

The Hybrid Genre In Karakalpak Children's Literature (Based On Sh. Seitov's "Qiyal Atawy")

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Abstract: This article investigates the genre status of Sh. Seyitov's "Qiyal Atawı" (Dream Island). While the author calls it a "novel in verse", opponents claim it is a poem. Using textual analysis, comparative genre theory, and historical exemplars (Pushkin, Goethe, Byron, Lermontov), the study finds that the work occupies a liminal position: it satisfies many novella/short-novel (повесть) criteria – plot structure, multiple protagonists, episodic composition – yet its poetic form, lyrical digressions and sustained verse-cadence align it with epic/poetic narratives (poems, verse-novels). The article argues for treating "Qiyal Atawı" as a hybrid genre – an authentic instance of the verse-novel phenomenon – and discusses implications for genre theory and pedagogy.

Keywords: Sh.Seyitov; Qiyal Atawı; genre hybridity; verse novel; poem-novella; lyrical narrative; Kazakh literature; poetics; epic form; comparative genre studies.

Introduction: Relevance of the Study. Genre is one of the most fundamental organizing categories in literature. Classifying a work into a particular genre requires not only formal indicators but also an analysis of content, composition, authorial intent, and reception (reader perception). In Karakalpak literature, Sh. Seyitov's Qiyal Atawı ("Dream Island") [4] represents a significant case that challenges conventional genre boundaries: the author defines it as a "novella written in verse", while some scholars and readers regard it as a poem (an epic poetic work).

This contradiction is theoretically important: in modern literary practice of the 20th–21st centuries, the phenomenon of the verse-novel (also called novel-in-verse or poem-novel) has received extensive scholarly attention, and the tradition of epic narratives written in poetic form – originating from Pushkin, Goethe, and Byron – remains alive today.

This article examines the genre debate surrounding Qiyal Atawı, compares both perspectives ("novella" vs. "poem"), and – through textual evidence and theoretical analysis – offers an argued conclusion about its genre identity.

Research Aims and Questions. The main objective of the study is to determine the genre status of Qiyal

Atawı and to systematize the arguments related to its classification. Key research questions include:

1. Which formal elements justify identifying the work as a novella?
2. Which poetic or structural elements suggest that it should be considered a poem (epic poetry)?
3. From the perspective of international genre theory, which classification ("novella in verse" vs. "poem") is more adequate?
4. If the genre boundaries remain fluid, which theoretical frameworks – such as hybrid genre or verse-novel – provide the most precise understanding?

Significance of the Research. Classifying works solely by formal criteria risks limiting literary understanding. Contemporary literary theory increasingly acknowledges hybrid or transitional forms. Analyzing Qiyal Atawı within this framework contributes to understanding innovation in Karakalpak literature and the expansion of its literary language. Moreover, such analysis informs how this work should be taught in schools and universities.

METHODS

Three main approaches were applied:

1. Close Reading and Formal Analysis. The text was analyzed in terms of its verse structure, composition (sectional division), plot dynamics, system of characters, and balance between lyrical and epic elements. Everyday life scenes and episodic conflicts were examined comparatively.

2. Comparative Literary Analysis. Classical verse epics such as Pushkin's Eugene Onegin, Goethe's Hermann und Dorothea, Byron's Don Juan, and Lermontov's Mtsyri and Demon were used as reference points to clarify genre criteria.

3. Theoretical Genre Analysis. Classical and modern theories of genre were applied – epic/lyric/dramatic distinctions, definitions of novella (Belinsky, Timofeev, and others), and recent studies on novel-in-verse or hybrid genres. Key open-access studies (e.g., "The Novel in Poems – An Emerging Genre") were also referenced.

RESULTS

A. Features Corresponding to the Novella (Epic Prose). Episodic-epic plot structure and multi-character narrative. The composition follows an epic chronology – exposition, episodic development, climax, resolution – featuring multiple characters (Anuar, Bakhtiyar, Sharyar, Qurban Mama, Alisher the forester, and the PMK director). Through these figures, social problems (environmental destruction, moral responsibility) are revealed. The plot progresses from small domestic scenes to a collective ecological conflict – a typical novella technique.

1. Complex system of characters with social roles. The narrative involves both main and secondary characters whose behavior and psychology are carefully individualized. This polyphonic character system (children, adults, antagonists) reflects social diversity – a hallmark of the novella.

2. Compositional organization. The work consists of structured narrative sections, episodic shifts, and an authorial epilogue. The story develops from everyday details toward broader societal reflection – another key trait of the novella genre.

B. Features Corresponding to the Poem (Poetic Form). Verse form and poetic intonation. The work is entirely written in verse (qosiq form). Its rhythm, repetitions, and rhetorical sound patterns reveal a strong poetic sensibility. As Seyitov himself noted, "If I did not write in verse, I would lose my feelings" – emphasizing that verse form is integral to conveying emotion.

1. Lyrical digressions and meditative tone. Nature imagery, maternal symbolism, and reflective passages connect the author's emotional world with the narrative – demonstrating lyrical meditation typical of

long poems.

2. Symbolism and figurative detail. Symbols such as the speckled goose, the hen's egg, and the "dream island" convey meaning beyond literal narrative. These poetic devices (metaphor, epithet, symbolic layering) align the text with the poetics of an epic poem rather than prose narration.

C. Integrative Interpretation: A Hybrid Genre. The analysis shows that Qiyal Atawi simultaneously embodies traits of both genres. Its compositional and narrative features align with the novella, while its versification, lyricism, and imagery derive from poetic conventions. Thus, the most accurate classification is a hybrid genre – a novel in verse (verse-novel, поэма-повесть).

This position corresponds to global literary discourse where similar works – Pushkin's Eugene Onegin, Goethe's Hermann und Dorothea, Byron's Don Juan – occupy an intermediate zone between poetry and prose [1; 2; 3; 5].

DISCUSSION

1. Historical-Literary Context. The tradition of verse epics is well established in world literature: Pushkin's Eugene Onegin stands as the classic novel in verse, while Goethe and Byron also conveyed broad social and moral themes through poetic epic narratives. Seyitov's choice to write in verse therefore continues a global literary tradition rather than contradicting it [1; 2; 3; 5].

2. "Novella" vs. "Poem": Theoretical Parameters. Classical theory defines the novella as a mid-length epic genre focused on everyday life and individual destinies (Belinsky, Timofeev). Seyitov's work clearly fits this model. However, the poem – as a large-scale lyric-epic form – also applies. This dual conformity produces the central genre ambiguity.

3. Authorial Intention vs. Reader Reception. Genre identification must account for both the author's designation and the reader's perception. Seyitov described his work as "a novella written in verse," yet history shows that authorial labels do not always determine final genre status (for instance, Pushkin's Eugene Onegin). Hence, textual features remain the decisive factor.

4. Comparative Assessment. When classified by form, Qiyal Atawi is a poem; when judged by content, it is a novella. The coexistence of poetic form and epic narrative thus justifies its hybrid definition.

5. Practical Implications. In educational and bibliographic contexts, designating the work as a "verse-novel" or "novella in verse" acknowledges both its epic content and poetic structure, providing a

balanced framework for teaching and analysis.

The plot system of “Qiyal Atauly” (literally “Dream Title”) at first glance begins with simple everyday events: children collecting eggs, Kurban Mama’s maternal compassion, and issues of environmental protection. However, these events gradually evolve into a profound philosophical and ecological idea. For example, the central motif – the emergence of a pair of chickens, the birth of a legend about the wild hen, and the preservation of the Aral Sea – ascends to a symbolic and metaphorical level. This demonstrates the presence of an epic field, and such scope is a defining feature of the poetic genre.

At the same time, lyrical reflections, the inner emotions of the characters, and the harmony of kindness and nature dominate the work – another indicator of its poetic nature. Structurally, however, the events unfold sequentially and logically, following the rhythm of everyday life – a trait typical of the novella. Thus, the work fuses epic (novella-like) and lyrical (poem-like) structures, forming a hybrid genre model.

One of the key factors defining the genre of “Qiyal Atauly” is its system of characters. In prose, realism manifests through lifelike characters revealed in daily activity, while in poetry, figures often bear symbolic and ideological significance. In Sh. Seitov’s work, both qualities coexist.

For instance: Aniuar, Bakhtiyar, and Shariyar – typical characters distinguished by temperament and mindset. They are rural children – ordinary individuals – yet their actions embody major ecological and moral ideas. The episode of the children and the eggs transcends a domestic scene, symbolizing the relationship between humanity and nature.

“Bakhtiyar was boasting, Just a little greedy, Counting the eggs in his cap

As if they were coins he’d earned...”

Here, the author depicts the child’s nature with vivid realism – typical of the novella. Yet beneath this realism lies a philosophy of compassion and moral reflection, characteristic of poetic thinking.

Characters such as Kurban Mama and Alisher Bajban likewise bridge the two genres. Kurban Mama represents maternal wisdom and compassion, resisting acts harmful to nature and embodying harmony between humanity and the environment. Alisher Bajban personifies justice and moral duty, opposing bureaucratic indifference and striving to protect forests and groves. These figures possess a social and philosophical dimension reminiscent of epic poetry. Conversely, the head of the PMK (Production and Construction Directorate) symbolizes bureaucratic

oppression. Through these contrasting characters, the author explores moral balance between society and nature.

All of this demonstrates that although the plot is realistic, its ideas and imagery are lyrical and symbolic – thus closer to the essence of poetry.

The most distinctive feature of “Qiyal Atauly” is its verse form, which plays a decisive role in determining its genre. The author himself notes:

“If I did not write in verse, I would lose my sense of feeling.”

For Seitov, poetry is not merely an artistic medium but a means of conveying meaning. From this perspective, his work aligns with verse narratives such as Pushkin’s Eugene Onegin, Lermontov’s Mtsyri, and Byron’s Don Juan. For instance, Eugene Onegin is written in iambic verse yet displays the social and psychological breadth of a novel. Similarly, Seitov’s work, though written in verse, encompasses domestic and social realities. This approach corresponds to what literary scholarship terms “poetic prose” or a “novel in verse.”

A 2019 study from Trier University titled “The Novel in Poems – An Emerging Genre” defines this phenomenon as follows [1; 5]:

“Verse novels combine the narrative scope of prose with the intensity and rhythm of poetry, forming a hybrid genre that transcends traditional boundaries.”

This definition aptly characterizes “Qiyal Atauly.” Within the work:

there is a narrative thread → typical of prose; poetic rhythm and symbolism → typical of poetry; emotional and philosophical weight → characteristic of the lyric-epic form.

The principal criterion for determining genre lies in the relationship between plot and idea. In a novella, events dominate; in a poem, emotion and idea prevail. In “Qiyal Atauly,” both tendencies are equally present. Yet the author’s emphasis on nature, the human spirit, and maternal compassion amplifies the lyrical dimension.

At first glance, it may appear as a realistic novella, but its inner poetic energy elevates it to the level of a poem. Hence, it can be defined as a “poem-novella,” a new form born of genre synthesis.

Similar forms exist in world literature: A.S. Pushkin – “The Little House in Kolomna” (a verse novella); M.Yu. Lermontov – “Mtsyri” (a lyrical poem with a narrative plot); G.Byron – “Don Juan” (a novel in verse); J.W. Goethe – “Hermann and Dorothea” (an idyllic verse epic).

All these works share common features: storytelling through poetic rhythm, revealing inner emotional

worlds, and expressing ideas through feeling. Sh.Seitov continues this tradition in a renewed form within Kazakh literature.

From a compositional standpoint, the sections of the work are closely interconnected. The first section depicts the children's simple actions; the second develops the nature-related conflict; and in total, sixteen sections are linked sequentially, culminating in a social and ecological conclusion. The composition follows the progression of ideas – a feature typical of poetic construction. At the same time, the events unfold consistently, and the characters' actions develop logically – a hallmark of prose. Thus, even at the compositional level, the fusion of genres is evident.

CONCLUSION

“Qıyal Atawı” is a hybrid literary phenomenon: structurally and narratively it corresponds to a novella, while its form and tone belong to poetry. This situates it firmly within the modern verse-novel tradition [1; 5].

While the author's own label “novella in verse” deserves respect, final classification must rest on combined formal and semantic analysis. The text reveals features of both genres, making it a genuine verse-novel – “neither purely a poem nor a novella, but a synthesis of both.”

Therefore, in academic and bibliographic descriptions, it is most appropriate to designate the work as a novella written in verse (verse-novel / поэма-повесть), recognizing the coexistence of epic narrative and poetic expression.

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