

О СВОЙСТВАХ ПРОСТРАНСТВА В РАССКАЗАХ Р. ДАЛА “GENESIS AND CATASTROPHY” И “THE LANGLADY”

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ON FEATURES OF SPACE IN R. DAHL'S STORIES “GENESIS AND CATASTROPHY” AND “THE LANGLADY”

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Abstract. The article deals with the study of concept “space” in the fictional discourse of the classic British writer – Roald Dahl – alongside with presenting the results of the analysis of the mentioned discourse in terms of characteristics that the space represents in the texts. So, the authors interpret the space of two stories taking into account the space’s being either close or open, flexible or non-flexible, extending or narrowing, concrete or abstract, real or imaginary, finally, its being either static or dynamic. Such an approach chosen for investigation of the fictional discourse contributes to deciphering the ways the architectonics of short stories is built up. It also makes the views on chronotopos deeper and more profound as the described concept “space” is one the basic elements within the two-member conceptual paradigm making the structural foundation of any discourse – of “time and space” organization.

Keywords: concept; space concept; spatial characteristics; local indicators; plot’s evolution; interpretation of narration.

The concept of space is one of the most fundamental text categories in literature as well as the concept of time. It was in far gone 1918 when O. Shpengler emphasized the importance of space concept in his book «Sunset of Europe» that was the first detailed interpretation of space in the arts. The space in relation to the text is the spatial organization of its events, inseparably connected with temporary organization of the work and the system of spatial images of the text. Artistic space is one of the forms of aesthetic reality created by the author. It is the dialectical unity of discrepancies: it is based on the objective connection of spatial characteristics (real or possible), it is subjective, endless but is at the same time terminal. The general charac-

teristics of real space found within the text structure are extension, continuity and tridimensionality. Particular characteristics are form, location, distance and borders between different systems. In any narrative text there is space of the narrator and the space of characters. Their intercourse makes the space of the whole opus more volumetric, multidimensional and less homogeneous. Language means, such as syntactical constructions with the meaning of location, existential sentences, verbs of motion, and adverbs of place are the instruments for indicating different spatial characteristics.

According to the results of our research, the space simulated in the text by R. Dahl may be, first of all, open and close. In the

«The Landlady» we can see the open space structure as the protagonist is moving from one place to another, thus changing the scenes within which the plot evolves itself: *Billy Weaver had travelled down from London on the slow afternoon train, with a change at Reading on the way, and by the time he got to Bath it was about nine o'clock in the evening and the moon was coming up out of a clear starry sky over the houses opposite the station entrance* [2, p. 1]. On the contrary, in the «Genesis and Catastrophe», Roald Dahl shows the close space by means of indicating that all the actions in this story are concentrated in one and the same ward, thus the space turns to be stagnant, immobile: *The doctor stood beside the bed looking down at the pale exhausted face of the young woman* [1, p. 2]; *The baby was tightly swaddled in a white woollen shawl, and only the tiny pink head protruded. The innkeeper's wife placed him gently on the bed beside the mother* [1, p. 5]. A hospital bed and Frau Hitler, a young woman who has just given birth to her child, are the points around which the space is organized in the story – they give the first impetus for the plot's development (the birth of a new man) and the final step in its evolution (the child in some years time is to destroy the space that spawned it alongside with the millions of spaces around Europe).

We also can to conclusion that the space depicted by R. Dahl in the abovementioned stories can be characterized in terms of being flexible, prone either to extension or narrowing. For example, the space in «The Landlady» is gradually becoming narrower and narrower when comparing the beginning and the end of the story as the protagonist, Billy Weaver, leaves the metropolitan for a small town, from London to Bath, he goes from vast territories to the enclosed space of the town and the inn itself where he is to stay and is destined to die. Therefore, he starts and lives for some time in a big city but he faces his death in the small room. The antithesis accentuates the profound role the space concept has in the comprehending the content of the discourse under consideration.

Based on the degree of generality of spatial characteristics space can be either concrete or abstract. The abstract space is not connected with particular local indicators. In both «The Landlady» and «Genesis and Catastrophe», Roald Dahl shows the concrete space as there are many indicators pointing at it. For example in the «The Landlady», he writes about the protagonist's actions: *He stopped walking. He moved a bit closer, Green curtains (some sort of velvety material) were hanging down on either side of the window. The chrysanthemums looked wonderful beside them. He went right up and peered through the glass into the room and the first thing he saw was a bright fire burning in the hearth* [2, p. 1]. Reading that we can vividly imagine the setting and the scene in our minds. It is the main characteristic of concrete space. In the «Genesis and Catastrophe», the author refrains from describing the settings, but we can feel the space in this story is not deprived of concrete features at all: *The doctor turned away from the bed and walked over to the window and stood there looking out. It was a wet grey April afternoon, and across the street he could see the red roofs of the houses and the huge raindrops splashing on the tiles* [1, p. 3].

It should also be said that the space can be characterized from the stance of its being either real or imaginary that's is thought as a kind of reality's deformation. However, latter us not obvious in mentioned texts: *So a few minutes later, after unpacking his suitcase and washing his hands, he trotted downstairs to the ground floor and entered the living-room* [2, p. 4].

When interpreting the space concept represented in two of R. Dahl's stories we should point out that it is certainly dynamic. Even though it is close in «Genesis and Catastrophe», it definitely demonstrates the features of being dynamic: *"Try to rest," the doctor said, going back to the bed. "Please try to rest."* [1, p. 7]. The doctor is talking to his patient constantly moving, not standing still at all. Here is another proof of the idea expressed: *The doctor shifted his feet uneasily on the bare floor* [1, p. 6]. These examples

make it obvious that story's space incorporates at first sight contradictory notions – closeness and dynamics.

From the point of view of static/dynamic type of space, «The Landlady» is more complex. First of all, it should be mentioned that the characteristics of both static and dynamic space are present in the narration. If to talk about the protagonist, we stated that he was going from one city to another. Other than that, there was the part in the story when he *walked briskly down the street* [2, p. 4]. And the following extract proves that the space is dynamic: *After dithering about like this in the cold for two or three minutes, Billy decided that he would walk on and take a look at The Bell and Dragon before making up his mind. He turned to go* [2, p. 3]. But when Billy Weaver came into the house of the landlady seeing the dachshund and the parrot sitting still. At first, he did not understand what was with them but a bit later, he realized what the problem was. These dialogues between Billy and the landlady make us realize the real reasons of pets' motionless too: *"That parrot," he said at last. "You know something? It had me completely fooled when I first saw it through the window. I could have sworn it was alive." "Alas, no longer."* [2, p. 7]; *"And have you met my little Basil as well?" She nodded toward the dachshund curled up so comfortably in front of the fire. Billy looked at it. And suddenly, he realized that this animal had all the time been just as silent and motionless as the parrot* [2, p. 7]. The point is that the author skillfully combined the features of static and dynamic space. Moreover, in «The Landlady» he is keen on creating multidimensional space by describing all the little things, at times the things of miniscule importance for the plot's development: *There were no shops on this wide street that he was walking along, only a line of tall houses on each side, all of them identical. They had porches and pillars and four or five steps going up to their front doors, and it was obvious that once upon a time they had been very swanky residences. But now, even in the darkness, he could see that the paint was peeling from the woodwork on their doors*

and windows, and that the handsome white facades were cracked and blotchy from neglect [2, p. 1].

Flexibility and non-flexibility can be other distinctive features of Dahl's interpretation of space concept. We reckon that the space in «The Landlady» is flexible as other than making it obvious for us that the space is narrowing, the main line goes from large to little spaces: enormous territory of the familiar to Billy London gets gradually condensed to the limited space of a train carriage he goes in to Bath and, finally, through a set of vast streets to a limited space – an inn being a house of the landlady in which he is doomed not only to end up his journey but also his own life. However, in «Genesis and Catastrophe» the space is non-flexible, and the main reason is that the hospital room is the only expansion where the plot of the story evolves.

If to compare the two short stories by Roald Dahl from the perspective of space concept representation we should, firstly, pinpoint that these narrations are not homogeneous in terms of space "quality" represented. Dahl's interpretation of this concept is inseparably connected with life and death concepts that drives us at the idea of chronotopos (as the unity of space and time) prevailing in the narrations. In the «The Landlady» the space is narrowing but it is generally open, real and flexible, as it was mentioned above, but in the end of the story the landlady poisons Billy Weaver, the protagonist. Therefore, his life ends there due to his naivety and gullibility. On the contrary, in another story - «Genesis and Catastrophe» – the space is close and dynamic; though there are no descriptions of the events outside the hospital ward, but it is for the reader to reconstruct the events portrayed and to associate them with real life events: a newly born life is to destroy the space that spawned it.

Bibliography

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