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DIACHRONIC VIEWPOINT ON POETRY GENRES
(WITH REFERENCE TO CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE
OF THE ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRIES)

Стаття присвячена поетичним жанрам у літературі англомовних країн. Поетичні жанри аналізуються в діахронічному розрізі.
Ключові слова: література англомовних країн, літературний період, поетичні жанри, діахронічний розріз.

Статья посвящена поэтическим жанрам в литературе англоязычных стран. Поэтические жанры анали-зируются в диахроническом разрезе.
Ключевые слова: литература англоязычных стран, литературный период, поэтические жанры, диахро-нический разрез.

The article is dedicated to poetry genres in literature of the English speaking countries. Poetry genres are analysed from the diachronic viewpoint.
Keywords: literature of the English speaking countries, literary period, poetry genres, diachronic viewpoint.

Introduction. Contemporary literature of the English speaking countries is represented by various poetry genres which emerged during different literary periods. Some of them originated in literature of other countries and then were borrowed and developed by English and American poets and poetesses. Despite their origin and diversity, they all became a distinguishing characteristic of contemporary literature of the English speaking countries. Thus, the main **purpose** of the article is to investigate the diversity of poetry genres in contemporary literature of the English speaking countries from the diachronic viewpoint.

Presentation of basic material of research. What are the main poetry genres? Under which genre does a poem fall? Before answering these questions, it is important to clarify the meaning of the word «genre». «Genre» comes from an Old French, *kind*, *gender* which comes from Latin *genus, gener-; genə-* in Indo-European roots and means *kind, category, or sort, esp of literary or artistic work* [12]. So «genre» is used to describe the style or category of art, literature, music, or any other type of discourse, written or spoken.

A poetry genre therefore means a category of literary composition which is written with proper rules about form, rhyme and rhythm or without them and which expresses emotions, experiences and ideas.

Diachronic viewpoint allows us to elicit poetry genres which are peculiar to literature of English speaking countries and to trace their evolution through time. A list of generally acknowledged poetry genres includes: *epic, ballad, couplet, sonnet, Mother Goose and Nursery Rhymes, free verse, diamante, limerick, cinquaind, haiku and tanka.*

Epic. The earliest recorded poems emerged during the Anglo-Saxon period marked from the invasion of Celtic England by Germanic tribes in the first half of the 5th century to the conquest of England in 1066 by the Norman French under the leadership of William the Conqueror.

Anglo-Saxon poetry of that time was recited as a song or a riddle and poets who usually were the historians of the tribe used alliterative verse (which is the repetition of the first consonant sound in a phrase) and linked two lines together, divided by a caesura:

> *The folk-kings' former fame we have heard of,*
> *How princes displayed then their prowess-in-battle [3].*

There are lots of F's in the first line: ƒolk-kings', ƒormer, ƒame and lots of P's in the second line: **p**rinces, dis**p**layed, **p**rowess.

Alliteration is still a commonly used tool in the literature of English speaking countries, tracing its origins back to Old English and other Germanic languages such as Old High German, Old Norse, and Old Saxon.

Caedmon's Hymn, Beowulf The Wanderer, and *The Seafarer* vividly represent the Anglo-Saxon period.

Ballad is a poetry genre written as a short story in the form of a poem or song. It was basically used in dance songs in the ancient France. Later on, during the late 16th and 17th century, it spread over the majority of European nations. The ballads which come down to us fall into two types, namely: folk and literary. The first ones were composed by anonymous singers and were passed down from generation to generation before they were written down and the latter ones were composed and written down by famous poets. They both preserved the local events, beliefs, customs and characters in an easily remembered form. Although ballads lost their popularity during the latter half of the 19th century, they are still read and listened to with great interest [2; 10].

Couplet is a poetry genre which includes two lines of poetry, one following the other, that are the same length. These two lines often belong together and often share a similar idea. The distinctive feature of two lines is that they rhyme and have the same meter. Let's consider the classic example from *the Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer:

Singing he was, or fluting all the day
He was as fresh as is the month of May [6].

Sonnet is a poetry genre of fourteen lines, following one or another of several set rhyme-schemes. The sonnet as a form developed in Italy in the thirteenth century. It was Petrarch who raised the sonnet to its greatest Italian perfection and gave it his own name.

Although the form was introduced into England by Thomas Wyatt, who translated Petrarchan sonnets into English, English sonnets are called Shakespearean in order to honor one of the most famous sonneteers in England [14].

Mother Goose and Nursery Rhymes. The name, Mother Goose made its way into England from France. A collection of eight famous folk tales by Perrault which was called «Contes de ma mère l'Oye» was published in 1697 in France. These stories were translated into English and published as «Tales of Mother Goose» in 1729. Since then the literary genre written in metrical form for children has been called **Mother Goose and Nursery Rhymes** [13].

The history and origins of most nursery rhymes are often connected with nature, people's believes, habits, traditions, customs, etc.

For instance, the words and lyrics of the famous nursery rhyme *«A swarm of bees in May»* reflect the belief that if people are attentive they can predict the weather [1].

A swarm of bees in May

Is worth a load of hay;
A swarm of bees in June
Is worth a silver spoon;
A swarm of bees in July
Is not worth a fly.

The origin of the old rhyme *«Wash on Monday...»* is believed to be connected with the English tradition of washing clothes on a definite day of the week (Monday). This tradition was taken to America by the women who were aboard *the Mayflower.* When they came ashore on Monday, November 13, 1620, the first thing they did was the washing:

Wash on Monday,
Iron on Tuesday,
Bake on Wednesday,
Brew on Thursday,
Churn on Friday,
Mend on Saturday,
Go to meeting on Sunday [16].

Limerick is a poetry genre written as a humorous short poem that is not only often nonsensical but ribald and has five lines that rhyme. Scholars claim that the origin of the limerick is unknown, but it has been suggested that the name derives from the chorus of an 18th-century Irish soldiers' song, *«Will You Come Up to Limerick?»*.

Limericks have a definite structure in which all lines usually rhyme. The main distinctive feature of a limerick is the number of syllables in lines. The first, second and fifth lines usually have eight to ten syllables. The third and fourth lines, in their turn, have five to seven syllables.

The first collections of limericks in the English language date from the beginning of the 19th century. A typical example of a limerick is a verse by Edward Lear, who composed and illustrated one of the first collections in his «Book of Nonsense» (1846):

There was an Old Man who supposed
That the street door was partially closed;
But some very large rats
Ate his coats and his hats,
While that futile Old Gentleman dozed.

Many variations of this poetry genre were quickly developed and acquired widespread popularity in the early years of the 20th century, and limerick contests were often held by magazines and business houses. For instance, the following limerick was written in the form of a tongue twister:

A tutor who taught on the flute
Tried to teach two tooters to toot.
Said the two to the tutor,
«Is it harder to toot, or
To tutor two tooters to toot? [11]*».*

Cinquain is a poetry genre written in metrical form that consists of five lines. The word cinquain comes from the French word cinq which means five (from Old French cinc; see *cinque) + (quatr)ain.* The founder of this poetry genre is considered to be Adelaide Crapsey (1878–1914) who was an American poetess. Adelaide Crapsey took her inspiration from Japanese haiku and tanka and applied the term *«cinquain»* to a five-line verse form of specific metre that she developed by herself. She composed a collection of poems which was called «Verse». It included 28 cinquains and was published in 1915. Cinquains are particularly vivid in their imagery and are meant to convey a certain mood or emotion [4].

Because Adelaide Crapsey created the cinquain as a poetic form, the best examples of a cinquain are poems that she wrote. For instance, «November Night»:

Listen…
With faint dry sound
Like steps of passing ghosts,

the leaves, frost-crisp'd, break from the trees
And fall [5].

There have been many variations of the cinquain since its invention. One of the most popular forms which is used today is a *didactic cinquain.* It is very popular among poets and poetesses because of its simplicity. As it was above-mentioned didactic cinquains consist of five lines. The first line names the subject, the second line includes two descriptive words; the third line consists of -ing words about what the subject does; the fourth line comprises a sentence about the subject and the fifth line is another name for the subject. Let's consider the following example of a didactic cinquain which is called *«Watermelon»:*

Watermelon
Juicy, sweet
Dripping, slurping, smacking
So messy to eat
Yummy [5].

The second popular variation of the cinquain is different from the didactic one in a way that the fourth line is a complete sentence and may have more than four words:

«Star»
Star
Hot, radiant
Shining, burning, exploding
It gives life to everything
Sun [5].

Diamante is a poetry genre written in metrical form which has seven lines that are in a diamond shape. Hence the name of this poetry genre is diamante. The form was developed by Iris Tiedt in A New Poetry Form: *The Diamante* (1969). A diamante poem does not have to rhyme because a poet is discribing something. It is usually written about two opposite subjects which are compared with one another. Subjects might include war-peace, fire-ice, love-hate, hot- cold, etc.

A diamante poem usually consists of seven lines. The first line contains one noun that names the first subject; the second line includes two adjectives that describe the first subject. The third line of a diamante poem comprises 3 –ing words that are related to the first subject. In the fourth line four adjectives are used: first two adjectives are related to the first subject in the first line and the second two adjectives which are related to the second subject. In the fifth line there are 3 –ing words that are related to the second subject and in the sixth line there are two adjectives that describe the second subject presented in the seventh line [17].

Water
Wet, Deep
Flowing, Splashing, Swaying
Lake, Ocean, Island, Forest
Growing, Stabilizing, Living
Hard, Dry
Land [16].

Haiku is a poetry genre which was borrowed from Japenese literature and became popular among poets and poetesses in the USA.

It is an unrhymed Japanese poem which consists of three lines and has a specific syllable pattern. Haiku poems are usually written on topics and things that easily identified by readers. For instance, seasons, animals and nature. Initially, haiku poems were called «*hokku*» and the first three masters who represented this poetry genre were Basho, Buson and Issa.

Haiku poems which are usually about two contrasting parts comprise three lines and 17 syllables in total. The first and the last lines consist of five syllables and the second one is composed of seven syllables.

One of the best examples of haiku poetry is *«Old Pond»* by Basho. It contains two contrasting parts one of which is frog that is jumping and second one is the sound of water. The syllable pattern corresponds to a 5-7-5 format.

Old pond
a frog jumps
the sound of water [9].

One more popular poetry genre which was borrowed from Japenese literature and became popular in the USA is **tanka**. Tanka poems usually consist of five lines and 31 syllables that has historically been the basic form of Japanese poetry:

Beautiful mountains
Rivers with cold, cold water.
White cold snow on rocks
Trees over the place with frost
White sparkly snow everywhere [7].

Free Verse is a poetry genre which is written without proper rules about form, rhyme or rhythm. Free verses lack rhyme and have less predictable rhythm. They do not have any set rules and are based on normal pauses and natural rhythmical phrases. This type of poetry genre is commonly used by contemporary poets. Some of them use this technique as a freedom from rhythm and rhyme because they think that it changes the mind of people. Therefore, free verse is also called *vers libre*.

One of the best examples of free verse poems which don't have a regular rhyme scheme and rhythm is represented by «*Soonest Mended*» by John Ashbury:

Barely tolerated, living on the margin
In our technological society, we were always having to be rescued
On the brink of destruction, like heroines in Orlando Furioso
Before it was time to start all over again.
There would be thunder in the bushes, a rustling of coils,
The whole thing might not, in the end, be the only solution.
Came plowing down the course, just to make sure everything was O. K.
About how to receive this latest piece of information [8].

Conclusions. The investigation conducted from the diachronic viewpoint allows us to conclude that contemporary literature of the English speaking countries is characterised by the diversity of poetry genres which greatly influenced its evolution. Although all poetry genres emerged during different literary periods, some of them were even borrowed from literature of other countries globalization and the fact that they were written on topics and things that the readers could identify easily helped them become popular and recognizable in contemporary literature of the English speaking countries.

Prospects of further research. However, the undertaken study is not at the end of all aspects of a problem of development of genres in literature of the English speaking countries. Challenging directions of further scientific research can be as follows: the investigation of the diversity of fiction genres and sub-genres in contemporary literature of the English speaking countries.

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