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Contextual coherence of the comparisons in D.S. Merezhkovsky's novel

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Abstract

The authors analyze the contextual comparison coherence in Merezhkovsky's novel 'Antichrist, Peter and Alexis' via the semantic-stylistic method and the contextual analysis method. As a result, comparisons in Merezhkovsky's novel serve to highlight the most significant issues and motifs, to expand artistic time and space, and to transmit the worldview of the characters and the narrator. In conclusion, textual interactions of comparisons are implemented at different levels of text division: at the level of sentences, paragraph, chapter, book and the novels in general. They also create semantic coherence of the novel with other parts of the trilogy.

Keywords: Antithesis, Comparative, Construction, Metaphor, Epithet.

Coherencia contextual de las comparaciones en la novela de D.S. Merezhkovsky

Resumen

Los autores analizan la coherencia de comparación contextual en la novela de Merezhkovsky "Anticristo, Pedro y Alexis" a través del método semántico-estilístico y el método de análisis contextual. Como resultado, las comparaciones en la novela de Merezhkovsky sirven para resaltar los temas y motivos más importantes, para expandir el tiempo y el espacio artísticos, y para transmitir la cosmovisión de los personajes y el narrador. En conclusión, las interacciones textuales de las comparaciones se implementan en diferentes niveles de división del texto: a nivel de oraciones, párrafos, capítulos, libros y las novelas en general. También crean coherencia semántica de la novela con otras partes de la trilogía.

Palabras clave: antítesis, comparativo, construcción, metáfora, epíteto.

1. INTRODUCTION

Russian literature in the late 19th – early 20th centuries, the era of wide ideological and esthetic pursuit, is of great interest for the stylistics of artistic speech. Merezhkovsky was one of the most prominent representatives of Russian symbolism. In his works, the writer reflects the literature development trends in the turn of the 19th – 20th centuries. The researchers' attention is attracted by the philosophical views of Merezhkovsky, the features of his poetics, the means of application of the antique and medieval heritage, Merezhkovsky's influence on

European culture of the 20th century and on Russian literature, and Bulgakov's works in particular. Literary scholars study different periods of Merezhkovsky's creative evolution, namely: his early poetry, historical novels of the late 1890s - 1910s, and works of the emigrant period (DAGNINO, 2008).

The linguistic aspect of Merezhkovsky's works is less studied, although linguists are interested in this issue. Thus, Neverova studies the contextual synonymity in Merezhkovsky's trilogy *Christ and the Antichrist*, Sukhanova analyzes the recurring images in the trilogy. The importance of comparison for the creation of an artistic picture of the world is generally accepted. Comparisons, used in the works of Merezhkovsky, have not been studied enough, although some aspects of this problem have been touched upon by researchers. Thus, KONON (2002) analyzes the comparisons in Merezhkovsky's work along with various linguistic means of color and light designation. Neverova studies the comparative conjunctions as part of the contextual synonymic chain in Merezhkovsky's trilogy *Christ and the Antichrist*.

The reader perceives the semantics and function of the comparison in the artistic speech through the context, within the symbiotic systemic coherence of comparison with other linguistic elements of the text. For that reason, the authors consider it effective to analyze the contextual coherence of the comparison in Merezhkovsky's works to identify the linguistic pattern of the artistic worldview. The purpose of the research is to indicate and analyze the

function of the contextual coherence of the comparison in the novel *Antichrist, Peter and Alexis*.

2. METHODS OF THE RESEARCH

In the research, text coherence of the comparison in LOTMAN's (2015) novel is analyzed in the framework of the semantic-stylistic method and the contextual analysis method. The semantic-stylistic method allows for analyzing the lexical meaning and connotative shades of linguistic units that are used in the text to express the comparison. The contextual analysis method serves to identify the means of cohesion between the comparative constructions and the previous and subsequent context. This allows for identification of the comparisons' function in the text and to prove the contextual importance for the reader's perception of the comparisons (METUSHAJ, 2018).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The novel *Antichrist. Peter and Alexis*. is the final part of DEHTYARENOK (2012)'s trilogy *Christ and the Antichrist? The trilogy, as a whole, studies the historical fate of Christianity and its competing spiritual movements in the framework of European history.*

The problem of the novel is determined by the conflict of the traditional Christian worldview and secular rationalistic worldview. The Christian worldview is personified by the image of Tsarevitch Alexei, although the rationalism of the 17th – 18th centuries is presented in the novel by the concept of Western European philosophers and embodied in the person of Peter the Great. The writer sympathizes with the Tsarevitch, who is doomed to martyrdom; however, at the same time, he emphasizes the tragic intractable worldview conflict, as each of them has its own rightness. That is how the Tsarevitch himself perceives his confrontation with his father: Each of them seemed to grasp a distinct truth; and the two truths were doomed to remain eternally contradictory, eternally irreconcilable (DRONOVA, 2009).

Alongside with opposition, conformation is also important in semantic space organization. There is a particular arcane similarity, even between the antagonists, namely, Peter and Alexis. Moreover, the statement of this similarity is the tenor of the novel. In the first chapter of the third book of the novel, Julian Arnheim, the Tsarevitch spouse's maid of honor, noted such a likeness:

I seemed to distinguish in both faces, so unlike in appearance, one common trait - the shadow of some impending grief, as if they were victims, and great suffering was in store for them both (ATROHIN, 2010: 11).

In the third chapter of the fourth book, the Tsarevitch in a moment of anger unexpectedly resembles his father: Distorted by

anger, pale, with flashing eyes, the face of Alexis bore a momentary, mysterious likeness to his father Peter (KALB, 2001).

In the fourth chapter of the same book, the conformation combined with the opposition is noted in Alexei and Peter's description:

Alexis remained silent, his gaze fixed on the ground, his face looking as lifeless as Peter's. One mask confronted the other, and both bore a sudden, strange, phantom-like semblance; two contrasts resembled one another (ANDRUSCHENKO, 2012: 18).

The similarity of the characters is also highlighted in the first chapter of the eighth book. Besides, the idea of similarity is intensified by the comparison with mirrors: "In silence, they gazed at one another, their look had the same expression, and these two faces, so different, were suddenly alike. They reflected and fathomed one another like two mirrors" (KOVALCHUK, 2010: 17).

Thus, the author constantly searches for similarity even among the opposed objects. This determined the importance of the comparisons in the novel. Comparisons are included in various textual relationships. Often words, used in the text as a direct nomination, are subsequently become a component of a comparative structure for the expression of comparison standard. Thus, the direct use of the word prepares the reader for comparison perception. The contextual connection between the comparison and the word used in its direct meaning can be called nominative-comparative interaction.

The reference of the comparison to the earlier mentioned reality helps the narrator to establish diverse relationships between the described objects. So, the coherence of reality and comparison allows for transferring the features of the surrounding natural world to a person. For example, firstly, a stone, on which a praying hermit stands, is mentioned; then the hermit is compared with this stone:

On the rock, in the middle of the glade an old man was kneeling, perhaps some hermit who lived in the forest. His black profile against the golden dawn remained motionless as if carved from the stone on which he knelt (BONETSKAYA, 2012: 15).

In this case, the character is described by the comparison with the landscape component, mentioned in the previous sentence.

The interaction of comparison and reality also allows us to indicate the coherence between the text of this novel and the texts of the previous parts of the trilogy. Thus, the comparison, which standard is taken from the time of the Roman emperors, connects the text of the novel *Antichrist. Peter and Alexis.* with the first part of the trilogy, namely, with the novel *the Death of the Gods, Julian the Apostate.* The comparison is motivated by impression of the maid of honor, Arnheim, from the use of the word emperor to name Peter the Great:

...a cold shiver ran through me; a vision of ancient Rome seemed to flash before me; I heard the rustle of victorious standards, the trampling of brazen cohorts, the cries of soldiers, the acclamations of divine Caesar, 'Divus Caesar Imperator!' (MESCHERYAKOVA, 2012: 17).

The comparison characterizing the religious disputes of the Old Believers also refers to the first part of the trilogy:

This council of peasants in the forest of the Vetlonga resembled in many respects the Council of the Churches held at the Imperial Court of Byzantium in the time of Julian the Apostate, fourteen centuries before (MESCHERYAKOVA, 2012: 17).

In the novel the Death of the Gods. Julian the Apostate, the representatives of different branches of Christianity, gathered at the church council, argue the same way as in the novel antichrist. Peter and Alexis. The characteristic of the Aphrodite statue brought to St. Petersburg, is important for the development of ideological and figurative unity of the trilogy:

She was the same now, as on the hillside in Florence where Leonardo da Vinci's pupil had looked at her with superstitious fear; or, yet earlier, when in the depths of Cappadocia, in the forsaken temple near the old castle of Macellum, her last true worshipper had prayed to her, that pale boy in monk's attire, the future Emperor Julian the Apostate. The comparisons in this phrase emphasize the correlation with similar episodes in the novels the Death of the Gods. Julian the Apostate, and Resurrection of Gods. Leonardo da Vinci. The statue of Aphrodite appears in all parts of the trilogy as a symbol of eternal Hellenic beauty (MESCHERYAKOVA, 2012: 27).

Comparisons and metaphors, implemented in different books and chapters of the novel in textual distance from each other, express a

mechanistic worldview that makes a character, emotionally close to the author, to feel fear and rejection.

4. CONCLUSION

Comparisons in Merezhkovsky's novel form multiple textual relations penetrating the whole work. In the variety of these relations, the authors highlight the following:

- Nominative-comparative interaction;
- Inter-comparative interaction;
- Comparative-metaphorical interaction.

The nominative-comparative interaction is presented in the coherence of comparison with a direct indication of objects and phenomena. Inter-comparative interaction is developed in contextual coherence between the comparisons. This interaction can be characterized by the concentration of semantically related comparisons in a single part of the text. In addition, it can be characterized by chiasm, antithesis and semantic coherence between different parts of the text. Comparative-metaphorical interaction is realized in the connections between the comparisons and metaphors.

Textual interactions of comparisons are implemented at different levels of text division: at the level of sentences, paragraph, chapter, book and the novels in general. They also create semantic coherence of the novel with other parts of the trilogy. Due to these semantic contextual connections, comparisons do not only characterize the objects but also serve to highlight the most significant issues and motifs, to expand artistic time and space in the work and to transmit the worldview of the characters and the narrator.

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