Abstract. The article is devoted to a retrospective analysis of the experimental concept of paracriticism, proposed by a prominent literary theorist, writer, and critic Ihab Hassan. The subject of the researcher's critical reflection is literature with intention and the act of criticism. It is noteworthy that Hassan’s modeling new principles for the analysis of literary texts turns his critical text into literature. This explains the appearance of the prefix para in the names of the new “synthetic” genres − paracriticism and parabiography, where the idea of “crossing frontiers” dominates.

In his essays “Paracriticisms: Seven Speculations of the Times” and “Parabiography: The Varieties of Critical Experience” Hassan analyses contemporary literature and discusses the radically new nature of literary texts which are created in the situation of indeterminacy and immanence. Diverging both from traditional approaches to literary analysis and from a purely intellectual poststructuralist methodology, Hassan does not abandon the existing modes of critical writing but transforms them in his own way. The idea of talking about literature in the language of literature is key in his famous manifesto “The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Towards a Postmodern Literature” and dominant in the literary milieu of the 20th century. The intention of the text is not limited by the intention of the author – this main thesis of postmodernism, which originates in New Criticism, is reflected in the gradual evolution of the theorist's views. Self-reflection, the idea of the frontier as a dialog of cultures and American pragmatism play a leading role here as well as subjectivation, which explicates personal in a critical text. “Intellectual invention” – a complex combination of personal experience,
knowledge, intuition, and fantasy, merged into a single whole in Hassan's “metaphors of critical perception” – is woven into the logical schemes of scientific discourse. This is inherent in the work of J. Barth, who often autobiographizes his critical essays.

Subsequently, Hassan's works are perceived as an illustration of the complex process of formation of a “theoretical discourse”, in which previously separate discourses of the Humanities exist simultaneously.

Keywords: paracriticism, parabiography, subjectivation of critical analysis, autobiographicality, Ihab Hassan, J. Barth.

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ПАРАКРИТИКА: МОДЕЛЮВАННЯ НОВИХ ПРИНЦИПІВ АНАЛІЗУ ХУДОЖНІХ ТЕКСТІВ

Анотація. Стаття присвячена ретроспективному аналізу експериментальної концепції паракритики, запропонованої теоретиком літератури, письменником і критиком Ігабом Гассаном. Предметом критичної рефлексії дослідника є література з інтенцією і сам акт критики. Примітно, що моделювання Гассаном нових принципів аналізу літературних текстів перетворює його власний критичний текст на літературу. Цим пояснюється поява префікса пара в назвах нових «синтетичних» жанрів – паракритики та парабіографії, де домінують ідея «перетину кордонів».

У своїх есеях «Парабіографія: різновиди критичного досвіду» та «Паракритицизми: сім роздумів про час» Гассан аналізує сучасну літературу та обговорює радикально нову природу літературних текстів, які створюються в ситуації невизначеності та іманентності. Відступаючи як від традиційних підходів до аналізу літератури, так і від суто інтелектуальної постструктуралістської методології, Гассан не відмовляється від існуючих модусів критичного письма, а трансформує їх у свій спосіб. Ідея говорити про літературу мовою літератури є ключовою в його знаменитому маніфесті «Розчленування Орфея: назустріч постмодерній літературі» та домінуючою в літературному середовищі XX століття. Інтенція тексту не обмежується інтенцією автора – ця головна теза постмодернізму, що бере початок у Новій критці, відображена в поступовій еволюції поглядів теоретика.
Problem statement. “The subject is frontiers, frontiers of criticism” — these words open “Paracriticisms: Seven Speculations of the Times”, which was written by I. Hassan in 1975[1, p. 3], and reflect the author’s intention to propose a new strategy for the analysis of literary texts. The comprehension and application of the ideas of French poststructuralists (M. Foucault, G. Deleuze, J. Kristeva, J. Derrida), who shifted the emphasis from traditional philosophical problems of being, truth and subjectivity to the linguistic nature of thinking, are in the center of Hassan’s attention.

“No Paracriticisms” are a series of articles based on combinatorics which form not only an experimental critical discourse but a theoretical discourse of the second half of the twentieth century, characterized vividly by F. Jameson in his famous work “Postmodernism and Consumer Society” (1988). Jameson noted the new quality of theoretical discourse, which marked the “end of philosophy” since a technical discourse of professional philosophy cannot be separated from the discourses of other academic disciplines, for example, political science, sociology, or literary criticism [2, p. 14-15]. Moreover, the style of philosophical and critical writings of the late 1960s and early 1980s is, as Foucault acknowledged, “a field of experience for study, planning and organization... in the eyes of some this may pass for radical non-philosophy, but at the same time it is a way of thinking more radically about philosophical experience” [3, p.36]. This explains the complex interaction of meanings, styles and cultural codes presented in Hassan’s works, who was a pioneer in the exploration of this new palette of theories.

However, Hassan’s approach to actualizing critical knowledge is not limited by the ideas of poststructuralists. He sees the key to understanding new cultural realities (decentration of the subject, plurality, poetic thinking,
etc.) in the creation of an alternative poetics that combines the experience of continental philosophy, the ideas of American pragmatism, the concept of the frontier as a dialogue of cultures and the discoveries of autobiographical writing [4, p. 124]. Appealing to W. James, who was convinced that our imperfect world could be changed if people were willing to join forces, Hassan seeks to revive the optimistic spirit that has always been a hallmark of the American national consciousness. In this regard, we also remember B. Franklin with his cheerful, unshakable faith in the power of reason, W. Irving, whose works are permeated with the spirit of subtle irony and cheerful invention, O. Henry, who endowed his heroes with a saving sense of humor, Mark Twain... In this way, Hassan tries to resist the dominant ideas in the intellectual environment about the final loss of identity, the “death” of the author, hero, reader, and even the “end of the book.” The postmodern “aesthetics of trust” [5, p. 211] is opposed to the “intellectual culture of disbelief,” which many researchers consider as the main sign of modernity.

**Analysis of recent studies and publications.**

To understand the place of Ihab Hassan in modern literary criticism it is worth turning to the works of such researchers as Sh. Weinstein, R. M. Olderman, R. L. Caserio, M. Mudric, J. Klinkowitz, K. Okazaki, I. Luca, A. Thiher, B. Scheer-Schäzler, L. Hutcheon. However, there are not many special studies devoted to the concept of paracriticism which, as K. Okazaki notes, “transcends the conventional criticism by theorizing paracriticism” [6, p. 384]. The search for new approaches to the study of literature has resulted in a significant expansion of the concept of criticism.


The subjectivity of the critic concerning literature, the intimate deeply psychological, and even personal tone in its assessments is, as researchers note (Ch. Caramello, D. Klinkowitz, B. Scheer-Schäzler, L. Niall), the essential feature of Hassan’s critical essays. Thus, Caramello calls the book “The Right Promethean Fire: Imagination, Science, and Cultural Change” (1980) “almost a novel,” in which the literariness of R. Barthes's texts is combined with Whitman's personalism and Eliot's impersonality [7, p. 191]. This artistry is the specificity of modern critical discourse, which seeks to show how thought is born in words. However, not all researchers consider
this approach productive. R. Caserio, for example, believes that the meaning of the neologism “paracriticism” proposed by I. Hasan is not sufficiently substantiated, and his style, “generated by hatred of formalism, is equal to the pedantry of formlessness” [8, p. 183]. The researcher criticizes embedding compositional and stylistic devices as fragmentation, aphorism, rejection of the academic “we,” and autobiographicality into the critical text. He is echoed by Caramello, who considers “manipulation of fonts,” mosaicism and cataloguing, which emphasize the literary nature of the text, its personal coloring, dynamism, and incompleteness of thought, as a less sophisticated way of conveying meaning than the complex layering of ideas, allusions, and images inherent in Hassan’s texts [7, p. 177].

K. Brooke -Rose, on the contrary, positively evaluates the variety of Hassan’s thought-stimulating means and techniques, such as “constant counterpoints, revisions, queries, digressions, other visions, and juxtaposing typography” [9, p. 344]. A similar point of view is expressed by Sh. Weinstein. She considers the techniques that Hassan uses not so radical in other literary modes but unusual for criticism: “the query—questions without answers, series after series of them—is basic to his work. Typographical devices abound: small print, change of type, playful margins, continuous divisions/separations/subheadings. The work contains dialogue that parodies and undercut itself. There are parentheses that enclose nothing, empty spaces, blank underlinings, number and word games, a bibliography in the middle of an essay, and quotes juxtaposed one after the other without critical interference” [10, p. 182-183]. This deconstruction of the traditional approach to the analysis of literary texts, as the researcher believes, allows us to hear critic’s prophetic voice.

Hassan considered paracriticism as a form of self-improvement, which corresponds to the idea of crossing boundaries, central to the aesthetics of postmodernism, the rejection of such conventions fixed by tradition as, for example, rigid genre affiliation. A distinctive feature of Hassan’s works is a new strategy for analyzing the literary phenomenon, which destroys the barriers between criticism and literature, reviving the perception of new forms and revealing endless reserves of meaning. The complexity of the theoretical understanding of the mechanisms of comparison and interpenetration of different theoretical approaches and the differences in the creative implementation of artistic ideas leads to the emergence of a kind of “intellectual tapestry” or even “the poetry of ideas” [11, p. 236].

The purpose of the article. The purpose of the paper is to consider the concepts of paracriticism and parabiography proposed by I. Hasan in the context of developing new methods for analyzing literary texts. The work of
the famous American theorist, critic and writer is at the epicenter of postmodern issues. It allows us to trace the formation of new genres of postmodern writing, based on a multi-component theoretical, artistic and cultural synthesis.

**Presentation of the basic material.** Hassan's concepts of paracriticism and parabiography are born in a situation of “essential uncertainty” – indeterminance (indeterminacy cum immanence), which is a distinctive feature of postmodernism [5, p. 202]. This is precisely what will stimulate the search for new forms of storytelling when scepticism regarding the idea of absolute exhaustion and moral obsolescence of the concept of the autonomous self as its indisputable integrity will serve as an impetus for the formation of more complex, devoid of naivety, ideas about reality and a human being.

“A construction of literary history and a romance of criticism” [12, p. xiv] – this statement marks the beginning of the development of the author’s original concept of paracriticism and parabiography. The polysemy of the words *a construction* and *a romance*, designated by the indefinite article ‘a’, indicates the direction of the author’s reflection, the guideline of which is the subjectivation of critical analysis. The author’s personality, life and creative experience are integrated harmoniously with a critical text. “Intellectual invention” – a complex interpenetration of experience, knowledge, intuition, and fantasy, merged in his “metaphors of new critical perception” into a single whole is deliberately woven into the logical schemes of scientific discourse [1, p. 28].

Silence, one of these metaphors, allows Hassan to destroy the boundaries of historical periods and, concentrating on the ambivalent nature of the language of a literary text, to model a new line of names – Marquis de Sade, F. Kafka, J. Joyce, E. Hemingway, S. Beckett... and further – J. Barth, D. Barthelme – writers who strive to expand the boundaries of subjectivity and find new forms of presence of their life and creative experience in the text. It is important to note that the metaphor of silence was interpreted differently by Hassan, either from a modernist or from a postmodern perspective. The problematic context of Hassan’s interpretation of the metaphor of silence is discussed by J. W. Bertens in “The idea of the postmodern: a history” [13, p. 25-26].

Based on the definition formulated by M. Foucault, we understand subjectification (subjectivation) as the process of creating a subject, i.e. formation of subjectivity, which is not given to him/her a priori [14, p. 496]. It is obvious that Hassan, moving in the wake of poststructuralist thought, pays special attention to the historical unfolding of different forms of the
subject, their relationship with “games of truths”. It forms a unique chain of fragments of philosophical, artistic, and critical thought, where epistemological freedom and openness play a key role, and making it possible for the personal to manifest itself at all levels of both fictional and critical text.

"We can start anywhere," states Hassan in Paracriticisms, violating the canons of academic style. “We can start anywhere. A generalist may find in graffiti a start. I saw a sentence on a crumbling wall the other day...” [1, p. 97] – a thought is born before our eyes, the text is filled with images and individual reactions to events of both the real and the artistic world, I appears in the text as if by chance, and from this point chains of associations begin to emerge: from graffiti to Marx, from Marx to modern prose, and then new circles of very personal thoughts, united by the refrain “history repeats itself the first time as tragedy and the next time as farce” [1, p. 97]. This refrain, localized in this section of the text, allows us to note another important feature of Hassan's texts – attention to a wide range of historical, philosophical, social, political, and cultural issues.

It is known that there are no strictly fixed methods of subjectification. Subjectification is considered as a way of forming a writer’s individual style. An abundance of philosophical terms and formulaic conclusions are among the formal signs of Hassan’s academism. However, unexpected transitions from direct to improperly direct speech, significant repetitions, editing, ironic stylization and inviting a reader to co-creation immediately destroy this academic stylistics. “Parabiography: the Varieties of Critical Experience”, for example, he addresses the reader: “Attend, perpend, what voice you please” [15, p. 422]. This appeal to the reader is similar to J. Barth’s stylistics in his experimental novel “Lost in the Funhouse”. Mixing artistic and critical discourses, Hassan connects a study of the mechanisms of the reader's co-creation and the principles of self-disclosure. It is essential not only to join the discussion started by R. Barthes about the role and place of the reader but also to penetrate the essence of a deceptively simple story – self-description.

When the writer turns to himself as the first reader, he strives to see himself through the eyes of the Other, to objectify his image, and then arrogate to himself. The autobiographical inclusions in italics in “Parabiography” are the illustration of the potential possibilities of this idea, which was expressed by S. Freud, picked up by J. Lacan and further developed by Foucault, Barthes, Derrida, P. de Man and other theorists. Episodes from the life of a real author, written in the third person, reveal philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic problems in the context of the individual experience of a person who not only analyzes but also suffers from loneliness and “a certain logophobia.” This
abstract logophobia loses its metaphorical meaning in another country, manifesting itself in a reluctance to talk, making one feel like “his brain is barely bobbing on a sea of silence” [15, p. 52]. All these sensations are repeatedly analyzed and, thanks to the eternal desire to materialize the “unpicturable being,” they are transformed into metaphors that artistically codify the critical meaning of the study.

Parabiography is also considered by Hassan as a form of artistic polemic with existing techniques of self-disclosure. The term *parabiography*, in which the Greek prefix “*para*” means “moving or going beyond”, was introduced by Hassan in 1979. The essence of this new form appears as a dialogue of genres and points of view. As a result, “less a discourse than a human cacophony of critical spheres” arises [15, p. 422]. The theorist defines desiring, reading and acting as critical spheres. He distinguishes these three fragments of autobiography among the infinite variety of types of critical experience, explaining this step by the need to protect against the “dangers” of “direct” autobiography.

For Hassan, who pays close attention to various aspects of linguistic criticism, the problem of self-disclosure “at the edge of ineffable” [15, p. 423] is of particular interest. But what are the mechanisms for penetrating the depths of the “ineffable”? It is obvious to the researcher that the mechanisms are diverse and cannot be reduced to a single denominator. The selection criterion reveals the presence of a subjective component that is invisibly present in creative life. “The texts I have chosen,” writes Hassan, “speaks a tendency in myself no less than in the culture of which we are all a part (apart)” [15, p. 440]. He compares the ideas of Hegel and Nietzsche, James and Freud, Lacan and Deleuze to historically connect the issue of desire with the problematics of language and identify the role of the Other in the formation of the creative self. This path seems to the researcher to be the most productive.

It should be noted that the “other” is the field of interaction between the text and the reader. It should be noted that the “other” is the field of interaction between the text and the reader. B. Scheer-Schäzler wrote about this in the article “From Paracriticism to Parabiography? Ihab Hassan’s Autobiography Out of Egypt” [16], analysing the interconnection of these two concepts.

Hassan opens a new sound for the autobiographical theme. Its essence is the intellectual exteriorization of the feelings and thoughts of various individuals, united into a single parabiographical space. Later, he creates a version of a special not only critical but also literary parabiography “Out of Egypt: Episodes and Explanations of Autobiography,” in the center of which
he thinks about himself, his homeland and the genre of autobiography.

According to Hassan, "no critical gesture – in reading or writing, in praxis or poiesis – that fails to confess even as it questions the intricacies of violence and desire – desire for life or death, for being or power – can come near to wisdom, which may itself be our most “refined passion” [15, p. 425]. This thesis is not new: the auto-confessional nature of Romanticism is a clear confirmation of this. But Hassan is looking for something else. He believes that understanding the linguistic nature of revelation and analyzing the flair of confession, woven from the interweaving of signs, allows us to open a new page in the study of autobiographical writing.

Hassan does not fully share the post-structuralist thesis about the pan-linguistic nature of the world. He believes, "the human universe to be neither Full nor Empty, neither Deed nor Word", everything depends on the position we have chosen [15, p. 427]. Hassan focuses attention on the mysterious thesis of Lacan, which says that “le symbole se manifeste d'abord comme meurtre de la thinge, et cette mort constitue dans le sujet l'éternisation de son désir” [17, p. 319]. It is a matter of a gap between the signifier and the signified. And this break sows chaos and ambiguity, leaving the desire to know one's self unfulfilled.

In my opinion, Lacan’s thesis allows us to understand his thought about the impossibility of autobiography to capture the signified. Hassan admits that there is no universal recipe for resolving this eternal conflict. Despite the wide range of sophisticated interpretations that arise at the intersection of literary and scientific spheres, “no one knows of what the self is made” [15, p. 439]. However, realizing that “self is certainly a construct, an interpretation, to various degrees effective or ineffectual”, stimulates the constant search for linguistic means that allow us to describe and designate the entire richness of human experience. Language, in Hassan’s concept, ceases to be just a tool, turning into a living, heuristically active paracritical and parabiographical space. In it, a personal fact is transformed into an artistic fact, and the experience of predecessors, passed through the prism of personal perception, on the contrary, loses its abstraction.

In “Paracriticisms,” where the variability and ambiguity of thought are cherished, a change in the writer’s images entails changes in the view of eternal philosophical, artistic, and aesthetic problems, reveals the multifaceted meaning of a work of art, and provokes the emergence of questions, omissions, allusions, and guesses. The critic’s “I” does not disappear in a mosaic of statements but coexists with the thoughts of others, creating a situational space where the subjective connotatively complicates the critical text, revealing the figurative mechanisms of the work of consciousness.
Future research will explore the theoretical and artistic aspects of contemporary critical writing. The focus is also on the processes of vocabulary enrichment in the English and Ukrainian languages through borrowings and neologisms, the significance and intensity of which is recorded by scientists [18, p. 49-50; 19, p. 7].

Conclusions. Paracritical principles are implemented both in the field of meaning and in the field of form, at the level of metaphors, comparisons and antitheses – on the frontier. And all this in “Paracriticisms” is permeated with the personal, which Hassan does not hide, but emphasizes. In a situation where the refusal to study the author’s intentions, proclaimed by New Criticism, has acquired the status of a literary norm, Hassan deliberately turns to the genre of autobiography not only as a literary critic, but also as a writer. And vice versa, he infuse autobiographicality into criticism, questioning the established conventions.

Testing the theory in action, I. Hassan creates an interactive paracritical dimension, in which the object of analysis is simultaneously the artistic text and the critical text – the text that the critic is creating now. This text in the process of creation manifests its own linguistic functions, analytical and personal strategies and carries within itself the humanistic impulse of endless renewal of life and literature.

References:

Література:


