

## HETEROTOPIES OF HISTORY IN THE NOVEL OF L. ULITSKAYA "MEDEA AND HER CHILDREN"

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**Abstract.** The study is devoted to one of the components of the feminine picture of the world – the "female" version of the chronotope. The purpose of the article is to consider the chronotopic originality of gender-marked women's literature on the example of L. Ulitskaya's novel "Medea and Her Children". In the course of the analysis the authors have found that the specificity of the "female" version of the chronotope in the novel "Medea and Her Children" is determined by its heterotopy, which in its turn correlates with the category of transgression. In "Medea and Her Children," the historical transgression takes place through the polarization of the "male" and "female" version of the signification of history, revealing itself in relation to the image of the "navel of the earth", centering the entire chronotopical system of the novel. In addition, the "female" version of the historical discourse defines its transformation into heterotopy of history, which fundamentally destroys the binary opposition of sacral and profane history. The unifying principle is the understanding of the traumatic nature of historical discourse in all its manifestations. The authors come to the conclusion that the novel "Medea and Her Children", which constructs a feminine picture of the world, demonstrates a consistent rethinking of the narrative of history in a completely different aspect to the patriarchal culture. L. Ulitskaya focuses not so much on fixing traumatic experience of history and revealing the causes of historical catastrophism, but also reveals the process of overcoming it, avoiding the existing oppositions and dichotomies, through the prism of which it was traditionally conceived.

**Key words:** women's literature, feminine world view, chronotope, historical discourse, traumatic experience of history, heterotopy, transgression, Lyudmila Ulitskaya, "Medea and Her Children".

**1. Introduction.** In recent decades, Russian philology has increasingly turned to gender aspects of text study. The philological research of the gender picture of the world was first taken up by linguists, who made it a part of the broader term "language picture of the world" [see, for example, 1–4]. Despite the fact that the gender aspects of the study of literature become more important in literary criticism at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, the language of describing the gender picture of the world is just beginning to evolve.

Obviously, not all modern female literature models a gender picture of the world. An explanation of this is the nature of the development of women's literature throughout its existence. The unity of this literary phenomenon at all stages is ensured by the predominance and transmission of "female consciousness" that provokes the appearance of a special type of "female writing". At the same time, the appearance of the creative group "New Amazons" in the late 1980s divides all contemporary female literature into two parts: gender marked and oriented towards overcoming cultural marginality. Accordingly, the gender-marked part of women's literature translates not only the traditional forms of "female writing", conditioned by "female consciousness", but also models the feminine picture of the world, building its own version of the chronotope, artistic representation of the male and female figurative paradigms, forming a special character of the description of the world and the specificity of narrative organization of the text becomes its embodiment. In this article it is supposed to consider the chronotopic originality of gender-marked female literature on the example of the novel by L. Ulitskaya "Medea and Her Children".

**2. Methods.** This article continues the research of authors in the field of studying the specifics of the methodology and practice of studying contemporary women's prose [5]. In the course of the study, the following literary methods were used: comparative-typological, which allowed to see the differences between the texts created in the framework of "literary transvestism" and gender-marked texts of female prose, historical and literary, which played an important role in detecting the influence of different art systems [see, for example, 6].

**3. Results.** Specificity of the "female" version of the chronotope in the novel "Medea and Her Children" is determined by its heterotopy. As it is known, the concept of "heterotopy" was introduced into the intellectual turnover of M. Foucault. The idea of heterotopy is considered by the researcher as the opposition of utopia in "Words and Things". In his later works ("Utopian Body", "Heterotopy", "Other Spaces"), he emphasizes the ability of heterotopy to overcome spatial binarity. Heterotopies "suspend, neutralize or overturn the totality of relationships, which are thereby identified or reflected" [7]. In this capacity, the heterotopy is internally associated with the category of transgression<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> In M. Foucault's interpretation, "a transgression is a gesture that is drawn to the limit ... <...> But this game does not just play by these elements; it takes them to the realm of unreliability, of breaking reliability, where the thought is immediately lost, trying to grasp them" [8].

On the one hand, projecting categories of heterotopy and transgression into the feminine worldview, makes it possible to reveal its special character associated with the rejection of the representation of the binary dichotomy "masculine / feminine"; and on the other hand, to demonstrate the specifics of their interaction.

In contrast to female "literary transvestism" of the previous period, female literature at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries functionalizes the Great style of patriarchal literature, turning it into the very "limit" that requires "transition". The result is the explication of the models of the Great style, primarily in the form of genre strategies (family chronicle, novel of upbringing, cryptology novel, detective, anti-utopia, etc.), and their restructuring based on heterotopies. As a rule, genre strategies easily find themselves on the plot-plot level, reaching the level of exposure in some cases. At the same time, the set of plot motifs produced by these strategies is formalized into a system of heterotopies, which carry out the act of transgression in relation to the masculine picture of the world.

**Discussion.** The perception of models of the Great style as a "limit" becomes especially obvious when we compare the variants of the "literary transvestism" of patriarchal literature of recent decades with women's prose. The most vivid example of the first is the micro project of G. Chkhartishvili "Anna Borisova", which is part of the "Authors" project, which specificity is determined precisely by imitating the Other's point of view: the soil and slavophile in the microproject "Anatoly Brusnikin", a woman in "Anna Borisova".

The reflection of the mystifying nature of the Other in the novel "Vremena Goda" is the strategy of representing historical discourse. The history which is experienced by Alexandrina, who has been in coma for fifteen years, is built in three stages, each of which is determined by the changed personality of the heroine: Sashenka-Sandra-Alexandrina. Representation of historical discourse is carried out in two ways - as the reconstruction of the emotionally-imaginative ("eidetic") memory, plunging the heroine into the past and forcing her to experience it anew, and as a visually and stylistically accentuated reflexive estrangement from herself as she was at that time. At the same time, both variants of representation remain within the boundaries of the female Other, the character of perception of which is affectivity and personality, which construct their own version of history.

However, in this case, no act of transgression occurs; The "limit" of historical discourse, given by the logic of patriarchal literature, is not overcome. The explanation of this is quite understandable ignoring the nature of female subjectivity. Alexandrina's "Eidetic" memory in Anna Borisova's project demonstrates the same strategy of intimization of history that characterized the projects of *B. Akunin* "The New Detective" and "The Adventures of the Master". For all the external dissimilarity, the inclusion of the "eidetic" memory of the heroine, especially in conjunction with "obeisance" or, "bioreception", as Aleksandrina calls it, performs the same function of quasi-documentality, which was revealed in two other projects by imitating a historical document (newspaper quotes in the "New Detective", family historical relics in the "Adventures of the Master") and the indirect expansion of the historical background. At the same time, the quasi-documentary nature of *Anna Borisova* does not change its orientation, creating the same authenticity effect, which confirms the version of an event that is different from the historical factology.

In other words, the strategy of intimization of history in the project *Anna Borisova* merely formally reproduces the new logic of women's literature. As I. Zherebkina noted, "the structure of female subjectivity is determined not by the structure of the state (with its social statuses), but by the structure of the family (even if they are non-standard / non-oedipal variants of a family - for example, a female family consisting of a grandmother, a mother and a daughter, or incomplete family a mother / a child, or a family of sisters, etc.)" [9]. At the same time, this contradicts the specificity of the representation of the female experience "mainly in antisymbolistic terms of corporal, biological, physiological, etc." [9].

In female literature, corporality, performing the function of secondary semiotization, provides an act of historical transgression, transforming historical discourse into a heterotopy of history. A fairly vivid illustration of this can be the novelism of L. Ulitskaya, beginning with her first novel "Medea and Her Children". In the novelistic literature of L. Ulitskaya historical discourse is emphasized by the two-folds and includes both the political history of Russia of the twentieth century, and various turns of world history (mythological history – "Medea and Her Children", Russian national history – "Sincerely Yours, Shurik", Christian history - "Daniel Stein, a Translator", etc.). The historical transgression takes place in the writer's works through the juxtaposition of "male" and "female" variants of history, the first of which is characterized by a high level of symbolization, the second one is accented with antisymbolic. The result of symbolization is not the overcoming of historical discourse, but the affirmation of its internal conflict: the sacralization of world history is opposed to the profanation of the political history of the twentieth century (and such a variant of signification exists in the text as a "minus-reception", destroying the horizon of readers' expectations).

In "Medea and Her Children," the historical transgression takes place through the polarization of the "male" and "female" version of the signification of history, revealing itself in relation to the image of the "navel of the earth" centering the entire chronotopical system of the novel. The "male" version of the signification is connected with the point of view of Samuel Mendes; in the interpretation of the hero "the navel of the Earth," fulfilling the functions of the universal center, becomes the focus of world cosmogony. The circular glade between the Upper and Lower Settlements, which was first discovered by Samuel Mendes, retains the traditional cosmogony. The cosmological centering of the world loses its singularity in Medea's perception. Moreover, the female perception of the image also demonstrates a distinct decrease. The "navel of the earth" in the village itself, where the convergence of Masha and Butonov occurs,

reveals an accentuated bodily nature: "On the navel! Right on the navel, it all happened. As in Italian cinema. Now you can put a cross at this place in memory of my unyielding loyalty to my husband! - And Masha smiled with her smart and old smile "[10]. The inclusion of such a clearly expressed bodily plan is motivated by such an important component of the author's letter as biological symbolism, which is always present in L. Ulitskaya's works and in some cases, such as the "Green Tent", has already explicated in the title. In the case of "Medea and Her Children" corporeality is not so much elevated to a mythological context, sacralizing birth semantics, but becomes rather a presentation of a special optics that reinterprets the masculine-centered perception of the world.

The "female" version of the historical discourse signifies its transformation into a heterotopy of history, which fundamentally destroys the binary opposition of sacral and profane history. The unifying principle is the understanding of the traumatic nature of historical discourse in all its manifestations.

The structure of the heterotopy of history is determined by the accentuation of heterochronia, the realization of which is, on the one hand, the construction of "memory places," and, on the other hand, narrative strategies that represent female subjectivity.

P. Nora, giving a description of the "places of memory," records the discrepancy between "memory" and "history" [11], and the replacement of historical discourse by the mechanism of memory implies the transformation of the historical narrative into nostalgic narrative. The two types of nostalgic narrative singled out by S. Boim ("nostos" and "algia") [12] correspond to the two faces of trauma that are distinguished by D. La Capra. In his opinion nostalgia conceals "absence", i.e. a structural trauma of "gaps" in the fabric of culture, for the compensation of which there is not enough existing cultural experience, and "loss" (lack), i.e. the historical trauma of a sense of lost "paradise", a return to which is possible if you get rid of the "others" " [13]. The presentation of "loss" is the first type of nostalgic narrative, the second type implements a structural trauma.

The area of female literature that interests us exploits the second type of nostalgic narrative, which at the same time becomes a "study" of the structural trauma of history. The artistic representation of "study" becomes the growth of "places of remembrance" (Ostiz region – "Once upon a time there was an old man with an old woman" E. Katishonok, Tavrida – "Medea and Her Children" of L. Ulitskaya, ghetto / Israel - "Daniel Stein, a Translator" of L. Ulitskaya, etc.); the mechanism of this is "genealogy of women" (Lucy Irigaret), which in her turn generates a mother-child plot, the realization of which ensures the formation of the chronotope of the genus.

In the novel of L. Ulitskaya "Medea and Her Children", "the place of memory" is the chronotope of Tauris; the evidence of which is not only the plural nature of this chronotope ("she was Scythian, Greek, Tatar"), but also the storyline associated with Medea's will (the latter demonstrates the principal correlation of Medea's image with the category of memory). The narrative structure of the novel, combining the retrospective direction of Medea's view with the external narrative plan, represented by an improperly direct speech, creates a special heterochronicity of Tauris, emphasizing her heterotopic character. At the same time, such a narrative organization is dialogized, including Medea's experience in collective female experience (the narrator's improperly-direct speech, which is often found in modern women's literature, is a way of presenting this experience) and turning the dialogue into a form of speaking of history. The unfixed female dialogue in the first novel of the writer is represented by the extremely wide variation of recursive artistic technique or the "box-like principle". In contrast to the traditional perception of discreteness of the narrative plan, the specific feature of retrospection in the first novels of the writer is their completeness, inner completeness.

**5. Conclusions.** According to Ulyura's just comment, "Compositional retrospection <...> more precisely, the reciprocal movement of the narrative (in rhythm it coincides with the" advancement-return "inherent in the act of reading) – in female prose, this is obviously one way to structure the sequence at the narrative level: the fixation of the past transforms it into a mode of memory "[15]. At the same time, the personalization of improperly direct speech, which dominates in the novel of Ulitskaya, creates the impression of an unfixed dialogue, which participants are not only Medea and an anonymous relative, but partly the reader.

From this point of view, the very nature of this non-fixed dialogue becomes a way of overcoming the traumatic experience of history. That is why the female literature of the sphere, which we are interested in, unlike the trend dominating at the present stage, is devoid of any kind of fictionalization of historical discourse. The historical transgression is aimed at creating a strategy for pronouncing the experience of history, the result of which is its adoption and elaboration.

So, the novel "Medea and Her Children", constructing a feminine picture of the world, demonstrates a consistent rethinking of the narrative of history in a completely different aspect to the patriarchal culture. Avoiding the existing oppositions and dichotomies, through the prism of which it was traditionally conceived, L. Ulitskaya focuses not so much on fixing traumatic experience of history and revealing the causes of historical catastrophism, but also reveals the process of overcoming it.

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