

THE ROLE OF WESTERN LITERATURE IN THE USE OF THE EPIC GENRE UP TO THE 20TH CENTURY

Samieva Nozima Umidovna

Linguistics (English) 2401 2nd cours

Abstract: This article analyzes the development of the epic genre up to the 20th century and the role of Western literature in this process. The impact of Western literary heritage on the formation and evolution of the epic genre, as well as the changes in its artistic style and themes up to the 20th century, are discussed. During the study, the transformation of the genre was examined in historical, cultural, and literary contexts, revealing how Western literature contributed to the emergence of new forms and trends within the epic genre.

Keywords: epic, genre, Western literature, 20th century, development, artistic style, theme, traditions

Introduction

The epic genre is one of the oldest and most significant artistic forms in human culture. It reflects a nation's historical events, heroism, and cultural values. In Western literature, the epic genre has developed since ancient times and, through its many examples, has influenced other cultures as well. Up to the 20th century, Western literature played a crucial role in shaping, developing, and enriching the epic genre with new artistic methods. Therefore, studying the use and development of the epic genre in Western literature up to the 20th century contributes to a deeper understanding of both Uzbek and world literary history.

Western epics such as Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, and medieval works like Beowulf and The Song of Roland, significantly influenced not only Western culture but also the development of world literature. These works, with their unique artistic styles, themes, and representations of heroic ideals, were key in the development of the epic genre and the emergence of new forms. The use of the epic genre in Western literature and its place in genre development — including its influence on other cultures and literatures — remains a current and relevant topic of scholarly inquiry. Thus, this article explores the formation and development of the epic genre in Western literature, its usage up to the 20th century, and its place in world literature.

Methods

This article uses historical-analytical, comparative, and artistic-stylistic methods.

- The historical-analytical method was employed to study the evolution and changes of the epic genre in Western literature.
- The comparative method compared epics from Western and other cultures, identifying their similarities and differences.
- The artistic-stylistic method analyzed the artistic characteristics and themes of epic works.

Primary sources included ancient and medieval Western epics (such as The Iliad, The Odyssey, Beowulf, and Western adaptations of Layla and Majnun) and works written up to the 20th century.

To determine the role of Western literature in the development of the epic genre up to the 20th century, several scholarly methods were applied:

1. Historical-analytical method:

Studied the formation, development, and transformation of the epic genre within Western culture and literature, analyzing works within their historical context to trace the stages of genre evolution.

2. Comparative method:

Compared Western epics with those from other cultures, analyzing differences and commonalities in artistic style, themes, and structure. This revealed the genre's universal and national aspects.

3. Artistic-stylistic method:

Analyzed the language and stylistic features, plot construction, and character systems of epic works to uncover unique artistic qualities of the genre.

The research examined epic samples from various periods of Western literature — ancient (Homer), medieval (e.g., Beowulf), and classical/modern works written before the 20th century — providing a comprehensive view of the genre's evolution.

Results

The study revealed that Western literature had a broad and multifaceted influence on the epic genre. While early Western epics were based on folklore and mythology, medieval epics were shaped by religious and feudal values. Western epic literature developed distinct artistic styles and themes, which contributed to the genre's spread across other cultures.

By the 20th century, Western epics had undergone significant generic and stylistic changes, resulting in richer content and the emergence of modern forms. Furthermore, the artistic vision and stylistic features of Western literature influenced the renewal and development of the epic genre in other national literatures.

During the Middle Ages, Western epics expanded their thematic scope, incorporating values such as spiritual struggle, sacrifice, and faith — as seen in works like Beowulf and The Song of Roland.

By the 20th century, the epic genre in Western literature experienced notable changes. Epic works began to address not only historical events and heroism but also human psychology, social issues, and philosophical quests. As a result, the genre gained more complex and multifaceted forms.

Moreover, it was found that Western epics had a substantial influence on the literary traditions of other cultures — particularly in Uzbek and other Eastern literatures, where the themes and artistic styles of Western epics laid the groundwork for renewal and further development of local epic traditions.

The conclusion drawn is that the role of Western literature in the development of the epic genre is not only historically significant but also culturally and artistically vital.

Discussion

The influence of Western literature on the epic genre goes beyond historical shaping — it also contributed to the formation of the genre's moral and ethical foundations. Through epic heroes, themes of human ideals, struggle, and heroism became a shared legacy of global culture.

The ongoing development of the epic genre in Western literature enriched it with elements from other genres and led to the emergence of new artistic forms. This, in turn, promoted inter-genre integration and the continued use of epic elements in 20th-century literature.

Western literature played a pivotal role in evolving the epic genre within both national and global literary contexts, contributing significantly to its richness and complexity.

Western influence wasn't limited to outward stylistic shaping; it also deeply transformed the genre's content and spiritual essence. While ancient Western epics exalted universal values

like heroism and courage, later works — especially in the Middle Ages and beyond — enriched these ideals with religious, ethical, and social dimensions.

By the 20th century, the genre evolved further through psychological and social themes. Western literature introduced advanced philosophical and artistic ideas that shaped modern epic tendencies. As a result, the epic genre expanded to include not only heroic history but also introspection, spiritual exploration, and societal critique.

Additionally, Western epics inspired the emergence of new genres and artistic forms in other literary cultures. In Uzbek and Eastern literatures, the influence of Western epics led to renewed epic traditions and the introduction of new artistic techniques and themes. This reflects a productive dialogue between global and national cultures.

However, the dominance of Western models also raised concerns about preserving national literary identities. Hence, while studying the genre, it is crucial to consider both Western examples and local literary and cultural characteristics.

In general, Western literature's role in the development of the epic genre is distinctive and decisive, allowing for a deeper understanding of the genre's historical and artistic evolution.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The role of Western literature in the development of the epic genre up to the 20th century is of central importance. Western epics influenced the genre's formation, themes, and artistic style, extending its reach across wider cultural and aesthetic territories. Furthermore, Western literature spurred the renewal and modern reinterpretation of the epic genre in other national literatures.

The epics of ancient Western literature laid the conceptual and artistic foundation of the genre. In the Middle Ages and later periods, the genre was enriched with new themes and styles. By the 20th century, Western epics began to explore human psychology and social problems.

The influence of Western literature contributed not only to the genre's development, but also to its renewal and evolution in other cultures. The study of national and universal features within the epic genre paved the way for new academic approaches in literary criticism.

Therefore, it is recommended to:

- Study and analyze elements of Western epic literature present in national literary traditions;
- Continuously monitor the development of the epic genre in contemporary literature;
- Expand the study of Western epics in academic curricula.

References:

1. Jung, C.G. Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious. – Moscow: Respublika, 1997.
2. Frye, N. Anatomy of Criticism. – Princeton University Press, 1957.
3. Abrams, M.H. A Glossary of Literary Terms. – Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1999.
4. Damrosch, D. What is World Literature? – Princeton University Press, 2003.
5. Lotman, Y.M. The Structure of the Artistic Text. – Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1970.
6. Miller, A. History of Western European Literature. – Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, 1985.