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COMEDY AS A GENRE OF LITERATURE

Abstract: *The article examines the comedy as a genre of literature on the basis of Nikolai Gogol's satirical play "The Government Inspector". The central theme of the play is the problems and vices of society, stupidity and hypocrisy of officialdom, the moral and spiritual side of life of this class. The authors regard the language of the comedy as sharp, satirical and sarcastic. There are no positive characters among the characters in the play, which is entirely new to the genre and the direction in which Nikolai Gogol worked.*

Key words: *comedy, a genre of literature, the Renaissance, sharp, satirical, sarcastic, political life, society, problems, characters.*

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Introduction

Comedy is one of the main drama genres in literature along with tragedy. It originated in ancient Greece. Its founder is considered Aristophanes (446 - 385 c. B.C.). He was the first to show in literature the power and possibilities of laughter. In his comedies Aristophanes liked to make fun of well-known Athenian citizens, as well as important events of political life in Athens. The play "Clouds" was considered by the playwright to be his best comedy [5, p.34].

In Europe, comedies emerged during the Renaissance, in the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. In Italy there was even a special type of comedy - the Commedia dell'arte. This was the name given to theatrical performances consisting of funny sketches, dances, musical and acrobatic numbers. The actors wore special masks. These productions were based on reworked comedies by Italian writers. The plot of the

works often changed during the performances: artists improvised a lot [1, p.608].

Since XVII century comedy became one of the main genres of the European literature. Different types of comedies developed. The high ones were devoted to important social and philosophical problems. And in the low ones the plot was built around funny everyday situations, curiosities.

Comedies were also divided into the lyrical and satirical. The former had a sympathetic approach to its heroes. In satirical comedies, writers denounced the vices of society, so their characters were often presented in an unsightly way.

In Russia national, not translated comedies appeared only in the middle of the XVIII century. The first works in the genre were written by Alexander Sumarokov, Denis Fonvizin and Vasily Kapnist. Almost all their comedies were satirical. In their works the authors wrote about the key problems of

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Russia in those years: the low level of education, bribes of officials, serfdom.

The genre of Russian comedy was finally established in the nineteenth century through the work of Alexander Griboyedov, Nikolai Gogol, Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin, Alexander Ostrovsky and Anton Chekhov. National colour and psychologism appeared in their works. And the heroes of such comedies were often typical Russians [3, p.126].

The fundamental, genre-forming feature of comedy is laughter. Aristotle defined the funny, the comic as a kind of mistake and outrageousness that does no harm or suffering to anyone. The specificity of comedy is best revealed by comparing it with tragedy. Whereas tragedy has an insoluble tragic conflict at its centre, comedy has a comic joke at its heart. The tragic hero is always sublime, filled with a wealth of feelings, emotions, and experiences. He puts his life on the line, he pursues noble goals. The comic character, on the contrary, is belittled, ridiculous, stupid, flawed, inferior, in most cases devoid of inner peace, a kind of simpleton who does not realise that he is ridiculous.

Comedies ridicule low human qualities such as stupidity, meanness, naivety, short-sightedness and simple-mindedness. The most striking examples of comedies in Russian literature are Nikolai Gogol's "The Government Inspector" ("Revizor"), Alexander Griboyedov's "Woe from Wit" ("Gore ot uma") and Vladimir Mayakovsky's "The Bathhouse" ("Banya").

Main part

Nikolai Gogol's satirical play "The Government Inspector" belongs to the genre of realistic comedy. Realism is a literary movement that appeared in Russia in the early nineteenth century as a way of reflecting contemporary reality [6, p.156].

The main representatives of realism in the first half of the 19th century were: Ch. Dickens, W. Thackeray (in England); F. Stendhal, H. de Balzac, H. Flaubert (in France); A.S. Pushkin, A.S. Griboyedov, M. Lermontov, N. Gogol (in Russia) [8, p.22].

Main features of realism as a literary movement:

- Historicism of the work. Realism has a specific approach to the portrayal of life: the events presented in a work of fiction are a reflection of a certain historical era;
- The spirit of the era is conveyed in the work of fiction by prototypes: in real life one can meet people with the same character traits as the characters in a literary work; a typical hero in typical circumstances;
- The heroes of a realist work are not only a product of a particular time, but also universal types;
- The characters of the heroes of a realistic work are given in development, multidimensional and complex, socially and psychologically motivated;
- A realist work uses lively, colloquial language and colloquial vocabulary.

High realism is closely merged in satirical play "The Government Inspector" with satire, satire with the embodiment of social ideas. Explaining the meaning of "The Government Inspector", Gogol pointed to the role of laughter: "I am sorry that no one noticed the honest face that was in my play... This honest, noble face was laughter". The writer's aim was to "laugh hard" at what was "worthy of universal ridicule" [6, p.156].

The peculiarity of Gogol's laughter lies primarily in the fact that the subject of comedy is chosen not for the tricks of a particular hero, but modern life itself in its comically ugly manifestations.

The plot of "The Government Inspector" is based on a typically comic incongruity: a person is mistaken for someone other than he really is. But unlike his predecessors, Gogol tackles the situation in a new way [6, p.158].

Khlestakov does not pretend to be anyone. The officials are deceived by Khlestakov's sincerity. An experienced dodger would hardly fool the town governor who "cheated the rascals out of the rascals". It is the unintentional nature of Khlestakov's actions that confused the town steward.

In "The Government Inspector" there are no external stimuli to the development of the action. Paradoxically, the main impulse for the comedy is the fear of the officials. This fear transforms the conflicted town into a single organism. This same feeling turns all of the town's inhabitants into virtual brothers. As it turns out, it is neither kinship of souls nor common interests that can unite these people, but only fear.

What was happening revealed to the people their true ugly and ridiculous face, making them laugh at themselves, at their life, which was the life of the whole of Russia. "You laugh at yourselves" - this is addressed to the laughing audience.

Gogol laughs both at the town as a whole and at its individual inhabitants and their social vices. Lawlessness, embezzlement, bribery, selfish motives instead of caring about the public good are all shown in "The Government Inspector" as those generally accepted forms of life, outside of which the administrators cannot imagine their existence.

The comic also reveals the seriousness with which each of the characters takes their work. They are all occupied with their work as the greatest task of their lives. The reader, on the other hand, sees the insignificance and emptiness of their concerns. Thus Gogol vividly shows the contrast between frantic external activity and internal ossification.

"The Government Inspector" is a comedy of characters. Gogol's humour is psychological. Laughing at the characters in a satirical play, we laugh not at their "crooked nose, but at their crooked soul", to quote Gogol. In Gogol, the comic is almost entirely devoted to the depiction of types. Hence the rejection of farce, caricature. The author himself wrote: "More

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than anything one should be afraid of not falling into caricature".

Thus, while giving hasty orders for the auditor, the town governor mixes up the words: "Let everyone take a street - hell, a street! - a broom..." («Пусть каждый возьмет в руки по улице, — черт возьми, по улице! — по метле...») [4, p.417].

A minute later he wants to put on a paper case instead of a hat.

The note Anna Andreevna receives from her husband contains an amusing confusion: "I don't understand anything, what is the point of pickles and caviar?" («Я ничего не понимаю, к чему же тут соленые огурцы и икра?») [4, p.427].

The quartermasters, to whom the town governor points out a piece of paper lying on the floor, "run and remove it, pushing one another in a hurry" («бегут и снимают ее, толкая друг друга впопыхах») [4, p.429].

While congratulating Anna Andreevna on the "betrothal" of her daughter Bobchinsky and Dobchinsky "approach at the same time and bump heads" («подходят в одно время и сталкиваются лбами») [4, p.454].

That is, perhaps, all such scenes and details. And we can see that these ridiculous "clings" are rather collateral tones to the main motif. They characterise the atmosphere of haste, confusion, fear. Gogol's comic is usually derived from the characters.

The author, as well as the readers, also laughs "at the inconsistencies of people's characters and their position in society," at the discrepancy between what the characters think and what they say, between people's behavior and their opinions. For example, the

officials and their wives, who came to congratulate the town governor and Anna Andreevna on their daughter's wonderful party, are flattered in their eyes, while they speak very unflatteringly about the town governor himself: "Not by fate, father, by fate-indeed, merit has brought him to this. (To the side). This pig is always in the mouth of happiness" («Не судьба, батюшка, судьба-индейка; заслуги привели к тому. (В сторону). Этаким свинье лезет всегда в рот счастье») [4, p.455].

Denouncing everything bad, Gogol believed in the triumph of justice, which will triumph as soon as people realize the destructiveness of the "bad", and in order to make them realize it, Gogol ridicules everything despicable and insignificant. Laughter helps him realise this task. Not the laughter that comes from temporary irritability or bad temper, not the easy laughter of idle amusement, but the laughter that "flies out of the bright nature of man," at the bottom of which lies "his ever-beating spring.

Conclusion

Gogol can be called the founder of the satirical drama genre in Russian literature. He developed the main laws of comedy, which have become classic. He introduced the "silent scene" in drama, when the actors are silent. It was Nikolai Gogol who introduced the satirical device of the grotesque. The bureaucracy is portrayed not just as stupid but as monstrously limited. The comedy has not a single neutral or positive character, resolutely all the characters are mired in vices and their own stupidity. The genre is that of a social-satirical comedy in the spirit of realism [7, p.120].

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