

Narrative Mode and Fiction
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Lecture - 08
Fiction and Different Modes of Narrative -III

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on narrative mode and fiction. So, we are discussing fiction and different modes of narrative. Our onus is on epic and novel as the two genres. We have studied the two genres in comparison with one another. From the perspective of George Lucas. Today we are going to talk about Mikhail Bakhtin's essays titled dialogic imagination where he is comparing epic and novel.

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Mikhail Bakhtin
Dialogic Imagination: Epic and Novel

- Novel is a peculiar genre that **continues to develop** and is **yet incomplete**.
- Development of a novel is very **unpredictable**, so what will happen next i.e., the **possibilities cannot be foretold**.
- Other genres have **fixed preexisting forms** in which artists pour in their experience.
- Novel as a genre **form as a result of historically documented observation**.
- On the other hand, epic is an antiquated genre whose development is complete.

So, according to Bakhtin novel is a peculiar genre that continues to develop and it is never completed. It is never an organic whole development of a novel is very unpredictable and so what will happen next or the possibilities in the future cannot be foretold other genres have fixed pre-existing forms in which artists pour in their experience. Novel on the other hand as a genre or as a form or happen as a result of historically documented observations.

Contrarily we see that epic is an antiquated dictionary where development is already complete and nothing more can happen possibilities are thereby closed in an epic. But the novel is

necessarily the reflection of the modern world a new world where which is you know characterized by polyphony, characterized by polyglossic texture is a characteristic of the novel.

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Dialogic Imagination: Epic and Novel

- Similarly to epic, tragedy also has a hardened skeleton.
- In a classic Greco-Roman tragedy, the stages are typically - Exposition or setting of mood, rising action, **peripeteia** (a sudden change in situation), **hamartia** (tragic flaw) leading to conflict, **anagnorisis** (recognition), crisis or reversal, falling action or **catastrophe**, pity, and fear (leading to **catharsis**).
- Epic and tragedy precede the written tradition.
- They flourished at a time when **oral tradition** was prevalent.
- In strict dactylic hexameter, each of these feet would be a dactyl (one long and two short syllables), but classical meter allows for the substitution of a spondee (two long syllables) in place of a dactyl in most positions.

So, there are different layers, different perspectives, different meanings and inter illumination all of these characterize the novel. Similar to epic, we see in tragedy also there is a hardened skeleton in other words, a hardened framework from which one cannot deviate too much. In a classic Greco-Roman tragedy, the stages are typically we know first we have the exposition or setting of the mood.

And then a rising action followed by peripeteia, which is a sudden change in situation followed by hamartia or tragic flaw which leads to some kind of conflict, anagnorisis or recognition, crisis or reversal, falling action or catastrophe, then we have pity and fear which all leads to catharsis on the part of the audience. So, epic and tragedy both precede the written tradition. They necessarily belong to the oral tradition.

They flourished at a time when oral tradition, oral culture was prevalent. So, in strict dactylic hexameter, each of the feet would be a dactyl. A dactyl meaning one long and two short syllables, but a classical meter allows for the substitution of a spondee or two long syllables in place of a dactyl in most positions.

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Dialogic Imagination: Epic and Novel

- The first four feet can either be dactyls or spondees more or less freely. The fifth foot is frequently a dactyl.
- As a result, these ancient genres retain their **oral and auditory characteristics**.
- Contrarily, the novel has **no generic canon**, but **individual examples**.
- While other genres are written in '**dead languages**', novel is very much **alive and young, the only developing genre**.

So, the first four feet can either be dactyls or spondees more or less freely. However, the fifth foot is frequently a dactyl. Now because these rhymes and rhythms are also prefixed; we know how after four dactyls is one spondee comes. So, after four dactyls or spondees there has to be the fifth foot as dactyl. These ancient genres retain an auditory characteristic. The lyricity is very important. Tragedy and epic are not meant to be read alone.

It is not a lonely affair in any way not in terms of you know, reading experience not in terms of what is happening within the frame of the text to the characters it is always a community affair it is meant to be read aloud, it is a verse, it has the poetic quality. Contrarily the novel, the classic novel has no generic canon as such, but only individual examples. So, we cannot have some parameters within which a novel can be inscribed.

Novel always tends to outgrow these parameters and form newer and newer definitions, while other genres are written in a dead language or this is something Mikhail Bakhtin has to say, he says you know tragedy and no epic are written in dead language. Novel is very much alive and young and Bakhtin would say that it is the only developing genre.

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Dialogic Imagination: Epic and Novel

- Novel belongs to the era of **world history**, whereas other **older genres that are already fixed**. In the era of novelization, older genres adapt to the new conditions of their existence.
- Prior to novel, **other genres form a harmonious organic unity** by reinforcing each other.
- On the other hand, novel cannot enter this whole and participate in harmony with other genres.
- Only genres with well-defined contours/characteristics can enter such an organic whole of literatures that are hierarchically organized.
- The older genres can mutually complement and delimit each other while preserving their own generic natures, as there is a deep structure common in all.

So, novel belongs to the era of world history, whereas other older genres that are already fixed. Cannot be you know associated immediately with contemporary in the era of novelization all the genres adapt to the new conditions of their existence that have been brought forth by the novel. Prior to novel, other genres would form a harmonious organic you know unity through reinforcing each other.

And novel cannot enter this whole and participate in harmony with the older genres. So, it is kind of an outcast if we attempt a generic study vis-a-vis epic and tragedy the novel is an outcast. Only genres with well-defined contours or characteristics can enter such an organic whole of literatures that are already hierarchically organized. The older genres can mutually complement and delimit each other while preserving their own generic traits or generic natures.

Because there is a deep underlying structure that is common in all of them. So, tragedy has this skeleton from which it does not deviate too much. There are certain stages through which the tragic hero has to journey to experience the no exit situation. Similarly, epic has a world view to which it subscribes novel has no such parameters is constantly making and unmaking it is parameters.

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Dialogic Imagination: Epic and Novel

- Bakhtin argues that they all resultantly ignore the novel.
- The novel parodies other genres, exposing the conventionality in their forms and languages, drawing traits from other genres while reformulating and re-accentuating them.
- In the era where novel is the dominant genre, all literature is caught up in the process of 'becoming' and engaged in a 'generic criticism.' This is a phenomenon that mainly began in the second half of the 18th Century).
- When novel reigns supreme, other genres are more or less "novelized". E.g., drama, epic poetry, lyric poetry.

Bakhtin argues that all the older genres resultantly ignore the novel the developing experimenting young genre. The novel parodies are the genres it exposes the conventionality the ossification that has happened in the forms and languages of the older genres and drawing traits from other genres it reformulates and re-accentuates them. So, in the era where novel becomes the dominant genre, all literature is caught up in the process of becoming there is a necessary novelization of the other genres.

They are engaged in generic criticism. This is one phenomenon that mainly began in the second half of the 18th century. So, when normal reigns supreme in the era of novelization other genres are more or less novelized. So, other genres for example drama, epic poetry, lyric poetry, the all attain the all you know emulate novels, treats in some way or the other.

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Dialogic Imagination: Epic and Novel

- Parodic stylizations of canonized genre and styles occupy an essential place in the novel.
- In the era of the novel's creative ascendancy – and even more so in the periods of preparation preceding this era – literature was flooded with parodies and travesties of all the high genres (parodies precisely of genres, and not of individual authors or schools). **So parodies are the precursors, "companions" to the novel.**
- But it is characteristic that the novel does not permit any of the various individual manifestations of itself to stabilize.
- So, the novel's aim remains stylization of every other genre taken to the point of **parody and travesty.**

So, parodic stylizations of canonized genre and styles occupy an essential place in the novel. In the era of the novel's creative ascendancy and even more so in the periods that preceded this era in the periods of preparation, periods that led to the era of novel literature was flooded with parodies and travesties of all the high genres. So, parodies however of the generic form and not of individual authors or individual schools.

So, parodies were targeting the generic characteristics. Seeing in this way one could very well say that, parodies are the precursors, they are the companions, they are the harbingers of the novel as a form as a genre. But it is characteristic that the novel does not permit any of the various manifestations to stabilize or to stay on for too long. So, the novel's aim remains at stylization or experimentation of every other genre taken to the point of a parody and travesty over the all the traditional features associated with epic poetry, lyric poetry.

All the traditional you know features associated with epic poetry already poetry are experimented with made to stand on their head turned upside down and so forth.

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Dialogic Imagination: Epic and Novel

- Bakhtin - The novel has become the **leading hero in the drama of literary development** precisely because it best reflects the tendencies of a new world still in the making; after all, it is the only genre born of this new world and in total affinity with it.
- In many respects the novel has **anticipated, and continues to anticipate**, the future development of literature as a whole.
- In the process of becoming the dominant genre, the novel enables the **renovation of all other genres**; it infects them with its spirit of process and inconclusiveness.

So, Bakhtin notes that the novel has become the leading hero in the drama of literary development precisely because it best reflects the tendencies of a new world which is still in the making; after all, novel is the only genre that is born of this new world it is an offshoot it is a result of this new world and in total affinity with it bearing all the symptoms the entire essence of this new world.

In many respects the novel has anticipated, and continues to anticipate, the future development of literature as a whole. And in the process of becoming the dominant genre the novel enables the renovation of all other genre. It infects like I already said the other genres with its own spirit of inconclusiveness, indeterminism and the process of seeking, the process of becoming and staying open-ended in a way.

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Dialogic Imagination: Epic and Novel

- The novel draws other genres into its orbit precisely because this orbit coincides with the basic direction of the development of literature as a whole.
- In this lies the **exceptional importance of the novel**, as an object of study for the theory as well as the history of literature.
- Unfortunately, historians of literature usually reduce this struggle between the novel and other already completed genres – the different aspects of novelization – **to the actual real-life struggle among "schools" and "trends."**
- For example, the literary historians call the novelized poem as a "**romantic poem**" (which of course it is). Such tagging tends to exhaust the subject.

The novel draws are the genres into it is orbit precisely because this orbit coincides with the basic direction of the development of literature as a whole. So, the era of novelization greatly enabled greatly facilitated the development, the evolution of world literature. So, in this process lies the exceptional contribution or significance of the novel; so, as an object of study for the theory as well as the history of literature.

So, for theorization as well as a historicization of literature, the contribution the significance of a novel can never be denied. So, unfortunately, historians of literature usually reduce this struggle between the novel and other already completed genres. The historians tend to connect these different aspects of novel the aspects of novelization, the tendency of novelization to the actual real-life struggle among different schools and different trends.

The paradisisation, the travesty, the restyling is never meant to attack any school or any trend it is just a playing with shuffling the generic purity of the old genres. For example, we see that the literary historians call the novelized poem as a romantic poem which of course it is however such tagging is not very worthy in as much as it tends to exhaust the subject. If it is a romantic poem, does it not have any other possibility.

That is a shortcoming of literary history when trying to tag a you know a work through a certain specific trait.

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Dialogic Imagination: Epic and Novel

- According to Bakhtin, beneath the **superficial hustle and bustle of literary process** there are major fates of literature and language. The great heroes of literature are first and foremost the genres, whereas "trends" and "schools" are but **second- or third-rank protagonists**.
- Language of the canonical genres in the era of novelization sound different from the era when novel was not a part of "high literature."
- Novel **does not allow** any of its various manifestations to **stabilize**.
- The ability of the novel to criticize itself is a sign of its ever-developing nature (parodies of chivalric romance, baroque novel, pastoral novel, sentimental novel are all within the purview of the novel as a genre).

So, according to Bakhtin, beneath the superficial hustle and bustle of literary process there are major fates of literature and language. The great heroes of literature are first and foremost the genres themselves. Whereas the trends and the schools are only second or third ranked protagonists; so, the onus of experimentation is on the genre and not on the trends or the schools that comes second or third when we are talking about experimentation when we are talking about novelization.

Language of the canonical genres in the era of novelization sound different from the era, when novel itself was not considered as a part of high literature. So, novel like I have already mentioned does not allow any of its various manifestations to stabilize. Novel does not stop at parodying older genre parodies itself too very much. So, the ability of the novel to criticize itself to parody subvert its own former values, former avatars or manifestations is a sign of its ever-developing nature.

So, modern novel is happening through parodying of chivalric romance, baroque novel, pastoral novel, sentiment novel; all of this within the purview of the novel and the process of novelization.

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Dialogic Imagination: Epic and Novel

- **Chivalric Romance** - prose or verse narrative that was popular in the aristocratic circles of High Medieval and Early Modern Europe. They typically describe the adventures of quest-seeking, legendary knights who are portrayed as having heroic qualities.
- **Baroque Novel** - The Baroque style is characterized by exaggerated emotion and clear detail used to produce drama, exuberance, and grandeur in sculpture, painting, architecture, literature, dance, and music. Baroque iconography was direct, obvious, and dramatic, intending to appeal above all to the senses and the emotions.
- **Pastoral Novel** is a mode of literature in which the author employs various techniques to place the complex life into a simple one. The presence of the pastoral element in literature, art, and music depicts life in an idealized manner, typically for urban audiences.

So, when we look at chivalric romance, we refer to prose or verse narrative and that was popular in the aristocratic circles of high medieval and early modern Europe. And they typically describe the adventures of a quest-seeking, legendary knight. And this knight is portrayed in terms of certain stock heroic traits. Baroque novel refers to the Baroque style which is characterized by exaggerated emotion and clear detail that produces drama, exuberance and grandeur.

This Grandeur and exuberance could be in the form of literature or even fine arts, sculpture, painting, dance and music. So, Baroque iconography was direct, too dramatic and it intended to appeal above all to the senses and the emotions. Similarly, pastoral novel is a mode of literature that employs different techniques to place the complex life into a simple one. The presence of the pastoral element in literature in art or music depicts life in an idealized manner away from the you know hustle and muscle of urban existence.

And it is typically meant to as it has a bombing effect almost a therapeutic bombing effect a kind of weakening you know light for urban audiences, a kind of getaway for or urban audience as the ideal becomes the kind of weakening light like I said.

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Dialogic Imagination: Epic and Novel

- **Sentimental Novel**, broadly, any novel that exploits the reader's capacity for tenderness, compassion, or sympathy to a disproportionate degree.
- The modern novel comments on, parodies and reshuffles each of these trends in novelistic tradition. With **novelization**, other genres become **freer and more flexible**, language becomes **dialogized** and **permeated with laughter, irony, humour, self-parody**, etc., involves an **open-endedness, indeterminacy** in the contemporary reality.
- Because novel is developing, it can comprehend development as a process, and as a new genre it speaks about renovation of all genres, **passing on a spirit of lack of pattern in them.**

So, then we have the sentimental novel, which is broadly form that exploits the reader's capacity for tenderness, compassion sympathy almost to a disproportionate exaggerated degree. The modern novel you know comments on, parodies and reshuffles the values of each of these trends in novelistic tradition itself. So, with novelization other genres become freer and more flexible, language becomes more dialogized, it attains more layers more perspectives.

And it is obviously permeated with laughter RNA self-parody, humour and so on and it involves a kind of open-endedness, indeterminacy in the contemporary times. So, because novel is still developing, still experimenting, it can comprehend development and as a new genre so, because novel is developing it can comprehend development as a process and being a new genre that it is novel speaks and renovates all channels.

It speaks about renovation of all genres passing on a spirit of lack of pattern to all these old little genres.

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Dialogic Imagination: Epic and Novel

- The novel is especially interested in those normative definitions of the novel that are offered by different novelists, who produce a specific novel and then declare it as the only correct, necessary and authentic form of the novel.
- For instance, Rousseau's foreword to his *La Nouvelle Heloise*, Wieland's to his *Agathon*, Wezel's to his *Tobias Knouts*; as well as numerous declarations and statements of principle by the Romantics on *Wilhelm Meister*, *Lucinda* and other texts.
- Such statements may not be seen as attempts at incorporating all the possible variants of the novel into a single eclectic definition; rather, they are themselves part and parcel of the living evolution of the novel as a genre.

So, the novel is especially interested in those normative definitions of the novel that are offered by different novelists, that produce a specific novel and then declare it as the only correct, necessary and authentic form of novel. So, novel is constantly gazing or looking into its own eyes and a kind of critiquing itself. We have instances of Rousseau's forward to his novel *La Nouvelle Heloise*, Wieland's to his *Agathon*, Wesel's to his *Tobias Knouts*.

And also, several declarations and statements of principle by the romantics on *Wilhelm Meister*, *Lucinda* as well as other texts. So, this forward defies the cause, defies the motive of novel when one writer sees that look, I have written this and this is the definitive you know version that one must follow when writing a novel, this is a kind of a preamble for writing a novel, it kind of defies the cause of the novel which is to constantly move away from a flow out of any kind of definition.

So, such forwards probably do more disservice than service to the cause and to the motivation to the motive of novel. So, these statements may not be seen as attempts at incorporating all the possible variants of the novel into a single eclectic or one of its kind definition; rather, one could also see these forwards these preambles or statements as you know part and parcel of the living evolution that novel as a genre epitomizes and stands for.

With this I am going to stop our lecture today and we I will meet you again with another round

of discussions in another lecture. Thank you.