

SPANISH NEO-GOTHIC NOVEL AS A DIDACTIC RESOURCE (BASED ON SHORT STORIES BY C. RUIZ ZAFÓN)

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Abstract

The novels of the most famous Spanish novelist C. Ruiz Zafón are written for the young. The main characteristic of his work is the dualism of images and the plot, as well as their intertextuality. The main binomial in Ruiz Zafón's novella is the pair of angel/demon, which has an extensive literary history and motivates a wide polylogue and discussion.

The undoubtedly precise artistic images-comparisons in the novels the author analyse are saturated with the considerable expressions of sensitivity. The reader meets an angel with reptile eyes, in black robes, with a wolf (dog) grin, animal fangs, claws, furry paws and a smell of sulfur. Such fruits of artistic fantasy, subjected to deliberate infantilization and stylized as adolescent perception are a manifestation of the most critical universal antitheses (light/darkness, harmony/ deformity, life/death). They are complemented by the metaphorical motifs of a mask, game, shadow, mirage, sleep that are appealing for the student audience.

The conclusions of this review can be helpful not only for the students but also for researchers.

Keywords: C.Ruis Zafón, neo-Gothic, modern Spanish literature, the artistic picture of the world, motivation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Spanish neo-gothic novel is an original didactic resource in the education in the humanities, genetically going back to the romanticism of Shelley and Goethe, feeding on the energy of magical realism that arose in Latin America in the 20s of the last century as the apotheosis of a century-old overcoming of alienation from the original culture of indigenous peoples (Ilyina, 2016). Initially, in some countries, the descendants of the conquistadors went by turning to the myths of local civilisations, while in others they resorted to "literary myth-making" (Larikova, 2018). Thus, the fantastic world of the Spanish writer C. Ruiz Zafón owes much to the symbolism of the iconic images of world literature of the XIX-XX centuries, embracing both the Old and the New World.

The current world is going through a process of rethinking the contradictory reality and the role of humans in it, summing up the results of two millennia of civilisation development. The success of the novels of C. Ruiz Zafón is explained by the fact that he was able to perceive the popular literary techniques of his predecessors, to delicately feel the needs and specifics of the young, as well as the market conditions of the literature.

1.1 Methodology

The authors believe that the study of literary work as a didactic resource should be carried out from the standpoint of linguistic analysis of the text, which lies at the heart of all linguistic methods and is characterised by extreme ambiguity. In this paper, we combine the method of linguistic analysis with literary analysis. At the same time, the defining moment that unites linguistic methods is the idea of the text as a unit of analysis. The method of complex text analysis used in the work includes the analysis of a number of factors, which makes it possible to trace the relationship between the linguistic and extra-linguistic perception of the text. The didactic significance of such an analysis is inexhaustible in the process of language teaching, since the linguistic component will allow senior students to refine their language skills, and the extra-linguistic aspect will provide an opportunity to get acquainted with the cultural aspects of Spanish and world realities, religious concepts, and will serve as a powerful impetus for enhancing motivation in learning. This analysis can be transferred to the audience, and on this basis can be created the basis for language debates improving communication skills. Using the method of text analysis, along with students, one can explore the structure of literary styles and their speech consistency, considering the style of C. Ruiz Zafón as a unity of three main components: a linguistically interpreted communication situation, stylistic features and a set of language tools. Using special techniques, one can see much more in the text. Content-compositional, cultural-historical techniques for analysing a literary text, meaningful linguistic analysis, stylistic analysis of the text, as well as techniques for drawing up scenarios of intercultural conflict, describing the behaviour of the characters of the text can be used.

2. DISCUSSION

The books of Ruiz Zafón are inhabited with figures of angels, which display the traits of shapeshifting, becoming nightmares, transforming into symbols of fear and despair. The wings of the angel become the wings of the devil, and the fingers transform into paws with claws, resembling the shapes of a bat; pupils turn into bloody crevices. One of the angels of Ruiz Zafón, always dressed in black, walks like in Bulgakov's novel, accompanied by a yellow-eyed black cat, whose breath spreads stench and strikes horror (*La Sombra del Viento*, 310).

The characters of many novels of Ruiz Zafón (*Lazarus*, *Kolvenik*, *Cain*) have many similarities with Lucifer, Beelzebub, Mephistopheles, Faust. They think that they are gods who can create life from death. In the "Marina", *Kolvenik*, the creator of hellish machines and figures, reviving and killing all living things, sculpts monsters, gives them terrifying screeching voices, and supplies jaws with metal tusks. Then he appears as a failed imitator of the Creator. He will have to realise that he cannot accomplish the work of God. In *The Shadow of the Wind*, the writer *Carax*, unrequited in love and who has sold his soul to the devil, appears as a classic vehicle of duality: inextricably linked with the characters of the novel, he merges with them and declares that they are all he, Julián *Carax*. (*La Sombra del Viento*, p. 206). As a child, he found solace by mastering figurines of angels with a wolf grin. When Christmas came, Julián was entertained by rearranging the figures of the crib and inventing stories in which the Three Wise Men abducted baby Jesus with terrible goals. Soon he had a mania to invent stories with spirits coming out of the walls and devouring human thoughts while their owners were sleeping.

In the novel, "The Palace of Midnight" the angel and the devil are two sides of the same essence, symbols of destruction and revenge. The split gives access to the problem of a person searching for his true implementation in life, his intended purpose, the need for moral choice in every step and collision with the inevitable consequences of this choice. Inversion and fusion, opposition and unity permeate the fabric of each work. With obsessive constancy, the author is faithful to the dualistic figure of the angel-demon, the image of a fallen angel. The life and relationships of the actors are presented as a continuous series of mutual reflections and transformations. Barcelona is charming in the afternoon; at night it becomes gloomy and dangerous; Engineer Chandra in "The Palace of Midnight", passing through fire, turns from a benefactor and an altruist into a murderer and a villain; Hell conquers Paradise, being its weird heir. The world of bizarre werewolf - mechanisms is revealed in "The September Lights", in which the shadowy twilight, instead of the door handles, there appear smiling and winking faces. Hundreds of puppets and toys crowd in endless shelves and window displays. Hang on an invisible ceiling, a merry-go-round of fairies, dragons and stars

dances in the void (Las Luces de Septiembre, p. 27). This is how the house of the main negative character is described: innocent at first glance, the figures of fairies and stars create an atmosphere - both ominous and fascinating. In a number of episodes, characters are viewed as dolls, mechanisms, tools, things, masks, mannequins without faces.

The concept of duality of the essence of the universe and people is also manifested in the complex and mysterious psychological category of the dream that appears in all the myths of the world. The dream is the quintessence of mixing reality and illusion: it is a mysterious mediator, reflecting the interconnection of the internal and external worlds (Sharov, 2017). In Ruiz Zafón's novels, the motive of prophetic dreams is one of the symbolic foundations of the works, where the reality of reality itself is questioned.

In "The Angel's Game", the participants of the events see a prophetic dream, where a silent escort, holding burning candles, surrounds a pedestal of darkened marble (El Juego del ángel, p. 242). After a while, appearing in a dream, the procession will proceed into reality.

We need to note that this perception of the duality and illusiveness of life, life as a dream, is very characteristic for the Spanish mentality and culture (Melchakova, 2007). It is necessary to recall the play "La Vida es sueño" ("Life is a dream") by Spanish playwright Calderon de la Barca. Its name has acquired the status of a catchphrase. After all, theatrical performances and the phenomenon of the dream can be interpreted as creative processes that reflect both the very life of a person and reflection on it - the processing of personal experience (Ivanov, 2007). Regret about the helplessness of a person and recognition of his capabilities are fusing in the works of C. Ruiz Zafón. Often, his characters can bravely and directly admit their disability and fears. Awareness of weakness inevitably elevates a person over the circumstances. All these topics, of course, vividly excite the current students.

In the works of Ruiz Zafón, the chanting of a person from the ancient times is intertwined with a decadent postulate about the incapacity that manifests itself in various vicissitudes. To compensate for the dissonance of these two opposing views on a person is not difficult: one needs to "declare the world an illusion. The greatness of a person is illusory, but his dependence on divinity is also illusory" (Ivanov, 2007).

Duality, being the basis of Ruiz Zafón's creative method, is also manifested in the exploitation of the image of the shadow. It is not by chance that one of the books of his tetralogy, which created a furor, is called "The Shadow of the Wind". Following Jung, the author interprets the image of the shadow as the embodiment of the unconscious component of the human psyche or as something sinful and aggravating, of which the individual cannot help to get rid. Here Ruiz Zafón, who has read all mystic writers, is the heir to Edgar Allan Poe and Isaac Asimov ("First Law"). In "The September Lights", the mysterious shadow, that pursues Lazarus, will find itself in a glass vial plunging into it like a gas whirlwind.

Shadow is a universal symbol. This topic is a fertile ground for various discussions with students. In a conversation with them, it is appropriate to recall that Karl Jung and his student Erich Neumann suggested: the suppression of his/her destructive instincts by a person forms in the psyche something like an inner shadow, ready to break free (Nueman, 1969). In ancient cultures, it was considered a sin to step on someone else's shadow (Jung, 1970: 53); the wife was supposed to stand in the shadow of her husband (Jung, 1970: 113). At the same time, it is the shadow that reflects the person in his integrity (Jung, 1970: 127). Almost all anti-heroes are provided with a double shadow: Chandra-Javal in "The Palace of Midnight", Kolvenik in the "Marina", Carax in "The Shadow of the Wind", Lazarus in "The September Lights". The disappearance of the shadow means the cessation of life: "The bottle has broken into a thousand pieces; like the breath of a deadly curse, the shadow vanished forever. Also, Lazarus felt "life slowly leaving him" (Las Luces de Septiembre, p. 275).

In the ending of the novel "The Game of the Angel," we see the author's fusion of shadow and the covenant with the devil, to which David sells his soul in order to write a book. He does not age: wrinkles will never peck his face. David will have to run a thousand times from his own shadow, looking around in terrible anticipation to meet it behind him, around the corner, across the street or by the bed in the endless hours before dawn.

3 CONCLUSIONS

By interpreting the duality of behavior and thinking of his contemporaries through the acceptance of duality, the postmodern writer focuses on the characteristics of the mass consciousness of young people of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, squeezed by archetypes of cruelty and myths of horror imposed on them, captured by squalling computerisation and robotisation associated with inhumanity.

Heaven and Hell at C. Ruiz Zafón are polar, but at the same time, they mutually feed each other. Because

the novels of C. Ruiz Zafón correspond to the taste preferences of the modern youth, the mere fact of appealing to them increases the motivation to learn Spanish at high classes.

The study of books by C. Ruiz Zafón can provide learning of new lexical units because memorisation processes can occur at a subconscious level. The combination and repeatability of lexical units in communication provide firm involuntary memorisation. The lexical material is memorized through the prism of artistic images. Most often, only with the help of involuntary memorisation, one can later consciously and productively remember the entire text. A specific role in understanding and memorizing followed by instant recognition of lexical units in the text is played by the establishment of certain spatial relationships and the stereotypical nature of the language and the underlying associative links of the word that form the basis of any language.

The assignment on the formation of intercultural communicative competence from a literary text can be represented by tasks that develop translational competence (literary translation exercises, tasks for choosing the best translation option from several suggested ones).

Discursive competence is a complex formation from the point of view of its development. The discursive stage is aimed at obtaining practical skills in overcoming communicative obstacles in the achievement of communicative tasks. Students learn to define communication strategies, use language means with which to express thoughts, vary the means of linguistic expression, use sound presentation techniques, ways of communicating speech, linguistic means of creating speech emotionality, subjective attitude. The most important at this stage is the predominance of interactive speech, interviews and role-playing games.

The stage of creative interpretation of the text aims the activity of students to a new creative solution of communicative tasks. The proportion of creative unprepared speech and the increasing role of speech independence intensify with the complexity of speech problems. The correlation of extracted information with its unchanging experience stimulates the multiple feedback to the text in the form of specific products of the process of semantic text perception. The system of ideas and conclusions based on personal experience, and being implemented in the process of self-expression and self-knowledge, determines the content of the feedback. Passing through a specific dose of the material, they are continually changing, acquiring new links. The life experience and the learning experience of students form the basis of the process of thinking. In the course of understanding the source text, new concepts and ideas are formed, assumptions are made that students will actively use in interpersonal communication.

Working on authentic fiction text provides plentiful opportunities for speech practice: it develops the skills of parrhesia, shows the functioning of linguistic phenomena in speech, implements the connection of types of speech activity, and stimulates the transfer of text-to-speech material. In reading students master the proposed models; select the most effective methods of work.

The proposed pedagogical model allows us to get away from the traditional approach to reading in a foreign language. In it, problems of perception of an authentic fiction text are considered from the point of view of problems of intercultural communication. The proposed technology reduces the time for learning, lays the skills of independent work with poetic text and provides extensive opportunities for self-development and professional growth.

Awareness of the teacher in the field of modern foreign literature strengthens his prestige and expands the range of topics for discussion in the classroom, which improves the communicative competence of the students.

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