The Temporal-Spatial Continuum in the Texts of Marina Tsvetaeva and Zinaida Hippius

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Abstract: This article dwells upon the nature of the reflection of temporal-spatial purports in the poetry of two Russian female poets of the 20th century, Marina Tsvetaeva and Zinaida Hippius. Time and space as universal philosophic categories find in their texts a most original interpretation. The authors’ attitude towards the time and place they were at can be assessed in various aspects and this attitude is capable of transforming both in texts from various periods and in the interpretation of readers from various epochs. The topicality of the subject is due to researchers’ keenness on exploring the history of Russian culture, the life and discourse of two iconic figures in Russia’s spiritual life of the 20th century, as well as one’s avid involvement with issues that relate to the modern linguistic paradigm, such as language personality, the language picture of the world, the category of text.

Key words: Time • Space • Text category • Continuum • Author’s language • Poetry • M.I. Tsvetaeva • Z.N. Hippius

INTRODUCTION

Today, all segments of linguistic science are pervaded with so-called “semantism”, i.e. an attempt to fathom the deep-seated, conceptually significant purports of the verbal and cogitative activity of a person. Science is, above all, interested in man himself as the carrier of the axiologic paradigm, his picture of the world, which is objectivized in the person’s language, or his language as a means of categorizing and conceptualizing reality. This is especially significant when it comes to persons who left behind a deep mark in the cultural life of the ethnos, their language, particularly poetic texts, which are an intellectual-moral section of time. The study of the author’s vision of space and the model of time revealed in texts remains a topical task and a promising strand in linguistics, whose anthropocentrism (language in man and man in language; language is “created to man’s measure” [1]), explanatoriness (describing and explaining language facts) and expansionism (the “interdisciplinary synthesis and symbiosis process” [2]) are being brought forward today by the major principles of development. Space and time as universal philosophic and textual categories are structured by the reality interpretation mechanism; they facilitate the objectivization of the author’s intention, worldview and world perception. Acting as a representative of personal purport, temporal and spatial lexemes become markers for the text’s conceptually significant information, which allows them to become a sort of substrate of purport, which stimulates the reader’s reflection and launches through the assessment and interpretation of an image/symbol that makes up its basis the mechanism of rethinking factual data. So how are these categories manifested in the poetry of M. Tsvetaeva and Z. Hippius, of whom time and space were so uncharacteristic in all the aspects of examining both their life and oeuvre?

METHODS

In this regard, this study, which employs an aggregate of methods of description, systematization, contextological, conceptual and derivational analysis, can lay claim to self-sufficiency, since it attempts to expound the characteristics of the functioning of a single temporal-spatial field as a textual and as a philosophic-culturological category.

Main part. In recent years, interest towards the life, oeuvre and language of M. Tsvetaeva has grown considerably in Russia. This is attested to by the fact that national researchers from various areas of humanitarian knowledge have started writing about M. Tsvetaeva and
her phenomenally original style. In our view, there is even “fashion for Tsveetaeva” in Russia today. Her original rhythmic, auctorial punctuation marks, syntactic collocations, keywords, lexical structures, semantic fields, concepts, language anomalies, intertextuality in her verses – these are just some of the topics investigated the most by linguists in texts by M. Tsveetaeva, let alone themes, ideas, issues, symbols, motifs and images in literary studies. The most substantial of investigations conducted in Russia are, in our view, the works of L.V. Zubova, “The Poetry of Marina Tsveetaeva: A Linguistic Aspect” [3] and V.A. Maslova, “The Poet and Culture: The Conceptosphere of Marina Tsveetaeva” [4] and, of course, the multivolume “Dictionary of the Poetic Language of Marina Tsveetaeva” [5].

What is more, there has been active development of Tsveetaeva studies outside Russia. Here are two facts to illustrate this: the first two-volumer of prose by M. Tsveetaeva was published in New York back in 1953, while in the USSR it was only in 1961; the book by S. Karlinsky, “Marina Cvetaeva. Her Life and Art” came out in Berkeley in 1966, while the study in Russian by A. Saakyan, “M. Tsveetaeva: Pages of Life and Oeuvre” did only in 1986 (1910-1922)”. In all fairness, the poet’s creative life happened to have been given more attention in terms of research and interpretation earlier in the works of foreign authors than those based in her homeland. This is due to objective reasons of a social-political and ideological nature. In this regard, S. Karlinsky would rightfully note: “Since great poets belong not only to their country, but to the world, Western Slavists, especially in America, have sought to fill in this important gap in Soviet scholarship and criticism – pending the day when Soviet scholars can again be guided by literary quality in their choice of subjects rather than by political expediency and party pressure” [6: 7]. On the whole, there are currently two major dimensions in the development of Tsveetaeva studies in England and the US: biographical (psychological and psychoanalytical) and interpretational, i.e. “the study of the poet’s mythopoetics and literary sources and the historical-literary and cultural context of their creation” [7: 7]. Of special significance, within the first dimension, are, in our view, both editions of a critical biography by S. Karlinsky and a Tsveetaeva biography by I. Feinstein [9]. Within the second dimension, we can single out the perception of Tsveetaeva legacy in terms of its intertextuality [10], mythopoetics [11], poetic innovation [12], genre originality [13], auctorial worldview/world-perception and attempts to interpret the psychotype of the author [14, 15, 16].

In this regard, the nature of the poetic discourse of Z. Hippius has been investigated to a lesser degree in terms of the literary studies and all the more so, linguistic aspect. However, the uniqueness of her artistic manner has been recognized without reserve by researchers, with their studies being of a different nature: philosophic-ideological [17], literary-critical [18], culturological [19], linguistic [20], etc. The monograph by M. Shaginyan, “On the Bliss of a Have: The Poetry of Z.N. Hippius” (1912), is one of the first attempts to interpret the characteristics of the author’s poetry [21]. The first collective monograph, “Zinaida Nikolaevna Hippius. New Materials. Studies” (2002), which was published in the writer’s homeland only 90 years later, examines the biography and creative journey of Z.N. Hippius, the characteristics of her prose, publicistic writing and literary criticism [22]. Among foreign studies normally dedicated to the activity, motifs, images, characteristics of poetry and prose and artistic manner of Z.N. Hippius [23, 24], one should highlight the numerous works (monographs and articles) of literary scholar T. Pachmuss [25, 26, 27], who devoted special attention to various pages of Hippius’s biography and critical works.

It should be noted that the authors of this article have produced a number of publications on these poets’ texts – namely, the monograph “Time and Space as Categories of Text: A Theory and Exploration Experience (based on material from the poetry of M.I. Tsveetaeva and Z.N. Hippius)” [28].

In the light of the above works, this article is distinguished by the novelty of the issue and is an attempt to interpret and express our own view of the universal categories of time and space in the discourse of M. Tsveetaeva and Z. Hippius, who are given a common ground not only by the female principle but the epoch itself and their subjective-poetic vision of tough reality. They lived during the same time and wrote during the same period of the Silver Age. They lived in the same country, out of which they often took trips overseas and resided for long periods of time in European countries: Czech Republic, Germany and France. These two poets saw one and the same world, one prone to abrupt change, so different in one and the same time, which had always been somewhat “not theirs”. They are given a common ground by the very real time and space. What parts them is, in a way, the literary dimension (school) and, consequently, the spatial-temporal poetic picture of the world, which, above all, is reflected in the characteristics of language structuring and lexical embodiment of purports conceptual to the poets.
Our aspiration towards exploring time and space, concepts of absolutely different conceptual and poetic levels, concurrently and within a single paradigm can be explained in a number of ways. First of all, it is a certain poetically mysterious bluredness of these categories in the texts of both poets. Time and space often form an indissoluble bond, as if smoothly “flowing” one into the other – forming a continuum. M. Tsvetaeva writes: Go, my son, home – go on – To your land, to your age, to your hour… [29], i.e. a time-space dominated in the author’s mind by the notion of belongingness, involvement, which is often actualized in texts through the possessive pronoun “your (one’s)”. With Z. Hippius, the auctorial temporal-spatial concept is associated with the lyrical “ego”. Thus, the I-subject as a worldspace defines the primary characteristic essences of ambient time and space, which are anthropocentrism and psychologism in the perception of ambient reality: All hopes, – all distances and reunions. – Are enclosed into one great circle. <…> Above time, in me. Beginnings and ends come in touch with each other [30]. That is, with Tsvetaeva it is the main character’s immersedness in the time-space, while with Hippius the time-space is “immersed” in the main character and makes up his/her inner organization.

The synergetics of spatial-temporal images and notions is associated with philosophic, historical-culturological syncretism and, no doubt, the syncretism of language forms and constructions. Let us recall the following lines by Z. Hippius: And everything here seems strange and unimportant to me. And, like back there, on Earth, my heart is indifferent. I remember there were times we would seek the end and wait and believe in mortal hope… But death proved as useless and I am as bored as before [30].

Secondly, it is time and space that are the most significant substances in the poetry of these highly intellectual and philosophically profound authors. They talk to time, argue with it; they create it themselves; they now stop it, trying to run away from it and now get into the center of the temporal field. For instance, M. Tsvetaeva boldly declares “Time, I bypass you!” [29]. In fact, an argument, a conflict with time, being turned towards it, which concurrently is conjugated with neglecting it, is one of the major traits of her entire oeuvre. M. Tsvetaeva connects the temporariness of existence with the eternal basis of the world. Z. Hippius, although she did experiment with time, was much more careful in time and with time. Nonetheless, the diversity of her spatial transformations is great: the poet is simultaneously “here” and “there”, “below” and “above”, “thence” and “hence”, “between heaven and earth”, which defines the nature of Z. Hippius’s world perception. Note that this can be an expression of ambiguity in perceiving/apprehending oneself and reality (<…> I rock in a net of air, equally far from Earth and heaven <…> I feel bitter below and it hurts me above… And here I am in the net – neither there, nor here [30]) or, on the contrary, in the harmony and logic of the world order and sometimes in the express detachedness of one’s outlook upon this world (The sky is above; the sky is below. The stars are above; the stars are below. Everything that is above is below as well. If you get it – good for you [30]). The latter is especially characteristic of Z. Hippius: she, figuratively speaking, is “eternal” in the spatial-temporal continuum, in her world-contemplation and philosophical flight of thought. Here, in our view, one can discern echoes of the poetices and esthetic tradition of symbolism and Plato’s two worlds of reality (the apparent, real, mundane and the ideal, eternal, sublime one). M. Tsvetaeva is in constant movement, on the road, in search of a world wherein “versts” and “years”. Through the synthesis of the contextual synonyms “verst” and “years”. No one took away anything – I am delighted we are apart! My kisses for you across hundreds of versts that Divide us… No one has ever watched you go as tenderly and irreversibly … My kisses for you – across hundreds of years that Divide us [29]. In this text we again observe an intertwinement of the temporal and spatial aspects: the continuum forms through the synthesis of the contextual synonyms “verst” and “years”.

A nominal ranking of the extent to which each of these two categories is engaged by the poets reveals that M. Tsvetaeva’s discourse focuses more multifariously and multifacettedly on time, while Z. Hippius’s does on space – she prioritizes place in her poetic world (circle, here – there, heaven – earth, the mirroredness of their reflection, liminality and transgressiveness). The poets themselves are like a conceptual-esthetic antinomy: M.I. Tsvetaeva is more dynamic, specific, real, earthly, while Z.N. Hippius is inert, detached, ideal, eternal.

M. Tsvetaeva and Z. Hippius lived, felt the word; their poetic language is so concinnous and expressive that it is the lexical (verbal) level that becomes key to representing time and space as purport-complexes; yet note that the ways and means of their actualization are different and manifest themselves at all levels of language. Here is a little example. The composition of verses by
M.Tsvetaeva differs greatly from texts by Z. Hippius, who with the title already (she attached special meaning to it: virtually all her verses have a title – an absolutely powerful item in the text, a conceptual dominant) set the stage for what she wanted to say. Most of Z. Hippius’s poetic titles carry spatial and temporal types of purports: “There”, “All around”, “To the bottom”, “Fence”, “Between”, “At the threshold”, “Before”. Now”, “The last”, “Never”, “The clock is paused”, “December 14”, “Anew”, “And then?..”, etc. Whereas M. Tsvetaeva mainly wrote her verses with no titles. Nevertheless, already in the first lines of most of her texts there are words that actualize the theme of time. Thus, for instance, in one of her 400-verse collections [31], the first line of the 138th verse begins with or includes temporal lexemes and locums: “At the age of 15”, “Ah, golden days”, “Generals of the year twelve”, “A day expired”, “I am now a celestial guest”, “Who sleeps at night”, “I don’t know where you and where I am”, “Your years are a mountain”, etc.

The multidimensionality of temporal and spatial views projected in the works of these two poets is, no doubt, associated with the complexity and multilayeredness of the time-absolute and space-world themselves, wherein they found themselves at a crossroads, at an intersection of times and macro- and microspaces. Both poets were persons with an extremely complex, contradictory character, which was bound to be reflected in their creative handwriting: often the same spatial and temporal images (home, Moscow, sky, tomorrow, night, eternity) were seen by the poets in absolutely different tones, multidimensional and impossible to explain logically.

**Inferences:** Thus, the two authors viewed and reflected time and the world (space) on the level of poetic language quite similarly, at the first glance, but, at the same time, rather individually and differently – at a deeper and more scientific glance.

Space and time as conceptually significant categories give us an idea of the poets’ individual style as a special view, instrument, optical device for representing the author’s personality in all the complex intertwining of its psychological, behavioral, culturological, sociological and other components.

The time and space of M. Tsvetaeva and Z. Hippius are a sort of transformers: they contract and expand; the proportions of objects change in them; transformations are also possible in interpretations of these two conceptually significant textual categories; temporality and spatiality act as some infinite single entity wherein each element is capable of growing and turning into a more significant and larger element.

Space and time in the texts of these two poets are not only images-symbols of a peculiar kind but represent the dominant attribute of the I-subject – formalize the “conceptual whole of characters”, to be exact. An interesting pattern: both time and space are capable of moving, actively “entering” the reader; they are capable, ceasing to be just auctorial, of stepping over the text and getting one to evaluate the time-place wherein the reader-researcher finds himself. It is for a reason that today some lines by Z. Hippius (That means it is too early, we cannot have it; That means fate would not have it for us...) [30] and M. Tsvetaeva (I cannot love my age more than the one before, but I cannot create another age but mine either: we cannot create what has been created and can create only frontwards [29]) are more topical than they were in the early 20th century. Today’s reader has missed M. Tsvetaeva and Z. Hippius both in time and space but is happy to be able to have entered and share a single spiritual space with them – and time is powerless then.

These two authors, who are characterized by reflection and self-seclusion, were the omphalos of their worlds, saw and understood absolute being as being outside time and space, which left an imprint on the nature of the spatial-temporal model. The Hippius artistic model of time and space is associated with the concept of two worlds, the dual essence of being, while with Tsvetaeva it is the eternal triunity of time, place and subject. It is thus apparent that the auctorial continuum is anthropocentric in its essence, since with both poets the defining principle is Man and his inner world order. It is important to comprehend that for M. Tsvetaeva truth is the absolute lying outside the boundaries of life, while with Z. Hippius the absolute underlying human existence is referred to as “Man, Love and God”. That may somehow account for the way their stay on Earth ended: the first cut her life short on her own, while the second “left this life” in the afternoon of her life.

This unique model of time and space in the verses of M. Tsvetaeva and Z. Hippius is, above all, represented on the lexical level, whereas the morphological-syntactic characteristics of manifesting temporality and spatiality are yet, in our view, to be described comprehensively in the science of language.

M. Tsvetaeva once said: “I am multiple poets; and how all this has been woven together in me is but my mystery” [29]. Having paraphrased the poet, we could
conclude the article with the following phrase: “Time and space with these two authors are multiple times and spaces. And how they were woven together is a mystery perhaps no one will ever be able to solve to the end”.

REFERENCES