

Comparative Analysis of the Novels "Dead Souls" by N.V. Gogol and "The Divine Comedy" by Dante Alighieri

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Abstract. *This article examines the comparative analysis of the novels Dead Souls by N.V. Gogol and The Divine Comedy by Dante Alighieri. The main goal is to study and identify the similarities and differences of the characters and plots in both works.*

Key words: *N.V. Gogol, Dante, «Dead Souls», «Divine Comedy», Chichikov.*

Nikolai Gogol's Dead Souls and Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy are among the greatest achievements of world literature, yet they represent diametrically opposed cultural and literary traditions. Yet a comparison of these works can provide profound insights into both the unique methods and goals of their authors and the breadth of human experience, from the dark depths of the human soul to the sacred radiance of the divine will.

The Divine Comedy is considered one of the masterpieces of Italian and world literature. Dante summarizes in it all the vast knowledge accumulated over the centuries, from the ancient classics to the medieval world; his religious faith and moral and philosophical convictions. The style of the play has a rich language, full of symbols and frequent references to historical figures and ancient mythology. Numerous artists of all times have created illustrations about it; Sandro Botticelli, Gustave Doré, Salvador Dali, William Blake stand out among them.

Today, modern literary studies reveal a close connection between the Divine Comedy and Dead Souls by N. Gogol. Modern research in the field of philology is devoted not only to the study of lexical, grammatical and phonetic features of language and literature, but also to the study of the connection between language and cultural realities and values. With the development of comparative texts, the issue of the relationship between texts of different eras and the recognition of the peculiarities of differences in texts is becoming increasingly relevant.

The relevance of the study is due to the increased interest of domestic and foreign literary studies in comparative analysis and the search for common motifs in the work.

Comparison of Gogol's characters with characters in the works of those of his European contemporaries, novelists of the critical-realistic trend, who seem to be the most typologically close to him, that is, O. de Balzac, C. Dickens, W. Thackeray, must begin with some significant clarifications.

The rather numerous characters of these Western European writers are typologically comparable and, to one degree or another, similar to Gogol's, but they are part of a whole system of images and, in their interaction with others, they receive full illumination and disclosure. These systems are different in O. de Balzac, W. Thackeray and C. Dickens. But for all that, taken together, they differ even more strikingly from the system of images in Dead Souls.

"The Divine Comedy" begins with these words:

Having passed half of my earthly life,
I found myself in a gloomy forest,
Having lost the right path in the darkness of the valley.

This is an allegorical description of a soul that has lost its clear bearings in life, entangled in the daily discrepancy between what is due, what is needed, and what is real. Led by Virgil, the hero goes through all the circles of hell and purgatory, and then, together with Beatrice, ends up in paradise. All this is very interesting, but what does it have to do with "Dead Souls" by N. V. Gogol?

Gogol, when conceiving "Dead Souls", relied on the tradition of "The Divine Comedy". The writer conceived "Dead Souls" as a three-part work, constructed by analogy with "The Divine Comedy": in the first volume - vice and baseness (hell), in the second - the difficult cleansing from sin, and the third - the triumph of the reborn Christian Pavel Ivanovich Chichikov, who embodied the best qualities of man... Well, that is, Gogol wanted to write such a wonderful story. Especially since the work on the work took place partly in Italy - the homeland of Dante.

The idea of the poem was not fully realized, so we judge it by the surviving text of Volume 1. Volume 2 was burned in 1845. In the early 1840s, Gogol lived in Rome, which partly explains his interest in Dante. A three-volume poem was conceived, each volume was to consist of 11 chapters, a total of 33 chapters. In The Divine Comedy, each canticle consists of 33 songs. Dante's book is structured as a journey (and Chichikov travels!), with the sins of humanity progressively presented through the circles of hell. Gogol also progressively shows the vices of the landowners visited by the main character. In Dante, hell and purgatory follow, the same sequence conceived by Gogol in Volumes 1 and 2.

Let's start with the common features of these works. Both authors take a satirical view of the society of their time. In "Dead Souls" Gogol, through the image of the main character Chichikov and his adventurous methods of buying "dead souls", raises many themes of moral decline, lack of spirituality and corruption that reign in Russian society. The satirical aspect of Dante's "Divine Comedy" is expressed in the depiction of specific historical figures and events, which the poet places in various circles of hell, purgatory and paradise, condemning them for their sins and virtues. In this sense, both works can be considered a critical view of human nature and social order.

On the other hand, there are significant differences between these works. The Divine Comedy consists of three parts - Hell, Purgatory and Paradise, and is a complex allegorical structure reflecting the medieval worldview and Catholic theology. This work represents the soul's path to God, the search for the meaning of life and the law of divine justice. While Dead Souls is much less allegorical and more straightforward in its social criticism.

Gogol sought to show the moral exhaustion and spiritual "dead state" of society. In addition, the forms of narration are radically different. Dante writes his poem in terza rima lines, maintaining a strict structure and metrics, which gives his work an epic scope and depth. Gogol uses the form of a novel with lively and extensive descriptions, caustic irony and vivid realistic detailing, which creates a powerful effect of presence and immerses the reader in Russian reality of the 19th century.

Thus, despite belonging to different eras and cultures, Dead Souls and The Divine Comedy can be considered important works in the world literary tradition, revealing to the reader eternal themes of human nature, morality and society through the prism of satire and allegory. Combining wit and wisdom, these works continue to be a source of reflection and inspiration for modern readers and researchers.

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