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GENRE CRITICISM AS A PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATION FOR THE PREVALENCE OF NARRATIVITY

Abstract: This paper aims to scope generic transfigurations throughout the history of genres, and the way genre criticism has underlined the problem of narrativity. Since Plato and his determination of literary imitation as mimetic (dramatic), mixed (epic), and narrative (dithyramb), approaches to generic typologies were diverse. Plato's paradigm was extended by Aristotle's "Poetics", and especially renewed in the period of the Renaissance. However, throughout the 20th century, genre significance is taken into a broader scope – philosophical, phenomenological, historical (or ahistorical), psychological, highlighted by evolution, factual "biological" existence (a sort of "life" of the literary work of art, as stated by Roman Ingarden), aesthetic values, inevitable generic mixtures, and stylistic choices. The simple question of the possibility of work's existence without genre (determined a posteriori or pre-determined) propels us to observe the methodological potential of genre criticism that can result into a new theoretical approach. Our intention is to re-examine the contemporary narrative practices in one Macedonian novel ("East-West" by Jadranka Vladova and Nebojsha Knezhevic) in order to explain why narration is the most effective tool to reach for nowadays, in order to "recall-and-narrate" or to "recollect-and-tell" (according to James Olney).

Key words: genre criticism, narrativity, memory, discourse, Macedonian postmodern novel**.**

1. The premises of genre criticism

As a specific literary notion (although not exclusive property of literary studies), genre poses different types of questions, starting from its proper definition, terminological discrepancies, the way literary works should be named as a whole, etc. If we take into account the fact that the sum of works we call literature is actually a social and intersubjective construct (Todorov, 1978, p. 14-17), it is inevitable to affirm the necessity of generic taxonomies in different fields of social relations, primarily in order to achieve adequate communication and information transfer. Posing the question about genre theory and its valid assumptions, and referring to Robert Stam's dilemma, Daniel Chandler (1997, p. 1) actually puts into perspective several doubts about the validity of genre existence, especially their descriptive or prescriptive character. Franca Sinopoli (Синополи, 2006, p. 113) in her researches of the status of genre explains that the term "genre" originates from the Latin word "genus, generic", which means "kind, origin, birth", and today this concept is enriched in its significance with the notion "gender". However, in its essence, the term "genre" posses a feature that makes it specific in historical sense, expanding over the prescriptive generic conventions: "Thus, there is type, kind or genre in the consciousness of the one that created the text, and of those who actualise that text in their own consciousness" (Konstantinović, 1985, p. 36). These assumptions are influenced by Hans Robert Jauss's

thesis on the fact that literary work of art cannot function in a so-called "informational vacuum", since it is widely determined by social relations and is situated in previously formed "horizons of expectation" (Jaus, 1978, p. 130). His premises of the urge to delineate genres historically are actually grounded in Kant's pre-suppositions of genre as a middle category, something between the common and the particular.

When it comes to generic terminology, a broad variety of terms can be noted. Miroslav Shutic (Šutić, 1985, p. 5) clearly affirms the inevitability of terminological discrepancies in this field of study (i.e. literary genealogy), since genre is externally positioned (in the social context), so author's choice of one genre over another is mainly influenced by the circumstances he lives in. Milivoj Solar (Solar, 1985, p. 50) notes that one generic term is usually more popular than the other, so in depicting the mass of texts belonging to one category, theorists usually treat terms like "class", "kind" and "genre" as more vivid and effective, compared with the more unusual terms like "type" (which often refers to an attribute by which a certain member of one class can be characterised), "form" (since this term unavoidably implies the term "content") or "sub-kind/mode", taking into account its relatedness to the term "kind". On the other hand, Zdenko Shkreb's terminology is more simplistic, he presupposes the total deletion of the term "type" and its substitution with the term "genre" (Škreb, 1985, p. 18). These attempts to simplify terminological ambivalences can be noted in Adrian Marino's assumptions of the urgent need to transcend the extra-aesthetic criteria for defining genres, and the effective understanding of genre as an interweaving, since "the essential genre of the creative self is, by definition, a poly-genre" (Marino, 1978, p. 49).

On the other hand, if we accept the necessity of generic taxonomies, the problem of proper understanding and definition of narrative structure inevitably arises. Alastair Fowler (1982, p. 106-129) proposes several different categories in order to re-arrange the classic understanding of what genre represents. Clearly, this is a step towards a more complex classification; still, its applicability cannot be dismissed. Fowler's term "kind" refers to the historical genre, the one that is fixed according to the labels of antiquity, and which, in essence, represents the generic repertoire; "mode" is defined by pronouns, i.e. comic, tragic, satiric, etc., implying to the elements of the outward structure or of a certain kind – characters, represented aspects, values; "subgenre", defined as a form or a subtype of certain type, characterised by the subject matter or the motifs in the literary work of art. One element in Fowler's typology has a unique status, namely the so-called "formal constructional type" that can be viewed in the light of a certain theme which is embedded in the literary work of

art, or according to the generic signals (names, titles etc.). Henceforth, this last term is an actual effort to envision a descriptive terminology, since Fowler's "mode" indicates factual presence of elements of certain type, even in structures already labelled as certain kind (for example, narrativity in poetry).

2. Antique taxonomies and the status of narrativity

According to Jauss's historical point of view, it is of an outmost importance to envision the status of one genre historically, i.e. "in re", in the pre-supposed continuum, where previous generic characteristics are enriched by the following ones, thus provoking changes in the system overall. Consequently, proper investigation of the nature of narrative structure and its dominance nowadays should propose a quick overview of the development of the notion "narrative". Plato in his work „Politeia" (The Republic) underlines the first and crucial difference between the mimetic and the diegetic, which will be elaborated thoroughly in the next centuries. In his understanding of "poiesis", works of art cannot be differentiated solely by their subject matter (or by the subject of imitation/narration); this division must be followed by the one focusing on the way the content is being represented. Consequently, the mimetic (or imitative) refers to the poet's urge to hide himself from the work he is representing (or even singing), and the diegetic is a form of his interfering into the words of the characters. Thus, Plato proposes a genre typology which can be grasped as a triad, namely the three basic kinds of poetry: imitative, narrative and mixed genre.

> You have conceived my meaning perfectly; and if I mistake not, what you failed to apprehend before is now made clear to you, that poetry and mythology are, in some cases, wholly imitative – instances of this are supplied by tragedy and comedy; there is likewise the opposite style, in which the poet is the only speaker – of this the dithyramb affords the best example; and the combination of both is found in epic, and in several other styles of poetry. Do I take you with me? – Yes, he said; I see now what you meant (Plato, The Republic, 50).

As Gerard Genette points out (1979, p. 14-15), Plato's genres are in fact modes/styles, they will be called genres much later (since they are defined by modes or styles of representation and enunciation), and thus Plato's paradigm is restrictive in its nature. Plato's three-folded classification will be adopted (in certain sense) by Aristotle, but the main difference between these two theoreticians is actually their understanding of the elements of narrative structure, as well as the essence of narrative (what do we mean/hear/grasp when it comes to narration).

On the other hand, in Aristotle's postulates, there is a crucial distinction between the imitative and the non-imitative poetry, since imitation is clearly defined more broadly, as a

natural, innate, instinctive human ability (Aristotle, 1902, p. 15). Imitative poetry, which is the main subject of Aristotle's analysis, once again is divided into several categories, according to the means, the object and the manner of imitation. Since the means and the objects of representation are more discernible (rhythm, tune and metre, or men in their actions), the manner of imitation presents itself as a ground for genre identification and poetic ramifications. Aristotle differentiates the narrative genre and the mimetic, thus excluding Plato's pure narrative genre. This sub-division is grounded in the way things ("state of affairs") are represented, and also in the represented objects and their status, since tragedy and comedy, or epic and parody are differentiated only by the status of the represented character (namely, their status also influences the so-called "proairesis", or the choices that one character makes, usually after a long and attentive deliberation).

> There is still a third difference – the manner in which each of these objects may be imitated. For the medium being the same, and the objects the same, the poet may imitate by narration – in which case he can either take another personality as Homer does, or speak in his own person, unchanged – or he may present all characters as living and moving before us (Aristotle, 1902, p. 13).

To Genette (1979, p. 28), Aristotle's paradigm excludes Plato's pure narrative genre (dithyramb), and this kind of exclusion is an expression of Aristotle's empiricism. The sole existence of pure narrativity is empirical impossibility, so by affirming the constructive role of dialogue in the narrative form, Aristotle underlines the specific place of narrative discourse (and narrativity) into the realm of discursive possibilities. On the other hand, Antoine Compagnon (2001, Troisième leçon, para. 5-7) analyses these different approaches of Plato and Aristotle, taking into account the Socratic tradition, since its influences can be clearly noted in Plato's vision of mixed genre (and respectively, of the narrative one). Still, his main argument about these different approaches is the notion of mimetic, understood by Plato as an opposite to narration and dramatic dialogue, while in Aristotle's paradigm mimesis (or imitation) is the inherent human ability, so mimetic poetry is the main category, which includes narrative and dramatic mode as its forms.

3. Narrativity and modern taxonomies

After antiquity, Latin middle ages were enriched by several attempts of broadening the system of genres with lyric poetry, thus speculating once again over the nature of narrativity. One of the most important classifications of that time, according to Genette (1979, p. 30-31), is Diomedes' tripartite division of genres: genus imitativum (the dramatic kind), genus ennarativum (didactic and gnomic poetry, historical poems etc., where poet speaks), and genus commune (the so-called mixed genre, including lyric kinds and heroic

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poems). This is clearly an attempt to revision and re-arrange Plato's paradigm, mostly by the act of confining narrativity to the historical and the non-imitative. This classification will be followed by Proclus division (in the fifth century AD), according to which the so-called "mixed genre" is totally included into the narrative one. This is yet another illustration of the antique theoretical differences and polemics.

Modern times, clearly according to the Romantic heritage, accentuate the tripartite division of genres – the epic, lyric and dramatic/tragic genre (kind), thus proposing a more simplistic and rudimentary system. Discursive criterion (i.e. way/manner of representation) acquires a dominant position, thus formally intensifying the gap between poetry and prose. The dominant 19th- and 20th-century theoretical postulate is the difference between the novel as an archetype of narrativity, and the lyric poetry as an archetype of poetry (Compagnon, 2001, Huitième leçon, para. 2-3). According to Compagnon, the crucial contrast between modern times and the previous centuries can be found in the way poetry (and poetic) were being understood. In the 17th and 18th century, the three-folded classification of genres (epic, dramatic and lyric) was attributed only to poetry, and prose was identified with the scientific or historical discourses (this is only a vivid representation of the influence of antique theories of genres). On the other hand, in the 19th and 20th century, poetry was mainly grasped as lyric, and prose took over the narrative and the dramatic genre.

One possible explanation of this modern transgression toward narrative genres can be found in Mikhail Bakhtin's theoretical postulates, since he is one of the main representatives of the philosophical theories of genres (Duff, 2000, p. 68). In his analysis of the epic and the novel, Bakhtin clearly differentiates the historical periods in the evolution of novel, and also its uniqueness, because novel is one of the genres that are constantly developing. In this historical perspective, novel is the genre that cannot be finished, it is always parodying other genres, "it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language", incorporating and excluding several genres, "reformulating them and re-accentuating them" (Bakhtin, 2000, p. 71). This kind of novelisation of other genres prompts the changes in their literary language, enabled by dialogisation, humour, irony, parody, etc. In Bakhtin's vision, the novel is subversive and profane, which in fact points out to its folklore (carnivalesque) origin.

> The novel as a whole is an utterance just as rejoinders in everyday dialogue or private letters are (they do have a common nature), but unlike these, the novel is a secondary (complex) utterance. The difference between primary and secondary (ideological) genres is very great and fundamental, but this is precisely why the nature of the utterance should be revealed and defined through analysis of both types. (…) A one-sided orientation toward primary genres inevitably leads to a vulgarisation of the entire problem (Bakhtin, 2000, p. 85).

Transforming the classical notion of language and literature, Bakhtin actually pinpoints the importance of concrete utterance and enunciations in all areas of linguistics and philology, since "language enters life through concrete utterances and life enters language through concrete utterances as well" (Bakhtin, 2000, p. 86). In a certain sense, Bakhtin investigates the specific relationship between style and speech genres through functional styles in language, thus provoking innovative deliberation on literary genres (renewed by the interpolation of non-literary styles into their structure), as well as the necessity for history of speech genres, taking into account the changes in social life and the ways they integrate into other speech genres. In one part of his text, Bakhtin makes several attempts to re-arrange the supposed relationship between language and genre, according to the traditional linguistics. Since in Bakhtin, the term "individual" is understood more as socially constructed, generic forms are conceived as pre-given, similarly to our native mother tongue (so we accept and integrate these forms long before we start to learn grammar). Although Bakhtin speaks of more or less stable genres, according to some formalistic postulates, he still treats literary genres as secondary, created by the fine interplay between the primary genres (letters, diaries, dialogues, everyday stories, etc). In this way, we can see how the dominant 19th- and 20th-century perception of the novel as an archetype of narrativity is being complicated, changing the way novel and narrative structure are being defined.

4. Narrativity and memory

Narrativity can be seen through its relations with memory, fact that underlines the necessity of memory's proper definition. As Andrea Lesic-Thomas indicates, narratology clearly points out the fact that narrative is the basic concept for understanding the central problems regarding human condition and the origin of language (and memory): "Even though memory itself does not take only narrative form (as the existence and importance of memories of vivid sensory images testifies), most recollection that acts as sense-making does seem to assume narrative form (…)" (Lesic-Thomas, 2008, p. 103). Correspondingly, Lesic-Thomas also investigates the problem of lost memories or forgetting, arguing upon neuroscientific conclusions the importance of narrative for memory strategies. Although in Mark Freeman's accounts narrative is seen as an "imposition" upon life and its vital force, one cannot explain or argument the fact that memory can be lost, but narrative reshaping of the formless and meaningless chaos of life cannot. These findings are once again a reaffirmation of the modern prevalence of narrativity, and also its possible explanation.

In James Olney's account, proper understanding of the correlation between narrativity and memory is in fact bedrock for explaining the variety of genres, generally excluded from the centralistic conceptions of genres, mainly because of their supposed referentiality (confessions, autobiographies, memoires, letters, etc.). Analysing the narratives of St. Augustine and Samuel Beckett, Olney (1998, p. 3-5) underlines his basic concern – proper explanation of the narrative re-arrangement by adequate interpretation of memory and time. Augustine's text is actually a combination of autobiographical and confessional tone, and by citing one of the most lucid paragraphs of Augustine, Olney affirms the logical and necessary relationship between narrative and memory (especially through the circular movements from past to present and vice versa).

> Perhaps it might be said rightly that there are three times: a time present of things past; a time present of things present; and a time present of things future. For these three do coexist somehow in the soul, for otherwise I could not see them. The time present of things past is memory; the time present of things present is direct experience; the time present of things future is expectation (Confessions, book 11, chap. 20, 26).

In Augustine's tenth book of "Confessions", dedicated to the analysis of memory and its shaping (and functioning), Augustine formulates the most important hypothesis on identity, indicating the strong correlation between memory and identity as well. As a young man grown in one polytheistic society, Augustine is later being influenced by Manichaeism, and this is the middle ground between his antique heritage and the latter conversion in Christianity. This ideological conversion reflects Augustine's current standpoints, clearly manifesting the nature of identity as well – here we can observe the so-called "branded contingencies" (Connolly, 2002, p. xiv), or the necessary difference that identity pre-supposes. These contingencies can be illustrated by Augustine's recollection of family background, childhood, and the instability of that construction, where memory and forgetting are equally active and productive. Regarding Augustine's narrative, it can be noted that memory and forgetting create an equally productive utterance that depends on their relative and timely framed productivity.

According to Augustine, God is the only stable, eternally present and permanent instance, so man's confession should be formulated upon the assumption that the confession will include the known and the unknown facts, or facts that are clearly suppressed in more distant region of the mind (Confessions, book 5, chap. 7, 12-13). These claims underline once again the correlation between memory and forgetting, highlighted by the fact that forgetting is a process where traces cannot be totally deleted, otherwise we would not be able to recollect the facts we forgot. In Augustine's text, there are several verbs repeating

continuously, according to Olney, which demonstrate the specific nature of memory, and the connection between memory and narrative – "recollect and tell, remember and confess, recall and narrate" (Olney, 1998, p. 5). Henceforth, Olney differentiates the "archaeological" and the "processual model of memory" (1998, p. 19). Archaeological model of memory indicates that memory is a harbour, a reservoir in which pictures are held according to the shape they were given by the sensory perceptions. On the other hand, memory is a process, and that can be illustrated by the fact that learning and thinking are actually processes of gathering and sorting of facts; that is why Augustine's terms "cogo (collect)" and "cogito (to go on collecting, to think)" are so similar.

> All this I do within myself, in that huge hall of my memory. For in it, heaven, earth, and sea are present to me, and whatever I can cogitate about them – except what I have forgotten. There also I meet myself and recall myself – what, when, or where I did a thing, and how I felt when I did it. There are all the things that I remember, either having experienced them myself or been told about them by others. Out of the same storehouse, with these past impressions, I can construct on the basis of experience – and from these I can further construct future actions, events, and hopes; and I can meditate on all these things as if they were present (Confessions, book 10, chap. 8, 14).

5. The novel "East-West" as an example of narrative possibilities

Macedonian literary tradition is one of the most specific and complex, since its development throughout centuries is vague and underlined by historical paradoxes. A kind of paradox is the belated appearance of the novel as a genre (in the early twentieth century), as well as the fact that the novel "East-West" by the authors Jadranka Vladova and Nebojsha Knezhevic, first published in 2002, is in fact the first epistolary novel in Macedonian tradition overall. The structure of this novel provokes questions about narrative logic and the necessary interplay between narrativity and memory, because the basic storyline is the correspondence and the writing project of Anastas Markov and Stefan Kralevski. Putting this component into perspective, the process of divided authorship is constantly undermined by the novel they actually write, the referentiality (exchanged letters between Serbian journalist Nebojsha, publishing house "Magor" and Jadranka Vladova), and various genres, incorporated in the novel (mostly articles, written in Macedonian and English, by the eminent professor of Slavic literature Michael Seraphinoff). These elements point out the heterogenic novelistic vision, enriched by the constant struggle for correct Cyrillic fonts (according to the time the text is created), which are necessary for correct transference of graphemes and voices in Macedonian language.

It can be stated that the first contact with the novel "East-West" can marvel us, basically because its form is quite different from what is usually understood by the label

"novel" (and epistolary novel, in that sense). This problematic structure cannot be grasped at first glance, since the email communication between two friends (Anastas Markov and Stefan Kralevski) is presented meticulously, considering the effective signs in this system of communication. Regarding the idea of epistolary novel, clearly focusing on generic rules and the "horizon of expectations" of the readers, the structure of this novel is transformed by one email, sent from Stefan Kralevski on 30th April 2001, which is printed on a usual piece of paper as an appendix (in contrast to the style of the book), similar to the format of regular letter. In the beginning, we are faced with the laboured communication between Stefan and Anastas, especially because Anastas (as a symbolic representamen of the East) is continuously struggling to establish and maintain the transference of ideas and values, while the West (Stefan) is merely trying to keep up in a formal manner. That can be clearly illustrated by the sent postcard at the beginning of this book, where we are not allowed to view the visual component of this card, although there is plenty of information about the sources from which these formats can be downloaded. This act can be interpreted as an implicit way of discussing generic divisions and typologies nowadays, regarding the changes in verbal enunciations and literary works overall.

Novel's polyphony of genres and voices underlines the relatedness of memory to the narrative structure. In the beginning, the main discussion between Anastas and Stefan is interwoven into the constant effort to overcome the process of forgetting, although "now it is inconceivable … with this technology" (Владова и Кнежевиќ, 2002, p. 10). What is discernible as a main plot of this novel is actually the way the suggested novel in letters is being created. In that sense, ideas of one future novel can be noted (kind of Bildungsroman, through which this primary novel can be read, since its main characters are also occupied with the problem of identity and the truth). The complicated novelistic structure is subverted once more, especially if we take into account Anastas and Stefan's novel, which is also called "East-West". Here, the basic idea is that we are actually reading their constructed novel, but this supposition is being undermined by the fact that the novel's plot is continually enriched by metatextual commentaries (even regarding the specifics of different media): "Let's begin with the agreement that we will write a novel and in it we will constantly show off our narrators, we will indicate that they are present and interwoven in the story" (Владова и Кнежевиќ, 2002, p. 14).

One part of Anastas and Stefan's novel, in which they appear under pseudonyms A and S, is a kind of apprenticeship novel, continually provoking questions about the status of interlocutors, their gender (A is assumed to be a woman, thus his enunciation radically

changes from this point in the supposed novel), questions of truth and artistic creativity, dialogism in the novel, etc. In all the aspects of dialogism, understood as a combination of endless accents, voices, and ideological stances, referentiality underlines the main part of the created novel, especially regarding the anticipated war in Macedonia. The two parts of the characters' novel – novel of apprenticeship and romantic novel – are being separated by formal and structural gap (we can note the graphic emptiness between the two parts, and also the lack of Stefan's presence). Thus, romantic novel is underlined by its form of soliloquy, where A in the absence of real interlocutor transforms into a dramatic actor, whose speech is being followed only by the real (present) spectators/readers. His/her statements are filled with aesthetical analyses, memories of past places, people and books, deep humanism, lost and recuperated facts about feelings and love stories. In this context, the process of memory, its formatting potency and the possibility of restoring its lost force can be seen through several examples, especially if we take into account the memories of Skopje's Old Bazaar, Stefan's military service in the newly-formed state, after its separation from the Yugoslav Federation, and the actualisation of "the things present", or the momentary conflict between the Macedonian army and the Albanian terrorists in 2001.

> I have only a faded, blurry photograph of yours. I wish, very often, a different one, but then I stumble along and remember that it is not appropriate, that the real and the fictitious should not be mixed: my photograph of you is created by the gentle blinking of the eyelashes. In my reflection you are quite, being as one with my incessant talk. You were talking longer only once. Do you remember? We were passing by the Stronghold, and You, probably hiding your embarrassment, were talking about mushrooms… That it is not a bad way to earn for books… Or, did I say it, not comforting enough? (Владова и Кнежевиќ, 2002, p. 56).

> My guardhouse was lonely and in deep darkness. Dry coldness was filling my uniform in March 1998. A signal from an electrical light was sent by the nearby guarding place, it was Blerim. We met halfway, between our guardhouses. He took off his military coat, inlaid with fur, together we covered up on that March. We shared everything. I believe we are all changing, and I am sure he did not have any intention to become a legitimate target (Владова и Кнежевиќ, 2002, p. 52).

Memory in this novel (understood as a storage and as a process) is constantly connected with present being of the "things present", fact that actually underlines the circular (mythic) logic of time that is passing by without wearing out, which can be illustrated by the framed Indian story "The woman that loved her man and her husband". In this narrative, according to the Hindu tradition, a goddess was being precluded from the immortal existence, thus losing her social rank and her husband. Afterwards, she was reincarnated and born in a rich Brahman family as being fully aware of her past lives. In the end, we feel compelled to realise the circular movement of time, highlighted by the fact that the lifetime long events just took several hours to happen, according to that divine logic. On the other hand, once again we are faced with the importance of the inner relationship between memory and forgetting.

Certain types of these narratives, incorporated into the structure of this novel, are presented by the articles of the prominent researcher Michael Seraphinoff, whose appearance in the text enables referentiality as a novelistic manner. His correspondence with the publisher Ljupcho Lazarevski, also the real publisher of this novel, and Jadranka Vladova, the "real" author of this text, afterwards is being replenished with the reviews of both editors of this novel (Elizabeta Sheleva and Aleksandar Prokopiev), and the review of the translated book of Macedonian short stories "Change of the System". Seraphinoff's reviews and articles, mostly written in Macedonian and English, underline the basic political and cultural aspects of war conflict in Macedonia in 2001, even with an overview on "US policy toward the former Yugoslavia", written by the eminent professor Meyer. If we take into account the fact that Michael Seraphinoff is a professor of Slavic languages and literatures, whose scientific elaborations are also focused upon one of the most significant authors in the 19th-century Macedonian literature, namely Kiril Pejchinovik, this employed metafictionalty becomes a kind of hypertextuality (Genette, 1997, p. 5), since the reader is compelled to actualise and research all the hidden texts in this novelistic structure (certainly, if he is willing to make a valid interpretation). Although signs of hypertextuality and allusions are more or less direct and easily discernible, this novel is provoking the reader to upgrade his knowledge of the modern novelistic type of unreliable narration, different narrative points of view, effects of memory strategies on narrative act, and the hidden (and loose) relationship between the referential (cultural) and the fictional (proairetic) code.

Following the basic assumption (narrativity and its prevalence nowadays), we can clearly determine the ways in which this dominant practice (which may or may not create a certain literary genre) becomes one of the means for reinterpreting and rearranging man's own, living experience, as well as his historical consciousness. It is undoubtedly true that memory is being organised in a certain narrative form, but question remains whether this is a plausible explanation for the dominance of one genre over another. If we take into consideration the antique epic tradition and the ways oral culture transformed into a literate society, we can get a glimpse of this unique process, i.e. the changing relationship between poetry (verse) and prose (narrative). In our analysis, we were examining one modern epistolary novel, where the traditional form of letter is being substituted by its electronic form (emails), which basically signifies a change not only in communicative context, but also in the way the living experience is being transferred (and, possibly, narrated).

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