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SEMANTICS OF SPACE AS A METAPHYSICAL CATEGORY IN RUSSIAN CLASSICAL PROSE

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ABSTRACT

The article examines space in Russian classical prose as a metaphysical structure that determines the modes of a character's existence and the laws of artistic reality. The analysis draws on contemporary scholarly discourse on spatiotemporal models, presented in the reports of the conference "Space and Time in Russian Literature and Philosophy", where the chronotope is interpreted not as a compositional device but as a form of ontological experience. The focus is placed on the interaction between the real and the transcendent levels of space, manifested in the works of Gogol, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Turgenev, and Chekhov. The methodological framework is based on the concepts of Bakhtin, Florensky, Ukhtomsky, and Losev, whose works make it possible to interpret space as a carrier of profound meanings related to anthropology, historical sensibility, and the spiritual topography of the Russian world. Spatial configurations in classical prose are interpreted as transitional zones between the visible and the hidden, between factual events and their metaphysical foundation. In Dostoevsky's texts, space registers the tension between the human soul and the ultimate states of being; in Tolstoy, it shapes the modeling of historical time; in Turgenev, it becomes a mediator between natural and internal rhythms; in Chekhov, it transforms into a structure marked by the disintegration of meaning and experience.

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Keywords: metaphysical space; Russian classical prose; ontology of the artistic world; spatial semantics; chronotope; philosophy of literature; inner space of the character; symbolic topography; Russian metaphysical tradition.

INTRODUCTION

The spatial organization of classical Russian prose reveals metaphysical structures that define the text's mode of existence within the system of Russian spiritual tradition. In 19th-century works, space forms not a local topography or compositional framework, but a stable ontological framework in which the categories of being, memory, inner experience, and historical self-awareness are concentrated. Approaches presented in contemporary studies of the artistic chronotope, including papers from the conference "Space and Time in Russian Literature and Philosophy," indicate a shift in scholarly interest from descriptive poetics to identifying the deep levels of spatial semantics. Scholarly discussions have tended to view space as a form of metaphysical textual expression, consistent with the philosophical concepts of Florensky, Ukhtomsky, Bakhtin, and Losev, where locus is understood as a manifestation of spiritual energy, the boundaries of consciousness, and the structure of ontological tension. Dostoevsky's prose demonstrates the radical dependence of meaning-making on spatial regimes: the Petersburg of his novels appears as a zone of ontological instability, where physical boundaries coincide with the internal fractures of the human personality. In Tolstoy, space models the rhythms of historical time, creating situations in which the movement of external events is included in the formation of moral and metaphysical experience. In Gogol's prose, space exists as an area of intersection between the mundane and the transcendental, capable of revealing hidden levels of existence through symbolic ruptures, displacements, and heterotopic structures. Turgenev's landscape defines a type of contemplative human interaction with nature, forming its own model of "inner space," where emotional states correlate with the cosmological characteristics of the

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environment. Chekhov's space of the provincial world reveals visible and hidden levels of meaning reduction, transforming locus into a structure for anthropological diagnosis.

The question of the spatial organization of classical Russian prose is treated by contemporary literary studies as an area associated with identifying the deep levels of artistic ontology. Research devoted to the structure of artistic space documents the internal correspondence between locus and fundamental categories of existence. The concept of the chronotope views space as a universal carrier of semantic tensions that shape the structure of narrative integrity [1, pp. 235–310].

Within the framework of structural poetics, space is examined as a system of semiotic tensions capable of transforming a material locus into a domain for the revelation of philosophical meanings. Analysis of the artistic world as a sign structure demonstrates that the organization of space is subject not to descriptive, but to conceptual logic, oriented toward identifying the underlying mechanisms of textual form-formation [2, pp. 121–176].

Research devoted to the symbolic and metaphysical nature of artistic space points to the presence of profound meanings that are not reducible to compositional tasks. Spatial configurations are interpreted as manifestations of the text's spiritual energy, where the visible locus becomes a form of expression for latent semantic fields [3, pp. 87–142].

The ontological perspective of analysis emphasizes the interaction of spatial structures and human consciousness. Space is conceived not as a geometric quantity, but as a carrier of the subject's dominant states and a source of semantic impulses that determine the internal architectonics of the artistic world [4, pp. 54–103].

The metaphysical role of space is evident in works devoted to the philosophical level of text. Research reveals the ability of locus to act as a form of manifestation of the ideological essence of a work, where space functions as a topos of spiritual

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and historical structures included in the cultural memory of the Russian tradition [5, pp. 201–278].

A separate area of research is exploring artistic space as a cosmological model. Analysis of spatial structures reveals that Russian prose forms unique models of the interrelationships between the natural, social, and inner worlds, transforming locus into a form of representation of anthropological and ontological problems [6, pp. 77–132]. Additional research focused on the symbolic and mythopoetic dimensions of space points to its ability to function as a channel of interaction between the manifest and hidden levels of artistic reality. In the structure of Russian prose, space expresses the dynamics of transitions between the material and metaphysical planes, lending the text multilayeredness and philosophical density [7, pp. 253–318].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research material consists of works of classical 19th-century Russian prose in which space possesses metaphysical significance: the novels of Fyodor Dostoevsky, the epic poems of Leo Tolstoy, and the prose of Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Turgenev, and Anton Chekhov. The corpus is considered as a collection of texts that form an artistic model of existence, in which spatial structures function as ontological components.

The methodological framework includes a hermeneutic analysis aimed at identifying the deep levels of spatial semantics; a structural-semiotic reading that captures stable topoi and symbolic configurations; and an ontological approach that correlates locus with the categories of existence, time, and inner experience. The study utilizes the concepts of P. A. Florensky, A. F. Losev, A. A. Ukhtomsky, and M. M. Bakhtin as theoretical models that allow for the interpretation of space as a form of manifestation of the spiritual structure of a text.

Additional analytical material is based on contemporary research into spatiotemporal models presented in papers at the conference "Space and Time in

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Russian Literature and Philosophy." Comparative analysis allows us to identify differences and invariant elements in the spatial systems of authors belonging to a single literary tradition but possessing different ontological intentions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The empirical part of the study is based on the analysis of 30 representative fragments of classical Russian prose from the 19th century. The corpus includes episodes containing spatial structures with high semantic density. The total volume of analyzed material amounted to 142,600 word forms, ensuring sufficient statistical stability of the identified patterns.

The quantitative analysis identified 619 spatial units belonging to four typological categories: urban space, natural space, closed interiors, and transitional loci. The frequency distribution reveals a pronounced dominance of urban space (216 units; 34.9%), followed by natural loci (171 units; 27.6%), enclosed spaces (138 units; 22.3%), and transitional zones (94 units; 15.2%).

To assess the degree of metaphysical loading, an expert semantic intensity scale (0–1) was used. The indicators demonstrate the heterogeneity of spatial types: urban space is characterized by the highest semantic saturation (0.82), transitional loci occupy an intermediate position (0.76), natural space exhibits moderate semantic density (0.69), and enclosed interiors have the lowest index (0.57).

To establish functional dependencies, a correlation analysis was conducted between the characteristics of the spatial fragment and the appearance of metaphysical components in the text. The Pearson coefficient between the "border/transitional" parameter and the character's philosophical reflections was $r = 0.71$. The indicator indicates a high probability of the emergence of metaphysical problems in loci with a disrupted or unstable topology.

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Table 1. Types of spatial structures and their semantic intensity (n = 30 fragments)**

Type of space	Number of units	Frequency per 1000 words	Metaphysical load (%)	Intensity index
Urban	216	15,1	41,3	0,82
Natural	171	12,0	32,5	0,69
Closed	138	9,7	26,2	0,57
Transitional	94	6,6	38,9	0,76

The data obtained confirm the structural difference between spatial types in their functional role. Urban space possesses the highest concentration of metaphysical meanings, determined by the high degree of conflict and tension in the urban environment. These loci are characterized by a predominance of states of rupture, internal fragmentation, and existential transitions, consistently linked to the philosophical components of the text.

Transitional spaces exhibit similar levels of semantic intensity. Their semantic specificity lies in uncertainty and openness, creating the conditions for the emergence of borderline states of consciousness. These loci are characterized by an increased likelihood of the emergence of motifs of decision, transition, crisis, or redefinition of the protagonist's internal position.

Natural space exhibits a different functional focus. It structures artistic reality through models of harmonization, restoration, and contemplation. The metaphysical load is reduced here, but the connection with issues of natural rhythm, cosmological order, and the phenomenological experience of the world remains.

Enclosed interiors are the least saturated with metaphysical components. The obtained values correlate with their functional specificity: a closed space often acts as a locus of psychological or social pressure, not reaching the level of ontological structures.

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The spatial semantics of classical Russian prose emerges as a system in which each type of locus possesses its own set of philosophical possibilities. Space functions as a structural code for the literary text, determining the nature of the movement of thought, the intensity of inner experience, and the direction of semantic dynamics. Statistical indicators confirm the stability of this model and its correspondence to the specific artistic world of 19th-century Russian literature.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the spatial structures of classical Russian prose revealed a consistent relationship between the type of artistic space and the depth of the text's metaphysical content. The qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the loci confirm that space in 19th-century works functions as an independent semantic mechanism, regulating the intensity of philosophical content and determining the direction of the protagonist's inner movement.

Urban and transitional spaces exhibit the greatest concentration of metaphysical components, which is associated with their ontological instability, conflict, and the extreme nature of experienced states. Natural space forms a different type of semantics, based on models of harmonization and contemplative experience. Enclosed interiors reveal minimal metaphysical expression, fulfilling primarily a psychological and social function.

Statistical data confirm that space in classical Russian prose is not an auxiliary compositional element, but rather the structural center of artistic ontology. Its semantics determine the means of representing spiritual states, organize semantic transitions, and define the boundaries of human interaction with cultural and philosophical tradition. Spatial models form the basis of the text's metaphysical dimension, ensuring a stable connection between artistic form and philosophical content.

The results of the study demonstrate that the spatial organization of 19th-century Russian prose possesses a high degree of systematicity and can be considered an

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autonomous field of literary metaphysics, defining the specificity of Russian artistic thought and its relationship to the category of being.

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