

POETICS OF CHRONOTOPE IN NOVELS BY NIKOLAY LUGINOV

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ABSTRACT

Yakut writer Nikolay Luginov began his writing career in 1970-1980s. He is primarily known for his novels. These novels display an individual creative path from writer-beginner to writer-philosopher. N. Luginov focused on the genre of novel at the start of his writing career, having written twelve novels altogether. This period in his work is characterized as the period of Luginov's formation and progression as an author; the time when his key esthetic principles were formed, and main problems and images found. In general, this is the period when his artistic conception of humanity and reality were finalized. Social and psychological novels with their philosophical overtones in presenting the problems and depicting the characters set the tone for later introduction of philosophical works focusing on eternal problems facing humankind.

The article focuses on identification and analysis of time-and-space relations as presented in psychological and philosophical novels written by N. Luginov. The authors show how N.Luginov builds time which is primarily complex in nature: plots of the novels reflect discontinuity and recurrence of time, as shown through lives of several characters depicted in the novels, as well as in parallel lines and retrospections of the plotlines often marked by time inversions. In his social and psychological novels N. Luginov depicts historical time periods. He primarily focuses on the second half of the XXth century: post-war and modern time. Socially and culturally during this period the nation was going through what is known as eras of the "thaw" and "stagnation" which caused many writers to start the discussion of the most relevant questions and problems of the time.

The Great Patriotic War is viewed by N.Luginov as the main reference scale against which he measures spiritual and moral values of modern society. Time in his philosophical novels is mostly presented as abstract and cyclic due to the author focusing on eternal and universal values. Home is introduced as the key theme in social and psychological novels by N. Luginov while Nature serves as one in his philosophical works. Both present the vital human environment that people must protect and preserve for future generations. N. Luginov depicts nature in his social and philosophical novels as a living spiritual force.

Authors analyze the ways in which N. Luginov introduces nature as a vivid participant of the events, capable of showing sympathy for the characters. It is noted in the article that nature in these novels acts as an active space rather than simply a background. It acts as a fantastic, metaphorical world living its life, thinking, reflecting, suffering and rejoicing.

Keywords: chronotope, space, time, reality, chronology, time projections, symbol, image

INTRODUCTION

Chronotope functions as “the key plot-forming category” [1]. Time unfolds within a place, while place does so within a time frame, thus making these two categories inter-related. M. Bakhtin saw this link and united time and place in one concept terming it as chronotope: “Signs of time are revealed through place, while place is perceived and measured through time” [1].

Further complication and individualization of time-and-place relationship within a work of fiction is linked to “the growing originality of the concepts of world and individual with each single author” [4]. Modern people’s knowledge of the world and the way it functions is practically unlimited. They, therefore, are not typically inclined to ask questions about the genesis of the world (similar to the questions mythology and epos as well as many traditional works of fiction were attempting to answer). Due to this factor modern literature and modern authors tend to show and reveal human nature under various circumstances of life. In its turn the nature of relations existing between individual and said circumstances progresses in its complexity.

MAIN BODY

Nikolay Luginov, the author of a series of social-historical novels depicts a historical time period. It mostly covers second half of the XXth century – post-war and modern time. This period in the history of Russia could not be compared in terms of intensity of world-changing events (revolution, civil war, political repressions, the Great Patriotic war as well as many others) that comprise it. Socially this period is marked in collective consciousness as years of the “Thaw” and following “Stagnation” which caused many writers to put forward the most relevant problems and issues of the time. For N. Luginov the Great Patriotic war becomes the reference point as well as spiritual and moral scale against which values of modern society are measured.

Methods of depicting time category in N. Luginov’s novels are varied in their functions.

Time progression is realized in chronological plotline in the novels “Nuoraldjima Grove”, “The Dance”, “Flood of the Leaves’ Fall”. In “Nuoraldjima Grove” the grandmother is overcome with the idea of continuing the family line when she repeatedly urges her grandson to “Be a

Human!”[5]. Events that unfold over the course of one summer – birth of the brother, passing of the grandmother – played a tremendous role in shaping Nyurgun’s personality.

“Flood of the Leaves’ Fall” end in author’s description of floodwater that keeps flowing. Flood here is the clear metaphor of time. In both novels the boys grow up, travel across time and places, but inevitably return to their home land where their lives started. Both novels have an open ending; time becomes eternity, and the writer reflects on eternal questions of life and humankind.

Luginov generally tends to create a complex timelines. His plotlines often reflect discreteness, frequency and recurrence of time. These are shown in the depiction of several characters reflected in parallel and retrospective plotlines in many cases marked by time inversions.

The novel “Taas Tumus” is based on the whole lifetime of an individual through biographic time. Toybol, Mikhey, and Odon all came to a landmark of their lives. The complex plot sees the characters braving life’s difficulties all the while trying to analyze the years left behind. The novel consists of five point of view chapters titled: “Toybol”, “Mikhey”, “Eksyu”, “Odon”, and “Sardaana”. Odon is satisfied with himself and his life; he realized his lifelong dream; that of steering large ships over the big river. One thing taunts Odon however: how to confess and admit his guilt before his daughter. Even here the character manages to triumph by telling the truth no matter how hard that is. Toybol’s last decade is but a mere existence with one final dream of being buried next to his wife. He lives by the happy memories where his loved ones are alive and happy, just like they were when he knew them. The past is alive in Toybol’s mind, and he understands that his family and friends are alive for as long as he remembers them. The writer reveals Toybol as an individual who grasped the mystery of life and eternity.

Time in N. Luginov’s philosophical novels is predominantly abstract and cyclic, determined by the author’s focus on eternal and universal values. Time images in these novels are symbolic in character, like winter (in “Kustuk” and “Raven”) or changing seasons (in “Serge”). In “Kustuk” winter reigns in tundra with its snow, harsh temperatures and blizzards which fits the main character’s perception of the world (Kustuk is a dog, living and working in the North). Kustuk defends his inner world, identity and freedom. He survives through cold and hardships, his freedom being limited by the cold and chains. In time inversions Kustuk goes back to happy times which haunt him, transforming into persisting dream of freedom. The central question is how long the state of captivity will last; if he will eventually break free, ending his torment. Time in the novel is abstract and cyclic, since situation in which Kustuk found himself could happen anywhere and anytime. The author speaks of eternal problems facing the humanity.

“Raven” is also centered around winter time. Its cold spells could only be broken by the news of the birth of new human, a hope for a new change, happiness, preserving the life and traditions of the people. Raven is a long-living bird. It is not even aware of the number of years it has been living – is it three

hundred, or four hundred? Raven muses about life being measured not by the number of years, but by the moments of happiness one has experienced. Time in the novel also correlates with human life and problems of modern society.

The events depicted in the novel “Serge” (tethering post, pronounced [sergə], one of the key symbols of Yakut culture) are set against changing seasons. The novel begins in winter, which later changes into spring and summer. When winter returns, its cold embrace locks minds, dreams and life itself. Thus the author shows the life cycle and eternity while waiting for Serge. Alongside, Serge’s memories show several generations, while summer themes prevail in the depictions of the happy family. Serge functions as a link between generations, earth and sky, death and eternity. He personifies a breakthrough to which people should hold on to.

When speaking of space category the researchers distinguish natural, daily, social, sacral, and geographical topoi [2]. In oral folk works depictions of nature played one of the central parts. Its functions varied while nature itself also had an independent meaning as an art object and symbol of beauty. In socialist realism and realism in general nature transforms into landscape, a background for events and places of action.

Living, spirited nature of N. Lugiov’s works is part of the events, capable of sympathy for the characters. In social and psychological novels such depictions are particularly strong in works like “Nuoraljima Grove”, “Taas Tumus”, “Old man’s smile”, and “Tall Isles”.

Nature is also a primary space in Luginov’s philosophical novels. It is not merely a background, but a fantastic and metaphorical world living its own life, thinking its own thoughts, reflecting, suffering and rejoicing. The writer gives beautiful depictions of the forest, taiga, valleys and meadows. He is well familiar with those who live there and understands the laws of their existence. In the finale of “Serge” the following depiction is given: “... Then came a terrible, loud sound like two pieces of wood hitting against one another. It raised clouds of dust and moved towards the edge of the forest where the Tall oak and Old pine stood. Suddenly the Tall oak bent as if rising above the surface and crashed down with deafening rattle breaking its branches! Kholoruk then vanished. Only leaves that floated in the air with dust started to settle... Silence fell... Only the grieving Old pine stood, swaying in the wind and mourning her old friend...” [6]. The ending of the novel symbolizes futility of Serge’s hopes for the return of the people. The writer shows tragedy of modern society separated from its native land and roots.

Within the abstract space of philosophical novels the writer thinks with imagery of the ethnic world: Alaas (“Serge”), Taiga (“Raven”), and Tundra (“Kustuk”).

S.E. Noyeva notes the presence of particular chronotope: “Space-time projection is modified; it develops in reverse direction where human world

transforms into the world observed from the outside” [7]. In N. Luginov’s novels we perceive the reality through the eyes of a dog, a raven, and a tethering pole.

Space within which the characters act starts to unfold from their statement in novels’ titles. “Sergelyakh”: Sergelyakh is where the University is located; it is a place where characters’ development and independence started. So, the place largely defines positions and paths taken by the characters, thus remaining in their memories.

“Nuoraljima Grove” is *alaas* (an open space, where traditional Yakut households were built) Nyurgun spends his childhood, it is his home which, according to his grandmother, is never to be forgotten.

“Taas Tumus” is the name of an abandoned village where the main character, Toybol spent years with his family. Taas Tumus is a rocky cape, a mountain which is also an eternal witness and monument of people’s life. Therefore, concrete space marks become filled with symbolic meaning. As Belozubova stated in her analysis of Kheidok’s fiction: “By creating the world of fiction a writer structures it, placing it in certain time and space. In some cases the text allows to re-create a detailed topography of action, be it fantastic or allegedly real”[3]. N.Luginov’s works too allow such kind of re-creation.

The novel “Tuhulge” was translated into Russian as “Contest”. Titular “Tuhulge” is the name of a sports arena where wrestling competitions are held. The title is aimed at emphasizing the closed nature of space in the novel, which creates the effect of intimacy. Meanwhile the characters in the novel expand the chronotope via flashback-induced time inversions.

According to M.Bakhtin, the main archetypal space images in literature are “Home”, “Threshold”, and “Road”. Each of them is associated with the beginning of maturity, the moment when a person wants to travel to other places. Such images are ubiquitous, they could be found in any genre of any era, for they represent vital human concepts and values. These images are also linked to an individual’s inner world and formation of character, which has in all times been the focus of fiction analysis.

Home is the primary image in Luginov’s works. Many of his novels are centered around it, starting from “Nuoraljima Grove” and continuing to his final work, “The house on the river”. Therefore the process of the author’s artistic search takes place in a reverse order. While other characters of Yakut literature strived to leave their home in order to explore other spaces, the writer wants them to return to their Home. The Home is the center of centuries-old traditions, wisdom and persisting values. This way he is striving to preserve, respect and uphold the ancestral legacy.

In the novel “On the Order of Genghiz Khan” the image of Home ascends to its highest embodiment, transforming into the Nation. Thus, the writer’s ideas operate on the level of nation and the world. Nation is a Home that needs to be built, developed and defended. Homes, or families could be different, just like nations: strong, prominent, consist of many members. Likewise, some nations

may boast centuries-long history and traditions, technological advancement, or military victories. In “On the Order of Genghiz Khan” N. Luginov depicts the Mongol State and its leader confronting them with questions of the price of glory, its inspiration, as well as the reasons for the Mongol State’s eventual disintegration. Nations, like an individual and their Home, have their own destiny, birth stories, maturity, development, disintegration and re-birth.

Threshold means overcoming. Having stepped over the threshold one finds themselves in a different place, world, life. Threshold symbolizes the situation of being faced with a choice, or taking a crucial decision. Thus, the dog Kustuk escapes from his new cruel owner to the man who once owned him. However his dies on the top of the mountain from which lights of his old home could be seen. Kustuk dies on the threshold of his new life, because this life is not to happen; his old master betrayed Kustuk, when he had sold him to other man. The dog remained alone, yet free. He was to step from evil to good, from captivity to freedom; yet there is no place for him in this life. He faces betrayal from both sides of the threshold.

Makar, the main character of “The house on the river” sets his eyes on a young woman named Arypyai, but she would not follow him in his wanderings. So she stays behind, forever remaining in his memory leaning on her fence. Hedge or fence is also a kind of threshold, over which Arypyai is unable to step. She belongs to Home. Makar, in his turn, cannot step over this threshold as well. At one point he takes the decision to return to the woman he loves and marry her, but never follows the urge. The roads he took never brought him to Arypyai, or to the heath. Only towards the end of the novel, he finally manages to step over the main threshold in his life, to build the house, the home, and eventually realize its meaning.

One recurrent symbolic image in N. Luginov’s space is the Ichitekh sir – an abandoned piece of land, or land without an owner. Ichitekh sir image which re-appears in “On the Order of Genghis Khan” and is interpreted by S.E. Noyeva as follows: “Emptiness” category is considered by the writer on ontological level. In historical novels (unlike in the previous ones, focused on the Revolution) the “people and history” model is modified into a more complex one, titled “people and history” [7]. While historical novels focus on the problem of war and peace, the latter novels deal with moral dilemmas of contemporary life. The emptiness often appears as a part of binary opposition “Home – Ichchitekh sir”, where Home has owner, while land is abandoned. But in many of his novels both Home and nature function as aspects of one entity, for all of them are eventually left with no Ichchi, owner, or soul. This is the author’s way of exposing the destructive attitude of humans towards their land. He criticizes lack of spirituality and morals of his contemporaries and states the tragedy of modern society.

N. Luginov pays special attention to singling out inner abilities of an individual when faced with moral dilemma. The narration in the monologues helps to reveal inner drama and motives of the characters’ actions.

Some of them conceal their secrets throughout their lives. Okhonoon (“Tall Isles”) remains a mystery even to his wife and after many years of living together. He hides his thoughts even from his family, ignoring his wife altogether during rows, or arguing with her only silently. He cherishes his inner world, safeguarding it from others. This is his way of protesting and protecting himself. Back in their time people rejected Okhonoon, and he preferred shifting the blame on others and staying alone on the isle. The isle, surrounded by water and estranged from banks and people becomes his own space.

CONCLUSION

Time in fiction may be abstract, concrete, sacral and historical. In oral creative tradition abstract and in many cases sacral time prevailed. Abstract was seen as eternal, and people believed in cyclical nature of time. Sacral time reflected thinking, perception and world-view of the ancient people. Realistic fiction with historicism being one of the key principles primarily focused on the progression of history, social relations as well as the way people’s life and collective mind change. In other words, the writers reflected given historical periods. In modern literature writers address the abstract and sacral time when depicting complicated sets of actual circumstances while in many cases appealing to the traditions of oral creativity. Space is concrete in social and psychological novels of Luginov. The author does not operate with fictional places; rather he depicts concrete geographic locations, thus creating a unique imagery of his world.

The actual space and time structure of N. Luginov’s social and psychological novels allows the author to provide a realistic picture of modern society and relevant problems which face it. In philosophical novels time and space becomes absolute by acquiring fantastic and allegoric features, allowing the author to focus on eternal and universal human values.

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