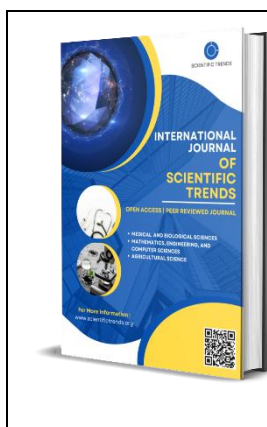


Pictorial Ekphrasis in the Work of V.F. Odoevsky

(Based on the Story "The Painter")

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Abstract

The article reveals the specificity of pictorial ekphrasis in the work of V.F. Odoevsky. On the example of the story "The Painter" the theme of art and its constituent images and motifs are revealed.

Keywords: Ekphrasis, functions of ekphrasis in a literary text, art, painting.

Introduction

The theme of art and the images of creators play a key role in Russian literature of the first half of the 19th century. The Romantics paid special attention to this theme. On the basis of romanticism, a unique philosophy and aesthetics of art were formed, which reconsidered the mystery of creativity. In the view of the romantics, the creator – be it a poet, musician, painter or sculptor – was perceived as a chosen person capable of comprehending the highest truths, embodying ideals in his works. Art for romantic writers became a manifestation of the inner worldview and personality.

In his work, F. Odoevsky uses art as a means for theoretical comprehension of art itself. According to P. N. Sakulin, "Odoevsky strives to get closer to works of art, sometimes even reproducing famous paintings in his works." [4, p. 297].

For F. Odoevsky, the images of artists have a special symbolic significance, embodying "the inner history of a given epoch of all mankind". [2, p. 5]. They embody the internal contradictions and aesthetic dilemmas of concrete art and general aesthetic issues. As V.G. Belinsky noted: "The artist is a riddle that Odoevsky began to study and study." [1, p. 116].

In his narrative, Odoevsky, through the description of the paintings created by the main character, helps the reader to immerse himself in his inner world. The paintings presented in the work are considered as key elements for understanding the life and soul of the artist, his creative talent and character.

F. Odoevsky addresses the theme of the creative personality through the image of the painter Shumsky, who appears not only as a creator: ("Danila Petrovich was, perhaps, one of the first painters of our time...") [3, p. 354], but also as an individual with a poetic view of the world.

According to M. I. Medovoy, "The image of the artist embodies the tragedy of an exalted personality, completely immersed in his inner experiences, detached from reality." [2, p. 6]

In the story "The Painter", the main character, Danila Petrovich Shumsky, seeks to depict the Madonna: ("He painted one picture on another; the figure of the Madonna is sketched on Tenier's costume") [3, p. 355]. Odoevsky presented the image of Shumsky in the context of the romantic tradition, where the hero comes into conflict with philistinism and dies, faced with an unbearable struggle with poverty, before he has time to realize his artistic vision. The incompleteness of the paintings, symbolizing the unattainability of the ideal by Shumsky ("I'll paint a portrait, so it will be surprising to the whole world") [3, p. 355], receives a special artistic resolution in the story. Thanks to unfinished paintings, the reader's attention is concentrated on the enumeration of themes as "bare" ideas, devoid of form, "body" and color [5, p. 46]. It is important to note that Odoevsky does not seek to absolutize the purpose of art. For him, the idealization of art for the sake of art itself and the idea of the isolation of art from society are alien.

In F. Odoevsky's work, ekphrasis is present in various forms: as a motif, an image and a genre form. The structural basis of ekphrasis for him is the impact created by a work of art on the reader, which is then concretized through the artistic techniques of a certain type of art: through genre features, material, color palette, composition, etc. This approach not only visualizes images, but also gives relevance to the object of the image.

When describing characters, Odoevsky often uses the interior as an expressive means, where everyday life acts as a form of expression of their essence ("Danilo is sitting in his unheated room, smearing some tricks on the canvas and singing songs"; "wanders day after day, and stares against the old wall...") [3, p. 359]. The workshop also symbolizes the way of life of the creator: ("There were scattered paints, palette, brushes around"; «... there were hundreds of paintings on canvas" [3, p. 355]. Summing up, we note that F. Odoevsky in the story "The Painter" masterfully uses pictorial ekphrasis to create the inner world of the creator. He emphasizes the symbolic significance of artists' images, addressing aesthetic dilemmas and ideas of art, emphasizing not only the tragic side of creativity, but also the influence of art images on the life and soul of the hero.

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