

GENRE FEATURES OF THE POSTMODERN NOVEL “PERFUME: THE STORY OF A MURDERER” BY P. SÜSKIND

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The purpose of the article is to define the genre features of Patrick Süskind's novel as a postmodern work. The task is to determine the artistic components, which will serve as a basis for establishing the genre affiliation of the analyzed work. The study employs the elements of formal and cultural-historical methods of analysis.

It is emphasized that the peculiarity of this novel is its genre eclecticism. It is noted that the work actualizes the Faustian image of the human/superhuman, who is marginal and disadvantaged, rejected by society, extremely talented, but has no moral values. The work consists of four parts referring to different periods of life and the work of Jean-Baptiste Grenouille (childhood and learning the craft; self-reflection in the cave and return to people; the culmination of activities as a perfumer and criminal in Grasse; his death). Each part falls into the canons of several genres; while intertwined quite chaotically, the elements of genres form a holistic picture nonetheless.

It is established that the events of the novel are tied to the events of the 18th century; the historical background is outlined both through specific dates of the protagonist's life, important milestones in his life and career, tied to individual historical events and processes, and also through artistic descriptions of guild manufacturing, the social hierarchy of the society, urban life in Europe. However, Süskind's work cannot be considered a historical novel in the classical sense of the genre (the plot is not centered around a historical event or a historical figure), thus literary critics rightfully interpret the work as a pseudo-historical novel. Detailed descriptions of the specifics of the social and domestic life of a child, adolescent, and apprentice signify the social and domestic novel, however, the protagonist's life and his actions can hardly be considered typical. The plot of Süskind's work develops conforming to the genre canon of the crime novel. We draw your attention to the fact that, according to the marketing definition, the analyzed work is defined as “a romantic detective”. Yet in accordance with the detective genre canon, the protagonist must be a detective, who unravels the crime and finds the killer. In Süskind's novel, the main character is a criminal, and the detective is not even formally represented, which gives us a reason to classify the analyzed work as a crime / noir novel. Gothic elements (the topos of the cemetery, the pervasive motif of death, the protagonist living in gloomy places, one way or another connected with death, etc.) also point to the genre of a crime novel. The novel describes in detail the features of the craftsmanship, and the life of the apprentice, and thus the text acquires a distinct quality of the occupational novel. Despite the fact that a significant part of the text is devoted to the description of the profession of a perfumer, the analyzed work is still difficult to label as an occupational novel, because it lacks the motif of work for the benefit of society, and the image of the main character being a genius perfumer-killer is far from the positive image of a worker, which is determining for a genre of occupational novel.

Philosophical motives are an integral part of Süskind's novel. The worldview and system of moral and ethical values are implicated and in a rather ironic context presented through references to famous scientists and philosophers of the Enlightenment, which in one way or another refer to the scientific picture of the world, criticism of the church, atheism, freethinking. The canon of the parable used in the second chapter enables the artistic presentation of the spiritual transformations of the main character and the formation of his axiology. As the hero stays in a cave, dreaming in the position of the embryo, it is perceived as his death and rebirth, the time spent in there (“seven years”) is similar to the time of the Divine creation of the world and, respectively, implicitly marks the protagonist's Faustian claims to the role of Creator. In Süskind's novel, there are also elements of an educational novel, the conventions of the picaresque genre. The transformation of Grenouille's execution into a collective orgy is presented in the manner of the parable genre with elements of the absurd. The fourth part of the novel, in which Grenouille returns to Paris, corresponds to canons of the genres of horror and parable. Written in accordance with various genre canons, the parts are implicitly enraged by the motif of Faustianism as a desire to know the mysteries of the world, messianism, and apostasy.

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