

GENEALOGICAL SPECIFICITY OF THE POETIC EPISTLE



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The article systematizes and generalizes the theoretical reflections of the genre epistle in the works of Ukrainian and Russian literary critics of the XIX – XX centuries.

Also we analyze the specific intergeneric nature of artistic and semantic existence of the genre epistle, its ability to engage in artistic interaction with other lyric genres.

The article investigates the controversial questions of definition of genre and generic assignment of the genre epistle, the terminological problems of correlation of genre epistle with astrology and poetic letter. Dominant and the optional characteristics that define the genre specifics of the epistle are characterized in the article.

Key words: *the poetic kind, lyrical genre, message, epistles, dialogic organization, addressee.*

The question of genealogical specificity of the genre of poetic epistle in modern literary criticism is one of the most debatable (the works of O. Kwiatkowskyi, L. Ginzburg, I. Poplavska, L.Kikhnei. Ye. Dmitriiev, V. Rumiantsev, I. Romanov, S. Artiomov, etc.). Summarizing the range of issues raised by modern literary critics, there are two most controversial questions of genre theory of the epistle as: 1) the question of gender appliance of the epistle; 2) the genre specification of the epistle. The purpose of the study is the systematization and generalization of theoretical reflections of genre of the epistle in the writings of literary critics of the XIX – XX centuries.

1. The question gender appliance of the epistle.

Starting from the XVIII century the theorists of the genre, tentatively determined the gender appliance of the epistle, or generally ignored this question. Literary critics focused on the poetics of classicism (I. Born, I. Ryzhskiy, etc.), correlated the epistle with the so-called didactic kind of poetry, because the poets-classicists enjoyed this genre often with didactic and instructive purpose. I. Levytskyi in the work «The Course of Russian literature» (St. Petersburg, 1812) opposed on the grounds of gender appliance of the epistles and the message, the first of which was correlated with the didactic, and the second with the lyric native literature. P. Kuznetsov noted «there was no even unanimity to what kind of literature to belong the epistle - to the lyrics or didactics. The authors of poetic and educational books of this period are actually sprayed an epistle between the adjacent genres or transferred the signs of literary writing on it» (Кузнецов, 2001: 2).

The difficulty of an univalent correlation of the genre epistle with a certain literary origin first of all is determined by the specific features of its semantic status. The verse form, which can be provided to the epistle, determines its genealogical connection with the lyrics, but the epistle can be prose, and not only artistic, but also the form of an ordinary domestic letter, which indicates the possibility of its correlation with the epic. In an artistic form of poetic messages, in addition to elements of epic story-narrative manner, can be used and elements of dialogue between the author, the addresser and addressee, which in turn, makes possible the convergence of genre message with dramatic generic form of the construction of the art work.

The generic uncertainty of the genre epistle determines the inconsistency regarding to its terminological definitions. Besides the term «message or epistle», scientists often use both conceptual definition – «epistles» and sometimes – «verse letter». Many researchers do not see a clearly defined conceptual difference between these terms and taking the latter as synonymous. Other scholars try to avoid such double or even triple synonymous definition conceptually, and theoretically, such position is not argued (these scientists often use the term «epistle», which is recognized as a kind of universal and commonly used). Only a few studies, mostly those where the theoretical tasks are clearly defined, the above definitions of the terminology are distinguished by those or other theoretical features. Most often, the term «epistle» is used for naming the archaic form of the poetic message, which was practiced in the eighteenth century by the Russian poets-classicists, and the poetry letter as the epistle and dedication (and sometimes other poetic genres like the ode and satire) was considered as the genealogical forms of the bigger general meaning of addressed lyric

(Дмитриев, 2004). «The transformation of the epistle in its own message – as believes L. Kikhnei, exists in the poetry of sentimentalists. It is connected with the change of the dominant characteristics of the genre that is defined already not by the didactic purpose, but by the communicative contact, which is valuable in itself. The didacticism of the classic epistle did not fulfill to the new world attitude of sentimentalists. The life of the heart, the value of companionship, the significance of the subjective world – all this amounted an aesthetic object of epistle and individualized the personality of the author, and the addressee» (Кихней, 1985: 31).

Occasionally, the message and the epistle are distinguished by another features, as it made O. Kwiatkowskyi in his work «Poetychnyi slovnyk»: «the message is one of the most ancient genres of monologue poetry, it is a great work in which the poet, as if conversing with the addressee, expresses his thoughts on a certain important issue. It is known from the ancient literature as «Message to the Prisons» of Horace, which is a treatise about poetic art» (Квятковский, 1966: 220); «Epistle is a literary composition, usually used in verse, in the form of a letter, which contains the views of the author about a certain subject; as a literary genre epistle is known in Russia since the XVIII century» (Квятковский, 1966: 357).

2. The genre specificity of the epistle.

The questions about genre specifics of the epistle are perhaps the most controversial in modern literary criticism. O. Sumarokov, the Russian poet and theorist of verse of the eighteenth century, considered the epistle as flexible genre, the style of which is caused by features of its content. Genre uncertainty about the epistle, its ability to adapt easily to genealogical sign of other lyrical genres stated almost all theorists of the romantic era, most of which served as a poet – proved genealogical metamorphosis of the genre epistle in his own poetic practice.

Modern literary critics indicate on the universalism of the genre epistle: «the epistle never demanded clearly fixed poetic form, because it might be a sonnet and a stanza, an ode and an ephramy. The formal feature of the genre is that it simulates letter in bigger or smaller extent» (Давыдова, Пронин, 2003: 97). The ability of the epistle to change its «genre view», adapting it to genealogical characteristics of other poetic forms, however, it does not mean that it is devoid of clear genre points. So, on the one hand, not denying the ability of the epistle to adapt to genealogical sign of other lyrical genres, the Russian researcher L. Kikhnei, on the other hand, recognizes their own distinctive signs in the genre epistle: «If take into consideration the wide range of different views and try to formulate a common genre characteristic of the epistle,

then, it should have to emphasize the following aspects. The epistle is a poetic work which is directed on some real addressee (personalized or generalized), named in the text of the work. The main thing in the epistle is a setting for «dialogue» with the addressee on this or that relevant to the author topic (the subject of conversation can be the relationship between the correspondents, their life and creative attitudes, philosophical, aesthetic, socio-political issues). The addressee of the epistle can be named directly (explicitly) – in the name of personal use, as well as indirectly (implicitly). In the last, the reference to it is placed in the artistic structure of the work, which finds expression in the appeals, requests, etc., and also in the foreseeable acquaintance of the recipient with a unique situation, depicted in the work. The epistle as a genre is traced as a directive on the dialogue with the addressee. In this case, it is distinguished from other related genres, which also include specific addressing, but have their own functional purpose that defines the essence of their genre (in the literature of the eighteenth century: praise in an ode, ridicule in satire, in the epigram, etc.). Satirical or single elements appear in the epistle according to the status that is attributed to the addressee, which creates the illusive genre uncertainty of the epistle and its ability to imitate the signs of other genres» (Кихней, 1985: 19–20).

As L. Kikhnei, the most theorists name the basic distinguishing feature of genre epistle – the factor of addressing that is realized in its artistic structure, which creates an appropriative communicative situation which is inherent only to this genre: «the dominant genre of the epistle is a communicative situation (its characteristics are highlighted by R. O. Jakobson), which implies the existence of an «ideal» interlocutor, who becomes the alter ego of the author. This situation causes a special «intimate» meaning and a special message code that is understandable to the author and to the addressee, «letter body» as a form of contact and a «personal» context of the epistle. Regardless of the genre variants of declaration (epistle, the letter, message), as a rule, the message usually contains a direct (naming) or indirect (specifying the addressee or address) of the author's labeling of the genre in the title» (Поэтика, 2008: 178); «lyrical genre, that simulates the letter to the real or notional, unreal, fictitious addressee. The formal features of the genre are 1) the title that contains the name of the addressee; 2) the presence of a communicative situation; 3) addressed speech of the lyrical subject, addressed to the other speaker» (Теория литературных жанров, 2011: 118). Т. Kruglova believes that «a working definition of the genre epistle is associated with the category of lyrical addressing: the epistle is a poetic work, designed for the real addressee (individual or generalized), named in the text of the poem, a piece that has a functional installation on the «interview» with

the addressee on actual for the author topic» (Круглова, 2010: 37). A similar definition formulates P. Kuznetsov: «the epistle is a lyrical poem that focuses on the imitation of dialogue with the addressee and the last should be mentioned in the text of the poem or its title, if this simulation has a formal, conditional character. / ... / The thesis of contemporaries is that the epistle is «only» a letter in verse, not uncritically to accept – even those examples of the genre that look close to the letters, just use some of their formal features as art techniques» (Кузнецов, 2001: 61). The factor of addressing, according to another researcher, A. Borovska, «it is genre determined, that allows to distinguish between the dialogic lyric and the forms of epistle, dedications and letters. The dialogical poetics of the epistle and related genre forms suggests an emphatic monologue addressed to the addressee. Formally, the addressing is in a title complex, in the system of common nouns, of rhetorical structures, etc., that is, in such an aesthetic organization that suggestively affects on the conventional attracted listeners. Dialogic intention, and its concomitant author's emotion are the main factors of genre making factors, that are organizing the structure and the verbal fabric of the addressed poems, and epistles (with explicitly addressing), and dedications (with implicit addressing)» (Боровская, 2009: 17).

Dialogical setting, that was introduced by the author in the artistic-communicative structure of his lyrical work, is the dominant genealogical feature not only of the genre epistle, but addressed to the lyrics as a whole. Dmitriiev noted, that «the addressed genres never coincide in their «flexibility» with introspective genres: love meditation or elegy, even if there is an addressee. The basis of the love monologues is not a setting of the dialogue, but feeling's reflection of the lyrical hero, the analysis of his inner world, which sometimes is realized indirectly through «sphere of existence» of another individual. Installations on the communication is the main factor that organizes the structure and verbal fabric of addressed genres. Their content is always «converted» to the addressee, focused on its perception» (Дмитриев, 2004: 321).

However, it should be noted that not all theorists in the genre specific of the epistle focus on the factor addressing or even just on the presence of a specific communicative situation. So, G. Pospelov does not consider the communicative orientation as feature of genre epistle. He thinks that the peculiar feature of the epistle addressed to the addressee is only the technique that performs the function of motivation: «the message is motivating of lyrical meditation which begins with a reference to that or another person. This is usually only the external occasion for expression, which in itself does not give grounds to speak about what and why the

poet speaks to somebody. This technique of motivation may be used in different genres – in the ode, elegy, romance, lyrical satire, epigram, etc.» (Поспелов, 1972: 154). Yu. Lotman pointed on the stylistic neutrality of the epistle which gives the author possibility to speak freely about his philosophical views, about his own impressions of a particular event, and his mood or health, he says: «the epistle is not an abstract thought, addressed to one person, but a lyrical poem in which we hear the voice of the poet. Sometimes it can become like a confession, which deals with deep personal experiences» (Лотман, 1999: 181).

On the other hand, some theorists, while recognizing the dialogical status as the main factor of the installation of the genre epistle, also express some warnings regarding to the specification of dialogue realized in the texts. Ye. Dmitriev certifies «there is no complete picture of communication in these addressed genres. It is told only about dialogic instruction, but not about the process of dialogue. Since the interlocutor as the native speaker is left outside of the literary work, then we have got the monologically organized, but logically oriented dialogue, as one of the stages of the dialogue that is happening now, in real time. This creates an openness of addressed genres, their involvement of their vital context, initiates the poetic responses of the addressee (especially prevalent in the environment of the romantic poets and the symbolists). The correspondent is not so much the object of experience, as the subject of communication» (Дмитриев, 2004: 319).

The vector of scientific research in theoretical reflections of the genre epistle is not only the opposition of the last in genealogical aspect of other lyric forms, but also is the provision of complex of its internal features, and therefore the development of typological models of genre organization of the epistle. The theoretical arguments and basic principles of the solution to the problem in different literary critics are totally different. As it is known, the foundation of any typological models of genre, as its generalized theoretical entity, concrete the historical material, the historical modifications and modifications of the genre that provide the most appropriate isolation and the facultative, “dispensable”, and the dominant, «immutable» characteristics, that form a kind of canon or, in other words, the invariant model of the genre.

The given points of unity and differences in the theoretical approaches of different researchers due to the construction of the typological models of genre organization of the epistle are such dominant features of the genre, such as: 1) actualized in the work situation of addressing, installation on the dialogue between the author (addresser) and an addressee; 2) mandatory references in the text about both of the dialogue

participants, that is, and the sender and addressee; 3) the existence in the text of the specific communicative organization, designed for the mediation of the perception of content to the potential recipient, therefore (because of the impossibility of real communication in real time) is implemented in the form of an imaginary dialogue, which simulates the direct, live communication; 4) the presence in the text (most often in its title) indication on direct or implicit addressing; 5) the composition of the text that is based on the use of forms of «inverted speech.» The optional characteristics of the epistle may belong to: 1) thematic and stylistic organization of the content and form of the text that is addressed (relatively free from inherent in other genres thematically quite tough style requirements, it is the basis thanks to, the message is easy to come into a variety of configurations of genre connections with other poetic forms, more or less organically adapting to it or, on the contrary, adapting them to itself); 2) clear fixity of signs of generic affiliation form, where is the communication (content of addressed may be implemented in the form of a lyric monologue of the sender, and in the form of epic narrative, dramatizing dialogue, and contamination of all these three forms); 3) the presence in the text of the elements of the so-called «home-semantics», that is a kind of code, information in advance and is certainly known to the sender and the addressee, which, on the one hand, is a condition of successful communication, on the other, is, the key to the possibility of using the potential disagreement, implications, covert sense, and a certain ideological context, or in intimate circumstances between the two parties, which are undesirable for general publication; 4) a statement of the circumstances which were the reason for the author to appeal to his addressee, time, and place; 5) greater or lesser degree of details of the addressed subject content (interior, portrait, landscape elements and the forms of their thematic, temporal and spatial delineated). However, in identifying the genre features of the epistle we should remember that the signs of a certain literary tradition, they cannot be considered canonical, once and forever established. Inversely, the essence of the genre epistle is in large measure a variable quantity, determined by the characteristics of a particular stage of historical development of literature.

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