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Originality of chronotope palette of Amelie Nothomb works

Своєрідність жанрового коду творів Амелі Нотомб (ukr)

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Abstract

The article is dedicated to studying the chronotypical models and their impact upon poetical features of novels by French-speaking female writer Amelie Nothomb. Such novels by Nothomb as “Hygiene and the Assassin”, “The Stranger Next Door”, “Attempt”, “Fear and Trembling”, “The Character of Rain” and “Cosmetics of the Enemy”. Attention is paid to inter-genre and enter-gender synthesis of Nothomb novels which significantly influences the specifics of building up the chronotypical models of the novels being analyzed. Studying peculiarity of genre form of A.Nothomb novels revealed polygenre synthesis which is inherent for them which is based upon diffusion of epic and dramatic kinds of great and small epic genres. Distinctive feature of novel works by this female writer is determined by complex stratification of chronotype layers, comprising chronotype models of enclosed spaces, idyll

Анотація

Статтю присвячено дослідженню хронотопічних моделей і їх впливу на поетикальні властивості романів відомої бельгійської франкомовної письменниці Амелі Нотомб. У статті аналізуються романи Нотомб ‘Гігієна вбивці’, ‘Катилінарії’, ‘Замах’, ‘Страх та тремтіння’, ‘Метафізика труб’ та ‘Косметика ворога’. Звертається увага на міжжанровий та міжродовий синтез романів Нотомб, що значною мірою впливає на специфіку конструювання хронотопічних моделей аналізованих романів. Дослідження своєрідності жанрової форми творів А. Нотомб виявив здійснюваний у них поліжанровий синтез, що ґрунтується на дифузії епічного та драматичного родів великих та малих епічних жанрів. Особливість романних творів письменниці зумовлюється складним нашаруванням хронотопічних пластів, серед

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chronotype, chronotype of raving, chronotype of art, chronotype of childhood, chronotype of love. Analysis of time-space models testifies about inclination of the writer to realistic, recognizable space with involvement of effective toponyms from historic and social-cultural contexts as different from time and space ambiguity which is inherent for postmodern text. Enclosed spaces are typical for Nothomb novels (building, house, room). Time in the novels has distinctive features of biographic, calendar, day time and historic time. Events take place in logical time sequence, creating linear process, ascending gradation of events is frequent to enhance psychological tension.

Keywords: Amelie Nothomb, chronotype, chonotype model, genre code, time, space.

Introduction

Historic and literature process on the boundary of XX–XXI centuries is in dynamic development. It is manifested in works by writers on idea, stylistic, plot, narration levels as well as on the level of gender and genre form which ceases to be a constant value more and more frequently but gains properties of product of writer's inventiveness and creative idea where content is the master of form, and esthetic value, in its turn, is the master of content. Writing is no longer perceived as inheriting canons and formulas, but as means to search for truth, attempt of interaction between author and reader, attempt to recreate reality in its sensual aspect.

Works by Amelie Nothomb, full of grotesque, ironic comparisons and deep psychologism, honed in esthetic traditions of minimalism, provoke explosive and contradictory discussion both among scientists and among cultural figures and readers. In the opinion of some people works by this writer abound with manifestations of extreme egoism and egocentrism as the leading motive of the plot, as well as with cynicism and miserabilism, and in the opinion of others, the guarantee of her works' success is their sincerity, as if "nakedness" of plot twists that turns the genre of the novel into a confession of certain sort or repentance.

Creative work by Nothomb was object of study for Laureline Amanieux (Amanieux, 2005), Susan Bainbridge and Janette den Toonder (Bainbridge & Toonder, 2003), M. D. Lee (Lee, 2010), our previous studies (Bieliavska, 2018;

яких хронотопні моделі замкнених просторів, ідилічний хронотоп, хронотоп марень, хронотоп мистецтва, хронотоп дитинства, хронотоп кохання. Аналіз часо-просторових моделей свідчить про тяжіння письменниці до реалістичного, впізнаваного простору із залученням дійсних топонімів історичного та соціокультурного контекстів, на відміну від властивий постмодерністському тексту часо-просторовій невизначеності. Типовими для романів Нотомб є закриті простори (будівля, будинок, кімната). Час у романах має чіткі ознаки біографічного, календарного, добового та історичного. Події вибудовуються у логічній часовій послідовності, утворюючи лінійний процес, частою є висхідна градація подій для посилення психологічної напруги.

Ключові слова: Амелі Нотомб, хронотоп, хронотопна модель, жанровий код, час, простір.

Cherkashyna, 2022a; Cherkashyna, 2022b). Most available scientific investigations about autobiographic creative work by Nothomb mostly refer to studying the most famous autobiographical novel by the writer 'Stupeur et tremblements' (Nothomb, 1999) and research of issues Me/Other, 'own'/'alien', trace correlation of eastern (Japanese) and western in life and autobiographic creative work work of the writer (Lou, 2011; Koma, 2009; Szczur, 2017). However, genre distinctiveness of her works provokes numerous literary discussions even today and requires more thorough reading.

The task of our study is to observe and analyze the functioning of chronotopic models, their combinations in the works of the writer, and thus track the formation of genre forms.

Theoretical Framework

In our study we reply on theory of genres developed by Ukrainian researcher Nonna Kopystianska (2005). Specifics of determining genre code of Nothomb's works also requires appealing to the theory of chronotope. When studying it we drawn on works by Mykhailo Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 1975), Mircha Eliade (Eliade, 2001), Nonna Kopystianska (Kopystianska, 2012), Svitlana Kryvoruchko, etc. (Kryvoruchko et al., 2022).

Bakhtin (1975) puts forward a point that in literary text chronotope becomes factor that determines movement of the plot, thus its genre-

creative and content-creative function emerges. In the opinion of the researcher, consideration of artistic time and space must take place in the context of physical chronotope, i.e., to have certain reference system – therefore, various types of chronotopes are formed (chronotope of protagonist, chronotope of the plot, chronotope of reader, etc.) within the boundaries of certain literary work. In his studies of genre-creating function of the chronotope Bakhtin turns to antiquity, noting it was in that epoch that three types were formed of “novel uniformity, ... three corresponding means of creative mastering of space and time in the novel ... three chronotopes” (Bakhtin, 1975, p. 236). A determinant of novel types of classification that was suggested by the scientist is the corresponding form of time: the first type of novel is caused by availability of “adventurous time”, the second – “adventurous-household time”, the third – “biographic” or “autobiographic” time. Based on theory about interference of time and space layers in artistic work, Bakhtin suggests different chronotype kinds: “chronotope of threshold”, “chronotope of castle”, “chronotope of city”, “chronotope of way”, etc. In Bakhtin’s opinion, chronotypes always remain in complex relations and cannot exist separately – they intertwine, replace each other, can be matched, or be opposed. Bakhtin emphasizes genre-creative function of time: “Chronotope in literature has significant genre meaning ... genre and kinds of genres are determined by chronotope as such, whereas in literature the leading feature in the chronotope is time” (Bakhtin, 1975, p. 234).

Romanian researcher of mythology and mythopoetic Eliade (2001) underlines mythopoetic aspect of spatial images of home and way, emphasizing that the way symbolizes the “way of life”, and movement along it is movement to the center of Creation. Apart from considering spatial characteristics of mythopoetic consciousness, Eliade also considers its temporal properties – in his opinion, Time, like Space, is also not uniform: there is Sacred Time and Mundane Time. The main feature of Sacred Time is its reversibility, it can be reiterated without being subject to changes, it also has no flow or duration. An example of Sacred Time manifestation are festivities – it is during festivities that a person is living through certain beginning anew, through a period when the Universe was born. “Festivities restore sacred meaning of existence, each time they teach how Gods or mythical predecessors created man and taught man various socially significant deeds or actions” (Eliade, 2001, p. 60). Unlike Sacred

Time, Mundane Time is not reversible, it has duration and the beginning and the end which are clearly set.

Kopystianska is the developer of genre theory and theory of chronotope. In her studies she builds up clear system of subdivision of works into genres, genre types and genre modifications (Kopystianska, 2005). Her typology of space-time in literary work is productive and can be made of several interrelated components, such as: closed and open time-space (external and internal), personal, family, public time-space, and others (Kopystianska, 2012).

Important for our study is theory of time in memoir work, represented by Kryvoruchko, Ilona Kostikova, Olena Gulich and Iryna Rudnieva (Kryvoruchko et al., 2022), as part of Nothomb’s novels have distinctively explicit memoir time.

Methodology

Our study is built up upon basics of hermeneutics with elements of structural texts analysis and psychoanalysis.

Results and Discussion

In Nothomb’s works distinct process of genus-genre synthesis is traced. It is based on diffusion of epic and dramatic kinds as well as fusion of features of small epic genres of novel and tale within the boundaries of novel form, enriching it and giving it more artistic capabilities.

The first novel by the writer “Hygiene and the Assassin” (Nothomb, 1992), written in 1992 after Nothomb had returned from Japan. “Hygiene and the Assassin” is a history of life and death of mysterious and scandalous person who is writer-assassin named Pretextat Tax. Novelty of this work is determined by layering of several chronotype layers. Relying on theory of chronotope by Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 1975), two time-spacial models are singled out in the novel. They are given in sensual and emotional opposition: it is life of writer after assassination of his beloved one, his artistic work, illness, old age and in the outcome of the plot it is his death and the period of childhood and adolescence of Takh full of love and happiness. Both models embody realistic, recognizable time-space: we find toponymical names of area where the main hero was born and where he spent his childhood – estate Saint Sulpice (France, commune La Sauvta-sur-Led) (Nothomb, 1992, p. 129), year when the hero was born – 1908. (Nothomb, 1992,

p. 128), recollections of two World Wars (Nothomb, 1992, p. 131), as well as events in the Persian Gulf (January 1991) (Nothomb, 1992, p. 35) and students revolution in France (1968) (Nothomb, 1992, p. 112). By comparing year when the main hero was born (1908) and his age at the moment when actions in the novel take place (83 years), we receive exact date of events taking place in the novel – 14 – 18th January 1991.

The first chronotope model of life of Takh-assasin is riddled with psychological pressure, feeling of disgust and indulgence, whereas another model is given properties of idyllic chronotope. In their turn, both models are woven from interaction of smaller chronotopes. Thus, reporters, after having heard that death of the great writer is very close, come to him one after another to his dwelling. Takh accepts them in the living room which makes horrible impression. Dark living room is a manifestation of inner loneliness of the character as well as a challenge to society of some sort which strives to comfort and perfection. Ugliness of dwelling and Takh himself become as if contagious: ‘Après avoir commandé un triple porto flip, il trouva la force de leur raconter sa mésaventure. A cause de la peur, il exhalait une odeur épouvantable, qui avait dû être celle de Jonas émergeant de son séjour cétaqué. <...> - Le ventre de la baleine ! Je vous assure, tout y était ! L'obscurité, la laideur, la peur, la claustrophobie...’ (Nothomb, 1992, p. 27).

Time in the chronotope of the living room has usual day properties, it flows monotonously and routinely and the repeated nature of events indicates it: ‘Chaque jour, une infirmière très courageuse passait vers 17 heures pour le laver. <...> Son secrétaire, Ernest Gravelin, vivait quatre étages plus haut mais évitait autant que possible de le voir ; il lui téléphonait régulièrement <...> : ne donnait-il pas, chaque année, la moitié de ses revenus à un organisme de charité’ (Nothomb, 1992, p. 10). Even Takh himself states that he does not feel impact of time: ‘De mes vingt-trois ans à mes cinquante-neuf ans, les jours se sont tellement ressemblés. J’ai de ces trente-six années un long souvenir homogène et quasi dénué de chronologie : je me levais pour écrire, je me couchais quand j’avais fini d’écrire’ (Nothomb, 1992, p. 14). Monotonous nature of the writer’s existence transfers a range of feeling to the reader where loneliness and disappointment in life and loss of its meaning is the first fiddle.

At the same time in retrospective narrative of childhood and adolescence of the writer an idyllic chronotope can be traced where in the lap of nature a boy and a girl, free from society and any obligations, savour each minute of existence, trying to stay in the “Eden” of childhood. Idyll of love is pictured in the background of beauty and magnificence of Saint-Sulpice estate. Despite the fact that children never left its territory, staying in the enclosed space, the childhood period of Takh and his cousin is pictured in the associative image of freedom that opposes loneliness of further years spent by the writer: ‘Vous avez eu une enfance bien trop belle. Vous aviez tout ce que l’on peut rêver, et plus encore : un château, un vaste domaine avec des lacs et des forêts, des chevaux, une formidable aisance matérielle, une famille adoptive qui vous choyait, un précepteur peu autoritaire et souvent malade, des domestiques aimants, et surtout vous aviez Léopoldine’ (Nothomb, 1992, p. 131).

Time in children “Eden” slows down, every instance gains emotional coloring which is different from the one that fills Takh’s living room for sixty-six years. Here everything around is full of sensuality, madness from love, perpetuity of feelings and infinity of unity with nature. Slowing of time flow as attribute of happy childhood is perceived as author’s narrative: ‘Les années s’écoulaient à peine. L’enfance est une aventure si peu rapide. Qu’est-ce qu’un an pour un adulte ? Pour un gosse, un an est un siècle, et pour vous ces siècles étaient d’or et d’argent’ (Nothomb, 1992, p. 131). <...> Nous n’avions plus changé d’un atome, nous nous étions seulement et prodigieusement allongés, sans que cette amusante étirement ait modifié notre complexion informe, imberbe, inodore, infantile’ (Nothomb, 1992, p. 174).

Nothomb confers an interesting trait to the character of her novel when he changes in his self-perception and gains features of a young man, returning to his childhood and adolescence in his memories. Thus, in the climax of the novel Takh lives through state of catharsis, where layering of inner chronotypes of Takh-youngster and Takh-elder are traced, the synthesis whereof creates chronotope of raving.

On the level of motives in this work the chronotype of art, in particular writing, is singled out as well as the chronotype of love. They permeate the entire plot of the novel. It is complexity of the chronotype structure of this work that preconditions its novel depth in its perception by the reader. Time-space characteristics of the work clearly and

consistently reflect reality, and their contradiction gives deep philosophical and psychoanalytic meaning to childhood on level of ideas, equating it with the meaning of human life. Work "The Stranger Next Door" (Nothomb, 1995) was written in 1995 and awarded with literature prize 'Le Prix Paris-Première', as well as 'Prix du jury Jean Giono'. This is a story that occurred with elderly married couple who had just moved into a new house far away from city fuss to fully enjoy quiet of the old age and time together. However, tranquility of the couple is disturbed by bizarre neighbors.

The novel chronotope of this work is also formed by complex system of chronotope models. Time in the novel is historically recognizable, it is indicated by birth dates of the couple and their age: 1929 – the year when the main character was born (Nothomb, 1995, p. 71), his age at the moment when the event takes place is sixty five years (Nothomb, 1995, p. 11), thus the time of event is January 1994, also there are recollections about World War II in the text (Nothomb, 1995, p. 71), at the end of which the character turned fifteen. Toponymic features in this work is the location of the new house of the couple – near village Mauves (Mauves, small village in the south-east of France) (Nothomb, 1995, p. 14).

The idea of opposition between protagonist and antagonist is based upon antithesis of chronotope of the two houses. The first model is the house of Emile and Juliette – an idyllic house engulfed in love, quiet, satisfaction from life. It is exactly the house attributed with sacred meaning by the characters: 'Il y a des maisons qui donnent des ordres. Elles sont plus impérieuses que le destin: au premier regard, on est vaincu. On devra habiter là... Nous avons vu cette maison et aussitôt nous avons su que ce serait la maison.' (Nothomb, 1995, p. 11). It becomes embodiment of childhood dreams, thus it is certainly related to the chronotope of happy childhood. Idyllic nature of the house chronotope is enhanced by its location – only nature is around it, forest, river and wisteria completely encircling the house. It is also a symbol of freedom, opposite to city fuss, a place where time slow down and gains sensuality: 'J'attendais la retraite comme le mystique attend la mort. Ma comparaison n'est pas gratuite. ... nous voulions quitter cette perte de temps qu'est le monde. Citadins depuis notre naissance, nous désirions vivre à la campagne, moins par amour de la nature que par besoin de solitude. Un besoin forcené qui s'apparente à la faim, à la soif et au dégoût' (Nothomb, 1995, p. 11). Time here combines features of calendar and day time, but, in particular, also biographic

time as it is projected upon happy childhood which seems to continue in this house. It slows down in perception due to detailing of extraneous elements, such as cracking of fire in the fireplace, hypnotic breathing of Juliette in her sleep, etc.

The chronotope of house seems to continue infinite childhood, thus opening its emotional-sensual filling. It is here that the image of love is created, love that exists beyond time boundaries, beyond mundane world as the highest value that unite Emile and Juliette: 'Le jour de la rentrée, nous nous sommes vus et nous nous sommes aimés. Nous ne nous sommes jamais quittés. Juliette a toujours été ma femme ; elle a quasi toujours été ma soeur et ma fille...' (Nothomb, 1995, p. 11). Effect of "eternal" childhood is enhanced by time shifts of the image of six-year old Juliette into the time when events of novel take place: 'Saisissement : elle n'avait pas changé d'un pouce, non pas depuis notre mariage, mais depuis notre première rencontre. Elle avait peu grandi –très peu –, ses cheveux avaient blanchi, tout le reste, c'est à dire tout, était pareil à un point hallucinant. ... je n'avais d'yeux que pour la fillette de six ans avec laquelle je vivais depuis près de soixante ans. ... Le temps n'existe pas. Je n'avais jamais été aussi heureux de ma vie' (Nothomb, 1995, p. 14).

Idyllic chronotope is opposed by infernal one which reigns in the consciousness of antagonist, bizarre neighbor as well as everywhere around him. And if the house of Emile and Juliette is a celebration of life, delight from its every second, love and cleanliness, the house of Palamed is like a waiting hall for death, denial of any manifestations of life. If the chronotope in Emile's house is emotionally colored in the atmosphere of happiness that lasts for entire life, which is its culmination, then we find mentioning about Palamed's existence as about unbearable, monotonous, lonely and without any sense at all: 'J'entrai : le halo de ma lampe éclaira une cuisine. Une odeur fétide me remplit les poumons : je n'osai imaginer ce que les Bernardin avaient mangé. <...> Comment des êtres humains pouvaient-ils vivre là-dedans ?' (Nothomb, 1995, p. 113-114). Intolerance of existence and thirst for swift death is symbolically represented by huge number of clocks everywhere around the house that tick exactly second-wise precisely one after another (Nothomb, 1995, p. 115).

Neighbor's abuses also have their chronotypical peculiarities: for his tortures he selects time from 16.00 till 18.00, crosses the threshold of the happy house at any cost and drive its owners

crazy by his silence. At first the the owners who do not understand it are happy that two hours of moral violence against twenty two hours of happiness is just a trifle, but soon the atmosphere of intolerance from the presence of unwanted guest occupy entire time of heroes, giving them no chance to think about something else. For half a year visit of the neighbor literally drive Emile crazy, creating the chronotope of boundary condition, deep despair, raving and loss of control over himself. Awareness of his own identity by the hero becomes threatened: 'Pour la première fois de ma vie, je regrettais ma bonne éducation' (Nothomb, 1995, p. 25), 'Le lendemain matin, je me réveillai nerveux. Je n'osai pas m'en avouer le motif' (Nothomb, 1995, p. 28), 'Cela commençait à ressembler à un cauchemar' (Nothomb, 1995, p. 29)», 'Ce type me met hors de moi' (Nothomb, 1995, p. 33). In the course of the text one can trace escalation of uncontrolled state. If at the beginning of the work he understands his place in life, life principles and values, then at the climax of the work we can see "rebirth" of Emile as the person who is no longer aware about the boundaries of his own "Me" or its nature: 'Ma blancheur a fondu et personne ne s'en est aperçu. Quand je me suis installé dans la Maison, il y a douze mois, je savais qui j'étais : un obscur petit professeur de grec et de latin, dont la vie ne laisserait aucune trace, elle aussi. Mais je comprends, maintenant, qu'elle est un mystère. Je ne sais plus rien de moi' (Nothomb, 1995, p. 151).

Inner chronotype of the character who is in permanent focus of reader's attention, exposing his inner struggle and experiences during a year, makes novel basis for this work. Enhancing of psychological-emotional tension in this chronotype is created by calendar contemplation of the hero over absurdity of his state and immensity of emptiness in the life of Palamed.

Romanticism of literary work "Attempt" (Nothomb, 1997) is stipulated by the buildup of consistent chronotypical periods (memories of the hero) onto the leading psychological, inner chronotope. Realism of the pictured events is stipulated by presence of time-space age benchmarks (twenty nine years) in the text and the year when the hero was born (1967) (Nothomb, 1997, p. 43), duration of events described – one year (Nothomb, 1997, p. 25), thus, the time of events described – 1996–1997. Narration is done in retrospective from the first person of diegetic narrator. As the place from which the character of the work is telling his tale is an isolated cell in prison where he is kept for murder, the time-space of narration is the chain

of his memories. In it we find chronotypical models of childhood, where the wicked syndrome of the hero personality has its roots, love that lead him to "transformation" and chronotope model of art as reflection of sociocultural state of that time, chronotope of ravings that "exposes" psychological crisis of the hero in reader's perception as well as epistolary that has time-space and emotional features of its own.

Chronotope of Epiphane's childhood combines his biographic time of hero that makes up period from birth till sixteen years of age and mostly psychological space of his consciousness inside which the hero is trying to find reasons and explanation of his fate. From the points of view of emotions childhood is colored by psychological trauma of the child from his own appearance and the fact that due to its everyone turn their back on him, even his own mother. Chronotope models of love and art are taken by the writer to the motive level of the work and make up basis of the plot. Epistolary corresponds to the culmination of the plot and actualizes chronotope most of all, as it has precise time and toponymic markers: "Dated 9.01.97 in the plane (from France to Japan), <...> dated 10.01.97 in the plane, <...> Tokyo-Kanazawa flight, the same day...etc (Nothomb, 1997, p. 117-144).

States of raving which is a specific sign of the writer's creative work unveil psychological crisis in the hero's consciousness. Thus, we watch romantic raving of Epiphane when he meets charming Etele whom he considers to be fruit of his own imagination: 'Je lui parlais sans peur parce qu'elle était la création de mon évanouissement. <...> J'admire mon oeuvre. Je l'avais faite, j'avais donc tous les droits' (Nothomb, 1997, p. 16-17). Soon he realizes that she is not his creation and does not belong to him, so nothing magical had happened. In search for answer what is love that mastered him so much, Epiphane plunges into studies of theories of sexuality and emotionality, encyclopaedia and treatises but, without satisfying his interest, he tries to find explanation for his own desires in his childhood. Then, reading the book "Quo Vadis", he was deeply disappointed by the happy final of this work. He stuck his head under the pillow, closed his eyes and suddenly felt he was that ox who cruelly murdered a Christian virgin of amazing beauty: 'Lygie nue est accrochée à mon dos. Je sens ses fesses virginales et ses reins archangéliques. <...> J'enfonce mes cornes dans ton ventre lisse : c'est une sensation fabuleuse. <...> Entre-temps, j'ai onze ans, je retire l'oreiller que j'avais écrasé sur mon crâne et je me lève,

pantelant de délectation.’ (Nothomb, 1997, p. 32-23).

Epiphane’s letters to Etele also demonstrate the state of love raving which he recognizes himself: ‘Mon état mental, en cette seconde, pourrait être qualifié de bizarre ; il me semble pourtant que, pour la première fois de ma vie, je suis normal’ (Nothomb, 1997, p. 139). It is in the world of ravings that Epiphane gains everything that reality deprived him of, creating the effect of parallel existence which is sensually and emotionally colored.

Chronotope of novel “Fear and Trembling” (Nothomb, 1999) has distinct realistic markers. It is created by intersection of private-inner chronotope of Amelie character which prevails in the focus of attention and time-space models of events in the plot. There is no geographic designation in the text of place where “Yumimoto” company is located. However, we find the date when Amelie contract began at the Japanese enterprise – eighth of January 1990 (Nothomb, 1999, p. 7) and the date of the contract completion – seventh of January 1991 (Nothomb, 1999, p. 184). Between these two dates there are numerous designations of calendar and day time: ‘It was hardly a month after (Nothomb, 1999, p. 22) <...> that February flowered into March (Nothomb, 1999, p. 31) etc.’.

Multiplicity of time markers testify the fixation of the heroine’s consciousness onto the flow of time that opens her emotional coloring. Time-space of the “contract” turns out to be unbearable for Amelie in psychological and emotional perception, culminations of this unacceptability are chronotope models of boundary states and ravings. First of all, there is a huge window that Amelie approached each time to “breathe in freedom”, is a symbol of transition between two worlds: idyllic, free and unbearable imprisonment: ‘Il ne me restait plus qu’à coller le front au verre et à me jeter par la fenêtre. Je suis la seule personne au monde à qui est arrivé ce miracle: ce qui m’a sauvé la vie, c’est la défenestration’ (Nothomb, 1999, p. 150). The culmination scene of the heroine raving state is the scene in the company’s office after three sleepless nights doing work: ‘Je marchai jusqu’à la baie vitrée. La ville illuminée était très loin au-dessous de moi. Je dominais le monde. J’étais Dieu. Je défenestrai mon corps pour en être quitte’ (Nothomb, 1999, p. 76).

Spacial limitation in the work is localized on the forty fourth floor of the building where the entire career evolution of Amelie takes places from

bookkeeping department through the department of dairy products sales to cleaner of men’s rooms. Beyond the enclosed space of the company there is free space that open to the heroine through the window: ‘Ces pages pourraient donner à croire que je n’avais aucune vie en dehors de Yumimoto. Ce n’est pas exact. J’avais, en dehors de la compagnie, une existence qui était loin d’être vide ou insignifiante’ (Nothomb, 1999, p. 148). Contract between two worlds, idyllic and infernal, gains psychological coloring in Amelie’s consciousness: ‘Quand j’étais à mon poste, aux toilettes du quarante-quatrième étage de Yumimoto, en train de récupérer les vestiges des immondices d’un cadre, il m’était impossible de concevoir qu’en dehors de cet immeuble, à onze stations de métro de là, il y avait un endroit où des gens m’aimaient, me respectaient et ne voyaient aucun rapport entre une brosse à chiottes et moi’ (Nothomb, 1999, p. 149). Apart from opposition of two worlds the chronotope model of the period after the expiration of contract is singled out, the duration whereof is two years. Here time changes from calendar and daily to historic time with recollection of large-scale world events as well as biographic events of the writer, and the space emerges as free and undetermined. Recollection of the events of private nature among events of worldwide scale in the chronology testifies strong psycho-emotional markedness of the character by the bygone experience. At the level of genre elevation of events of private nature to worldwide level grants epicness to the work with consideration that the main opposition was between representatives of two different civilizations. However, the relevance of events in this work should be noted. As the main heroine is pictured in the up-to-date socio-cultural context, i.e. as a contemporary of the author and reader, the chronotope of this work leans towards novel type.

In the novel “The Character of Rain” (Nothomb, 2000) a writer’s attempt can be traced to recreate versatility of world perception by a child. The writer manages to picture the originality of child worldview due to the chronotope strategy of the “boundary”. The first time and space antithesis on the boundary of which little Amelie becomes self-aware is divine and mundane space. The plot of novel tells about the birth of a baby by involving the myth about world creation to the narrative manner: ‘Au commencement il n’y avait rien. Et ce rien n’était ni vide ni vague: il n’appelait rien d’autre que lui-même’ (Nothomb, 2000, p. 5). The parallel between child and God that she further associates herself with creates desacralized mythical space devoid of specific

salutary markers. Here it is measured by “existence” of God: ‘Dieu ne vivait pas, il existait’ (Nothomb, 2000, p. 5), ‘Le tube n’avait aucune conscience de la durée. Il atteignit l’âge de deux ans comme il eût atteint celui de deux jours ou de deux siècles’ (Nothomb, 2000, p. 16). Mundane world which is opposed to it is the world of common people who surround small girl and whom she tries to understand has realistic time and space properties among which we find the place of the main events of the plot – Kansai, region in the west of Japan (Nothomb, 2000, p. 10), the time of pictured events – 1968-1970 (Nothomb, 2000, p. 10,156), actualizing toponymic and historic markers – daily earthquakes in Kansai (Nothomb, 2000, p. 10), recollection of military actions in the territory of Japan in 1945 (Nothomb, 2000, p. 50-51), events in Vietnam in 1970 (Nothomb, 2000, p. 65), calendar and daily time markers: “this morning”, “April in Japan”, “the start of May was happy” (Nothomb, 2000, p. 50, 66, 81), etc.

The second antithesis of time and space models on the boundaries of which Amelie becomes self-aware, is the world of grown-ups and the world of children. The child is granted powers to understand the world of grown-ups from birth, but in order to preserve realistic nature when recreating images of the child’s world, she, as it true for all babies is deprived of the possibility to talk. However, it seems that during her life she has already felt the most critical states of the world of grown-ups: ‘Mort! Comme si je ne savais pas!’ (Nothomb, 2000, p. 45). Amelie also “exists” between the Western world, being a Belgian from birth, and the Eastern world where she is brought up by her Japanese babysitter. She understands Japanese from birth as if it was her native language. The girl gives an unconditional preference to her “eastern” existence, beginning to speak Japanese with her babysitter even before she started speaking French with her parents and relatives. Amelie felt she was Japanese, because this country became the first image of beauty for the girl: ‘Etre japonaise consistait à vivre au coeur de la beauté et de l’adoration’ (Nothomb, 2000, p. 57). Having two governesses, Amelie feels like staying between two poles – between good embodied by Nisio-san, and evil personified by Kasima-san. If Nisio-san, adoring the girl, succumbed to the play of her fantasy in God, Kasima-san was not willing to accept this “religion” and worship the child, thus rooting her image of evil in the eyes of Amelie. But the central chronotope opposition becomes life and death. The girl’s birth was accompanied by complications, and as a result she was born with a certain mental disability. Till she was two she

stayed in autistic state without showing any interest in life. The only signs of the child’s life activity were feeding and defecation: ‘Les parents du tube étaient inquiets. Ils convoquèrent des médecins pour qu’ils se penchent sur le cas de ce segment de matière qui ne semblait pas vivre’ (Nothomb, 2000, p. 9). However, it was impossible to say that she was dead: ‘Votre enfant est un légume. C’est très préoccupant. Les parents furent soulagés par ce qu’ils prirent pour une bonne nouvelle. Un légume, c’était de la vie’ (Nothomb, 2000, p. 9). Subsequently, joy from the taste of chocolate take her out of living “non-existence”. Still, the boundary conditions between life and death are observed during the entire plot. Thus, Amelie was drowning in the sea, savouring each instance of transition from life to death. Soon she decides to take a look at everything during the night through the open window and falls out of it: ‘Je tombai... Mes mollets et mes cuisses étaient allongés sur le léger rebord du toit, mes hanches reposaient sur la gouttière, mon tronc et ma tête pendaient dans le vide’ (Nothomb, 2000, p. 77). Then the girl lived through drowning again, this time in the pond, but again savouring existence on the boundary between existence and non-existence: ‘Délicieusement sereine, j’observe le ciel à travers la surface de l’étang. <...> Je me sens bien. Je ne me suis jamais sentie aussi bien’ (Nothomb, 2000, p. 147). The epilogue of this work also states the “non-existence” that followed separation with Japan: ‘Ensuite, il ne s’est plus rien passé’ (Nothomb, 2000, p. 156). Therefore, the chronotope of novel is created by overlapping the inner chronotope of the heroine, which in its turn includes mythical time-space and models of “boundary” existence over realistic one, recognizable by time and space markers.

The novel “Cosmetics of the Enemy” (Nothomb, 2001), continuing the novelistic writer’s concept, operates complex combination of time-space models. In this work we find markers of realistic chronotope: recognizable toponyms (scene of action – Paris (Nothomb, 2001, p. 42), the place where hero’s wife was raped – Montmartre cemetery (Nothomb, 2001, p. 42), mentioning of the twentieth arrondissement of Paris (Nothomb, 2001, p. 56), the first encounter of the murderer with the victim–1979 (Nothomb, 2001, p. 42), etc. The central chronotope of plot actions includes time-space models of the antagonist’s childhood, picturing growth of the demonic personality of the murderer: ‘Mes parents sont morts quand j’avais quatre ans, en me laissant en héritage cette identité mystérieuse, comme un message que j’aurais à élucider’ (Nothomb, 2001, p. 15). Mysteriousness and demonic nature of the

boy named Textor is revealed in his ardent desire of superiority that pushes him to murder his competitor: 'Un dimanche soir, je me suis mis à prier dans mon lit. Une prière satanique: je priai Dieu de tuer le petit garçon que je détestais... Le lendemain matin, à l'école, l'institutrice entra en classe avec un air contrit. Les larmes aux yeux, elle nous annonça que Franck était mort pendant la nuit, d'une inexplicable crise cardiaque' (Nothomb, 2001, p. 19). Childhood of mysterious orphan boy is full of states of fanatic oblivion and ravings. In his raving he feels affinity with his intestines as well as experiences split of consciousness. Protagonist also experiences states of unconscious actions, killing his own wife at first: '– Tu l'as poignardée à plusieurs reprises. Aucune parole ne fut échangée. Silence. – Je ne me souviens pas, dit Jérôme avec obstination' (Nothomb, 2001, p. 113), and soon, enraged, he kills himself: 'Le 24 mars 1999, les passagers qui attendaient le départ du vol pour Barcelone assistèrent à un spectacle sans nom. Comme l'avion en était à sa troisième heure de retard inexplicé, l'un des voyageurs quitta son siège et vint se fracasser le crâne à plusieurs reprises sur l'un des murs du hall.' (Nothomb, 2001, p. 122). Phenomenon of split of the hero's consciousness is reached by the writer by overlaying inner chronotypes of protagonists and antagonist in the climax of the work. In this work the dominant is dramatic concept of narrative organization, represented by the dialogue that in the end turns to be an inner dialogue of the hero with himself, the tragic pathos of the work is revealed in hero's suffering that pushed him to suicide.

Conclusions

Analysis of originality of Nothomb's works highlights distinct process of genre-generic synthesis that expands their pictorial and expressive possibilities. Genre-style particularities of Nothomb's novels are stipulated by complex chronotope created by overlaying and antithesis of time-space layers. Most often the writer opposes realistic and idyllic chronotopes, building artistic reality on their boundary. Realistic chronotope in the novels has usual daily characteristics, flows monotonously and routinely, creating feeling of intolerability of life and existential identity crisis. Idyllic chronotope which is opposed to it embodies author's vision of happiness and freedom where time slows down, each minute of existence is sensually marked. Time-space of the writer's works gets more complicated by chronotope models of art, love, and metamorphic reincarnations of characters most often occur

under the chronotope conditions of of raving, agony, catharsis... All this allows to speak about presence of existential worldview which separates Nothomb's novels from mass literature.

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