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COMBINING SPATIAL MODELS IN "THE TERRACOTTA OLD WOMAN" NOVEL BY E. CHIZHOVA

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Abstract

There are different approaches to the issue of literary space in modern literary studies. The typological approach is the most productive one, reflecting the fundamental parameters of the author's worldview and performing genus, genre, and style functions. This approach also provides for identifying and describing basic spatial images and models, which are the basis of the world of literary fiction in the work of literature. The study of literary space in close connection with the event-related level, the system of spatial relationships between characters, the spatial point of view of the author and their characters, other significant components of the literary text allows one to penetrate deeper into its ideological content, understand characters and their inner state, come closer to the disclosure of the author's idea. Having selected basic models which represent the "objectively existing" and suitable for living environment (real space), characterize the inner world of characters (psychological space) and build a fictional reality (virtual space), we focus on the study of mixed models, taking into account the fact that there is always an experiment in the so-called "strong" texts. This research paper materials are based on "The Terracotta Old Woman" novel (2011), written by E. Chizhova, the Booker Prize winner. The paper describes structural and semantic types of space, according to the content and functional criterion (geographical, cultural, family, social and psychological models), which identify the general principles of artistic vision and determine the value of each spatial components in stylistic harmony.

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1. Introduction

The review of numerous works (Bachelard & Jolas, 1994; Bakhtin, 1975; Epstein, 1990; Gao, 2016; Farino, 2004; Lotman, 2000; Mints, 1999; Niekerk, 2017; Saveleva, 1996; Shutaia, 2007; Toporov, 1995 and others), devoted to the spatial analysis of a literary text, allowed one to identify several research levels, allocated depending on their content and volume of the material in question:

- Level 1 deals with the analysis of the most significant spatial images (home, road, city, manor, forest, garden, etc.) in a particular literary text or works of an author in general;

- Level 2 describes the individual author's specificity for the spatial organization of literary works;

- Level 3 aims at identifying common patterns while portraying literary space in the literary process of a particular epoch;

- Level 4 constructs various classifications and typologies of literary space in literature.

The most topical and promising, in our opinion, is the fourth research level, because it provides for summarizing the accumulated experience, theoretically interpreting each problem and linking together numerous concepts in the course of studying a literary text in the spatial aspect.

Back in the 1930s, M. Bakhtin developed a typology of spatio-temporal patterns (chronotopes) of a novel in the early stages of its development. The genre principle underlying the classification allowed the researcher to describe the largest spatio-temporal models: chronotopes of Greek novels and chivalric romances, Rabelaisian and idyllic chronotopes, as well as currently repeated chronotopical images (meetings, roads, castles, saloon-living rooms, provincial towns, et al.), being the main scenes of action in different types of a novel (Bakhtin, 1975).

Another approach to the typology of literary space – structural-semiotic – is presented in works of Lotman (1986, 2000), Toporov (1984, 1995, 1997), Farino (2004) and others. Considering space apart from time, representatives of this direction distinguish and characterize major spatial patterns based on their inclusion into binary oppositions: closed/open, homogeneous/heterogeneous, filled / empty, conflicting / non-conflicting, moral/immoral, etc.

Finally, the third approach combines both directions of research, as scientists build different classifications, highlighting and describing the genus, genre and style-forming spatial models: historical, geographical, mythological, fantastic, etc., within which they analyze key spatial oppositions. We are adopting this very approach, however, the main attention is paid not to the so-called "pure" spatial models, but to the mixed ones, which are most often found in new and recent literature. Basically, we consider models depicting the "objectively existing" and suitable for living environment (geographical, family, social space, etc.), describing the characters' mental world, representing this world as a kind of microcosm (psychological space), constructing fictional structures, consciously pushing the boundaries of conventionality (virtual, oneiric, surreal, etc. of space) (Pykhtina, 2014, 2015, 2017).

2. Problem Statement

The main research objective of this paper is to illustrate our literary concept for the typological study of the literary space on the specific example.

3.   Research Questions

The selection of a representative text for further analysis, where several spatial models coexisting in stylistic harmony and influencing the idea of the work in general would be found together.

Identification of "mixed" spatial models in the structure of a modern novel.

Determination of the role of spatial models identified in an individual author's concept.

4.   Purpose of the Study

This study is aimed at conducting the spatial-temporal analysis of the contemporary literature, where one can see the combination and interposition of various spatial models, due to which the problem-thematic and ideological content of the text is appreciably deepened.

5.   Research Methods

In the course of the work, structural-typological and functional-semantic research methods were used, which made it possible to identify key spatial models in the work in question, figure out their main functions and describe the links between multi-level word pictures.

6.   Findings

We illustrated our concept on the basis of "The Terracotta Old Woman" novel, written by Chizhova (2011), the winner of the Booker Prize from St. Petersburg. In this particular novel space is presented as multidimensional and multifunctional.

This novel is a first-person narration, on behalf of Tatiana, a striking and outstanding individual, who has reached an impasse, both moral and material. Tatiana used to work as a university lecturer, then she became a successful business-lady, and now she is a Russian language tutor, bored with her social role. Her painful self-reflection is given in the form of memories about events which happened twenty years ago, interwoven with sketches of her life in the present. In the 1990s, Tatiana, educated by her parents-philologists, on the examples from Russian classical literature, left her job at university and started working as a personal assistant for a successful entrepreneur and an owner of a furniture factory. This was a necessary measure; she had to support her small daughter and her friend Yana who was left alone without a job with a son to bring him up. However, being "crazy about literature", Tatiana could never adapt to the "bestial world", where, to survive, you need to "fight to the bitter end". Comparing herself to a terracotta old woman (an archaic statuette depicting an ugly woman with a big belly), the main character of the novel by Chizhova (2011) emphasizes her tragic needlessness in the new world, built on the other, not at all humanistic, concepts.

In the course of the analysis, we found out that the disclosure of the internal conflict of the main character could be facilitated by the detailed characteristics of the literary space, namely, geographical, cultural, family, social and psychological. Let us take a closer look at how these models are presented in the text and what their functions are.

6.1. Geographic space

The main decoration in the novel is St. Petersburg, described with topographical accuracy. Petersburg realities, included into the work, fill it with numerous references to the so-called "Petersburg text" of Russian literature, the commonplace of which is the motive of death. Being organically intertwined into the novel, the city becomes the embodiment of modern civilization, which has approached "the last frontier of the world cataclysm" (Chizhova, 2011). Tatiana, St. Petersburg-born resident, sees the catastrophe coming, feeling that after the physical loss, the cultural loss is inevitable. In the consciousness of the heroine, the apocalyptic fate of the city is associated with her own destiny. Tatiana has long ceased to be a woman, now she is just a reflection, dressed "in her own second-hand clothes", "a fragment of the old world, who the Lord gave literary tablets to", an archaic relic, "having remained" in the middle of nowhere – there is no spiritual connection with parents who died long before perestroika and who did not have time to become disillusioned in their Soviet ideals, there is no mutual understanding with her daughter, who, not having any bitter experience compared to that of her mother, fully belongs to the new era, the era of "victorious practicability", where "there is no place for truth or lie" (Ibid).

The Petersburg *couleur locale* in the novel is created by the intrusive repetition of words that are markers of death: "The dead city, dark eyeless facades ... Through the glass of an alien Volvo, I saw the ruins. Everything was in decay. More correctly, everything was in tatters. Not Petropol, going under the Neva waters ... Now it has become the city of Bandar-logs ... A dark, monkey kingdom, where you can only sneak around ... " (Chizhova, 2011, p. 88); "The sky covered the city with a sticky net – an eternal Leningrad drizzle, grey greasy dust. <...> Having lowered the nearside window of his car, the driver is sniffing the air: It looks as if this place is here... it smells like on a garbage pit <…>" (p. 91). However, it is important for the author not only to draw the Petersburg landscape itself but to express its painful perception by the heroine, for instance, her critical state of mind, lack of opportunity, is shown by describing the view from the window: "I turn away to the window. Outside the window, there is a courtyard, a shabby slide, and refuse containers, choked with trash. My landscape does not depend on time" (p. 100).

6.2. Cultural space

Cultural space is conceived primarily as memory storage and included in the text of the novel with numerous reminiscences from fiction: "I love to walk. When I was teaching at university, I organized walking tours for my students. Dostoevsky's Petersburg. It used to be important ...", etc. (Chizhova, 2011, p. 58). Tutor's experience, as well as the intellectual conflict with her own daughter, led Tatiana to a bitter conclusion: she, an intellectual philologist, and the "new" generation do not have a common cultural memory: "They have different hearts. They look like stomachs – they respond exclusively to natural stimuli: hunger, desire, and fear" (p. 83).

In addition, the cultural space can be visualized in the novel by texts of non-verbal arts – sculpture and architecture – which simultaneously show the real space of St. Petersburg and the personal experience of the heroine: "A woman, who has given her reflection the slip, is walking over the bridge, admiring Klodt's horses. Baulking with their hooves, the horses are rushing to freedom. Not so long ago,

they were taken to the restoration. She thinks: "If I were those horses, I would take the advantage of it. It is easier to make a break for it from the workshop. We should not miss the chance that is given once in a hundred years ..." (Chizhova, 2011, p. 5).

6.3. Living space

In the course of the analysis, we found out that the disclosure of the internal conflict of the main character could be facilitated by the detailed characteristics of the literary space, namely, geographical, cultural, family, social and psychological. Of great importance in the novel is living space. Tatiana has made attempts to describe her apartment several times, but always strays from the path and starts using someone else's words. Comparing the two-room Khrushchyovka, pasted over with yellowish wallpaper, with the yellow dark garret of Raskolnikov's, apparently, she subconsciously uses the symbolism of colour, as in F. Dostoevsky's novel (she wrote her graduation essay about it and has still been keeping it in her memory). In addition, drawing her own home as a close, uncomfortable and disharmonious place, she shows that her depressive worldview is like the crisis of the hero of "Crime and Punishment".

It is interesting that Tatiana subtly feels the connection between the places where people live or work, and their characters, and, as a rule, she is not mistaken in her assessment. For Tatiana, the mismatch between the intended and the real is particularly painful. So, the old mansion, once belonging to princes from Baryatinsky family, which now houses the Chamber of Commerce, seems very romantic to her: "Heavy curtains, a floor clock with owls on the top ... The door to the library is over there. The shelves with the books on them: I think I could recognize every cover. It was as if I used to live there ... " (Chizhova, 2011, p.73), but instead of that picture she sees dull corridors painted with oil paint, dirty floors, fluorescent lights, door handles smudged with visitors' finger marks. The employees of this institution are "a match for the described interior": "The auntie (a blue suit, a white blouse with a washed out jabot) is encircling the figures" (Chizhova, 2011).

6.4. Social space

Twenty years ago, when Tatiana was working for a large furniture company, her social contacts were quite extensive: she had to manage a large team at a factory, hold negotiations with business partners and creditors, set up contacts with the right people at customs, in the Chamber of Commerce ... However, contacts established with great difficulty were broken with Tatiana's leaving the job. She was able to step over herself, having decided on minor frauds – the falsification of the seal and customs documents, but she could not tolerate violence against a person: literary-centrism and crime were incompatible concepts for her.

Gradually, Tatiana's neighbourhood narrowed down to the size of her own inner world: "I am going to my room. I am lying down on the sofa with my face buried into the pillow ..." (Chizhova, 2011, p. 17). Ultimately, everything that she has is a social vacuum which is more and more difficult to overcome with age. Feeling so lonely, Tatiana always fills her "self" space with the power of her imagination (i.e. someone or something): talking to her own shadow, talking to the portraits of classic writer, talking to an imaginary friend, etc. This inner space created by fantasy and filled with imaginary objects can be called a psychological one.

Thus, combining different spatial models in the novel, Chizhova reveals the inner conflict of her heroine, "the dialectic of her soul", by new means.

7.   Conclusion

While analyzing the chronotope in the novel by Chizhova from the structural-typological and functional-semantic perspective, we managed to identify and consider the geographical, cultural, family, social and psychological types of space which, overlapping each other in the heroine's consciousness, contribute to the disclosure of her "self" relations with the outside world, allow one to transfer all the nuances of her crisis of internal state.

In our opinion, the proposed aspect of the study complements the approaches to spatial analysis already developed in literary criticism, helps to understand the deeper layers of the literary text and come closer to understanding individual author's concept.

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