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CHRONOTOPIC STRUCTURES AND THEIR INTERACTION IN J. R. R. TOLKIEN'S THE LORD OF THE RINGS

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Abstract

The article examines the system of chronotopes in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and the principles governing their interaction. It argues that the artistic world of the novel is constructed at the intersection of mythopoetic, epic, adventure, and idyllic models of space-time organization. Particular attention is paid to the chronotopes of the road, feast, battle, and Otherworld, as well as to their role in shaping the semantic structure of the narrative. The symbolism of the One Ring, the White Tree, the Shire, Lothlórien, and the Grey Havens is analyzed. The article concludes that the chronotopic system of the novel unites the hero's private destiny with the historical and mythological fate of the world, bringing together the local and the universal, the domestic and the sacred, the earthly and the transcendent.

Keywords: Chronotope, J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, mythopoetics, epic, road, Otherworld, Lothlórien, Shire, White Tree.

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Аннотация

В статье рассматривается система хронотопов в романе Дж.Р.Р. Толкина Властелин Колец и принципы их взаимодействия. Показано, что художественный мир произведения строится на пересечении мифопоэтического, эпического, авантюрного и идиллического типов пространственно-временной организации. Особое внимание уделяется хронотопам пути, пира, битвы и Иного мира, а также их роли в формировании смысловой структуры романа. Анализируется символика Кольца Всевластья, Белого Древа, Хоббитании, Лориэна и Заокраинного Края. Делается вывод о том, что хронотопическая система романа обеспечивает единство частной судьбы героя и историко-мифологической судьбы мира, соединяя локальное и универсальное, бытовое и сакральное, земное и трансцендентное.

Annotatsiya

Maqolada J.R.R. Tolkienning The Lord of the Rings romanidagi xronotoplar tizimi va ularning o'zaro ta'sir tamoyillari tahlil qilinadi. Asarda badiiy olam mifopoetik, epik, sarguzasht va idillik makon-zamon modellarining kesishishida qurilishi ko'rsatiladi. Yo'l, ziyofat, jang va O'zga olam xronotoplariga, shuningdek, ularning roman ma'no tuzilishini shakllantirishdagi rolga alohida e'tibor qaratiladi. Uzuk, Oq Daraxt, Shire, Lothlórien va Grey Havens obrazlarining ramziy ma'nosi ochib beriladi. Xulosa qilinishicha, roman xronotopik tizimi qahramonning shaxsiy taqdirini dunyoning tarixiy-mifologik taqdiri bilan birlashtirib, lokal va universal, maishiy va muqaddas, yerlik va transsendent o'lchamlarni bir butun tizimga keltiradi.

Ключевые слова: хронотоп, Дж.Р.Р. Толкин, Властелин Колец, мифопоэтика, эпос, путь, Иной мир, Лориэн, Хоббитания, Белое Древо.

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Kalit so‘zlar: xronotop, J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, mifopoetika, epos, yo‘l, O‘zga olam, Lothlórien, Shire, Oq Daraxt.

Introduction

The chronotopic system of *The Lord of the Rings* is formed through the interaction of several models of space and time: the mythopoetic, the epic, the adventure, and the idyllic. These models do not remain isolated; rather, they overlap, supplement one another, and create a multilayered organization of the narrative world. Such a reading corresponds to Bakhtin’s understanding of the chronotope as a concrete fusion of temporal and spatial relations in literature, as well as to Tolkien’s own construction of Middle-earth as a historically deep and internally coherent secondary world [5, p. 28].

At the mythopoetic level, time in the novel repeatedly acquires material embodiment. It is not presented as an abstract sequence, but as a force condensed in objects, symbols, and loci. The most obvious example is the One Ring: it contains and mediates Sauron’s power, and its destruction entails the collapse of his dominion. Time here is inseparable from ontological duration: the survival of evil is bound to a concrete artifact. A similar function belongs to the White Tree, whose restoration marks not merely a dynastic change in Gondor, but the renewal of historical order itself. Tolkien’s larger legendarium traces the ancestry of the White Tree back through Númenor to the sacred trees of Valinor, thereby giving the symbol both historical and cosmological depth.

This mythopoetic layer is inseparable from the epic dimension of the novel. *The Lord of the Rings* presents itself not as an isolated adventure, but as a late chapter in a much broader mythic history. Tolkien explicitly described his legendarium as an interconnected body of narrative extending across several Ages, while the structure of the novel itself places the central action in a moment of extreme historical crisis, when the fate of all Middle-earth depends on a single mission [5, p. 95]. In this respect, the novel approaches the epic model described by cultural

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historians as an all-encompassing world-picture, one that links present conflict to the deep past and to the future order of the world.

At the same time, Tolkien introduces features of adventure time. Chance encounters, delays, misrecognitions, sudden interventions, and reversals repeatedly affect the progress of the plot. Yet these elements do not dissolve the epic design; they intensify it by turning contingency into a test of providence, character, and endurance. The road becomes the central chronotope through which this interaction is organized. In Bakhtinian terms, the road is a privileged site where time “thickens” into encounter, danger, and transformation [1, p. 114]. In Tolkien’s novel, the road likewise functions both literally and symbolically: it structures movement across Middle-earth and simultaneously expresses the inner change of the traveler. Frodo’s journey is therefore not only geographical, but existential and moral.

The idyllic chronotope is represented most clearly by the Shire. Its temporality is cyclical, domestic, and communal; it is grounded in seasonal rhythm, hospitality, cultivation, and continuity of everyday life. The Shire initially appears as a closed and harmonious local world, almost untouched by the violence of wider history. However, Tolkien complicates the idyll by showing that it can be violated. The Scouring of the Shire destroys its earlier balance through coercion, ugliness, and industrial deformation. Thus, the idyllic chronotope in the novel is not static: it may be lost, wounded, and then partially restored. This makes the Shire not merely a pastoral background, but a value-laden image of home whose fragility is essential to the novel’s meaning.

Among the more localized chronotopic forms in the novel, the feast occupies a significant position. Bilbo’s birthday celebration at the opening of the narrative functions not simply as a social event, but as a threshold scene. It temporarily suspends ordinary narrative movement, gathers the community, and establishes a festive mode before the onset of danger. In Bakhtin’s perspective, such scenes often interrupt linear progression and provide a symbolic concentration of

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communal time. In Tolkien's case, the festive chronotope also acquires retrospective importance, since it marks the last moment of apparent security before the quest begins.

The chronotope of battle becomes especially prominent in the later parts of the novel. Here space expands and narration slows down, allowing the reader to perceive combat not merely as action, but as an event of historical and cosmic significance. Tolkien often shifts toward panoramic vision in battle scenes, presenting armies, fortifications, movement, fear, and destruction in a way that magnifies both scope and urgency. The battle chronotope is also charged with apocalyptic imagery: darkness, fire, siege, flight, and supernatural dread intensify the sense that the conflict exceeds the political and enters the ontological opposition between light and shadow. Thus battle is not only an event in history, but a condensed form of historical destiny itself.

A particularly important role in the novel is played by the chronotope of the Otherworld. Tolkien's Lothlórien is a liminal space in which ordinary temporal perception is altered, memory deepens, and the traveler experiences a different relation to duration and presence. Recent scholarship has convincingly connected this structure with Celtic conceptions of the Otherworld, especially the motifs of threshold crossing, altered temporality, protective waters, and western departure [2, p. 161]. Tolkien's use of rivers, narrow passages, bridges, and enclosed sacred territories reinforces this liminality. The Grey Havens intensify the same model: the voyage westward becomes a final crossing beyond the historical world, linking healing, departure, and transcendence.

The Otherworld motif in Tolkien is not limited to blessed spaces such as Lothlórien or the West. There is also a dark counterpart: the spectral dimension opened by the Ring and associated with Sauron's domination. When Frodo wears the Ring, ordinary perception becomes distorted; time, sight, and presence are deformed, and he begins to enter a hostile mode of being in which visibility and invisibility acquire a new ontological meaning. The Ring thus functions as a

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threshold object, opening access to another order of reality while threatening the integrity of the self. Such transitions are repeatedly marked by boundaries—bridges, rivers, gates, abysses, or enchanted objects—through which the hero crosses into another temporal and spatial condition.

The interaction of chronotopes in *The Lord of the Rings* may therefore be described through the structural pattern “home – road – return,” but Tolkien complicates this model by distributing its components unequally among his characters. Sam’s destiny remains more closely tied to the chronotope of home and restoration, whereas Frodo’s fate is governed by the chronotope of the road and, ultimately, by a movement beyond ordinary return. In his case, the end of the journey leads not to reintegration into the domestic world, but to departure toward a form of healing linked with transcendence. This difference demonstrates Bakhtin’s broader principle that large chronotopic structures can contain smaller, intersecting ones without reducing them to a single formula.

Thus, the chronotopic organization of Tolkien’s novel is based on the correlation of mythopoetic, epic, adventure, idyllic, and liminal forms. The feast, the road, the battle, and the Otherworld are especially important because they determine the main ways in which space, time, and destiny interact within the narrative. Through their interplay, *The Lord of the Rings* becomes a world in which the local and the historical, the private and the mythic, the domestic and the sacred are united in a single semantic system. The novel’s artistic power lies precisely in this capacity to make personal biography and world-history intelligible within one shared chronotopic design.

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