



The Poetics of A. Kim's Prose Genre in the 1990s

Mukhamedova F.B.

Independent Researcher, Lecturer, Uzbekistan State University of World Languages, Uzbekistan

E-mail: feruza9106@mail.ru

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Abstract

The work of Anatoly Kim, one of the most talented and mysterious Russian writers, occupies a special place in the modern literary process. A. Kim is distinguished by the ability to intuitively understand and predict the most relevant trends in literary development. These include the process of genre modifications, which in the writer's work is manifested mainly in the appeal to the original artistic forms (myth, parable, fairy tale) and the use of techniques of other art forms (intermedia poetics).

Keywords: *Genre; Poetics; Literary Process; Myth; Parable; Novel; Fairy Tale; Life*

Introduction

The study of A. Kim's prose in the aspect of the poetics of the genre allows us to present the writer's work as an integral system in which everything is interconnected. The unity of the works is determined not only by the commonality of genre content –the "history of the spirit", the way of knowing the eternal metaphysical issues of human existence, but also by the specific features of poetics, manifested mainly in genre searches, reflecting the writer's desire to find adequate forms to embody his idea.

The genre content of A. Kim's stories–the image of the "history of the spirit" – determines the corresponding type of character, the features of the plot. The weakening of the eventful beginning is inseparably linked with the strengthening of the internal, emotional and psychological action in the writer's works. Most of the heroes are depicted in "boundary situations", which determines the special correlation of characters and circumstances. Heroes face situations that cannot be objectively changed (illness, death), but which cause sharp tragic reflections on the meaning of human existence, on the unity of life and death.

The correlation of these reflections with the events of the life of the heroes themselves, as well as other characters, is a complex plot basis of the writer's stories.

Instead of an acute social or personal conflict in the works under study, a “cognitive conflict” comes to the fore. The path of knowledge, spiritual growth, through suffering and loneliness, leading the hero to move from a separate “I” to a substantial spiritualized “WE” – such is the genre dominant of A. Kim’s stories.

The literary “baggage” of the writer today consists of many stories, nine stories and eight novels. A. Kim is also known as a playwright, screenwriter, translator, author of documentary and historical work. He wrote the plays “The Cuckoo’s Lament” (1984), “Two Hundred Years Have Passed” (1986), he is the author of scripts for the films directed by Ermek Shinarbaev “My Sister Lucy” (1985), “Out of the Forest to the Clearing” (1988), “Revenge” (1990), “The Departing Man” (2007), translates from the Kazakh language the prose of M. Auezov (the epic “The Way of Abai”), A. Nurpeisov.

The Main Part

A. Kim is the compiler of the book “Where the Sun Ends”, which contains memories and testimonies of the victims of the deportation of Koreans from the Far East to Kazakhstan and Central Asia, as well as declassified documents from the party archives. He is a laureate of the Yasnaya Polyana Prize “For outstanding achievements in the field of Russian literature” (2005).

The first publication of A. Kim was preceded by about ten years of unsuccessful attempts to print his works. However, in 1973 the magazine “Aurora” published two stories of the writer: “Meko Briar” and “Watercolor”. Since that time, A. Kim’s works have been published almost every year. In 1975, the story “Bow to the Dandelion” was published, and in 1976, the first book of the writer, “The Blue Island”, containing stories and the story “The Collectors of Herbs”, was published. Further, the novels *Nightingale Echo* (1977), *Onion Field* (1978), *Lotus* (1980), *Jade Belt*, *Utopia of Turin* (1981) are published.

The first novel by A. Kim “Squirrel: a fairy tale novel” was published in 1984, followed by a collection of short stories “The Taste of Thorns at Dawn” (1985), the novel–parable “Father–Forest” (1989), the grotesque novel “The Village of Centaurs” (1992), the novel “Onliria” (1995), the novels “My Past”, “The Wall: A Tale of Invisibles” (1998), the mystery novel “Picking Mushrooms to the Music of Bach” (1998), the novel “Twin” (2000), meta–novel “The Island of Iona” (2001), fairy–tale novel “Arina” (2005).

The main stages of A. Kim’s creative development are reflected in the periodization proposed by V. Bondarenko and supplemented by M. Belonuchkina. Researchers distinguish four periods in the writer’s work:

- The initial, or period of eastern exoticism (“Meko Rosehip”, “Vagabonds of Sakhalin”, “Bride of the Sea” – stories written by A. Kim before 1975);
- The period of everyday prose (“Bow to the Dandelion”, “Onion Field” – novels and stories written before 1980);
- The period of the pantheistic vision of the world (“Lotus”, “Squirrel”, “Father–Forest” – stories and novels of the 1980s);
- The period of the Christian worldview (“Onliria”, “Mushroom picking to the music of Bach”, “Jonah’s Island” – stories and novels from 1990 to the present).

The first two periods were designated by V. Bondarenko, the third and fourth were identified by M. Belonuchkina. Note that the evolution of A. Kim’s artistic thinking does not fit into chronologically precisely defined periods (at the stage of “everyday prose” the story “The Nightingale Echo” was also written, filled with mythological and fairy–tale imagery, and the author himself noted about the novel “Father–Forest” that the work was written when “the placid pantheist left” (N. Ivanova, V. Bondarenko,

E. Shklovsky, L. Anninsky, I. Shtokman, A. Nemzer, S. Semenova and others). In the period from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, his work arouses keen interest among critics, as evidenced by dozens of reviews.) – A. Kim converted to Christianity).

Nevertheless, this periodization gives an idea of the main trends that at different times prevailed in the work of A. Kim—from the metaphorical poetics and imagery of the East to the realistic manner of writing, from pantheistic views to the Christian worldview.

Contradictory interpretations are inevitable when determining the place of A. Kim's work on the "literary map" of Russia. His works are considered in the context of natural-philosophical prose (A. I. Smirnova), "conditionally metaphorical" (G.L. Nefagina), E. Balburow calls A. Kim an original representative of the cosmic tradition in Russian literature. Some of the writer's novels correlate with the traditions of modernism ("Jonah's Island"), with postmodern poetics ("The Village of the Centaurs", "Gathering Mushrooms to the Music of Bach" and even with marginal culture ("The Village of the Centaurs").

In foreign literary criticism, it is customary to consider his prose in the context of magical realism. The works of A. Kim, like the creations of any outstanding artist, do not fit into the framework of any one direction.

When identifying the degree of study of the short stories and novels of the writer under study, it is advisable, in our opinion, to proceed from the chronological principle, highlighting at each stage the most important problems of understanding the author's prose. In the study of A. Kim's creativity, three periods can be distinguished:

With the release of the books "Blue Island" and "Four Confessions", critics unanimously spoke about the talent and originality of A. Kim: "Blue Island" surprised me with the existing independence of writing, unusual vision of the world, exotic material" (Sergeev, 1980); "The plots of Kim's first stories, style and images were striking in their freshness and surprise" (Mikhailov, 1981).

Critics also noted "the closeness of A. Kim's works to folklore, the fabulousness of many stories" (Andreeva, 1976), the stylistic merits of prose (Ivanova, 1978; Shklovsky, 1978), "philosophical journalism" (Bondarenko, 1979), the picturesque manner of writing, the writer's lyricism (Urban, 1987), "double poetics" (the poetics of confession and myth) (Pikach, 1979).

Of particular note is the article by V. Poleshchuk "Echo of Traditions", who, using the material of the story "The Nightingale Echo", was one of the first to reveal various forms of manifestation of the mythological in the writer's prose: individual reminiscences, the originality of time and space, which are mythological in nature, and the representation in the work of the mythological opposition "top"—"bottom" (Poleshchuk, 1980).

It should be noted that most of the first reviews consist of judgments of an evaluative nature regarding A. Kim's prose as a whole, while individual stories ("The Herb Collectors", "The Nightingale Echo", "The Onion Field") are not analyzed in depth.

With the advent of the story "Lotus" and the book "Jade Belt", interest in the writer's work increased, and the first disagreements appeared. A lively controversy flared up around the story "Lotus".

The novel-parable "Father-Forest" (1989) caused the appearance of several articles (by K. Stepanyan, L. Bartashevich, V. Sobol). However, the attention of critics was focused on the analysis of the content of A. Kim's complex philosophical novel, without resorting to his poetics.

The grotesque novel *The Village of the Centaurs* (1992) also did not receive a wide response. Consideration of the image of horse-people, more precisely, the natural component of this image, is contained in the article by G. Tsvetov “Natural in the centaurs of A. Kim”. The genre originality of the novel, the functions of the “inner language” became the subject of A. Antonov’s research (Antonov, 1994).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, articles appeared in which a scientific problem was analyzed on the material of A. Kim’s text. Thus, a comparative analysis of M. Prishvin’s poem “Gen–Shen” and A. Kim’s story “The Herb Gatherers” is presented in the article by E.V. Frolova, the originality of the form of expressing the author’s position in the story “Onion Field” is considered by L.K. Maksimova (Maksimova, 1988).

The theme of immortality became the subject of research by M. Tsyrenova. The researcher examines the key motifs and images of the story “Lotus” (the motif of transformation, the image of the steppe, the caterpillar, the Sun), reveals the features of the carnival worldview. M. Tsyrenova draws attention to the features of artistic time and space, which reveal the idea of the interconnectedness of everything in the world.

Foreign researchers were most interested in the story “Lotus” and the novel “Father–Forest”. Charles Rouge notes such features of the Lotus poetics as the use of the “stream of consciousness” technique, spatio-temporal movements, change of narrative angles, fantastic imagery (Rouge, 1990).

The similarity of the main characters (the Stranger, Otto Meisner, Ivan Chekin, Yuri Turin, Lokhov) is manifested in the individual–personal qualities that the author endows them with (characters of a complex psycho-emotional warehouse, an increased tendency to reflection). Their images are also created in a special way, with a minimum of biographical information, the absence of portrait, as well as pronounced individual speech characteristics. In the internal monologues of the main characters, the voice of A. Kim himself often sounds openly, which expresses the close relationship between the plan of the author and the plan of the characters.

The motives of loneliness, alienation, sadness, which characterize the internal state of the main characters and are explained by specific historical circumstances (most of the characters in childhood experienced the full horror of war), a difficult life situation (illness or loss of a loved one) are raised by the writer to the level of universal characteristics of human existence as a whole, which manifests the philosophic nature of A. Kim’s prose.

Life-affirming poetics, opposing the tragic content embodied in the plot of works, is associated with images of nature and also with the composition of stories, which, as a way of developing an idea, determines their genre originality.

The motive of loneliness in the artistic system of A. Kim’s stories is opposed by the motive of unity, in the disclosure of which natural images are important. In terms of role, in terms of the volume that occupies in the plot-compositional whole of the work, nature in the stories of A. Kim is equal to the characters. Cross-cutting images of the sun, sky, stars, earth, endowed with a mythopoetic meaning in the context of the narrative, reveal the author’s idea of nature as a single, harmoniously arranged cosmos. Constant transformations and transformations—in the heart of nature itself and life, in which there is no death, but there is an endless transformation of eternally living, spiritualized matter.

Numerous natural descriptions, depictions of pictures of the self-movement of life, in which the method of removing the author from the hero, which is characteristic of the composition of A. Kim’s stories, embodies such a property that defines the genre of A. Kim’s stories as the inseparability of the philosophical – lyrical and objective-pictorial plans of the narrative. Descriptions depicting nature or

pictures of everyday life are imbued with lyricism and embody the philosophy of unity, as well as the author's understanding of the pricelessness of life, the uniqueness and significance of its every moment.

The novelistic work of A. Kim is marked not only by the search for new ways of literary existence, but also by a craving for the synthesis of heterogeneous principles, forms, and types of art. The author is closely within the genre boundaries of the traditional novel, he is looking for a way out in the fusion of myth and literature, realism and fantasy, in a combination of literature with painting and music.

Thus, the consideration of A. Kim's prose in the aspect of the poetics of the genre allows us to present the writer's work as an integral system in which everything is interconnected. The unity of the works is determined not only by the commonality of genre content – the “history of the spirit”, the way of knowing the eternal metaphysical issues of human existence, but also by the specific features of poetics, manifested mainly in genre searches.

Conclusion

At the same time, the genre system of A. Kim appears as dynamic, mobile, this is especially clearly manifested in the diverse modifications of the novel form: a fairy tale novel, a parable novel, a grotesque novel, a mystery novel, which reflects the writer's desire to find adequate forms to embody his plan, and also testifies to the high degree of artistic freedom of A. Kim.

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