

**MSC 2020****International Scientific and Practical Conference «MAN. SOCIETY.  
COMMUNICATION»****FACTUALITY AND FICTIONALITY IN “SEVENTEEN  
MOMENTS OF SPRING” BY YULIAN SEMYONOV**

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**Abstract**

Yulian Semyonov's works have been popular among readers and viewers for more than half a century now. His best-known novel "Seventeen Moments of Spring" is a perfect example of Soviet mass prose. Philologists in their analyses identify both structural and linguistic characteristics of mass literature which proves that literary "low" works are created by the certain rules. That's why the demand for mass literature research in conditions of book markets overflowed with different levels literature is of great current interest. The factual basis of the novel has not been considered before. The paper focuses on a research of "Seventeen Moments of Spring" in the aspect of its accuracy. The study's purpose is to identify factual and fictional narratives of the novel with the object of definition the work's genre. Alongside with the conventional conception of Semyonov's novel as a detective story and political chronicle (this is how the author himself determined its genre) the paper contains arguments for presence in it another genre variation of a novel. By means of comparative and intertextual methods the fictional and factual narrative were revealed. The principles of implementation of a fictional narrative in a novel were also noted. Results of the study show that the novel can be classified as documentary fiction and in a narrower sense as historical documentary due to being based on a historical fact. Along with that the novel is saturated with fictional narrative which interweaves with the factual basis. Semyonov's novel fits the definition of a polygenre work.

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## 1. Introduction

Yulian Semenov is called a true writer of his era (Lovell, 2013) His legacy to this day lives and excites the modern reader. However, the writer's literary activity has not been sufficiently studied, and his most famous novel, *Seventeen Moments of Spring*, was not considered at all from the point of view of genre affiliation. The problem of the ratio of the document and fiction has recently been actively attracting philological attention. "Literary fiction is one of the oldest philological problems" (Muravieva, 2018, p. 327). Many researchers address issues of fiction and fact in works of different genres (Beatty, 2017; Hack, 2017; Nekrasova, 2016; Smirnova, 2017). It can be noted that in a modern literary text quite often there is an intersection of fact and fiction. The novel by Yulian Semenov "*Seventeen Moments of Spring*" is also built on a combination of two types of narrative.

## 2. Problem Statement

The question of determining the genre of works in which a fictitious and a real origin is combined remains debatable. The categorical apparatus for discussing this problem is determined by researchers in different ways. Mestergazy (2007) in her research identifies eight most used terms that characterize literature with a documentary principle: documentary literature, fact literature, human document, artistic and documentary prose, historical and documentary prose, self-documentary text, non-fiction literature, ego-document, naive writing. As you can see, the definitions of concepts associated with the presence of a documentary principle in a work are quite controversial, and so far there is no complete agreement among researchers in determining the genres of texts that combine fiction and documentary. Meanwhile, the identification of factual and fictitious principles, the characteristic of their interaction in the novel by Yulian Semenov "*Seventeen Moments of Spring*" will help to more accurately determine the genre of the work (Zakharov, 2007).

If mass culture is engaged in a kind of "formation of memory ", within the framework of which national stories are integrated into the global one, and myths, legends, and fantastic assumptions become the main source of ideas about the past (Chernyak, 2018, p. 85).

Then the problem of assessing the ratio. The fact and fiction of such a cult novel, which to this day remains popular with the mass reader, is relevant.

## 3. Research Questions

The study raises the following questions:

**3.1.** What is the ratio of fictitious and factual narrative in the novel?

**3.2.** How historically accurate is the description of what is happening in the novel?

**3.3.** To which genre can the novel by Yulian Semenov "*Seventeen Moments of Spring*" be attributed?

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the research is to study the novel “Seventeen Moments of Spring” from the point of view of organizing factual and fictitious narratives to more accurately determine the genre nature of the work of Yu. Semenov.

#### **5. Research Methods**

Using the historical and cultural approach during the study, the novel content was compared with its historical basis, and the reliability of the events described in the novel was assessed. Studying the novel on the subject of factuality helped to identify which of the types of narrative prevails in the text, which contributed to a more accurate definition of the genre of the novel.

The method of intertextual analysis contributed to the identification of documents and pseudo-documents in the text of the novel, which made it possible not only to isolate various types of inserted texts, but also to evaluate their reliability in the context of the novel's relevance.

#### **6. Findings**

The plot of the novel by Semenov "Seventeen Moments of Spring" is built around separate negotiations between Wolf and Dulles - representatives of the United States (and Great Britain) with the representative of Germany on the surrender of German troops. These are real events that are recorded in historical documents (however, these documents were not included in the novel), that is, they represent the factual beginning in the work, which allows us to assume that the novel was conceived as a work with a documentary principle, i.e., as a creative synthesis of historical facts and fiction. Documentation is intended to organize the reader's impression of reliability, to overcome the author's arbitrariness in assessing phenomena (Lekhtsier, 2018). Therefore, the author turns to real events and real historical characters, against the background of which an artistic, fictional action develops.

Let's start with the image of the main character of the novel - the Soviet intelligence agent Stirlitz - Isaev. Of course, everyone is well aware that Stirlitz did not really exist, the image of the agent is fictitious. However, this does not mean that he does not have prototypes. There is an assumption that the Soviet agent Willy Leman became his prototype, as noted by Zalesski (2006), they have only one thing in common - they were both employees of the Reich Main Security Office. The version is also considered that Stirlitz's prototype was “a scout who was hiding not only from strangers, but also from his own. In the 1920s he was infiltrated into the Nazi party. He made a great career, participated in everything that the SS did ... The story of this mysterious person seemed to be the basis of the novel ... In any case, the main scientific consultant of the film, Professor Yezhov, believed this” (Mlechin, 2018, p. 21). However, let us dwell on the recognized opinion that “Stirlitz is a collective image and is the result of the brilliant author's imagination of Yulian Semenov” (Zalesski, 2006, p. 17). The author introduces the character who did not exist in fact into a text based on historical material so that the image should look convincing and believable. In this character, Yulian Semenov romanticizes the idea of the heroic behavior of a person who is in a situation of "one among strangers." This is a sort of an image of a “superman” in a war setting. The main

character in mass literature is always a certain superhero endowed with superhuman qualities: he can do anything, but he himself cannot be destroyed. In accordance with this unwritten rule, Stirlitz in the novel is a hero with exceptional professional qualities, able to solve problems of any complexity and escape from the enemy at the very last moment. The introduction of a fictional character is allowed in fiction and non-fiction, provided that "the main event canvas, as evidenced by the document (historical fact)" is preserved (Sharifova, 2011, p. 248). At the same time, the introduction of a fictional character is possible in historical and documentary prose.

The novel takes place in two countries (toposes): Germany and Switzerland. In Berlin, several important loci can be distinguished, one of the main ones in their series - the Reich Main Security Office (RSHA). The organization that really existed united the special services of Germany. The author in the narrative does not reveal in detail neither the structure of this organization, nor its hierarchy, nor its place in the state structure. In the novel, only Prinz-Albrecht-Straße is mentioned: "... since then the tape was often seen in the basement on Prinz-Albrecht-Straße, especially during night bombing, when it was impossible to interrogate the arrested" (Semyonov, 1991, p. 312); "Stirlitz decided for himself that today he would get free earlier and leave Prinz-Albrecht-Straße for Nauen." (Semyonov, 1991, p. 324). Indeed, in Nazi Germany it was on this street that the Gestapo headquarters was located. However, "by the beginning of 1945, the RSHA units occupied 30 buildings in Berlin" (Zaleski, 2006, p. 41), that is, in fact, the action could not take place only at this address, just as Muller and Schellenberg could not collide in the corridors. Muller is the chief of the Secret State Police (Gestapo), Schellenberg is the head of Political Intelligence of the Security Service (SD). They are the leaders of two different organizations, which at the end of 1945 in Berlin were territorially located in different buildings.

Yulian Semenov unites all the actors under one roof to give the action greater compactness and dynamism, and to make the relationship of the characters more dramatic. While in the same building, the characters enter into communication, while there are no additional (excessive for the plot series) movements in space - the reader is constantly in tension and is intrigued by what is happening. Note how exactly this locus is involved in the novel. Important dialogues between the characters take place there (Stirlitz is suspected of betrayal, Schellenberg and Himmler discuss Wolf's negotiations with Dulles, Stirlitz contacts Bormann by phone, Stirlitz is detained and locked in a chamber, etc.), that is, the historical place becomes a platform for untwisting fictional parts of the events of the novel. Certain details of the scene, which differ from historically reliable ones, do not play a significant role, since the actors and their actions are more important for the author; that is why Yulian Semenov had no need to depict exactly the building where the RSHA departments were located, it was enough to name one address. Turning to a historically reliable organization, the address of which almost coincides with the real one, Yulian Semenov introduces a fictitious beginning into the narrative, creatively processing the fact, thereby concentrated it creates the general semantics of the "terrible place": the one from which the threat for Soviet intelligence officers comes.

The protagonists of the novel can be conditionally divided into those who have historical prototypes, and actually invented by the author. The first category includes the highest party officials of the NSDAP (Hitler, Goering, Kaltenbrunner, Schellenberg, Goebbels, Muller, Wolf, Bormann), negotiators (Allen Dulles). The second category includes fictional characters: Kat, Erwin, Pastor, Pleischner, Stirlitz, Barbara.

In the novel, fictional characters come into contact with real personalities, resulting in various ups and downs of the novel plot. Thus, fictitious and factual principles are intertwined already at the level of organization of the character system of the novel.

Note that K.A. Zalessky in his work describes all the inconsistencies in the behavior of the officers in the television series, the impossibility of some of their orders, actions, incorrect appearance, etc. For example, the episode when Himmler “played the show: a dummy agent in SA uniform shot in the Fuhrer’s open car, and Himmler, closing the leader with his body, shouted - the first in the party: “ My Fuhrer, how happy I am to give my blood for your life!” (Semyonov, 1991, p. 359). Zalessky claims that “there was nothing like that. And, rather, it resembles the case of an attempt on Stalin ... - the substitution of concepts and the transfer of Soviet realities to German soil” (Zalesski, 2006, p. 84). The fictional case from Himmler’s alleged biography, which Yulian Semyonov inserts in “Information for Thought”, reveals in Himmler’s image such a trait as cunning, through which he demonstrates by almost theatrical means devotion to the party and the Führer, seeking to increase his status in the party hierarchy. The interweaving of fictitious and factual principles helps the author to create an artistically necessary (albeit contrary to historical fact) image, because Himmler is an extremely important figure, he is the main opponent of Stirlitz. This episode testifies to a distortion of the historical fact, which the author intentionally does for the sake of artistic effect. Both art-documentary and historical-documentary prose allow such a technique.

So, for the author it was important to create not an abstract, but a rather definite, expressed in actions, thoughts and words, image of German officers. However, he still did not set the task to describe scrupulously, with accuracy to the details, what they were wearing, how many awards they had and what full rank they had. That is, an appeal to the facts is important for him, but not self-sufficient.

It should be added that in describing the leaders of German fascism, Yulian Semenov uses a number of real biographical facts. Several pages from Goebbels' diaries have been introduced into the text of the novel. It is known that he really kept diaries that have survived to the present. However, it should be emphasized that 4 volumes of Goebbels' diary on the instructions of the Munich Institute of Modern History in collaboration with the Federal Archive were published by Elke Frohlich only in 1987, that is, in the process of writing the novel, Yulian Semenov could not contact them, since they had not yet been published. Therefore, we have to assume that a fiction is used here. That is, Goebbels' diaries are a historical fact, but their content, cited by Semenov in the novel, is fictitious.

As noted above, absolutely fictional characters are introduced into the novel. Let us dwell on some of them. Kat is a radio operator who works with Stirlitz. She can be called one of the key images around which the intrigue unfolds. More precisely, Kat is a character thanks to whom several storylines develop at once. Firstly, with the help of the image of Kat Yulian Semenov raises the topic of children in the war, including those who were with their parents under the Gestapo. Secondly, Kat is a collective image of a Soviet reconnaissance radio operator who risks her life and the life of her child for the success of the operation. In addition, around Kat, an adventurous intrigue ensues over the possible exposure of Stirlitz, which should keep the reader in emotional and psychological tension.

Another storyline is built around Professor Pleischner - a character invented by Yulian Semenov. Pleischner is part of the Stirlitz plan: with his help, he is going to deliver a message to the Center after the scout lost his radio operator. The professor becomes not only a messenger in the "game" of Stirlitz, but also

a real hero in the eyes of the reader. From an insecure, all-fearing professor, Pleischner, as the story unfolds, becomes a man who has managed to sacrifice himself for the liberation of Germany from fascism. He is not at all a professional soldier or scout, on the contrary: he is a private person, an absent-minded intellectual, a professor who has decided to take a courageous act, and as a result, by self-sacrifice in a hopeless situation, he deserves the respect of the reader. Dialogues with Pleischner give us the opportunity to learn more about Stirlitz himself. So, for example, in the second edition of the novel, Stirlitz discusses the fate of literature: “Soon, literature will use concepts, but by no means long verbal periods. The more information — through radio and cinema — is absorbed by people, and especially by younger generations, the more tragic will be the role of literature” (Semyonov, 1991, p. 483). Here Pleischner is surprised at Stirlitz's poetic nature and advises him to compose poetry, to which Stirlitz replies that “he never wrote poetry, because he takes the poet's profession quite seriously, but he really tried to paint” (Semyonov, 199, p. 483). Yulian Semenov seeks to show the attitude of honest Germans, people of all sorts of activities, to fascism, to the events in Germany from different points of view.

It is worth adding that with the help of fictional characters, Yulian Semenov demonstrates different types of heroism. Kat shows heroism as a mother and as a scout who found herself in fascist captivity. Pastor Schlag shows heroism, broadcasting, preaching anti-Nazi sentiments. Different aspects of the heroic demonstrate the complex structure of human experiences in such a tense atmosphere, and also add contrast to the behavior of German officers. After all, the top leadership of the Third Reich is concerned about how to save themselves, realizing that the war has already been lost by Germany, there is no question for them about any self-sacrifice for the sake of an idea or the heroic acceptance of the situation. Compared with ordinary people (pastor, professor), whose actions arouse respect among the reader, the behavior of Bormann, Kaltenbrunner, Goering looks like a cowardly fuss, a desperate attempt to create the appearance of calm and faith in the successful development of events.

The novel "Seventeen Moments of Spring" is based on historical facts, but the main roles are assigned not to historical, but to fictional characters. In the novel, fiction and documentary become elements in the structure of the text, making up a unique alloy of factual and aesthetic authenticity (Kireeva, 2011). Thus, using the factual basis, Yulian Semenov brings psychological and plot-justified fiction into the story. And first of all, this applies to the main characters.

## **7. Conclusion**

An analysis of the interaction of factual and fictitious principles in the novel “Seventeen Moments of Spring” leads to the conclusion that the work is on the border of several varieties of the novel genre at once, primarily documentary-fiction and historical-documentary novels. In a broad sense, the novel by Yu. Semenov is a documentary-fiction. In a narrower sense, this is a historical-documentary novel, as the plot is based on a historically reliable fact, but the text is saturated with a fictitious narrative: it includes pseudo-documents, fictional facts and the main characters around which the narrative is built. In addition, the genre of historical-documentary novel, as noted by E. G. Mestergazi, is often addressed by authors of mass literature, among which is Yulian Semenov. At the same time, one cannot dismiss such genre definitions that were given to this novel by the author himself and his contemporaries: such as detective, political detective, political chronicles, which suggests that it is impossible to give an unambiguous genre definition

to the novel “Seventeen Moments of Spring” and that the novel in question belongs to the category of polygenre works.

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