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## FEATURES OF THE TEMPORAL-SPACE DIMENSION IN DORIS LESSING'S NOVEL "THE CLEFT"

*The article analyzes the novel of the English writer of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Doris Lessing. It was determined that the novel «The Cleft» fits into the general paradigm of the subject of artistic texts of the late period of the writer's creativity, in which the author explores the historical process of the development of humanity. It was found that in «The Cleft» the focus of attention is on the study of the historical past. It is proved that the writer's novel reproduces the author's myth about the origins of human history. In the novel «The Cleft» there is a mythological model of the world, which is realized on different artistic levels of the text (mythological space, mythological time, mythological images). The writer «rewrites» the patriarchal narrative, giving primacy to the female gender and returning humanity to its matriarchal origins. It was revealed that in D. Lessing's novel «The Cleft» two traditions, «feminine» and «masculine», interact with each other and enter into a kind of dialogue. Feminine (matriarchal) tradition is closely connected with the space of the Cleft and the coast of the nameless ocean – a topos in which women have lived since time immemorial. Masculine (patriarchal) tradition prevails in the Valley and, later, in Ancient Rome. It is proved that in the chronotope of the novel «The Cleft», the artistic space appears as a defining component, thus, the topos prevails over the chronos. Artistic time also reveals its peculiarities: the novel lacks an accurate division of time and time experienced by the characters. Space-time is «spatialized», time acquires a spatial dimension, extensifying. In the spatial dimension of the novel, the space of the Cleft, in which the female tribe lived, acquires an important significance. It was determined that the temporal dimension in the novel is subordinated to the spatial dimension. The chronoplane of the Cleft is characterized by a mythological confluence: women exist in a fantastical dream, as it were. The women of the Cleft have a «mythological worldview»: they subordinate their existence to lunar rituals, «enact the events of the mythological era» and reproduce the cosmogony. The spatial component of the chronotope is manifested in the juxtaposition of the topos of the female space of the Cleft and the male topos of the Valley, which until a certain moment are separated from each other by the threshold space of the Killing Rock. Slowly, the boundaries between the two topos are partially leveled, causing their interaction.*

**Key words:** Doris Lessing, novel, neomythologism, time-space, chronoplane, gender, mythological time, mythological space.

**Problem setting.** The name of the English writer Doris Lessing (Doris Lessing, 1919–2013) is iconic for world literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The Nobel Prize for Literature (2007) only confirmed the literary value of the writer's work that had lasted for more than half a century. Acute gender issues, neo-mythological and post-apocalyptic trends were reflected in the artist's work. In particular, D. Lessing's novel «The Cleft» (2007), which belongs to the late period of the author's creativity, is of particular interest. The text reinterprets the origin of humanity and the primacy of the male gender.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The critical reception of D. Lessing's novel «The Cleft» was covered in foreign literature in several articles

[5, 6, 7, 8]. The general outline of study of D. Lessing creativity was focused on the material of her better-known novels («The Golden Notebook», «Shikasta», «Children of Violence», etc.). Separate aspects of the novel «The Cleft» were studied by Ukrainian scientific researchers such as L. Miroschnychenko [2, 3], I. Bura [1, 4], O. Tykhovska [4]. However, the problems of the temporal-spatial dimension of the work remained out of the attention of research interests.

**Task statement.** Taking into account the growing interest of scientists in the study of the problem of neomythology and its inherent space and time, there is a need to study the texts of modern foreign writers, in whose works the neomythological chronotope functions implicitly or explicitly.

**An overview of the main material.** D. Lessing's novel «The Cleft» is consistent with the previous works of the writer of the late period, in which she creates an emphatically mythological world. D. Lessing uses the artistic method «novel within a novel»: the text of «The Cleft» includes two storylines. The first is the story of a historian named Transit, who studies ancient manuscripts. The second line of the story relates directly to the content of these manuscripts, which talk about the «authentic» history of the origin of mankind – these are the chronicles of the area called «The Cleft», where the first creatures of the universe lived – women.

The beginning of the series of events «The Cleft» is temporally uncertain: «*When was then? I don't know. Then was a very long time ago, that's all I know*» [9, p. 8]. The life of the inhabitants of the Cleft was like an endless dream, a state of «timelessness». The artistic time of the Cleft is not clearly defined, the flow of time is associated in the inhabitants of the Cave with the oppositions «day and night». The counting of time is carried out by the time of day or in general, it is not defined: «it is already noon», «from time to time», «for a long time», or «in ancient times». Historian Transit characterizes the artistic time of the events of the Cleft as «timelessness».

According to literary experts, the space-time continuum can «influence» the behavior of the characters. The time-space of the area of the Cleft exists as if in a fantastic dream of its inhabitants, however, it fully adheres to the cosmic rhythms of the universe. Nothing can shake the old order: «*Why was it? Because that's how it has always been, and we never thought to change things*» [9, p. 12].

The water space (the tides of the sea), the Cleft, and everyday life of women (conducting various rituals, the birth of new representatives of the tribe) of this topos are connected with the lunar cycle. The time of the monthly ritual performed by the women of the Cleft is symbolically called «the time of the red flower». Women plucked red flowers that grew in the cave and threw the petals into the stream so that the red water from the flowers would «set off» their female cycle: «*When the moon is at its biggest and brightest we climb up to above The Cleft where the red flowers grow, and we cut them, so there is a lot of red, and we let the water flow from the spring up there, and the water flushes the flowers down through The Cleft, from top to bottom, and we all have our blood flow*» [9, p. 9].

Thus, the women of the Cleft perceive the surrounding world through the prism of a mythological worldview. For the female inhabitants of the Cleft, traditions, and rituals become «a sacred vault not only of prototypes but of magical and spiritual powers». Women of the Cleft conduct monthly rites and «continue to maintain the established order in nature and society». During the ritual, the inhabitants of the Cleft «enact the events of a mythical era and include the recitation of creation myths» [10, p. 208].

The inhabitants of the Cleft do not feel the passage of time, they do not even need to allocate a certain period of time: «*How old are you, as a people? with bland, blind enquiry: 'What do you mean?' They believed that a Fish brought them from the Moon. When was that? Long, slow, puzzled stares*» [9, p. 31]. Women of the Cleft do not separate time periods: «yesterday» and «tomorrow», but exist in the eternal present: «*They lived in an eternal present. For how long? Useless to ask*» [9, p. 31].

However, the existence in the eternal present, which was perceived by the women of the Cleft as «golden times», is interrupted by an unexpected event – the first boy is born in the female tribe. This event provokes the «starting» of a new countdown and «tears out» women from their everyday dream like life. The women of the Cleft perceived the baby boy as an anomaly, a «monster» that contradicted the social order of the tribe. Since the birth of the first boy was presumed by the inhabitants of the Cleft as a deviation from the norm of the social life of the Cleft and as a threat to the further peaceful existence of the female tribe, this baby is killed. However, the killing of the first man did not solve the gender problem, because more and more often, instead of new Clefts, as the women called themselves, new male babies, monsters, were born. Violation of the cosmogony was perceived by women as a return to chaos, emotions of surprise slowly transformed into anger, disgust, and fear of all manifestations of masculinity: «*They hated the Monsters, and now they were afraid*» [9, p. 15].

The women of the Cleft tried to get rid of all mentions of the existence of «monsters» and to «cleanse» the exclusively female space of the cave from the presence of men and their further influence. These circumstances forced women to leave the boundaries of the world they knew, to leave the familiar closed and controlled space to the «open and foreign». When it became impossible to silence the more than isolated cases of the birth of boys in the tribe, they were taken to the Killing Rock, where the babies were sacrificed to the claws of huge eagles. From this moment in the Cleft, the division of the world into two parts begins: the traditional feminine and the modern masculine. Such a «split» of the known universe contributes to the birth of a new worldview: «*Perhaps a new kind of thinking began like everything else when the Monsters started being born*» [9, p. 8].

Before the appearance of the first «mutants», the time of the Cleft was unchanged, segments of time did not stand out and did not differ from each other: «*That was how things had always been. Nothing changed, could change, would change*» [9, p. 31]. From the moment a male child appears in the female tribe, this cycle breaks, and the chronology steps towards linearity. However, the time of the Cleft is still characterized by a mythological monolithic:

«What need had there ever been to define time? It was such a time ago, we did this then ... when ... but everybody knew the times of the moon, sometimes large and round, or like a slice» [9, p. 79].

The mythological nature of the time of the Cleft is contrasted with the clarity and chronological sequence of the time-space of Ancient Rome. Transit criticizes the way of the ancient female tribe, and their reluctance to master time: «We Romans have measured, charted, taken possession of time, so that it would be impossible for us to say, 'And then it came to pass' <...> for we would have the year, the month, the day off pat, we are a defining people» [9, p. 101]. So, for Transit, as a historian and a representative of the male gender, the chronological accuracy of events and counting the passage of time is correlated with the study and mastery of the chronoplane. The syncretism and mythological unity of the female chronotope contrasts with the divided space-time of Ancient Rome and the male world system in general.

The opposition of two traditions and time-spaces: the chrono-plane of the Cleft and Rome is gender-marked. The chronotope of the Cleft (the Women's Cave) is purely feminine: such definitions as «the time of the full moon», «the time of the round, narrow», «the time of the red stream» are used to denote this time. The time of the Cleft at the beginning of the story is emphasizedly mythological. Space is limited to an unspecified area near an unnamed ocean. Residents of this topos do not need to specify and systematize knowledge about their living space. Over time, masculine tendencies break into the feminine time-space, modify it, and incorporate it into an exclusively male system.

Transit does not attempt to give geographical precision to the events of the Cleft, to tie them to a specific locus. For Transit, as a scientist, it is not the very fact of the existence of the Cleft, its authenticity, that is important, but the history itself and its interpretation, which has subsequently changed. The historian, depicting the contemporary chronotope of Rome, gives a more or less exact point in time: the era of Emperor Nero's reign. In a dialogue with his wife Julia, the scientist mentions political unrest, repression, and confiscation of the property of nobles and prisoners in Rome (approximately 61–63 AD): «Do you really want to lose this house to Nero? Nero is worse, worse every day» [9, p. 175].

The main topos – an estate near Rome are reproduced in detail. Transit provides comprehensive descriptions of his estate and social system, while briefly presenting his biography. Modern realities and the correlation of the two genders are represented through memories of Transit's marital relationship, relations between the historian's daughter and son, and everyday situations.

So, the chronotope of the Cleft reveals certain features: the spatial component prevails over the temporal one. In the spatial dimension of the novel,

the central place is occupied by the Cave, the Cleft, which is a feminine topos. It should be noted that the title of the novel «The Cleft», correlates both as a word for a topos and as a vulgarism. In the novel, the inhabitants of the cave call themselves «Cleft» before the appearance of the division based on the gender principle. Ancient female representatives of the tribe (The Old Shes) didn't separate themselves from the Cleft topos, existing according to the principle: «We are The Cleft, The Cleft is us» [9, p. 9–10].

In the text of the novel «The Cleft», it is stated that the name «The Old Shes» was used by the male historians of Rome to denote only the oldest female representatives of the tribe of the Cleft, who were capable of parthenogenesis (birth without male fertilization). It was these residents of the Cleft who initiated the tradition of killing male infants. «The Old Shes» felt threatened both by the male tribe in general and by the children of a new generation, born from the union of the female inhabitants of the Cleft and the men of the Valley. The old inhabitants of the Cleft tried to destroy this new generation and restore the ancient harmonious state, get rid of the prevailing chaos. However, their attempt was defeated, and «The Old Shes» slowly disappeared, and new generations of the Cleft and the Valley began to be born only from the union of a woman and a man.

The disappearance of the ability of the original inhabitants of the Cleft to parthenogenesis marks the final extinction of the old tribe of the Cleft and its traditional organization: «There is no mention at all of the Old Shes, the Old Females, and from this we have agreed to believe that they had died out, and that none of the young ones had grown into the status and stature of the Old Ones» [9, p. 140].

The topos of the cave, where generations of women live (from women capable of parthenogenesis, the Old Shes, to the more modern generation of Maronna's time), is characterized for them, according to the mythological worldview, as «their», i.e. safe, overtaken space: «Our caves are warm, with sandy floors, and dry» [9, p. 8], «But why should we have moved about and looked for new things, or wondered about the eagles? What for? We have everything we want on this part of the island» [9, p. 13–14].

For women, leaving the space of the Cleft marked the transition from a safe space to a foreign and hostile topos and was equated to death: «Away from the sea, her element, her safety» [9, p. 109]. The peaceful existence of women was spent resting on the rocks, on the shore, and on the waves of the sea: «They lay on rocks, the waves splashing them, like seals, like sick seals» [9, p. 29]. The sense of security and isolation that prevailed in the cave affected the structure of the tribe, and their reluctance to leave the already occupied safe space. The functioning of the mythological space determines the need for a sacred center, the main point of the universe. Such a center is

the space of the Cleft and the Cave located in it, which is the cradle of life: «*The Cleft it is the most important thing in our lives. It has always been so*» [9, p. 9].

However, the space of the Cleft is a safe space for women only. For the male part of the tribe, this female space has a negative impact and is dangerous for their lives. The space of the Cleft suggests to men memories of ancient times, when their existence was under threat from the moment they were born: «*We knew we hated the Clefts though we did not remember anything of our earliest days, of being put out on the Killing Rock*» [9, p. 29]. So, this hatred and the opposition of the feminine and masculine principles were rooted in the consciousness of all the inhabitants of the Cleft and the Valley and were passed down from generation to generation.

The feminine space of the Cleft is contrasted with the topos of the Valley, which is a refuge for the male tribe. The ancient representatives of the tribe, in contrast to the active male nature, had a rather passive disposition, but this passivity was a continuation of natural harmony. The life of the women of the Cleft was in harmony with the rhythms of nature: «*Impulses and rhythms we may hardly guess at governed their lives*» [9, p. 34].

The fundamental leisurely nature of women is opposed by the active nature of men: «*Not only were they unused to fighting, or even aggression, they were unused to physical activity. They lay around on their rocks and they swam. That was their life, had been for – ages*» [9, p. 22]. Men have an inherent urge to study the unknown and master someone else's space, conquests, they strive for travel, to go beyond «their» space: «*To get somewhere, find something, to discover, take possession*» [9, p. 205]. However, the novel states that men try not to cross the boundaries of the female tribe: «*Most females lived in the caves, because they did not like the valley, and most males lived in their valley*» [9, p. 145]. The men of the Valley travel to master a qualitatively new space that would not be «feminine». The valley is surrounded by thickets, which become a kind of obstacle for crossing the defined space. The complex, tangled internal structure of the caves is contrasted with the «lowland» and «openness» of the Valley.

The opposition Cleft-Valley is realized in the binary pair «top-bottom». Between the two juxtaposed topos, there is a threshold space of rock, the place of killing, where the first boys of the female tribe were taken to die. This space becomes a barrier separating the female and male space. Guardians of this threshold space are eagles, who embody masculine characteristics and are the protectors of the male tribe.

Transit, researching the chronicles of the Cleft, calls this space an island from which there is no way out. Men, residents of the Valley, set out on an expedition to expand their own space: «*All they wanted was to land their flimsy craft, <...> and then a new life*

*would begin <...> this place was altogether better, richer, more beautiful than their own*» [9, p. 214]. The men of the Valley went on an expedition to explore new lands near the coastline of the Cleft, but many obstacles awaited them: the death of comrades, a rebellion of teenagers who refused to obey the will of the leader of the expedition named Horsa and for fun blew up and burned the environment, etc. Therefore, the expedition did not bring the men from the tribe the expected results: the helmsman of the tribe and the leader of the expedition, Horsa, could not go beyond the topos of the Island, so he was forced to return to the already occupied space of the Cleft and the Valley.

The artistic space of the novel *The Cleft* is built on binary oppositions, in particular the «open-closed» space. The topos of the Cave, in which women live, are endowed with the characteristics of a closed space. The feminine space of the Cave and Cleft is initially opposed to the «open» masculine space of the Valley, which, in fact, also turns out to be limited. The members of the men's expedition, exploring the unexplored foreign space, are defeated and forced to return to the ascending point – the Cleft. However, after returning to the mastered space, the young men, who found an incendiary substance during the expedition, reveal their destructive nature and blow up the Cleft.

**Conclusions.** Therefore, in D. Lessing's novel «*The Cleft*» two traditions, «feminine» and «masculine», coexist and interact with each other and enter into a kind of dialogue. Feminine (matriarchal) tradition is closely connected with the space of the Cleft and the coast of the nameless ocean – a topos in which women have lived since time immemorial. Masculine (patriarchal) tradition prevails in the Valley and, later, in Ancient Rome. The collision and opposition of two different traditions lead to the presence of two time-spaces in the novel: feminine and masculine, which conflict with each other, entering into a kind of dialogue. Such dialogism of the two chronotopes determines their close relationship and interpenetration, which leads to the supplanting of the feminine space-time and narrative beyond traditional history by the masculine chronotope.

In the chronotope of the novel, it is the artistic space that appears as a defining component, the topos prevails over the chronos. Artistic time also reveals its peculiarities: the novel lacks precise time division and time experience. Space-time is spatialized, time acquires a spatial dimension, extensifying. In the spatial dimension of the novel, the space of the Cleft, in which the female tribe lived, acquires an important significance. The temporal dimension in the novel is subordinated to the spatial dimension. The exposition of plot situations related to the history of the Cleft, on the one hand, is linearly oriented, and chronologically consistent, but, on the other hand, this temporal dimension lacks the accuracy of the exposition.

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**Проскуріна Н. Ю., Кравець О. М. ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ТЕМПОРАЛЬНО-ПРОСТОРОВОГО ВИМІРУ У РОМАНІ ДОРІС ЛЕССІНГ «УЩЕЛИНА»**

У статті аналізується роман англійської письменниці ХХ–ХХІ ст. Доріс Лессінг. Визначено, що роман «Ущелина» вписується в загальну парадигму тематики художніх текстів пізнього періоду творчості письменниці, в яких авторка досліджує історичний процес розвитку людства. Виявлено, що в «Ущелині» фокус уваги зосереджено на дослідженні історичного минулого. Доведено, що у романі письменниці відтворено авторський міф про витоки історії людства. В «Ущелині» наявна міфологічна модель світу, що реалізується на різних художніх рівнях тексту (міфологічний простір, міфологічний час, міфологічні образи). Письменниця «перепише» «патріархальний» наратив, надаючи «першість» жіночій статі й повертаючи людство до його «матріархальних» витоків. Виявлено, що у романі Д. Лессінг «Ущелина» співіснують дві традиції «фемінна» й «маскулінна», що взаємодіють між собою та вступають у своєрідний діалог. Фемінна (матріархальна) традиція тісно пов'язана з простором Ущелини та узбережжям безіменного океану – топосом, у якому споконвік мешкали жінки. Маскулінна (патріархальна) традиція превалює у просторі Долини і, згодом, у Давньому Римі. Доведено, що у хронотопі роману «Ущелина» саме художній простір постає визначальною складовою, таким чином топос превалює над хроносом. Художній час також виявляє свої особливості: у романі відсутній точний часоподіл і часопереживання персонажами. Часопростір «спеціалізується», час набуває просторового виміру, екстенсифікуючись. У спеціальному вимірі роману важливого значення набуває простір Ущелини, у якій мешкало жіноче плем'я. Визначено, що темпоральний вимір у романі підпорядковано просторовому. Хроноплощині Ущелини притаманна міфологічна злитість: жінки існують у неможливо фантастичному світі. Жінкам Ущелини притаманно «міфологічне світосприйняття»: вони підпорядковують власне існування лунарним ритуалам, «інсценують події міфологічної епохи» та відтворюють космогонію. Спеціальна складова хронотопа оприявнюється в протиставленні топосів жіночого простору Ущелини і чоловічого топосу Долини, які до певного моменту відокремлені один від одного пороговим простором Скелі Вбивств. Поволі кордони між двома топосами частково нівелюються, зумовлюючи їх взаємодію.

**Ключові слова:** Доріс Лессінг, роман, неоміфологізм, часопростір, хроноплощина, гендер, міфологічний час, міфологічний простір.