

HETEROTOPY OF THE BODY IN DINA RUBINA'S TRILOGY *PEOPLE OF THE AIR*

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the problem of the representation of the gender picture of the world in Dina Rubina's trilogy *People of the Air*. Gender conceptualization unfolds in the context of the representations, characteristic to performative theory of gender. Therefore the heterotopy of the body, which is the main form of the artistic representation of the gender theory, in one case represents the process of producing female subjectivity (*Leonardo's Handwriting*), and in another case the form of problematization of male discourse (*White Dove of Cordoba*), (*Syndrome of Punch*). It is emphasized that the heterotopies of the circus (*Leonardo's Handwriting*), painting (*White Dove of Cordoba*) and the puppet theater (*Syndrome of Punch*) become a reflection of this type of transgressive spaces. Dedicated heterotopies play a different role in the construction of female and male subjectivity. If the heterotopy of the circus demonstrates the process of performative deployment of female subjectivity, the heterotopies of painting and puppet theater represent substitution / compensation heterotopies. So the resolution of the problematization of male discourse is connected with their destruction. In conclusion, the authors of the article state that the heterotopies of the puppet theater and painting provoke the appearance of the body that tries to embody soul, but becomes a kind of cell for it. So overcoming the heterotopy boundaries is the basis for overcoming the duality, getting rid of the phantom of a "split body". In contrast, the heterotopy of the circus, which acts as a kind of low analogue of life, accented by a bodily expression, turns out to be a kind of mirror of the world, allowing the character of *Leonardo's Writing* to "look at herself". The consequence of this is the involvement in the flow of life while maintaining an external distance from it..

Keywords: gender picture of the world, performative theory of gender, modern female prose, Dina Rubina, trilogy *People of the Air*, heterotopy, motive of duality, motive of mirror.

1. Introduction

Nowadays one of the most popular theory in women's studies is the performative theory of gender. This theory is characterized by rejection of an essential identity and a "pre-discursive I". Its basis consists of the consideration of gender subjectivity as a system of discursive power practices, while the discourse of male subjectivity turns out to be authoritative and regulating. According to this theory, the production of gender is "a process and the result of constant repetitions of cultural practices <...>, typical to a particular gender identity" [1]. Judith Butler, analyzing the performance of gender identity in the context of Louis Althusser's theory of interpellation, emphasizes the ambivalence of the subject as power and powerlessness: "interpellation, appealing power to the subject, not only awe and demands obedience to the law, but also positions it in the social space, creating action conditions that not only confirm and reproduce laws, but can also displace them, question them, or even destroy them. Therefore, the power and impotence of the subject are directly related to each other. The execution of the law can be accompanied by its resignification" [1].

The noted positions of the theory can be found during the analysis of the gender picture of the world, created by modern Russian women writers in their literary text. Thus, the gender conceptualization in the trilogy of D. Rubina *People of the Air* (*Leonardo's Handwriting*, 2008, *White Dove of Cordoba*, 2009, *Syndrome of Punch*, 2010) unfolds in the context of representations peculiar to the performative theory of gender, but the main form of artistic representation of gender theory is heterotopy.

Heterotopy, defining the nature of the organization of the setting structure of "female" texts, demonstrates the movement from the XX century traditional conceptual chronotope with a high degree of symbolization to the perceptual chronotope, which corresponds to the very nature of women's literature. From this point of view, heterotopy is considered in the context of Fukian representations as a breaking with everyday life, revealing the systemic interaction of special spaces of "the realization of human activity and feeling of life" [2].

Moreover, in the female literature of the XX-XXI centuries heterotopy becomes a way of living of specific female experience, based on traumatic experience [3]. Traumatic experience involves the experience of all the basic spheres of existence, from intimate personal to socio-historical. A special role plays the experience of bodily experience, which becomes a specific female experience. According to N.V. Vorobyova, the discovery of women's prose of the last decades of the XX century is the discovery of a traumatic subject [4].

It is the heterotopy of the body is the leading artistic element in the representation of the performative theory in the *People of the Air*. In this trilogy in one case the body's heterotopy represents the process of producing female subjectivity (*Leonardo's Handwriting*), and in another the form of problematization of male discourse (*White Dove of Cordoba*, *Syndrome of Punch*). The aim of our article is to reveal the difference in the functioning of the heterotopy of the body in female and male subjectivity.

2. Methods

The authors of the article use a combination of methods which are classical for literary criticism and methods that are considered relatively new in literature. So, the structural-semiotic method allowed us to analyze D. Rubina's

trilogy as a system with common sense and structure forming links. The hermeneutic method [5] made it possible to interpret the novels through the prism of the gender theory. Finally, gender analysis help to find structures that play an important role in women's prose [6-7].

3. Results

Dina Rubina is one of those Russian women writers who consistently conceptualize the gender picture of the world in her creativity. However, not all of her novels will be put in this model. The peculiarity of the writer's creativity is a significant problematic complex that combines aspects of national, creative and gender identity. Activation at different stages of different components means not only reduction, but also the functionalization of other components.

A special role is given to the creative component. D. Rubina fairly consistently arranges the concept of her creativity, which is based on the solution of two antinomies: "creativity - life" and "creativity - game". In the first antinomy attention is focused on the necessity of interpenetration of its two components. The attempt to isolate creativity on any grounds leads to its loss, or rather, to the betrayal of the own gift and often turns into either a personal crisis or even a personal collapse.

However, the problematization of Rubina's concept of creativity reveals only in some texts, primarily in the short story *On the Upper Maslovka* (2004) and in the novel *On the Sunny Side of the Street* (2006). In contrast, in the post-Russian prose the writer forms a "plot of creativity", which retains its relevance in all genre strategies, from the strategy of the travelogue to the novel strategy. In the absolute majority it is characterized by strict functionality, forming the national conceptosphere (*Jazz band on the Charles Bridge*, 2011, *Cold Summer in Provence*, 2008) and solving the national problem.

The "plot of creativity" is equally found in all three novels of the trilogy, fixing the theme of border, "double reality", which the writer calls the link that unites all three novels into one.

Since Romanticism the "plot of creativity" is often connected with a twin plot, fixing the ambivalent nature of creativity, the presence of a destructive component. In D. Rubina's trilogy the twin plot, realized through the motive of mirror in *Leonardo's Writing* and through the duality motive in *White Dove of Cordoba* and *Syndrome of Punch*, conceptualizes the problem of gender subjectivity. In the first novel the attempt to solve it becomes the basis for the production of female subjectivity, and in the next two becomes the basis for the problematization of male discourse. From this point of view, the construction of male and female subjectivity in D. Rubina's trilogy can be viewed through a different type of affirmation (confirmation of norms) and subversion (their undermining / destruction). To a certain extent, this proves to be a realization of gender revanchism, which is part of the author's general ideological strategy along with national revanchism¹. Therefore, in *Leonardo's Handwriting* the construction of female subjectivity occurs: the mirror motive as an embodiment of the twin storyline, which allows literal realization of the figurative typology of the "border", demonstrates the performative nature of gender identity. In two other novels the emphasis is shifted from the process of producing subjectivity to the character of the male discourse, based on the interdependence of the "power and impotence of the subject". The problematization of male discourse is provided by the motive of duality, in contrast to the mirror, which requires its solution.

4. Discussion

The space for the unfoldment of female and male subjectivity becomes a heterotopy of the body in the trilogy, which is a specific form of representation of the category of corporality in female literature of the XX-XXI centuries. Moreover, if in the novels of writers concerning about the essentialist conception of gender, authors' attention is concentrated on the literally physical expression of the corporeal, but in the context of performative concepts of gender, the heterotopy of the body is often embodied as a transgressive space that produces "special regimes of corporeality and subjectivity" [9].

In this trilogy heterotopies of the circus (*Leonardo's Handwriting*), painting (*The White Dove of Cordoba*) and puppet theater (*Syndrome of Punch*) are becoming a reflection of this type of transgressive spaces. Dedicated heterotopies play a different role in the construction of female and male subjectivity. If the heterotopy of the circus demonstrates the process of performative deployment of female subjectivity, the heterotopies of painting and puppet theater represent substitution / compensation heterotopies. So, the resolution of the problematization of male discourse is associated with their destruction.

Bodily nature of heterotopies of circus, painting and puppet theater is quite obvious in the context of poststructuralist psychoanalytic concepts. From this point of view heterotopies of the trilogy problematize the same situation of overcoming the "split body" (J. Lacan). Heterotopies of painting and puppet theater are linked in novels with the image of the imagined I, what J. Lacan called the phantom the split body.

Artistic representation of this is realized through the motive of duality. In *The White Dove of Cordoba* it is embodied in the story of Andriusha's death, which results in the displacement of the image of Zakhar Kordovin towards the Other. This is expressed both in his status as a falsifier and in the fundamental refusal of his own creativity.

In *Syndrome of Punch* the starting point of the unfolding of the duality is the figurative typology of Peter Uksusov. The character was originally typologically correlated with the lower image of the trickster as "God's ape" and simultaneously with the image of "God's doll". In both cases, this is emphasized by the name of Uksusov. His "night" name was Martyn, which a small girl Lisa associated with him (Martyn is the first doll made by Peter and presented to Liza). The character's own name creates "a stable cultural allusion to the folklore doll, the most famous character of

¹For details, see [8]

balagan performances". Taking Punch in his hands for the first time, the character "suddenly felt a hot wave that swept from his shoulder to Punch's wooden head, as if they were connected by a single vein, along which the common blood ran". [10] The image of "God's doll" is actualized at the end of the novel: "He was dancing <...> just God's doll, guided by the innumerable threads of good and evil" [10].

Bidirectionality of the unfolding of characters becomes fundamentally important, it retains its significance in relation to the image of Anna (*Leonardo's Handwriting*). It is revealed through a motive of mirror. According to Yu.I. Levin, its semiotic possibilities becomes the opposition "to look inside/at yourself" [11,12]. Anna equally realizes both components of this opposition, but unlike the other two characters, the cases of "looking inside" and "looking at yourself" are the stages of the character's self-awareness, and it is their correlation that becomes the production of gender subjectivity. Such existence "between" is realized in the novel through the motive of the mirror corridor that accompanies Nyuta from the moment she appeared in the novel to the episode of her mysterious disappearance.

As for "male" novels of the trilogy, duality is associated with playing of dichotomy "soul-body". At the same time D. Rubina emphasizes not traditional for the romantic artistic paradigm the antinomicity of "T", but projects it into a gender context, ensuring the bidirectional development of the images of Zakhar Kordovin and Peter Uksusov. Female and male variants of the experience of the "split body" demonstrate different types of involvement in traumatic discourse. In the first case, it becomes the ontological condition for constructing subjectivity, and in the second, it appears as trauma of the first sexual experience generating character's fear of life, which is realized in disharmonious relationships with a woman.[13]

In this case, demiurgic claims of both characters are a form of sublimation of fear, while limiting artist's talent, preventing him from becoming genius¹. The heterotopy of the puppet theater and painting become a space for the realization of the phantom of a "split body", in the first case, the overcoming of which destroys the process of pupating the world, and in the second, its forcible horizontal deployment.

In the image of Zakhar Kordovin a kind of manifestation of the splitting is the image of a white dove, which is included in all his imitation pictures. In the image of Pyotr Uksusov the splitting is fixed through the golem story, perceived in the interpretation of G. Meinrink². The connection of the twin plot with the plot of creativity is particularly evident in the last novel of the trilogy. The intertextual plan of it, in addition to G. Meinrink, includes the Hoffmannian "influence" (*The Sandman*, 1816). Its significance is determined by the fact that it most clearly allows to distinguish the demiurgic type of artistic consciousness, that is typical to Peter Uksusov and Zakhar Kordovin.

However, the functionalization of the "plot of creativity" leads to the fact that the characters' "duel" with God takes place predominantly not in the existential, but in the gender and national aspects. The imposition of symbolic figurative series, which is characteristic for the late creative work of D. Rubina, plays an important role. Traditional Christian symbolism of images, without disappearing completely, combines with symbolism more inherent in Judaism. In *White Dove of Cordoba* it is observed in the image of a dove, which became the "secret working mark" of Kordovin. On the one hand, the presence of the dove symbolism in the twin storyline must inevitably cause associations with the symbolism of the soul; and on the other hand, in the Judaic tradition, the dove becomes the personification of the Jewish people (*Song of Songs of King Shlomo*), and the dove is the symbol of the beloved (*Shir a-Shirim*)³. In *Syndrome of Punch*, the same situation of linking the symbolism of the soul with the feminine and creative complexes generates both the Gofmanian "influence" and the symbolization of the relationship between Peter and Liza in the image of Korchmar who conceals the baby in his womb (the "female being").

5. Conclusions

The main form of artistic representation of a specific female experience is the heterotopy of the body. Unlike the heterotopies of history and childhood, fairly homogeneous in the literary works of different authors, the peculiarity of constructing a heterotopy of the body is defined by the link, most often unintentionally, with the essentialist or performative theory of gender. It is determined both by the time of creation and by belonging to one or another part of the literary process (middle literature or high literature).

In D. Rubina's trilogy *People of the Air* the heterotopies of the puppet theater and painting provoke the appearance of a body striving to embody the soul, but becoming a kind of cell for it. So overcoming the heterotopy boundaries is the basis for overcoming the duality, getting rid of the of phantom "split body". In contrast, the heterotopy of the circus, which acts as a kind of low (in the Bakhtinian sense of the word) analogy of life, accentuated by bodily expression, turns out to be a kind of mirror of the world, allowing the main character of *Leonardo's Writing* to "look at yourself". The consequence of this is involvement in the flow of life while maintaining an external distance from it.

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¹ Such structure is fully described in an earlier short story by D. Rubina *On the Upper Maslovka*

² For details see [7].

³The interaction of feminine and creative semantic levels is supported by a pictorial intertext; an example of this can be the work of M. Chagall (for example, "Where is the dove," etc.).

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