

**“ALIVE AND ‘TANGIBLE’ EMBODIMENT OF THE
WORLD LITERARY PROCESS”
(D.S. LIKHACHOV AND THE *LITERARY MONUMENTS* ACADEMIC
SERIES)**

In 2018, we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the *Literary Monuments* academic series, the first books of which saw print in 1948. More than 675 books have been published in the series, which, over the years, has received recognition of scholars and vast readership in our country and abroad. Academician Dmitry S. Likhachov, who had served as head of the *Literary Monuments* committee for many years, described the series as “alive and ‘tangible’ embodiment of the world literary process”¹.

He became chair of the editorial board of the *Literary Monuments* in 1971 after academician Nikolai I. Konrad had passed away and kept this position till December 1990, after which he was elected the honorary president of the board and performed these duties during the next decade until his death, “actually remaining all the time at the wheel of the editorial committee, having his finger on the pulse of the publication process, initiating new projects, setting forth new ideas”. In other words, he had been in charge of the series for about 30 years². This fact allows us, without any disrespect towards other outstanding scholars, to mark the special place, which D.S. Likhachov kept in the 70-year-long history of the series.

N.I. Konrad in his program article dedicated to the *Literary Monuments* and written to regard the 20th anniversary of the series, pointed out the tasks of the

¹ Likhachov D.S. The Tasks of the Literary Monuments Series // *Literary Monuments. Reference Book*. Moscow: Science, 1978. P. 10.

² For details, see: Yegorov, B.F. Likhachov and the Literary Monuments // *Archeographic Yearbook for 1999*. Moscow, 2000. P. 407.

series as follows: “We’re looking forward to presenting our readers with such works from national literatures, which stand out as mainstays in the history of each particular literature; that is, these works are valuable deposits of artistic-and literary, as well as of cultural-and-historical meaning. It is well-known, that presently the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union is working on the multi-volume *History of World Literature*; meanwhile our book series is suited to provide, to a certain extent, the material basis for this History – to prepare for publication the monuments and masterpieces, which define the unique character of each national literature and, when taken together, make whole the history of world literature”³.

Since N.I. Konrad mentioned *The History of World Literature*, it is appropriate here to say a few words on the correlation of the *Literary Monuments* series and the literary history in question. The bringing together of two big academic projects, whereby, as it was truly noted, “theoretical research seemed to yield a practical outcome in the form of book-publishing syllabus”, was answering the urgent needs of its time. It was N.I. Konrad himself, an active participant of both projects and co-author of their concept, who was first to declare the common ground of the *Literary Monuments* series and *The History of World Literature*. Beside him, there were many notorious scholars who not only energetically contributed to both projects as writers, but also served on both editorial committees as managing editors.

We’ll limit ourselves to four names here. Academicians Nikolai I. Konrad, Dmitry S. Likhachov, Nikolai I. Balashov and corresponding member Andrey

³ Konrad, N.I. A Word from the Editorial Committee // *Literary Monuments. The Gains and Prospects of the Series*. Moscow: Nauka Publishers, 1967. P. 7. The multi-volume study mentioned by N.I. Konrad was created with recourse to resources and potentialities of the Gorky Institute of World Literature of the USSR Academy of Sciences (presently, the RAS): *The History of World Literature in nine volumes*. V. 1-8 (sic!). Moscow: Nauka Publishers, 1983-1994.

D. Mikhaylov, who in different periods of time served as chairmen of the Literary Monuments editorial committee and also considerably contributed to the development of *The History of World Literature* concept. All of them, except perhaps N.I. Konrad, who passed away before the work on *The History* was over, served as chief editors of certain volumes of *The History*, were members of the general editorial committee and of editorial teams working on separate volumes. They also wrote articles for *The History*. With these facts in mind, a former chairman of the editorial committee of the *Literary Monuments* (who currently serves as vice-chairman) Boris F. Yegorov writes with fairly enough substantiation: “As a matter of fact, it’s difficult to find any big expert in the study of literature or historian in the recent half a century, who did not participate in the *Literary Monuments*”⁴.

The consolidation of the academic personnel around the *Literary Monuments* series and *The History of World Literature* in many volumes reflected on their conceptual closeness. We’ll confirm this thought by several quotations.

N.I. Konrad asks the question in *The History of World Literature* as to what is to be considered literature for a certain period, i.e. he puts “the question about the very composition of literature” as “the fact of different compositions of literature in different historical times is absolutely evident” and “very similar in the theme, nature, undoubtedly significant, if you take literary features, works are included in the composition of literature in the earlier historical times and not included later”, or, on the contrary, certain works can be for a long time viewed “beyond what was considered literature”, when “the published article, philosophical treatise... were literature, and of the top level”, and only later works, which were “beyond the limits” before, will be viewed as literary works. “Consequently, the recognized composition of literature consists of the ideas of the type of a literary work, and these ideas are always secondary, i.e. determined by

⁴ Yegorov B.F. The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Literary Monuments // Bulletin of the Russian Academy of Sciences. 1998. V. 68. No. 7. P. 653.

the general position of literature in a certain historical period: its place in the cultural life of the country, its role in this life, they are determined by the attitude of the society in that time to the nature of the literary work's theme, its material, form, genre, purpose", N.I. Konrad wrote. Thus, the scientist says, "historical changes of the composition of literature are one of the most important phenomena in its history"⁵. And exactly the historical change of the composition of literature "determined the real condition of literature of that time and associated with it idea of a literary work"⁶. We can finish N.I. Konrad's reasoning on the topic by his final thought: "...Gradually, what the humankind called 'literature' is outlined in the process of historical changes of the composition of literature, taking more and more certain contours and getting independent being, i.e. the category of spiritual creative activities of the society, different from philosophy and science and at the same time associated with them as they use common means: notions, symbols, images and even meter, rhythm, euphony. This process is inevitably viewed in the history of all separate literatures, i.e. it is common"⁷.

The idea of historical changeability of the composition of literature was inalienably connected in N.I. Konrad's concept of world literature with thoughts about the list of classical writers. The scientist's ideas of world literature are closely linked in the latter aspect with discussions of the principles for drawing up lists of authors for the *Literary Monuments* academic series. In this connection, D.S. Likhachov rightfully wrote in 1978 that N.I. Konrad was "the first to theoretically conceptualize the tasks of the series"⁸. And really, N.I. Konrad's

⁵ Konrad N.I. Introduction. The Place of Volume One in "The History of World Literature" // The History of World Literature in nine volumes. V. 1. Moscow: Science: 1983. P. 14-15.

⁶ Ibid. P. 17.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Likhachov D.S. The Tasks of the Literary Monuments Series // Literary Monuments. Reference Book. Moscow: Science, 1978. P. 12.

thoughts about historical changeability of the composition of literature were supported by many participants of *The History of World Literature* project and were practically applied in the *Literary Monuments* series when the composition of the series was discussed and its repertoire was definitely formed.

D.S. Likhachov speaks about historical changeability of the composition of literature and the idea of a literary monument in accordance with N.I. Konrad's spirit of ideas, and develops them. We'll quote D.S. Likhachov's work here (the quotation is necessarily long): "What does the editorial board (of the *Literary Monuments* – A. K.) understand under the 'literary monument'? No unambiguous answer can be given to this question. First of all, we have to take into account historically changeable ideas of literature as a whole. There is a period in the history of each culture, when literature was not yet singled out into an independent field – the period when literature still does not perceive itself as literature. It was like that, for example, in Old Russia before the 17th century. In that period, encompassing six centuries, literature in its certain monuments linked up to clearly business written language or religious written language, business works included fiction elements and fiction monuments often had 'business' purpose. The 'clause lists' (a kind of official record keeping in Old Russia) of Russian ambassadors published as a part of the *Literary Monuments* series in 1954, were not 'literary monuments' in our sense of this word, in today's understanding of what literature is, however, these business documents, ambassador's reports about what they saw abroad and the talks they had there, played an outstanding role in formation of Russian literature in the 16th – 17th centuries. It's usual to understand only written works under literature (the word 'literature' itself, originating from 'litera' meaning 'letter of the alphabet', points at that). However, we don't refuse from publishing folklore works, the whole cycles of them. We publish not only written monuments but also those that were created orally and lived orally and were only later written down. Folklore played a primary role in origination of certain literatures and has been accompanying literature along the whole way of its development, interacting with it. Because of that we included great folklore works

from the feudal period into the series — such as *The Song of the Nibelungs* (1972), *The Song of Roland* (1964), *The Legend of Tristan and Isolde* (1976), *The Song of El Cid* (1959), *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (1961), *Elder Edda* (1963), *Younger Edda* (1970) and many others. Cycles of folklore works are also published in our series: *Ilya Muromets* (1958), *Dobrynya Nikitich and Alesha Popovich* (1974), *The Epic of the Serbian People* (1963), etc.”⁹.

D.S. Likhachov did not contrast the *Literary Monuments* and *The History of World Literature*, nevertheless he wrote in 1973: “N.I. Konrad modestly thought that the *Literary Monuments* series can to a certain extent show the ‘material basis’ of the multi-volume publication of *The History of World Literature* undertaken by the Institute of World Literature of the USSR Academy of Sciences. However, practice showed that the series he supervised not only ‘outran’ *The History of World Literature* but also provides independent attitude to the preserved monuments, independent concept of the world literature development and its values. Selection of monuments for the series, articles and comments it provides are in a sense wider than the tasks set for itself by *The History of World Literature*. The series underlines not only the historical importance of the monuments but their ‘eternal’ meaning to a much greater extent than it is possible in the most serious histories of literature, their importance for our times and their general humanitarian values. Any world literature monument is always bigger than its interpretation”¹⁰.

D.S. Likhachov in this appraisal proceeded from his own, “contrary to established and deep-rooted ideas” of understanding the nature of textology as a “wide” literary scientific branch of knowledge. Actually he starts his article dedicated to N.I. Konrad with the thoughts on the subject. The scientist writes that “Textology is a very wide science encompassing problems of a very various range from special and technical to connected with general attitudes to the fates of the

⁹ Ibid. P. 15-16.

¹⁰ Likhachov D.S. Nikolay Iosifovich Konrad // *Literary Monuments*. Reference Book. Moscow: Science, 1973. P. 35.

mankind and the essence of world history”¹¹. After that D.S. Likhachov divides textology into *microtextology* and *macrotextology* for the purpose of discussion. He refers the problems of the text history to the first with “exits” “into technical practices of editing technology”. He sees the tasks of the second in the studies of the nature and typology of texts’ movements in various periods, types of texts’ changing in pre-individual and individual periods with practical “exit” “to general publication principles for texts from various historical periods, choice and selection of monuments for publications in collected works and multi-volume series”¹². D.S. Likhachov finishes his discussion of textology in the context of the said article with the following conclusion: “N.I. Konrad as the scientist was as if called to supervise the series, encompassing world literary monuments on the largest known until now scales. He was a ‘macrotextologist’ – a scientist capable to select monuments and establish principles for their publication on worldwide scales”¹³.

When D.S. Likhachov defined N.I. Konrad as a “macrotextologist”, he did not mean lack of “microtextological” interests of his predecessor in supervising the *Literary Monuments*, he just put the emphases: “N.I. Konrad gave a special role to the historical and literary aspect of the monuments’ publication and attached importance to a narrow-textological one: the history of the work’s text”¹⁴. It seems possible to present an opinion based on the analysis of D.S. Likhachov’s words,

¹¹ Ibid. P. 28.

¹² Ibid. P. 28-29.

¹³ Ibid. P. 29.

¹⁴ Ibid. P. 33. We’ll also refer here to Vyacheslav Vs. Ivanov’s opinion, who says well-groundedly that “the problem of text’s interpretation was central to all multi-faceted N.I. Konrad’s scientific and literary activities” and that “Konrad as text interpreter was unthinkable without Konrad as culture historian” (Vyach.Vs. Ivanov. *Konrad as Text Interpreter // The Tales of Ise*. Moscow: Science, 1979. P. 260, 261).

that the scientist, who stood up for combination of the “micro-” and “macrotextological” approaches and brought that combination into life practically from the time he headed the *Literary Monuments*, emphasized the “microtextology” only because “macrotextological” aspects had been mostly worked out by that time and actually accepted unanimously basing on the “theoretical conceptualization of the tasks of the series” offered by N.I. Konrad.

In any case, various members of the editorial board of the series were enthusiastic about many of the above mentioned N.I. Konrad’s ideas. We’ll mention only some of them here, directly referring to the editorial board’s practical work. “N.I. Konrad paid attention to considerable change of the idea of ‘classics’ and expansion of the list of world classical writers in recent years,” D.S. Likhachov writes as about a generally accepted fact; he was “a scientist capable to select monuments and establish the principles of their publication on worldwide scales”¹⁵. D.S. Likhachov added, giving reasons for this thought, that “N.I. Konrad’s understanding of the common character of cultural and historical development of the mankind, common main stages and formations in nations development did a good service to selection of works for the *Literary Monuments* series: first of all, the ancient times, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. At the same time, N.I. Konrad highly evaluated not only the ancient times and the Renaissance but the Middle Ages as well, which was a principally important provision of his concept of the unity of world development and cultural value of all eras”¹⁶.

And another important note by D.S. Likhachov, referring to the general concept of the series: “N.I. Konrad’s views of the tasks and the nature of the *Literary Monuments* series were not frozen, established once and for all, they grew and developed together with the series’ growth and advancement”¹⁷.

¹⁵ Likhachov D.S. Nikolay Iosifovich Konrad. P. 32.

¹⁶ Ibid. P. 29-30.

¹⁷ Ibid. P. 33.

The listed ideas of historical, theoretical and literary as well as comparative and historical studies of Eastern and Western literature, world literary process were practically realized in the *Literary Monuments* series¹⁸. Addressing these ideas turned out extremely useful in the components of scientific, “microtextological” “accompanying” of texts in the *Literary Monuments* series, as the works in the series, in the opinion of its direct participants, should be scientific publications, publications-researches, they are called to publish “the fullest and most recent research materials” in order to provide “deep and comprehensive understanding” of the published monuments¹⁹. Practically “the scientific character of the books from the series” was manifested in the nature of its publications. As a rule, they consist of three main sections: “1) text of the monument; 2) “Supplements” – other wordings and variants of the text; here documents and materials helping to understand the published monument more thoroughly can also be placed; 3) “Annexes” – a research paper as well as references and notes, including textological substantiations, real historical notes and indices”²⁰.

In this connection D.S. Likhachov wrote that “The *Literary Monuments* series was published for ‘slow reading’, the heuristic meaning of which was worked out in Russian philological science by academician L.V. Shcherba in his time basing on A.A. Potebnya’s ideas”²¹. “The prerogative and privilege of the

¹⁸ Thus, for example, the above note by D.S. Likhachov about high evaluation of the Middle Ages by N.I. Konrad was worded not accidentally. It was done at the time when many people still thought that the Middle Ages were dark ages, the time of “obscurantism”, etc. Criticism of such ideas was practically unanimous both in the *Literary Monuments* series and *The History of World Literature* volumes.

¹⁹ Gasparov M.L., Grishunin A.L., Mikhaylov A.D., Ptushkina I.G. Preface // *Literary Monuments. 1948-1998. Annotated Catalogue*. Moscow: Science, 1999. P. 16, 20.

²⁰ Ibid. P. 19-20.

²¹ Likhachov D.S. The Tasks of the *Literary Monuments* Series. P. 14-15.

Literary Monuments are detailed ‘academic’ comments to the texts”, B.F. Yegorov²² adds.

D.S. Likhachov wrote about the two main tasks of the *Literary Monuments* exactly in this context (in case of “microtextological” and macrotextological” aspects’ combination), which “were performed in... the series unflinchingly and successively, but surely not without some miscalculations and mistakes: 1) give monuments to readers rightly readable and in the most ‘explained’ way, and 2) encompass all countries of the world geographically, nationally and historically”²³. These tasks remain urgent for the series today as well, as according to the scientist, “encompassing all countries of the world is far from being completed, and it’s difficult to say when it can be completed”²⁴. At the same time, D.S. Likhachov repeats the words about real difficulties of the whole series and finishes his vision of the future of the series optimistically: “A lot of time should pass before general contours of all world literature, all verbal arts of the globe start taking shape in the general mass of published works, but it is already possible to say now with assurance that the task set for the *Literary Monuments* series is real and it will be brought into life”²⁵.

Likhachov’s insights and assessments of the *LM* book series are especially weighty, since he, from where he sat, could know and feel the gist of the matter, which is more than knowing the conceptual basis of the series or the schedule of new projects and publications; he knew perfectly well the real picture as to how the theory and inspirations were brought to life.

²² Yegorov B.F. The Fiftieth Anniversary of the *Literary Monuments*. P. 654-655.

²³ Likhachov D.S. The Tasks of the *Literary Monuments* Series. P. 12.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid. P. 20.