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THE ANALYSES OF CHRONOTOPE OF THE ROAD IN JOHN STEINBECK'S NOVEL "THE GRAPES OF WRATH"

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the literary chronotope to an analyses of depiction of the road travel in John Steinbeck's novel "The Grapes of Wrath" (1939). The analyses illustrates how the work positions itself in relation to the genre of road narratives. The article further observes how the road chronotope is characterized by a detachment between place and time and contributes to figure out some dilemmas associated with American road genre.

KEY WORDS: Chronotope, space and time, genre, chronotope of the road, physical space, concept, geographical space, chronotopical characteristics, physical space.

INTRODUCTION

The chronotope is the place and time where the notes of narrative are tied and united. It can be said without qualification that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative [1]. In other words we can call them as "organizing center" for the events of the novel or a film. Chronotope directly will effect to the genre of the narration. **Each literary work involves variety of genres chronotopical characteristics** combining specific senses of pace and time. The use of chronotope may help us to precisely capture that particular trend of studies of the text and context [2].

By the aid of the time-spaces the narrator will easily draw the focus of the reader to the multiple past, present or imagined future. For instance, if the scene of narration occurs in the "road" in the mind of the reader unconsciously will appear the images of **path** that the protagonist is going to reach to some destination. Consequently, the chronotope is the clue that hints where and when the events of narration occurs.

The chronotope of the "road" has been widely used in literary studies. Bakhtin in his discussion of specific kinds of chronotope identifies "the chronotope of the road" of one of the most enduring in Western literature (Bakhtin, 1981;244). In narratives containing the road chronotope, the protagonist undertakes a journey, in which the distance travelled typically stands in stable relation to the amount of the time elapsed. The protagonist's travel are often paralleled by a metaphorical inner journey, where "the choice of a real itinerary equals the choice of the "path of life" (Bakhtin 1981: 120)

Bakhtin demonstrates some examples of chronotope of the road with Apuleius' "The Golden Ass", in which the hero Lucius is transformed into a donkey and wanders in search the road to return to his original state, acquiring new perspectives on Roman society along the way.[3]

The scholar Timo Muller considers that analyses of chronotope emphasizes the environmental dimension of the narration as it draws the attention to the concrete physical spaces in which stories take place. Muller analyses the chronotope of the **road** which for the conception of the Bakhtin was means of the meeting place, however in modern literature no longer brings people together in this way, because of the means of transportation have altered the way we perceive the chronotope of the road. Nowadays, as Muller considers, car drivers want to minimize the time they spend on the journey. They are interested in the road as physical space, the natural environment around the road, or the environmental implications of their driving [4]

We can see a clear contrast with earlier literary examples such as Robert Frost's poem "The road not taken" or John Steinbeck's novel "The Grapes of Wrath", where the road is described as a part of the natural environment and travelers are interested in that environment.

METHODS AND RESEARCH

In the following article we will discuss and analyze the chronotope of the road through the examples given in "The Grapes of Wrath".



“The Grapes of Wrath” is a novel depicting the life path of American migrants which considered as a road novel. This novel is a brilliant example of how the author used the chronotope of the road to emphasize protagonists feelings by demonstrating the mixture of the space and time.

In the novel Steinbeck tries to illustrate the hard conditions in which the family of farmers like the Joads needed to endure during the Dust Bowl. The all novel is centered to the open road that Joad family had to take and that voyage in the open road from Oklahoma to California could have been how the American dream was formed by the disastrous conditions that was occurring during that time.

The road the migrants take to California is too difficult for a person to travel even today. “Highway 66- Historic Route 66” can be pretty rough for modern means of transportation, but this road was a will for living, hope for future. The road of Oklahoma had become the path of despair, but the road leading to California seemed like a Heaven promising work and prosperity.

“Highway 66 “is the main migrant road. 66 the long concrete path across the country waving gently up and down on the map, from the Mississippi to the Bakersfield – over the red lands and grey land twisting up in to the mountains crossing the Divide and down into the bright and terrible desert and across the desert to the mountains again into the rich California valleys .” (John Steinbeck, 156)

From the given extract the reader can easily imagine the flow of migrants, their sweat, their hardship. The author masterly depicted the chronotope of the road, visualizing each elements of the road so purely. Only by the aid of this passage the reader comprehends how the road of life of the protagonist was full of battle, difficulties and thrust for beautiful life.

“66 is path of people in flight , refugees from dust and shrinking land, from the thunder of tractors and shrinking ownership , from the desert’s slow northward invasion, from the twisting winds that howl up out of Texas, from the floods that bring no richness to the land and steal what little richness is there. From of all these the people are in flight, and they come into 66 from the tributary side **roads**, from the wagon tracks and the rutted country roads. 66 is the mother **road, the road of the flight.**” (John Steinbeck, 156)

The following extract depicts the life path of the protagonist of that time, how they were bored of the problem of the shrinkage of the land, from the dust and even the thunder of tractors. It seems the road 66 would give a hope to refuge all the problems and live a happy life without above mentioned problems.

“The people in flight streamed out on 66, sometimes a single car, sometimes a little caravan. All day they rolled slowly along the **road**, and at night they stopped near water. In the day ancient leaky radiators sent up columns of steam, loose connecting rods hammered and pounded. And the men driving tucks an the overloaded cars listened apprehensively. How far between towns ? It is a terror between towns . If something breaks – well, if something breaks we camp right here while Jim walks to town and gets a part and walks back and – how much food we got?.....’ F we can get to California where the oranges grow before this here ol’ jug blows up “(John Steinbeck, 157)

The details of this passage stress the difficulty and precariousness of the protagonists’ journey on the road 66. They must be aware of every hustle, noise which might signal a vast problem that could lead to misfortune in their desperate journey. The constant worry about money and food grinds them down. Here Steinbeck shows his sympathy to the migrants and emphasizes how their path of destiny was full of sorrow and misfortune. But the symbol of the ” orange” again gives them hope for going on their journey on the open road in the search of better life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The novel “The Grapes of Wrath”(1939)is a sort of work that Steinbeck combines the elements of geographical space with the road chronotope. He combines the narrative elements of the road, geographical space, the space of nature, the space of heroes and urges his heroes to move forward. John Steinbeck uses spatial details like the scene of the road, the scene of the journey, the scene of the desert, the scene of the earth. All these details are connected to each other with the road chronotope as all events in the novel occurs in the open road. The will for the promised “Heaven” makes the Joad’s get ready for the road. The Joad family have a faith that moving to California will tackle all the problems what they have , since this land seems to be a truly paradise, where there is an abundance of food supply and a chance having a good job.

By the usage of highway-roads the author wanted to add a panoramic picture of reality. In this he follows the traditions of M. Twain and J. London. Later, this chronotope is used by D. Kerouac in the novel “On the road” (1957), in which allusions to the book “The Grapes of Wrath” are clearly traced. [5]

In the novel the roads crossed with desert. Here deserts illustrates the border of the old and new lives, destinies of the protagonists. Crossing the roads beyond deserts is too hard for old people and even takes the lives of many of them, but it also urges them to go on and increases their will power.

Many other examples can be found in “The Grapes of Wrath” and each time the open road serves to represent adventure, discovery, escape, freedom, rebellion and often upon the myth of the West about existing utopian society that promising better standard of life. The chronotope of the road in the novel offers a pure critique of the existing society where the protagonists try to find the right way by taking to the road .



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