ТЕОРИЯ ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ. ТЕКСТОЛОГИЯ. ФОЛЬКЛОРИСТИКА

LITERARY THEORY. TEXTOLOGY. FOLKLORE STUDIES

LITERARY LEGEND: A COGNITIVE MODEL OF THE GENRE

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Perceived as one of the major taxonomic devices, the genre also serves a means to process and reflect the world. Thus, the genre has cognitive grounds. The paper endeavours to analyse the cognitive model of the literary legend. The objective of the present paper is to ascertain the typical features of the pattern that numerous literary legends of the nineteenth century follow. The cognitive model of the genre consists of formal features, namely compulsory, default and optional ones, and idealized cognitive model, which corresponds to the author's message. The material for analysis is the corpus of the nineteenth century literary legends written in different languages. The texts were selected by the presence of the genre signal 'legend' in the title or subtitle of the text or the cycle containing the text. The core formal features of the literary legend are related to its conflict, plot and setting. The idealized cognitive model may be expresses as the higher value of the world over a personage. Whatever the national variant of the legend may be, the legend mostly touches upon the relations between a person and an established set of values (law, superstition) and is embodied in the following sequence: proclaiming the rule, its break (ac-

cidental or intentional) and atonement (punishment, revenge, repentance). The collision between man and the world mainly results in the personage and reader's evaluating some old truth (moral, Biblical law) which the personage attempted to refute. Contrary to the novel, where the personage understands and professes a new truth about the world, the legend is highly traditional. Establishing formal properties and idealized cognitive model contributes to a more precise genre attribution of literary texts, particularly the ones devoid of the author's genre definition.

Keywords: *genre; literary legend; idealized cognitive model; compulsory features; default features; optional features.*

ЛИТЕРАТУРНАЯ ЛЕГЕНДА: КОГНИТИВНАЯ МОДЕЛЬ ЖАНРА

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Воспринимаемый как одна из важнейших таксономических категорий, жанр является также средством восприятия, понимания и отражения действительности и имеет, таким образом, когнитивную основу. Настоящая статья представляет собой попытку анализа когнитивной жанровой модели литературной легенды. Цель исследования – установить типичные черты образца, по которому строятся многочисленные литературные легенды XIX века. Когнитивная модель жанра состоит из формальных признаков, а именно обязательных, стандартных и опционных, и идеальной когнитивной модели реальности, которая соотносится с авторским замыслом. Материалом для анализа послужили литературные легенды XIX века, написанные на различных языках. Были отобраны те тексты, которые содержат жанровый идентификатор «легенда» в заглавии и или подзаголовке текста или цикла, в который входит текст. Ядерные формальные признаки легенды связаны с ее конфликтом, сюжетом и хронотопом. Идеальная когнитивная модель может быть описана как установление большей ценности мира по сравнению с человеком. Вне зависимости от национальных вариантов литературной леген-

ды, жанр рассматривает взаимоотношения личности и определен-
ного отношения к миру (выраженного в виде закона, суеверия и т.д.).
Сюжет легенды выстраивается в следующей логике: провозглаше-
ние правила, его нарушение (сознательное или неосознанное) и рас-
плата (наказание, месть, раскаяние). Результатом коллизии между
человеком и мироустройством главным образом становится осоз-
нание и признание персонажами и читателем некой давно извест-
ной истины (мораль, библейская заповедь), которую намеревался
оспорить персонаж. В противоположность роману, в котором че-
ловек понимает и озвучивает новую правду о мире, легенда является
очень традиционным жанром. Определение формальных признаков
и идеальной когнитивной модели реальности позволяет более точно
атрибутировать жанр многих литературных текстов, в особенно-
сти лишенных авторского жанрового определения.

Ключевые слова: *жанр; литературная легенда; идеальная ког-
нитивная модель; обязательные признаки; стандартные призна-
ки; опционные признаки.*

Genre is considered not only as one of taxonomic devices, but also as a
way to perceive, reflect and model reality. In this way, genre has a cognitive
nature, or grounds. The paper presents an attempt to analyse the cognitive
basis of one particular genre, which has been disregarded by scholars, i.e.,
the literary legend. The objective is a description of the genre in terms of
cognitive studies. The pattern of the literary legend will be ascertained
through comparison of a corpus of texts written in different languages in
the nineteenth century. First, the idea of cognitive genre model, developed
in Western and Israeli cognitive linguistics, will be presented and its ele-
ments defined. Then, the literary legend pattern will be established.

European and American scholars frequently employ cognitive method
or at least its elements in genre studies, and have developed a compre-
hensive approach to the cognitive model of the genre. What they dislike
about the 'outmoded,' as they call it, theory of genre, is understanding
of genre as "a classification of texts based on a series of characteristics
deemed both necessary and sufficient to produce a coherent category"

[10, p. 341]. This classification, which seems rigid to them, fails to consider historical flexibility of the category; hence, it is viewed as pointless – as a sort of library for keeping texts, not for understanding them better [2, p. 45]. It implies the necessity of "the rethinking of genres as cognitive entities rather than purely formal constructs" [5, p. 46].

The cognitive approach to the genre is based on the theory of resemblance by Ludwig Wittgenstein. "Applying Wittgenstein's observations about the role of family resemblance in categorization to genre, Fowler proposes that texts constitute genres in much the same way that Wittgenstein's games form a family: through a complex network of overlapping similarities rather than by a specific set of identifiable features common to all exemplars" [10, p. 343]. Thus, it is possible to trace the properties of the genres and to distinguish them from one another.

Genre then is viewed by the cognitive science as a unit cognate to concept and frame, and is defined by Paul Newsom as "a form of knowing and conceptualizing the world" [11, p. 275]. Stephen Bax suggests the mental construct of *genre schema,* formed as "a cluster of mental concepts" [2, p. 40], as an analysis unit [2, p. 37]. "…Genre, or rather our knowledge of genres, acts on our comprehension like mental structures such as schemas and scripts. This view of genre sees it <…> as a mental construct which we draw on as we create and interpret actual texts" [6, p. 45]. As the genre maintains communication between the text and the reader [4], it seems that an average reader will have the same level of genre awareness as a literary critic, based on reading practices and experience.

One of the key points of the genre cognitive model is the theory of genre nucleus and periphery, first developed by the Russian Formal School: "… Cognitive genre theory allows us to generate a radial category of genre extending outward from an ideal, "prototypical" member of the genre toward real texts with varying degrees of participation in the genre. At the edges of the genre we find fuzzy boundaries where the resemblance of particular texts to the prototypical members of the genre may be distant enough that the texts' participation in the genre may legitimately be disputed" [10, p. 337]. The distinction between genre nucleus and genre periphery maintains generic systems and does not let them replace one another too haphazardly.

Though the theory appears to be logical and practical, it still has its drawbacks and challenges. First, a minute description of genre features, including peripheral, means that many texts are not likely to fall under some category, and the researcher will have to make a choice between several genres. "…In distinction from the classic categorization model of genre, it is possible (and even likely) that no two members of a given genre will share all of the same features, or even a clearly demarcated set deemed necessary and sufficient to define the genre. Instead, the texts relate to one another much more fluidly, and considerable variation of features can be tolerated without threatening the integrity of the genre" [10, p. 343].

The second difficulty in applying the theory is the absence of certain criteria, properties, features, that need to be identified while analyzing the genre. "In order to account for the lack of "necessary and sufficient" criteria to define genre membership, Fowler and others have proposed a "family resemblance" approach to genre" [10, p. 342]. It is obvious that prosaic, dramatic and poetic texts will have a different set of features to be considered. For example, metre will count in poetry but will hardly be considered in prose. Williamson suggests that "recognition of genre depends on associating a complex of elements, which need not all appear in one work. But invariable external, will be among the indicators: structure, or formal motif, or rhetorical proportion" [10, p. 202].

There are several stages in genre attribution. One of the most transparent algorithms is the one developed by Robert Williamson who applied it to the analysis of the pesher, one of the genres of Jewish literature [10, p. 347–354]. According to Williamson, the initial stage in developing a cognitive model of a genre is "to identify the texts that are generally recognized as belonging to the genre. <…> While we cannot define the *limits* of the genre based on those texts commonly agreed to belong to the genre, we can begin to locate its *center* by means of these texts, which are recognized as forming something of a coherent category" [10, p. 347].

The second stage consists in identifying "the compulsory, default, and optional elements constituting the schema of the genre… <…> The cognitive approach allows us to distinguish between a few, very general *compulsory* features (all tigers are animals) and a more detailed set of *default*

features (the typical tiger has four legs, teeth, and stripes) and *optional* features (this particular tiger is six feet long)" [10, p. 347]. It is not suffi-cient, though, to establish these sets of properties, the correlation between these sets being of primary importance [10, p. 349–350]. In Williamson's words, "the presence of particular common elements in two texts does not necessarily identify those texts as belonging to the same genre. Generic convergence is indicated only when those particular elements relate to one another in a manner consistent with the genre's *Gestalt* structure" [10, p. 350]. Wright calls the correlation typical of particular genres "a *constel-lation* of elements or properties", which makes it possible to distinguish "typical or atypical examples, related to each other in a *Gestalt* structure that acts as an idealized cognitive model (or ICM)" [11, p. 293–294]. The idea of ICM, first introduced by Lakoff with respect to concepts rather than genres [7, p. 74] and was later distributed to genre studies.

The examination of "the idealized cognitive model of reality that is em-bedded in the genre's *Gestalt* structure, if such a thing can be identified" [10, p. 354], is the final step in genre definition. "…Prototype effects result from the fact that human cognition is ordered by means of presupposed, culturally-conditioned mental frameworks, which he terms "idealized cog-nitive models (ICMs)" [11, p. 1–154]. Which aspects of reality are cate-gorized with the help of the genre? Cognitive theory considers genre "as distinct modes of perception or even of ways of constructing meaningful worlds" [11, p. 293]. Initially this idea was articulated by M.M. Bakhtin (Medvedev) in 1928, who influentially defined genre as integrity of the theme and its expression [1, p. 310]. Theme in Bakhtin's terminology cor-relates with the model of reality represented in the text, and expression of the theme – to those external features which help to communicate the theme. Genres perceive and depict reality differently: "Every genre has its methods and means of seeing and conceptualizing reality, which are ac-cessible to it alone. <….> The process of seeing and conceptualizing re-ality must not be severed from the process of embodying it in the form of a particular genre. <….> The artist must learn to see reality with the eyes of the genre" [1, p. 308]; Translation by Newsom in [8, p. 272]. That also corresponds to Brook's argument that the genre involves primary and sec-

ondary factors, the former determining the outcome (text), and the latter related to the methods chosen to create the text [3, p. 339].

While analyzing the genre of the literary legend, I am going to treat genre as a kind of schema which reflects a certain way of literary modeling reality. The texts belonging to the same genre share the ICM (the message), as well as some (though not all) formal properties. A sufficient and necessary condition for ascribing the text to a genre is a certain combination of shared compulsory traits. The message is more stable, as genre presents a way of building a certain attitude towards the model of the world created in the text. As Siding puts it, "the ICM [idealized cognitive model] theory of categories expects edges to blur and overlap" [9, p. 201], but the nucleus is more stable and conspicuous.

The literary legend emerged as a result of collecting, publishing and processing the folk and the religious legend, and was widespread in the literature of the nineteenth century. Traditionally scholars point out the following features of folk and religious legends: prosaic form, small volume, orality. Among default features they name verisimilitude; reference to material evidence of the events; presence of miracle; combination of the past, the present and the future with a view to projecting the events into the sphere of eternity; unhappy ending. Optional features are: historicism, religious message, forgotten events as material for the legend.

Legends that appear in the nineteenth century literature are quire numerous, even if we take into account only those called 'legends' by their authors and disregard the rest. To name some examples, these are *Legends of the Conquest of Spain* by W. Irving (1835), *Legends of the Province House* by N. Hawthorne (1838), *A Legend of the Rhine by W. Thackeray* (1845), *Sieben Legenden* by G. Keller (1854), *Les Légendes Flamandes* by Ch. de Coster (1858), Leyendas by G. Béquer (1864), *Spanish and American Legends* by Bret Harte (1870), *Christuslegender* by S. Lagerlöf (1904), and many others.

The analysis of the corpus of legends shows that the texts comprising the nucleus are those that share the following set of features. They are short prosaic stories, included in volumes of homogenous texts (other legends); are centered round one personage (usually a male one) who is

involved into a conflict with supernatural forces and is defeated by them. Close to the nucleus are individual texts, those comprising volumes of heterogeneous texts, in travel writing. Further from the centre are poetic legends (usually short, but occasionally long). Peripheral texts are large prosaic texts, based on historical events.

Compulsory features inherent in the literary legend are very few and can be formulated as the written form of the text, and established authorship, as opposed to the oral *tradition*, which is a genre of folk lore. The insignificant number of compulsory features may be explained by the fact the genre emerged quite recently. Moreover, it often exploits traditional plots, so the writers seek for originality somewhere else. That is why legends vary to a high degree.

Default features include: a conflict between a personage and the established order; high dramatic suspense; prohibition as the complications of the plot; break of prohibition as the plot climax; importance of location; combination of several temporal layers. It can be seen that most default features belong to the sphere of plot structure and are embodied in the form of motifs. The conflict, complications, climax and even the most typical denouement are borrowed from the folk legend. The central personage is mainly a man. Regarding the setting, it should be mentioned that it plays a vital role. It serves as a point where different time layers – the past and the present – coexist in a material, tangible form, making it able to see behind the moment. Eventually the time of the legend is supposed to be beyond any time. The place is always alive, thus it may present a danger, or warn the hero against some action.

Optional features are the following: volume; form (prosaic, poetic); inclusion into novels / collections / travelogues; genre signals within the title or the text; degree of historicity; religious message; authenticity; tragic or happy ending.

It means that though most legends are short (from one to five pages pages), they may take a longer form, and even a form close to that of the novel. In the latter case the legend is necessarily related to history. The predominant prosaic form may be replaced by poetic, mainly balladic form. It can be accounted for by the link between the folk legend and the ballad, which

is also highly dramatic and is based on the same type of conflict. Legends in the form of drama are almost absent in the nineteenth century literature.

Legends can occur and be perceived by the reader on their own, or within other texts. The inclusion into cycles of homogenous legends is often stressed through the usage of genre signals in the titles. Still, quite frequent are cases when legends comprise cycles together with sketches that contrast with the former in the type of narrative. Quite typical are inclusions of legends into books of travels writing. The popularity of this type of legends is connected with the crucial role of the setting (especially place) in the genre canon. While traveling, a narrator runs into places that are surrounded with some rumours, and eagerly retells them. The whole narrative is built as a series of such encounters. Rarer are legends within novels, where they are heard by a central personage and serve as a kind of premonition.

Genre signals may be present within the title, subtitle, or the text itself: quite frequently there are double signals (title + subtitle, title/subtitle of the text + title/subtitle of the cycle). However, the signal 'legend' sometimes may not serve as grounds for such attribution, or, a text called differently or having no signal at all may be a legend.

Degree of historicity can vary, depending on the origin and volume of the legend. The longer texts tend to be historically precise, while shorter ones, based on folk legends or being their stylizations, are loosely connected with history. The same is true of religious message – some texts openly declare their religious meaning, involving the figures of saints, biblical characters, sacred places; others use biblical morals as prohibition; fewer texts avoid any connection with religion.

The question of authenticity is raised almost everywhere in the legends, but the authors may either declare the text's being purely a product of their imagination, or, on the contrary, insist on it belonging to tradition and having material evidence. Sometimes the authors make verisimilitude an object of their irony.

The legend may result in the central character's punishment or reward. If he is perceived as a courageous, brave, initiative hero, who is not afraid to struggle with the destiny, he finds a treasure, marries a good girl, becomes happy. If he is presented as too brave, risky, or as s criminal who breaks a law, a moral code, an ethical system, he dies, goes mad, vanishes forever.

The cognitive aspects of the genre seem to be revealed first of all through the plot structure and the message of the text, thus making it quite easy to identify the idealized cognitive model (ICM) of reality. The plot seems to be reiterated many times, which is partially explained by the connection of the genre with the highly repetitive folk stories, where the stable motif is one of the central units of building the plot.

The legend starts with a personage being warned against some action – visiting a dangerous place, sleeping in a haunted room, touching some object, speaking to ghosts. There are legends where such warning is implicit but obvious: stealing from a church, making a deal with the devil, murder, betrayal – sometimes not in the personal, but in the historical or biblical perspective. Another option is a horoscope, premonition, riddle, which is communicated to the main personage. In most cases the prohibition is linked to some place – sacred (church), damned (haunted house/castle/room, cemetery, tomb), border (river, stream), alien world (forest, sea).

The hero is then tempted to get into some kind of struggle with the established set of events. He may fail to understand it right (in case it is a horoscope or a riddle), or forget it, but there are cases when he may do it consciously, led by curiosity, love, passion, revenge, greed. There are some adventures through which the central personage goes in an attempt to change or influence the fate. In most cases he fails to do it, and becomes aware of the pattern behind the reality.

The identification of ICM helps to distinguish between the legend from other genres with which the legend, depending on some of its optional properties, may be confused, such as the novel and the short story. In case of both shorter and longer narrative, the latter genres depict a collision between the world and the central personage. He undergoes some changes, and in the course of action some new truth is disclosed to him and to the reader. Whether he wins or is defeated, the novelty is supposed to keep the reader in suspense. The legend, otherwise, deals with a fundamental, universally acknowledged truth. The personage remembers the laws, or just understands that they can not be changed.

The cognitive basis of the legend helps to define the genres in complicated cases. For example, *La Légende d'Ulenspiegel* by Charles De Coster, which is usually defined as a novel, can be treated as a legend

due to its cognitive basis. Its ICM presents a quest of Tyl, who has to solve a riddle of the spirits to save his motherland and revenge his father's death. For a long time he does not seem to see the religious meaning behind the historical events, not being able to connect the struggle against the Spanish inquisition and the Bible. Searching for the mysterious *Seven*, he forgets about the seven deadly sins, and only in the end the truth is revealed to him in a vision, though the allegory is one of the central images of the depicted epoch.

It can be concluded that notwithstanding the national variants of the legend, its form (prosaic, verse) and volume, the legend constantly deals with the notions of established set of values (warning, law, superstition), mistake (sin, crime, error) and atonement (punishment, revenge, repentance). The legend mainly tells of a collision between man and the world, which results in the personage's and the reader's understanding of some old truth (moral, Bible law) and accepting it. Historical events follow the spiritual, religious history of humankind. The eternal laws transcend themselves through reality, history, are embodied everywhere.

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