



The Concept And Development Of Literary Image (Obraz) Theory

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Abstract

This article examines the concept and evolution of the literary image (obraz) in world literary theory and aesthetics. Beginning with its etymological roots, the study explores the interpretations of “image” in classical philosophy, including Aristotle’s notion of mimesis, Hegel’s view of art as “thinking through images,” and Kant’s epistemological approach. The paper further analyzes Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic perspective, emphasizing the role of unconscious processes in image formation. The contributions of Russian literary critics such as Belinsky, Bakhtin, and Shklovsky are discussed, along with Roland Barthes’ poststructuralist approach, which challenges the author’s authority in interpretation. Finally, the article addresses the integration of the term obraz into Uzbek literary studies, replacing earlier concepts such as “timsol, tasvir, and nusxa”. The study concludes that the image, as a central category in literary theory, serves as a bridge between reality and imagination, uniting aesthetic, social, psychological, and cultural functions.

Keywords: “Obraz” literary image; mimesis; catharsis; aesthetic theory; psychoanalysis; dialogism; defamiliarization; semiotics; Uzbek literary studies.

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada badiiy obraz (obraz) tushunchasi va uning jahon adabiy nazariyasi hamda estetikadagi rivoji tahlil qilinadi. Maqola dastlab atamaning etimologik ildizlariga murojaat qilib, klassik falsafadagi talqinlarni, jumladan Aristotelning mimesis (taqlid) haqidagi qarashlari, Gegelning san’atni “obrazlar orqali fikrlash” sifatidagi yondashuvi va Kantning gnoseologik qarashlarini sharhlaydi. Shuningdek, Sigmund Freydning psixanalitik nuqtayi nazari, xususan ongsiz jarayonlarning obraz shakllanishidagi o’rni tahlil qilinadi. Rus adabiyotshunoslari — Belinskiy, Baxtin va Shklovskiy qarashlari, shuningdek Roland Bartning muallif hokimiyatiga qarshi chiqqan poststrukturalistik yondashuvi ham yoritiladi. Maqolada, shuningdek, o’zbek adabiyotshunosligida obraz atamasining shakllanishi va u ilgari qo’llanilgan “timsol”, “tasvir” hamda “nusxa” iboralarini astasekin almashtirgani haqida ham so’z yuritiladi. Xulosa sifatida, obraz adabiy nazariyaning markaziy kategoriyasi bo’lib, u voqelik va tasavvurni bog’lovchi, estetik, ijtimoiy, psixologik va madaniy funksiyalarni o’zida mujassam etuvchi universal hodisa ekanligi ta’kidlanadi.

Kalit so’zlar: Obraz; badiiy obraz; mimesis; katharsis; estetik nazariya; psixoanaliz; dialogizm; o’zgartirish (ostranenie); semiotika; o’zbek adabiyotshunosligi.

Introduction.

One of the main functions of artistic literature is the reflection of reality, and the image (obraz) is considered the primary tool of representing it in a unique and expressive way. The creator perceives the world through images and expresses an emotional attitude towards what is perceived. Therefore, the type of thinking specific to literature is called “figurative thinking” (D. Quronov, 2018). Along with literature, the image, which is also the “language” of art, philosophy, and aesthetics, serves as a mirror of human psychology and social changes, helps the reader to understand the content of a work, activates imagination, contributes to the creation of national and global culture, and plays an important role in establishing global dialogue.

In a broad sense, the concept of “image” includes not only the depiction of a person but also landscapes, objects, details, animals, and other artistic means of depiction. In a narrow sense, however, it is limited only to the artistic scenes of human life (T. Boboyev, 2002).



Before discussing the development of image theory, it is important to turn to the etymology of the term itself. The term “obraz” is derived from the Russian word “raz” (“line”). From “raz” comes “razit” (“to draw, to carve”), and from that “obrazit” (“to draw, to shape, to carve”), which eventually gave rise to “obraz” (“a general representation”) (Hotam Umurov, 2002).

Literature review.

The earliest ideas about “image” appear in the aesthetic views of the famous Greek philosopher Aristotle. In his work *Poetics*, Aristotle used the term “mimesis” (imitation) instead of “obraz,” explaining it as the reflection of nature, human actions, and emotions through art. According to him, the main function of art and literature is to reveal the essence of life. He emphasized that art does not necessarily reflect reality exactly but rather conveys its essence and meaning. Analyzing mimesis in the context of tragedy, Aristotle stressed that its main purpose is to lead the audience to “catharsis,” i.e., emotional purification, which allows a person to achieve inner balance (Aristotle, *Poetics*).

A significant teaching on “image” belongs to the German philosopher Georg Hegel. In his aesthetic views, Hegel argued that “art is thinking through images” (Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1968–1973, trans. B. Stolpner & P. Popov). He analyzed images from the standpoint of dialectics, claiming that the artistic image is a means of synthesizing subjective and objective reality. Hegel saw art as a form of the spirit’s selfexpression, where images transform into thoughts and concepts, reflecting cultural and historical development.

Immanuel Kant’s theory of images is rooted in philosophical epistemology and aesthetics. Kant explored how human cognition and understanding are formed, and how representations and ideas appear in the mind. For him, knowledge is the result of harmony between experience (empiricism) and reason (rationalism). He regarded the image as a mediator between the external world and the mind, shaped by the categories and forms that the mind imposes (Kant, 1781). In his *Critique of Judgment* (1790), Kant discussed images in the context of beauty and aesthetics, considering them subjective, dependent on perception and feeling.

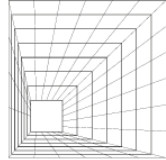
Sigmund Freud developed the theory of images within the framework of psychoanalysis. He interpreted images as products of psychological processes that emerge in both the conscious and unconscious. Freud paid special attention to dreams, fantasies, and unconscious desires. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), he explained how hidden desires and conflicts manifest themselves symbolically through dream images, distinguishing between latent (hidden) and manifest (visible) content. Within his structural model of the psyche (Id, Ego, and Superego), images result from the mediation of instinctive desires and social rules by the Ego (*The Ego and the Id*, 1923). Thus, Freud saw images as symbolic expressions of unconscious conflicts and desires, central both to creativity and art.

Comparative analysis and methods.

In Russian literary criticism, the term “obraz” was introduced and developed by Vissarion Belinsky. He emphasized the role of images in art, analyzing their aesthetic and moral functions. For Belinsky, images were not only artistic tools but also carriers of social and ethical meaning (Belinsky, 1834). He viewed them as reflections of the human spirit, worldview, and societal changes, shaping collective consciousness.

Mikhail Bakhtin introduced the concept of “dialogism,” referring to the interaction of voices and images in literary works, leading to “polyphony” (multiple voices). He argued that literary characters are not mere extensions of the author’s voice but independent agents involved in dialogue (Bakhtin, 1963). This approach highlighted the openness of images to multiple interpretations.

Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky developed the concept of “defamiliarization” (*ostranenie*), considering literary images as tools to renew perception. By presenting ordinary elements in unusual ways, literature frees the reader from automatism and reveals new aesthetic dimensions (Newton, K.M., 1997).



Roland Barthes' theory of images is linked with semiotics and cultural studies. Barthes rejected fixed meanings of texts and emphasized the plurality of interpretations. His famous essay "The Death of the Author" (1967) challenged traditional literary criticism, advocating for the reader's role in creating meaning. For Barthes, images are dynamic and open to multiple interpretations, shaped by cultural and personal contexts.

In Uzbek literary studies, terms such as "timsol," "tasvir," and "nusxa" were used instead of "obraz" until the early 20th century. It was only in the 1920s–1930s that the Russian term "obraz" entered Uzbek terminology (T. Boboyev, 2002).

Conclusion

The concept of the literary image (obraz) has undergone a long and dynamic evolution, shaped by philosophical, aesthetic, psychological, and cultural perspectives. From Aristotle's idea of mimesis as imitation of life, to Hegel's understanding of art as "thinking through images," to Kant's epistemological reflections, each stage has expanded the meaning and function of the image in literature. Freud revealed its psychological depth, linking it to unconscious desires, while Russian critics such as Belinsky, Bakhtin, and Shklovsky emphasized its social, dialogic, and perceptual dimensions. Later, Roland Barthes challenged the authority of the author, underlining the openness of images to diverse interpretations. In Uzbek literary studies, the term obraz gradually replaced traditional notions like timsol, tasvir, and nusxa, reflecting the influence of global literary thought. Altogether, the image stands as a universal category that bridges reality and imagination, embodying both individual creativity and collective cultural experience.

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