MACRO-RHYTHMIC ANALYSIS OF R. M. RILKE’S PROSE (BASED ON “THE NOTEBOOKS OF MALTE LAURIDS BRIGGE”)

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The article provides survey of such problematic phenomenon as literary prose rhythm and its basic difference from cognominal notion in poetry. One of the structural aspects of prose organization in R. M. Rilke’s novel “The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge” is studied. This aspect is specifics of prose rhythm organization on macro-level. General objective laws for rhythmic organization are revealed. The author draws a conclusion that architectonics of the text is specified by the character of narration, rhythm of inner monologue ideas of the protagonist, switching from external reality description to interior feelings and emotions experienced by Malte and transition to author’s reminiscences.

Keywords: prose rhythm, structural-compositional principle, novel, macro-level rhythmic peculiarities, fragmentarity, literary whole.

ANAЛИЗ РИТМА ПРОЗЫ Р. М. РИЛЬКЕ НА МАКРОУРОВНЕ (НА МАТЕРИАЛЕ «ЗАПИСОК МАЛЬТЕ ЛАУРИДСА БРИГГЕ»)

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В статье дается обзор проблематики такого феномена как ритм художественной прозы и его принципиальных отличий от одноименного явления в поэзии. Рассматривается один из структурных аспектов организации прозы в романе Р. М. Рильке «Записки Мальте Лаурйдса Бригге», а именно специфика организации ритмов прозы на макроуровне. Являются общеструктурные ритмические закономерности. Делается вывод о том, что архитектоника романа обусловлена характером повествования, ритмом идей внутреннего монолога главного героя, переключением от внешнего описания действительности к внутреннему переживанию героя и перехода к авторским reminiscences.

Ключевые слова: ритм прозы, структурно-композиционный принцип, роман, макроуровневые ритмические особенности, фрагментарность, художественное единство.

The problem of rhythm in prose continues to stay actual and controversial for literary scholars, linguists, theorists and experts of translation. Many of researchers are agreed on the point that rhythmic effects can be ascribed to both prose and poetry. But, it should be said that poetic and prosaic rhythms are two different types of artistic and structural organization of the text. Arnold Nelson explains this difference in the following way: “The quality of rhythm in prose is more subtle than in poetry, but surely it is there. A strictly observed line rhythm, rhyme are outlawed in prose. Even alliteration is discouraged. Prose seems devoted more to the straight communication of thought; the indirectness of poetic effects distracts the reader. Still, writers of prose obviously pay attention to the effect of rhythm” [8].

Such specialists as K. I. Chukovsky, A. V. Fedorov, A. M. Peshkovsky, F. Zelinsky, U. M. Lotman, G. R. Gachechiladze, M. M. Girshman, V. M. Zhirmunsky, N. V. Cheremisina, G. M. Kalancha, N. S. Leites, G. N. Ivanova-Luckjanova, E. I. Zamjatin, K. Marble worked on defining the notion of prosaic rhythm in general and on studying the levels of its formation, the hierarchy of its levels in fiction, on detecting the basic rhythmic unit and rhythmic structures in particular. Reconstitution of prose rhythm in translation of literary writings is, in its turn, an actual subject for studies in theory and practice of literary translation.

Undoubtedly, lots of various theories explaining essentials of prosaic rhythm were put forward by Russian and foreign linguists. However there is still some kind of deficiency of works on rhythmic diversity of certain writers’ prose writings, including ones by R. M. Rilke.

Before moving on to the analysis of rhythmic effects in R. M. Rilke’s prose and its translations, we think it would be well-timed to give the definition of prose rhythm offered by M. M. Girshman: “specific, different from poetic rhythm, imprinting depth processes of life motion – that universal life motion which fills up and is reflected in creative individuality of an artist” [3, p. 7] (transl. by E. Sherstneva).

E. I. Zamyatin suggests that there is no definitely stated rhythm in prose, there is some kind of rhythm with its rules but no cadency, because cadency can be considered a disadvantage of prose, which should by all means be avoided by the author. Zamyatin asserts overpowering complexity of analysis of rhythmic effects in prose compared to poetry putting all his hopes on a qualitative rather then a quantitative analysis of the former [9, p. 363].

T. V. F. Brogan, for example, ascribes prose higher degree of structuredness and regulation, compared with communication, emphasizing the fact that prose is “more formal and more structured than virtually all speech, certainly than ordinary quotidian discourse” [2, p. 979].

N. S. Leites believes that in prose rhythm is not so clear, as compared with poetry, but it manifests itself in the development of the text as a whole, on all of its
levels, including general composition, storyline, characters portrayal, repetitions, contrasts, motives diversification, phrase, paragraph, chapter structure. Rhythm contributes to the creation of a definite key-note, which through pathos is connected with the message [4, p.31]. Thus, we can observe quite a global approach to comprehension of prose rhythm. Definitely, rhythm of prose should be studied at all levels of the text to give us multifaceted and complete idea of it, its functions and effects.

There is noticeably an apparent problem in studying of R. M. Rilke's prose in its rhythmic aspect as it is very special. E. A. Stepanova with good reason calls it "a poet's prose". The researcher believes that the idea of art and its creator which are central for Rilke's work are structure-forming, content-related dominant ideas profoundly reflected in Rilke's novel "The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge" [8, p. 1, 10–11].

When we speak about rhythm in the context of macro rhythm it should be taken into account that in the novel under consideration there are some objective laws or consistent patterns revealing themselves in the sequence of abstracts and paragraphs which can be regarded as author's device used for establishment of contrast and harmony in narration. It is worth mentioning that predisposition to assert the substantiality of macro-rhythm as composition-forming factor is profoundly developed in M. M. Girshman's work, the researcher says that rhythm is filled with inner relations with other levels of narrative structure, gets its intonation-expressive, plot-compositional functions, implements authors energy and organizes prose as a literary whole [3, p. 75].

A. Nelson reformulates the idea of rhythm viewing it from the other esthetic angle; he draws our attention to the fact that not all the rhythmic effects in prose are derived through sound. "Repetition of images, ideas ... may be rhythmic". In A. Nelson opinion the central rhythmic effects in prose "transcend the bounds of the single sentence. Any element that conveys movement, suspense and fulfillment, or logical or temporal progression may give the reader the sense that he has experienced rhythm – and beauty" [7]. Therefore, comprehension of prose rhythm cannot be limited only by qualitative metering of phonetic, lexical and syntactic organization of prose. There exists connection between rhythmic peculiarities of a surface text structure and depths of its meaning.

Here are the structural parameters of "The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge": the novel is divided into seventy one fragments, their length varies from three sentences (the 15th fragment) up to more than ten pages (the 15th fragment), three issue-related parts comprise it: Paris, childhood memories and reader's recollections, but there is still no unanimous opinion as to the exact division between these thematic parts.

Most of Rilkeans claim that the novel is fragmentary, discordant, diary-styled and segmentary [5, 6]. For the main character of the novel there is no logic, no regularities in his world of dreams, which are chaotic, not connected, contradicting each other. They triumph over his mentality fugling his hastyful neurotic pen. And Malte's task in uniting them into something whole and unified is unachievable, that makes the source for his inner discord. Though Malte cannot make an integral comprehensive literary work out of these fragments, he brilliantly succeeds in particular, in separate episodes, where single pages form vibrant stories which miserably fail to consolidate in mature synthesis. That accounts for the abrupt ending of the novel. Malte remains in his state of quest, inner discord and dissonance, not acquiring harmony for himself. N. Litvinets suggests that general rhythm of the work assembles into a flexible, fanciful structure [5, p. 7–17].

As we know Rilke guided to read his novel against its movement. In his interview with his French translator M. Betz, Rilke himself says that in "The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge" there was a cut, split rhythm, which was obtruding itself upon him. Some of the pages were written by chance. Some were letters, some notes, abstracts from a diary, blank verses [1, p. 164].

All these attests to the fact that the rhythm in the novel goes beyond the textual rhythmic structure. It's not only rhythm of sentences, words and syllables, it is rhythm of ideas, ideas developing in Malte's inner monologue and transforming into his "self-dialogue". We can observe some scheduled consistency in the length of fragments. For instance, fragments, which are connected with Malte's present, things that he sees, events that he witnesses mostly are pretty short. Here we can refer to the fragments with the description of Paris, its life, its people: 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 17, 22 in the first part of the novel. Fragments connected with Malte's reminiscences are much longer. We can find Malte's reminiscences about his childhood, his family and relatives and, what is more, these fragments are interconnected with the present experience of the poet. He antedates his thoughts by remembering some by-gone episodes, trying to clarify his present reactions and feelings. Fragments dealing with childhood descriptions are: 8, 15, 28, 29, 31, 32, 34, 36 in the first part. Each of them takes no less than five pages of the book, most of them occupy about nine to ten pages on average. Most of Malte's sentiments, reflections on his life in Paris, his anxiety and emotional stress are mid-length fragments as compared to the two types of fragments scanned above, but certain of them are characterized by a large volume of about six pages.

Hence, we can observe here so to say a strictly motivated consistency, even a kind of predicted pattern: when some inner motives mediated by emotional stress or emotional upheaval make the main character reminisce, the flow of narration decelerates, impelling us to lighten up and contemplate on the given message, as if imitating or even simulating daydreaming for the reader. However, short fragments comprising images of Paris frightening with their realism, with its inhabitants overwhelmed by existing destructive civilization, concise outlook of Malte's life in the city which oppresses him seem to be very rhythmical, imitating rhythm of Paris with its poverty, solitude, maladies.

If we analyze compositional characteristics, surpassing micro-rhythmic level of the text with its syllabic, syntagmatic, intonational, phonetic and syntactical rhythms and moving on to macro-rhythmic level which is apt to comprise rhythms of time and space, imagery, key-line and composition rhythms, we can conclude with full confidence that there is even some kind of switching method in the novel. And it is particular rhythmical failure, marking change of inner vision perspective from objective description to lyrical empathy, poetic experiencing of the described. This phenomenon can be considered as one of the sustainable elements of such hybrid construction. Such rhythm serves the formation of the whole complicated architectonics of Rilke's writing under study.

Analytical and detailed description of the past, accurate
recording of space and visual impressions, usage of imagery is characteristic of long fragments of the novel containing recollections. As soon as Malte switches to contemplations and meditations, articulating his lyrical impulses, overflow of emotions – we can observe some shrinking in the volume of fragments. Description of the present, of the city is short, abrupt and jerky. Thus, macro-rhythm of the novel cannot be called monotonous, boring, dragging or vise versa jerky and inappropriate. There is no need for Rilke to try to avoid it or camouflage it as it logically switches from one of its shapes into another. Past and present intertwines in the narration, fragments are ended up and continued next but one. Periods of sustainable rhythm and borders of its change and, we can say it for sure, that changes in lexics, grammar and semantics are accompanying this.

To sum up our observations concerning prose rhythm in R. M. Rilke’s novel we will render one of E. A. Stepanova’s works where she underlines that seeming fragmentarity, abruptness of narration revealing itself through a chain of substituting each other past and present episodes, sketches of forms, lyrical and philosophical reflections turns into a harmony of Rilke’s conception [8, p. 10].

Thus, it can be concluded that structural and rhythm-syntactical peculiarities of R. M. Rilke’s novel are unity of multidirectional points which mediate its manifold genre character. Type of narration determines rhythm of the text and volume of its parts.

In conclusion it can be added that intercommunication of micro-and macro-rhythmic systems in R. M. Rilke’s novel presents substantial source for its examination in the facet of their formation the esthetic-climactic centre of “The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge” and should be thoroughly analyzed by the rilkeans.

REFERENCES


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