

Remythologizing Strategies in Modern European Literature at the Turn of XX and XXI Centuries

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Abstract: The article identifies key factors influencing formation of European magic realism. The author of the review article adheres to some dominant features of the modern European prose, i.e. to remythologizing strategies and magical realism as its main peculiarity. Using the aesthetical types of analysis, the author explores the fantastical aspects of prose writing, focusing on the theoretical indicators of magic realism and such important elements of modern literature as fantasy, philosophical mysticism and magic realism combined.

Key words: European magic realism • Latin American novel • Fantasy • Remythologizing strategies • Literary traditions.

INTRODUCTION

The most noticeable tendency in the development of European prose of the turn of the XX and the XXI centuries is ample use of radical genre experiments in the aspect of remythologizing by most modern writers. The period is marked by active search of the new aesthetical forms as the main demand due to contemporary global social and historical changes. Prose works of many modern European writers remind of the multileveled mosaic which subtly combines polyphony of voices, genres and language receptions, skillfully processing elements of melodrama, fantasy, boulevard thrillers, philosophical mysticism and magic realism, the latter being extremely popular in modern cultural context. Mythologizing European authors are deeply involved in the perception of the world rooted in the historical memory of humanity which is reflected in myths, legends and fairy tales [1].

The purpose of the present review article consists in an attempt to classify typological features of the so-called European magic realism as one of the most essential remythologizing strategies in the literary process of contemporary Europe of the considered period. Most prominent literary critics would agree that the term "magic realism" served in its initial meaning as current designation of mythological strategies borrowed from European novels into the Latin American literature of the

second half of the XX century. The number of articles and research works devoted to the problem enables us to differentiate between two methods of magic realism: one belonging to the European tradition and the other belonging to the Latin American trend. We would like to observe here the main features of European magical realism which serve as the basis for considering remythologizing strategies of modern European literature. Quite much importance should, in our opinion, be assigned to the West European literature tendency to use Latin American realia, fantastic and folklore elements, mythological images and motives which in general reflect the poetical concept of myth rather than reality. Partially, it can be explained by the words of the Paraguayan literature critic A. Roa Bastos: "From whatever point of view we consider the Latin American literature, it becomes evident at once that in its own development it resolutely surpassed and left primitive realistic forms far behind. Despite having many styles, aesthetic and even ideological concepts at hand, our writers are aspiring to update traditional forms, canons and systems of figurative means of prose in the global context of literature" [2]. In the present article we partially analyze work of one of the most popular European writers, Daniel Kehlmann, who develops remythologizing strategies in his works and in particular his most widely known novels: "Beerholms Vorstellung" (1997), "Mahlers Zeit" (1999) and "Die Vermessung der Welt" (2005). All his works are heavily

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influenced by magic realism and represent a dramatic shift from the traditional German prose. British critics highly estimate Kehlmann as an "attractive" writer of the new generation who doesn't look for inspiration to Mann or Grass and rather looks to the Spanish magic realism and Anglo-Saxon fiction [3]. In his motherland Germany Kehlmann is awarded such epithets as "modern romantic novelist" and "story-teller philosopher", who follows Pynchon, Mann, Nabokov and Borges [4].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present article is based on the principle of systematic approach to the phenomena of literature and culture. The principle develops philosophical and aesthetic knowledge and gives a more profound multidimensional presentation of the literary work. During research we also used typological, comparative-historical and the method of complete analysis of fiction. For the theoretical basis of our article we have chosen the monographic work of "Magic (al) realism" (2004) of the British researcher M. E. Bowers who thoroughly considers crosscultural options of magic realism. According to the Russian literature professor A. Gugnin, some characteristic receptions for magic realism "weren't essentially new to the European prose" [5]. European writers just attempted to synthesize world experience, with the purpose to get beyond the European type of civilization and world perception. These modern writers successfully showed the European magic realism as part of post-modernist culture, which has many fundamental lines of this trend, over boosted with key concepts of traditional "Caribbean" literature. According to the researcher B. Nevsky European magic realism balances on the verge of fantasy and the realistic mainstream, thus representing a definite aesthetical camouflage of such genres, as science fiction or fantasy" [6]. Evolution of magic realism in Europe, especially in Austrian-German and British literature and criticism, marked a certain desire of the authors to present a universal "idea" in an extensive cultural and mythological context with involvement of traditional supernatural elements. To these belong such writers as A. Carter, S. Rushdie, D. M. Thomas, J. Winterson, D.Kehlmann and many others.

Remythologizing strategies in modern European prose: The European magic realism as a type of the realistic narration erases borders between traditions and novelty i.e. creates experiment in literature. The literature of "magicians" which has gained wide recognition marked the beginning of the new dialogue of cultures achieving

a synergetic effect. The European magic realism became the new phenomenon in the world culture based on the one hand on various layers of the European and world culture and art and on the other hand, enriching them with new various models. Literature of "magic" realism of the Latin American writers, such as Alejo Carpentier, Julio Cortázar, Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa and Jorge Luís Borges, undoubtedly, had a great impact on emergence of this method in the European literature, having presented mythological thinking as the main sign of its philosophy and art originality. Having passed a long-term way of formation, the magic realism was repeatedly exposed to transformation of the contents. While in the second half of the XX century the phenomenon of magic realism adhered to several national literatures, it had then by the beginning of the new millennium greatly expanded its geographical, racial and gender boundaries. The concept of the European magic realism at the turn of the XX-XXI centuries is developed further in the creativity of the whole group of talented European writers, among whom are Hubert Lampo, Milorad Pavić, Anita Mason, Christopher Priest, Ciaran Carson, Jonathan Carroll, Goran Petrovic, Daniel Kehlmann etc.

The most distinctive feature of European magic realism is addiction to supernatural imagination. All the elements of European fantastic literature are adapted for expression of the Latin American mythological collective consciousness. The trend itself arose in Europe and the USA in the second half of the XX century as a result of the boom about the Latin American prose. It led gradually to the term "magic realism" being used to depict creativity of even those writers who had never visited South America. The monographic work "Magic (al) realism" (2004) of the British researcher M. E. Bowers notes its two main directions in the European literature: ontological and epistemological. Ontological magical realism can be described as magical realism that has as its source material beliefs or practices from the cultural context in which the text is set. Epistemological magical realism, on the other hand, takes its inspiration for its magical realist elements from sources which do not necessarily coincide with the cultural context of the fiction, or for that matter, of the writer. Jeanne Delbaere identified a similar difference between what she called folkloric magic realism (similar to the ontological) and scholarly magic realism (similar to the epistemological) in which the magical realism originates either from a particular folk tradition, or is cultivated from a variety of traditions in order to produce a particular narrative effect [7]. The work of the Flemish writer Hubert

Lampo is a good example of such epistemological magical realism, as he acknowledges that he was interested in using magical realist techniques in order to express the mood of Belgium but also to be a part of a larger international literary movement [8]. He draws his magical realist aspects from many sources, but particularly from Greek and Roman mythology. While there is an argument that Greek and Roman mythology have influenced Western European culture, its influence is so historically and geographically removed that this argument does not convince sufficiently to support a claim that Lampo's magical realism originates predominantly in Flemish folklore with its Germanic roots [9]. So the ontological magic realism is actually most recognized in novels of such writers, as, for example, S. Rushdie (India), T. Morrison and B. Okri (Africa) scooping the magic themes of the texts in mythology, cultural beliefs and folklore of the native land. The same way the popular Austrian writer D. Kehlmann in the freakish texture of events and words characterizing local peculiarities helps the reader visualize the magic charms and prophetic dreams associated with Latin American culture. The author succeeds in his works in a very plausible imitation Garcia Marquez's narration, constantly balancing between reality and fantasy [10].

Among the main characteristic methods of the magic realism which has come to the European literature, the researcher of this phenomenon, N. Shamsutdinova, considering A. Karpentier's theories, calls destruction of the idea of time, space and identity [11]. Besides, typologizing the genre of European magic realism, the above-mentioned researcher notes existence of the following characteristics: inexplicable elements, existence of two realities, redundancy at the description of details, life-like realia, obligatory existence of recognizable lines of historical reality, use of fantastic elements etc.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion we should make it a special point that many modern European prose works absorb and transform traditional strategies of magical realism combining fascinating plots and deep philosophical problems and thus remythologizing modern literary context. Judging European reality from the aspect of saturated cultural and mythological context, involvement of elements of folklore, categories of the supernatural and wonderful gives us a chance to reveal individual characteristics of the European magic realism and

acknowledge the latter as one of the main remythologizing strategies of the appointed literary context. Being an important component of novelistic creativity of many modern writers, magic realism clearly dominates modern literary traditions and considerably enriches European literature of the turn of XX -XXI centuries.

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