

## Letter as meta-genre (on the material of mash notes of Ukrainian writers at the end of XIX – beginning of the XX century)

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**Abstract.** The article deals with meta-genre character of a writer's letter in the context of mash notes of Ukrainian writers-modernists. To avoid terminological misunderstanding, the author suggests to consider fictional and nonfictional prose as upper genre, in the structure of which such meta-genres as epistolary, memoirs, diary, notebooks, autobiographies, necrology are functioning.

**Keywords:** letter, writer's epistolary, meta-genre, genre synthesis, genre matrix, upper-genre (hyper genre), letter genre modifications

**Introduction.** The writer's letter as a complicated genre formation hasn't been recently studied in a proper way in the literary studies. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the writer's letter goes beyond the literature alone, due to philosophical and psychological background of textual ideology. Epistolary art for epistolary communicators is the experience of selfhood and the experience of loneliness relief. The letter has become one of the methods to overcome personal unity. That is why the letter's purpose goes beyond the epistolary dialogue and transfers into artistic act of self-reconstruction, acquiring existentially important role for the writer. The letters are becoming the artistic field of developing the existential subjectivity for the author, and the beneficial material for the research of the author mythological process, author self-consciousness and the specifics of literary way of thinking for the literary scientists. Secondly, European literary studies defines a letter too broadly, as literature as a whole, that leads to the loosing of its genre boundaries. Zh. Derrida, the French philosopher and literature theorist, states that "a letter or epistolary is a combination of genres, including all genres and literature as a whole". Such metaphorical letter representation includes address, directing to the reader as immanent literature content. But the possibility of including all literary genres into the letter does not confirm the reality. In fact, a letter may include small genre forms into its compositional structure (poems, essays, novels, stories, literary critical articles, sketches, critical reviews, comments, etc.), but large genre forms (novels) cannot be included in the letter structure due to its text volume. These genres can be synthesized with a letter, creating new genres of fictional literature, e.g., a novel in letters or poems in letters. However its belonging to the belles-lettres is obvious. Taking into consideration the above-mentioned information, we believe that letter research as meta-genre will allow to define its genre peculiarities, to amplify the theory of this genre and to determine its place among other literary documentary genres of literature. All this determines the significance of this research.

**Brief review of publications.** The problem of diffusion as genre synthesis is conceptual in modern science of genres. Theorist of literature, Yu. Kovaliv, defines genre synthesis as "general tendency of such structures to integrity, unity and interconnection, poly-genre system, which is genetically driven art syncretism and the focus of writing on the artistic acquiring of the environment" [3, P. 44].

Theorists of literature focus their attention on the literary works, that are not included in the recently defined genre matrix, go beyond established forms of literature, develop-

ing a unique "upper" genre. Yu. Podlubnova, a Russian scientist, suggests to differentiate between mega-genre and meta-genre. She defines meta-genre not only as specific generalization, but outside genre structure, which inter genre syncretical formation is its main differentiating feature. V. Khaliziev, a Russian theorist of literature, considers that literary documentary plays a conceptual role in the structure of meta-genre constructions. This is because the approach to the literary documentary from the point of view of traditional genres does not allow to embrace aesthetic and intentional fields of non-fictional literature, that causes the necessity of using the meta-genre matrix.

In the Ukrainian literature studies the theoretical category of meta-genre is represented in the works of T. Bovsunivska, O. Halych, Yu. Kovaliv, E. Solovey, O. Stuzhuk, O. Rarytskiy. Yu. Kovaliv defines meta-genre as "outside genre, that embraces other genre forms" [6, V. 2, P. 30]. O. Halych determines this category broader: "it is a synthetic inter genre and adjoining formation that has all features of all three literary genres, including genres of science and art, united by specific feature" [3, P. 27]. Broader definition of meta-genre is proposed by O. Rarytskiy. He defines meta-genre as "a peculiar new imaginary model of the world or its parts, the structural peculiarity of which is genre syncretism, mega imaginary artistic structures, based on the author's ability to acquire artistic experience" [8, P. 43]. The above mentioned theorist of literature defines meta-genre as entire literary documentary prose, as outside genre and inter genre formation. He states that genre syncretism due to which "texts of various genres and spheres are read as the entire artistic integrity", is the main feature of literary documentary text [see 8, P. 37].

Summarizing theoretical results of modern genre studies, we can state that the notion "meta-genre" has two main meanings: in narrow sense it is a specific system of genres with certain characteristic features; in broad sense it is an outside genre structure, an established invariant of many historical means of artistic modeling of the world, ambivalent approach to understanding of which is connected with the elements that are beyond the literature – psychological, philosophical, ideological; it is a diffusion of various stylistic elements, that is meta-genre goes beyond the literature field.

**The objective** of the article is to reveal meta-genre characteristics of a letter as a whole outside genre structure.

**Matter and methods.** The research is carried out on the material of mash notes of the Ukrainian writers at the end of XIX – beginning of the XX century – I. Franko, O. Ko-

bylyanska, L. Ukrainka, V. Vynnychenko, A. Krymskyi, M. Kotsyubynskyi. Taking into account a great amount and dissimilarity of the original material, the research will be based on complex application of historic and genetic, descriptive, biographical and structural methods, as well as the method of material collection and systematization. Such complex approach will give an opportunity to carry out the analysis of epistolary works of the Ukrainian writers from the point of view of genre characteristics.

**Results and its discussion.** On the basis of the above stated theoretical results we can state that literary documentary prose, to which epistolary belongs, can be widely described in the context of meta-genre, because it is characterized by the combination of the following meta-genre features:

**The unity of literary features and features that go beyond literature that comprise the literary and documentary integrity of the text.**

In the context of mash notes of V. Vynnychenko and O. Kobylyanska we can demonstrate the unity of literary, philosophical and psychological elements in the structure of epistolary text. The letters of O. Kobylyanska and the letters of V. Vynnychenko to his lover RosaliyaLifshyts were based on the philosophical ideas of F. Nitsche, particularly the idea of male domination over female one.

The beginning of love V. Vynnychenko associates with so called "lower instincts". Differentiation of concepts "love" and "affection" by the writer is similar to the division of love into Eros and Agape. And according to the epigram of V. Vynnychenko that "love is blossom that grows up rare vegetable, that is love. There is no fruit without blossom, and not every blossom turns into fruit" we can state that erotic love is primary, but true feelings can arise out of this love. The research of life and epistolary experience of V. Vynnychenko as "a collector of male victories", and one of the most important Don Juans of Ukrainian modern literature, shows the maintenance of erotic love discourse, so little developed in the literary works of Ukrainian writers. Vector similarity of "love concept" in the philosophical tractate of F. Nitsche and literary documentary works of V. Vynnychenko is determined by the similarity of life experience, common emotional stress – parental instinct failure. Also common topics of philosophic reflections of German speculator irrationalist and Ukrainian modernist writer have become love and marriage, woman sacrifice in marriage, loneliness and death. But not all their epigrams are identical, that is why we are not talking about direct translation, but interpretation, transformation of Nitsche's ideas on the attitude of life, epistolary texts and belles-lettres of V. Vynnychenko.

Intimate epistolary of O. Kobylyanska with philosophical conceptions of Nitsche is similar because of loneliness motive in her literary works. Loneliness in the literary works of Nitsche and O. Kobylyanska is represented as one of the forms of self-cognition and self-deepening. So, Zarathustra of Nitsche goes to the mountains to hide from people, to enjoy his spirit and loneliness. In the autobiography in letters O. Kobylyanska confesses that loneliness stimulates her artistic work ("Loneliness, soul loneliness is disgusting feeling for people that surround me, it gave me drive to write everything that worried me" [2, P. 214]). After that loneliness has become psychological form of melancholy ("Despite being cheerful for hours,

even a naughty girl, alone I was feeling sad, almost melancholy – I was not feeling well" [2, P. 210]).

The development of genre stylistic modification system, genre syncretism, among various genres of belles-lettres (letter-confession, letter-poetry in prose, letter-novel), as well as forms of literature (e.g. open letter, publicistic writing in letters is considered to be syncretism of publicistic writing and belles-lettres).

The main genre stylistic modifications of a mash note of XIX-XX century are as follows:

*Artistic letter with elements of poetry in prose*, in which lyrical beginning dominates. More often such modification of intimate letter can be found in the literary works of Lesya Ukrainka and M. Kotsyubynskyi.

The letter of L. Ukrainka to the death sick Serhiy Mergynskyi, written by the writer during living together with her lover in Minsk "your letters always smell like faded roses..." is traditionally considered by theorists of literature as poetry in prose. Nevertheless this letter was also written as a poetical drama "Obsessed" during one of the most difficult nights of the writer near the bed of sin Mergynskyi ("poor, faded blossom"). In the notes to the academic publication of works of L. Ukrainka to this novel, epistolary form of this novel is defined, that lives its own literary life and goes beyond the boundaries of epistle as a whole. This letter is endowed with rhythmic melody, common for poetry ("Oh, I have known another life, full of harsh happiness, filled with sorrow and grief, that burnt and worried me and forced me to wring hands and hit, hit against the ground with a wild desire to die, to disappear from the world, where happiness and grief were madly interwoven" [9, V. 1, P. 257]), and alarming alliteration of "r" ("Through the darkness to the space I raise my hands to you: take me, take me with you, this will be my rescue. Oh, rescue me, my darling! May white and pink, red and blue roses fade" [9, V. 1, P. 257]).

In the letters of M. Kotsyubynskyi to his wife Vira Deisha, he realized intense detalization of his story telling ("I am going to finish my journey at last, that may have bored you. Where can I pad out this trifle!" [11, P. 48]), but he may have planned to use epistolary descriptions as artistic markers to the future belles-lettres writings. That is why most of his letters are read as poetry in prose, that give us reasons to talk about intimate epistolary of M. Kotsyubynskyi as epistolary prose.

*Autobiography in letters* is a genre development of modern epistolary, because we cannot find syncretic genre in the romantic model of the letter. Autobiography in letters is a poly-stylistic and poly-genre formation, where letter genre (with its genre modifications of "epistolary critics" and "epistolary publicism") and documentary artistic genre of autobiography are interrelated. Such genre modification can be found in epistolary heritage of O. Kobylyanska ("autobiography in letters to professor Smal-Stotskyi") and the autobiography of A. Krymskyi in the letters to his best fellow B. Hrinchenko.

*Epistolary publicism.* Such modification of epistolary genre can be found in the letters of I. Franko and A. Krymskyi.

Scientific problem of epistolary subject matter of A. Krymskyi has become a determinant of the complicated genre structure. The main topic of scientific discussions within epistolary text is linguistics problem, particularly Ukrain-

ian spelling norms, language clarity problems, etc. More often A. Krymskyi holds epistolary publicistic discussions with Ohonovskyi, Hrinchenko and L. Ukrainka.

Syncretism of epistolary and publicistic styles is also significant for intercultural epistolary dialogues of I. Franko with E. Ozheshko. Reflection of vertical context in the letters of I. Franko to the progressive writer Eliza Ozheshko, representing various interests of Halytskyi and Polish middle class at the end of the XIX century, has become very important cultural marker. One of the main constant of these letters is evaluation / reevaluation of the literary process in Ukraine, particularly in Halychyna of that time.

The main semantic code of intercultural communication of E. Ozheshko and I. Franko is inter-popularization of national literatures. I. Franko skillfully highlights the key points not only in the sphere of Ukrainian writing, but also in history, geography and linguistics. He suggests Ozheshko to get acquainted with the works of Draho-manov, Ohonovskyi, Barvinskyi, Kostomarov as the outstanding scientists and thinkers of that time.

*Epistolary critics* is common for epistolary heritage of A. Krymskyi, I. Franko, O. Kobylanska, L. Ukrainka.

The attempt of creation of a certain literary canon, hierarchy can be found in the epistolary dialogue of I. Franko with E. Ozheshko. In one of the letters he suggests the writer to pay attention to the works of P. Myrnyi (particularly, his highly evaluated novel "Prostitute"), and among Halytskyi writers he emphasizes only the works of Yu. Fedkovych and N. Kobrynska. He has recognized the talent of N. Kobrynska since her first novel "For a living". I. Franko also informs E. Ozheshko about N. Kobrynska's attempt to publish "Female Almanac", showing her favour to the activation of so-called "woman consciousness" in Halychyna. Three years later E. Ozheshkowrote autobiographical novel "Mr. Hraba" (1869), so lively describing "woman question". The problem of women was also described in her publicistic work "A few words about women" (1870) and fiction "Late love", "Sylfidy", "Vatslava's diary", "Marta", "Interrupted harmony".

Epistolary critics can be often found in the letters of L. Ukrainka to O. Kobylanska. Critical review of the novel "Ill-mannered woman" can be found in the letter, dating January, 30, 1900: "What a great novel "Ill-mannered woman"! What a wonderful impression it made on me. So picturesque landscapes! There is no writer as you that can portray the landscapes so nice. I do not know how can I appreciate you for that, because I like landscapes in literature very much and I always feel lack for that in our writing" [4, P. 54], further she analyses the character of Paraska, gracefully talk about sexual and erotic character of this novel: "Do not think that I do not like this novel, there is nothing rude about it, the strongest places are like fortissimo for a good pianist, that can never be rude" [4, P. 67].

Epistolary critics and epistolary publicism of a modern letter is featured by fragmentarity, the ability to change topics without any presuppositions or justifications, points of view. As a rule, it is an immediate "live" literary emotion, or better to say, an emotion to the literature, in which unawareness of literary stereotype and independence from scientific practicability or argumentation create a feeling of authenticity, unbiased evaluations and positions of epistolary communicators.

**The composition of documentary characters in the light of artistic worldview.** In O. Kobylanska's letters to V. Stefanyk their documentary biographic characters are realized through literary concepts of "Red Rose" and "White Lily". Their letters can be read as novels or poems in prose, the main motive of which is the soul and heart confession of epistolary communicators. In the tradition of the English lingua culture of the Victorian Period a White Lily symbolized spiritual and platonic affection, and a Red Rose symbolized physical love and women's sexuality. In one of the letters to V. Stefanyk, O. Kobylanska's virtual confessor/communicator is her own loneliness, that is her alter melancholic ego. V. Stefanyk supports a metalanguage, suggested by O. Kobylanska, and in his letter's response he uses this symbol of pure and platonic affection to represent the doubtfulness of his feelings: "Now your lily is mine. I carried it bitterly. On my way I was afraid of having burnt it in my hands. In the forest I bathed it like a baby" [5, P. 79], but afterwards he models the following situation: "I must tell you: I killed your lily. I do not like this flower – it is so white that a man must spoil it. May angels keep it because it is their flower... I love a red flower and a yellow one... I will give you a yellow and a red flower. And your lilies will die" [5, P. 79-80]. Apart from writers' epistolary, these symbols find their implementation in belles-lettres.

The combination of the main epistolary features gives us the grounds to interpret a letter as a genre. However, most Ukrainian theorists of literature define meta-genre as literary and documentary prose, but within its boundaries they talk about the system of literary and documentary genres, that function in this genealogical matrix, particularly in letters, memoirs, diaries, autobiographies, necrologies, literary portraits, notebooks, etc. We should also take into account that each of these genres have their own system of genre and stylistic modifications. To avoid some terminological misunderstanding we suggest to divideliterary and documentary literature into "upper-genre" and "meta-genre" (according to Yu. Podlubnova), i.e. is literary and documentary prose is considered to be "upper-genre" in which such meta-genres as epistolary, memoirs, diaries, notebooks, autobiographies, necrologies, etc. are functioning.

If we interpret meta-genre as "leading genre", on the basis of which genealogical modifications occur, a letter has its meta-genre history in world literature. A letter as meta-genre has become a basis for the creation of new epistolary forms, e.g. a publicistic letter-article ("Letters about Nature" by O. Hertsen), letters of philosophical tractates, a novel in letters (popular in XVIII century), letter-report ("Letters from Africa" by H. Senkevych), poetical letter-message ("Alive, Dead and Not Born" by T. Shevchenko).

**Conclusions.** Research of epistolary as meta-genre, as an integral structure that goes beyond genre, will allow theorists of literature to discover new sense fields in epistolary texts, the peculiarities of authors' intentions on the way to transcendency, to explore genre stylistic modifications of a letter as genre "expansion" that lead to the creation of "genre in genre". Finally, the interpretation of a letter as meta-genre expands the boundaries of available instruments, referring a letter to different discourses (ethical, psycholinguistic, cultural or historical).

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