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SYNTHESIS OF CHRONOTOPES IN NIKOLAI GOGOL’S HORROR NOVELLA «VIY»

The time frame of the literary work is between 1744 and 1784. The events at the beginning and at the end of the short-story unfold in chronicle-everyday chronotope, which is a kind of framework for the main plot. “Viy” begins with the description of the Kyiv morning and ends with the conversation of seminarians in the Kyiv tavern. Thus, the spatial framework of the work is the topos of Kyiv, within which the story unfolds and the plot of the story ends.

In Gogol’s text, the space of Kyiv has sacral character, in contrast to the mystical space of the night steppe and the fantastic space of the night church. The components of the chronicle-everyday chronotope are the chronotopes of the seminary, road, tavern and inn, the antithesis of closeness/openness, the food motive, time of day (morning and day) and calendar time (hot July). The everyday household details of the “Viy” novella are the antithesis to the demonic fantastic, while the main function of the chronicle-everyday chronotope is to create the contrasting background for the introduction into the text of mystical and fantastic characters and corresponding to them types of time and space [1].

The chronicle-everyday chronotope in “Viy” is closely connected with the mystical and fantastic chronotopes that dominate in the spatio-temporal worldbuilding of the short-story. Mystical space is characterized by images of mermaids, dark scale of colours, spatial “curtain” – silver fog, sound distortion, accelerated passing of time, spatial replacements, imitations of the real (everyday) world, vertical “compression” of space, replacement of spiritual benchmarks at the hamlet of the Cossack chief (kitchen instead of church), the change in the value

component of the house image, the “petrification” of the hero and his inability to resist evil spirits and so on.

The mystical chronotope in the story, characterized by the synthesis of the “living” and the “dead”, is closely connected with the motifs of the mirror and the forbidden road, with the mythologem of the labyrinth. This type of chronotope serves in this novella as a connecting link between real, everyday and fantastic events, that is between chronicle-everyday and fantastic chronotopes. All three types of chronotopes not only correspond to the plot gradation of events in the literary text (from everyday to mystical and fantastic events), but also to the gradation of horrors and dangers that lie in wait for the hero.

An example of the fantastic chronotope in Gogol’s short-story “Viy” is the desecrated church at the hamlet of the Cossack chief, depicted at night before the first cry of the rooster, filled with fantastic characters – the living dead, monsters (“gnomes”) and Viy. The locus of the church is important in the plot of this novella, as the structure of this space is dualistic: during the day it is sacred (light) space, the house of God, and at night it is the “dark temple”, the space in which the servants of the devil appear. It is both the space of peace and fear, of forgiveness and revenge [2].

The church in the story is spatially distant from the people and is located not in the center, but on the outskirts of the settlement, and the axis of the Orthodox church is the black coffin of the witch, which contradicts to the established tradition. The church symbolizes in this text not the prototype of God’s house and God’s world, but the demonic world order.

This fantastic space is full of contradictions: the face of the dead seems to the seminarians “alive”; her “terrible beauty” is not horrid, but admirable; in the temple, where there should have been good acoustics, Khoma Brut’s voice sounds quietly and sullenly; in God’s place, the servants of his eternal antagonist, the devil, appear, and the prayer for the resurrection of the soul causes an unnatural miracle – the resurrection of a dead witch. It should be noted that in this temple, pagan magic (magic circle) is more effective than Christian prayers.

All types of chronotopes in Nikolai Gogol’s story are united by Christian and pagan symbols, motives of fear and “seeing/not seeing”, “transitional” characters

(the witch and Khoma), chronotope of the road. At the same time, each space-time continuum has its specific features and is distinguished by the special sound content, saturation of events and the flow of time.

References:

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