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**The Boundaries of Literariness:
Image of the World as a Book in the European Prose
of the late 20th Century
(through the example of the novel
by Christoph Ransmayr „The Last World”¹)**

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The article suggests the new treatment of contemporary European literature landmark texts, which are traditionally assigned to the aesthetics of postmodernism: Ch. Ransmayr's "The Last World", M. Grzimek's "Shadowing", P. Suskind's "Perfume" and M. Kruger's "Cellist". It is proved that aforementioned writings mark overcoming the deadlock of deconstruction, the beginning of the absolute spirit search into the world-chaos. The most important issue of the research is whether it is possible to embody the image of the ideal, remaining within the ludic aesthetics of the postmodernism. And if it is possible, which artistic devices are used?

Emphasis in the research is put on the analysis of the novel by Austrian author, Christoph Ransmayr "The Last World", which is recognized the best among European prose works of the end of the 1980s. The narrative basis of the novel includes the search and interpretation of mystified and confabulated "The Metamorphoses" by Ovid and is represented as the Book of Genesis. The variants of rendition of the famous text are understood as manners of external making, examination of the author's self-awareness, an attempt of approximation to the truth. The chosen strategy of the research allows us to educe the modes of the author's self-reflection through images-masks, narration, mystification of the world literature texts, the characters-storytellers themselves and the system of comments. Characters-storytellers who offer different interpretations of the disappeared poem, implement their own conception of the reality that requires further discussion and study.

The human history is preserved in people's memory and consciousness due to the stories, which authors rely on in their personal existential experience and experience of their predecessors, and predict the future. The process of cognition is the process of reading, interpretation the previous texts and creation of the new ones, that depart with the main thesis of postmodernism about self-enclosure and structural integrity of a text. The mystery of the elusive time as well as heaven and hell, are revealed to Ovid in the novel and he tries to share these secrets with his interlocutors. The process of compassion and co-authorship brings us closer to the understanding of the metaphysical foundations of being. The image of an Artist is functionally associated with the image of the Creator, and this fact disputes the well-known thesis about the "death of the author".

Keywords: European postmodernism, models of the author's self-reflection, Ch. Ransmayr, M. Grzimek, P. Suskind, M. Kruger.

Introduction to the research problem

Literocentrism is traditionally considered as a hallmark of the Russian culture up to the postmodern era, when the significant artists started debunking the cult of literature as one of the means of ideological influence (Govorukhina, 2010, 32-37). In Europe, the process of literature displacement on the periphery of public life began much earlier and it was connected with the influence of popular art, new media and the Internet (Berg, 2005). In addition, within literature there was the critical review of the problem of *an author, a character, a reader* and a *literary text* itself.

Theoretical grounds

In this context the novel by Austrian writer Ch. Ransmayr "The Last World" ("Die letzte Welt", 1988) is of an exceptional importance. The novel is usually considered as an example of the postmodernist aesthetics (Wilke, 1992; Kiel, 1996; Gottwald, 1996). We aim to prove that the novel, vice versa, is associated with the search of the Absolute, but, at that, it retains ludic poetics (Anisimov, 2010, 64-74). The key issue in this research is the question about the prospects of *author's reflection*: deconstruction or reconstruction of the ideal from chaos? "The Last World" is dedicated to reflections about the artist's destiny, literature in history, as evidenced by the choice of the genre: *post-historical novel*. In this case a "commentator" or translator/copyist who interprets the texts of other characters – narrators, to whom an author subcontracts rights, becomes the leading figure. Such heroes are philologically oriented, engaged in the research studies of their own and other authors' texts, which is implemented as a process of self-cognition and self-determination in the present, indicating of mistrust to the former absolutes and reality itself.

Text as the evidence of history in the novel by C. Ransmayr "The Last World"

The plot of the novel comes to trying to reconstruct the lost book by the disgraced Roman poet Ovid – "The Metamorphosis". The story line develops as a process of reading, "translation" of the destroyed manuscript's fragments, writings on stones, animal skins and cloth that motivates introduction of the text of the Other. The famous writing by Ovid is mythologized and mystified and acts as Genesis that contains people's destinies.

The writing can also be considered as the history of the Roman Empire in the era of Octavianus Augustus that embodies all the achievements of the Western civilization, and as a mystical, special kind of reality which is reconstructed by the texts and does not require verification. It is perceived by a character-reader, "a commentator" and, following him, a reader of the novel. The secret follower of the exiled poet – Cotta tries to unravel the teacher's idea, and in this way, his own work that is imposed upon the text of "The Metamorphosis", appears. In the intertextual field of the novel the myths of Antiquity and the Middle Ages as well as their literary versions, represented by Ovid's, Dante's, Kafka's, Umberto Eco's texts and the texts by Ch. Ransmayr are intertwined (Fitz, 1998). "The Metamorphoses" that was created in such a way, keeps the main idea of the author about frailty of the earthly life, the relativity of time, space and culture that is emphasized by the epigraph from Ovid – "**Nothing** in the world remains **unchanged**", which is multiply repeated in the text. The book, recreated by Cotta, is understood by the writer as the evidence of disappearing history: from "the golden age" until "the iron age" that diverges with the aesthetics of postmodernism, which recognizes text as the only reality (Butov, 2003, 175-178). The present

in the novel is elusive, time is like water and sand, it absorbs everything and the problem of mystification in this case is associated with the *problem of consciousness*, which is capable of comprehending texts, understanding the creator's idea, or provides them with its own interpretation.

In opposition to the purely external, theatrical life of Rome, the history of provincial Crimean town of Tom where Ovid was exiled to was made. The dwellers of the town were ore smelters, adventurers and barbarians who tried to avoid state regulation or punishment. The Iron Town is "the sinister place", but, according to the author, it is here, where there are no laws, traditions and authority, the freedom of self-determination is acquired. In the settlement "at the edge of the world", amidst wilderness, mythological scenes, displayed in the reliefs of Roman palaces are acted out: "Tereus' mask was a caricature, a rough cartoon, but, nevertheless, resembled wind-eroded reliefs on the facades of Roman temples, ministries and palaces and reminded the image of the god of Sun in the chariot of fire" (Ransmayr, 2005, 65).

Ovid, who initially accepted all the terms of the literary industry (he took part in advertising and presentations of his works, intrigued and shocked the audience), achieved mass success, but, at the same time, experienced a deep disappointment in the craft. Exaltation in the emperor's eyes, as well as celebrity in his opponents' camp can also lead to alienation from his own destiny, threaten him conversion into a monument, canonization of the texts, transformation of his house into a museum. In the country of opposition Ovid's texts are said to influence the acts of protest and public disorders. Resisting the predetermined fate, the artist deliberately incurs disfavor of the power structure, refusing to make a triumphant speech to praise the Emperor, "In that evening Naso went out and stood in front of a bunch of dimly

gleaming microphones and, by making this one step, he left the Roman Empire behind, he did not make, he forgot – ! – the strictly recommended litany of addresses, to kneel in front of the senators, generals and even the Emperor, who was sitting under his canopy, he forgot about himself and his happiness, and without the slightest hint of a bow stood in front of the microphone and said only "The citizens of Rome" (Ransmayr, 2005, 46-47). The act of disobedience marks the freedom of the artist from society; he chooses exile, the destiny of a nameless narrator, running, according to J.L. Borges from the captivity of "the infinite library of Babel".

The master's life journey is crowned by the mountain trekking to the cave in the abandoned miners' village of Trahile that is simultaneously the pass to Hades, guarded by the mythological dog. The theme of the mountain trekking is one of the key themes in Ch. Ransmayr's works, its semantics is defined by the victory over time. In this case the logic of Ovid's journey acquires universal human and general cultural characteristics, can be interpreted as a symbolic journey into the depths of his own soul: Lost Paradise, Hell and Purgatory that gains literary connotations (Dante's story). It is indicative that Cotta, who follows the poet's footsteps, is a student of Dante Academy and his stay in Naso's cave, excavated in the cliff, is equivalent to symbolic death and accompanied by the funeral lamentations of Pythagoras – Ovid's servant: "Cotta seemed that this muttering, both indistinct and persistently penetrating from the top floor, was intended for him. These were elegy's stanzas on his death. His bed was a hearse" (Ransmayr, 2005, 58).

In the image of the Iron City symbols of different eras and cultures are connected (in the 1century BC cinema, printing, stadiums and advertisement coexist; dissidents are persecuted, crucified on crosses and killed in gas chambers) –

here the dreams and myths come true, wonders are done and there is no time. The image of the country town embodies the interworld between the past and the future, dreams and reality, life and death. What is happening in Tomoi is a compendium of the human history with an open ending, marked by permanent apocalypse. History of the “recent times” is written in the context of the ancient and Christian cultures: from the theme of the flood, unleashed on the mankind by Zeus, up to the classic indications of The Revelation of St. John the Divine – the city survived the earthquake, the plague, the invasion of scorpions, water changed its color, however, these events are among many followed by other events. The end inevitably turns into a new creation, the time of people-ants and humans, who are made of mud as predicted in Ovid’s speech, comes to replace the era of heroes. New generations are distinguished by obedience, silence, absence of passions and memory, the necessity of which the poet mentions. The process of degradation of humanity is associated not with the loss of humanistic orientations, but alienation of culture (e.g. language, according to J. Lacan) from existence (meaning), what is demonstrated in the history of Rome.

The travel to Tomoi, narrated according to the initiation model (themes of temptation, storms, the Ark, sleep/death and the symbolic dog) is a search of the initial structures of civilization. Scanty historical reality in the novel is intensified by the storylines from the disappeared poem as a kind of *ideal force* capable to change human being, to correlate it with the prehistoric times (initial meanings). Pathos of the game (as a basis of culture in general, according to J. Huizinga) of carnival contradicts the idea of statehood, on which the Empire of Augustus, conquered by entropy, is based. Bearing evidence of inevitability of the energy cycle and decline processes, the author emphasizes the importance of personal insights

and existential texts that prove the reality where everything is repeated ...

Cotta, trying to get to Tomoi with the same ambitious goals that once were experienced by Ovid, reveals dependence of his own destiny on the found signs and the patches of the text that absorbed philosophy of its author: “The fall of the poet expelled him of the Roman protection, and now he followed the exile. He was tired. He is no longer strained after influence or honors. He just did what he did” (Ransmayr, 2005, 119-120). Connection between the poet, Pythagoras, Cotta and inhabitants of the Iron City is carried out on a mental level, bearing evidence of proximity of people of different ages and at the same time of creation of a new book in a reader’s mind. The author gives detailed description of poor life of the depth of the country’s inhabitants, twists and turns of personal relationships, but each fate is rooted in myth and reflected in another fate, what is also featured in the names: Lycaon, Arachne, Dith, Echo, Proserpine...

Great Mountain, at the foot of which Tomoi nests, is a prototype of Olympus: “The name of the massif crowned with snow, glittering outside the broken windows, was also captured on flaps – Olympus. Mighty, mightier than anything that has ever been raised above the Black Sea, the mountain casted its shadow on the shore of the Iron City” (Ransmayr, 2005, 172). The poet, who has risen above time and his own destiny, becomes an authorized representative of the gods. The mountain as an axis of the universe, around which being is building up; it connects heaven, space of the mortal and Hades. The image of the mountain is duplicated by the symbols of *ever green mulberry* at the entrance to Ovid’s cave, the *oak tree* from the poet’s speech about the birth of the ants’ race and *Pythagoras’ pyramids* decorated with the fragments of the poet’s texts.

Silk that was used for the first books writing, was produced of mulberry. An image of winter

mulberry, snow under which “had blue juice stains from the fallen berries” echoes the picture of the burned manuscript of “The Metamorphoses”, “Pale, with black hands, Naso opened the door of his study only after much persuasion: the blue carpet as if with snow, was covered with ashes” (Ransmayr, 2005, 23). Mulberry fruits symbolize life path of a man from birth to death, mulberry tree is considered an analogue of the Tree of Life (Slovar’ Simvolov, 2003, 686). Invulnerability of evergreen mulberry that outlived the flood, the earthquake and destruction of civilizations in the novel, provides the prospects to a creative person, who is let into the secret of writing (tradition).

In the Iron City witch doctors and tempters of all times try their hands: from an ancient storyteller to a Christian missionary and a midget-cinema operator. Their texts in varying degrees correlate with the text of “The Metamorphoses” recreated by Cotta. The image of the city – the last ark, lost in the waters of history, is presented by the author as an area of life amid the chaos of disintegrated lines. Appearance of Jason’s military frigate “Argo” on the shores of Tomoi with the adventurers on board brings to mind M. McLuhan’s analogy, who compared the ranks of warriors grown from a dragon’s teeth, with the letters of the alphabet: “The Greek myth about the alphabet holds that Cadmus – the king, who holds the merit of introduction of the phonetic alphabet to Greece – had sown the dragon’s teeth and when they tillered, the armed warriors went out of them. Like any other myths, this one succinctly summarizes continued process in the instant flash of enlightenment. The alphabet meant power, authority and control over the military structures” (McLuhan, 2003, 94). According to the philosopher, dictate of linear writing over human consciousness turns into the domination of didacticism and rationalism of Western culture.

Foreseeing this danger, Ovid prefers the *spoken* word to the written one. He retrieves the stories literally from the material prima – fire, air and stone. The stories passed from mouth to mouth, got the status of rumors, embodied in real people’s destinies, even being recorded by a servant, they keep their fragmentarity, have an open ending and inscribed in random places. “In Nazo’s answers and stories Pythagoras inevitably found all his thoughts and feelings and he believed that in this coincidence he finally discovered the harmony that is worth perpetuating; since that time he no longer wrote on the sand, he began making inscriptions everywhere he appeared, first, he scabbled only tables in the cellar at the innkeeper with nails and a penknife, and then began writing with potsherds on the walls and with chalk on trees, and sometimes even on the sides of strayed sheep and pigs” (Ransmayr, 2005, 154).

The sequence, in which the hero chooses materials for records, reflects the stages of writing formation: from rock paintings to parchment and paper. History of sage Pythagoras, whose works have not survived, creating a legend of the scientist’s fundamental rejection of writing, which distorts the meaning and gives ironic colours to the poet’s fate. In Ovid’s texts the Ancient Greek philosopher finds the traces of primary meaning which, since that time, he tries to convey in a picture, a gesture and a word. Seemingly sporadic writings on stones, walls and scraps of cloth... excite the imagination, require active co-creation and solution, thus reuniting disintegrated times. Mythologizing and eschatologization of history that happens in this way has a purpose to confront the coming power of entropy and void. According to the remark by U. Wittstock, “The Last World” is the only novel by Ch. Ransmayr, where except natural history perspective, comparing to which everything is perishable, there is also cultural and historical dimension in which Ovid’s art remains relevant for 2 000 years that in human scale is

incomprehensible term (Wittstock, 2009, 122-136).

Texts of the characters – narrators in the novel

Cotta's book, which is based on extracts from the mythological poem by Ovid, allows considering the heroes as two *alter ego of the author*. The text, created within the sight of a reader, at the same time includes stories, films, writings on the scraps and walls of houses of the authors of "*alien texts*". Ovid's image as a result of interpretation of the fragments of his work and the stories of other authors is highly controversial and unfinished. Inclusion of the poet's texts at the level of narration does not order his image and does not make the image easier to interpret, on the contrary, the texts are like a maze and wild bushes, where "a little man" Cotta wanders, initially in captivity to formal ideas about the great poet.

Burning the manuscript of "The Metamorphoses" is Ovid's escape from former him (motif of lost paradise), auto-da-fé, followed by an attempts to defend his own destiny, and to find those – the Others – able to remember and pass / play the fragments of the destroyed poem with the hidden knowledge about the world in it: "With all the speculations, the burning remained as enigmatic as a reason for the exile. The authorities kept silent or resorted to prate. And as a manuscript that had long believed to be in safe hands for all these years did not show up, in Rome they gradually began to suspect that the fire at Piazza del Moro was not a desperate act or a fire sign but a mere destruction" (Ransmayr, 2005, 24). Cotta tries to unriddle the image of a voluntary exile, arising from the poem passages. Aiming to give "The Metamorphoses" its final form, "the commentator" later abandons this idea, collects scraps of cloth with inscribed lines and stringing them arbitrarily, repeats Ovid's

logic. The scraps represent the fragmented way of interpretation of reality, the effect of a stopped moment, when everyone addressing to them, can position the writings in the proper order, to read into them.

Texts of the Others are formed into several books or cycles: *about stones, birds, heroes, people's fates, the underworld, and, finally, about creativity and poetry*. Ovid found interlocutors, untrusting the chosen ones only a part of his own intentions, "Naso opened to every listener a special window into the kingdom of his dreams, telling everyone only those stories, what he/she wanted or was able to hear" (Ransmayr, 2005, 124-125). Each cycle is an attempt to reconstruct the events that are at the basis of the universe, to detect the traces of initial meanings, and, at the same time, providing evidence of the accomplished fate of the poet, its enduring significance.

The first book is dedicated to Echo the beauty – Ovid's confidante in his wanderings through the mountains. The poet makes fires everywhere, claiming that reads in the fire. *Stories about stones* are combined here, saying that after the flood, arranged by Zeus, they give basis to new humankind. The motif of turning into stone connects the rulers of the empire embodied in the monuments with the image of a petrified madman Battus and the first people – barbarians. Demonstrative proximity of the king and the jester goes back to the most ancient archetype: "At the time of Roman Saturnalia a slave was elected a king. Everybody obeyed him, but he knew that at the end of the holiday he will become a bloody sacrifice" (Panchenko, 2005, 37). "An emperor – a jester" parallel is unfolded at all the text levels: from gestures, attributes (Battus' nettle wreath parodies a laurel wreath of the Emperor) and postures (immobility of August, who was watching at the rhinoceros and the village madman, enchanted by reflections of the Bishop) to speech (gabble or silence).

Battus' figure correlates with the images of Ovid himself (the carnival mask of the character copies Nazo's traits) and Cotta, who monks believe to be insane. The fate of the unfortunate son of Rumors is a farcical reflection of the Poet's fate that expected him in official Rome: "And Battus – a stone among many stones on the local coast – had eventually taken place in a small shop between the barrels of sauerkraut, snaths and jars with caramel, black with coagulated pig's blood, shining from German ointments, towered in the living world, like an idol smeared with the sacrifices' blood" (Ransmayr, 2005, 134). Cotta's endeavor to engage Echo's heart, to possess her is a symbolic attempt against the mystery of the language, the poet's voice that resulted in tragedy.

Dumb weaver Arachne projects mythology of the *overworld* in the patterns on carpets, and wealth of colours and vividness of images "arose in some Tomoi dwellers undercurrent melancholy for the other world" (Ransmayr, 2005, 121). The weaver, who sheltered Echo, found a friend in the girl, the lover of stories-patterns, as Arachne herself reads the stories in Ovid's lips. Midget-cinema operator Cypress, followed by a beautiful deer in his films demonstrates the myths about the *feats of the antique heroes*: "Cypress, as in the past, governed along the shore, depicting whistling and confusing signs by the whip in the air and loudly announcing the names of the heroes and beautiful women: thus the midget from afar proclaimed delight, pain, sorrow and all the passions that in darkness of the next evenings will flicker with his will on peeling white walls of a slaughterhouse" (Ransmayr, 2005, 24). Functionally, the midget is the same as Battus (both are absorbed with the game of shadows) and the exiled poet: "In this evening cinema operator Cypress was leaving the iron city in the same way as Naso once was leaving San Lorenzo and Rome: through the lines of the curious, beaten by

the fate and with the characteristic absent look of a person who knows that there is no way back" (Ransmayr, 2005, 76). It is significant that Ovid's villa in Rome is hidden from prying eyes behind "cypress and stone pines".

The Book of Herbs, of underworld is revealed to Dis, the German, "who was swept up on these shores by the forgotten war". The hero, similar to Sisyphus, beats his own death and was engaged to "nymphomaniac" Proserpina. The features of mythological healer Asclepius and his opponent Hades are ironically combined in Dis' image. The witch doctor in his speech even uses quotations from Ovid's writings, acting as his mythologized counterpart: Ovid – Zeus – Dis. *Narration about people's morals* is heard from the mouth of Rumors – a shopkeeper in whose shop the poet rested before going to the mountains. Shopkeeper's son, who repeats fragments from Ovid's stories, functionally coincides with Echo.

The most hidden, most inaccessible part of "The Metamorphosis" are *flaps with Pythagoras' notes* fortified in the pyramids on top of the mountain, and *menhirs on the stones*, hidden beneath slugs' bodies. Notes on the stones are devoted to the poet's fate, who is finishing his work, foreseeing his fate in centuries. The stones themselves are witnesses and guardians of history of the universe. Cotta managed to read a small piece of the text – it is the only authentic quotation from Ovid, which underlines its significance in the novel:

Now I have completed my work, which neither Jove's anger

Nor fire nor sword nor ravenous time will be able to destroy.

That day will come which has no claim to anything

But my body, and put an end to whatever days remain to me.

Nevertheless I will be carried aloft beyond the distant stars,

Eternal, by what is better in me, and my name will endure.

*Wherever Roman might holds sway in lands subdued,
My words will be on people's lips: throughout the ages*

I shall be read, and through all the centuries,

If prophets know aught of truth, my fame and I shall live. (Ovid, 2000, 350).

Being of the characters-storytellers as personalized doubles of Ovid is focused on the process of narration, after which they are disembodied (Echo, Cypress, Pythagoras), turning into a stone or a bird. Their texts literally float in the air.

The plot of reading. The Image of Cotta the “Commentator”

Key for the novel image of a reader-“commentator” Cotta outplays the author-creator’s personal reflective viewpoint. The chosen hero is the evidence of the crisis of authorship, the method for the artist to check his own creativity. Passages of the text given to other characters create a situation of polyphony, dialogue of viewpoints, interpretations and opinions, moral and aesthetic verification of the decision taken by Ovid happens, as well as his views on time, history and man. The same issues of self-determination and self being in the world that is changing before our eyes are resolved after the master by the “little man” Cotta, whose inner suffering and doubts are subjected to thorough analysis. The poet’s image is ironic and hermetic, it is made by viewpoints and interpretations of the Others (the court in Rome, inhabitants of the Iron City, the servant, the “commentator”), who are often incongruous with each other. The Interpreter, on the contrary, is “self-revealing” character, endowed with voice, biography, personal biases and insights. Ovid’s and Cotta’s, writer’s and “commentator’s”, the creator’s and the reader’s destinies are the most important components of the author’s attitude.

The “commentator’s” image in the novel is created by story-telling, narration of its history and philological tastes, but it isn’t represented in the original text. If the meaning-making function is assigned to the character, the text-generating function – to the author-creator.

Cotta *proves* Ovid’s poem, experiences the described events as his own destiny, collects and holds the fragments like a virtuoso-bookbinder. It is no coincidence that he settled in the rope maker’s house, mastering his craft; huge rolls of leather belts in Lycaon’s trunk are prototypes of ancient books. “The only catchy novelty in Lycaon’s house were garland flags that Cotta stretched far and wide in the workshop and the covered terrace – these were rags taken from the stone pyramids of Trahila and carefully brought into the city threaded with hemp ropes” (Ransmayr, 2005, 125). Hanging “garland flags” with scraps of legends around the house, Cotta turned it into the Book’s analogue. Emotional and artistic experience of the reader-interpreter that changed his perception of culture and history influences the most important existential settings, thereby radically changing personal destiny that withdraws the text from the postmodernism aesthetics.

Synthesis of the poet’s and the “commentator’s” conciseness as well as the creator’s of the text and the Other’s is complicated by the fact that the author-narrator describes mythologizing Ovid’s consciousness, progress of characters in understanding their own destinies and Cotta’s interpretive efforts from the position of the late 20th century artist. The poet and the “little man” succeeding him, the creator and the interpreter-philologist are the two lines in existence, two missions called to understanding, preservation and transmission of the spiritual experiences of people and its enrichment with personal insights. The narrator is not only a *scripter of postmodernism*, but a *director, a mystifier*, who

externalizes the author's consciousness, narrates about the techniques and methods of writing and the book industry that is subject to the laws of mass culture. Each hero-alter ego has his/her own line in being and a text ("The Metamorphoses" by Ovid exist in Cotta's interpretation), in relation to Ch. Ransmayr's novel they are the Others. Narrative structure is based on the synthesis of two realities: textual, metatextual and external text reality, Ovid's reality (primary) and Cotta's reality (secondary, created by reading). Such a subject-character organization of writing indicates a change in quality of the author's consciousness in contemporary prose, loss of the right to absolute truth and relativisation of the author's consciousness (Gulius, 2004, 166-179).

Resume

Importance of the *poetic word* is recognized in the novel absolutely. Contrasting linearities, "monophonic" characteristics of writing and reading poetic lines, J. Lacan indicates polyphonism characteristic to the sounding of discourse that seizes multiple contexts, witnessed at the time of the message (Lacan, 1997). Not accidentally A. Karelsky notes that "confident power of Words and Talent reigns over the "last world" and it leaves a feeling of a brilliant final victory" (Karelsky, 1993, 5). Meaning his own profession, Ch. Ransmayr calls himself not a writer but a storyteller whose mission involves "willingness not only to judge the world, but to know it, stroll it over on foot, and if you want to sail it, to search it, to swim it around and even to suffer it" (Ransmayr, 2008, 231).

"The Last World" is finished by the mystical scene – on the top of the mountain Cotta is watching the poet who has returned from Hades and is dictating another story to the servant: "Looking into the fire of a small stove, Naso as if was talking to the servant. Cotta recognized the voice and intonation, however, he couldn't

understand a word, he could only hear a knock of blood in his temples and blasts of wind that tore from the exile's lips sentence by sentence and took them away up the slopes. And Pythagoras' hand moved fast on a blue rag as if in a desperate haste he definitely had to write these words before they are gone with the wind. Time slowed its progress, it stopped and went back to the past" (Ransmayr, 2005, 146). Poetic word in the novel determines fates of the gods, people and the world as a whole, time has no power over it, it binds human history and fills it with meaning. The plots of the poem are acted out in real life, reality is originated out of poetry, it becomes a myth and returned to poetry, understanding of its meanings reveals the metaphysical essence of being "Construction reality no longer required records".

M. Grzimek works in the paradigm close to Ch. Ransmayr's, revealing simulative nature of post-industrial world in his novel "Surveillance" (1989), where the loss of the sense of being is linked to the disembodiment of reality and its absorption by simulacra. In this case creativity is not supported by ontology and dies out as unnecessary (an analogy to Augustus' Rome in the text by Ch. Ransmayr). Perfume by P. Suskind of the same novel acts as a kind of Ovid's antithesis. The character does not strive to defend his own destiny or the right to act, on the contrary, he tries to create a work of art (a unique aroma) from a variety of aromas, not correlating his work with the personal world and experience. Deprived of the unique style, but satisfying taste needs of the mass audience, the aroma brings death to its creator. And finally, composer George from the novel by M. Kruger "Cellist" (2002) in the tension of the search of meaning, genuine to the art of post-industrial era is similar to the character of "The Last World". Genuine tragedy of human existence with its disappointments, death and social turmoil cannot abandon the game strategies of contemporary art, on the

contrary, it is the experience of tragic, the Others are able to renew faith in the present and potential to creativity. Thus, the late 20th century literature is characterized by a keen search of the Absolute, a hero capable to reveal initial meanings and incarnate them in his/her creativity (Anisimov,

2007, 124-138). Basically, the main question of an author at that time is possibility to reveal the genuine in the language of art that assimilated the game strategies of the postmodernism aesthetics and was experiencing pressure of the market and mass consumer tastes.

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Границы литературности: образ мира как книги в европейской прозе конца XX века (на примере романа К. Рансмайра “Последний мир”)

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В статье предложена новая трактовка знаковых текстов современной европейской литературы, традиционно относимых к эстетике постмодернизма: “Последний мир” К.Рансмайра, “Слежка” М.Гржимека, “Парфюмер” П.Зюскинда, “Виолончелистка” М.Крюгера. Доказывается, что названные произведения знаменуют выход из тупика деконструкции, начало поиска Абсолюта в мире-хаосе. Важнейший вопрос статьи – возможно ли, оставаясь в пределах игровой эстетики постмодернизма, воплотить образ идеального и, если возможно, какими художественными средствами?

Акцент в исследовании сделан на анализе романа австрийского автора – Christoph Ransmayr “Die letzte Welt”, признанного лучшим произведением европейской прозы конца 1980-х годов. Сюжетную основу романа составляет поиск, интерпретация мистифицируемой и мифологизируемой поэмы Овидия “Метаморфозы”, выступающей в роли Книги Бытия. Варианты прочтения знаменитого текста понимаются нами как способы овнешнения, проверки авторского самосознания, попытки приближения к истине. Избранный ракурс исследования позволяет выявить формы авторской саморефлексии через образы-маски, сюжетное повествование, мистификацию текстов мировой литературы, самих персонажей-рассказчиков и систему комментариев к ним. Герои-повествователи, предлагающие различные толкования исчезнувшей поэмы, реализуют собственное понимание действительности, требующее дальнейшего обсуждения и проверки. Человеческая история сохраняется в памяти, сознании людей благодаря рассказам, авторы которых опираются на собственный экзистенциальный опыт и опыт предшественников, прогнозируют будущее. Процесс познания суть процесс чтения, интерпретации прежних и создания новых текстов, что расходится с основным тезисом постмодернизма о самозамкнутости, герметичности произведения. Овидию в романе открывается тайна ускользающего времени, рая и ада, которую он пытается донести до собеседников. Процесс сопереживания, сотворчества приближает к пониманию метафизических основ бытия. Образ Художника функционально сопоставляется с образом Творца, что оспаривает известный тезис о “смерти автора”.

Ключевые слова: европейский постмодернизм, формы авторской саморефлексии, К. Рансмайр, М. Гржимек, П. Зюскинд, М. Крюгер.
