Systemic problems of fiction genre (experience in studying small and medium epic forms)

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Abstract

In present globalized world of scientific thinking in literary criticism the problem of generating a system of scientific criteria to determine the genre of fiction is still relevant. Solution to this problem is to develop a methodology and methods of a comprehensive study of the four-level system of content and form of the fiction whole. The origins of this approach are explained in scientific pursuits of the Kazan core group headed by Professor Nigmatullina, the Commission for the comprehensive study of belles-letters art and works of the Russian Academy of Sciences. These surveys developed in the writings of Kulumbetova (the concept of the four-level system of content and form of the work of fiction of epic, poetry, drama; methodology and techniques of its integrated study) formed the basis of our research. The plan of this article is to present a system of criteria for determining genre features of an epic work. To achieve the goal it is necessary to consider the functions of present chronotope (entanglements in the traditional sense) in the disclosure of the genre form of the work and isomorphic function of the active site (climaxs in the traditional sense) and semantic parts of the text in the disclosure features of genre form, genre and genre type of a work. The results show that the *genre form* of an epic work as an art system is revealed on three levels of the work and is associated with the *upper limit* of present chronotope. It is due to the *amount* of raised *problems* and their *climaxs* (the fourth level) and emerges in an isomorphic way in the *volume* of climaxs and semantic units (paragraphs and sentences). *The number of situations* in them and the *activity of the main and secondary* characters (the third and fourth levels) also influence the genre form. *Genre* as an art system communicates with the third and fourth levels of the work: with the analysis of the active site and *semantic parts of the text* (microfocuses, focuses and microactive sites). *Genre type* is in the isomorphic way denoted by the *prevailing levels* in the name and *types of initial syntagmas* of the active site and semantic parts of the text. In the future, we see the further development of the system of criteria for the genre specificity of the novel.

Keywords: Genre form; genre; genre type; four-level system of a work of fiction; present chronotope; active site.

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1. Introduction

Transformation of the human mind requires more systematization of scientific knowledge. At the present stage of development of literary criticism it is important to develop a specific methodology and methods of a comprehensive study of a literary text. In this regard, the problem genre is also relevant. "Genre, apparently, is one of the bridges that connects the writer and the reader" (Khalizev, 2000). It should be noted that the problem of genre form has not been studied to date.

To clarify the definition of the genre we appealed to the predecessors and contemporaries. *One group* of scientists considers the etymology of the term (Timofeyev, 1974; Abramovich, 1970; Gulyaev, 1977; Meshcheriakova, 2000; Akhmetov, 1998; Kabdolov, 2002; Zhumaliyev, 1969; etc.). That is why they denote the word "genre" (in the broadest sense of the word) as a literary kind. In French "genre" means genus, type.

Another group adheres to the most widely used terminology (Concise Literary Encyclopedia, 1964; Schepilova, 1968; G. Kudina and others, 2000; Volkov, 1995). First, they recognize genre as a certain *type, species, variety* of genres of literature or composition. Secondly, genres are also defined as groups of works (Khalizev 2000; Yesin, 1998; Wellek and Warren, 1978). It is related to the school interpretation of the genre (Ozerov, 1994; Meshcheriakova, 2002; Kumanova, 2003; Busova, 2005).

Some researchers emphasize the stability of its *formal features* (Tomaszewski, 2001; Tynyanov, 1977). Genre is also correlated with the *structure, order* (Gachev, 1968; Leiderman and Barkovskaya, 2002; Leites, 1985).

However, they noted the deep richness of the genre. Consequently, they faced the problem of its assimilation with the model of the Universe.

The *latter* group perceived the "*linguistic*" entanglement as a communicative genre-forming aspect (Tyupa, 2001; Zenkin, 2000; Faryno, 1980).

So, in a number of works of the *first* group of researchers the terms "gender" and "genre" are identified. Notions of genre are also replaced by the notions of genre form, genre type that is genre form. The *second* group of scientists, on the contrary, replaces genre form with genre.

All these ideas naturally shrink to the well-known Bakhtin-Medvedev's concept. This is an idea of *the meaningfulness of the form*: "Every genre is a special type of building and finishing the whole, though, I repeat, it is essential to complete thematically rather than conditionally and compositionally finish" (Medvedev, 1928).

It is quite evident that genre form improperly refers to the genre and genre type. Therefore there is a need for clarification in their definition and development of criteria for their differentiation.

In this paper, we consider, first, functions of present chronotope in the disclosure genre forms of a work of fiction. Second, we define isomorphic functions of climax of the work and its semantic parts in discovering features of genre form, genre and genre type of the work.

2. Theoretical and methodological basis of the work

In this paper we rely on the concept of Aristotle (idea of the whole as "a beginning, middle and end" in correlation with the study of the tragedy), Bakhtin (chronotope and genre as "a type of thematic ending of the text"), Nigmatullina (a two-level structure of the work – the horizontal and vertical sections based on dialogic relations, ideological principles of the structure of the aesthetic ideal, the active site as a "focusing system"), Hajiyev (romantic and realistic, romantic-realistic type of creativity and imagery), I. Prigogine (about chaos and order as interdependent phenomena), the method of the theory of systems (direct and return connection, isomorphism), the "New Criticism" (the idea of "the organic center" where "there is some higher fusion of form and

content"), Kulumbetova (the concept of a four-level system of content and form of the work of epic, poetry, drama, methodology and techniques of its integrated study).

Methodologically significant are the following assumptions of Nigmatullina's concept:

a) **on a two-tier structure** of the work. These are horizontal and vertical sections based on dialogic relations between the writer and reality, the writer and the reader;

b) **on the structure of the aesthetic ideal** (idea of the beautiful) – social, anthropological and enlightening principles;

c) **on the active site** – the focusing system (Nigmatullina, 1990; System analysis of works of fiction, 1992).

Transformation by Kulumbetova (2002; 2006; 2008) of these provisions in the fusion with Bakhtin's concept of the "chronotope" and "genre" ["type of thematic ending of the whole" (Bakhtin, 1986) led to a new understanding of the function of the active site. For us, the active site is the last moment of the lower limit of present chronotope narrated, happening, and experienced. This is the climax of a work of fiction which focuses on the features of content and form. It is primarily established by the writer and is then perceived by the reader. Bakhtin's idea of the "chronotope" has organically entered the world of literary criticism and has triggered the expansion of boundaries of the fiction time. This is a distinction between the past (exposure) and the present with an emphasis on the importance of the latter. Inasmuch as the writer reflects his modernity. Here starts the activity of the reader-co-creator – to allocate in the work of fiction the borders of present chronotope – upper and lower.

Significance is the concept of Hajiyev about the types of creativity and **types of imagery** (romantic, realistic and romantic-realistic) and the "**literary proximity principles**" and "**literary remoteness principles**" (Hajiyev, 1972).

Aristotelian idea of the whole as "beginning", "middle" and "ending" (Aristotle, 2000) is referred by us to the stages of a systematic-structural analysis and with significant parts of semantic segments of the text. The first and second stages – "beginning", the third stage – "ending", the fourth stage – "middle".

Prigogine's identified law on "order" and "chaos" (Prigogine, 1986) is related to the concept of **imagery criteria**. We reveal the level of compliance of interdependent signs of genre form, genre and genre variety with laws of isomorphism in the four-level system of a work of fiction. Incompliance of signs of genre form is demonstrated on the second, third and fourth levels of the system of a work of fiction. For example, with a small problem range the semantic segments of a text may be subject to the canons of the average genre form. Deviation in the genre aspect becomes visible on the third and fourth levels – in the system of expression of amplification in the active site and semantic parts of the text. Violation in the system of genre type (at all levels of the work of fiction) appears, at first, at the uniformity of all primary syntagmas. Secondly, at mismatch of dominant rhythmic-intonation level in the name and type of the initial syntagma of climaxs with the types of themes, problems and their climaxs.

On this basis we expose the methodology and methods of the four-step system-structural analysis of the epic work in the light of the concept of Kulumbetova (four-level system of the work) (Kulumbetova and others, 2008).

So, the first step is the analysis of the name of the work.

The second stage is the designation of the upper and lower boundaries of the present time in the literary description.

The third stage is an interpretation of the lower bounds of the present time – the active site, i.e. climax of the work. It has a concentrated interdependence of features of the form and content. The

content is related to the object theme, invariant theme, potential meaning, tone, presence or absence of a amplification, and primary reader's perception. The form is represented by gender, style, method, genre form and genre, genre type, and the criterion for differentiation of semantic units that will form the basis of dividing the text in reverse motion. The primary reader's perception correlates with reader's assessment of the potential meaning of the last sentence.

The fourth stage is an analysis of semantic parts of the text (micro-focuses, tricks, micro-active sites) with an emphasis on the "traces" of the object theme, method, genre form, and genre type.

3. Criteria for determining the genre form, genre and genre type

Signs of *genre form* are marked on the second, third and fourth stages of the analysis. Firstly, the contrast of genre form the three stages is connected, according to Kulumbetova's concept, to *the match or mismatch of the upper limit of the present time (entanglement) with the beginning of the text*: in the first case this is the feature of the *medium and large forms* of all three genders of literature; in the second it is a sign of *the small form* which through the explanation of the past reproduces the present in the lives of the characters. That is why exposition is inherent in the text of *the small form*. Its presence in the medium and large forms or its absence in the small form of genre is the result of the diffusion of genre forms. The exposition containing focuses and micro-active sites is the feature of the *medium and large* genre forms. Secondly, *through the volume* of the active site and semantic parts of the text, the number of situations and activity in them of main and secondary characters. Third, *through the number of issues (focuses) and micro-climaxs*. Hence multi-theme range and multi-problem range are the genre features of the story and the novel as opposed to short fiction genres.

Criteria for distinguishing epic genres (narrative, short story and novel) follow from the criteria for determining *the genre form (small and medium).* The basic principle of the genre ("type of the theme ending of the whole") is the perception of the idea determined only by reading the work. The novel is different from the story not for the *simultaneous* perception of the idea but for *diachronic* rereading requiring – reconnecting the past and present times. In *small genres* such diachronism comes only from the implied meaning, in *medium genres* where synchronicity is excluded – from a larger volume and greater complexity of the representation of the author's intent. The amplification in the medium genre form creates genre of *the story with implications*. The *amplification* is systematically revealed in the third (the active site) and fourth (micro-focuses, tricks, micro-active sites) stages of the analysis of the text. It is associated with the absence of real detail and signs in the climax of the work which indicates that there is no "hard" authoring system for the reader. This, vice versa, leads to a rigid determinism of all semantic parts of the author's plan. However, the phenomenon of amplification arises only in those cases where in the last sentence of some semantic parts there are no real details and signs. The mentioned genre pattern inherent in the system of works of all genders supports Prigogine's idea of the relationship between "order" and "chaos". If we take "chaos" for the absence of real details and signs in the active site, then the "order" will mean their presence in each semantic part of the text, and vice versa.

Genre type is determined systematically, firstly, by the dominant structural level in the active site and in the title, sometimes adequate to each other, and secondly, by the type of initial syntagma of each semantic part and, thirdly, by the dominant position of details (socio-psychological aspect of describing specific historical reality) or signs (timeless philosophical aspect of the description).

Varieties of genre types: 1) *social* (questions of action and mode of actions of objects and their attributes); 2) *psychological* (feelings) – with a plot-compositional level; 3) *philosophical* stipulated by:

a) chronotopes that answer questions of the adverbial modifier of time and space, for example, not just the syntagma "home" (what?), but "at home" (where?); b) question mark, finishing the active site as an expression of the debate – with the ideological and thematic level; 4) *lyrical* (a functional pause

at the end of the active site or semantic part as an indication of the merger of the reader's feelings, the author's feelings with the feelings of the character); 5) *satirical, comical or humorous* (conflicted feelings of the reader and the writer with different signs) – with the rhythmic intonation level.

Thus, the system of genre form, genre, its type, and also gender, style appears also through the hierarchy of their signs with regard to the principle of dominance.

On the basis of the developed system of clear criteria for determining the genre form, genre and genre type we try to give definitions of genre form and genre, on the basis of the dominant features of the active site and isomorphic semantic features of the semantic parts of the text.

Genre form is a type of literary organization of the work based on chronotopic frames of the description, the amount of climaxs and micro-climaxs, thematic and problematic sections of the text, the number of *situations* in them, and the number of *active characters*.

Genre is "a type of thematic completion of the whole" (Bakhtin).

Genre type is a type of evaluation of depicted phenomena of reality from the standpoint of social, psychological, philosophical, lyrical (tragic or dramatic), satirical, comic, comic phenomena (Kulumbetova).

A small epic form is the form of the epic literature with the obligatory exposition, a scarce range of themes and few problems, predominance of small volume of all semantic parts of the text with a small number of active situations and characters.

Small epic form is the form of the epic literature which does not require exposure but still with a large range of themes and issues with a predominance of the medium amount of semantic parts of the text with a significant number of situations and a sufficiently large range of supporting characters.

The story is a genre with dominant traits of the small epic form, containing the author' plan in the climax and naturally eliminating it in the themes or issues, the idea of which is perceived synchronically when *reading*.

The novel is a genre with dominant traits of the small epic form excluding the author's plan in the climax which is natural for all themes and issues that define the *amplification* meaning in diachronic comprehension of the idea when *rereading*.

The narrative is a genre with dominant signs of the middle epic form, containing the author's plan in the climax, the idea of which is perceived by the reader in diachronic (the connection of the times of the narrative) perception of a number of themes, problems and their micro-climaxs with an optional author plan.

The narrative with an amplification is a genre with dominant traits of the medium epic form that has no author plan in the climax, but is compulsory for all semantic parts that defines the implied meaning of the work, the idea of which is perceived by the reader in the diachronic aspect.

The amplification in the narrative occurs in the absence of a climax of the author's plan, which is obligatory for all semantic parts (the idea is also conceived by the reader in the diachronic aspect). The phenomenon of amplification causes genre synthesis.

4. The system of classical small and medium prose

1. Demarcation between small and medium classical genre form is based on the number of themes and problems, activity of characters, number of situations, the amount of semantic parts, presence or absence of exposure with the significance of the fact whether it contains culmination.

2. The story genre differs from the novel by the simultaneous perception of ideas that defines the author's explicit plan in the climax of the work. The similarity of the novel and the story is based on the diachronic perception of the idea.

3. Manifestation of the lyrical aspect in the small genre types demonstrates the talent of the writer to create medium and large epic forms.

4. Observations of the studied prose showed that if the medium form is characterized by either style duality, or synthesis, then in the small genres there are also romantic-realistic styles and realistic styles with romantic tendencies.

5. The method of depicting how a phenomenon of a timeless phenomenon does not fit into the framework, for example, the expressionistic attitude can equally manifest themselves in the medium and small prose.

6. In the aspect of compliance with the criterion of the literary merit of the system of studied works of small and medium classical prose there can be pointed out the following features:

a) study of small ("Poor People" by L. Tolstoy, "Lights" by Korolenko, "Bakyt" by Erubayev, "Lida" by Shalamov) and medium ("The Lady with the Dog" by Chekhov, "Mumu" by Turgenev, "Poor People" by Dostoevsky) of the classical prose determined their compliance with the criterion of literary merit in the isomorphism of signs of genre forms. In all works, except for ("Poor People" by Tolstoy and "Lights" by Korolenko (examples of "pure" small form), diffusion of traits of genre forms (small and medium, medium and large) was identified;

b) literary merit in terms of the genre is broken in the system "Bakyt" as a result of an overabundance of implied meanings in semantic parts. This is inherent in the system of the novel and is manifested in the absence of explicit author's plan in the final sentences of all semantic parts of the text (instead of the proper "chaos" in PP there is "order");

c) isomorphism of the dominant types of initial syntagmas coincides with the prevailing levels in the title in all works. Their diversity eliminates heir one-sided perception by the writer of his modernity. The criterion of literary merit for the aspect of the genre type comes from "Bakit" by early died Erubayev – all semantic parts have the same initial syntagma – social and psychological. In this aspect the "Poor People" by Dostoevsky, where, with appropriate greetings in the beginnings of letters which combine different types of syntagmas (psychological, social-psychological, social-psychological and philosophical-lyrical, socio-psychological and lyrical);

d) there is excluded any incompliance with the criterion of literary merit in the aspect of diffusion in gender, style features, as well as method.

5. Features of genre form, genre and genre type of modern small and medium genre form

1. Criteria for distinguishing between modern small and medium *genre forms* (function of exposure, the number of problems, "active" characters, situations, the amount of semantic parts) are adequate to signs of classical forms indicating their typological character. However, contemporary prose tends to "emancipation" reflected in the specifics of the genre form of the narrative. It acquires the "novel" form as after a big genre form it takes on the task of understanding the preceding spiritual heritage. Whereas in classical prose there is a convergence of medium and small genres.

2. Our studied contemporary prose is represented by the narrative *genre*, not novel. We think this is due to the requirements of our live when the increasing publicity dictates synchrony of perception of the writer's plan.

3. *Genre type* of the studied works attests to adequate "genre" potentials of artists of the word. In classical prose genre type discovered talents of the writer-narrator to the creation of medium or large forms.

4. The studied modern stories and novels indicate the romantic-realist *style* synthesis or duality. In contrast to classical prose we do not observe any romantic or realistic type of thinking with those or other tendencies.

5. Modern prose convinced us of the timeless nature of the method as a certain type of attitude of the writer.

6. Attempts to justify the degree of level of *literary merit* associated with the following criteria:

a) typological signs of genre form in the system of small and medium modern prose are adequate to the classical system with natural and logical synthesis of features of genre forms in the works "Nadka" by Petrushevskaya, "Ariel" and "Toy" by Dovlatov, "Night" by Tolstoy, "Death of a Greyhound" by Magauin, "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" by Kenzheev. In this regard we can see the role of the classical prose as a model representing "pure" forms of small genre forms;

b) by the *genre* aspect the incompliance to the literary merit criterion is observed in systems of the stories "Ariel" and "Nadka": with the author's explicit plan in the climaxs of the works there is a deviation in the other semantic parts of the text. Instead of the "chaos" inherent in the system of the story everywhere there is an "order" – "ubiquitous" explicit plans of the writers. This deficiency in the system of the text explains the "obtrusiveness" of authors in the understanding of the objective value of contemporary problems. And here we can note an exemplary manner of classical works;

c) a defect in the context of the *genre type* is observed in the absolute uniformity of the initial syntagmas in "Nadka": with the only socio-psychological and philosophical syntagma all the others are social and psychological;

d) as in classical prose there is a logical compliance of the texts of modern prose with the level of literary merit in terms of generic features, their diffusive interdependence, and the style and method.

6. Results

On the basis of the studied material of small and medium classical and modern prose there are resulted of the work summed up. Thanks to the systematic structural study of the isomorphism of content and formal features on each of the four levels of the imaginative system of epic works there were designated typological signs of genre form, genre and its type which allow identifying levels of compliance of the work with the criterion of literary merit. In addition, there were exposed typological features of the system of signs of the gender, method and style of the work, not reflected in the theme of the research.

With a total review we can visibly see diffusive interpenetration of dominant traits of genre forms with the elements of other forms: medium form with the small one, small form with the large one and large with the medium. "Exemplariness" of the classics manifested in the "pure" small forms ("Poor People" by Tolstoy and "Lights" by Korolenko) that is defined by the strict determinism of the cohesion of several situations, the activity of one or two characters at a wide range of theme and scare range of problems.

Observation of researchers about the "novel" content of classic novels is confirmed by us in the analysis of the system of genre form in "Lady with the Dog" by Chekhov and "Mumu" by Turgenev. Signs of the small form are synthesized with the dominant feature of the medium form: numerous themes and issues with large-scale plans. Features of the large form in the medium genres of classics are explained most often through the tendency of the writer to create large canvases ("Poor People" by Dostoevsky). However, the story is specific not only for its wide range of problems in describing deployed situations and a wide range of supporting characters. It is characterized for a group of themes of a predictive nature ("A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" by Kenzheyev) and "a cluster"

of climaxes with a common resolution. The latter besides attests to the expressionist method or its part ("Poor People" by F. Dostoevsky, "Death of a Greyhound" by Magauin).

In small stories the "argument" part is really important. This brings them closer to the small epic genres where obligatory is the exposition without climax that has a supporting role of the precession of present chronotope. The lack of exposure in small genres because of the significance for the artist of the words of present chronotope as well as the stated in the name of the multi-aspect position of the creator in the assessment of reality with a concise way of its recreation by the writer is a consequence of gravity of his talent to create medium and large epic forms ("Lights" by Korolenko)

We have presented a system of criteria of the literary merit stipulated by the material of the research. Monotony of the assessment of phenomena of reality ("Nadka" by Petrushevskaya), i.e. genre type in all parts of the text, incompliance of forms of climaxes designated by us (with or without exposition, with a focus in it or not) with the volume of situations in themes and issues alleges a violation in a work of literature of the laws of literary merit in a genre type in the first case and a genre form – in the second. The fact of incompliance with the level of literary merit in the genre is detected through the prism of the climax of the text. Hidden plan of the author in it is a sign of a novel or a story with implications whose function is to lead the reader to rethinking of the work is not updated ("chaos" does not go into "order"). This is due to the creator's keenness for implied meanings of each part of the work ("Вақыт" by Erubayev as a writing attempt of the young writer). Imperfectness of the genre system emerges with an excess of realistic author plans for the reader in his mastering themes and issues ("Nadka" by Petrushevskaya, "Ariel" by Dovlatov). In this case, the "clarity" of the object theme of the work does not go with the rereading but is compounded by the abundance of his "footprints" in the text ("order" is not followed by its natural "chaos"). It should be noted that in terms of gender features the incompliance of the studied epic texts with the criterion of literary merit is not observed, as there is natural interdependence of the diffusion of epic (dominant) traits, lyrical and dramatic birth of literature.

Radically changes the idea of the novel as a kind of story that has in its basis a dynamic, anecdotal or exceptional event and an unexpected ending. In distinguishing them the legitimate is the last feature. This is their qualitative difference. The implication of the novel genre contributes to an unexpected rethinking of the work. Function of the implication is to disguise the essence of the depicted – contributed to the actualization of this genre with its social nihilism in the Soviet period ("Lida" by Shalamov, "Вақыт" by Erubayev). The implication which isomorphically causes misalignment of the primary and secondary meanings of the text is rare in the story. This is the specificity of the genre, and without implication which requires diachronic reproduction of the link of times when rethinking the idea (similar to the novel).

In modern prose the story, transforming, adopts the "novel" form due to the global rethinking of centuries of accumulated literary heritage and therefore a natural stretching of its "memory" over time ("A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man"). Publicity, emancipation of thought caused an increase in the mobility of the story, not the novel. Synchronicity of the perception of ideas in the story

Consideration of the four-level system of the work led us to another important observation – isomorphism of the content and formal elements of the work that allows us tracing points of "deviations" of the literary system of epic genres from the criteria of literary merit. Isomorphism of signs of method and genre type appears on all four levels of the text. This can be explained by the importance of the method as the artist's worldview of the word serving as the basis for the literary integrity of the work. Genre type stipulated by the writer's assessment of the depicted phenomena of reality, also has a "cementing" value of the system of the work. Both method and genre type can unite artists of the word of various historical periods and creators of various genre forms and genres. Isomorphism of the traits of genre form is revealed in the second, third and fourth levels. While signs of the gender, style and genre are displayed only in the third and fourth stages. The first of them in the epic work can be displayed at the second stage – through the phenomenon of diffusion of gender

features. But only if the laboratory of the creative writing was originally connected with poetry ("A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" by Kenzheyev). After all, the generic peculiarity of small lyrical genres reflecting short-term experiences, is also evident on the second level of the work, when the upper limit of the present chronotope of the narrative is related to the first lines of the text.

With the further development of criteria for systemic analysis on a much broader scale (with inclusion of foreign literature) we clarify the prospect of research which is also made up of problems of genre form, genre of the novel with its types, isomorphic relationship of the chronotope function with the method and genre, the disclosure of the extent of compliance of the work with the level of literary merit in aspects of the categories of gender, method and style.

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