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**GENRE ORIGINALITY OF NOVEL PROSE
BY RUSSIAN-SPEAKING AUTHORS OF KAZAKHSTAN
AS A MANIFESTATION OF IDIOSTYLE**

This article examines Mikhail Zemskov's novel "Gabriel's Saxophone" from the perspective of genre poetics and the manifestation of idiosyle. The aim of the study is to identify the genre-specific features of the novel and to reveal the ways in which the author's individual artistic manner is represented through plot and composition, the system of characters, mythopoetic elements, and intertextual connections. Russian-language prose of Kazakhstan is interpreted as an important segment of the contemporary literary process, in which the aesthetics of new realism, authorial reflection, social critique, and metaphysical inquiry intersect.

The study employs structural-semantic, motive-based, comparative, and biographical methods of analysis. The results demonstrate that the genre nature of the novel is synthetic: it combines features of the religious-philosophical, intellectual, psychological, and adventure novel. Within the artistic structure of the text, myth and reality, the everyday and the sacred, individual consciousness and cultural archetypes are brought into a unified semantic system that shapes the author's distinctive literary world. Particular attention is paid to the image of the author, fragmented narration, collage-like composition, and the transformation of biblical motifs and symbols as major markers of Zemskov's idiosyle.

The significance of the study lies in clarifying the genre and poetic characteristics of contemporary Russian-language prose in Kazakhstan on the basis of a specific literary text. The findings may be used in further research on the contemporary literary process, the aesthetics of new realism, authorial poetics, and the theory of the modern novel.

Keywords: novel, idiosyle, Russian-language prose, new realism, plot, motive, character, image of the author, mythopoetics.

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**Қазақстанның орыстілді авторларының роман прозасының
жанрлық ерекшелігі идиостильдің көрінісі ретінде**

Мақалада Қазақстандағы орыстілді прозаның көрнекті өкілдерінің бірі Михаил Земсковтың «Саксофон Гавриила» романы жанрлық поэтика және идиостиль мәселелері тұрғысынан қарастырылады. Зерттеудің мақсаты – романның жанрлық ерекшелігін анықтап, авторлық стильдің көріну тетіктерін сюжеттік-композициялық құрылым, кейіпкерлер жүйесі, мифопоэтикалық және интертекстуалдық қабаттар арқылы сипаттау. Қазіргі Қазақстандағы орыстілді роман ұлттық әдеби үдерістің маңызды бөлігі ретінде қарастырылып, онда жаңа реализм эстетикасы, авторлық рефлексия, әлеуметтік сын және метафизикалық ізденіс өзара тоғысатыны көрсетіледі.

Зерттеу барысында құрылымдық-семантикалық, мотивтік, салыстырмалы және биографиялық талдау әдістері қолданылды. Талдау нәтижесінде романның жанрлық табиғаты біртекті емес екені, онда діни-философиялық, интеллектуалдық, психологиялық және шытырман-прозалық белгілердің синтезі байқалатыны анықталды. Шығармада миф пен шынайылық, күнделікті өмір мен сакралды кеңістік, жеке сана мен мәдени архетиптер өзара сабақтасып, автордың дара көркемдік әлемін қалыптастырады. Сонымен қатар романдағы «автор бейнесі», фрагментарлық баяндау, коллаждық құрылым, библиялық мотивтер мен символдардың трансформациясы М. Земсков идиостильінің негізгі белгілері ретінде қарастырылады.

Зерттеудің маңыздылығы – қазіргі Қазақстандағы орыстілді романның даму үрдістерін нақты шығарма негізінде талдап, жанр поэтикасы мен идиостиль арақатынасын айқындауында. Мақала нәтижелерін қазіргі әдеби үдерісті, жаңа реализм эстетикасын, авторлық поэтиканы және қазіргі роман теориясын зерттеуде қолдануға болады.

Түйін сөздер: роман, идиостиль, орыстілді проза, жаңа реализм, сюжет, мотив, кейіпкер, автор бейнесі, мифопоэтика.

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Жанровое своеобразие романной прозы русскоязычных авторов Казахстана как проявление идиостиля

В статье роман Михаила Земскова «Саксофон Гавриила» рассматривается в аспекте жанровой поэтики и проявления идиостиля. Цель исследования – определить жанровое своеобразие произведения и выявить способы репрезентации авторской индивидуальности через сюжетно-композиционную структуру, систему персонажей, мифопоэтические элементы и интертекстуальные связи. Русскоязычный роман Казахстана осмысливается как значимый сегмент современного литературного процесса, в котором взаимодействуют эстетика нового реализма, авторская рефлексия, социальная проблематика и метафизический поиск.

В работе использованы структурно-семантический, мотивный, сравнительный и биографический методы анализа. В результате установлено, что жанровая природа романа носит синтетический характер: в тексте сочетаются признаки религиозно-философского, интеллектуального, психологического и авантюрно-приключенческого романа. В художественной системе произведения миф и реальность, повседневное и сакральное, индивидуальное сознание и культурные архетипы образуют единую смысловую структуру, формирующую авторский художественный мир. Особое внимание уделяется образу автора, фрагментарности повествования, коллажной композиции, а также трансформации библейских мотивов и символов как важнейшим признакам идиостиля М. Земскова.

Значимость исследования заключается в уточнении жанровых и поэтических характеристик современной русскоязычной прозы Казахстана на материале конкретного художественного текста. Полученные результаты могут быть использованы при изучении современного литературного процесса, эстетики нового реализма, авторской поэтики и теории романа.

Ключевые слова: роман, идиостиль, русскоязычная проза, новый реализм, сюжет, мотив, персонаж, образ автора, мифопоэтика.

Introduction

Contemporary Kazakh literature reflects global trends while actively engaging with multiple layers of Kazakhstan's social reality. The form of cultural hybridity becomes more evident, reflected in the writer's integrative interaction with various fields, such as philosophy and natural sciences, which forms distinctive artistic views. A new generation of authors appeared, many of whom were born during the Soviet period, who are gradually moving away from the traditions of socialist realism under the pressure of rapidly changing historical conditions. The fiction began to introduce the spirit of deep changes in 1990s, caused by socio-political shifts that began in the late 1980s.

In this context primacy of the personality begins to be more expressed, that leads to a philosophical restructuring of value systems in which individual experience serves as the basis for universal meaning. Author's intuition introduces the link between personal and universal, while the structure of fiction codes and develops author's idea.

Thus, the analysis of narrative discourse reveals some of the key problems addressed in contemporary literary criticism and theoretical research.

Contemporary literature pays particular attention to the distinctiveness of the author's voice. In

fiction, the formation of the author's worldview becomes an important axiological dominant that requires deeper interpretation. Modern authors give special attention to social dissonance, capturing the tension of both in the collective consciousness and in the inner life of individuals. History, philosophy, and ethics are subjected to critical re-evaluation, giving rise to new thematic configurations and literary representation, released from past ideological restrictions, but aiming to search for cultural memory and spiritual continuity.

The emergence and development of these trends are conditioned by broad historical and social changes, as authors seek to reflect a transforming reality and respond to the changing expectations of readers. Within the context of globalization, literature increasingly foregrounds individual experience and universal human values, which constitutes one of the defining features of new realism.

The object of the study is Mikhail Zemskov's novel "Gabriel's Saxophone" as a representative example of contemporary Russian-language prose in Kazakhstan. The subject of the research is the genre originality of the novel and the ways in which idio-style is manifested through plot construction, character system, mythopoetic symbolism, and the author's narrative strategy. The purpose of the article is to identify the genre-specific features of the novel

and to determine how they reflect the author's individual artistic manner within the aesthetics of new realism.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the attempt to analyze Zemskov's novel in the context of contemporary Kazakhstani Russian-language prose and to reveal the connection between genre synthesis and idiostyle. Special attention is paid to the interaction of mythological, biblical, psychological, and social layers of the narrative.

Materials and methods

This article examines the recent novel "Gabriel's Saxophone" by the Kazakh writer Mikhail Zemskov (Zemskov, 2021). The purpose of the study is to identify key features of the author's prose within the framework of the aesthetics of "new realism". To achieve this aim, the study addresses two main objectives: first, to analyze key scholarly works devoted to the contemporary literary process; second, to conduct a detailed examination of the novel "Gabriel's Saxophone".

The novel is examined as an original expression of the author's artistic universe and as a form of narrative statement through which the writer establishes an ongoing dialogue with the reader. The study also traces the author's artistic trajectory and analyzes the construction of the authorial image through its interaction with various characters and genre elements in the text.

The study uses biographical methods, selective text analysis, as well as systematic-structural and motive analysis.

The empirical basis of the study is Mikhail Zemskov's novel "Gabriel's Saxophone" (2021), as well as the author's interview materials and critical works devoted to the aesthetics of new realism in contemporary Russian-language literature. The analysis is based on the principles of close reading and structural-semantic interpretation. Particular attention is paid to the interaction between plot structure, mythopoetic motifs, biblical imagery, character typology, and the author's position in the text.

Literature review

The poetics of literary works is undoubtedly one of the pressing issues of contemporary literary criticism. However, global changes in the theoretical framework and foundations of object-based research, along with the emergence of new concepts and techniques in philological scholarship, suggest the need for a more detailed organization and mod-

ern methods of implementing them. The holistic artistic text of literary works should be considered within a strict hierarchy of sequence and conformity to poetic categories: philosophical context, genre, composition, plot, spatio-temporal organization, author and protagonist, landscape, images, and motifs. The author's poetics, when viewed in this light, appears to be an extremely complex structure and allows one to extrapolate the philosophical worldview, ideas and concepts of the writer into the existing literary process.

Kazakhstani literature of the early twenty-first century, in the context of shifts in the global literary process, is marked by significant transformations in subject matter and genre, shaped by changing philosophical and artistic paradigms that reflect ongoing sociopolitical change. "New realism" represents a relatively recent literary movement in which contemporary writers actively engage. Its representatives seek to represent current social realities, the legacy of the perestroika period, processes of social stratification, and the formation of national consciousness, as well as social fragmentation and the return of religiosity.

According to researcher L.Kh. Nasrutdinova, "new realism" can be characterized as a movement between classical literary movements and the latest postmodern and avant-garde currents of contemporary literature. This trend can be observed throughout contemporary world literature. It should be noted that modern Kazakh literature is also subject to similar changes (Nasrutdinova, 1999, p. 3).

The term "new realism" has become a subject of extensive debate in contemporary literary studies. Even before the scholarly publications of the 1990s, researchers identified a methodological crisis in the field, particularly evident in comparisons between early twentieth-century neorealism and contemporary literary practices. The sociocultural context of the late twentieth century significantly shaped the emergence of new realism, giving rise to diverse authorial strategies: from those oriented toward cultural memory to those focused on the intensive exploration of individual subjectivity.

M. Sviridenkov argues that, unlike the Futurists who consciously rejected classical literary canons, such a rupture is no longer productive for contemporary writers; for the generation formed during the late Soviet period, literary perception after perestroika is fundamentally different (Sviridenkov, 2005, p. 431). V. Pustovaya similarly emphasizes a defining feature of contemporary authors as "an absolute lack of reflection on the past" (Pustovaya, 2005, p. 420), which itself becomes a central conceptual marker of new literary consciousness.

S. Shargunov's essay "The Denial of Mourning" (2001) provoked wide critical discussion and articulated a rejection of postmodernism alongside a call for a new literary paradigm. Despite its comparatively short duration as a defined movement, new realism encompasses multiple genres, including fiction, poetry, drama, essays, and literary criticism. As Pustovaya notes, the early 2000s literary generation perceived its cultural mission in terms of "life-creating salvation," mythologizing youth as a transformative cultural force confronting the legacy of an exhausted generational order (Pustovaya, 2012, p. 345).

The aesthetics of "new realism" are characterized by an intense focus on the spiritual experiences of the characters, reflecting on physical pain, the moral degradation of the individual, their painful duality, and emotional vulnerability. In this case, the author's own personality becomes the key figure and center of the narrative. The writer's experience serves as a model for biographical references; the events and characters of the works sometimes actually existed in the author's own life. This structuring principle in the narrative becomes the modeling element in the composition of a literary work of "new realism". At the same time, the author's individual presence becomes structurally significant: the uniqueness of the writer's personality is foregrounded not merely as biographical reference but as a formative principle of artistic organization (Pustovaya, 2005, p. 123).

A. Rudalev interprets new realism as a process of rethinking literary consciousness within contemporary cultural conditions, emphasizing that the term does not denote radical formal novelty but rather a new lived reality that reshapes artistic perception and value systems (Rudalev, 2011). Similarly, Kalita associates the emergence of this movement with a generational rejection of postmodernism and earlier aesthetic positions (Kalita, 2016).

From Khomyakov's perspective, new realism is marked by a pronounced autobiographical orientation, where fictional narratives often incorporate reworked elements of the author's lived experience. The search for a contemporary protagonist capable of embodying new social and ethical paradigms becomes central (Khomyakov, 2019, p. 50).

Sorokin identifies additional structural features of this literature, including its orientation toward an educated readership, particularly the "office intelligentsia," whose cultural competence shapes reception practices (Sorokin, 2011, p. 48). Rodnyanskaya similarly characterizes this audience as a socially stable, educated stratum for whom intellectual culti-

vation is a normative cultural value (Rodnyanskaya, 2001).

According to Sorokin, the aesthetic function of such texts is often subordinated to communicative intent, privileging clarity of message, stylistic wit, and compositional ingenuity, as well as a tendency toward neutral linguistic expression (Sorokin, 2011, p. 49).

Despite the growing scholarly interest in the aesthetics of new realism and in contemporary Russian-language prose, Mikhail Zemskov's novels remain insufficiently studied in the context of Kazakhstani literary criticism. In particular, the issues of genre synthesis, mythopoetic structure, and the manifestation of *idiostyle* in his prose have not yet received systematic analysis. This gap determines the relevance of the present study and explains the need to examine "Gabriel's Saxophone" as a representative text of contemporary Russian-language prose in Kazakhstan.

Results and discussion

Mikhail Zemskov is one of the most renowned contemporary Kazakh writers writing in Russian, the founder and leader of his own literary school. His books include "Perigee", "Sectarian", "When Merlot Loses Its Taste", and others. Zemskov received the Russian Prize in 2005, the first year of this literary award's inception, for his collection of short stories, "Alma-Ata Stories" (published under the pseudonym Ivan Glagolev). Zemskov's short stories, novellas, and novels offer a unique blend of descriptions of various periods in human history, references to significant cultural phenomena, references to the history of unique artifacts and personalities, and the fusion of personal biography with the characters in his works. In an interview published in the almanac "Articulation" in December 2022, the writer, discussing his creative literary process, notes that he has developed certain methods for constructing a literary text. "You could call it my personal guideline: I believe that, regardless of the themes, ideas, or images a book conveys, its plot should engage the reader – at least so they'll read on and get to the ideas and images the author wants to share. The methods and techniques are generally well known – dramatically constructed composition, detective or action-packed plot structures, and so on. The main challenge remains 'stitching' these compositional techniques and structures together with the artistic component so that it appears natural, but not banal, and doesn't replicate other authors' work. My personal, so to speak, 'secret' technique in working on

a work is that I begin the main work on the composition after the text (or rather, the first draft) is completely written. After that, I begin moving fragments around, adding things, removing things. And the second draft of the text can differ significantly from the first in terms of narrative structure” (Zemskov, 2022).

To date, Zemskov’s work remains largely unstudied, despite his status as one of the most successful Russian writers of the new generation. His novels enjoy considerable popularity due to their engagement with pressing contemporary issues. They focus on modern individuals concerned with the fate of future generations, yet these characters are marked by a sense of alienation, detachment, and mechanistic behavior characteristic of urban life. In this context, Zemskov explores the fate of the young intellectual in contemporary society. Mikhail Zemskov’s creative work is connected with both the Kazakhstani and broader post-Soviet cultural space. His prose combines social observation with philosophical and psychological reflection, while the thematic range of his works extends from urban everyday reality to broader existential and metaphysical issues.

Zemskov’s writing style is often described as possessing a Central Asian inflection combined with elements of surrealism (Korneeva, 2010). The fragmented narrative structure aligns with motifs of dreams, plot intrigue, and memory, with dreams acquiring particular metaphorical significance. A frequently employed device is literary collage, marked by recurring references to specific images and motifs.

Mikhail Zemskov’s works address the problem of social degradation in its interconnection with social and cultural change, while also exploring the fate of the young intellectuals in contemporary society. The author’s personality and creative experience, as reflected in his interpretation of key life events, directly shape the authorial persona within the text and its relationship to the narrative. Many of Zemskov’s characters bear a clear resemblance to the author himself; indeed, most of his stories and novels feature some form of alter ego.

In structural-semantic analysis, the plot is understood not only as a sequence of events but also as a means of organizing meaning. In M. Zemskov’s works, plot dynamics are often subordinated to the internal logic of characters’ experiences, which results in a weakening of eventfulness and a strengthening of the psychological and philosophical dimensions of the narrative. Structural analysis of the plot reveals recurring situations, mirrored episodes, and

closed compositional cycles that generate stable semantic patterns. These key authorial techniques are present and traceable throughout all of Mikhail Zemskov’s works: physical and spiritual practices aimed at self-discovery, continuing agonizing doubts in the vain hope of attaining the sacred idea of a harmonious personality, duality of thinking, alter ego conflict, emptiness and a strange loneliness within the surrounding society. The author’s style, manner, and tone of the narrative quickly shift from dynamic to contemplative slowness. The aesthetics of a sophisticated contemporary urban writer, with a rational mindset and a passion for the spiritual practices of the ascetic East, develop into an intriguing contradiction between the protagonist, the author-narrator, and the writer himself, whose experience and biography play a significant role in the narrative’s construction. In such works, the author functions not only as a creator but also as a protagonist, a figure endowed with significant semantic and artistic weight, whose self-awareness becomes the organizing principle of the text. These are precisely the methods employed by the writer in his new novel. In October 2021, Mikhail Zemskov’s new book, “Gabriel’s Saxophone”, was published in e-book format. Mikhail Zemskov’s new novel is essentially a reflection of the state of mind of today’s generation, who grew up in a time when everything around them seems imperfect and obsolete. Zemskov is known as an author of intellectual fiction, and this book marks the next step in the writer’s ongoing exploration of the limits of the human psyche. Mikhail Zemskov’s novel, “Gabriel’s Saxophone”, marks a creative breakthrough in his style. The novel is constructed using the principle of collage: several parallel narratives depict contemporary life, reflected from different perspectives. We view the playfulness and diverse forms of reproduction and recoding of biblical motifs as a form of a special literary model, the application of which to popular literature can yield interesting results. According to A. Kasyanov’s (2007) concept regarding the role and function of biblical motifs and images in the plot structure of the novel, “the researcher identified five main options for the use of biblical plots, images and motifs in the architecture of a literary work”. These include: works based on a coherent biblical narrative (1); works in which a distinct biblical storyline and characters develop in parallel with another plotline, both remaining equal and independent (2); works where a single biblical episode functions as an inserted microplot, generating associations that form a unifying leitmotif and, in counterpoint, shape the overall narrative (3); works characterized by a centrifugal epic

plot that evokes biblical imagery, further enriched and generalized through an additional lyrical motif (4); and, finally, works structured as a compilation of biblical parables, in which each plotline corresponds to specific biblical images and motifs (5).

Thus, the third type of plot construction is most appropriate in contemporary literary texts, as it allows for the author's almost complete autonomy, who constructs and plays with borrowed situations or images, as well as the reader's associations, at their own discretion. This is precisely the functional characteristic of contemporary literature. The reader is initiated through engagement in the game: recognition-deciphering-understanding. The moment of "understanding" is the most important, and therefore the supporting, signaling images and motifs most often come from fundamental, iconic figures and plots (the Holy Family, Judas, Pilate). The title of the novel itself is also intriguing. In the Christian tradition, Gabriel's duties include interpreting the meaning of prophetic visions and the course of events. In Western European art, the image of this archangel is most often associated with the Annunciation. Scripture indicates that it was Gabriel who announced the imminent birth of Jesus Christ. Archangel Gabriel helps us correctly understand messages and sometimes enlightens those who are unprepared to receive the Divine word. This, for example, happened to the priest Zechariah, who was punished with muteness for his mistrust of Gabriel's words (Gospel, 2022). Holy Scripture and tradition describe many instances in which God, through His archangel, communicated with prophets and saints, initiating them into previously hidden secrets about the coming of Christ and the salvation of mankind. Gabriel is a wandering angel. Therefore, iconographers often depict the archangel with a pilgrim's staff. The staff also signifies support and consolation; Gabriel consoles fallen humanity with good news and uplifts them. He is also depicted with a lantern (symbolizing the enlightenment of believers by grace), a lily (during a meeting with the mother of God), a mirror, or a sphere (knowledge of the destinies and deeds of mankind). The projection of Christian symbolism is linked to the modern musical instrument, the saxophone. The author deliberately juxtaposes the two symbolic images. Of all the wind instruments, the saxophone is considered the closest to the human voice; it is the music of a state of mind. The saxophone is often called a chameleon instrument for its ability to transform. The protagonist constantly tries on different personas and attends a drama club, a rather unusual hobby for a furniture company administrator. One day, an acting

teacher tasks Ilya and one of his friends with playing a prank on two violinists at Satan's ball. Their violin has been lost, and it must be replaced with a saxophone, otherwise the host will be enraged and destroy the musicians. The saxophone is an instrument of unfulfilled desires and forgotten dreams, unlike the trumpet, which is primarily a harbinger of war. The novel's protagonist, Ilya, undergoes his spiritual transformation while remaining in his past. He observes the present from his own perspective. As for the novel's setting, the locations and geographic references are recognizable, but the action takes place in a still-untouched world. The narrator, Ilya, is an ordinary person from our shared present, a fairly typical specimen—good-natured, awkward, and of average appearance. "Lately, many people around me have suddenly started talking about their purpose in life. It seems to me that conversation topics have their own fashion laws, and, apparently, the hit of the current season is the word "purpose". I felt completely out of place in fashion trends and didn't know how to keep a conversation going on the topic of "purpose in life" (Zemskov, 2021). He lives an ordinary life, shares an apartment with a girlfriend, drinks beer on weekends, has friends, colleagues, neighbors, and enjoys computer games. The hero travels through his past lives throughout the book, and this creates an interesting compositional and stylistic effect: at first, the hypnosis used by the psychotherapist is described in detail—from the welcoming dialogue between patient and doctor to the preparation and detailed exit. But under hypnosis, he discovers that he is the reincarnation of Jesus Christ. The hero has no faith in himself, no stability in life, no answers—the game, the woman he loves, the psychotherapist, his friend, and a young girl, Maria. When the lives of Ilya the man and Ilya the god collide, all participants must acknowledge the fact that being a god gives no power in the material world, and that today's world is more material than any world that ever existed before. "My God, what grandiose words!" Igor Ivanovich clapped his hands and laughed. "You've made me sound like a universal demiurge! ... I'm not changing anything except what's in this little box", he twirled his index finger in the direction of my head, "and that's still questionable... After all, everything happens only inside you. Your subconscious, your images. Everything we work with is only inside you. There's nothing else. And helping you is my only task and goal" (Zemskov, 2021). Igor Ivanovich, while ennobling Ilya's memories, cannot alter the chronology of events: the entry into Jerusalem, the sermon, the expulsion of the merchants from the temple, and most

importantly, the capture and crucifixion. In his past life, Ilya ascended the cross. But in his present life, society treats the appearance of Christ's reincarnation as a spectacle or a publicity stunt. This is where the allusion to the Archangel Gabriel appears, for they didn't believe him either. Ilya's past life can be interpreted metaphorically; everyone seeks God within themselves. We can speak to Him within ourselves, seeking and receiving answers. In turning to God, we turn to ourselves. "Little Jesus, who found peace, happiness, and himself only late at night, on the straw, covered over his head with a rough cloth, shutting himself off from the infinite universe and creating his own tiny nook, whose greatest treasure was this very tinyness". "In a small, cozy little world, my second life began, a world in which only bliss was possible, a world in which only I existed, and that lump of goodness and all-encompassingness that was probably a part of God, His presence personally for me, an insignificant, unfortunate creature whose life on Earth was so short and fleeting. In those seconds, under the blanket, I was infinite, blessed, omnipotent (within the confines of the linen covering me), and almost equal to God" (Zemskov, 2021). The ubiquitous journalists begin to hound Ilya. But not to hear the Sermon on the Mount, but to catch a catchy story. A few want God's blessing, but most use this miracle for short-term gains. Orthodox Cossacks with sabers lie in wait for the new Messiah, and he rightly fears them and hides. The book culminates in a super-popular talk show, where the host asks Ilya skeptical questions live on air, and his ex-partner explains that he is supposedly a failed actor who, out of grief, imagined himself God... Ilya answers the people on screen: "I did not abandon the cross. I said that I am with you forever and ever. I said that I would return and lead all the unfortunate and oppressed with me into the kingdom of heaven. And here I am again. So that the unfortunate and persecuted may find solace and a home. So that the last may become first. So that those who suffer may find deliverance from their suffering" (Zemskov, 2021). The hero can no longer live as before, can no longer lead a meaningless life. "Akram suddenly looked at me with a touching gaze I'd never seen before – full of sadness and tenderness. Meeting that gaze, I felt something change around me. A sense of love came—as if it had returned to me, having gained strength from somewhere – many times greater and stronger, and, most importantly, no longer dependent on me. It flowed of its own accord from various places. I merely received and absorbed it and then gave it back to those

around me. Everything changed very quickly and irreversibly" (Zemskov, 2021).

Zemskov's novel "Gabriel's Saxophone" is distinguished by both structural and conceptual complexity, arising from its genre synthesis, which integrates elements of the religious-philosophical and adventure-detective novel. The reference to the image of Christ is no coincidence. One of the significant motifs is that of a person who believes in their own exceptionalism and refuses to "be like everyone else". Does this not represent the reverse side of that same persistent ego – pride? Ilya reveals the potential of a singular individual capable of transcending the burdens of the ego, particularly on the ethical and volitional dimension. Here, a psychological dimension comes to the fore, constituting a leitmotif of his development and gradual transformation. In the studio, he utters for the first time the inviting phrase, "Take up your cross and follow me" (Zemskov, 2021). With this phrase, the new Christ will attract new like-minded people, while simultaneously recording his own deeds: "Time is almost running out. We're leaving very soon – I can sense it in the light from the dome. So, I'll finish writing the epilogue and go out into the street, as usual – quietly saying to passersby left and right: "Take up your cross and follow me, take up your cross and follow me" (Zemskov, 2021). Those who follow Christ will not remain in this world, as the author says literally. From the very beginning of Elijah's transfiguration, a UFO follows him. At first, it's tiny and almost unnoticeable in the heavenly heights, then it grows and gets closer, and finally, it takes over the book's space: "It's already almost a kilometer in diameter, sometimes appearing in shiny metallic flesh, as before, sometimes incorporeal and almost invisible. It's no longer oval, but rather round, with a dome rising upward. More people are coming into it. Those who follow me in the evenings, taking up their crosses..., and whom I bring to it; those who have left everything behind, the unfortunate and the sick, those who have rejected everything and descended in tearful repentance to the very depths of their being, the orphans and the wretched—to the dome shining with pure light. The dome welcomes them into its light, with tender meekness and unconditional devotion" (Zemskov, 2021). Among Ilya's companions are the prostitute Masha and the bandit Akram, new incarnations of the harlot and the tax collector from the Gospel. "Masha had already been inside a UFO, but she returned – to help me or simply to be nearby. Akram – as he wanted – became my accountant. He counts the people caught and saved" (Zemskov,

2021). But despite such clarity, salvation does not occur. The novel's ending is open-ended: the sacramental phrase "Take up your cross and follow me". The author perplexes the reader with the ambivalence of the narrative. From the very first pages, the book reveals various possibilities for escaping reality, which we cannot dismiss—as possible indications that the coming was a fantasy or a game, like many other episodes in the book. "Gabriel's Saxophone" contains numerous symbols of the "other world", a distorted reality. For example, this is a mundane, everyday mysticism – the regular disappearance from the apartment of the most ordinary things, like forks and socks; this is an expressed love of sleep as a process of being in nothingness. These are appeals to art: after all, Ilya is involved in an acting club, where he masterfully assumes the guises of others. And for the writer, rock music is no longer just art, but also an opportunity for meditation, a soul-exit from the body. Conceptually, Mikhail Zemskov's novel has profound meaning. The novel features two narrative planes: the present (at this level, the narrator, the author of the text, operates) and the past (the image of the self reconstructed by the author's memory). Interestingly, polyphony is preserved in works narrated from the perspective of a single, main character. The same event, to which his thoughts constantly return, which has become an obligatory part of his memories, is seen each time as if anew, each time revealing different facets. The enrichment of the protagonist's practical and spiritual experience entails a shift in perspective, narrative angle, and value system. This is especially noticeable when returning to the very beginning of his life's journey. The novel's protagonists are new types of characters, figures marked by an inner void and a tendency toward imitation. Such characters cannot be defined through stable personal qualities; rather, their identity emerges through disguise and the assumption of alternative roles. Gradually, the novel's characters acquire a simulacral quality, while reality itself is transformed into a game, a copy, or a self-referential image of reality. According to contemporary theoretical approaches, we live in an era of visibility, in which reality is increasingly replaced by simulacra, social order by the illusion of happiness, and personality by constructed identity. As Jean Baudrillard argues, "a simulacrum is a copy that has no original in reality, an empty image, devoid of a referent". (Baudrillard, 2008). In this context, the novel does not aim at straightforward realist representation but instead engages the reader through a play of intertextual references, invoking the Gospel, the

figure of the Messiah, spiritual practices, and meditation. This becomes a structure-forming device that complements the semantic layer of the text. Or, in Karl Jaspers' terms, it bears the imprint of "the highest possibilities of human existence" (Jaspers, 1994, p. 56). Ultimately, the novel functions as a game: its characters "play" with one another, consciousness becomes absorbed in the logic of play, and the author likewise engages in a philosophical game with the reader.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, M. Zemskov's novel "Gabriel's Saxophone" reflects the trends and fundamental principles of contemporary postmodern literature. Following the latest demands and traditions of conceptualization, the author considers the future reader's background, creatively reinterprets the biblical story, and transforms it into a contemporary artistic reality. The title, of course, can be attributed to the text's "strong position", which predetermines the narrative's theme. This can be formulated as a problem and an opportunity for coexistence in a global complex world of an individual with an extraordinary way of thinking and psyche with the most complex questions of the meaning of human existence in a constantly and rapidly changing world. These features of new realism include a documentary style, attention to the smallest details of contemporary life, nuanced representation of the protagonist's emotional states, often closely aligned with those of the author, confessional discourse, an emphasis on artistic truthfulness and sincerity, and adherence to traditional narrative forms.

All these categories can be applied to characterize the writer's works. In his works, Mikhail Zemskov examines social degradation as a phenomenon closely connected to broader processes of cultural transformation. The fundamental elements and distinctive features of the novel's aesthetics are the writer's desire to focus the plot of the work on the life of an "ordinary" ("normal") person, whose place is taken by a "new" protagonist, who separates himself from the mundane and from fate, a potential creator. Therefore, it is necessary to identify several distinctive features of "new realism" as a form of artistic narrative: contemporary spatial-temporal organization that corresponds to empirical reality; "retrospectivity" as a key narrative strategy enabling plot construction and expanding the author's capacity to draw on personal memory and life experience; an engagement with diverse genre forms aimed at

illuminating the contemporary socio-political context; the articulation of an optimistic worldview; and the search for a positive protagonist representing a modern (often young) person within the sphere of everyday life.

Contemporary writers often employ unique techniques that result in a distinctive, non-hierarchical composition. Existential themes about the meaning of life and the protagonist's place in it lead to an unusual narrative where reality and fiction are often closely intertwined, suggesting a reference to modernist aesthetics. Mikhail Zemskov's novel "Gabriel's Saxophone" is a wonderful example of an open-ended novel, allowing anyone to shape their own vision of a modern hero and the work's architecture, according to their level of rational thinking. Thus, the novel may be interpreted as a text centered on characters living in a world of simulacra, where the boundaries between fiction

and reality are deliberately blurred as a means of authorial self-expression.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

Dzhamalova Zh.B. conceptualized the study, conducted the literary analysis, wrote the main body of the article, and provided overall academic supervision. Maulenova B.S. contributed to the analysis of genre originality and idiostyle, compiled the reference list, and participated in data systematization. Tattimbetova K.O. analyzed the mythopoetic and intertextual layers of the novel, and participated in editing the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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