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**DOUBLE REALITY AND ITS REPRESENTATION IN THE NOVEL
“THE SYNDROME OF PETRUSHKA”**

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the novel by one of well-known contemporary writers Dina Rubina “The Syndrome of Petrushka”. This book is the last in the trilogy “People of the Air”. The title of the book is a joining link for all novels in the cycle. The collocation “People of the Air” has a hidden meaning – Rubina’s characters are not ordinary people: their lives are interwoven with art. Their abilities and results of creative activity are sometimes beyond logical explanation. That is why Dina Rubina’s novels are full of metaphors. Novels’ reality is doubled and the reader has an opportunity to cross the border of the objective reality to understand the character’s reality and witness the process of creation. Commenting on the history of trilogy Dina Rubina notes that one of her aims was to look beyond the boundaries of genius’ work. She stresses metaphorical nature of “The Syndrome of Petrushka” which is a significant point in the research. The key aspect in “The Syndrome of Petrushka” perception is studying the motive of double reality. Each of the two realities introduced in the novel is organized with topois, specification of the artistic space, characters’ points of view and metaphor. The article introduces ways of representing double reality of the artistic world and analyzes metaphorical models in the structure of the text “The Syndrome of Petrushka”. These models can be denoted as relations: “life – theatre”, theatre – life”, “people – puppets”, “puppets – people”, puppet master – creator”, ‘creator – puppet master.

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Keywords: Double reality, puppet, puppet master, creator, metaphor.



1. Introduction

Dina Rubina is one of the prominent representatives of the contemporary Russian prose. She is the author of such works as “Here the Messiah goes”, “Syndicate”, “In the sunny side of the street”, trilogy “People of the Air” (Rubina, 2013), cycle “Russian canary” and others. The trilogy “People of the Air” includes three novels: “Leonardo’s handwriting” (Rubina, 2008), “The White Dove of Cordoba” (Rubina, 2009), and “The Syndrome of Petrushka” (Rubina, 2010). They received wide response of the readers and critics. Special interest was paid to the author’s way of uniting the books into one cycle and the title itself. The three novels do not have similar or the same characters which are usually in cycles or epic works. Every book tells about a person with remarkable capabilities.

The title of the whole cycle “People of the Air” unites all the books of the trilogy. The collocation has a hidden meaning – the characters’ lives are interweaved with art; these people are above reality leaving in their artistic reality. Their abilities and results of creative activity are sometimes beyond logical explanation – they are similar to illusion which appears from air and finally disappears into it. That is why Dina Rubina’s novels are full of metaphors. Novels’ reality is doubled and the reader has an opportunity to cross the border of the objective reality to understand the character’s reality and witness the process of creation. This research has the following tasks:

1. To disclose the meaning of the concept “double reality”;
2. To analyze artistic devices used for creating the space of the novel.

2. Problem Statement

In the process of creating the book “The Syndrome of Petrushka” there appeared questions concerning implementation of the double (metaphoric) plot of the book. The purpose of the article is in studying two realities of the novel and ways of their representation.

3. Research Questions

The subject of this study is depicting double reality in the novel by Dina Rubina “The Syndrome of Petrushka”.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this article is in disclosing two realities of the novel “The Syndrome of Petrushka” and their representations.

5. Research Methods

The following methods have been used:

Formal - when analyzing devices used in the work; structural - when analyzing structural elements of the novel text.

6. Findings

In the article “The Title as the Sign of the Author’s World View” Khoreva (2017) writes, “The author’s role is primary in any literary work, not only because the author creates his work but primarily the author determines the vector of the recipient’s perception basing on own cultural worldview” (p. 11). This point of view is an axiom when we talk about the book perception. The history of the world literature knows a lot of examples when the author himself denoted the genre of the book or in the foreword addressed the reader in order to explain the most important aspects of the book perception. In one of the interview with Dina Rubina about trilogy the author shares her creative concept, “...I have been always fascinated by the worlds which scarcely contact each other or do not contact at all or just fleet past each other. A human is an image of God; a doll is an image of a Human; an Idol by means of which a human strives to be God at least for a moment. For me it is important to know the reality of puppets’ otherness” (Alexandrov, 2011, para. 6). Her main task while writing the novel (and the whole trilogy) was to peep “beyond the margin”, that is to sneak into the world of gifted people and understand the secret of their artistic life.

Puppets otherness which the author narrates about is one of the most specific aspects of the internal composition of the novel “The Syndrome of Petrushka”.

The history of the puppet master Petr Uksusov is the basis for the novel. Trying to peep beyond the margin of the other (puppet world), the author intends not only disclose the matter of the artistic techniques and skills but understand the essence of the actor himself. The plot is devoted not only to the puppet master but also to the character-trickster. This duplication can be found through the whole plot.

A trickster (AE trickster) is an archetypical image in mythology, folklore, religion with qualities of a rogue and ruffian. Trickster, according to mythological representations can be introduced as a divinity, a ghost or a spirit. The most important his peculiarity is that he does not obey universal moral principles like Petrushka, but herewith he is not a villain. The main essence of his actions is game, or the process of the game, demonstration of his dexterity. One more component of this image is that Trickster is a mortifier and manipulator. His actions are aimed at audience amusement, causing fear, astonishment, perplexity, and admiration simultaneously.

The name semantics of the central character contains his being Peter and Petrushka simultaneously. Petrushka-trickster emerges not only as a puppet – a means for theatrical performance. Petrushka is a central character who positions himself as Petrushka and perceived as Petrushka. Thus, we deal with two hypostasis of the character – a real one and theatrical which is an important component of the binary nature of the artistic reality of the book.

One of the components of the double reality organization is the point of view as a key element of the internal composition of the book: character’s point of view, personage’s point of view and narrator’s point of view.

On the show of the book Peter is represented through girl’s eyes as “a weird man” who makes improvisation in the airport. The reader already knows that he is an actor. It is purely external view of the character: “A weird man was sitting behind my back that looked like an Indian: hollow cheeks, hawk nose, protruding chin, a braid...” (Rubina, 2013, p.35). But in the context of narration there appears a point of view of the character himself. To be a puppet master means to think and live as a puppet master, to see through the lens of puppetness: And all around – the school, teachers, children, the town with its paper

plant, and the sea desert behind the House of Children's Craft existed separately and clearly, and these conspirators – a puppet master and puppets – were in a different unreachable world closed for common people (Rubina, 2013).

Talking about the point of view in the novel, it should be noted that a narrator prevails in its conversational structure. Some episodes are represented with his voice. For example, in ten minutes, both were exhausted...Were lying on the cold floor of the workshop, among the torn off puppets, thrown all over the floor in funny, dreadfully alive human poses... In the hush of night only restless Karag'ez was fussing around, whining or licking actively adorable faces, or again sitting on the floor by their heads in a patient melancholy expecting when all again will return to former state: puppets – wooden, people – alive (Rubina, 2013).

As it is seen in the cited fragment, the author-narrator perceives his characters as puppets, whose will is subjected to the highest power. It allows perceiving the novel in a metaphorical way that is to see in the non-living world of puppets – a fully-featured world, and the life of common people – as the theatre where everyone plays a certain role.

The episode of the night dance of the character demonstrates the collision of narrator's and the character's positions – different points of view on one and the same event. If Peter perceives his dance as a magic, graceful and filigree action with an absent but imaginary puppet Alice, then the narrator whose voice is used to describe that episode gives a different version – the view from the outside. The subject of speech tries to switch to the position of the spectator and reader who is not acquainted with Peter. And this symbolic dance with air looks as: "Only one thing deserved a real astonishment (and even adoration): a hawk-nosed and extravagant, bended man in funny boxers and a cheap vest dancing was so charmingly plastic, ironically sad and deeply in love with the precious emptiness enrolled in his right elbow..." (Rubina, 2013, p. 63). Thus, two realities are illustrated in the novel – characters reality, personages' and recipients' reality.

The double plot of the novel is created by a metaphor of its artistic world. The novel is based on the metaphor concept-model "People – puppets and puppets – people". Peter, as Luzhin (the character of V. Nabokov's novel "Luzhin defence") since the childhood has stuck in his own reality. Here there are own personages-puppets who are not only Peter's creative thought but also "packed into flesh" creations. The character perceives the real and puppet worlds similarly, without borders between them.

Puppet nature of the novel is created on the details of the artistic space. Topos of the town is important for Dina Rubina. The place is not only the scenery-setting which is a background for the events of the novel but also has implied meaning. A characteristic stylistic peculiarity of Dina Rubina poetics is space and artistic world detalization (Dunaevskaja, 2001).

One of the most important compositional centers of the novel-metaphor is depicting Prague. Prague is a favourite Peter's city as it resembles a magnificent world's puppet theater (Babaeva, 2018). That is why the novel "The Syndrome of Petrushka" represents a detailed landscape of the city through the eyes of the main character (Danilov, 2010).

In "The Syndrome of Petrushka" a metaphor model is fulfilled – "life is a theatre", which can be inverted and receive a reverse but equivalent formula "theatre – life". Both models are fulfilled through metaphor images. A puppet is perceived by the reader directly as a toy. For the central character a puppet

is not just a toy, but a way of self-expression. A puppet is not only for a game. It is the puppets master creation with its individual features. There is a bind between a puppet and a puppet master as between the Creator and the Man: “A puppet – it is different, different relation with the man. It is the oldest man’s model, you know?” (Rubina 2013, p. 93). There are both people and puppets in Peter’s world, but their roles are so interwoven in his mind that he himself does not distinguish them. In the world of people Peter has his own classification. People, from his point of view, are divided into puppets and puppet-masters.

Panovitsa (2014) notes, that in “The Syndrome of Petrushka: “the key textual metaphoric model is given “a gift – is means of animation”, “genius vivifies”. This point of view can be considered fair, as in the novel context animation of inanimate is the essential nature of art. Animation as resurrection is God’s function. According to Peter, a puppet master is similar to God – creator. It means that, creativity in the novel by Dina Rubina “The Syndrome of Petrushka” is a metaphor of creation – animation, and the concept “puppet-master” is a metaphor of the creator able to vivify the inanimate.

Two realities of the novel intersect. It is the starting point of the conflict between the character and the reality around him. Peter creates his main piece of art – puppet Alice similar to Lisa. He perceives Alice as Lisa and Lisa as Alice. Peter’s tragedy is not in his solitude and moroseness but in that he ruins the border between the two realities and perceives himself to be not just a puppet master but God.

The end of the book is symbolic: “He was dancing... distractedly, with a blank face, moving as if he himself – just air packed into flesh, just God’s puppet, controlled by numerous threads of good and evil... Well. He was glad to enlighten somehow the grandiose solitude of the Creator with this show” (Rubina, 2013, p. 44). The central character is shown alone in his lonely dance, dance with air, and dance in the air. Exactly here the main metaphor of the novel is fully implemented – life is the theatre under the supervision of “the Master Puppeteer”.

7. Conclusion

Two realities have been shown in the novel “The Syndrome of Petrushka” according to the author’s idea: the objective reality in whose context the exterior context of the novel expanded and supporting characters function and the internal context – the world of the central character, puppet reality, where puppets and people co-exist, but their roles are so interwoven in Peter’s consciousness, that he himself can not tell them one from the other.

Double reality is depicted through metaphor. Key aspect of this process is a metaphoric model: a puppet is a man, a man is a puppet. One more metaphor is built by this principle – life is the theatre, the theatre is life.

Two realities are represented in the novel via such methods as a point of view fulfilled in the narrative structure “The Syndrome of Petrushka”, and detalization of the artistic space.

The artistic world of “The Syndrome of Petrushka” is united with the theatre model. It is explained by the narrative-compositional peculiarities of the novel. As in dramatics where the speech structure is arranged as voices coexistence, in Dina Rubina’s novel the narration is polyphonic. Every character has his own role not only in the described events but in the narration itself. All characters are similar to the puppets of the author-puppeteer who distributed their roles.

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