of postmodern space as a text.

The interpenetration of techniques in various fields of scientific knowledge is associated with the adoption of a new cultural and scientific paradigm based on the philosophy of dialogical interpenetration of chaos and space. There are many other examples of the approval of this paradigm: from the super-influential theory of deconstruction by J. Derrida, aimed at exposing the “Brownian motion” of disputing languages and refuting each other, and the meanings that exist under the cover of any ordered discourse, to the information theory of “strange gravitations”, which, unlike the theory of “scattered structures”, studies the birth of ordered formations from disordered. A completely organic place in this series is occupied by postmodern poetics.

The need for a new culturological paradigm in the post-classical period is undeniable. Not only the idea of a person, his role and place in the world has changed, but also the concept of artistic creativity (the object is decentered, the ways of its artistic embodiment are changing, the idea of language, aesthetic norms, etc.). The asemantics of postmodern literature is

manifested in the impossibility of the traditional identification of the genre and style of works. In contemporary Russian culture, the work of artists such as V. Sorokin, V. Pelevin, A. Akunin, V.

Erofeev, A. Bitov, T. Kibirov, P. Krusanov and others, does not fit into the Procrustean bed of traditional hermeneutics and comparative studies the plan of the genre, style, method, aesthetics and other components of the literary text. Attempts to create a new methodology for the analysis of modern literature have led literary critics to the other extreme - all non-traditional phenomena in culture are declared postmodern, that is, in this case, postmodernism is interpreted as an artistic method. This approach is the simplest and, accordingly, the most superficial. It should also be noted that the classical text in connection with changes in the worldview of the modern reader requires new methodological approaches to its interpretation. For example, it is noted in one of the contemporary literary and critical works devoted to the analysis of the works of Leo Tolstoy that "The relevance of the study is a new approach to the study of the late creative activity of Leo Tolstoy and his educational ideas, which focus on the nature of paradigm shifts that took place in the writer's worldview, and on their effective reasons. A number of fundamentally new ideas and concepts were discovered that were characteristic of the great writer during his spiritual crisis, which greatly expands the boundaries of Tolstoy's modern research" (Shishkhova and others, 2018).

At the present cultural and historical stage, the theory of Russian postmodernism is at the stage of comprehension, and it is quite natural that for this reason Russian literary criticism was in a state of crisis. Over the past fifteen years, the thesis of the crisis in Russian philology has become leading in the pages of periodicals. The manifestation of the crisis is noted in the breakdown of familiar academic institutions, in the degradation of the intellectual level, in aggravated conflicts within the philological scientific community, in a decrease in public interest in the subject.

The crisis of Russian literature affected primarily literary and art magazines, as these publications form the contemporary literary space. The traditional "thick magazines" were not ready to comprehend a new cultural phenomenon - postmodernism - and their artistic object - "other" and "returned" literature. Accordingly, previously a single magazine stream was divided: along with academic journals that retained a hierarchy of traditional values and a commitment

to authority, magazines appeared with a concept consistent with the current cultural situation.

At present, the question of whether a common, universal, multidisciplinary language is possible or already exists has turned out to be one of the main in the field of the humanities, in particular philology and cultural theory. The process of blurring the boundaries between the disciplines of the general humanitarian field is evident. Another question follows: if interdisciplinarity exists, is this temporary? Or interdisciplinarity is a tendency towards the emergence of a new direction in humanitarian research. These questions have become the subject of lively discussions on the pages of modern literary magazines.

Postmodern criticism from the second half of the 20th century in Western science stands out in a separate area of scientific knowledge. The discussion on the movement of modern humanitarian knowledge, launched back in the early 1990s on the pages of the journal *New Literary Review*, led to the understanding that Russian literary criticism, which analyzes the modern literary process from the standpoint of related but different specialties - sociology, the history of culture, the theory of literature, semiotics - departs from the classical and represents a new kind of literary criticism adapted to the postmodern situation. Moreover, if in 1996 the process of blurring the boundaries between disciplines was designated as a crisis, and the humanities were trying to clearly divide into philosophers and philologists, into "pure" and "unclean" philologists, then the participants of the "round table" in 2002 concluded that this is not a crisis, but a new trend in the development of the humanities that fully meets the needs of the time. I. Prokhorova, editor of the journal, suggested that the gradual disappearance of "philology" as a definition suggests that either some other type of science is being born, or there is a redistribution within traditional disciplines (The New Humanities..., 2002).

I. Ilyin, in his study "Postmodernism from the Sources to the End of the Century," noted this trend as a characteristic feature of Western literary criticism. He wrote that the interpenetration of science and literary text led to the fact that "<...> literary criticism ceases to be only a science of literature and turns into a peculiar way of modern philosophizing. In this regard, the role and function of literary criticism as a science changed dramatically ... it began to lose its specificity, the traditional set of signs and parameters, characteristic only for him as a

strictly specialized discipline of topics and objects of study, as well as the usual conceptual apparatus and analytical tools. Literary criticism began to erode, turn into interdisciplinary science without a clearly formulated and definite subject of study" (Ilyin, 1998). M. Mayofis, editor of the history department of UFO, believes that going beyond the boundaries of narrowly disciplinary education has become a necessity, she designated the field of philology as follows: sphere - post - Tartu, post-semiotic, post-structuralist, from which she concluded that the beginning of an interdisciplinary scientific approach was laid by Yu. Lotman and the Tartu school of semiotics with their interpretation of the text. M. Lotman wrote: "The basis of culture is semiotic mechanisms associated, firstly, with the storage of knowledge and texts, secondly, with their circulation and transformation, and thirdly, with the generation of new signs and new information. The first mechanisms determine the memory of culture, its connection with tradition, support the processes of its identification, etc., the second - both intracultural and intercultural communication, translation, etc., finally, the third provide the opportunity for innovation and are associated with a variety of creative activities" (Lotman, 2002). Yu.M. Lotman formulated the direction of new scientific knowledge in the postmodern situation as one of the first cultural researchers: "Separation of the content of certain cultural texts from the structure of their" language "should be considered an indispensable condition for constructing a structural and typological history of culture" (Lotman, 2002). Since language is the main means of communication, proceeding from its symbolic nature (as well as culture in general), Yu.M. Lotman states: "The study of culture as a sign phenomenon is based on the idea of the equivalent exchange of information between the sender and the recipient. There is a variety of specific interpretations arising from this premise; they have a stable common feature: it is assumed that the transmitter and receiver use the code common to both, given in advance or arising in the process of communication" (Lotman, 2002).

An integrated approach includes postmodern literature in the general communicative process to understand the specifics of the functioning of a literary text in the media space; in this case, the observations of Yu.M. Lotman over the sign nature of the communication process is of particular interest: "Thus, all the material of the history of culture can be viewed from the point of view of certain informative information and a system of social codes that allow this information to be expressed in certain signs and made

available to certain human groups" (Lotman, 2002).

If we take into account the fact that the traditional "pure" philology studies the texts distant and already completed, then we can agree that its methodology is unproductive when applied to modern literature, especially developing in the context of the sociocultural crisis that began in Russian culture at the end of the 20th century. Any critic, as a person with his own view of what is happening, faces the impossibility of "impartial" work. It is well known that in any scientific industry there is a model of the object of study. In philology, this is the concept of personality, which varies depending on many social, historical, cultural, national and other factors. In the era of the crisis of the 90s, the concept of personality also undergoes a crisis. The fact that it is difficult to give a clear literary interpretation of the eclecticism of Russian literature of the post-Soviet period also causes its difficulties. Previous methodologies, in particular classical and literary criticism of the Soviet era, prove to be unproductive to comprehend the modern personality and contemporary literature.

Given the statement of J.-F. Lyotard that eclecticism is the dominant feature of the postmodern cultural era, which is a "zero degree of general culture" (Lyotard, 1983), it can be argued that Russian philology takes the position of postmodern methodology.

It can be noted that while the question of including the Tartu formalist school of Y. Lotman in modern Russian philological science is no longer in doubt, the question of the relevance of post-structuralism in Russia remains open. A. Etkind in the article "Russian literature, the 21st century: a novel of internal colonization" noted that "<...> post-structuralist thought does not take root in Russia" (Etkind, 2003). There are other points of view. For example, M. Lipovetsky and V. Kuritsyn, the authors of the first monographs on Russian postmodernism, used the post-structuralist-deconstructivist methodology, along with the methods of traditional Russian literary criticism, to outline a new direction in the Russian theory of literature. The development of the Russian model of postmodernism is quite logical and justified on the basis of Western and American models, since there, according to a number of ideological, aesthetic and social prerequisites, this cultural and aesthetic phenomenon was born and formed. At the same time, it is revealed that direct tracing of the Western postmodernist model to Russian

culture is impossible. I. Ilyin defines postmodernism as “a complex of philosophical, epistemological, scientific-theoretical and emotionally-aesthetic representations”, multi-valued and dynamically moving depending on the historical, social and national context” (Ilyin, 2001). The key concept for understanding the uniqueness of Russian postmodernism in this definition is the “national context”. Based on the uniqueness of any national model of culture and the picture of the world, including the Russian one, when analyzing the sociocultural situation, it is important to find the features of a global postmodern world outlook and at the same time determine its national identity. I. Ilyin notes: “First of all, postmodernism acts as a characteristic of a certain mentality, a specific way of perceiving the world, perceiving and evaluating the cognitive abilities of a person, and his place and role in the environment” (Ilyin, 2001).

### Problems of Postmodern Literary Criticism

The question of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of postmodern phenomena is directly related to the problem of the formation of a “new” postmodern criticism.

In modern literary criticism, postmodern tendencies began to appear in the 80s (leading thinkers: Frenchman J. - F. Lyotard, Americans I. Hassan, F. Jamison, Dutch D.V. Fokkema, T. D'an, Englishmen J. Butler, D. Lodge and others). The postmodern trend in this context refers to the use of the poststructuralist-deconstructivist model of text analysis. Thus, a new artistic phenomenon can be represented in the form of a multicomponent structure consisting of a post-structuralist theory of language, a deconstructivist theory and practice of text analysis, and the very object of scientific research - postmodern art.

If we take this system as the basis for the interpretation of postmodernism, then it becomes possible to come closer to a holistic perception of the general postmodern artistic and aesthetic picture.

A new period of development of culture inevitably leads to a change in problems and semantic signs, respectively - to a regrouping of traditional material and to the introduction of new facts that have fallen out of the previous system due to its natural limitations. B.M. Eichenbaum notes a number of signs of a new literary situation: the absence of literary controversy, the disappearance of journalistic associations, pronounced literary schools and,

most importantly, the disappearance of leading criticism and a stable reader.

The most holistic and analytical description of the state of literary criticism of the post-Soviet period is presented in the monograph of the German researcher Birgit Menzel “Civil War of Words. Russian literary criticism of the perestroika period” (Menzel, 2006). The author of the work considers the period 1985-93 years, but the problems presented in the monograph have not lost their relevance and deserves attention today. The relevance of the study of the German critic, first of all, is that there are no comparable works on the current state of literary criticism as part of literary culture that are comparable in soundness, systematic analytical reflection, except for studies by Russian cultural sociologists (B. Dubin, L. Gudkova, A. Reitblat, S Shvedov and other authors) from the 1970s, systematically engaged in the problems of the sociology of literature and culture. B. Menzel in his study relies heavily on their theoretical and empirical observations.

The author of the monograph believes that for the analysis of “<...> Late Soviet and post-Soviet literary criticism, the functionally oriented approach developed by Czech, Polish and Croatian structuralists” seems most appropriate (works by Y. Mukarzhovsky, F. Vodicki, E. Slavinsky, St. Zholkievsky) (Menzel, 2006). B. Menzel includes in his study the work of literary theorists who productively developed the Marxist approach in combination with the phenomenological and semiotic approaches, which allowed them to give a general theoretical definition of literary criticism within the framework of the literary process and consider its specific ideological and institutional “involvement” in the socialist system. This approach echoes the methodology of the “new criticism” of R. Barthes and represents the first experiments of postmodern criticism. R. Barthes argued that the old criticism is connected with mass criticism and, within the framework of the modern cultural community, has its own audience, dominates the literary pages of a number of major newspapers and acts in accordance with certain intellectual logic, which prohibits contradicting tradition, generally accepted views, etc. (Barthes, 1966)

B. Menzel believes that the transformations in public and literary life, which raised the question of the need for new approaches in literary criticism, are due to the denationalization of literature, which occurred both at the level of its institutions and at the level of consciousness. The



essence of this process is the recognition of the autonomy of literature, its deideologization, the acceptance of diversity, understood as an irreversible form of its existence with guaranteed free access for all potential recipients to the totality of literary products, as well as the possibility of free expression of opinion and freedom of publication. The author of the study considers literary criticism as part of a literary communicative system in a situation of moving away from the principle of liteocentrism. B. Menzel believes that "the norms and forms of presentation in Russian literary criticism have developed in their present form under the influence of two most important factors: censorship and dependence on the main publication media – monthly "thick magazines" (Menzel, 2006).

Since literary communication is a part of the social communicative system, literary critical statements, understood as communicative actions, always turn out to be tied to certain political, economic, social and cultural conditions. Therefore, according to B. Menzel, the gradual replacement of the political type of regulation of social relations, which dominated in the Soviet period, has a decisive significance for the transformation of literature as a social and communicative system during the perestroika period.

In the process of changing the system of literary communication, the perestroika press played a key role, and to a large extent - the activity of literary and art magazines. The value of literary and artistic magazines is difficult to overestimate, since without this publication and communicative intermediary the existence of literary criticism is impossible. At the level of the literary communicative process, the main results of the publication and journalistic activities of journalistic criticism were the expansion of the boundaries of the literary heritage and the removal of taboos related to topics displaced by Soviet censorship associated with the publication of previously forbidden texts. In 1991, the publication in the New World of the Gulag Archipelago by A. Solzhenitsyn caused incredible reader excitement and a sense of freedom (note: the first volume was published in Paris in 1976).

B. Menzel believes that the crisis of journalistic criticism, which was most clearly expressed in a sharp drop in the circulation of the perestroika periodical as early as 1993, should be seen in the context of a wider social change - the loss of the previous social status and the cultural and

political role of the entire educated layer ("mass intelligentsia"): "Most critics saw in the retreat of the state from a commanding position in culture not so much their release from political and moral guardianship and getting rid of the imposed from above ospitatelnoy function, but, first of all, the decline of culture. <...> The main reaction to the unforeseen consequences of commercialization and the loss of a privileged position was rejection and loss of orientation" (Menzel, 2006).

Unlike Menzel, critic N. Zorkaya claims that the collapse in the circulation of literary and journalistic journals in the post-perestroika period was primarily due not so much to economic reasons that Menzel analyzes in detail, but to the departure of the intelligentsia from the social stage and its inherent ideology of culture. Despite the complexity of the process of restructuring the communication system, it should be noted that the main results of this period were a significant expansion of the literary communicative space, blurring of the boundaries between the official and unofficial spheres of literary communication, respectively - the destruction of the monopoly of criticism in defining the boundaries and the "meaningful content" of the literary process. B. Menzel emphasizes that literary magazines and magazine criticism played a leading role at this stage, in which the claim of literary criticism to "hegemony" both within the literary system and in the social dimension of the literary process, traditional for the Soviet type of literary culture, manifested itself.

N. Zorkaya notes: "It is fundamentally important in this case that the expansion of the space of literary communication, the introduction into wide circulation of previously forbidden, hushed up, supplanted or forgotten literary and literary journalistic works, as well as, perhaps, actual journalism, were not actually accompanied by a change accepted criteria for evaluations, literary values and norms, ideas about the role and functions of literature and its boundaries, revision of the established literary canon. This was especially evident in the purely negative attitude of most critics, who represented primarily the older and middle generation, both to the phenomena of mass literature and mass reading, and to the actual literary process, in which the so-called "other literature" and "new criticism" are more and more started to set the tone" (Zorkaya, 2004)

Literary critics, first of all, representatives of the older generations, explain the state of the crisis

by the loss of the sociocultural role of “high culture”, “high literature”, the social (moral, enlightening) status of literary criticism in the era of commercialization of culture, blurring of the boundaries and concept of literature, the loss of common for the literary community criteria for the selection and evaluation of relevant literary products.

Menzel considers the syncretism of literary criticism and literature as one of the most important features of Russian literary criticism, which played a significant role in the formation of traditions of interpretation and aesthetic norms of perception and evaluation of literature. The researcher believes that the basis of this syncretism is the rivalry between literary criticism and literature itself, which is traditional for Russian literary culture, which manifested itself during the era of perestroika in the “literature” of perestroika criticism.

In our opinion, the trend of interpenetration of literature and literary criticism is not a distinctive national feature of the Russian literary system, but rather, it belongs to the postmodern paradigm as a whole. For example, almost all famous Western European and North American postmodern writers performed in two guises - an artist and a critic (or were present in their texts as an interpreter. One of the most convincing examples is the work of W. Eco, a writer, scientist, and critic). It can also be noted that the literary text in the postmodern paradigm loses the signs of a classical text, including different-style segments in its space, including journalistic ones. The “claim” of literature and literary criticism to “work” with the problems and ideals of the universal dimension, which was transformed in the Soviet period into a normative idea of the “ideological” nature of literature, was behind the traditional idea of literature embodied in the work over the formal and artistic aspects of literature. This, in particular, explains the unpreparedness of critics who are committed to these traditions for specialized professional reflection on literary phenomena that do not fit into the literary canon of Russian classics of the 19th century. It is also important that the criticism’s claim to the didactic function was both rejected by the “elitist” literature, innovative in the formal and aesthetic sense, and the rejection of the literature “popular”, “grassroots”. “The latter, as before, was considered a tribute to the base tastes of the “crowd”, and the people were always called the “crowd” when the intelligentsia considered it necessary to emphasize their specialty” (Menzel, 2006).

The debate on “other literature” focused on postmodernist discourse has also become a touchstone for post-Soviet criticism. There is no doubt that in this case the paradigm of critical analysis and assessments should have changed. Menzel states that most critics, regardless of their worldview or political orientation, generational affiliation, were not ready to answer the aesthetic and cultural “challenge” of “other literature”.

Menzel believes that, unlike Western concepts of postmodernity, the Russian variation of “postmodernist discourse” was mainly retrospective and focused mainly on the problems of “reinterpreting past literary eras of symbolism, avant-garde, socialist realism, clarifying their relationship” and searching for “Russian modernity”. Moreover, the peculiarity of Russian postmodernists was the consideration of the era of socialist realism as “their” modernity. It should be noted that this line of a critical-analytical approach to the history of Russian postmodernism is quite justified, since the era of socialist realism, considered in line with the avant-garde (modern) paradigm, undoubtedly left its mark on Russian postmodernism and determined its national identity (see M. Lipovetsky, V. Kuritsyn, M. Epstein).

Postmodernism in the West arose as a movement directed against structuralism as the dominant literary metalanguage and against its claim to rationality; in Russian literary criticism, due to the tradition of syncretism in the 19th century and because of the ideological functions imposed on it in the 20th century, there was no metalanguage, or it took only the first timid steps. Therefore, the new syncretism in Russian criticism was manifested not only in the rather large freedom of subjective author’s expression, stylistic diversity and the widespread dissemination of essays; thanks to syncretism, such traditional features of Russian literary criticism as the vagueness of terminology, the deficit of precisely defined concepts, the absence of critical distance and well-reasoned assessments became more pronounced” (Menzel, 2006).

It is difficult to expect tangible changes in the system of aesthetic values and literary norms without intradisciplinary substantive and methodological reflection. Today, these tasks are successfully solved by a professional interdisciplinary community of researchers in specialized journals such as *Literary Issues*, *Literary Review*, *New Literary Review* and others.

When considering the problems of modern literary criticism, it is perhaps difficult to overestimate the importance of the Internet. In just a few years, a global portal has been created for the electronic distribution of now-limited-edition "thick" magazines and newspaper criticism texts. It also offers information about critics and ongoing discussion forums with their participation, access to their home pages, as well as publisher sites. In the network, you can find literary magazines and literary contests that exist exclusively in the electronic version, which can take place both domestically and abroad ("Reading Circle": [http://www.russ.ru/krug](http://www.russ.ru/krug;); "Journal Hall": <http://magazines.russ.ru/index.html>; "New Literary Review": <http://www.nlo.magazine.ru/>; "Babylon": <http://www.vavilon.ru/>; "Salon" : <http://www.anekdot.ru/salon/>; literary and philosophical portal "Topos": <http://www.topos.ru/map.shtml>; "Internet almanac of modern poetry and prose": <http://www.serafim.spb.ru>. and many others).

Not only young correspondents of the information network, but also critics from different generations and directions take part in the forums, although in recent months the participation of critics has quickly declined. B. Buck notes that "<...> when jumping from traditional forms of communication to electronic information technologies, new problems and new opportunities appear: network communication, which imposes its style, pace and efficiency on the print media, opens up space and ways for the literary communication beyond the traditional hierarchies. At the same time, it contributes to the appearance of a superficial style, the rejection of thorough analysis, the preservation of traditional tendencies toward graphomaniac excesses and threatens to take time and place for analytic, prognostic, non-ideological literary criticism for many years to come" (Buck, 2003).

Significant changes have occurred in the genre structure of criticism. Since literary criticism has moved to newspapers and the Internet, review has become the leading genre of Russian criticism as a form of discussion of a single book or a selection of books. We can say that the time of traditional literary and critical articles of large format has passed. O.G. Shilnikova notes: "Adapting to new conditions and striving to maximize the technical capabilities of the media, art criticism changes its quality and form of representation. Nowadays, this is the reflection of a journalist or an art professional who is competent in the field of art and is disseminated by all mass communication means (print and

electronic) and broadcast by various information channels (newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet). Expertise carried out by a professional can really affect the mass consciousness and public opinion" (Shilnikova, 2009).

It can be stated that the expansion of the spectrum of norms and forms of modern criticism is still in the process of formation. Collective self-reflection, as shown by some discussions and online forums ("Round Table", "Critics of Prizes", cycle "This is criticism" on the site "Russian Journal. Reading Circle": <http://www.russ.ru/krug>; discussion forms in the magazines Mitin Magazine, UFO, Banner), began not so long ago. In general, discussions about updating the methodological apparatus of the new criticism are aimed at developing a scientific paradigm, since journalism and evaluativeness at the "like / dislike" level prevail in modern metal literary discourse. Today "... the methods of humanitarian scientific knowledge are used in literary criticism" not in their pure "form, but are rethought. The strict requirement of scientific evidence, logical argumentation is being reduced; the requirement of integrity in the approach to the work becomes optional. Subjectivity plays the role of an argument (the impression of what is read often turns out to be the basis for formulating an assessment)" (Govorukhina, 2010).

It should also be noted that the target audience of literary criticism today is no longer amateur readers, but professionals. Yu.A. Govorukhina notes: "Criticism assimilates unexplored literary material, forming a metal literary context. The creative competence of critical discourse consists in constructing a "literary landscape", building value hierarchies / criteria, in the innovativeness of the metal literary language in which all the many critical judgments are made, in correcting and forming new mental representations. In this sense, literary critical discourse is constructive" (Govorukhina, 2010). Agreeing with the thesis about the constructiveness of metal literary discourse, we consider it possible to generalize the principles of foreign literary criticism, mainly formulated by R. Bar ":

- Movement from the work to the text, meaning the interpretation of information codes and text structure;
- Creation of a metalanguage of criticism (refusal to establish truth / falsity, objectivity / subjectivity);
- Establishment of dialogical relations author - critic - reader;

- Distancing critics from the reading process;
- Interpretation of the text as a letter, suggesting a departure from subjectivity and crowding out the author's figure (theory of "death of the author") (Barthes, 1966; Barthes, 1967).

These provisions, in our opinion, are quite productive when applied to the analysis of Russian postmodern literature.

### Conclusions

The problem of literary criticism and its methodological apparatus seems urgent and significant because of the obvious crisis in Russian culture, generated by the situation of a radical restructuring of mass consciousness in the process of transition to a new socio-economic and political formation. According to D. S. Likhachev, criticism is genetically and historically a kind of coordination mechanism, "art regulator."

In the period of departure from the Soviet system of literature-centrism with the dominance of the only officially recognized method, a lot of different-style art and literary trends appeared, united by postmodern aesthetics. The criticism was not ready for such a challenge.

Most scholars of contemporary literary critical discourse note the need to update methodological approaches and the analytical paradigm. The reason for the failure of classical and Soviet literary criticism is the emergence of postmodern literature that cannot be interpreted at the level of ideological and artistic content. The subjectivity of such approaches noted by the researchers dictates the need to develop principles of interdisciplinary science, including literary, semiotic, art criticism, philosophical and aesthetic and other humanitarian concepts. Moreover, we can agree with the opinion of Yu.A. Govorukhina is that the question of the features of the manifestation of the principle of scientificness in criticism remains the least studied in the system of questions related to its specificity. In our work, we outlined some conceptual attitudes of foreign and Russian literary criticism, which could be included in the scientific paradigm of contemporary Russian criticism. These provisions require further refinement and expansion, but in general, the

study aims to update the problem space of literary communication processes.

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