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POSTMODERNISM IN THE PROSE OF V. SOROKIN

Annotation. Despite the emergence of new trends in culture (metamodernism and alter-modernism), postmodernist philosophy and aesthetics continue to steadily influence contemporary artistic discourses. Humanism as an episteme has been developing since the Renaissance; today its conceptual field continues to be refined: philosophers, literary scholars and other representatives of the humanities are asking the question: What are the limits of humanism, should it be qualified as a declaration of the value of life and the dignity of the individual subject, or is it a social phenomenon that should be considered diachronically? Postmodernism is a movement that seems to reject humanism as such. On the contrary, its main vector is the dehumanization of the individual and of society. The deliberate travesty of the narrative, the concentrated intertextuality and the modification of the canonical texts of the past provide a mode of perception that makes it impossible to view humanism as a whole idea without a satirical or ironic undertone. Nevertheless, in Kazakhstan's modern prose we can find examples of fiction that overcome this trend.

Keywords: postmodernism, intertextuality, dehumanization, gnoseologeme, phenomenon.

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В. СОРОКИННИҢ ПРОЗАСЫНДАҒЫ ПОСТМОДЕРНИЗМ

Аңдатпа. Мәдениетте жаңа бағыттардың пайда болуына қарамастан (метамодернизм және альтер - модернизм), постмодерндік философия мен эстетика қазіргі заманның көркемдік дискурстарына тұрақты әсер етуді жалғастыруда. Гуманизм эпистемолог ретінде қайта өрлеу дәуірінде дамиды, бүгінгі күні оның тұжырымдамалық өрісі нақтылануда: философтар, әдебиеттанушылар және гуманитарлық білімнің басқа өкілдері гуманизмнің шекаралары қандай, оны өмірдің құндылығы мен жеке субъектінің қадір-қасиетін жариялау деп санауға бола ма, әлде бұл диахронистік тұрғыдан қарастырылуы керек әлеуметтік құбылыс па? Постмодернизм-гуманизмді жоққа шығаратын бағыт. Оның негізгі векторы, керісінше, жеке тұлғаны да, қоғамды да адамгершіліктен шығару болып табылады. Әдейі травестиленген экспозиция тәсілі, шоғырланған интертекстуалдылық, өткеннің канондық мәтіндерін өзгерту гуманизмді сатиралық немесе ирониялық субтекстен тыс тұтас идея ретінде қарастыру мүмкін болмайтын қабылдау режимін жасайды. Дегенмен, Қазақстандық заманауи прозада біз осы үрдісті еңсеретін көркем шығармалардың үлгілерін табамыз.

Кілт сөздер: постмодернизм, интермәтіндік, адамгершіліктен айыру, эпистемология, құбылыс.

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ПОСТМОДЕРНИЗМ В ПРОЗЕ В. СОРОКИНА

Аннотация. Несмотря на появление новых направлений в культуре (метамодернизм и альтер-модернизм), постмодернистская философия и эстетика продолжают устойчиво влиять на художественные дискурсы современности. Гуманизма как гносеологема получает свое развитие еще в эпоху Возрождения, на сегодняшний день концептуальное поле ее продолжает уточняться: философы, литературоведы и другие представители гуманитарного знания задаются вопросом, каковы границы гуманизма, квалифицировать ли его как провозглашение ценности жизни и достоинства отдельного субъекта – или это социальный феномен, который следует рассматривать диахронически? Постмодернизм – направление, казалось бы, отвергающее гуманизм как таковой. Его магистральным вектором, напротив, становится дегуманизация как отдельной личности, так и общества. Намеренно травестированная манера изложения, концентрированная интертекстуальность, модификация канонических текстов прошлого создают такой модус восприятия, при котором невозможно рассматривать гуманизм как целостную идею вне сатирического или иронического подтекста. Тем не менее, в казахстанской современной прозе мы находим образцы художественных произведений, преодолевающие эту тенденцию.

Ключевые слова: постмодернизм, интертекстуальность, дегуманизация, гносеологема, феномен.

1. Introduction

Postmodernism literature is a system, the self-moving force of which is its ambivalence, moreover, its antinomy, when in the unity of opposite, often mutually exclusive tendencies, a special "field of tension" of the aesthetic phenomenon emerges. On one hand, postmodernism managed to compile the most important features and elements of the preceding literary trends (here, one cannot even speak of a diachronic verticality, as postmodernism is focused on panchromony). It is no coincidence that one of the metaphors of postmodernism is the "dismemberment of Orpheus". This metaphor, not coincidentally, is intertextual. Orpheus, one of the key figures of Greek mythology, signifies the idea of divine harmony, art capable of creatively transforming the world. In contrast to the forces of Chaos, Orpheus' art is an energy of world order (suffice it to recall the Colchis "episode" when Orpheus manages to put to sleep the Dragon, a chthonic creature guarding the Golden Fleece). Orpheus symbolizes the idea of Harmony; if we draw a parallel with If, we parallel the Nietzschean typology of art developed in the philosopher's essay "The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music", it is logical to view the demigod as a representative of Apollonian art. All the more tragic is his fate: torn apart by the maenads and dismembered into a multitude of sacred "pieces", Orpheus as a symbol of harmony in art gives way to rampant, gothic Dionysianism. His head is floating on the sacred waters of Gebræ. Found by the muses of Apollo, it is placed in one of his temples, where it continues to prophesy. However, postmodernism is not interested in this metasubject: in the latter's conception, art is Orpheus dismembered. Postmodernism today is no longer an 'omega' in the shift of cultural milestones; today researchers speak of both metamodernism and alter-modernism. Nevertheless, its influence on the culture of modern times remains stable. The postmodern

era is a summarizing state of civilization of the last decades, characterized by the feeling of the finality of the known world, the exhaustion of modernity, and the theme of entering the stage of evolutionary crisis. This is symptomatic: the currents that gave impetus to postmodernism are caused by changes in the collective unconscious, disillusionment with the idea of dominant rationality, a search for mediating strategies of coexistence of different ethnic groups, cultural programmes, ideological systems and individual actors.

Postmodernism marked the strengthening of new trends in culture and society. In particular, it is a change in the style of scientific thinking. To counterbalance classical rationality came post-classical rationality, for which there are no once and for all known objects of reality: every thesis is either questioned or taken on faith, but it is not manifested as aleatory 'flawless'.

The very notion of postmodernism, along with alternative categories (Transavantgarde, poststructuralism, deconstructivism) continues to be refined. In the context of "big time" (M. Bakhtin), postmodernism is a rather new phenomenon. Beginning to emerge in the United States on the basis of post-Freudian ideas and literary concepts of French poststructuralists, it gave a new generation of cultural workers (in the broad sense) an impulse to comprehend current trends of modernity, such as pop-art, citation as a principle of textual organisation and others. L. Fiedler's article "Cross Borders, Fill in the Ditches" (1969) became one of the landmark theoretical works of the time. One of its leitmotifs was a rapprochement between the language of modernism and the language of the maslit, which was to encourage art to move beyond the bounds of elitist modernist discourses (which were inaccessible to the general reader because they were intellectualized). At the same time, fiction, despised by aesthetes, became another "component" of the new trend in literature. The blending of these trends was to enable literature to transcend genre boundaries and trends, reader expectations and authorial strategies. A special role in the popularization of postmodernism was played by the ideas of Derrida, as well as the materials of the journal *Oktober*, thanks to which the principles of the new direction influenced the whole complex of humanities - from psychoanalysis to criminology.

What are the hallmarks of postmodernism? First and foremost, the concept of Chaos and decay, the intersection of temporal axes, modes of the real and the unreal, panchronism in the selection of genres, trends and emblematic texts of different epochs, the loss of the immanent meaning of the "thing in itself", the interpenetrability of phenomena, fluidity, de-centeredness, rhizomaticity. Traditional notions of wholeness are breaking down. The boundaries are being blurred; the taboo nature of individual themes and motifs is being levelled. The postmodernist paradigm is characterised by

- Decanonization of classical cultural patterns;
- the abolition of binary oppositions;
- the blurring of personal boundaries, the merging of the concepts of the "I" and the "Other";
- mutation of genres;
- carnivalization;
- the meta-language game;
- the game of Chaos;

- intertextuality;
- neonomadism;
- orientation towards polyinterpretation of the text without the rigid figure of the General (Author);
- inviting the reader to co-create and developing strategies of cooperation with the reader;
- the principal incompleteness of the construction.

All these features have determined the peculiarities of postmodern poetics. There has been a hybridisation of genres, increased pastiche, a tendency to fragmentation, dismemberment of the text, creation of collages, intertextual play, irony and parody. Text became the main object, while the main principle was the rejection of Truth. The world in the concept of postmodernism is illusory, fictitious, filled with simulacra and quasi-values, illogical. Life has been subjected to desolation, the personality in all senses is destabilised. In contrast, Text becomes limitless and total ("The world is text").

An important characteristic of postmodernist literature is the author's use of a certain mask, the deliberate complication of the narrative, outright parody and black humour. It is especially important to bear this in mind when interpreting Sorokin's story "Nastya": otherwise, we risk making serious hermeneutical errors.

2. Methods and materials

2.1 Methods

In this article, we will consider a story by one of the iconic postmodernists of Russian literature - V. Sorokin.

"Nastya", which is part of the novel "The Feast". The novel in this case is a conventional genre. It does not implement the classical principle of N. Boileau's classic principle (valid both for drama and conventionally for prose), which assumes the unity of place, time and action. On the contrary, it is a collection of fragments isolated from one another and not linked together by transversal characters. Nevertheless, the motif structure of the novel is relatively homogeneous: motifs of feasting, death and rebirth, overcoming boundaries, and destabilising literary canons are inherent in all the stories of the prose whole.

In interpreting the text we use the methods of

- intertextual analysis;
- hermeneutic commentary;
- motive analysis.

"Nastya" is a highly representative story. From the metatextual symbolism of the title (the name "Anastasia" means "resurrection") to the author's strategy of deliberately trolling the reader, it is a highly postmodern text, possessing all the specific features of this trend.

2.2 Materials description

In our work we have relied both on textbook texts of the theory of postmodernism, and on works devoted to the work of V. Sorokin. One of the most famous works devoted to the poetics of postmodernism belongs to Canadian researcher L. Hutcheon. He notes that the literature of postmodernism is parodic and ironic. Hutcheon calls game, black humour, intertextuality, which is a sign of a decentralized universe, pastiche (combining and gluing together elements of different works), fabulation (mixing of fiction and reality), poyomenon

(as a type of metaprose), temporal distortions, hyperreality, paranoia (Hutcheon, 1988). M. Lipovetsky, a famous theorist of Russian postmodernism, continues this series, including dialogism (in particular, dialogue with Chaos), culturogenicity of text, semiotics in the characteristics of postmodernism (Lipovetsky, 1997). S. Suleiman (Suleiman, 1986) writes about ontology of postmodernism. The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism remains an indispensable theoretical source. It contains works by scholars from all over the world, essays on philosophy, politics, literature, critical theory, business, gender and the performing arts, the concept of simulacra (Bodrijar, 2015), the aesthetics of Russian postmodernist discourse (Mankovskaya, 2000), late postmodernism (Green, 2005) and hypermedia (Sim, 2011). According to H. Demeyer and S. Witse, the contemporary development of fiction has not yet overcome the ontological dominance of postmodernism; however, there is a shift towards affective dominance in recent literature. Dominants are structures that bring order and hierarchy to the variety of techniques and methods of the fiction text. "Postmodernism functions include Anti-authoritarianism, or the unwillingness to acknowledge the authority of anyone's style or concept of what art should be, and the blurring of the lines between high culture and mass or popular culture, as well as between art and everyday life, are all aspects of postmodernism" (Harihasudan, 2022: 151).

When studying Sorokin's work, it is important to remember that the author deliberately "breaks" authorial expectations in accordance with his own authorial strategy. Despite the fact that postmodernist literature is characterized by the "death of the author" (R. Barthes), the overthrow of the figure of the General (Deleuze, 2005), Sorokin, staying behind the scenes, "trolls" the reader as a buffoon, a trixer, staying on the other side of 'scenery'. On authorial strategies, see (Iser, 1980). Consequently, the setting of the reader's reception must initially be adequate (Eco, 1990).

3. Discussion

The short story "Nastya", which we have chosen for our analysis, is part of the author's novel "The Feast". As we can see already on the level of the title, the text refers us to the paradigm of other known texts of world literature, each of which participates in the amplification of the original meaning. First of all, we reconstruct Plato's Feast and partly reproduce the concept of the philosophy of the ideal (which is important, because it is to the ideal that the heroes of the story "Nastya" aspire to as the result of overcoming the boundaries of the human). Another reference in this case is to Pushkin's A Feast in the Time of the Plague - but, in the rhizome principle, also to Boccaccio's Decameron. The semantics of the feast, set in the context of a calamity, is intended to imbue the action with a hint of sacredness, ritualism and mysticism. The very title of his novel, Sorokin prepares us for a particular event which is set to overturn our ideas about the world. As Schmid rightly points out, an event only occurs if the situation "turns" the plot upside down, leading it from the logical to the unforeseen (Schmid). This is the kind of event that the reader will encounter as he or she reads the story.

The heroine of the story "inherits" the features of the romantic heroines of classic Russian literature: a delicate, slightly exalted young lady, who is preparing to celebrate her sixteenth birthday, writing her thoughts of the innermost, as if continuing a gallery of images created by Alexander Pushkin, Ivan Turgenev and Lev Tolstoy. Up until the key

event of her initiation, she remains a child, pure and chaste, a girl who has never been born. remains a child - immaculate and pure. The theme of childhood in Russian literature - and in world literature in general - is one of the eternal ones. It is the child as an image, semantically correlated with the idea of innocence, that marks the future, the capacity for renewal and continuation of society, vitality.

The chronotope of the story is rather limited: the action takes one day and unfolds in the Sablins' estate. The reader is left to "guess" at the time of the action, following the markers in the text: the lexemes "babysitter", "footman", The lexemes "nanny", "footman" and "manor" refer back to a classical late 19th-early 20th century manor house, which, by the law of accretion of meaning, takes on the features of a Turgenev, Tolstoy, Goncharov or Chekhov manor. "The deepening and expansion of ethnocultural and linguistic contacts is changing the language situation of the XXI century. A new bi-and poly-lingual picture of the world is formed in which ethnic identity (identity, self-identification of an individual with a certain ethnic group, ethnos, nation) includes the complicity of ethnocultural tradition" (Ananyeva, 2021: 28).

4. Results

Sorokin stylizes the text for the manner of writing of that time: the reader perceives the author's discourse as a continuation of the traditional realistic prose. In addition to the manor's left and right wings the reader is introduced to the garden, which is divided into the New and the Old - an association with the Old and the New Testament is inevitable. A "greenhouse cone" appears in the New Garden, a futuristic image that runs counter to the "stale wicket" of the Old Garden.

Nastia is preparing for the holiday; it is interesting the details that the girl notices in the people around her. For example, the "kvasha of Nanny's belly", the "cool dough of Nanny's hands", the unexpectedly "toothy" head of her mother prepare us for the fact that people are not just intelligent, they are predators; moreover, they can be perceived in the *modus operandi* of edible.

A proleptic leap occurs when the nanny tells Nastia that she is "better suited to other things" than having children and carrying on the family name. The premonition of dramatic events is justified. Nastenka, washed and beautifully dressed, who has written in her diary that she "must overcome herself" and swallowed the black pearl presented to her, does not sit down at the festive table. She is undressed and sent straight to the furnace

- But the girl is not shocked; she accepts her fate with humility and serenity. Only now the reader guesses that the main course of the birthday party is Nastia herself. A basic literary image is dismantled: the child is transformed into food (and even the association with God's body is perceived here inappropriately, blasphemously, due to the shocking physiological details of Nastia's dying and eating).

"In this episode, a device typical of Sorokin's texts occurs: a 'transformation' ('fracture', 'disruption') of the narrative, when, around the middle of the text, one narrative is suddenly and counterpointually replaced by another: space is inverted, time goes backwards, clothes are re-framed,

"The 'figurative' plot is replaced by verbal gibberish, the simplest of meanings displaced by alphabetic graphics. It is important to note that in this fragment of the story this

"disruption" has only just begun. It is as if a kind of reversal of the entire preceding text is taking shape. All of the images that appeared at the beginning of the story are replaced by their polar opposing pairs. Throughout the rest of the story the "dislocation" will only intensify, and eventually the transformation of the characters, which begins in this episode, will reach verbal abracadabra, alphabetic graphics and illogical actions. In "Nasta", this technique is not carried out in a single moment, but rather lives on and develops throughout the entire subsequent text" (Bibergan, 2011: 16).

The guests enjoy eating Nastya. The father starts with the "breast"; the brutality of the scene reaches its climax when the mother is forced to divide her daughter's "meat" among those present.

"Shifter" turns out to be even the image of Father Andrei eating Nastia's eye (as we know, the eyes are the mirror of the soul, the external representation of the inner self). Moreover, the meal is not at all a special occasion for those present - they chat about society, philosophy and the modernization of agriculture. The reader is soon to learn that two of her friends have been roasted and eaten before Nastia. Nastya, for her part, was prepared for her fate from the start. It is no coincidence that the inscription on her pendant read "Overcome". This is one of the basic tenets of Nietzschean philosophy. That the guests and the mansion's owners themselves are participants in a familiar ritual is evidenced by the episode with the golden nails, each of which bears a code word. The absurdity of the narrative grows. Father Andrei asks one of the guests - Mamut - for his daughter's hand in marriage. Sorokin masterfully plays here with the desemantization of phraseologically linked units. To ask for the hand is to ask for permission to marry. However, the hero asks for hands in the literal sense of the word - and the other hero takes it literally. The girl's hand is sawed off and Father Andrew, having performed a ritual with her in front of the icon of the Saviour, withdraws.

The ritual with the nails only becomes clear towards the end of the piece: the lenses, refracting light, flare up and give birth to a projection of Nastia in the air, who smiles at those present from another dimension. "The reference to Nietzsche at the beginning of the story eventually becomes the key to reading the text. Nietzsche's ideology and the foundations of his philosophy turn out to be one hundred percent applicable to Sorokin's text, which seems cut out to overlap with Nietzschean philosophy. It is important to note that Sorokin's implementation of Nietzsche's philosophical views is somewhat mutated. The ideal of Nietzsche's philosophical ideals is the image of the single man, whose powerful will is the only criterion of good and evil. The man and the world merge into one common superhuman being. According to the Nietzschean philosophy, man - is only a transitional stage to something more perfect. The aim of mankind is to overcome oneself in the name of a higher ideal. It is these words ('to overcome oneself') that flicker in the pages of the novel, constituting the prerequisite for the achievement of the higher goal" (Bibergan, 2011: 27).

The reader once again finds himself "The reader is once again deceived: more than once throughout the course of the story Sorokin changes the optics of what is depicted. The initial deconstruction of the "eternal image" of the child leads to the creation of a fundamentally new dimension in which other values and ideals prevail.

That the optics of the narrative are transformed more than once is evident from the numerous details and intertextual interjections. When Nastya is given a black pearl, she

says "Straight from the island of Bujan! The reader is transported in advance into the modus operandi of the unreal. The description of the scene Nastya's "cooking" as a roast also conjures up associations with fairy tale discourse.

"The red-stone fence of the courtyard, the fresh whitewashing of the newly built large Russian cooker, the waist-naked cook Savely with a long poker in front of the orange stove-roof, his father, mother, father Andrey, Lev Ilyich. The heat is good, - Savely straightened himself, wiping sweat away. - In the name of the Eternal One," his father nodded to him. Savely put a huge iron shovel with dangling chains on the table: - Lie down, Nastasia Sergeyevna. Nastya hesitantly approached the shovel. Her father and Savely picked her up, put her back on the shovel" (V.G. Sorokin "Nastya"). The well-known folklore plot of Baba-Yaga who is trying to roast a hero of a fairy-tale by sly trick is given birth in a new setting. The very symbolism of the fairytale dates back to ancient rites of "guardianship of the infant". The infant, in the views of the ancient Slavs, was a creature that belonged to neither world. Before giving it the opportunity to enter the world of the living, it has to be hardened in the warmth of "the mother's womb" - the oven. Thus, we should perceive Nastia herself ("risen") in a symbolic rather than body-oriented way. From this perspective, the dismantling of eternal themes - childhood, the child, the family - contributes to and intensifies the effect on the reader, which is, after all, what postmodernist aesthetics is all about.

V. Sorokin's texts are ironic through and through, but it is difficult for the reader to understand this mode. The events taking place in "Nastya" are so naturalistic that they shock the reader with every physiological detail. The text is divided into pseudo-realistic and metaphorical. We managed to establish that it is the metaphorical level that should be recognized as the main one. The Nietzschean myth about overcoming the human being within oneself becomes the main one. The main thing here is the author's game with the reader, the author's strategy of deliberately misleading the reader.

Solving our key tasks - namely, the revelation of postmodern implicatures - we come to the conclusion that it is necessary to focus on all the texts of the "Feast" cycle in order to corporally confirm our observations.

5. Conclusion

The aesthetics of postmodernism is not oriented towards the search for harmony, but towards an endless conversation with Chaos as the ontological essence of this world. This is evidenced by its metaphor of the "dismembered Orpheus". There is no place in postmodern discourse for the pivotal, bearing axes of the universe. The thinking of its adherents is decentred, rhizomatic. The rhizome, as a root growing broadly, represents an inexhaustible potential of connecting one with another in an infinite set of variants. The figure of the "omniscient" author, the General, is abolished. However, the death of the author does not always come. Often, as Sorokin demonstrates, the author plays with the reader, deliberately misleading him and remaining "out of the picture" in the unfolding narrative. Sorokin's prose implements the key principles of the postmodernist aesthetic. The interpenetrability of the modus realus and the unreal, the presence of prolepsis, which prepares the reader for the dramatic (but only at first glance!) situation, the deanonization of the classic literary images are "accompanied" by a broad intertextuality, which contributes to numerous

extensions of the source text. Moreover, as the analysis of the story "Nastya" shows that multiple reconfigurations of meaning is one of the strategies of the game Sorokin plays with the reader.

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