The Pre-Romantic, the Sentimental, and the Trivial in the Late 18th Century German Literature

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Abstract:
The article deals with the manifestations of sentimentalism and triviality and with the problem of the pre-romanticism in the German literature of the late Enlightenment. Traditionally, such problems are analyzed in the literary studies apart from "high" literature. It is important to comprehend the nature of pre-romanticism as a distinct and remarkable phenomenon of the eighteenth-century literature (and not as an early stage of romanticism), the existence of which during several decades proved its vitality and uniqueness. Triviality, in its turn, existed as a part of the culture in G.E. Lessing's time, that is, to a great extent before Goethe. It should be marked that triviality had been manifested in literature long before the Enlightenment. Traditional and repeated themes and plots may be the markers of triviality as a cultural phenomenon.

Keywords: the Enlightenment, XVIII century German Literature, triviality, high and trivial German literature, mass culture, pre-romanticism

1. Introduction

It was the eighteenth-century German literature that was to be recognized on the all-European scale. Whereas, at the beginning and in the middle of the century it slavishly imitated French and English models (international achievements were made only in philosophy due to the works of Leibniz and Wolff), in the second half of the Age of Enlightenment and especially in its last third, German men of letters became more and more acknowledged beyond their lands.

During the 1770-1790s, German literature had been a complex phenomenon: together with the new literary and aesthetic systems there developed those trends which had come to being at the end of the seventeenth century, but were vigorously actualized in the later decades of the Enlightenment. Among the latter, one may regard, in the genre plane, the novel and, in the philosophical and cultural plane, agnosticism and pre-romanticism. The peculiarities of advancement of the national culture conditioned the fact that German thinkers considered profoundly literary, aesthetic and philosophical doctrines of their predecessors from neighboring countries and also examined the assumptions already checked by practice.

At that period, there started a reflection on trivial literature (mass culture). Whereas in the seventeenth century, the age of neo-classicism, authors and their audience hardly discriminated "high" and "trivial" literature (drama or novel), in the age of Enlightenment the situation changed. The mentioned dichotomy was manifested in the disapproval of the novel as a

genre which failed to portray real life or develop a good taste or comply with artistic standards. This unwillingness to aesthetically recognize the novel is all the more surprising since by that period outstanding works of continental importance, written by Defoe and Swift, Richardson and Fielding, Lesage and Prevaust, had appeared.

The eighteenth century witnessed several entirely new substantial socio-cultural phenomena: the emergence of public opinion, increase in availability of higher education for lower classes, huge growth of literacy and the number of readers, and awareness of the existence of some "other" literature intended not for the elite, but for a mass audience which had been deprived of the access to the achievements of arts. Hence, the notions of "kinship with the people" and "popular character" of literature could appear in the theory of arts only in the second half of the age of Enlightenment.

In the history of culture, the neo-classicists have been studied profoundly the essentials of rational comprehension of reality by 17 c. As for the problems of sensual world perception and its expression in a work of art, they still remain controversial. The term "sentimentalism", widely used in literary theory, is highly disputable as it embraces two entirely different forms of vision and representation of reality: proper and pre-romantic sentimentalists. A more general difference between them is concerned with the angle of evaluation: sentimentalism views feelings just like neo-classicism evaluates reason. The sentimental vision of the world also presupposes a possibility of rational appraisal of the feelings. Contrary to that, the pre-romantic outlook of the world is characterized by a strong disbelief in rationality.

Pre-romanticism has been investigated mainly in Western literary studies; but in the first decades of the 21st century, several prominent works, devoted to this cultural phenomenon, have appeared in Russia. In our paper, we have revealed only general principles of pre-romanticism, essential for the study. The problem of the qualification of literary pieces as sentimental ones has not been solved as an appeal to feeling is not a reliable criterion of distinction. The terms "bürgerliche Literatur" and "trivial literature" also need to be cleared up. We accept them to characterize as the third estate literature. "Bürgerliche Literatur" is a civil literature which reflects the ideology of the third estate and embodies consistently aesthetic ideals of burghers. In our understanding, it is "high", classical literature.

Trivial literature is regarded by us as a predecessor of the mass literature of the nineteenth and twentieth century, which contributed substantially to the shaping of contemporary tastes. A number of its representatives created works that were to become a "platform" for a new generation of writers who later enjoyed a global fame. As trivial literature spread hugely, it inevitably affected "high" literature – this fact determines the importance of the study.

To better understand the development of the late 18th century literature, it is important to highlight the key problems concerned with the oeuvre of the most famous authors.

It is drama and novel that need to be studied in detail, as dramatic principles were imposed on epic works and vice versa; prose works relied on dialogues substantially, and dramatic pieces abounded in lengthy monologues which, in some cases, turned to micro-epic forms. Besides, drama and novel provide a possibility to observe both traditional and innovative traits of literature- drama being a "revolutionary" genre and novel evolutionary one, a new form which was seeking for recognition of a wide audience and critics.

In this study, it is also important to highlight those peculiar features of German rationalism and sentimentalism, which have common continental foundations and rely on the "rationality" of both reason and feelings.

2. Literature Review

European literature of the 18 c. was a heterogeneous and contradictory phenomenon of varied ideological, aesthetic and stylistic nature, as it was marked by co-existence of neo-classicism (Voltaire, Gottsched, Pope), baroque and rococo (Wieland, Crebillon, Marivaux, Moncrif, Uz, Hagedorn), Enlightenment realism (Defoe, Fielding), sentimentalism (Gellert, Gray, Sterne, Young) and pre-romanticism (Gozzi, Macpherson, Chatterton). Not infrequently, different trends were combined in the works of one author (Bürger, Wieland, Voltaire, Goethe, Rousseau). Such interconnections made it possible, for example, to speak of Voltaire and Wieland as representatives of both neo-classicism and rococo.

Literary and aesthetic opinions of the epoch were not necessarily manifested or rigidly fixed in a particular theory, be it neo-classicism or pre-romanticism. The age of Enlightenment witnessed a revival of the Renaissance universalism, when basic doctrines only defined the vector of reflection without restricting the development of the aggregate of conceptions of the world, man, and art.

When speaking about the early period of Enlightenment, scholars usually stress that at the beginning of the century, creative imagination was repudiated in favour of rational comprehension of the world (for instance, in the works of Leibniz). This opinion is essentially true, as rationalists distinguished contemplation and day-dreaming; the latter was associated with harmful phantasizing [1, p.15-17]. Attempts taken at theoretical grounding of the necessity to avoid pure fancy indicate obliquely that this element was included in aesthetic systems of writers, artists, and musicians. At that period, there also appeared ideas of the aesthetic value of folk art as an important element of human culture, articulated by J. Addison and R. Steele.

Eighteenth-century German Literature evoluted rather quickly from imitativeness to a vigorous support of original art and searching for the new ways of developing the national culture. Although opponents of foreign literary models denounced Gottschedian literary doctrine in the second half of the century, neo-classicism still functioned after Gottsched's leaving the throne of the German literary Pope (e.g., in the works of K.F.Weisse (1726-1804), a famous man of letters of the "Stürm und Drang" period). Stürmers, the first to create original works, united the literary clubs ("Rheinische Genies", "Göttinger Hainbund") in accordance with their literary interests, devotion to drama or lyrical poetry, and also with their residence or place of studies.

Western scholars tend to regard pre-romanticism as an early stage of romanticism. The main argument against this approach is that the major pathos of romanticism was directed against neo-classical normative poetics, while pre-romanticism existed in the borders of the Enlightenment and was not in opposition to it.

In addition to it, a refusal to discriminate between pre-romanticism and romanticism leads to merging different aesthetic phenomena which should be explored discreetly, and to ignore the problem of sentimentalists' attitude to the category of feeling.

Pre-romanticism is a transitory phenomenon (consequently, it is not entirely "self-sufficient"). As such, it has traits belonging both to the past and future and, besides, not all pre-romantic elements turned to romantic ones. There are some difficulties in discriminating such similar modes as pre-romanticism and sentimentalism. The difference seems to be in the aesthetic level of their recipients. Sentimentalism was manifested mainly in the works of "sophisticated" authors (Wagner, Heinse, Gerstenberg, Goethe, Klinger, Leisewitz, Moritz, Nicolay), while pre-romanticism took its expression in the writings of "trivial" men of letters

(Babo, Vulpius, Gemmingen, Cramer, Toerring, Spiess). Indeed, this criterion is not absolute, but relative.

Some scholars reduce trivial literature to a tri-partite thematic formula: love, virtue, crime [2]. Such literature serves to entertain and please the reader [3].

3. Methodological Framework

In the studied period, high and trivial works were opposed in several aspects. One of them is concerned with the portrayal of human emotions. The playwrights of the period tended to show the power of a mighty feeling which suppresses human rationality and leads the protagonist to death. Feelings, passions are depicted by "high" authors either as uncontrollable, destructive or as rationally comprehensible phenomena. In the last third of the eighteenth century, feeling, finally, gives in to reason. Not infrequently, the power of feelings turns into the power of the individual over the social; and their suppression means a victory of the general over the particular, private, individual. In trivial literature, feelings are represented more traditionally; the total emotional background is serene, with occasional flashes of anger or joy, suffering or pain. As a rule, trivial writers depict ordinary life without extremes.

Another group of problems is concerned with the novel. This genre of German literature came to fore and started to compete successfully with drama after the 1770s. The majority of writers and readers perceived it as a literary form which was far from real life, so attempts to create significant epic works were sporadic (Wieland, Goethe), and the novel was beyond the literary mainstream.

Pre-romanticism is analyzed in detail mostly on the material of English and French literature [4], whereas its German manifestations are often neglected [5]. In German lands, it became a noticeable literary mode, presenting new, extraordinary characters and situations.

If we assume that pre-romanticism is the initial stage of romanticism, we will deny any trait of the pre-romanticists that could help to distinguish them from the romanticists, which is entirely wrong, as pre-romanticism is, essentially, an independent phenomenon. It emerged before romanticism and existed in different forms until the twentieth and even twenty-first century, which proves its vitality and uniqueness [6].

It seems that we will hardly find a trend in the world literature which, being self-sufficient, could have given such a huge impetus to another outstanding literary movement, as pre-romanticism did to romanticism. It is acknowledged that its philosophical source was agnosticism. It is basically so, but the incognizability of the world was also a trait of baroque; nevertheless, one can hardly imagine baroque as a predecessor of even early romanticism, in spite of the fact that these two phenomena have much in common.

Considering pre-romanticism as a literary phenomenon, scholars define its main features, but often fail to recognize its self-sufficiency and self-value. Analysis of the common traits of pre-romanticism and romanticism (Shakespeare, historicism, folk art, etc.) will inevitably lead one to a conclusion that their interpretation is different in the two literary systems. These differences may be seen in translation strategies as well as in the critical reception of Shakespeare or folk songs.

The works of the late pre-romanticists freely coexist and do not mingle with those of romanticists because they are different, though they have some common traits. The fact of pre-

romanticism being transitory (is not romanticism transitory, in its turn?) does not minimize its significance as an independent stage of the history of culture. Indeed, we can speak about true independence of pre-romanticism. It is romanticism, then, that can be called dependent: it borrowed pre-romantic traits, reworked them and created true masterpieces of great, high literature based on another philosophical system.

Traditional use of conventional terms (epoch, the age of Enlightenment) will be more appropriate if we apply them to socio-historical and not to literary phenomena. It is not worth arguing about the term "Enlightenment" nowadays: it has been accepted in the humanities, but it may be applicable also to historical, social formations. Automatic transference of this notion on the all 18 c. cultural production has led to the imposition of general criteria on particular literary facts. Thus, pre-romanticism has come to be understood as a variant of sentimentalism or an early stage of romanticism, or as a separate phenomenon, though not entirely autonomous.

If we pay deep attention to rationalism and sentimentalism, we will come to the conclusion that they both rely on reason; the feeling itself is subjected to rational analysis. So, the two pseudo-opponents present different angles of the conception of the rationality of both Reason and Feeling.

The German pre-romanticists' concern with folktales, their contemplations about folklore (e.g. G.A.Bürger's ballad "Lenore", reflection about translations of „Tausendundeine Nacht") make it possible for us to qualify their views as pre-romantic. In this case, the term "pre-romanticism" is understood as the "forerunner of romanticism", which is more correct than "an early stage of romanticism".

The Pre-romanticists' interest to folk art, Shakespeare, the Bible, and also their concern with the incomprehensibility of the world and man, agnosticism – all these viewed through the prism of the concept of original genius – make a deep imprint on their literary doctrines. On the one hand, they tended to regard literature and folklore as the main source of artistic creation; on the other, even prominent men of letters of the epoch of Enlightenment, such as Bürger, did not succeed in realizing their programme of the new art, called "folk art" by Bürger, and also failed to translate foreign authors, although they had good competence in English and French.

They could not comprehend the spirit of a foreign nation, and, to be true, they did not make fundamental efforts to do it, as their prime objective was to reconsider the whole previous literary heritage. In "Stürm und Drang", Germany was gathering spiritual forces for the new developments and seeking the ways of renewal. One should bear in mind that the attitude of the prominent men of letters (Gottsched, Wieland, Klopstock, G.E. Lessing) towards contemporary literature was negative. And the Prussian king Friedrich der Zweite was almost unanimous with them – his position, as that of the great people of his time, is traditionally subjected to criticism.

4. Results and Discussion

The Romanticists based their doctrines on the achievements of their predecessors. They thought differently, although, as it seems, in a similar manner. No wonder that F. Schiller, who due to all his Weimar classicism was much closer to them, sharply opposed his teacher and predecessor Bürger. Romanticism is another epoch of the development of the German literature which is similar to preromantic one, but it should be noted again, it preached other approaches, different understanding of literary process and creative personality and undertook other practical literary

steps, that is traditionally forgotten, because there is great romanticism, and everything can be compared with it and to which you can write off a lot of incomprehensible.

The understanding of Shakespeare as the greatest playwright, equal in power of talent to the ancient tragedians, existed for German pre-romanticists primarily in theory and exaltation. It was not by mere chance that there arose the notion of "Shakespearization", and it is also no coincidence that only one work of that time, "Goetz von Berlichingen" by J.W. Goethe, can be understood as something close to Shakespearean dramas in spirit and form, and it's also not by chance that none of his contemporaries wrote anything similar with the use of national material. And, finally, it is not without reason that both Goethe and Schiller got quickly enough through the sturminster (almost alongside with the sturmers' works, especially in Schiller's writings, there appeared "classical" theory) and began to revive the classics, which they did not understand in the spirit of the French tradition of the XVII century (classicism), but tried to recreate (rather to revive) the ancient Greek and Roman traditions of the great, that is, classical (not classic!) literature of the past. And it is not by accident that classicism, pre-romanticism, and romanticism will have been existing in parallel for a fairly long time, without converging but preserving their own features, techniques, and approaches (classic-romantic epoch!). Pre-romanticism, by the way, continues to exist even nowadays, in the "postmodern" time, for it has created, developed and consolidated a number of features that proved extremely viable in the XIX and XX centuries. And this is another argument in favour of the thesis of the independence of pre-romanticism.

As far as the term "pre-romanticism" is concerned, the terms "triviality" and "nationality" are often used, which often coincide in the context of the theory of literature. Unconditional increase in the number of "trivial" works in the late 18th century German literature indicated the growth of the number of readers and, therefore, the strengthening of the "popular" basic principles of the German literature. Although the concept of "people" in the age of Enlightenment did not become a cultural-political term yet, it was at this time in Herder's, Goethe's, Moeser's writings that the people's role in the historical process began to be discussed. The analysis of the concept of "triviality", in relation to the last third of the 18th c. German literature shows that as a phenomenon of culture triviality was an important part of the writers' works of so-called "high" (actually belles-letters) literature [12]. The terms, "trivial literature" and "pre-romanticism" that exist in the theory of literature, are still being used as relating to various literary phenomena, which is to a great extent true. If we talk about "trivial literature", we, according to the tradition, mean the works that did not differ in novelty of ideas and written in a rather primitive language, containing conjuncture material, an expected action, a happy ending, and which are characterized by superficiality, lightness, lack of depth of thought, that is, all that is created is to satisfy the tastes of not well-educated and prepared readers and have to justify their expectations. Therefore, the title of some collection of articles on the problems of such literature is "Trivial Literature? The literature of the scheme! ", that does not lead to such an unambiguous conclusion after reading the book [13].

Among the German trivial writers of the past one can, first of all, name Christian August Vulpius (1762-1827) and Eugenia Marlitt (1825-1887), who were perhaps the most famous and popular writers among their contemporaries. These authors are known and their works are republished at the present. We shouldn't forget that Ch.A.Vulpius published the book "The Library of Romantic-Miraculous" [14] and was one of the authors of translations-revisions of the libretto for the operas of W.A. Mozart [15]. It is curious that among his many works we can find works like "Russians and Englishmen in Naples" [16] and "Suvorov and Cossacks in Italy" [17].

The discussion of trivial and pre-romantic literature is naturally concerned with the problem of the "popularity" of art. The concept of "popular" is also multifaceted and extremely controversial. Is it good or bad to be popular? Great German lyricist G.A. Bürger (1747-1794) believed that having become popular, the poet becomes a true poet, for it displays "nationality" (vernacularity), a term, following F.Schiller (1759-1805), is perceived in the history of literature as something contrary to the truly great literature. However, "popularity" (popular) has gradually ceased to be perceived as an exclusively negative characteristic.

It has to be said that the discussion about people as such in the XVIII century had a largely abstract character. "People" was understood as the best part of the population (as opposed to the aristocratic upper stratum, but also next to it as well), that is, "people" was featured as the best, most subtly felt part of all the estates of Europe of that time. The term "plebs" was used to denote insufficiently intelligent, uneducated and ill-bred people; besides it could include representatives of the upper classes too, although it was not explicitly mentioned.

Popular literature was, in a certain sense, a democratic one and acquired a sufficiently wide audience of readers that almost inevitably led to a scornful attitude towards it on the part of certain writers, the men of letters of so-called "high" elegant literature (for example, on the part of F. Schiller). Such authors sought to educate people by means of literature, that was, in general, a declaration of intentions rather than a reality of the literary process and social life of the end of the century.

We will also note that Schiller himself did not refuse to take into account the interests and tastes of the less educated strata of people. We should recall his reworking of "plays for reading" into "plays for the theater" as if his intention was to create two variants: one for the tage, that is, for "people", and the other - for future, for an idea, for "eternity".

If we take a closer look at the content of novels and plays written by the authors of the last third of the 18th century, we will hardly find people from the lowest social strata among their main characters. Even in the plays "Der Hofmeister" (1774) by J. M.R. Lenz or "Werther" (1774, revision 1787) by Goethe, the representatives of sufficiently well-off burgher layers were depicted as suffering "heroes of the century", who imagined themselves to be unable to take advantage of their talents within the framework of the contemporary estates society.

In this context, the discontent of the hero is much more clearly grounded in F. Klinger's "Die Zwillinge" (1776), where the birthright of the aristocratic families was decisively put to doubt. That who of the two twin brothers was born before the other is not clear throughout the whole play. Moreover, the thought, articulated by the drama's characters, is that the "order" of the brothers could have been falsified, which could deprive a possible heir of his "legitimate" throne and turn him into a powerless "second person".

In the epoch of Enlightenment, the number of readers didn't only rise but also expanded many times. Publishers began to produce writers' works in very large circulation, and therefore the books became cheaper and naturally accessible to poorly educated layers of the population, who could often only read and write simple texts, and certainly did not understand brainy writings of some Leibniz in the original, as they were often written in French or Latin. Expansion of the audience, not only in the market for literature but also in the market for science and education, gradually led to a simplification of the general level of knowledge, its adaptation to the skills and abilities of this new public.

Literature became more democratic than in the old days of Enlightenment. The main part of the population was affected by its ideas, but the theoretical or epoch-making literary works of

even the most famous authors were read selectively. The number of writers, who took into account such interests, increased; a very specific literary market began to be created.

In this age, for the first time in European history, literature ceased to be unified, created for all (read: for educated people), as it was in the 17th century, when Corneille, Moliere, and Racine wrote their works at the same time and often on the same plots as other writers, who not so many decades later would be called "secondary", "trivial" authors.

Literature, especially dramaturgy, brunched out "high" literature and a different new one, which did not have its name yet, but the reality of which writers, critics, and the public were already beginning to feel clearly. At least, the so-called "great" writers were trying to dissociate from it to a certain extent and, therefore, were already forced to take into account its existence.

Literary circles were increasingly aware of the emergence of new and extremely unexpected works that raised the problems which are unlikely to be found in the works of the greatest writers of the past (for example, racial problems, not connected just with the humiliation of "wild" people, but just the opposite!). And this happened even before the era of romanticism when, after pre-romanticists and in general after Rousseau, such ideas actively began to break through into trivial literature. And the plays, whose authors had traditionally and unfairly been thrown away on the margins of culture for years, flourished on stage for decades (until the end of the XIX century!). The artistic merits of such works, which were not always significant indeed, nevertheless created that general level, that average "bar", in comparison with which and against which "great" writers will stand out, becoming the foundation of the great German literature.

At the same time, the writers of the "second" and "third" ranks ventured to express something in their "entertaining" works that their recognized and great contemporaries avoided doing. And it's, perhaps, not by chance that all the classics of German literature also got through avocation of such simplified literature too.

Pre-romantic literature, which became the Russian scholars' concern in the XX century, deserves a closer analysis. Whereas the number of pre-romantic studies based on English and French literature is constantly growing, the German experience is still underappreciated. This may be partly a fault of the German scholars who do not pay attention to those phenomena which devaluate "Weimar classics" and who consider pre-romanticism an early stage of romanticism.

The desire of trivial writers to be widely-read can't give cause for criticism. Ordinary topics are an integral part of "high" literature too. Plays also appear on the stage because the theater owner is interested in an increment of the number of spectators, in the growth of profits, and not only for the sake of realization of certain author's ideas which certainly must be present.

Even the noblest ideas will not save the theater if there's no audience's (reader's) interest. Many well-known world theaters now exist not only for the constant striving public but also because of certain state subsidies.

If we refer to the repertoire of that time, we will be surprised to find out that the writings of great writers did not make up the main part of the production plan. And as a rule, they survived only a few performances. Even the "Goetz von Berlichingen" by the great Goethe in Weimar theater, directed by himself, began to look worthy on the stage only after its adaptation (adjustment!) to the requirements of the theater. In other words, great ones wrote "for the eye", not "for hearing". Therefore their writings were created rather for the future, although we will agree that some of their creators were already considered to be brilliant masters in their lifetime.

It's apparently not by chance that in a prologue of Goethe's "Faust" the author complains about the creator's direct dependence on the requirements of the theater. The laws of the theater exist objectively; they must be considered by all the participants of the creation of the performance regardless of the will or desire of the author of the work. The better he takes into account and embodies these laws the sooner he creates a truly scenic work that can live on the stage for many years. That's what, for example, O. Balzac sought, but what he could not achieve despite his careful study of the structure of the most successful theatrical works.

It should be acknowledged that it was precisely such a position and art of men of letters that guaranteed them the attention and interest on the part of various layers of the population, from the spiritual elite of the nation to relatively educated people, who were at a lower level of cultural and social development.

Perhaps, one of the most difficult and most formidable problems to overcome is the lack of statistical data for studying the tastes of the lower classes because the notion of "people", which is willingly and traditionally operated by journalism, tends to absorb all the segments of population and at the same time directs the attention of researchers to the middle and higher "something" which represents people.

There is no fault of science here, and writers themselves do not really try to write about representatives of the lower strata of the population even if they are the most exotic-romantic robbers. If we remember Rinaldo Rinaldini from the novel of the same name by Ch.A.Vulpiuse, we will see that the author also raises the criminal to the top of society, making him the son of a nobleman.

Something common between the trivial literature and the pre-romanticism lies in the unconditional orientation of both on accessibility, interest, love to mysteries and bright unordinary personalities, on understandable and "life-like" plots. As part of these concepts, they are close to a certain extent. Nevertheless, it is not entirely appropriate to combine these literary phenomena.

While investigating the works of the most famous writers of this time (Goethe, Gerstenberg, Leisewitz, Klinger, Wagner, Lenz, Schiller), one can conclude that "triviality" is not limited to enumerating the qualities that belittle this phenomenon. Such a circumstance allows us to make a conclusion on the existence of "triviality" as an element of culture not only of the studied period but also of the epoch before Goethe, works by G. E. Lessing in particular, especially at an early stage of his development.

In fact, "triviality", in general, is inherent in the culture of mankind and in this way it pervades the culture and literature of Western Europe from the ancient times. The use of traditional themes, plots, and techniques can be observed in the works of the authors mentioned by us; so, we can make a conclusion about trivialization (triviality) of long known and familiar material even among those playwrights who are a part of the literary elite of Germany.

The last third of the 18th century was full of interesting and vivid works not only of the great German playwrights but also of their so-called "trivial" brethren known in Western Europe no less than the classics of German literature. Schroeder, Iffland, Kotzebue, Toerring, Babo, Gemmingen and K. Lessing wrote plays that were appealing to the greater part of the German population. They raised in them ideas important for an ordinary person, talked about family problems and often brought to the stage advanced people of their time.

Theatrical performances of the trivial authors were based on magnificent knowledge of the theatrical reality of that time, and the authors were often talented actors too. Therefore, the theaters and actors' companies that they directed represented the best entertainment institutions and companies not only in Germany but also within the framework of European culture.

The public's precise interest to national history with its national events and heroes was reflected in the trivial dramas of the last third of the 18th century, the more especially as that historical past of Germany and certain German lands was manifested in significant events and vivid personalities. Although modernity with its way of life and its problems never left the range of vision of trivial authors, it was in the last third of the 18th century that trivial drama became a historical one, carefully presenting to the theatrical public and the Germans in general different epochs, above all in their social dimension [18].

The epoch of Enlightenment became for the German literature the time when the novel as a genre increasingly turned into a leading one, the output of novel publications was exceeding the number of dramatic works, which was especially evident towards the end of the 18th century [19, p.46]. German novel was gradually liberated from the influence of foreign models, and writers derived material not only from foreign sources but also from German everyday life, which also multiplied the possibility of penetration of trivial elements into "high" literature.

If, in the first half of the century, the tendency of using the foreign material or imitation of the most famous novels of the 18th century (e.g. "Robinson Crusoe" by Defoe) dominated, the process of conquering the public by new genre formations began to be carried out much more decisively since the middle of the century with the appearance of Wieland in German literature with his bright novels, even if they were not related to national material.

At the same time women's novels also appeared, that is, the works written by women and for women, but also attracting keen interest on the part of male writers (Sophie von La Roche, Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim), as well as psychological works analyzing the state of the human soul and actions.

The appearance of "Werther" by Goethe and "Anton Reiser" by Moritz was an evidence of the writers' and their audience's interest to the feelings and actions of people. This early stage of literary psychologism, caused by the interest in the inner world of the contemporary hero, opened up the prospect of the emergence of prose by Schiller ("Der Geisterseher"), Nicolay and Heinse in the not too distant future.

Formation of new German trivial novel took place on the basis of national folklore and literary traditions of chivalric romances and robber novels. It is true that in the studied period these novels were not printed again, with the possible exception of "Der neue Amadis" by Wieland, which in fact became an ironic complementary treatment of a well-known material.

Trivial novels of the last third of the 18th century were represented by a wide range of diverse subgenres. In general, they can be reduced to three large groups: family-household, knightly and robber novels, which were extremely popular not only in their time but also much later, which indicates their undoubted importance not only for German culture of the XVIII century but also for European and world literature in general.

5. Conclusion

Rapid development of social ideas, important progress in the structure of social relations, spread of mass literacy in broad democratic circles (the introduction of German instead of Latin in German universities at the beginning of the eighteenth century), a significant change in the structure of the theatrical audience are all the elements of cultural development in the studied period, explaining formation of two large interrelated directions of literature development.

Since that time trivial literature had strengthened its position in cultural life, which allowed it to enter the sphere of people's interests in the next decades. "High" and trivial literature, equally affecting the contemporaries, did not have strictly differentiated spheres of activity. They were both almost equal to the realities of German culture in their impact on the nation and they had an impact on the culture of other countries and peoples (the representatives of the former were Goethe and Schiller, and the latter, Spiess, Iffland, and Gemmingen).

Trivial literature performed an important function of informing and educating people, filling lacuna left by classics. At the same time, great modern writers influenced the nation through the minor fellow writers, who occasionally knew the needs of their countrymen better than they did.

Literature is formed under the influence of the requirements of the time, that is, social problems and their reflection in the minds of people. Therefore, the penetration of simple and understandable artistic constructions into literature is a logical and natural phenomenon. Art and triviality go hand in hand, interact with each other and complement each other. The formation of classical literature was a complicated process, and many of its manifestations reflected the concerns of the general public.

Trivial literature influences national literature, forcing writers to take into account the demands of the society. Therefore, Goethe's works such as "Werther" and "Goetz" bear the imprint of time in its trivial dimension, and the works of minor authors come close to the writings of outstanding masters.

Repetition of subject-matters and their implementation in a specific work, longing to the use of stamps, traditional images, and time-tested techniques should be considered the signs of trivial literature. The stylistic eclecticism of works could often be attributed here too – e.g., quite sharp and unexpected passing from the epically exalted style to the banal colloquial one.

At the same time, the writers of this type avoided relapsing into the other extreme and never stooped to vulgar phrases of speech. Their heroes spoke without violating the rules of decency adopted in the society. Literary "trespasses" of trivial authors more often concerned abuses of sublime style, addiction to the verbal beauty that masked the lack of fresh original ideas. In the mental sphere, the writers of the second rank, as a rule, relied on time-tested thoughts and concepts that guaranteed the success and attention of the public.

Trivial topics exist in the German national literature objectively as an indispensable element of the literary process and permeate art, for everything that relates to the life of people and society is ordinary, familiar, trivial.

The impact of the literature of the last third of the eighteenth century on the German culture was powerful and fruitful. Virtually all the representatives of the spiritual life of Germany were subjected to its influence. The literature of that time left a notable mark in the history of German culture. Just since the end of the 18th century, German fiction rises to the level of world literature.

Acknowledgement

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