

人類共有知ゲノムとしての風刺表現(通時的解析) Small Satirical Forms as the Genome of Collective Human Intelligence (Diachronic Aspects)

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Abstract: This article concerns some aspects of humorous and satirical small forms in cultural development in West and East European literature. In this connection the author touches upon the principal trends of anecdotes and adjacent genres evolution from Antiquity to New times, putting accent to their specific features in Russian culture in comparison with Western (French) literature. The results of multi-aspect review of theoretical material give full ground to state that anecdotes as well as adjacent small literary forms (epigrams, jokes, aphorisms) can be considered as the genome of collective human intelligence.

Keywords: anecdote, epigram, humor, literature, form, genre

1. Introduction

As it is known, small literary satirical genres such as anecdotes, epigrams, fables, aphorisms, etc. have been always an object of high interest and numerous controversies. The deep connection between these genre varieties is quite obvious, since they have common genesis and similar compositional, structural features. Thus, according to existing encyclopedic references, anecdotes are a kind of small prosaic satirical or didactic stories or jokes making fun of any specific person or event. The main compositional features of anecdotes are recorded in the Dictionary of Russian researcher N.F. Ostolopov (1821): "Two parts make up an anecdote, taken in its current meaning: One concludes a sentence of an object or thing that produced the thought; the other is the very thought or, so to speak, a sharp phrase, which together can be called a knot or a denouement" [6,p.134].

Of course, this definition can be also applied to an epigram which has been created as a small genre on the base of anecdotic stories. Both present satirical utterances, witty and caustic, directed at a certain person or an event, but epigrammatic works mostly exist in a rimed, poetic form. So, it is just the lapidary nature of epigrams that allows them to maintain structural

stability as a sign of the genre. This structure makes it closely related to other short satirical genres - epigrams and fables, aphorisms, parodies, proverbs, sayings, etc., whose forms variety is a necessary condition of the European prosaic (poetic) literature successful development.

Most often, it's a "sharp thought" fit into several sentences. The plot in all funny jokes, in particular, anecdotic ones, usually develops especially resiliently, being even compressed to the limit. So, in general, anecdotes, as well as epigrams are akin to proverbs and sayings, since for them the main thing is also the condensation of meaning into a short verbal formula.

2. Anecdotes principal characteristics and genesis

The essence of an anecdote as a highly condensed thought, idea, framed in a laconic form and reflecting some important, meaningful events, problems, aspects of life, every day activity remains actually the same for centuries. The topics of anecdotes cover not only family, love, friendship, but also political items, what is quite natural. War conflicts, political, international events are inevitably reflected in the people's witty thought and creative verbal activity. In general, all great or significant cultural events and social- political changes accompanying different historical periods of humanity evolutional development have always found and will surely find their reflection in small literary genres. That's why we can surely name anecdotes as well as epigrams, aphorisms, fables, proverbs, sayings, parodies, etc. the condensed people witness or the genome of collective human intelligence. Of course, anecdotes' specificity and thematic trends are greatly influenced by social-cultural context, historical, ethnic traditions, customs and particular features of national mentality.

The popularity of anecdotes and epigrams as their «smaller sisters» is facilitated by the intensive fictionalization of this small form, polished by the human brain and his immortal soul to a dazzling brilliance [4, 10]. It has always been used as a means of emotional discharge, producing impression and creating personal contacts. The humorous effect produced by an anecdote as a short joke is actually owing to stylistic means of unexpected end, or deceived expectation widely used in this genre.

Anecdotes as well as other small forms are greatly varied by their content and embrace a large scope of moods, involving humor, irony, satire, sarcasm and some mixed manifestations. Having originated in the era of antiquity, in the period of antique Greco-Roman traditions [2], anecdotes as well as epigrams endured considerable modifications for more than two and a half thousand years before finally taking the forms and manifestations we are familiar with. One can suppose that small forms evolution is genetically predetermined by ancient epitaphs which are considered to be the most old attempts of provoking comic, humor effect on people using laconic, condensed plots and non-standard (non)rimed forms. Besides, the language of anecdotes, dating back to pre-history literary traditions, is greatly owing to the famous fabulist Ezop [5] who is considered not only as the creator of rich fable heritage but of the specific language full of alliterations, reminiscences, insinuations and used mostly by oppressed simple people, deprived of any other means of expressing their thoughts, challenges and wishes.

Probably, this ancient literary and conceptual heritage has become widely used by Western and Eastern Europe authors who tried to apply it on their national grounds adding to Ezop's style and plots their individual elements, (nick)names, details, etc. The ancient jokes containing condensed wisdom of several generations and transmitted orally from mouth to mouth gave birth to other satirical small forms, such as fables and epigrams. So, the early people's funny, humorous stories fixed in the memory and greatly varying in size, style, topics, etc. probably served a platform on which most satirical genres were born and developed within centuries.

But if in the period of antiquity the only form of

anecdotes was a short oral utterance, from the 15-th century and up to our time it exists mainly in a written form, being fixed in various collections, including Internet ones. In fact, the so-called low small genres flourished especially magnificently in French literature, although no less striking examples could be found in Polish literature.

From here comes, by the way, the very name of extremely brief and bright works of a famous Polish writer Stanislaw Jezhi Letz (20-th c.), whose sharp «phrashki» have become aphorisms, sentences, etc. [10]. In general, speaking of the anecdotes and epigrams, we should always remember that it is impossible to isolate them in their pure form, completely separating them from parables, fables and parodies, pamphlets and feuilletons, as well as their folklore soil.

3. Small genres in French literary Tradition

For the French poets of Renaissance, small satirical genres gradually ceased to be exclusively descriptive and moralistic. "Philosophical" thoughtfulness was certainly reinforced by their ironic attitude to life, to society, to themselves [7]. And already in the 16th century the "acute Gallic sense" so characteristic of the satirical literature of medieval France happily came into contact with ancient experience, which gave these small genres clarity, measure, completeness and a certain elegance. In them, the joke has already ceased to be deliberately rude and obscene, as it carried a certain generalization and morality. Thus, critical notes on various aspects of human existence, acquiring universal generalization, retained the sharpness of the topical document. Of course, this was not given immediately: one had to "overcome not only the inertia of the ancient tradition with its abstract philosophizing and descriptiveness, but also the obsessive didacticism of medieval thinking" [11, p. 176].

The appeal of Renaissance poets to the ancient forms was one of the symptoms of "classical antiquity revival." The writers and poets of that era were able, perhaps for the first time in the history of world culture, to overcome their class and estate division, in general, any kind of limitation, and to realize the rights and power of a free human intellect and artistic word. They seemed to

foresee the innate breadth and ideological emancipation of small satirical genres. In the literature of this time one can come across pure imitations, and even translations from ancient anthologies. Especially often the victim of the latter was Martial with his sharp political and everyday epigrams, exposing human vices and weaknesses, as well as playful epitaphs and auto-epitaphs.

The first true master of the Renaissance epigram was Clement Marot (1497-1544), although attempts of this kind were made by the French authors much earlier. Marot successfully combined ancient experience with specific local humor, which, among other things, has always been characterized by balancing on the edge of what is permitted and even almost obscene. The skill of Clement Marot, the author of a large cycle of anecdotes and epigrams (almost 300 miniatures), consisted, in particular, in the fact that "the poet never crossed this invisible line, never fell into either flat scoffing or rude greasiness" [7, p. 165].

During the 17th century, the main formal features of small literary forms were defined, and their subject matters were also worked out. Three of most characteristic features of them have been polished: laconism, topical satire, unexpected denouement. These miniatures are becoming an ironic genre and, as a result, a sharp weapon in literary disputes, social life, and political struggle. This property of small genres is already clearly recognized by others.

For example, C.A. Montesquieu called them «small sharp arrows, inflicting deep and incurable wounds» [7, p. 237]. And here is what is paradoxical: if earlier the authors of funny jokes, who wrote «for themselves» or a few friends, still published their works, now they often remained handwritten and even oral for a long time. And, nevertheless, they instantly became known and interesting to the whole society, vividly responding to all the events that worried it. This is how small anecdotic and epigrammatic forms gradually became one of the most poignant and satirical commentaries on the history of the era:

4. Small satirical genres evolution in Russia

As far as Russian small satirical literary forms are

concerned, their base was greatly prepared by the people's actual folklore trends and genres, such as «chastushki», «poteszki», songs-jokes, as well as by sharp proverbs, sayings, etc. The elements of small anecdotic jokes appeared in Russia rather early and even in the style of blaming words, dating back to the Byzantine tradition of accusatory speech [11]. Most anecdotes of that time, as a rule, ridiculed idolatry, witchcraft, ritual dances preserved from the pre-Christian faith. Among human vices the most often targeted were drunkenness, love of gold, slander, malice, lies and fornication. In the Baroque era, the socio-historical setting for elegant satire also matured.

Foreign anecdotes, fables, jokes, were translated into Russian, domestic wits mastered a new form and style. The personal principle, unknown to the literature of the Russian Middle Ages, prompted the development of previously uncultivated genres. As a result of this awakening of the personality, as well as the socio-historical differentiation of society, i.e. the emergence of new features of world perception, there is also a craving for artistic and journalistic genres, and, above all, for anecdotes, epigrams which in the 18th century can already be spoken of as an independent trend [1, 12]. In this connection, fashionable at that time «curious» verses – palindromes or «crustacean poems» were considered by many literary men useless, and anecdotes, epigrams raised to the heights of political sound [4]. A murderous sarcasm gave these miniatures a touch of an acute social plan. Most researchers suppose that at the origins of Russian small satirical genres one of the most significant positions is occupied by the follower of F. Prokopovich – A. Kantemir (1708-1744), translator from French and one of the founders of the Russian satirical trend.

According to V. G. Belinsky, this direction of development "since the time of A. Kantemir became a living stream of all Russian literature, defining the pathos of our literature throughout the 18th and 19th centuries" [8, p.234]. A. Kantemir expressed the urgent need for the growing national and aesthetic self-consciousness of Russian society, the top of which still clearly gravitated in its literary attachments to classicism [8]. Thus, the real world began to find more and more reflection not in

ceremonial odes and tragedies, but in the so-called "low" genres: prosaic and poetic satire and fairy tale, fable, comic poem, comedy. In his sharp miniatures, A. Kantemir denounced stupidity and ambition, class prejudices and «malice in general» [8]. The names of the characters in his works are stylized in the antique spirit – after all, criticism of generalized and eternal vices is important to any satirical poet.

In the 18th century, when Russian small forms were only taking shape, the reliance on the preceding European tradition played an important role. Thus one must mention the abundance of translated works, the widespread borrowing of plots from the most famous masters of this genre [9]. However, there were no mechanical transplantations: Russian people interpreted foreign works in their own way, adapting them to local conditions, dressing them in a nationally original form [1]. Thus, such newly born satirical creations greatly contributed to the enrichment and further formation of the Russian language. Actually, the French, German and English authors themselves moved along the same track, mastering the creative heritage of the ancient period.

5. Russian national humor and its specific trends

As a rule, Russian national humor is often difficult to understand even if you speak fluent Russian. This is because many Russian jokes play on cultural stereotypes, political events, popular culture, and Soviet-time movies. Russian jokes called anecdotes have a unique history. The first of them came to Russia through the European tradition of telling interesting, rather funny stories. They were popular in the aristocratic circles and eventually developed into classic jokes similar to those existing in the West [3]. However, these jokes took on a very political slant during all so-called Soviet period, which lasted for 70 years. This unique trend stipulated for the development of an unusual, specific Russian humor characterized by its themes of political or cultural relevance. A lot of material for such new jokes has been provided by various stories about former Soviet political leaders (Stalin, Brezhnev, and Khrushchev), owing to their odd or funny behavior as well as the paradoxical and claustrophobic nature of the Soviet life. Some

political jokes, anecdotes have been often composed by the ideological services. For example:

1. «That's enough of messing around», said Brezhnev, gluing his eyebrows under his nose.
2. Brezhnev is speaking at a party meeting: «Who said that I can only speak when I have the speech in front of me? Ha, dash, ha, dash, ha, dash».
3. - "Do you have a hobby, Leonid Ilyich?"
- «Of course! I collect jokes about myself».
- «Have you got many?»
- «Two and a half labor camps already!» [13]

In the 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union a new trend of so-called New Russians appeared in the country, as the Russian nouveaux riches. They quickly became the subject of many jokes due to their lack of culture, education, and manners, as well as their garish tastes. New Russians were usually depicted as low in intelligence and reliant on money to solve everything. For example:

4. Two New Russians are driving in a Jeep and see a sign «Traffic police – 100m.» One of them takes out his wallet and begins to count the money. Then he sighs and says: «You know what, Vovan, I don't think we have enough for a hundred cops».
5. A New Russian says to an architect:
- «I want you to build three swimming pools: one with cold water, one with warm water, and one without any water».
- «Why would the third one not have any water?»
- «Because some of my friends can't swim».
6. A new Russian is buying a real estate abroad. The agent is showing him his future property:
- «Here is a forest around the house that will be yours, as well as these fields».
The buyer is watching thoughtfully the surroundings from the window of his limousine.
- «And here is your future castle. This is the first half of the 18th century».
«Sorry», – the new Russian asks quite amazed, – «And where is the second half?»
7. The agent of the real estate firm is explaining the situation to a New Russian who wants to buy a house:
- I must be honest with you. This house has got quite serious flaws.

- On the left there is a pig farm, on the right – the fish factory, a little further – a large dump.
- «Really?» – the New Russian asks. – «But what are then the advantages of this house?»
- «You can always know for sure from where the wind is blowing» [13].

5. Small satirical genres status nowadays

Nowadays small humorous stories, jokes, anecdotes are still in great demand, actually as they were in ancient, Middle age, Renaissance and post Renaissance New times. Among famous contemporary Russian poets and prosaic authors of Soviet and post-Soviet periods we can mention I. M. Iryenyev, V. I. Gaft, S.Y. Marshak, M.F. Svetlov, D.I. Harms, A.M. Cherny, V. P. Vishnevsky, A.M. Arkanov, M. M. Zhvanetsky, I.M. Guberman and many others, whose works in original and translations are still popular with young, old and middle aged people. Of course, intensive development of mass media and computer technologies in our time of globalization has greatly contributed to this small genre wide popularization. New born authors, who often prefer to remain anonymous, try to find new alternative topics and even forms, sharing the Internet space with modern type short epigrammatic verses, called «poroshki», which are composed by new metric standards and are accompanied by funny sketches. Still, this doesn't mean that the very principles of small funny stories creating have changed considerably. They are still the same as they were several centuries ago, and now as ever their composition (structure) is based not only on specific funny situations, episodes, but also on so called brain games, or «puzzles» what is especially precious for human intelligence development. This surely explains high importance and constant popularity of small funny genres in all European languages and cultures.

6. Conclusion

In general, high and constant interest of people for anecdotes as small literary forms can be explained by several reasons. In fact, they are accessible, emotionally attractive, short, non-standard, containing highly condensed, polished within centuries wisdom (witness) and life experience. As a rule, most modern readers

prefer to get necessary information from secondary sources, choosing laconic and acute funny stories and verses instead of classical literature with its huge volumes, hard plots and style. It's really much more convenient, economical and helps to distract from every-day reality, stereotypes, patterns. Anecdotes as well as humorous verses give power to live and even survive to many people who find themselves in hard conditions or dangerous, unpredictable situations. All this, as well as Internet resources functionality actually contributes to wide spreading of anecdotes, funny stories, jokes and adjacent forms as an effective means of emotional discharge and relaxing.

The long-standing popularity of anecdotes as well as adjacent literary forms obviously proves that their composing is a very useful creative activity practiced not only by teenagers or genial individuals, but by hundreds of people inspired by humorous subjects, original plots, interesting ideas and always ready to share them with many others. Thus, we can really consider small satirical genres and, in particular, anecdotes the genome of collective human intelligence.

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