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Creativity of Guzel Yakhina in Modern Criticism

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Abstract: *This study analyzes the works of modern literary scholars devoted to the poetics of Guzel Yakhina's novels. The article identifies the main features of the artistic world of the writer's novels.*

Keywords: *novel, specificity, genre, theme, style, writing style.*

Guzel Yakhina is a prominent representative of contemporary Russian literature. Researchers of the modern literary process have noted its involvement in genre syncretism, based on the fusion of large narrative forms: "In order to objectify the narrative to reveal the unexplored depths of human life and interpret the traumatic experience of Russian history, G. Yakhina uses the hybridization of genre formulas" [7, p. 2]. This enabled the writer to solve the artistic problem of reflecting a multi-valued reality that does not fit into the framework of a one-dimensional genre canon.

The vector of genre syncretism, which determined the integrity of Yakhina's works, was the model of the historical novel, in which the author reconstructs the existence of man in a historically changing world. I. Savkina and A. Rosenholm also turning their attention to the genre transformation of the writer's works, notice the genre hybridity of her novels: "There you can find everything that the reader's soul desires. Direct reminiscences, almost quotations from a socialist realist novel about collectivization (such as "Virgin Soil Upturned" by Mikhail Sholokhov) coexist with neo-mythologism. Ethnographic exoticism connects with the Western educational tradition of robinsonade and road movies" [14, p.3].

Researcher N.I. Pavlova also insists on the signs of a socialist realist novel and robinsonade: "...echoes of a socialist realist novel about collectivization in the spirit of Sholokhov easily coexist with melodrama, robinsonade and "action" [13, p.3]. But here the researcher also finds traces of the adventure novel type: "... the spirit of magical realism and skillfully combining the traditions of the adventure novel, fantasy, melodrama and the same socialist realist novel" [13, C.3].

It should be noted that, analyzing the works of Guzel Yakhina "Zuleikha opens her eyes" and "Train to Samarkand", V. Babitskaya also highlights the robinsonade as fundamental in the writer's prose writing: "The hunger and hardships of the first years are perceived rather as a robinsonade, a story of survival" [2, p.1].

In contrast to the above-mentioned researchers, N. Ivanova, reflecting on the genre structure of the writer's novels, notes the traditional novel form: "... the appearance of versions of a traditional, socially charged novel with a clearly defined "story", clear characters, verified motivations, and historical background is a matter of approval and interest at the same time among readers and professional judges" [5, p.2]. Thus, genre syncretism, created on the basis of the traditional novel, is a specific feature of the narrative strategy of G. Yakhina.

Note that magical realism, according to the point of view of K.N. Kislitsyn, is "maintaining fidelity to the principle of verisimilitude, while at the same time introducing the motive of the miraculous into the narrative" [6, p.19]. Thus, many researchers are inclined to believe that "magical realism has become the principle of Yakhina's books" [21, p. 3]. This is indicated by researcher Nagumanova, Pavlova and others. In particular, the motif of miracles stands out in the writer's novels. Thus, the second specific feature of G. Yakhina's prose is highlighted - magical realism.

Researcher N.I. Pavlova, as a leading feature of Yakhina's prose, emphasizes the writer's appeal to history, in particular to the Soviet past: "At the same time, without pretending to be historically factual, and more likely, completely avoiding the genre boundaries of the historical novel, G. Yakhina uses the historical background for artistic reflection on universal human problems and values" [13, p.2]. In this sense, it would be more accurate to talk about an attempt to create a quasi-historical novel, when the characters are placed in a certain framework of historical events, but at the same time existing at a distance from them.

Sh.N. Ibragimova, noting the historical vector of Yakhina's texts, highlights the theme of the fate of small nations: "... the author turns to the most tragic events of Soviet history during the period of Stalin's personality cult and the radical turning point in the life of the country, its restructuring in a new, socialist way" [4, p.1]. It is characteristic that G. Yakhina's work is aimed at understanding the fate of small peoples inhabiting the territory of modern Russia - the Tatars (in the novel "Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes"), the Volga Germans (in the novel "My Children")."

Sirota E. also focuses on the writer's interest in turning points in history: "dekulakization, collectivization and the closed labor settlements that followed are described G. Yakhina along with the destinies of ordinary people - Russians, Tatars, rich, poor, educated and illiterate" [15, p.5].

N.Y. Bukareva shares the same opinion: "Guzel Yakhina's prose fits into this trend, since her novelistic work is characterized by the depiction of the fate of an individual during critical, tragic periods in the country's history. "Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes" depicts collectivization and repression, "My Children" depicts the years of the Stalinist regime, and her latest novel, "Echelon to Samarkand," published in 2021, depicts the early 1920s, the difficult post-revolutionary time [3, p.1]. Thus, the third feature of the writer's prose is highlighted: the main theme of G. Yakhina's works is an appeal to the historical past.

Researchers of Guzel Yakhina's work, in addition to the transformation of the novel genre, the use of the principle of magical realism, and an appeal to a historical theme, also note such a striking feature of the writer's works as cinematography.

L. Ulitskaya in the preface to the novel "Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes" had the opportunity to be the first to draw attention to this feature: "The somewhat cinematic style of narration enhances the drama of the action and the brightness of the images, and journalisticism not only does not destroy the narrative, but, on the contrary, turns out to be an advantage of the novel" [18, p.1]. Then this very feature will appear in the writer's other novels.

D.A. Shchukina, also emphasizing the cinematic nature of Yakhina's style, writes that "Details of everyday life are depicted concisely and vividly, one of the characteristic features of the author's prose is

realized here: cinematography (visualization of the depicted, close-up, dynamic observation situation, verbalized storyboard of the scene)" [20, p.2].

In turn, M. Abasheva believes that cinematography is a general trend in the modern literary process and in Yakhina's work it occupies an important place: "It is especially important that in the case of Yakhina - and this, of course, is a general trend - the text is initially written with the expectation of its transmedia opportunities and perspective" [1, p.2].

In our opinion, the visual qualities of Yakhina's prose owe a lot to film optics; the text is even stylistically reminiscent of a film script; screenwriting techniques penetrate into it – a kind of pointers for camera movement. A.S. Nitkalieva, agreeing with Abasheva's opinion, adds that "... the moment is important for Yakhina, she catches it and envelops the reader in it, influencing his sensations and emotions. The same thing is true for cinema" [12, p.3].

Expanding the boundaries of the use of cinematography in Yakhina's works, N.A. Levitskaya speaks about the intermediality of the writer's novels: "Intermediality becomes the most important means of creating a three-dimensional picture of life, i.e. techniques characteristic of other types of art" [7, p.2].

The visualization effect appears to the reader largely due to the fact that Yakhina masterfully masters the techniques of literary cinematography. In an interview, the writer emphasized that the script for the film was written first, and only later the text of the novel. Thus, the fourth characteristic of Yakhina's novels is the cinematic style.

Highlighting the originality of G. Yakhina's writing style, N.I. Pavlova. notes: "Among other things, the writer's appeal to Tatar legends, to the material of German folk tales, whimsically included in the historical context of the 1920-1930s, makes possible the combination of neo-mythologism and neo-realism in the poetics of her works, expands the range of interpretations, thereby providing greater associative freedom for communication between the author and the reader" [13, p.5]. Highlighting folklore as one of the most important elements of Yakhina's creativity, E.F. Shafranskaya notes: "In each of the above novels there is a historical layer of the culture of everyday life of its era. Folklore is included in this culture as a basic pattern. Although it does not linger long in the memory, it nevertheless gives an idea of the moods and aspirations of people in a particular place and at a particular time. When recorded in writing, folklore is of historical value. Actually, Guzel Yakhina fulfilled the mission of a folklorist" [19, p.2].

E.V. Terentyeva also emphasizes the folklore side of Yakhina's work, saying that the huge difference between Yakhina's prose and other texts "on the topic" is that "... in addition to the obvious and necessary artistic component, her novels are permeated with fairy-tale motifs as such. Not fantastic stories (although not without it!), but fairy-tale plots moving according to all the laws of the genre, skillfully woven by the author into the thread of the entire story. They are the ones who connect two novels, two universes, two realities; they are the ones who create from letters and words what is commonly called the author's handwriting" [17, p.1], and O.V. Meshkova generally believes that Yakhina "by resorting to a fairy tale, manifests their vision of reality" [8, p. 4], and her heroes, acting as listeners and as creators of fairy tales, determines the special, plot-forming role of the motives associated with "fairy tale creation, which in the world works turns out to be akin to myth-making" [8, p.4]. In turn, A.S. Storozhakova believes that fairy tale motifs in Yakhina's prose "...are an effective literary device, an integral part of the poetics of the works (fairy tales play a plot-forming role or symbolic meaning in it)" [16, p.3]. The author uses it both directly and inverted, reflecting on the law, which contradicts the flow of real life. In addition, Y.V. Chernyavskaya defines the works of G. Yakhina as a "myth novel" [21, p.5].

I.V. Moskvina comes to the conclusion that "... neo-mythological synthetism becomes the dominant principle of structuring the historiosophical concept in the work of Guzel Yakhina and is built, as a rule, in the system of the receptive field of four mythic components: biographical, ethnic, historiosophical and religious neo-myths" [9, p.5].

Agreeing with Moskvina in opinion, A.N. Nabiullina adds something new in defining the specifics of the writer's novels: "In G. Yakhina's prose, the artistic model of the world consists of such types of space as social and everyday space, natural space and mythological space, which are hierarchically correlated. The correlation of these types of space occurs in conjunction with the category of time and is at the same time a means of determining the semantic perspective of the work" [11, p.2]. S.B. Mukhametova believes that one of the features of Yakhina's creativity is the chronotope: "Chronological images and motifs play a huge role in the novels of the modern Russian-language writer G. Yakhina. In the works of G. Yakhina, time and space are made up of several types of artistic spaces, each of which is not only designed to show the place of events of the novel, but also serves as a backdrop for the gradual revelation of the character of the characters" [10, p.2].

Among the writer's style, critics also note vivid detail as the main stylistic dominant in the writer's prose. For example, N.I. Pavlova writes that "Artistic attention to the smallest details - in the depiction of everyday life, the interior, the landscape, the behavior of the hero - is a characteristic feature of G. Yakhina's novel prose; the dominant features of Yakhina's artistic style include her inherent penchant for precise dynamic detail in the depiction of a person in his worldview" [13, p.8]. Thus, the fifth sign of Guzel Yakhina's writing style is her appeal to folklore, neo-mythologism, and chronotope.

Summarizing the analysis in our article, we can say that, having analyzed the research of scientists regarding the novels of Guzel Yakhina, we can highlight several features of the writer's work: the main theme of G. Yakhina's works is an appeal to the historical past, genre syncretism created on the basis of the traditional novel, magical realism, cinematic style, appeal to folklore, neo-mythologism, chronotope.

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