

CHRONOTOPIC ANALYSIS OF A LITERARY WORK

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One of the ways to treat a literary work is to analyze it according to the traditional views of linguists: linguostylistic analysis which allows its authors to see what lies behind the words of the author, what his outward information and implications characterize the time, the place and the personages of the literary work. We argue that the chronotopical approach initiated by M. Bakhtin forms the basis of the architectonics of a narrative work and reveals the influence of the time a person lives in and the places he finds himself in on his outlook and conscience. This theoretical assumption is going to be proved on the example of the chronotopic analysis of the travel novel as we may call it, although it does not wholly answer the requirements of such novels of the Upper Middle Ages. Travelling and escapes take such an active part in this novel that in spite of the fact that it portrays everyday life and kitchen talk to a great degree, too, but the impression the novel produces on the reader is that of "life as a travel" and literal travel.

In today's world the care for a person, his/her place in life, his/her traits of character, occupation, leisure time, etc call for a theory which might combine all these things in one whole. The answer was given in late thirties when M. Bakhtin applied the notion of chronotope not only to time and place, according to the origin of the word (chronos - time, topos -place/space) but also to a person [1]. When humanitarians knew these materials, researchers began to study chronotopical traits (characteristics) of the worldview of a person through the analysis of poetical and literary texts [2].

B. Keunen argues that there is still no systematic theory of the concept "chronotope". He also mentions the absence of definite understanding of the notion "polyphony" and some others connected with M. Bakhtin's commentaries [3]. We agree with B. Keunen's idea that chronotopes "are not only semantic elements of texts; they are also (and in the first place) cognitive strategies applied by specific readers and writers" [3]. What sounds attractive in his research is that he points out two main theories in M. Bakhtin's argumentation: 1) dialogical character of any text and mutual interaction of texts which is called "intertextuality" today the latter being perhaps more pragmatical than theoretical; 2) chronotopes which are cognitive invariants used by writers and readers in order to structure historically and textually divergent semantic elements" [3].

Other scholars draw our attention to the types of "chronotopic" literature differentiated by M. Bakhtin, such as travel romance, the narrative of ordeal and others which "are seen as concrete cultural-historical developments that created changed understandings of the nature of, and relations among, people, their world, and, perhaps most significantly time" [4,3]. Representatives of a number of sub-disciplines support M. Bakhtin's theory of chronotope: psychology, toponymies, historical studies, epistemology, politics, etc. A. Cheyne and D. Tarulli argue that chronotope theory may be applied not only to narratives but to different styles of writing, and prove their thesis that "report writing in mainstream psychology shares many features described by Bakhtin [1] in his generic typology of the novel and that these reflect particular views of the nature of the individual and the world" [4, 3].

Some authors of scientific publications develop or explain M. Bakhtin's theory of time and space. M. Bakhtin states explicitly in his work [1] that in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time. It is interesting to note though that opinions about the priority of time or space differ. For Morson and Emerson, for example, 'place is one major state where chronotopic activity is involved in the making of the fiction" [5]. The key to the relations between space and time in M. Bakhtin's essay, as S.L. Kleppe points out, is simultaneity, an aspect of spacetime in which we live our lives: the world of the author, of the performer, and the world of the listeners and readers are chronotopic as well [6]. Followers of M. Bakhtin's outlook distinguish subjective chronotope and objective chronotope, dealing with subjective place and subjective time against objective place and objective time and make their ideas clear with the help of the analysis of different literary

works, the novels of James Joyce among them [7, 8]. The idea of subjectivity of time and place is inevitably close to understanding the role of chronotope as a means of portraying personages. Real time and real space in contrast to the inner subjective time and space of the character are of cognitive significance to the writer and to the reader as the subjective vision of these categories artistically created by the author reveal the major historical and human values.

It is evident nowadays that a human life has its own chronotopic characteristics without which it would be impossible to explain the feeling of being, of reality and, of course, to form one's own moral values. The chronotope of a person is dynamic; it appears as a result of a person's activity, the latter taking place in space and time [8].

In this work we follow M. Bakhtin's assertion that chronotope denoting "time-place" or "time-space" means "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships" [1]. This argument of M. Bakhtin is relevant for explaining the mental and psychological state of D.Hogan's heroes and in this way the narration is closely connected with psychology.

For a witty reader Desmond Hogan's novel "The Ikon Maker" is a textbook of Irish history, of relations between people, of friendship, of generation gap, of loneliness, of "normal" and "abnormal" sexual relations, of belief in progress. Actually, this short novel is a textbook of life and love. But following M. Bakhtin we may call it a travel romance combined with a narrative of everyday life and elements of test and ordeal. The novel was written in 1974 and it is permeated with love and compassion for Ireland, sympathy to the main character Susan O'Hallrahan who loves her son Diarmaid passionately and goes from her native Galway to England (London and York Minster) in search for him. Her obsession with the son allows the author to create a number of chronotopes: of home, of the road, of a guest, of meeting others, of the street, of the church, etc. All these occur in Susan O'Hallrahan's life way. Just the way, the road, the ever changing circumstances enable the heroine to remember the past of Ireland and realize its present, to meet her son's friends and meditate over their roles in Diarmaid's life, to think about her loneliness ("loneliness" being one of the key words in the novel) and joyless future without the beloved son. We understand that the chronotopes grow from each other, they are transformed and changed according to the author's will, they overlap, they even "compete" with one another under certain circumstances.

The very first paragraph of the novel *"When spring came she looked westward. Down the sliding road, over the hills, to where Galway city lay. The Spanish Arch, Claddagh buildings, the lovely, the decayed, horses, tinkers and memories of her husband George as a young man fresh from a peat jungle"* [9, 11] is the novel in miniature, because real time and subjective time and place mingle here as they will do further to portray the Ireland of Susan's past and present. The row of places and things in Galway going before her mind's eye and the reminiscence of her late husband is illustrative of the triune unity: person, time, place, which is the essence of chronotope. This paragraph prepares the reader for a travel novel because the word "spring" is associated with the beginning of something new, of a new or fresh life, of something remarkable to happen. The heroine's "looking westward" introduces the theme of space, of dear emerald Ireland she lives in. It is a promise of some adventure, some unknown experience.

We may call her chronotope subjective since in her thoughts she is often going back to the days of her youth, to the time of her love for George with whom she traveled once to Galway and with whom she was very happy there. Subjective present and objective present and past merge into one whole and become a successful method of characterizing the heroine and of presenting the place and the time she lives in. Certain days, seasons or years and the circumstances in which the author places his heroine serve as a means to reflect her mental and psychical state. We can gather from her visit to the mother and the niece in which the time of her actual visit stops, the place remains unchangeable, she goes through a very intensive meditation: the three personages plunge into the past when the Irish lost the Battle of Aughrim *"to William of Orange, the battle fought nearby where many thousands of Irish were either slaughtered or had fled in ignominy. The defeat was remembered vividly, reminisced in ballads, in folk stories, in the dying legends of a race"* [9, 38]. This inseparable linkage of a person to historical events coincides with Bakhtin's theory that development takes place against a static background with little or no consideration given to

historical change in the world in which the individual develops [4]. D. Hogan's heroine is closely connected with the historical events in her country: she suffers because of *"the violence of Belfast streets or the untold misfortunes of a Belfast child, his face clinging to the grey and the wet of the television screen"* [9, 43]. She was from a thinking family as she thought to herself (and right she was!) and such episodes add charm to the heroine and reveal the author's attitude to his motherland, since all writing is somewhat autobiographical.

One more mention should be made of Susan's unusual ability to part with the present and go back into the past because of its great impressiveness. Susan O'Hallrahan *"was often crying, she was"* as D.Hogan used to write (because this is the peculiarity of the Irish variant of the English language as described in linguistic literature) [10]. This stylistic element is very important for concentrating the attention of the reader on the meaning of the main verb and the action expressed by it. Once her son asked her why she was crying. That was a very crucial moment:

"Why are you crying?" he asked.

She said "I don't know. I don't know. I've let you slip from me" [9, 47].

It may seem at first sight that after such a melodramatic scene she must think about the way to improve the situation somehow. But let us read the continuation:

"The tears ceased; there was the desperation of movement toward one another. No one knew why she was crying. She didn't. Something trundled in her brain. The train taking away from Euston during the war. Back to Galway. 1942. A brief home visit when she visited the city and found a dead seal on the beach in Salthill" [9, 47]. Of course the reader understands that the reason of her tears was much deeper than this reminiscence but it is still suggestive of her nostalgia for old times when she was cared for, when she was loved. Now she is losing the love of her son, and all her life seems to her in vain. How is it expressed linguistically? First of all, it is the repetition of the phrase *"I don't know. I don't know"* by which she hides her real feelings from her son. Besides, the author uses a true to life allusion to *a dead seal*, which produces a gloomy effect on the reader and forces him to make parallels not in Susan's favour. More than that, to make predictions, in her reminiscences the author resorts to the contrast between the present participle form *taking away* and the adjective *brief* referring to the visit to the city. Yet that visit is remembered with *a dead seal*, something dead, something finished forever. Premonitions, perhaps, follow her but she is not going to surrender. Again the subjective chronotope of Susan makes a strong impact on the reader who is supposed to anticipate some failure. The stylistic device of parceling strengthens the impression: *"Back to Galway. 1942."* There is a break in the narration, a division of the thought, which enlivens the picture.

It is a striking fact that the geography of her life is also very rich and extensive. One of the leading chronotopes of the novel is that of the road: Susan O'Hallrahan is made to travel all the time and we observe a clear connectedness of M. Bakhtin's theory in D. Hogan's interpretation, of course, with topology. Susan goes places, visits places not in her thoughts or dreams but in reality. All her life is subjected to her son Diarmaid, to the desire to be with him. She used to be happy when *"The years, thirteen, fourteen quiet years, somber years. Diarmaid did his sums at night, painted little pictures. She'd made tea for him; they'd eat scones, floured with freshness. They'd listen to the Country and Western music on the radio...-feel safe with one another... Nothing would pass between herself and her son"* [9, 21]. This idyllic picture of Diarmaid's early years was enriched by travels to nearby villages where they both enjoyed nature and this mood in the spirit of D.H.Lawrence seemed to Susan real paradise. The prevalence of the subjunctive mood forms emphasizes the eternal character of the pleasures: now he would be taken to Ballinasloe to school, now they would visit the zoo in Dublin, 1958 with hippopotami opening mouths into caves, now he would gather small things to make pictures which she would later on call collages. The unity between them and the surrounding nature was perfect.

Her troubles began when she sent her son to school a boarder: *"Diarmaid was shy of her. His face held a skeleton of displeasure - he was totally enamored of Derek. Twice she'd watch them shy away from her, the two of them off before she left"* [9, 23]. The environment her son found himself in was hostile to her and in the new circumstances she does not know how to behave. The world

was changing, and his psychology was changing too. From that moment on she felt she began to lose her son: *"He became part of what Susan had heard so much about. The younger generation. These young people had their ways"* [9, 27]. Within the space of the boarding school she could not influence him any longer. Alien walls did not help her, on the contrary, they made her feel guilt "because in a sense she'd interned Diarmaid in that school" where he came through a tragedy of losing his friend: "The cause of that boy. And in a sense she was one of the murderers of that boy. She'd misunderstood the situation. She'd let it carry to a desperate end" [9, p.47]. This feeling of guilt will drive her away from home in search of her son. In laconic but highly informative and expressive phrases the author emphasizes the problem of generations: *"Diarmaid was far from her now; old in his way; wise in his way"* [9, 34].

She invited him home where she reared him but they could not find common language there either. *"He behaved strangely, quietly. Always by himself, brooding. Emptying little things on the table. He'd begun making ikons again - feathers, beads, paper accumulated. Mrs O 'Hallrahan called him in her mind "The ikon maker"* [9, 33-34]. To a Russian reader there is an implied thought about the mysterious Slav soul, which is like that of Irish people. Let us read the text. Susan to her driver: *"I remember George, Diarmaid's father, once telling me Ireland was the saddest country on earth, because it didn't know its own soul"* [9, 39]. Susan was always concerned with the fate of her country; this idea is the red line of the whole novel. And wherever she went she carried Ireland with her. And another parallel with Russia can be seen, it is Susan's knowledge of Russian icons, although it is primitive and does not reflect the real essence of this purely Russian art, at any rate in her mind she traveled to Russia when she read about icons. The misspelling used by the author is not occasional, we suppose, its deep meaning is, perhaps, in driving home to the readers the fact that her son is a misfit. Thus the graphical stylistic device, the change of one letter in the word (icon - ikon), becomes symbolical.

In the novel we observe a rapidly changing society. Remember, for instance, Susan's meditations about the chastity of marriages in Ireland before the Second World War but "George and she had made love before they married. *A terrible thing in Irish consciousness...* But she and George had done it... They hadn't confessed it. They'd married. *Now all the young people in Ireland were making love* " [9, 103]. This reminiscence of Susan is charged with great meaning: in the center of York Minster she remembered her first act of sex with George in Galway. Travelling in England, seeing places she was in Ireland all the same. After the ordeal of hers she came back to her village, started visiting pubs and: "One night the whole pub watched with fascination as the act of love was shown on the screen" [9, 148]. O tempora, o mores! Thus we witness two contradictory tendencies in the chronotope of her travel, the author objectively widens it: London, York Minster, but in the subjective chronotope of Susan it is narrowed down to her dear Ireland. This is what we may call dynamism in the narration.

The chronotope of the road enables the author to fix some changes in his heroine as well. During the journey and after it she realizes that she is not only a village citizen, that she can join any company, any society and be an interesting personality, interlocutor, and partner. Besides, she becomes aware of her attractiveness; she saw the way men looked at her. She finds out that she can live in any community. This cross-cultural discovery may be supported by the following quotation: *"She was going back to Ireland. But not as a country-woman. For years she'd camouflaged herself as one, but the last weeks had shown one thing; she was capable of being accepted by any culture. She was a woman of intelligence and beauty..."* [9, 139]. Thus we may assert that the chronotope of Susan O'Hallrahan created by D. Hogan (its liveliness, dynamism, the ability to expand or narrow down) reflects the author's perception of life as an ever changing, irreversible process.

We suppose that the uniqueness of Desmond Hogan lies in his excellent knowledge of Ireland, in understanding its people, their pain and hopes, their love for history, their belief in the future of dear Ireland. The idea of chronotope forms philosophic thinking in the reader, it discovers the inner world of a person and presents it in an entirely broad sense. Our concluding remarks concern the applicability of M. Bakhtin's chronotope which unites the setting, the plot, the character drawing within the frame of different time layers and space variety: Ireland and England. When portraying

the personages D. Hogan carries them through hardships of life thus revealing the connection of the theory of chronotope with psychology, topology, cultural awareness, history. This rich background based on the time and space forms a great panorama of historical developments, geographical variety, psychological ups and downs of the protagonists, problems of generations. Interesting discoveries are made about subjective and objective categories. Time in the novel is nonlinear, that is through the whole book "past" is mixed with "present" (subjective and objective). Space in the novel could also be divided into subjective and objective. For Susan the subjective space is positive and objective - negative. For Diarmaid, vice versa, the objective space is positive and the subjective - negative. In the novel we can see the conflict between the mother and her son which finally becomes the cause of tragic (for the mother) family relations: the mother rejects the objective time and space, where she cannot find either her husband or her son, and the son rejects retrospective subjective time and space and his mother as a part of that time and space.

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