

History of the English Short Story (Critical Review of Sources)

¹ Aripova Halima Aripovna

Abstract

the article notes that the study of minor epic genres is still widespread in contemporary Anglo-American literary criticism; with the joint efforts of several generations of researchers and different schools, the factual foundations of the English short story have been established, but its theory is still very underdeveloped.

Keywords: epic genres, literary criticism, short story, theory, literature, short narrative, prose.

¹ Associate professor, Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences Russian Language and Literature department
Bukhara State University

I. Introduction

Perhaps no genre in English literature is as controversial as the short story. These disputes began at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and today have already become an independent problem.

English critics themselves are rather skeptical about the level of theoretical understanding of the short story genre. One of the works, which begins with a very revealing section - "Critical neglect", speaks directly about the "immaturity" of his theory.

There is no stable and generally accepted definition of this genre. Modern researchers confine themselves to an inductive description of a short story and a statement of brevity as its main genre feature. A. Scott, author of a popular literary reference book, considers a story to be "a short narrative in prose". At the same time, it remains unclear to which side of the literary work the criterion of brevity refers - to the content.

YAN recommendation widget or form. As a result, the circumstance is not taken into account that in the small genre "quantity, size appears ... as the most obvious expression of qualitative features".

II. Literature review

Some literary scholars, speaking about the brevity of the story, limit its size to a certain number of words. For example, R. Kassil believes that "any work of fiction from one to fifteen thousand words in size" can be classified as a story genre. G. Shaw is guided by the same quantitative indicator, defining a story as "a relatively short narrative (up to ten thousand words), which should cause one definite impression". But the external volume of the text of a work cannot serve as a defining feature of the genre, if only because the history of literature knows many examples when stories exceeded stories in the number of words, and those, in turn, were not inferior in size to novels.

At first glance, those definitions of a genre that takes as a basis not the volume of the work itself, but the volume of its plot, are deprived of this shortcoming. The English literary critic E. Bennet, based on the study of a German short story, comes to the conclusion that "a story is a prose work, shorter in size than a novel, reproducing one exceptional situation, one event or one character trait." A. Lazarus and H. Smith, characterizing the story as "a relatively small work of art in prose", point to the "small duration of the action" and "a small number of characters." However, this point of view also has a certain flaw. After all, there are novels like Ulysses, which tell about one day of human life, and, on the contrary, stories like Kipling's Lispit or Conrad's Lagoon, in which, on an extremely limited area of \u200b\u200ba small genre, virtually the entire life of the hero fits.

III. Analysis

The existing definitions of a short story are not satisfactory for two more reasons. Firstly, in the works of Western literary critics, we are talking mainly about static, closed-isolated contours and components of the genre, and not about the short story as a mobile historical-functional system. When analyzing the material of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, or even modern literature, researchers largely proceed from the theoretical propositions formulated back in the last century by Poe and Matthews.

Secondly, when studying the story, as, indeed, other genre forms, it is necessary to keep in mind

that "the development of genres ... went to an ever greater diversity, to an ever greater individualization" and that the theoretical concept of a genre, in this case a story, does not yet determine the features of those individual forms that this genre takes in the work of great writers. That is, it is necessary to proceed from the complex dialectical connection between the general features of the genre and individual genre forms in the living practice of artistic creativity.

The increased interest of researchers raises the question of the origins of the short story. After all, it is in the historical genesis that the essential, dominant features of the genre are revealed.

But there is no unanimity on this issue either. English and American literary scholars cannot definitively agree on either the time of origin or the pedigree of the short story. Some literary historians, based on the thought of a long and uninterrupted tradition of the genre, include Chaucer's Canterbury Tales and moralizing stories from the Acts of Rome, essays from the early 18th century and Dickensian Sketches of Boz. Some of the critics generally refuse to see a historical phenomenon in a short story, raising its genesis to biblical parables and legends.

Another group of researchers tends to view the short story as a relatively late phenomenon. W. Alley, the author of a major work on the English-language story, begins the history of the Russian short story with W. Scott. A. Collins insists that the short story as a special genre emerged in English literature only at the end of the 19th century. E. Bowen claims that this is "young art", "a child of our century."

In Soviet literary criticism, the question of the genesis of small epic genres in English literature was not specifically discussed, but nevertheless, a point of view was established on the short story as a historical category. Y. Kovalev believes that the short story in English literature is a relatively young genre and one can seriously talk about it only in connection with the literature of modern times. D. Urnov agrees with Y. Kovalev, according to whom English literature did not have the richest novelistic basis.

IV. Discussion

The question of the time of the origin of the short story will be clarified in many respects if we clarify what is meant by this term. The very concept of "short story" as a designation of a literary genre was established only in the 80s of the XIX century in connection with the flourishing of short stories in American literature. Prior to this, there was no generally accepted English term for the definition of a small genre. Irving called his works "sketches" and "tales". Poe and Hawthorne also wrote "tales", and when Poe, in a well-known article on Hawthorne's story, uttered a laudatory word for the novella, he meant precisely "tale".

Already critics of the beginning of the 20th century drew attention to the ambiguity and ambiguity of the term "short story". H. Canby wrote about his "uncertainty" in 1909. In his opinion, the genre corresponding to the short story "could be easily found in the literature of ancient Greece, Buddhist India, medieval France and Arabia." The same idea was repeated later by M. Werli: "... More and more difficulties arise in terminology (story, short story, short story, etc.). The dominant phenomenon, above all in the latest Anglo-Saxon literature, is a short story ..." "

At present, in the critical everyday life of English literary scholars dealing with a small genre, there continues to be a number of concepts and terminological designations - story, short story, long short story, novella, tale - between which it is sometimes difficult to draw a clear line.

Such terminological costs can be partly avoided if we try to single out at least two meanings in

the very concept of "short story": on the one hand, the small epic genre as a whole, and on the other hand, a typological variety of this genre form corresponding to the term "story". In this case, we have the right to state with complete certainty that the short story in the sense of "a small genre in general" is indeed an ancient form and its history is difficult to review, while in the sense of "story" it receives a relatively late development in English literature.

The source that played a decisive role in the formation of the modern English short story was tale, a short genre form that gravitates towards a free plot construction and a fairy tale style of narration. By itself, the concept of "tale" has a fairly long history. At least it is found in Chaucer. In the 19th century, this genre designation was used by Dickens, Kipling, Conrad.

Another peculiar predecessor of the story was the essay, the tradition of which in English literature goes from the essays of Addison and Style through the prose of the "London" romantics to the "Essays of Boz" and "The Book of Snobs". Soviet literary critics rightly wrote about the extraordinary genre syncretism of the English moralistic essay, which was of inestimable importance not only for the development of the novel, but also for the formation of the short story genre.

The intra-genre classification of a short story, or "second-level typology", if by "first-level typology" we mean genre-generic classification, is also debatable.

The principles of typology of small epic genres existing in Anglo-American literary criticism reveal two extremes. In one case, the systematization of the story is carried out within the boundaries of a certain amorphous genre form, without taking into accounts not only the real diversity of intra-genre varieties, but even the signs of a literary type. Thus, G. Bates singles out the phases of myth and legend, fable and parable, anecdote and essay in the history of a short story, uniting folklore and literary, prose and verse, plot and descriptive forms under the auspices of one genre. L. Stevenson, without any reservations, refers fairy tales and folk ballads to the genre of a short story. D. Gardner and L. Dunlop also admit the possibility of coexistence within the genre of the story itself with a sketch, a fable, an anecdote.

Another common way of systematizing small genres in Western literary criticism is a classification based on a mixture of several heterogeneous features. For example, U. Pylen distinguishes two main types of small genre in modern American literature - the short story of morals and the short story of the grotesque. In the first case, a certain genre content is meant, in the second case, the artistic principle of the embodiment of an image, mode or phenomenon of reality.

It would seem that a more objective classification was proposed by another American literary critic K. Lubbers, according to whom the English-language short story includes two intra-genre varieties - a story about initiation and a story with epiphany, which became the dominant type of short prose in the 20th century.

Demonstrated for the first time by Joyce in The Dubliners, the story with epiphany produced, according to Lubbers, a real revolution in the field of short prose form. The small genre has freed itself from the mechanical constraint of the plot; the unexpected novelistic finale has ceased to be a decisive structural component. Each element of the story has gained weight and significance.

The story with epiphany is subdivided by Lubbers - on the basis of the so-called "hierarchical principle of dominant" - into several types. The first of them, called "plot about one", tells about a single exceptional situation removed from the chain of events. The second type - "plot about a

few" - offers a description of already established characters or states. Finally, the third type - "plot about many" - covers the widest possible life and characterological content.

As a defining genre feature of the story, Lubbers has in mind the human condition: the concept of initiation implies the process of the hero's awareness of his transition from ignorance to knowledge, from innocence to experience; epiphany is defined, following Joyce, as "the sudden discovery by the hero or reader of the hidden essence of things." But the thing is that Lubbers depicts an abstract person in general, cut off from social ties and social functions, and the world is perceived as a derivative of human essence. Thus, the abstract-idealistic basis of the critic's worldview does not allow him to recognize his typology of the small genre as scientific, although a number of private judgments about the story with epiphany are of particular interest in themselves.

Finally, disagreements among researchers arise in connection with the peculiarities of the artistic structure and style of the short story. At the same time, they often break the form and content; do not take into account the integrity of the artistic phenomenon, absolutizing individual features and components of the story. S. O'Faoline considers the compactness and suggestiveness of style, as well as subtext, to be distinctive features of the poetics of a short story. F. O'Connor, seeing the specifics of a small genre in the nature of the embodiment of time, tries to extend Lessing's concept of a "fruitful moment" to a short story. Ya. Wright names the unity of impression, the moment of turning point and the proportionality of the structure among the essential features of the story.

A more extensive description of the storytelling technique based on the material of English, American and Canadian literature of the 19th-20th centuries was offered by G. Bonheim, who widely used the principles of quantitative analysis. But not numerous statistical data and quantitative indicators in themselves, but an underestimation of the content level and semantic conditionality of each genre-forming element of the work testify to the formal-structural approach of the researcher to fiction.

And W. Allen, in accordance with his sociological methodology, is limited to only the most general judgments regarding the specifics of the individual manner of the leading masters of the short story. Thus, he mentions the dynamic plot of Kipling's stories, Joyce's epiphanies, and the lyricism of Mansfield's style.

V. Conclusion

As far as Soviet literary criticism is concerned, it has little critical material on English short prose, concentrated in separate articles, prefaces, and dissertations. Until now, the English story has been considered in our country mainly from the point of view of the individual ideological and artistic searches of writers. The role of the short story has not yet been determined either in the general historical and literary process, or in the creative evolution of major writers.

Thus, the logic of further study of the English short story should lead from the resolution of particular problems to the formulation of more complex and broad problems.

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