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## GENRE BLENDING AS A MOTIVATED CHOICE IN POSTMODERN POETICS

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### INTRODUCTION

Any genre from a perspective of traditional stylistics can be treated as a unity of particular textual properties of any literary text, a number of repeated language means, special plot structure, imagery, speech, and rhythm<sup>1</sup>. With this perspective in mind genre as a literary category can be defined by: 1) repeated language/stylistic means and devices dominant in a literary work; 2) a type of the characters (protagonists and antagonists); 3) narrative techniques used to reveal the theme/the topic according to conventions of this particular genre; 4) the aesthetic value of a literary work; 5) the message of a literary work.

The main goal of any literary genre is to categorize or classify literary works. Such classification is often based on specific shared conventions, including language means, mood, length, setting, narration, theme, and some formal plot characteristics<sup>2</sup>. In everyday usage, genres help group literary works or media films into recognizable styles, shared genre conventions, settings, and themes. It is worth mentioning that under genre conventions<sup>3</sup> we understand established rules, topic/thematic traits, style characteristics, language units that are commonly associated with a particular piece of art, literature, films, or forms of media. In other words, genres are grounded on explicitly agreed or socially inferred conventions, some thematic and/or structural criteria that are dominant in the process of genre analysis.

According to thematic approach genre can be identified by the main theme of the story/narrative that is revealed in its content. Hence, we recognize such thematic genres as a war novel, a COVID novel, a historical novel, a dystopian novel, an apocalypse novel.

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<sup>1</sup> Todorov T., Howard R. The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre. *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 20 (2), 1976.

<sup>2</sup> Duff D. *Modern Genre Theory*. London: Routledge, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Fishelov D. The Birth of a Genre. *European Journal of English Studies*. 3 (1), 1999.

Structural approach to genre classification involves deeper analysis than pointing out thematic makers, which are usually on textual surface. Genres are defined on the basis of interrelation of elements plot structure of the story/narrative, its main characters and types of conflict and the possible ways of its solving (e.g. a detective novel, an adventure novel, a romance novel, a horror novel).

However, the described criteria seem rather problematic while classifying contemporary literary genres as they undergo constant changes, merge with each other, making new genre hybrids, that appear to be quite flexible and do not have strict guidelines. Moreover, postmodern detective novels comprising a number of different genres turned into thrillers, literary realism stories emphasizing real characters and setting with unreliable narrator and elements of magic realism turned into a new genre fantasy stories, historical novels having blended with mythology, fantasy, and realism turned into alternative historical novels which present historical events in a creative “what if...” way. Such genre blending may coincide or do not with the reader’s expectations making the process of reading deeply involving and the ending unpredictable.

It is worth mentioning that any choices in genre blending are motivated, even if they are unconsciously, and have a profound impact on the way literary works are structured and interpreted. Literary critiques state that not a single historical issue can stand in its pure form but is characterized by the predominance of one or another aspect<sup>4</sup>. We completely agree with T. Corrigan who has a similar point of view regarding the purity of genre<sup>5</sup>. He points out that every stage of genre development absorbs essential literary and cultural features of the epoch along with the elements pertinent to already established genres.

Often, the criteria used to classify literary works into genres are not consistent and can be subject to debate, change, and challenge by both authors and critics<sup>6</sup>. This ambiguous situation within contemporary genre reign can be explained not by the inconsistency of genre criteria only but also by genre blending caused by “the postmodern turn” or to be exact by “generic turn” and as a result, the appearance within postmodern literary discourse of numerous hybrid subgenres with shacking boundaries.

This research is based on the hypothesis that postmodern genres having flexible boundaries are discontent with classical modes of representation prompted by contemporary literary crisis in postmodern poetics. Hence, they can be easily transformed by mutation of literary genres of high and mass

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<sup>4</sup> Duff D. *Modern Genre Theory*. London: Routledge, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Corrigan T. *Genre and Interpretation*. Critical Inquiry, 1986.

<sup>6</sup> Fishelov D. The Birth of a genre. *European Journal of English Studies*,3 (1), 1999.

literature creating numerous hybrid genres. Due to special postmodern text-forming principles used by the postmodern authors, such as fragmentation of textual structure, unreliable narrators, unrealistic and impossible plots, language games, postirony,<sup>7</sup> new postmodern subgenres appeared and acquire new features. Among them postmodern detective novel, mashup novels, magic realism fiction, cyberpunk literature, alternative history novels and many others.

The goal of the research is to elicit the phenomenon of postmodern genre blending with traditional modes of representation and to explore the development of new postmodern subgenres within the reign of postmodern poetics. The research also involves an analytical review of relevant academic resources on contemporary genre theory in general, and the exploration of genre blending in postmodern poetics in particular.

### 1. Genre as a complex transdisciplinary phenomenon: crisis of representation

Since classical times genre played an important role in presenting a large amount of literary works of different kinds as they have been classified as belonging to general types which were variously defined. Its goal was in accordance to its etymological meaning: the term “genre” came from the French (and originally Latin) word which stood for “kind” or “class”. It was widely used in rhetoric, literary theory, media theory, and more recently in text linguistics, to refer to a definite type of text. Now we can assume that in the course of its development the notion of genre turned out into a transcultural, transdisciplinary phenomenon, which is not easy to describe. Then the questions arise: is genre a timeless essence or ephemeral, fuzzy, time-bound entity? Should genre analysis be descriptive or proscriptive?

It is worth mentioning, that in philosophy of language, genre figures as “speech genres” (the idea of heteroglossia), a particular modes of speaking or writing that people learn to mimic, weave together, and manipulate (such as “a formal letter”, “an agreement”, “a reference letter”, “a grocery list”, “a lecture”, “a joke”) based on certain conventions. “Genre conventions are the result of the standardization of communication practices. As certain kinds of text are used repeatedly in certain situations with more or less the same function or functions, these texts acquire conventional forms”<sup>8</sup>. In other words, genres are socially specified: they are recognized and defined by a

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<sup>7</sup> Babelyuk O. Postirony in hysterical realism discourse. *Language. Culture. Discourse* (pp. 133–147). PRIVAT COMPANY TECHNOLOGY CENTER, 2022. <http://monograph.com.ua/pctc/catalog/book/978-617-7319-60-2>

<sup>8</sup> Nord C. *Translating as a Purposeful Activity Functionalist Approaches Explained* by Christiane Nord. Routledge, New York. Scientific Research Publishing, 2018.

particular culture or community. By the way, Norman Fairclough has a similar concept of genre that emphasizes the social context of texts, namely as “different ways of (inter)acting discursively”<sup>9</sup>.

Talking about the genre essential nature, Robert Allen notes that “for most of its 2,000 years, genre study has been primarily nominal and typological in function. That is to say, its main function was “the division of the world of literature into types and the naming of those types, much as the botanist divides the realm of flora into varieties of plants”<sup>10</sup>.

Traditionally literary genre is known as a historically developing type of a literary work, which has definite language characteristics, a predetermined stylistic nature, and axiological accents of its literary canon or epoch. However, some basic genre distinctions are widely accepted. For example, the genre of fiction (“literature created from our imagination, not presented as a fact, though it may be based on a true story or historical event or situation”) is not applied to all fictitious literature but encompasses only prose literary texts (novels, novellas, short fiction), not poetry.

So, in literary criticism the broadest division is between poetry, prose and drama, within which there are further divisions, such as tragedy and comedy within the category of drama. Later in “The Anatomy of Criticism”<sup>11</sup> the formalist literary theorist Northrop Frye (1957) presented certain universal genres and modes as the key to organizing the entire literary corpus.

From the perspective of text linguistics genre is treated as a textual category which is able to classify different texts on the basis of certain criteria, such as: repeated language means, formal/structural traits, general textual organization, narrative technique, relation to communicative situation. Moreover, contemporary literary and media genres tend to relate more to specific forms than to the universals of tragedy and comedy. For example, films are routinely classified as “thrillers”, “westerns”, “crimes”, “romantic comedy”, “sitcoms”.

Nowadays, there are many genres and subgenres for which we still have no names/terms. Taking this in mind, Carolyn Miller suggests that “the number of genres in any society... depends on the complexity and diversity of society”<sup>12</sup>. For example, lesbian fiction, LGBTQIA+ literature which comprises lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, pansexual and two-Spirit. We agree with Jane Feuer’s observation, that

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<sup>9</sup> Fairclough N. *Media Discourse*. London: Edward Arnold, 1995.

<sup>10</sup> Allen R. Bursting bubbles: "Soap opera" audiences and the limits of genre'. In Ellen Seiter, Hans Borchers, Gabriele Kreutzner & Eva-Maria Warth (Eds.): *Remote Control: Television, Audiences and Cultural Power*. London: Routledge, 1989, pp. 44–55

<sup>11</sup> Frye N. *The Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press, 1987.

<sup>12</sup> Miller C. R. Genre as social action. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70: 151–67; reprinted in Freedman & Medway (1994a, op. cit.), 1984, pp. 23–42.

“what we really can see now in contemporary researches on the genre issues is that one theorist’s genre may be another’s sub-genre or even super-genre (and indeed what is technique, style, mode, formula or thematic grouping to one may be treated as a genre by another)”<sup>13</sup>. Even themes/topics cannot be used as criteria for defining genres since, as David Bordwell notes, “any theme may appear in any genre”<sup>14</sup>.

To illustrate these statements let us have a look at contemporary films. They are grouped according to different criteria: the period or country (American films of the 1930s), by director or star or producer or writer or studio, by technical process (Cinemascope films), by cycle (the “fallen women” films), by series (the 007 movies), by style (German Expressionism), by structure (narrative), by ideology (Reaganite cinema), by venue (“drive-in movies”), by purpose (home movies), by audience (“teenpix”), by subject or theme (family film, paranoid-politics movies)<sup>15</sup>.

At the same time contemporary media genres are based on story content (the war film), other are borrowed from literature (comedy, melodrama) or from other media (the musical). Some are performer-based (the Astaire-Rogers films) or budget-based (blockbusters), while others are based on artistic status (the art film), racial identity (Black cinema), location (the Western) or sexual orientation (Queer cinema)<sup>16</sup>.

Similar genre criteria can be used to classify genre diversity within literary works. In the course of our research we would like to apply two basic criteria (thematic and structural) to make a rather still vague genre classification.

According to *thematic approach* literary genres can be identified by the main theme of the story/narrative that is revealed in its content. Hence, we may recognize such thematic genres as a war novel, a COVID novel, a historical novel, a dystopian novel, an apocalypse novel.

For example, as COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020, one of the first novels that appeared on this issue was a COVID-19 novel “The Fell” by British author Sarah Moss (2021). Written from the perspective of four neighbors living in a picturesque countryside in the English Peak District, it presents a dark, claustrophobic portrayal of pandemic life: “*Fear can be like a clear mirror showing you exactly what you are most afraid of, but it’s important to*

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<sup>13</sup> Feuer J. Genre study and television. Robert C Allen (Ed.): *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism*. London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 138–59.

<sup>14</sup> Bordwell D. *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.

<sup>15</sup> Bordwell D. *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.

<sup>16</sup> Stam R. *Film Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

*remember that it's only a reflection, not your true face*"(p.27).<sup>17</sup> One of the protagonists is Kate, a middle-aged woman living with her teenage son. They have been unable to leave their house for the past ten days after she was exposed to a COVID case at work.

The conflict is based on different challenges during new strict regime caused by the epidemiological situation, not enough information about an unknown virus, possible ways to escape the overwhelming feelings of despair and fear. Being trapped, Kate decides to take a late-night walk on the nearby fells: *"Up and up they went, over heather and rock, their path marked by occasional cairns, until they broke out onto a broad, flat expanse of fell top, where the wind was fierce and the air so clear that the faraway hills looked close enough to touch"*<sup>18</sup>(p.46). The inner conflict is heightening by Kate's fear to be "caught" for the transgression of leaving her home and the moral judgement of her community if this happen.

One may also find interesting a collection of ten short stories, "Life Without Children" (2021) by Irish writer Roddy Doyle, which are of the same genre and are marked by a similar desolate tone. The main characters in these stories, set in Dublin, are nearly all middle-aged or older men going through their days in quiet desperation as they attempt to come to terms with lockdown and the threat of COVID which was especially dangerous for them.

**Structural approach** to genre classification involves deeper analysis than thematic makers only, which are usually on the textual surface. Genres are defined on the basis of special interrelationships of plot elements of the story, its main characters and types of conflict and the possible ways of its solving (e.g. a detective novel, an adventure novel, a romance novel, a horror novel).

It seems quite easy, to our minds, to classify a literary work belonging to romantic genre, because from the very beginning of plot development the main characters interrelate according to "a boy meets a girl" pattern and encounter various obstacles that threaten their romantic/love relationships. To keep the reader involved into a romantic narrative, the writer explores many different conflicts (external and internal) not to make the further plot unfolding predictable. The main conflict is set between promises of their reunion and threats of separation. Hence, the consistent features of romance genre are as follows: the love theme as a basic topic, no matter whether they have a Happily Ever After conclusion or not, suspense in characters' actions and story twists, and well-paced narration towards the satisfactory resolution, when the characters are able to develop their relationship.

A vivid example of this genre could be a novel "Lady Chatterley's Lover" (1928) by English author D. H. Lawrence. The book is known for its

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<sup>17</sup> Moss S. The Fell. London, Picador, 2020. 272 p.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

love story of the physical (and emotional) relationship between a working-class man (a gamekeeper) and an upper-class woman. The central theme of the novel is Constance's realization that love requires the elements of both body and mind.

Rather similar in love topic is in "Maurice" (1932), the romantic novel by E. M. Forster about homosexual love in early 20th-century England. The plot is developed around the cross-class relationship between Carpenter and his working-class partner, George Merrill, presented a real-life model for that of Maurice and Alec Scudder.

Sometimes, literary works may contain love as thematic criteria, but structurally belong to other genres, as can be illustrated in the story "Legacy" by V. Woolf. Though it is based on complicated love relationships between a wife of a well-known politician, her husband, and her lover, B.M., who is the brother of the politician's wife's secretary, structurally the story follows the pattern of a detective. The husband is revealing the puzzle (why B.M. committed suicide), suggesting the answers (because his wife was not ready to leave him and acknowledge their relationship), and supplying the solution (his wife dies intending to reunite herself with her lover).

While talking briefly about structural genre peculiarities of adventure novel they can be grouped as follows: a protagonist sets a definite goal and overcoming obstacles as the narrative unfolds through different kinds of conflict eventually achieves a satisfactory resolution. The oldest example of adventure genre can be "Beowulf", who set his goals to fight with a dragon and to defeat Grendel. It is worth to stress that the characters in adventure stories always achieve their goals despite suffering serious injuries. The process of overcoming different obstacles is the crucial for this genre. However, the personality of the main character doesn't change much, doesn't grow in the process of plot development because, often it is depicted around one or two character features.

Structural peculiarities of horror genre in the context of interrelationship of plot elements lies in the fact, that the main character is in conflict with a special horror entity that can scare the reader. The scary entity can be of different types: something simple like spiders, mice, rats, sharks or insects, supernatural (ghosts, witches, demons, vampires) or more realistic like a serial killer, a psycho, different kinds of violence. It is worth stressing, that the main goal of horror genre literary works is to frighten the reader, even though there is no reason to be frightened. That's why the horror plot is unfolding through the conflict between fear and security providing suspense and tension in the process of narration and leading to the resolution where the conflict is solved partially. It means that the main character has endured the carnage, death or destruction after struggling with horror entity. The essence of horror genre is

not the victory, the set goals, the won battle achieved by the main hero as in adventure genre but the promise of “that evil could rise again someday” as J.F. Gonzalez stated. It is interesting to know that J.F. Gonzalez (1964–2014) was the author of over thirty novels (under his own name as well as several pseudonyms), mostly in the horror and thriller genres, including the seminal “Survivor” and the popular “Clickers” series. He was also the author of over two hundred short stories (again under his own name as well as several pseudonyms), several of which were listed as “Recommended Reads” in Ellen Datlow’s annual Year’s Best Fantasy and Horror anthologies.

Structural peculiarities of the detective genre seems quite obvious as classical detective stories possess certain specific characteristic features, such as: 1) the perception of the mystery of a crime where the main character is involved; 2) alien to mysticism, where the disclosure of the secrets is rational<sup>19</sup>. On that grounds any literary work can be classified as classical detective. To this genre first of all belong detective stories and novels about the detective Sherlock Holmes, the amateur detective with powerful observation, deduction abilities created by Sir Author Conan Doyle.

But at the same time, it is worth mentioning that Agatha Christie while writing her detective stories nearly broke all genre canons of classical detective story declared by R. Knox. When we go deeper into the genre analysis of Agatha Christie’s detective fiction it becomes quite obvious that the Queen of Crime modernized classical detective stories in numerous aspects (adventurous investigation, victim investigation and collective investigation), creating her own detective genre of *cozy mystery*.

For instance, the main character of a classical detective story is a professional detective, while in Agatha Christie’s literary works he is playful, grotesque, with an appearance close to a mask; without age; without a detailed biography; more often a man (e.g. Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple). Agatha Christie also included into her detective narrative an unreliable narrator, who creates a complex puzzle for the reader to unravel during the process of crime investigation. Besides, she also introduced psychotherapeutic analysis to crime investigation, namely how buried desires of the unconscious could be a motivation for the crime.

To sum it up, we may assume, that the problem of defining a definite number of classification criteria for contemporary literary genres is rather problematic and should be based on a proper theoretical minefield. The essential nature of genre can be understood through certain genre conventions that comprise particular *conventions of content* (such as

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<sup>19</sup> Koliassa O. Detective Stories: From classical al to Postmodern. Definition and History. *VECTORS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF PHILOLOGICAL SCIENCES AT THE MODERN STAGE*, 95–113. Liha-Pres, 2019.



themes) and/or *conventions of form* (including plot structure or textual structure and style) which are revealed in different literary texts differently.

In the process of our research we have proved that these criteria turned out to be rather ambiguous and could be hardly helpful for any genre classification. Moreover, we understand literary genre as ultimately a *vague concept* rather than something that exists empirically with definite criteria, strict rules and concrete boundaries.

Let's analyze a novel "Robinson Crusoe" (1715) by D. Defoe, where the main character is depicted on the real-life experiences of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish sailor who at his own request was put ashore on an uninhabited island in for 4,5 years after a quarrel with his captain, and at first glance this literary work can be regarded as an adventure novel. But Defoe took his novel far beyond A. Selkirk's story by blending the traditions of Puritan spiritual autobiography with some components of travel literature and adventure novel, creating a new genre of *modern myth* with blurring boundaries, as it comprises genre features of a gripping tale, memoir, fable, and adventure.

The abovementioned theoretical assumptions on literary genres blending can be extrapolated on the description of postmodern genres which are seen as being discontent with classical modes of representation.

## 2. Postmodern literary genre blending: plot characteristics and stylistic devices

In this research, the term "postmodern" is not only used to denote a definite period of after WWII (from 1945 till about 2010) culture and literature, but also mark various aspects of contemporary life, that are often vague and ambiguous due to a constant sense of instability, doubt and anxiety that became quite essential during the last decades. U. Eco believes that "postmodernism is not a fixed chronological phenomenon, but a definite spiritual state..."<sup>20</sup> (Eco, 1990).

The crisis of reality presentation, pessimism, the world that turned into simulacra, false visions, and into the world of many referents, made it possible that multiple-meanings or total absence of meaning became crucial for postmodern mindset. This postmodern (poststructural) philosophic worldview is fully presented in postmodern literary texts with the help of special postmodern devices, such as postirony, language games, rhizome, ludic absurd, stylization, intertextuality, polyphony of unreliable narrators, postmodern sensibility"<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Eco U. *The Limits of Interpretation*. Indiana University Press, 1990.

<sup>21</sup> Babelyuk O., Koliasa O., & Smaglii V. Language means of revealing postmodern ludic absurd in English literary text. *Wisdom*, 20 (4), 2021, 166–179. <https://doi.org/10.24234/wisdom.v20i4.531>

Focusing on the essential features of postmodern literary genres in general and the “crisis” of large literary forms in particular, we completely agree with Patricia Waugh that the postmodern novel has changed considerably and is now stepped into “an uncertain, insecure, self-questioning and culturally pluralistic period”<sup>22</sup>, which may be considered quite illuminating in this respect. In other words, a characteristic feature of the “ordered reality” of modernism is alien to postmodern chaotic representation and fulfilling the condition of truthfulness within the fictional literary world does not guarantee a realistic actualization of the objective reality presented in literary text that became split up into numerous alternative worlds.

That is why postmodern literary texts lack credibility, as the reader often fails to displace the presented facts within his reality. Besides, the constant presence of different unreliable narrators does not persuade the reader to consider them as part of his observed reality, which looks more like a split-up ironic reality.

While defining the key tendencies in the genre development in postmodern literature, one can assume that it is discontent with classical modes of representation on the one hand, and mobile and easily transformed by blending or mutation of traditional genres of high and mass literature, on the other. The constantly upcoming new postmodern literary genres are, without any doubt, worth investigating.

For instance, after being transformed from the classic detective novel into a postmodern one, the emphasis is made on the very process of investigation, the crime itself is hygienic, described at random by the unreliable narrator who creates unreliable relations between the author/narrator and the reader. In other words, genre transformations within postmodern detective novel lie in non-linear method of narration, where the desired object of search is dissolved in the very process of search. Such postmodern detective novels might be regarded as *postmodern mystery*, literary genre, where the nature of an event, usually a murder or other crime, remains mysterious until the end of the story as in Dan Brown’s novel “The Da Vinci Code” (2010), which is defined by literary critics as a mystery thriller.

Another example of postmodern genre blending can be Salman Rushdie’s novel “Shame” (1983), which contains the first-person narrator setting the tricky fairytale atmosphere right at the beginning: “*In the remote border town of Q ... there once lived three lovely, and loving, sisters*” (Rushdie, 1995), which disorientates the reader towards its genre. However, an attentive reader will definitely guess that a town called “Q” is actually a fictitious version of Quetta, in Pakistan. The plot is focused on the problem of “artificial” country divisions when Pakistan was created to separate the

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<sup>22</sup> Waugh P. *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. Methuen, 1984.

Muslims from the Hindus after Britain gave up control of India. So, to our minds, the novel is written in *magic realism* which represent a realistic view of the world adding magical elements, often blurring the lines between fantasy and reality.

Among rather interesting, to our minds, genre blending is *mashup*, a postmodern genre hybrid which combines a pre-existing literary text, often a classic work, with another genre, usually horror genre, into a single narrative. For instance, graphic novel “Pride and Prejudice and Zombies” (2009) by Seth Grahame-Smith, combines Jane Austen’s classic 1813 novel “Pride and Prejudice” with elements of modern zombie fiction, crediting Austen as co-author.

*Cyberpunk* postmodern genre can be regarded as a hybrid of science fiction in a dystopian futuristic setting featuring advanced technological and scientific achievements, such as artificial intelligence and cybernetics. It is vividly represented in graphic novels. Cyberpunk is a postmodern genre of science fiction with a future setting that tends to focus on society as “high tech low life” featuring advanced technological and scientific achievements, such as information technology and cybernetics, juxtaposed with a degree of breakdown or radical change in the social order. It is worth mentioning that cyberpunk plots are based on conflicts between among artificial intelligences, hackers, and among megacorporations, and tend to be set in a near-future Earth, rather than in the far-future settings or galactic vistas found in novels such as “Foundation” by Isaac Asimov or Frank Herbert’s “Dune”.

According to Lawrence Person “cyberpunk characters were marginalized, alienated loners who lived on the edge of society in generally dystopic futures where daily life was impacted by rapid technological change”<sup>23</sup>. Moreover, the described above postmodern genres and criteria of defining them do not seem to be valid, as contemporary literary genres undergo constant changes, they merge with each other, making new genre hybrids, often they are quite flexible and do not have strict guidelines.

Let’s take for a genre analysis a postmodern novel by Kazuo Ishiguro “The Remains of the Day” (1989). The story is told from the first-person perspective of Mr. Stevens, an English butler who has dedicated his life to the service of Lord Darlington at Darlington Hall.

The narrative unfolds through Stevens’s recollections over six days during a motoring trip, when he contemplates the sense of his work through the concept of “dignity” which he considers essential to his identity as a butler. He recalls the significant events at Darlington Hall, including international affairs and the political and social gatherings hosted by Lord

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<sup>23</sup> Lawrence P. My Old Man. George Alec Effinger, Live from Planet Earth, Golden Gryphon Press, 2005.

Darlington, who sympathies with the Nazi regime. Stevens also reflects on his relationship with Miss Kenton as a lost love because of his extreme dedication to his professional duties.

What are the criteria for defining the genre of this novel? A social novel? A war novel? A historical novel? A romance novel? It seems rather difficult, as the novel explores themes of duty, social change, and the nature of greatness, as Stevens grapples with his memories and the choices he made, or failed to make. The message of the novel is fully represented in its title, “The Remains of the Day”, a conceptual metaphor that reveals the essence of Stevens’s ambiguous contradicting personality, where unwavering commitment to his principles is both his strength and his downfall.

So, the novel critically examines the idea of service and loyalty, questioning the value of these virtues when they are given to an unworthy cause, as in the case of Lord Darlington’s misguided politics. However, it can be also classified as deeply psychological as Ishiguro addresses the theme of repression, both emotional and political. The novel portrays the suppressed emotions of the post-war-British people with deep references to historical novels. Moreover, it also suggests that personal and political integrity are intertwined and that the failure to acknowledge truth in one area can lead to failure in the other.

A rather complicated rhizome-like narrative structure which moves back and forth in time through Stevens’s memories, effectively illustrates the fallibility of memory and the selective process of recollection. This makes Stevens’s narration unreliable and question the accuracy of his account. Complicated narrative also invites readers to read between the lines and to plunge into the deeper level of text interpretation: the message of this literary work is a description of the social changes that occurred in Britain, from the rigid class structures of the 1930s to the more democratic post-war society.

Focusing on specific language means used in literary works it is worth mentioning that special postmodern stylistic devices of revealing genre peculiarities are explored by postmodern authors. Among them: pastiche (using various literary styles within a literary work to make a mixture of styles), intertextuality, unreliable narration, self-reflexivity, temporal distortion (the use of non-linear, rhizome-like timelines and narrative techniques in literary text); alternative history (mixing of actual historical events with fictional events without clearly defining what is factual and what is fictional); reader involvement); magic realism (the introduction of impossible or unrealistic events into a narrative that is realistic).

As to the term “magic realism” is broadly descriptive rather than critically rigorous and in postmodern poetics can be substitutable for the term “magical realist”. Matthew Strecher defines magic realism as “what

happens when a highly detailed, realistic setting is invaded by something too strange to believe”<sup>24</sup>. However, many writers are categorized as *magical realists* (the term was influenced by a German and Italian painting style of the 1920s). Later, a British novelist and critic David Lodge defines magic realism as when “marvelous and impossible events occur in what otherwise purports to be a realistic narrative”<sup>25</sup>.

The described above postmodern generic “mixtures” are typical for contemporary literary works. It allows us to assume that every stage of genre development absorbs completely new characteristics of a definite literary epoch along with the traditional elements pertinent to already established literary genres, which is worth further investigating. By analyzing stylistic devices, genre transformations, and essential conventions within postmodern poetics, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of contemporary literary genre trends.

## CONCLUSIONS

The presented research acknowledges the evolving nature of genres and the challenges faced by scholars in categorizing postmodern genres. Moreover, it recognizes the influence of external factors, such as social and cultural changes, on genre transformations. By incorporating these proposed changes, the project provides a comprehensive exploration of genre dynamics in postmodern poetics, shedding light on the complex and intriguing nature of contemporary literature.

The focus of the research is laid on a broader understanding of the notion of genre as a transdisciplinary phenomenon. It is presented not only as a stable literary category, which has a predetermined literary nature and axiological accents within certain literary criticism canons, but also as a dynamic concept of postmodern poetics that comprises a combination of different genre forms that can be easily transformed or modified depending on the external changes in the social and cultural context. Besides, it is proved that genre is also influenced by the objective qualities of the described object, phenomenon, or process.

Furthermore, in a broad sense genre is treated as a cultural phenomenon that is always marked by definite ideological, moral, ethical, aesthetic, professional, and individual psychological features of the author. Besides, in the realm of text linguistics genre represents a number of repeated language units, definite structural peculiarities and pragmatic/axiological values of any text (fiction/non-fiction).

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<sup>24</sup> Strecher M. C. *Magical Realism and the Search for Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki.* Journal of Japanese Studies 25(2), 1999. p. 267.

<sup>25</sup> Lodge D. *The Art of Fiction, 1992.*

Working on the essential features of postmodern genre blending we point out the key genre features of postmodern detective, COVID novels, mashup, cyberpunk literature, and some others. By the way, the question of genre blending, the appearance of graphic cyberpunk literature is part of a larger discussion on the survival of postmodern literature in a digital world and its continuous genre transformations to keep up with the latest cultural and literary tendencies.

We may assume that the abovementioned genre transformations of postmodern fiction are caused by the denial of traditional literary forms connected with the ordered presentation of reality, such as a well-made plot, chronological sequence, authoritative omniscient author, rational connection between what characters “do” and what they “are”, causal connection between “thematic surface” details and “deep plunging” into text interpretation practices. Besides, within the postmodern approach, authors are free to experiment with different literary genres and forms, making their literary works highly specific and unique, and involving the reader into active cooperation in the process of postmodern writing.

Provided a complex genre and stylistic analysis of postmodern literary works makes it possible to trace different genres within one literary text, which, without any doubt, contributes to further investigation of stylistic hybridity and mixing of different postmodern literary genres.

## SUMMARY

Traditionally genre is known as a historically developing type of a literary work, which has definite language characteristics, a predetermined stylistic nature, and axiological accents of its literary canon or epoch. According to thematic approach genre can be identified by the main theme of the story/narrative that is revealed in its content. Hence, we recognize such thematic genres as a COVID novel, a historical novel, a dystopian novel, an apocalypse novel. Structural approach to genre classification involves deeper analysis than thematic makers only, which are usually on the surface. Genres are defined on the basis of plot structure of the story, its main characters and types of conflict (e.g. a detective novel, an adventure novel, a romance novel, a horror novel). However, the described criteria seem rather problematic as contemporary literary genres undergo constant changes, they merge with each other, making new genre hybrids, often they are quite flexible and do not have strict guidelines. This research is based on the hypothesis that postmodern genres having flexible boundaries are discontent with classical modes of representation prompted by contemporary literary crisis in postmodern poetics. Hence, they can be easily transformed by mutation of literary genres of high and mass literature making different hybrid genres. The goal of the research is

to elicit the phenomenon of postmodern genre blending with classical modes of representation and to explore the development of different postmodern subgenres within the reign of postmodern poetics. It has been proved that due to special postmodern text-forming principles (fragmentation of textual structure, unreliable narrators, unrealistic and impossible plots, language games, postirony) new postmodern subgenres appeared. Among them postmodern detective novel, mashup novels, magic realism fiction, cyberpunk novels, alternative history novels.

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