

The Transformation of the Genres in the Contemporary Polish Novel

Žabkar Ana

Assistant of University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Slavonic Studies,
Ljubljana, Slovenia

Writers who made their first appearance in the Polish literary scene at the end of the eighties and in the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century in their work in a postmodern way shape the old genres and forms. Postmodern literature is the result of the knowledge that everything has already been written, that there is nothing left to write about, writers can just repeat old patterns. On the other side iteration adds something new to the original, alters the original. Contemporary novelists in their literary works transform the old patterns; their novels are characterized by genre syncretism, the mixing of genres, styles, mixing of high and trivial literature.

Authors in their novels use old genres, but they do not blindly follow the rules, just the opposite – they transform them, leave out what they do not need and add something new. For example, Andrzej Stasiuk in the novel *Jak zostałem pisarzem* uses his own autobiography to transform the autobiographic novel, in novels *Dziewięć* and *Biały kruk* uses the genre of crime fiction. Paweł Huelle in his novels *Weiser Dawidek*, *Castorp* and *Ostatnia wieczerza* transforms detective fiction. The novel *Weiser Dawidek* is a quest of a long lost friend from childhood, who disappeared during child play. Narrator Heller, now an adult, seeks the answers about what really happened on the day of disappearance of Dawid Weiser. He searches for the truth, visits the participants in the game and childhood friends. However, every time he encounters closed doors. It appears as if the participants deleted the event from memory. There are no expected solutions of secrecy required by the classical detective fiction, on the last page of the novel, readers do not know anything more than at the beginning of reading the novel, and so does the detective himself.

However, the novel *Weiser Dawidek* is not only a detective fiction, contemporary novel rarely uses form of only one genre; characteristic for it is genre syncretism, thus the abovementioned work can be also read as bildungsroman and literature of homeland (mała ojczyzna). The term mała ojczyzna is related to the changed borders of Polish territory after the World War II and consecutively to the migration of thousands of Poles. Przemysław Czapliński in his book *Wzniosłe tęsknoty* defines characteristics of this genre: the authors describe the land where "no one is a foreigner, although everyone is different" [Czapliński: 106]. On the territories that Poland lost lived people of different language, religion and nationality. Writers see their lost homes as "Arcadia, where man with the help of nature and rituals of community finds connection with the immortal, eternal" [Ibid: 106]. The lost homeland in the memory of the writers gets mythical dimension. The genre is also connected with the bildungsroman. Contemporary novelists have no memoirs of the lost homeland of their parents; they see it only in things that the parents brought with them, when they were force to emigrate. Novelists choose their own land where they feel good and add to it a mythical dimension; they find in it their new homeland. Stasiuk has chosen territory of Beskid (*Opowieści galicyjskie*), Huelle and Stefan Chwin Gdansk (*Hanemann*), and Olga Tokarczuk Silesia. Writers Tokarczuk (*Prawiek i inne czasy*), and Magdalena Tulli (*W czerwieni*) went further in transforming the genre – their mythical land (Tokarczuk) and town (Tulli) do not geographically exist, they created them.

Chwin, Tokarczuk and Huelle in their novels *Esther*, *E. E.* and *Castorp* transform realistic urban novel of the 19th century. They are not interested in the class conflict, which is very important for urban novels of the 19th century. The characters are not interested in their social engagement, they are individualized, and writers are rather interested in conflict between rational logic and irrational phenomenon, in the crisis of personality. This

postmodern way of the urban novel of 19th century is the reason why Wojciech Browarny designates the genre as "new urban novel" [Browarny: 97].

Olga Tokarczuk in the novels *Dom dzienny, dom nocny* and *Bieguni* plays with the story within the story. Tokarczuk laid the stories in the novel in the mouth of different narrators, and they therefore differ both stylistically as well as belonging to different periods of time and place. The stories, are not whole, the reader must link the fragments of stories that are put in different places in the novel. Stories interweave, traverse into one another. All the stories, however, are linked by the same theme, in the novel *Dom dzienny, dom nocny* the theme is the contrast between male and female, between passing away and cyclically returning of the same.

Bibliography

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