The Application Of Pragmatic Literary Theory In Contemporary Practice

Eshqobilov Abdivali,
SamSIFL dotsent, PhD

Annotation: *Eshkobilov A.K. On the Applicability of Pragmatic Literary Theory in Contemporary Practice.* The article examines pragmatic literary theory as a new phenomenon emerging in opposition to traditional literary studies. It identifies the factors that have contributed to the emergence of this theory, outlines its analytical "instruments," core principles, and practical approaches to the analysis of literary works, and also considers the views of several critics of the new theoretical paradigm.

Key words: pragmatic literary studies, new theory, instrumentalism, "Literary Theory Two," genre morphology, "humanitarian risk"

Аннотация

Эшкобилов А.К. Прагматик адабиётшунослик назариясининг замонавий амалиётда қўлланилиши масаласига доир. Мақолада прагматик адабиётшунослик назарияси анаъанавий адабиёт назариясини инкор этувчи янги ғоя сифатида ўрганилади. Янги назариянинг пайдо бўлиши сабаблари, уни амалиётда қўллаш "жиҳоз-инструментлари", асосий қоидалари ва бадиий асар таҳлилида қўллашнинг усуллари, шунингдек, янги назарияни танқид қилувчи олимларнинг айримларини қарашлари баён қилинган.

Таянч сўзлар: прагматик адабиётшунослик, янги назария, инструментализм, "адабиёт назарияси Икки", жанр морфологияси, "гуманитар хавф"

Эшкобилов А.К. К вопросу применимости прагматической теории литературы в современной практике. В статье рассматривается теория прагматического литературоведения как новое явление в противовес традиционному литературоведению. Обозначены причины появления новой теории, его "инструменты", основные положения и пути применения на практике анализа художественного произведения, а также рассмотрены взгляды некоторых противников новой теории

Ключевые слова. Прагматическое литературоведение, новая теория, инструментализм, "теория литературы Два", морфология жанра, "гуманитарная угроза"

In a number of our previous scholarly publications, we have argued that, according to certain foreign researchers, new directions of intellectual inquiry are emerging that are intended to replace traditional literary studies, which are increasingly described as methodologically limited or even obsolete [1]. In particular, progressive trends in contemporary Western literary theory devote significant attention to a conceptual framework commonly referred to as *"Literary Theory Two."* This framework is presented as a means of developing a new methodological apparatus capable of analyzing the distinctive features of modern textual perception.

The term *"Literary Theory Two"* denotes a new phase in the development of literary theory—modern, informal, yet rapidly gaining institutional recognition. Within this paradigm, priority is given to intermediality, digital research practices, data-driven methodologies, and interdisciplinary inquiry. The approach deliberately distances itself from traditional structuralist and post-structuralist models, instead advocating for the examination of literary texts within broader technological, cultural, and media-related contexts. Importantly, *"Literary Theory Two"* should not be understood merely as a revised or updated version of existing theoretical models. Rather, it constitutes a response to novel forms and mechanisms of textual production—such as algorithms, social media platforms, and digital infrastructures—thereby conceptualizing literary texts not as autonomous artifacts, but as elements embedded within complex networks of media and cultural information flows.

The principal characteristics of the *"Literary Theory 2.0"* movement (also referred to simply as "Theory Two") may be summarized as follows:

• **Digital Humanities:** the application of Big Data platforms, machine learning technologies, and large-scale textual corpora to identify patterns and regularities that remain inaccessible through conventional analytical methods;

• **Intermediality and transmediality:** the investigation of interactions among literature, cinema, video games, the internet, and artificial intelligence;

• **Posthumanism and theories of agency:** the analysis of the role played by non-human agents—such as algorithms, artificial intelligence systems, and material objects—in the processes of textual production and reception;

• **Cultural analytics:** the study of literary works within broader cultural and social dynamics, incorporating methodological tools drawn from sociology, psychology, anthropology, and related disciplines;

• **The "death of the author" or decentering of authorship:** a shift in analytical focus away from authorial intention toward reader reception, affective response, networked circulation, and models of collective authorship.

From this perspective, *"Literary Theory Two"* represents an attempt to recalibrate literary theory for the conditions of the digital era—an environment in which traditional boundaries between text and reader, as well as between text and author, are increasingly destabilized, and in which literary works frequently exist in hybrid and multimodal forms.

At the same time, scholars within national and Russian academic traditions caution that a radical rejection of the extensive legacy of literary theory does not contribute positively to the development of productive analytical approaches or methodologies for the interpretation of literary texts as outcomes of the literary process. In this context, Roland Barthes's (1989) assertion that "only the destruction of past scholarship is truly scientific" appears methodologically untenable [2]. While it is undeniable that any academic discipline must evolve continuously, expanding its conceptual and methodological horizons, such development does not necessitate the wholesale abandonment of foundational theoretical principles. Even G. Tihanov (2019), one of the earliest proponents of the notion of the "death" of traditional literary theory, emphasizes the importance of preserving scholarly continuity and integrating classical theoretical paradigms into emerging forms of intellectual inquiry [3].

Against this background, particular attention should be paid to a new theoretical direction developed and advanced in Russia, notably within the framework of the St. Petersburg literary journal *Translit*. According to P. Arsenyev (2016)—a literary theorist and one of the contributors to the *Translit* almanac—there exists an urgent need to elaborate alternative approaches to literary theory capable of overcoming the constraints imposed by an increasingly bureaucratized contemporary research environment [4]. Arsenyev argues that traditional literary theory has largely confined itself to the analysis of explicitly articulated textual content. In contrast, he foregrounds the examination of **illocutionary meaning**, that is, the actions performed through language within a literary work. Additionally, he assigns particular significance to **perlocutionary effectiveness**, understood as the impact of textual utterances on the reader.

Arsenyev observes that both dimensions remain insufficiently explored in contemporary literary scholarship, and that existing methodologies grounded in these concepts are often characterized by vagueness and inconsistency. He further contends that the application of a pragmatic approach under such conditions frequently results in the uncritical incorporation of fragmented biographical data and sociological constants, rather than systematic textual analysis [5]. This tendency, in turn, produces a tension between literary value and practical functionality within literary theory. To elucidate the conceptual foundations of this approach, scholars frequently reference Arsenyev's (2014) formulation, presented here in English:

"A pragmatic action in literature is directed toward actions that already exist within the literary field, while simultaneously surpassing contemporaries and addressing a newly constructed audience. The event of the artistic word—neither a marginal element of genre morphology nor merely the product of individual creative will—acquires a pragmatic function both as a diachronic redefinition of the genre system (historical pragmatics) and as a localized situation of poetic expression (situational pragmatics). Unlike metalinguistic models, the word is not a natural extension of the author's existence; rather, it is suspended upon significant pragmatic threads stretched between precedents of utterance. Without accounting for this addressivity and oppositional positioning, it is impossible to grasp the orientation of a literary work or to understand a text as

a speech act" [5]. The defining feature of this approach lies in its innovative deployment of the pragmatic dimension of literary theory. This position, commonly referred to as **instrumentalism**, conceptualizes literary texts as a system of instruments facilitating communication between author and reader.

Another distinctive feature of *"Literary Theory Two"* is its renewed focus on identifying the author's presence within the text. Since any theory seeks to comprehend the essence of its object, and since the history of any object presupposes the examination of its concrete existence, the study of communication between text and reader may represent a promising direction for future literary-theoretical research. Such an approach enables a reconceptualization of this relationship under conditions of heightened contextuality. Nevertheless, some scholars regard this orientation as a form of "humanitarian risk," arguing that it remains insufficiently theorized and methodologically underdeveloped.

One of the most prominent critics of this tendency, V. I. Tyupa (2019), contends that contemporary literary theory increasingly treats literature and utterance as mere instruments of influence. According to Tyupa, this shift redirects scholarly attention away from the semantic and aesthetic significance of literary phenomena toward the technical means that facilitate their production. Consequently, analysis becomes focused on the instruments of writing—digital devices, pens, printing technologies—rather than on literary meaning itself. Tyupa expresses skepticism regarding the extent to which instrumental diversity genuinely affects the essence of literary creativity. Although such concerns may be situated within the theoretical legacy of Marshall McLuhan (2003), who famously conceptualized media as extensions of the human body and mind, Tyupa nonetheless maintains his critical stance, despite substantial opposition from fellow scholars.

According to Tyupa, the most significant "humanitarian risk" of the new literary theory lies in its tendency to analyze literary works as collections of fragmented experimental elements lacking unity and aesthetic completeness. He argues that wholeness constitutes a fundamental cognitive condition for the apprehension of aesthetic objects, aligning literary experience with notions of beauty and perfection. Moreover, wholeness implies a form of shared participation in aesthetic perception—one that transcends individual authorship. This perspective also foregrounds **suggestiveness** as a defining feature of aesthetic experience, understood as the capacity of a work to engage and motivate the audience's imaginative and emotional involvement. While the new literary theory promotes interpretive freedom and supports fragmentary modes of reading, its advocates often insist upon the necessity of the "death of the author," seeking to emancipate readers from the constraints of authorial intention.

In conclusion, although proponents of contemporary literary theory actively respond to the demands of the present intellectual climate, it is both appropriate and necessary to acknowledge the conceptual limitations inherent in these approaches. At the same time, the history of scholarship demonstrates that innovative theoretical paradigms frequently become catalysts for genuine academic advancement. Therefore, while endorsing the application of pragmatic approaches to literary analysis, it is advisable not only to recognize but also to productively integrate the achievements of traditional literary theory into contemporary critical practice.

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