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**SPECIFIC FEACHERS OF NARRATIVE IN MODERN  
AMERICAN PROSE**

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*Abstract*

The author of any text of fiction uses certain genre forms, narrative techniques and perspectives. Modern literature, postmodern fiction in particular, can be characterized by combining or mixing of several genre and narrative characteristics in one work. As a rule, this combination or mixture realizes special stylistic functions resulting in additional aesthetic effect of the text. The reader's assumptions of a certain genre and narrative structure of a novel can help them decode and interpret a work of literature. Studying a literary work characterized by a code mixing of different genre and narrative types the first step of analysis involves identifying special narrative techniques used by the author, their role in conveying the author's message and aesthetic effects associated with this mixture. The aim of the present paper is to prove that modern fiction is primarily characterized by contamination of different genres and narrative types, to demonstrate special features of narrative in the novel “Happy are the Peace Makers” by a contemporary American writer Andrew M. Greely. The main conclusion of the analysis is the following: the elements of different genre and narrative forms are closely interrelated in the text; they mutually complement each other, serve to develop the plot, convey central themes, provoke polyphonic reading of the text.

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## 1. Introduction

The main forms and types of narrative techniques in a variety of literary works have been the focus of attention in domestic and foreign literary criticism for several decades. The problems of narratology inspired a great amount of academic attention, the most famous narratologists being W.C. Booth, G. Genette, W. Iser, V. Kaiser, D. Cohn, G. Prince, M. Fludernik, K. Hamburger, S. Chatman, W. Schmid, F.K. Stanzel, J. Phelan, B. McHale and others. The ideas of narratology have also been developing in the Russian literary theory and criticism in the works of M. M. Bakhtin, Yu. M. Lotman, N. D. Tamarchenko, V. I. Tyupa etc. Narratology is primarily concerned with the study of narration structure and storytelling mechanism, focusing on the identification and analysis of different types of narrative and narrator, their functions, characteristics, the interaction between the genre conventions and the narrative structure of a literary work and a number of other issues.

The genre and narrative characteristics of a literary work necessarily determine the principles of its study, since the genre form of the text affects the selection, amount, arrangement and presentation methods of narrative information (Andreeva, 2019). In terms of the text perception and decoding, the genre conventions are notably important as they determine the reader's "horizon of expectation" (the term of "receptive aesthetics"). According to Lanzendörfer, (2017) "we must understand genre as a salient aspect of contemporary literary production, and as a powerful tool for literary and cultural diagnosis" (p. 3).

In her fundamental work *An Introduction to Narratology* Fludernik (2009) states that a text becomes a narration only at the moment of its perception and comprehension by the recipient: "Texts that are read as narratives (or 'experiences' in the case of drama or film) thereby instantiate their narrativity" (p. 6). We can say that the narrative is not initially set as a narrative, it becomes such when the reader, listener, viewer starts to 'instantiate its narrativity', to cognitively process this text (Lozinskaia, 2018).

In this regard, markers that determine the text decoding should receive both the researcher's and reader's attention: an adequate understanding of the narrative by the recipient is achieved largely due to the implicit instructions in the text that guide the process of reader's interpretation and reception (Sleptsova, 2018).

## 2. Problem Statement

As a rule, a particular genre of a text, as well as specifics of its narrative, can sensitize the reader and researcher to its narrative structure and determine their expectations: the reader and researcher put a literary work in the context of other works of the same type, compare it with them, highlight its typical and characteristic features. That is why genre categorizing within the literary text analysis is difficult to overestimate. According to Andreeva (2019), the genre is an organic form of a literary narrative text. Literary and narrative discourses, meaningful text structures can be realized only within a certain genre form; they, on the one hand, determine the choice of a genre form, and, on the other hand, find their adequate embodiment in it.

### 3. Research Questions

Many works, mostly works of modern fiction, are characterized by experimental forms, diverse narrative techniques, which include different genre modifications, mixing of several genre characteristics in one work, combining different types of narratives and narrator's voices. New literary practices dictate new methodological approaches and principles of narratological, stylistic and contextual analysis, which would take into account the form and content of a literary work and determine variants of its interpretations.

In literary analysis, the code mixture of different literary forms should be studied in terms of conventions of various genres and forms and their functions in conveying the author's message within the text. Studying a fictional text involves not only categorizing it as belonging to a particular genre or (more often) a mixture of genres, but identifying transformed codes of the original genre, key elements of other genres, and aesthetic effects associated with this mixture.

The narrative structure and perspective, along with the image of a story-teller or narrator are also of great importance in the text perception.

As was stated by Raven and Elahi (2015), "there is no narrative without a narrator – without the entity whose account of events it represents". In a literary text, the plot, the events described, the personages' characterization and development are equally important. Yet the choice of the narrative style, the form of the narrative presentation, the atmosphere, tone, diction, the perspective and interpretation of central themes and ideas are very often significant and sometimes paramount. Raven and Elahi (2015) underline the significance of the figure of narrator in fiction: "The important point is that *every narrative is a function of the subjectivity of the narrator*. At the most objective level, this affects which parts of the story are told (and in how much detail), and which are not: a narrator cannot narrate an event which they did not personally witness or otherwise hear about, for instance" (p. 52).

The narration structure conditioned by the image of a story-teller or narrator, should always be in the focus of the reader's attention; we should keep it in mind when reading the text, because 'how' is sometimes more important than 'what' is told in a story. The number of basic plots in storytelling is limited, their variability is determined by genre fundamentals. In literary theory there are different plot typologies. There is a certain plot structure for fairy tales, detective stories, romance novels, etc. But the number of interpretations, the number of narrative perspectives and presentations is almost endless. A. B. Esin argues that the personage's speech characteristics are created with the help of precisely this 'how' – the manner of speech, its stylistic coloring, the specifics of vocabulary, the choice of intonational and syntactic constructions, etc. (Esin, 2015).

Many theorists of literature point to the fact that the structure and forms of modern narrative are constantly changing. Gulab (2019) argues that "if we examine the history of narratives, we can discover the fact that they are always prone to changes. This flux of change is visible in the fiction, just as it can be seen in other forms of writings" (p. 509). Numerous factors influence the narrative structure of a

contemporary novel, postmodern in particular: “Postmodernism, with its pluralism and multiplicity, allows the writers to create fictions with multiple narrative patterns” (p. 507).

The narrative structure of a modern literary text has its own specifics, which include free combination of different, sometimes heterogeneous elements, mixing several genre and narrative forms within one work. Moreover, this heterogeneity is intentional, emphasized, as the postmodern author as a fragment collector no longer hides seams and joints in the narration, they do not strive for its perfect balance and harmony – on the contrary, they emphasize fictionality, internal inconsistency of their texts in every way (Kabanova, 2017). As an example of such fragmentation, inconsistency, a whole series of works by contemporary writers can be mentioned; among American authors, the most famous names being G. Flynn, J. Egan, K. Stockett, W. Van Draanen, A. Greeley and many others.

Postmodern texts also tend to be inherently metafictional. Fludernik (2009) expounds it in the following way: “A narrative strategy or a comment on the part of the narrator is metafictional if it explicitly or implicitly draws attention to the fictionality (fictitiousness or arbitrariness) of the story and the narrative discourse” (p. 156). Metafictional texts necessarily involve special narrative techniques: “Metafiction is a narrative strategy that highlights the fictionality of the text by employing reflexive techniques” (Tykhomyrova, 2018, p. 366).

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The subject of this article is the novel by a modern American writer Andrew Greeley, whose creative heritage is distinguished by a great deal of genre diversity: he is the author of historical fantasy, science fiction, detective story, family novel, love story, religious prose, and magical realism. He is also the author of several poetry collections. Within the framework of research questions of this article, the novels where the author combines different narrative techniques – elements of different genres and different narrative types – are of particular interest.

#### **5. Research Methods**

Leading narrative techniques used by the author in a work of art can be identified in the course of narratological analysis (Tyupa, Tamarchenko, Schmid, etc.). In the novel under study most narrative techniques can be found at the levels of genre and narrative, which necessarily requires specific approaches to their analysis. The genre mixture is analyzed through comparison between the given novel and classical novels of the genre. The analysis of narrative types reveals special authors’ devices employed for conveying central themes and ideas through the text imagery.

Another dimension of analysis is intertextual study of the text which implies identifying the prototext invariants, their specific relations with the text under investigation, and their role in a new context. The emphasis of this dimension is interaction between different narrative techniques within various literary discourse strategies.

The approach used in this paper focuses on narrative transformations within the given text, on interaction between elements of different genres and types of narrative, on the forms and functions of this interaction.

## 6. Findings

One of the novels by Andrew Greeley that demonstrates different narrative techniques is the novel *Happy are the Peace Makers* (Greeley, 1993), which has not yet been translated into Russian. This work, according to its central plot, is a detective story written in the classical traditions of this genre: a crime has been committed, the crime is under investigation, several characters are suspected, the mystery of the crime is eventually solved, the criminal is exposed. Before the text of the novel the author places a drawing and a scheme of the house where the murder occurred; this graphic stylistic device sets up the reader's anticipation for a detective story. In accordance with the rules of classical detective novels, a detective leading the investigation is a stranger, an outsider, he is an American who came to Ireland to search for a criminal. The well-known detectives of world literature Dupin and Poirot were also foreigners. Unlike his famous prototypes, Tim McCarthy, a former policeman, a private investigator at present, is not completely alien in Ireland, as he is an American of Irish descent. This fact explains his interest in all Irish, especially to cultural, social, psychological traits of a typical Irishman.

This novel cannot be called a 'pure' detective story, as it also tells about love relationships: the detective falls in love with the main suspect in the case, shares his experiences with the reader, and meditates about his feelings. The love line plays a significant role in the plot development and occupies a fairly large place in the novel, so it can be categorized as a love story as well.

In addition, this novel can also be considered a vivid example of regional prose, since the novel contains a detailed description of Ireland and particularly Dublin. The epigraph for the novel is the poetic lines of the British poet of Irish descent, Louis MacNeice, dedicated to Dublin (L. MacNeice *Dublin*). The text of the novel introduces the reader to geography, climate, some historical facts, the country's social structure, architecture, sights and monuments of its capital.

The beginning of the work, namely the very first sentence, is very capacious, because it contains signals that determine the love, detective and regional lines of narration at the same time: *I met the woman in the elevator of the Shelbourne Hotel in Dublin a few moments before the Provos sprayed us with automatic weapons* (Greeley, 1993, p. 2). The word 'woman' which appears in this sentence is used with a definite article, which emphasizes the importance of this character for the hero and for the story in general; the place of action is also mentioned – it's Dublin, which serves as a background for the whole text and its role in it is particularly important; the author also refers to the upcoming attack on the characters caused by the detective investigation.

Yet, the genre characteristics of the novel are not limited to only three genres: the elements of a multicultural novel can also be traced here. The text describes two cultures – Irish and American, parallels are drawn along different lines, including history, social institutions, traditions and customs, family relationships, typical character traits, language and speech features. Examples containing such comparisons are numerous. Here are the most revealing of them, depicting character traits of a typical Irishman: *the Irish are genetically programmed to be hospitable* (Greeley, 1993, p. 86); *dominating Irish-mother type, keeping her son at home* (Greeley, 1993, p. 185); *a combination of affection and amusement, the way Irish women watch their men (and their boy children)* (Greeley, 1993, p. 193). Some other examples are also given and analyzed in Lushnikova and Osadchaya (2019, p. 36–37).

The author so skillfully analyzes and emphasizes specifics of these two cultures through complicated images of his characters, so vividly depicts difficulties of adapting to another culture and language differences, that fragments of this novel can be used in teaching the courses of Linguocultural Studies and Crosscultural Communication.

At the same time, this novel might also be considered an example of intellectual prose: it incorporates intertextual connections with the famously known novels by J. Joyce which serve as a broad background of the narrative; all the events, descriptions, scenes, and even characters in the novel are being compared with those of a classical writer of Irish literature. The author keeps mentioning streets, houses, pubs, which are associated with the name of J. Joyce, with his relatives, with heroes and scenes from his works: *I had met Nora again at noon on the gun platform of the Martello Tower at Sandycove, five miles down the beach from Sandymount, where Joyce lived with Oliver St. John Gogarty – Buck Mulligan – for a couple of weeks and where the first scene in Ulysses is set* (Greeley, 1993, p. 145).

The reader receives information about the writer's biography, about the prototypes of his characters, and even the city topography. The following examples illustrate the point.

*Actually number seven was the home of J.F. Byrne – Cranley in 'Portrait' – Joyce's most loyal friend. He stood by him through bad times and good and refuted the calumny that Nora had been unfaithful to him* (Greeley, 1993, p. 258). *Here was the spot that Bold Jimmy Joyce met Nora Barnacle on their first date, June 16, 1904* (Greeley, 1993, p. 259).

Such literary and biographical inserts are quite numerous and, most importantly, have a direct connection with the detective line of the novel, which is explicated in the words of the protagonist, summing up the investigation of the crime: *'there was a link between the crime and the story Mr. Joyce tells in 'Ulysses' – a house being dishonest by a false lover. The house, as is known, was in fact owned by Mr. Joyce's closest friend'* (Greeley, 1993, p. 290).

The intertextual connection with the Dublin text of J. Joyce is central in the novel and acts as one of the genre codes. However, the novel contains other references, primarily to the Bible, a quote from which is used as the novel's title and repeated in its final part, forming a frame narrative structure – *'Happy are the Peace Makers'*. In addition, the novel contains references to the works of other writers and poets (J. Updike, L. MacNeice, C. Doyle and others) and lengthy discussions of the characters about religion, philosophy and philology.

Another feature of intellectual fiction that can be found in the analyzed work is using certain techniques of meta-narrative – the author-narrator comments on the utterances, explains the employed stylistic devices, analyzes differences between English language variants and even states the main subject of the novel. The storyteller linguistically characterizes the characters' speech, focusing on their pronunciation, evasive manner of speaking and various expressive means. Some of the author's comments resemble stylistic analysis of the text: *Her west-of-Ireland brogue was thick, her speech allusive and filled with strange metaphors, and her train of thought either confused or deliberately confusing* (Greeley, 1993, p. 86). *... he was the master of the Irish style of indirection* (Greeley, 1993, p. 246). *... a different variant of English filled with allusions, winks, nods, indirections, and convoluted questions* (Greeley, 1993, p. 295). *Nice mix of two slang traditions* (Greeley, 1993, p. 147).

The terms of Stylistics can also be found in original conclusions of the author on philosophical and religious topics: *On the level of metaphor, however, he was irredeemably Catholic; and religion is metaphor before it is anything else* (Greeley, 1993, p. 77).

The characters also use the terms of Stylistics when expressing their attitude to what is happening: *"Small was a euphemism. There are no small pints"* (Greeley, 1993, p. 123). *"I'm searching for the right metaphor..."* (Greeley, 1993, p. 183). *"Oh, yes, a very interesting metaphor"*. *"It fits your pattern"* (Greeley, 1993, p. 215). *"'Tis a metaphor, eejit, but it's how you make me feel"* (Greeley, 1993, p. 241).

A considerable attention is paid to the comparison of American and Irish varieties of English, the author discusses lexical and grammatical differences between them: *It is necessary to realize that the noun 'guard' or 'garda' in Irish is both a singular and a collective noun* (Greeley, 1993, p. 2). *Bewley's, a tearoom founded in 1846 and what we Yanks would now call a cafeteria* (Greeley, 1993, p. 46). *... yet she served the tea – including sandwiches, biscuits (cookies for us Yanks)* (Greeley, 1993, p. 86). Some other examples are analyzed in Lushnikova and Osadchaya (2019, p. 34–35). Such fragments can be used as illustrative material of different varieties of English in the course of Modern English Lexicology.

The subject of the novel is verbalized at the very beginning. It does not quite correspond to the central themes of the novel, but rather describes its main characters – the heroine, who is the subject of love of the author-narrator, and his partner in the investigation: *The painted eyes of the woman, the innocently playful eyes of the priest: I guess they're what my story is about* (Greeley, 1993, p. 3).

As for the narrative types, their mixing is also observed in the text, which, along with the focalization change, makes the narrative sound polyphonic. According to Hashemi and Hesabi (2016), "each focalizer has its own set of beliefs, values, and categories by reference to which he comprehends the world. The interplay among the characters provokes a non-unitary, polyphonic reading of the text" (p. 583).

The main type is a first-person narrative, a narrative from the protagonist's point of view; his image in the novel is explicit. According to Schmid (2003), an explicit image is based on self-presentation of the narrator. The narrator can introduce himself, describe himself as a narrative 'I', tell the story of his life, explicate his way of thinking.

Self-presentation of the protagonist in this novel is as follows: the narrator introduces himself to the reader, comments on the events, gives evaluative judgments about himself, his own actions, other characters, tells the reader about his thoughts and desires. Using the metaphor offered by Van Krieken (2018), such a narrator serves as a kind of a filter through which the events in the novel are presented: "The technique of internal focalization allows narrators to access the inner life of a character and to describe events and situations from the internal viewpoint of that character, also in third-person stories. Thus, although a story is always rendered through the narrator's voice, the subjective experiences of a third-person character can serve as a filter through which the narrator observes and describes the events and situations" (p. 772).

The outline of the novel includes a large number of dialogues that represent speech characteristics of the main character–narrator and other characters of the novel: they convey specifics of the spoken language of the Irish and Americans, as well as the professional speech of the policemen, clergymen, and

intellectuals. Apart from these typical narrative patterns of any classic novel, the Greeley's novel is also distinguished by some other specific features.

Firstly, it contains fragments representing the conversation of the main character with himself, strange dialogues-disputes in which he contradicts his own statements, tries to prove certain ideas to himself, convinces himself of something. The character and his inner voice act as two participants in the conversation between 'I' and 'you'; these dialogues contain linguistic elements of ordinary dialogues – appealing to each other using conversational or even rude words, exclamations, interrogative sentences, including typical for English disjunctive questions. The graphic presentation of these conversations corresponds to the presentation of ordinary dialogues in the text:

*That's not the point.*

*Well, smart ass, what is the point? The point is, eejit, that she is afraid of you but also likes you.*

*Yeah?*

*That's not a bad position to have a woman in.*

*Yeah?*

*Yeah.*

*You mean that her candid talk with me was a come-on?*

*Are you kidding?* (Greeley, 1993, p. 102).

The protagonist calls his inner voice 'my dialogue partner', 'my brain', 'the subject of my inner dialogue', describing it as a real companion, possessing the qualities of an ordinary person: '*My dialogue partner declined to continue conversation*' (Greeley, 1993, p. 102).; '*my dazed brain said pugnaciously*' (Greeley, 1993, p. 103).; '*The subject of my inner dialogue spoke*' (Greeley, 1993, p. 187).

Secondly, a number of dialogues and polylogues between the characters are presented as remarks in the text of dramatic work, with no explicit intermediary between the author and the reader. Fragments of this type are quite common and can take several pages.

*Biddy: Uncle Punk has this, like, group of friends who help him. He calls them the North Wabash Avenue Irregulars.*

*Trish: Like the Baker Street Irregulars, you know.*

*Me: I've read Sherlock Holmes...* (Greeley, 1993, p. 227–229).

The characters' lines are accompanied by the author's theatre-specific remarks in parentheses indicating how the phrases should be intoned and pronounced: *Biddy: (laughing) So he goes ...* (Greeley, 1993, p. 227); *Me: (guardedly) I might* (Greeley, 1993, p. 227); *Me: (sensing there is no escape) it would be an attractive possibility* (Greeley, 1993, p. 228); *Biddy: (firmly) Nora would never do a thing like that!* (Greeley, 1993, p. 229).

The author's remarks also indicate the actions performed by the characters: *(Young people giggle)* (Greeley, 1993, p. 234); *Exit me.* (Greeley, 1993, p. 234).

These inclusions fuel the narration; being drama texts they intrinsically create an illusion of being present in the theater – the reader feels like a spectator watching the action taking place on the stage.

## 7. Conclusion

The elements of different genres and narrative types are combined in the novel by A. Greeley in perfect balance, they mutually complement each other, serve to develop the plot, to convey the central themes and ideas, provoke polyphonic reading of the text. All the mentioned elements prove the writer's style to be original and distinctive. Mixing various narrative techniques is an example of an inherently postmodern literary game with the text, which, among other things, involves switching of the narrative perspectives. Specific features of narrative in modern prose call for the reader's and researcher's involvement, who are expected to identify and then interpret their functions and the resulting effect. The further analysis of literary works demonstrating hybrid forms of narrative seems increasingly relevant: studying new literary practices require new methods and a great deal of academic attention.

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