The article suggests the new treatment of contemporary European literature landmark texts, which are traditionally assigned to the aesthetics of postmodernism: Ch. Ransmayr’s “The Last World”, M. Grzimek’s “Shadowing”, P. Suskind’s “Perfume” and M. Kruger’s “Cellist”. It is proved that aforementioned writings mark overcoming the deadlock of deconstruction, the beginning of the absolute spirit search into the world-chaos. The most important issue of the research is whether it is possible to embody the image of the ideal, remaining within the ludic aesthetics of the postmodernism. And if it is possible, which artistic devices are used? Emphasis in the research is put on the analysis of the novel by Austrian author, Christoph Ransmayr “The Last World”, which is recognized the best among European prose works of the end of the 1980s. The narrative basis of the novel includes the search and interpretation of mystified and confabulated “The Metamorphoses” by Ovid and is represented as the Book of Genesis. The variants of rendition of the famous text are understood as manners of external making, narration, mystification of the world literature texts, the characters-storytellers themselves and the system of comments. Characters-storytellers who offer different interpretations of the disappeared poem, implement their own conception of the reality that requires further discussion and study. The human history is preserved in people’s memory and consciousness due to the stories, which authors rely on in their personal existential experience and experience of their predecessors, and predict the future. The process of cognition is the process of reading, interpretation the previous texts and creation of the new ones, that depart with the main thesis of postmodernism about self-enclosure and structural integrity of a text. The mystery of the elusive time as well as heaven and hell, are revealed to Ovid in the novel and he tries to share these secrets with his interlocutors. The process of compassion and co-authorship brings us closer to the understanding of the metaphysical foundations of being. The image of an Artist is functionally associated with the image of the Creator, and this fact disputes the well-known thesis about the “death of the author".
ТЕКСТ НАУЧНОЙ РАБОТЫ

на тему «The boundaries of literariness: image of the world as a book in the European prose of the late 20th century (through the example of the novel by Christoph Ransmayr „The Last world”)»


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The Boundaries of Literariness:

Image of the World as a Book in the European Prose

of the late 20th Century

(through the example of the novel

by Christoph Ransmayr „The Last World“ *)

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Emphasis in the research is put on the analysis of the novel by Austrian author, Christoph Ransmayr "The Last World", which is recognized the best among European prose works of the end of the 1980s. The narrative basis of the novel includes the search and interpretation of mystified and confabulated "The Metamorphoses" by Ovid and is represented as the Book of Genesis. The variants of rendition of the famous text are understood as manners of external making, examination of the author's self-awareness, an attempt of approximation to the truth. The chosen strategy of the research allows us to reduce the modes of the author's self-reflection through images-masks, narration, mystification of the world literature texts, the characters-storytellers themselves and the system of comments. Characters-storytellers who offer different interpretations of the disappeared poem, implement their own conception of the reality that requires further discussion and study.

The human history is preserved in people's memory and consciousness due to the stories, which authors rely on in their personal existential experience and experience of their predecessors, and predict the future. The process of cognition is the process of reading, interpretation the previous texts and creation of the new ones, that depart with the main thesis of postmodernism about self-enclosure and structural integrity of a text. The mystery of the elusive time as well as heaven and hell, are revealed to Ovid in the novel and he tries to share these secrets with his interlocutors. The process of compassion and co-authorship brings us closer to the understanding of the metaphysical foundations of being. The image of an Artist is functionally associated with the image of the Creator, and this fact disputes the well-known thesis about the "death of the author".

Keywords: European postmodernism, models of the author's self-reflection, Ch. Ransmayr, M. Grzimek, P. Suskind, M. Kruger.

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Introduction to the research problem

Literocentrism is traditionally considered as a hallmark of the Russian culture up to the postmodern era, when the significant artists started debunking the cult of literature as one of the means of ideological influence (Govorukhina, 2010, 32-37). In Europe, the process of literature displacement on the periphery of public life began much earlier and it was connected with the influence of popular art, new media and the Internet (Berg, 2005). In addition, within literature there was the critical review of the problem of an author, a character, a reader and a literary text itself.

Theoretical grounds

In this context the novel by Austrian writer Ch. Ransmayr "The Last World" ("Die letzte Welt", 1988) is of an exceptional importance. The novel is usually considered as an example of the postmodernist aesthetics (Wiike, 1992; Kiel, 1996; Gottwald, 1996). We aim to prove that the novel, vice versa, is associated with the search of the Absolute, but, at that, it retains ludic poetics (Anisimov, 2010, 64-74). The key issue in this research is the question about the prospects of author's reflection: deconstruction or reconstruction of the ideal from chaos? "The Last World" is dedicated to reflections about the artist's destiny, literature in history, as evidenced by the choice of the genre: post-historical novel. In this case a "commentator" or translator/copyist who interprets the texts of other characters-narrators, to whom an author subcontracts rights, becomes the leading figure. Such heroes are philologically oriented, engaged in the research studies of their own and other authors' texts, which is implemented as a process of self-cognition and self-determination in the present, indicating of mistrust to the former absolutes and reality itself.

Text as the evidence of history in the novel by C. Ransmayr "The Last World"

The plot of the novel comes to trying to reconstruct the lost book by the disgraced Roman poet Ovid - "The Metamorphosis". The story line develops as a process of reading, "translation" of the destroyed manuscript's fragments, writings on stones, animal skins and cloth that motivates introduction of the text of the Other. The famous writing by Ovid is mythologized and mystified and acts as Genesis that contains people’s destinies. The writing can also be considered as the history of the Roman Empire in the era of Octavianus Augustus that
embodies all the achievements of the Western civilization, and as a mystical, special kind of reality which is
reconstructed by the texts and does not require verification. It is perceived by a character-reader, "a commentator"
and, following him, a reader of the novel. The secret follower of the exiled poet - Cotta tries to unravel the teacher's
idea, and in this way, his own work that is imposed upon the text of "The Metamorphosis", appears. In the
intertextual field of the novel the myths of Antiquity and the Middle Ages as well as their literary versions,
represented by Ovid's, Dante's, Kafka's, Umberto Eco's texts and the texts by Ch. Ransmayr are intertwined (Fitz,
1998). "The Metamorphoses" that was created in such a way, keeps the main idea of the author about frailty of the
earthly life, the relativity of time, space and culture that is emphasized by the epigraph from Ovid - "Nothing in the
world remains unchanged", which is multiply repeated in the text. The book, recreated by Cotta, is understood by
the writer as the evidence of disappearing history: from "the golden age" until "the iron age" that diverges with the
aesthetics of postmodernism, which recognizes text as the only reality (Butov, 2003, 175-178). The present
in the novel is elusive, time is like water and sand, it absorbs everything and the problem of mystification in this case
is associated with the problem of consciousness, which is capable of comprehending texts, understanding the
creator's idea, or provides them with its own interpretation.

In opposition to the purely external, theatrical life of Rome, the history of provincial Crimean town of Tom where
Ovid was exiled to was made. The dwellers of the town were ore smelters, adventurers and barbarians who tried to
avoid state regulation or punishment. The Iron Town is "the sinister place", but, according to the author, it is here,
where there are no laws, traditions and authority, the freedom of self-determination is acquired. In the settlement "at
the edge of the world", amidst wilderness, mythological scenes, displayed in the reliefs of Roman palaces are acted
out: "Tereus' mask was a caricature, a rough cartoon, but, nevertheless, resembled wind-eroded reliefs on the
facades of Roman temples, ministries and palaces and reminded the image of the god of Sun in the chariot of fire"
(Ransmayr, 2005, 65).

Ovid, who initially accepted all the terms of the literary industry (he took part in advertising and presentations of his
works, intrigued and shocked the audience), achieved mass success, but, at the same time, experienced a deep
disappointment in the craft. Exaltation in the emperor's eyes, as well as celebrity in his opponents' camp can also
lead to alienation from his own destiny, threaten him conversion into a monument, canonization of the texts,
transformation of his house into a museum. In the country of opposition Ovid's texts are said to influence the acts of
protest and public disorders. Resisting the predetermined fate, the artist deliberately incurs disfavor of the power
structure, refusing to make a triumphant speech to praise the Emperor, "In that evening Naso went out and stood in
front of a bunch of dimly
gleaming microphones and, by making this one step, he left the Roman Empire behind, he did not make, he forgot -
- the strictly recommended litany of addresses, to kneel in front of the senators, generals and even the Emperor,
who was sitting under his canopy, he forgot about himself and his happiness, and without the slightest hint of a bow
stood in front of the microphone and said only "The citizens of Rome" (Ransmayr, 2005, 46-47). The act of
disobedience marks the freedom of the artist from society; he chooses exile, the destiny of a nameless narrator,
running, according to J.L. Borges from the captivity of "the infinite library of Babel".

The master's life journey is crowned by the mountain trekking to the cave in the abandoned miners' village of
Trahile that is simultaneously the pass to Hades, guarded by the mythological dog. The theme of the mountain
trekking is one of the key themes in Ch. Ransmayr's works, its semantics is defined by the victory over time. In this
case the logic of Ovid's journey acquires universal human and general cultural characteristics, can be interpreted as
a symbolic journey into the depths of his own soul: Lost Paradise, Hell and Purgatory that gains literary connotations
(Dante's story). It is indicative that Cotta, who follows the poet's footsteps, is a student of Dante Academy and his
stay in Nazo's cave, excavated in the cliff, is equivalent to symbolic death and accompanied by the funeral
lamentations of Pythagoras - Ovid's servant: "Cotta seemed that this muttering, both indistinct and persistently
penetrating from the top floor, was intended for him. These were elegy's stanzas on his death. His bed was a
hearse" (Ransmayr, 2005, 58).

In the image of the Iron City symbols of different eras and cultures are connected (in the 1century BC cinema,
printing, stadiums and advertisement coexist; dissidents are persecuted, crucified on crosses and killed in gas
chambers) -

here the dreams and myths come true, wonders are done and there is no time. The image of the country town
embodies the interworld between the past and the future, dreams and reality, life and death. What is happening in
Tomoi is a compendium of the human history with an open ending, marked by permanent apocalypse. History of the
"recent times" is written in the context of the ancient and Christian cultures: from the theme of the flood,
unleashed on the mankind by Zeus, up to the classic indications of The Revelation of St. John the Divine - the city
survived the earthquake, the plague, the invasion of scorpions, water changed its color, however, these events are
among many followed by other events. The end inevitably turns into a new creation, the time of people-ants and
humans, who are made of mud as predicted in Ovid's speech, comes to replace the era of heroes. New generations
are distinguished by obedience, silence, absence of passions and memory, the necessity of which the poet
mentions. The process of degradation of humanity is associated not with the loss of humanistic orientations, but
alienation of culture (e.g. language, according to J. Lacan) from existence (meaning), what is demonstrated in the
history of Rome.

The travel to Tomoi, narrated according to the initiation model (themes of temptation, storms, the Ark, sleep/death
and the symbolic dog) is a search of the initial structures of civilization. Scanty historical reality in the novel is
intensified by the storylines from the disappeared poem as a kind of ideal force capable to change human being, to
correlate it with the prehistoric times (initial meanings). Pathos of the game (as a basis of culture in general,
the fragments of his work and the stories of other authors is highly controversial and unfinished. Inclusion of the writings on the scraps and walls of houses of the authors of "alien texts". Ovid's image as a result of interpretation of alter ego of the author. The text, created within the sight of a reader, at the same time includes stories, films, Cotta's book, which is based on extracts from the mythological poem by Ovid, allows considering the heroes as two Texts of the characters-narrators in the novel void. According to the remark by U. Wittstock, "The Last World" is the only novel by Ch. Ransmayr, where except eschatologization of history that happens in this way has a purpose to confront the coming power of entropy and excite the imagination, require active co-creation and solution, thus reuniting disintegrated times. Mythologizing and fate. In Ovid's texts the Ancient Greek philosopher finds the traces of primary meaning which, since that time, he

paintings to parchment and paper. History of sage Pythagoras, whose works have not survived, creating a legend of material prima - fire, air and stone. The stories passed from mouth to mouth, got the status of rumors, embodied in real people's destinies, even being recorded by a servant, they keep their fragmentarity, have an open ending and inscribed in random places. "In Nazo's answers and stories Pythagoras inevitably found all his thoughts and feelings and he believed that in this coincidence he finally discovered the harmony that is worth perpetuating; since that time he no longer wrote on the sand, he began making inscriptions everywhere he appeared, first, he scrabbled and he believed that in this coincidence he finally discovered the harmony that is worth perpetuating; since that time he no longer wrote on the sand, he began making inscriptions everywhere he appeared, first, he scrabbled only tables in the cellar at the innkeeper with nails and a penknife, and then began writing with potsherds on the walls and with chalk on trees, and sometimes even on the sides of strayed sheep and pigs" (Ransmayr, 2005, 154). The sequence, in which the hero chooses materials for records, reflects the stages of writing formation: from rock paintings to parchment and paper. History of sage Pythagoras, whose works have not survived, creating a legend of the scientist's fundamental rejection of writing, which distorts the meaning and gives ironic colours to the poet's fate. In Ovid's texts the Ancient Greek philosopher finds the traces of primary meaning which, since that time, he tries to convey in a picture, a gesture and a word. Seemingly sporadic writings on stones, walls and scraps of cloth... excite the imagination, require active co-creation and solution, thus reuniting disintegrated times. Mythologizing and eschatologization of history that happens in this way has a purpose to confront the coming power of entropy and void. According to the remark by U. Wittstock, "The Last World" is the only novel by Ch. Ransmayr, where except natural history perspective, comparing to which everything is perishable, there is also cultural and historical dimension in which Ovid's art remains relevant for 2 000 years that in human scale is incomprehensible term (Wittstock, 2009, 122136).

Cotta's book, which is based on extracts from the mythological poem by Ovid, allows considering the heroes as two alter ego of the author. The text, created within the sight of a reader, at the same time includes stories, films, writings on the scraps and walls of houses of the authors of "alien texts". Ovid's image as a result of interpretation of the fragments of his work and the stories of other authors is highly controversial and unfinished. Inclusion of the
Nor fire nor sword nor ravenous time will be able to destroy.

Now I have completed my work, which neither Jove's anger nor fire nor sword nor ravenous time will be able to destroy.
progress, it stopped and went back to the past" (Ransmayr, 2005, 146). Poetic word in the novel determines fates of
in a desperate haste he definitely had to write these words before they are gone with the wind. Time slowed its
lips sentence by sentence and took them away up the slopes. And Pythagoras' hand moved fast on a blue rag as if
understand a word, he could only hear a knock of blood in his temples and blasts of wind that tore from the exile's
return from Hades and is dictating another story to the servant: "Looking into the fire of a small stove, Naso as if
you want to sail it, to search it, to swim it around and even to suffer it" (Ransmayr, 2008, 231).

Importance of the poetic word is recognized in the novel absolutely. Contrasting linarities, "monophonic"
characteristics of writing and reading poetic lines, J. Lacan indicates polyphonism characteristic to the sounding of
discourse that seizes multiple contexts, witnessed at the time of the message (Lacan, 1997). Not accidentally A.
Karelsky notes that "confident power of Words and Talent reigns over the "last world" and it leaves a feeling of a
synthesis of the poet's and the "commentator's" conciseness as well as the creator's of the text and the Other's is
complicated by the fact that the author-narrator describes mythologizing Ovid's consciousness, progress of
characters in understanding their own destinies and Cotta's interpretive efforts from the position of the late 20th
century artist. The poet and the "little man" succeeding him, the creator and the interpreter-philologist are the two
lines in existence, two missions called to understanding, preservation and transmission of the spiritual experiences
of people and its enrichment with personal insights. The narrator is not only a scripter of postmodernism, but a
director, a mystifier, who
externalizes the author's consciousness, narrates about the techniques and methods of writing and the book
industry that is subject to the laws of mass culture. Each hero-alter ego has his/her own line in being and a text ("The
Metamorphoses" by Ovid exist in Cotta's interpretation), in relation to Ch. Ransmayr's novel they are the Others.
Narrative structure is based on the synthesis of two realities: textual, metatextual and external text reality, Ovid's
reality (primary) and Cotta's reality (secondary, created by reading). Such a subject-character organization of writing
indicates a change in quality of the author's consciousness in contemporary prose, loss of the right to absolute truth
and relativisation of the author's consciousness (Gulius, 2004, 166-179).

Resume
Importance of the poetic word is recognized in the novel absolutely. Contrasting linarities, "monophonic"
characteristics of writing and reading poetic lines, J. Lacan indicates polyphonism characteristic to the sounding of
discourse that seizes multiple contexts, witnessed at the time of the message (Lacan, 1997). Not accidentally A.
Karelsky notes that "confident power of Words and Talent reigns over the "last world" and it leaves a feeling of a
brilliant final victory" (Karelsky, 1993, 5). Meaning his own profession, Ch. Ransmayr calls himself not a writer but a
storyteller whose mission involves "willingness not only to judge the world, but to know it, stroll it over on foot, and if
you want to sail it, to search it, to swim it around and even to suffer it" (Ransmayr, 2008, 231).

"The Last World" is finished by the mystical scene - on the top of the mountain Cotta is watching the poet who has
returned from Hades and is dictating another story to the servant: "Looking into the fire of a small stove, Naso as if
was talking to the servant. Cotta recognized the voice and intonation, however, he couldn't
understand a word, he could only hear a knock of blood in his temples and blasts of wind that tore from the exile's
lips sentence by sentence and took them away up the slopes. And Pythagoras' hand moved fast on a blue rag as if
in a desperate haste he definitely had to write these words before they are gone with the wind. Time slowed its
progress, it stopped and went back to the past" (Ransmayr, 2005, 146). Poetic word in the novel determines fates of

the gods, people and the world as a whole, time has no power over it, it binds human history and fills it with meaning. The plots of the poem are acted out in real life, reality is originated out of poetry, it becomes a myth and returned to poetry, understanding of its meanings reveals the metaphysical essence of being "Construction reality no longer required records".

M. Grzimek works in the paradigm close to Ch. Ransmayr’s, revealing simulative nature of post-industrial world in his novel "Surveillance" (1989), where the loss of the sense of being is linked to the disembodiment of reality and its absorption by simulacra. In this case creativity is not supported by ontology and dies out as unnecessary (an analogy to Augustus’ Rome in the text by Ch. Ransmayr). Perfume by P. Suskind of the same novel acts as a kind of Ovid’s antithesis. The character does not strive to defend his own destiny or the right to act, on the contrary, he tries to create a work of art (a unique aroma) from a variety of aromas, not correlating his work with the personal world and experience. Deprived of the unique style, but satisfying taste needs of the mass audience, the aroma brings death to its creator. And finally, composer George from the novel by M. Kruger "Cellist" (2002) in the tension of the search of meaning, genuine to the art of post-industrial era is similar to the character of "The Last World”. Genuine tragedy of human existence with its disappointments, death and social turmoil cannot abandon the game strategies of contemporary art, on the contrary, it is the experience of tragic, the Others are able to renew faith in the present and potential to creativity. Thus, the late 20th century literature is characterized by a keen search of the Absolute, a hero capable to reveal initial meanings and incarnate them in his/her creativity (Anisimov, 2007, 124-138). Basically, the main question of an author at that time is possibility to reveal the genuine in the language of art that assimilated the game strategies of the postmodernism aesthetics and was experiencing pressure of the market and mass consumer tastes.

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References
В статье предложена новая трактовка знаковых текстов современной европейской литературы, традиционно относимых к эстетике постмодернизма: "Последний мир" К. Рансмайра, "Слежка" М. Гржимека, "Парфюмер" П. Зюскинда, "Виолончелистка" М. Крюгера. Доказывается, что названные произведения знаменуют выход из тупика деконструкции, начало поиска Абсолюта в мире-хаосе. Важнейший вопрос статьи - возможно ли, оставаясь в пределах игровой эстетики постмодернизма, воплотить образ идеального и, если возможно, какими художественными средствами?

Акцент в исследовании сделан на анализе романа австрийского автора - Christoph Ransmayr "Die letzte Welt", признанного лучшим произведением европейской прозы конца 1980-х годов. Сюжетную основу романа составляет поиск, интерпретация мистифицируемой и мифологизируемой поэмы Овидия "Метаморфозы", выступающей в роли Книги Бытия. Варианты прочтения знаменитого текста понимаются нами как способы овнешнения, проверки авторского самосознания, попытки приближения к истине. Избранный ракурс исследования позволяет выявить формы авторской саморефлексии через образы-маски, сюжетное повествование, мистификацию текстов мировой литературы, самих персонажей-рассказчиков и систему комментариев к ним. Герои-повествователи, предлагающие различные толкования исчезнувшей поэмы, реализуют собственное понимание действительности, требующее дальнейшего обсуждения и проверки.

Человеческая история сохраняется в памяти, сознании людей благодаря рассказам, авторы которых опираются на собственный экзистенциальный опыт и опыт предшественников, прогнозируют будущее. Процесс познания суть процесс чтения, интерпретации прежних и создания новых текстов, что расходится с основным тезисом постмодернизма о самозамкнутости, герметичности произведения. Овидию в романе открывается тайна ускользающего времени, рая и ада, которую он пытается донести до собеседников. Процесс сопереживания, сотворчества приближает к пониманию метафизических основ бытия. Образ Художника функционально сопоставляется с образом Творца, что оспаривает известный тезис о "смерти автора".

Ключевые слова: европейский постмодернизм, формы авторской саморефлексии, К. Рансмайр, М. Гржимек, П. Зюскинд, М. Крюгер.