

The Categories "Own" and "Alien" in the Local (Kazan) Text

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Abstract

The article analyzes a variety of semantic aspects of the image of Kazan based on a wide literary material (works of authors of the XIX – early XXI century). The starting point of the arguments becomes a persistent stereotype in the interpretation of this image as a place very far from the center of Russia, located on the border of Europe and Asia. The analysis of the local text through the prism of the opposition of Own/Alien allows us to explain the reasons for the formation of such stereotypes. The biographical circumstances connecting the authors with Kazan, as well as the specifics of historical events reflected in their works, turn out to be significant. The complexity of these reasons causes a negative connotation of city image, a stable tendency to perceive it as alien space. The motive of the prison becomes one of the semantics manifestations of the hostile essence of Kazan. There are also found mythological motives of the passage through Lethe and the folklore motive of the path of the fairytale hero. In some of the studied literary works, the boundary between own and alien space is modeled not on the principle of Kazan / the world beyond its borders but passes inside the urban space. The dichotomy can be built on national and socio-political bases. At the same time, in the reflection of the heroes of the works, both a familiar, habitable space and localized outside the sphere of its existence, can turn out to be their own.

Keywords: Own, Alien, local text, urban text, supra-text, Kazan, artistic space.

Introduction

The local, urban text has become one of the key concepts of modern humanitarian culture. Nowadays, there are two main approaches to the interpretation of this term. In the interpretation of the Tartus school of literary studies and their followers, a local text is a supra-text, a semantic core, distinguished in works dedicated to a particular topos ("Semiotics of the city and urban culture. Petersburg", 1984). A.V. Rudnev, in the "Dictionary of the Twentieth Century Culture", suggests considering the real space of the city as a text or a collection of texts" (Rudnev, 1999).

Unfortunately, the concept of the Kazan text in both understandings of the term, in comparison with the concepts of St. Petersburg, Moscow, and provincial texts, is not developed

Published/ publié in *Res Militaris* (resmilitaris.net), vol.12, n°3-November issue (2022)

in sufficient volume. We believe that there is a necessity for in-depth study of the Kazan text in both conceptions of this term. Classification of individual authors' interpretations of the Kazan text in the context of the opposition of Own/Alien, as we think, will allow us to identify significant semantics elements of the city's image.

Methods

The problems we have stated require a shift in the aspect of research from the local history to the literary-local history. In this regard, not only the historical-functional method is significant, but also the structural-functional and system-typological ones. The problems under development required an interdisciplinary approach since a productive understanding of the local text is impossible without knowledge of the geographical and ethnocultural characteristics of the city and its history. In addition, as already indicated in the works on the theory of imagery (Kotkin, 2005; Prieto, 2013; Westphal, 2011; Burton, 1981; Gizatullina & Hayrutdinova, 2017), it is impossible to study an artistic image in separation from the personality of the author who created it. Herewith, not only the biographical context is important, but also its axiological values.

A special role in solving the tasks assigned to semiotic analysis. We rely on the theory of supra-text developed in the works devoted to the local text of St. Petersburg, Moscow, the province, as well as individual variations of urban provincial texts ("Semiotics of the city and urban culture. Petersburg", 1984; Toporov, 2003; Lilly, 2002; "Moscow and the Moscow Text of Russian Culture", 1998; Belousov et al., 2020; Abashev, 2008; Sorochan, 2010; Lyusy, 2003).

Results and Discussion

Dominant characteristic of Kazan has always been an indication of the its border position between Europe and Asia, as well as the extreme distance from both Russian capitals. Meanwhile, Kazan is located quite far from the Ural Mountains, along which the official border of Europe and Asia passes. The same fact that the city's appearance organically combines the features of the west and the east is due to its history. Moreover, the distance from Kazan to Moscow is approximately equal to the distance from Kazan to the Ural Mountains. Consequently, the stereotype about the city location almost at the edge of the world also does not find confirmation.

The specificity of such a perception of space is usually explained by the fact that since the 1830s, the features of a provincial city as an influential topos of Russian culture began to manifest themselves in the perception and representation of cities. We consider that the specificity of the reception of Kazan in fiction and memoiristic is due not so much by the image of the city itself or the tradition of its perception in the context of a provincial text, as by several extra-literary reasons.

It so happened that, at least in the 19th century, no sufficiently great Russian author worked in Kazan during his creative maturity. But many of them visited Kazan for various needs: Pushkin collected materials for a book about Pugachev, N. Nekrasov – in the hope of getting money to establish a magazine, I. Goncharov – returning from a voyage on the frigate Pallada, A. Ostrovsky – traveling along the Volga, G. Uspensky – traveling throughout the country, V. Korolenko – being the Nizhny Novgorod correspondent of the Kazan newspaper "Volzhskiy Bulletin", N. Chernyshevsky – being a teacher of the Saratov high school, accountable to Kazan University, N. Garin-Mikhailovsky – researching the construction of the railway, V. Zhukovsky – accompanying the heir to the throne on a trip to Russia, E. Baratynsky – visiting his father-in-law, etc. So Kazan for them, by definition, was an "alien" space, different from the city they were used to, in which they lived constantly.

Also note that, despite a large number of travelers, the railway to Kazan was built only in 1896. Before that, everyone who wanted to visit the city had to endure the hardships of a multi-day overland road. For example, I. Goncharov compares his four-day trip to Kazan to torture. He notes that as they approached the city, certain changes occurred with the travelers; there is a kind of alienation of people from themselves, their essence. This situation is compared with the changes that occur with the heroes of fairy tales when they find themselves in the "far away kingdom", far Tmutarakan. It can be said that the heroes of N. Gogol's poem "Dead Souls" were right, expressing doubts that Chichikov's chaise would be able to get to Kazan. Indeed, it was very difficult and unsafe to get to the city by overland in the first half of the 19th century. It is not by chance that there is a parallel with the situation of the Russian road in folk tales. There, the hero, leaving his own space and going on a long journey, is forced to enter into a confrontation with some hostile forces that inhabit alien space.

In addition to the overland route, it was possible to get to Kazan relatively quickly by waterway. However, the Volga is a full-flowing river, especially during the spring flood. For example, A. Herzen remembers that when he came to Kazan, the Volga was overflowing for fifteen miles or more. This journey from one station to another, from one coast to another, was often fraught with a real threat to life. This allows us to relate the waterway to Kazan with overcoming Lethe, the border between the empire of the living and the empire of the dead, which is undoubtedly alien to a living person. This mythological parallel at the same time gives the image of Kazan a negative connotation.

The negative connotation of the city's image, especially in documentary works, is also explained by the fact that visiting Kazan was not always associated with the goodwill of those who left written responses. The fact is that the main lines of connections – the Orenburg and Siberian paths - passed through Kazan. It is on the way to hard labor that the Decembrists, A. Radishchev, N. Chernyshevsky, A. Herzen, M. Saltykov-Shchedrin, F. Dostoevsky, and others stop in the city. It was the last frontier of civilization on the way to Siberia. Hence the idea of Kazan as a prison city and a city located almost on the edge of the world. It is not strange that the space of the city is perceived not just as alien, but as hostile.

The daily life of townspeople to a person forcibly alienated from his home and his usual life seems almost a ridicule of his difficult life situation. From this point of view, an episode of N. Nekrasov's poem "Russian Women" is indicative, which describes the stay of Maria Nikolaevna Volkonskaya at the Kazan hotel of the Noble Assembly. From the windows of the hotel, the heroine of the poem saw the ball. A woman who goes to Siberia to visit her exiled Decembrist husband and is deprived of all noble privileges because of this, someone else's joy, of course, seems inappropriate.

Interestingly, the motive of the prison is also found in L. Tolstoy's memories of Kazan, although he was never convicted of a convict. It happened that right in front of the house where the orphaned Tolstoy children arrived in Kazan, there was a prison. And their aunt-guardian P. Yushkova took the children to the service at the Ostrog church, because it was located closest to home. Ordinary townspeople were separated from the guards by a transparent partition, and this impression greatly influenced the future writer.

The twentieth century, unfortunately, continues the exile-convict theme. For example, E. Ginzburg's "Harsh Route", several works by V. Aksenov, G. Yakhina's novel "Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes". The last of these novels is most interesting in the aspect of the relation between the motive of violence against a human person and the perception of urban space in the context of the capital/ province opposition. It would seem that for a black, battered woman from far Tatar village Kazan is not just a province, but the capital. Meanwhile, in the description of Kazan in the novel, the motives of grayness and dirt characteristic of the provincial text are significant. Zuleikha perceives the city as a photonegative because for her, having just lost her husband and traveled to unknown lands, the world is generally devoid of bright colors.

The negative connotation of the image of Kazan and the perception of the city as an alien space are also because many authors have described dramatic periods of Kazan history. Moreover, they visited the city at a bad time. For example, A. Tolstoy in the story "The Viper" describes the horrors of the Civil War, a fire in a military hospital. O. Ilyina-Boratynskaya also writes about the tragic events of the revolution and the Civil War in the novel "White Road. The Russian Odyssey. 1919-1923». G. Yakhina in the above-mentioned novel describes the era of collectivization and dispossession. E. Ginzburg and V. Aksenov describe political repression. During the Second World War in Kazan, there was a temporary accommodation for evacuated authors and their families. The national tragedy of the war, domestic disturbance give the image of the city a gloomy flavor. In addition, many people here received funerals for loved ones who died at the front. Personal tragedy reinforces the tendency to alienate from the space associated with unpleasant memories.

The narrator's hostility to urban space is clearly expressed in A. Pushkin's novel "The Captain's Daughter". The plot of the novel occurs in the time of Pugachev's rebellion. And A. Pushkin, as is known, was an opponent of violent attempts to change the course of history, did not welcome riots and rebellions. And the image of a ruined city is a kind of reflection of his

philosophical views. It should be mentioned that A. Pushkin during his trip to Kazan, although he visited the Kremlin, was not interested in the ceremonial side of the city. He, by his admission, dragged himself around the neighborhood, through the taverns, since it was the place where the surviving witnesses, and sometimes the participants of the Pugachev rebellion, lived. The author came to Kazan precisely to collect and study historical material. It is not surprising that the habitats of the urban poor are perceived by the metropolitan nobleman as alien space.

A different interpretation of the image of Kazan is found in the works of authors who lived in Kazan for a relatively long time. In their perception, the city combines its own and alien space. However, the principles of delimiting these spaces differ significantly from writer to writer.

The dichotomy of space reflected in M. Gorky's novel "My Universities" is due to the division of the city on ethnic grounds. Back in 1552, after the fall of Kazan by Ivan the Terrible, the entire Tatar population was evicted beyond the boundaries of the posad. This is how the Tatar settlement was formed, with unique architecture and a unique atmosphere. The border between the Russian and Tatar parts of the city was very clear until the revolution of 1917.

Therefore the idea of the life and manners of the Tatar settlement in the perception of Russian-speaking authors, including M. Gorky, is mainly mythologized. It seemed to the hero of M. Gorky that good-natured, affectionate people live in the Tatar settlement in a special cleanliness life. It should be noted that to the inhabitants of the Tatar settlement, their life did not seem clean at all, and people were good-natured. Perhaps that is why the genres of social comedy and satirical novels dominate in Tatar literature (Galimullina et al., 2019). The narrator in M. Gorky's "My Universities" simulates in his mind the way of life in the Tatar settlement as the antithesis of the world in which he exists.

In V. Aksenov's story "The apple of my eye: Instead of a memoir", the dichotomy of space is set by the peculiarities of the historical epoch. The time of action is the era of political repression of the 1930s. And therefore, in the urban space, the images of the house and the Brown Ravine where was located NKVD stand out and oppose each other like two poles and two value systems. Traditionally, it is assumed that semantically and emotionally contrasted spaces are also opposed according to the principle of transparency/insularity. In this case, both spaces are characterized by insularity. But this quality is subjectively perceived differently by the main character. The space of the Brown Ravine feels like a pressing space, depriving a person of freedom, alienating him from himself. The house appears not only as a personal, habitable space, but also as a metaphorical defense. Although a small, individual space turns out to be defenseless before the superior power of the state and history, it creates a dichotomy in the image of the city.

Summary

Thus, the perception of Kazan in the context of the Alien category dominates in Russian literature. The semantics of the alien in the local Kazan text is associated with a complex of

Res Militaris, vol.12, n°3, November issue 2022

motives with a negative connotation: inaccessibility, ruin (poverty), prison (exile), death. This perception of Kazan is due to several historical and biographical circumstances. Consequently, the structure of the Kazan text is dominated by the subjective nature of the reception of the image of the city.

From this point of view, examples of modeling urban space as dichotomous, combining the features of Own and Alien, deserve special attention. The space inhabited by the hero in the works we have studied is not perceived, despite the prevailing stereotype of perception of the image of the house, as uniquely Own. A situation is possible when the subjective dissatisfaction with his existence provokes the hero to the desire to leave the hostile space of his daily existence. And then objectively alien space is perceived as more prosperous, and therefore more desirable, that is, it's own at the axiological level.

It should be noted that all three trends highlighted by us in the reception of the image of Kazan inevitably lead to the mythologization of certain small locus and aspects of city daily life. This feature of the perception of the local text has already been noted by researchers in the supra-text of St. Petersburg (Afanasev et al., 2020).

Conclusions

As noted above, the authors referred to in this article have been in Kazan for a short time. It can be assumed that the character of the local text created by them is due to the fact that the city is alien to them. He is not their homeland, their home. In this regard, it appears promising to compare the supra-text studied by us with the reception of the image of Kazan by those writers who live in this city permanently. Since the Kazan writers' community consists not only of Russians, but also of Tatar writers, this will allow us to raise the question of the similarities and differences of ethnocultural variants of the local text.

Acknowledgements

This paper is performed as part of the implementation of the Kazan Federal University Strategic Academic Leadership Program.

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