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SPECIFICITY OF THE SEA TOPIC IN EGONS LĪVS' PROSE FICTION

Anotacija

Straipsnyje tiriama jūros tematikos specifika latvių autoriaus Egono Lyvo prozos darbuose. Jo darbų centre beveik visuomet yra su jūra susiję žmonės – žvejai ir jų artimieji. Remiantis semiotine metodologija E. Lyvo prozoje nustatomi du esmingiausi jūros tematikos realizavimo variantai: 1) jūra – iniciacijos ritualo vyksmo erdvė; 2) egzistencinė jūra, išsauganti arba atimanti gyvybę. Kiekvienoje teminėje grupėje analizuojamas vienas darbas jame akcentuojant jūros tematikos specifiką ir apibūdinant jūros reikšmę žmogaus koncepcijos realizavimui bei pasaulio modelio kūrimui. Trumpai apibūdinami literatūrinis ir biografinis kontekstai taikant biografinį ir antropologinį metodus.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: jūros tematika, aplinkos semiotika, tapatybė, iniciacija, psichologizmas, Egonas Lyvas.

Abstract

The present paper is focused on the specific treatment of the sea topic in the Latvian writer Egonas Līvs' prose fiction. His works are focused on people who are related to the sea – fishermen and their families. Using the methodology of semiotics, two major variants of actualizing the sea topic in E. Līvs' prose fiction are singled out: (1) the sea as a space of the rite of initiation, (2) the existential sea that preserves or takes one's life. Within each of these thematic groups, one work by the writer is analyzed, emphasizing the specificity of the sea topic in it and characterizing the significance of the sea in the revelation of the conception of human and the construction of the world model. The literary and biographical contexts are briefly characterized by means of the biographical and anthropological methods.

KEY WORDS: the sea topic, semiotics of space, identity, initiation, psychologism, Egonas Līvs.

1. Introduction

The sea is an intrinsic component of the landscape in the Baltic space, it is an element that structures the culture consciousness of the people, a mythological, folklore image and that of individual creativity. The sea instils piety, respect, and shapes identity of a person. Māra Grudule notes, “Water, also one of the Baltic landscape markers, be it sea, river or lake, is not exclusively an expression of natural environmental” (LAL 2010, 238). Contemporary research highlights the idea that people who live by the sea and consider it their native place, are in everyday communion with it, depend on the sea for their subsistence, greatly differ from other people of the same nationality or living in the same country. The sea shapes the identity of the community. August Hecksher, as regards the collective identity, emphasizes that the native land must first be formed, over a rather long time period, and then it must be sustained (Hecksher 1965, 7). In Latvian culture those who live by the sea are often called *people on the coast*; the sea is the determining element in the formation of their life course and fate.

Despite its conceptual significance and identity-forming role in Latvian and Baltic culture space, the sea appears in Latvian literature rather episodically. It is regularly depicted by those writers whose life has been fatally affected by the sea and whose place of living is by the sea, i.e. *people on the coast*.

This may be accounted for by the specificity of the sea semiotics. The sea constitutes a part of Latvian identity, it is well known, always close, everybody knows what it looks like and what affects its state, the depths of the sea still keep unpredictability and mysteriousness, its space can never be completely known and described, so, being one's own, it is also other, unknown, border space with its own laws that differ from the regularities of the lives of the people on the coast. The specificity of the sea semiotics, its difference from the mainland semiotics conditions the fact that this space is described only by the authors who are well aware of all the regularities of the functioning of this space. Egons Līvs is one of these rare authors in Latvian literature whose writing provides depiction of the sea. The specific delineation of the sea topic in his prose fiction makes an object of the present research. The related aim is to systemically analyze the specificity of the sea topic in E. Līvs' writing, emphasizing the diversity of its semiotics and taking into consideration biographical and culturological factors. The following tasks are set for reaching the aim of the research:

- define the research object, aims, and tasks,
- study a corpus of E. Līvs' prose texts depicting the sea,
- select the methods necessary for the analysis,
- analyze the texts according to the peculiarities of the sea topic in them, to

provide a full picture of the diversity of the sea concept in E. Līvs' writing.

The literary legacy of E. Līvs entails five collections of stories, *Selgas vīri* (*The Men of Deep-Sea*) (1962), *Kapteinis Nulle* (*Captain Zero*) (1963), *Prelūdija* (*Prelude*) (1964), *Vecā romantiķu pirts* (*Old Romantic Baths*) (1968), *Pārņākšana* (*Homecoming*) (1977) and novel *Velnakaula dvīņi* (*Devil's Bone Twins*) (1966). All the texts are focused on people who are to some extent related to the sea – people of the coast. However, the sea as an object of depiction is emphasized only in some works. As the object of the given study is the depiction of the sea and its semantic and poetic peculiarities, we selected for analysis two works that best of all reflect the peculiarities of the depiction of the sea in E. Līvs' oeuvre. These are the works in which the image of the sea assumes conceptually varied treatment, i.e. story *Kapteinis Nulle* and novel *Velnakaula dvīņi*. The depiction of the sea in these works is both quantitatively broad and conceptually significant. In the first text the sea is represented as the driving factor of personality growth and the space of action, in the latter the semantic of the sea is marked in the existential sense, besides in a positive aspect, i.e. the sea saves life instead of taking it. Thus, analysis is produced on works that present the manifold semantic and poetics as well as provide a common notion of variations of the sea thematic in E. Līvs' oeuvre.

2. Methodology

Interpreting the space of the sea as a specific semiotic system different from that of the mainland, that still functions according to the regularities similar to those of the mainland, it is useful to apply the methodology of semiotics as it makes it possible to regard the sea concept both in the syntagmatic and paradigmatic aspect. The analysis of the specificity of the sea topic in E. Līvs' texts by means of the methodology of semiotics makes it possible to define the conception of human and the world model in his works that is an important goal of literary text analysis. The specificity of the sea topic is regarded in accordance with the human conception produced in his works, because, as noted by the literary scholar Sandra Meškova, “in literature and culture we first and foremost see the depiction of human, socium, human's inner world, searching for answers to questions about human life procedures in society, psychological processes, moral and spiritual life problems, etc. that we are interested in” (Meškova 2009, 5).

Analyzing the manifestations of the sea topic, special attention is also paid to the conceptual structures in texts, with the sea as a part of them. Yuri Lotman points out that the structure the author has given to his text reflects a certain world image, the world model determined by it, and the image of its author's

understanding (Лютман 2005, 95). In the course of the research, the image of the sea is reflected as a certain structure with characteristic regularities, thus using the methodology of structuralism in the analysis. The culturological and biographical methods are used as additional ones that make it possible to sketch out the context of works by E. Līvs, their place in Latvian literature as well as the specificity of the sea topic characteristic of them in the space of Latvian culture.

3. Characteristics of the author's personality and his works

E. Līvs is a Latvian writer who has received little attention from literary scholars, though his works are worthy of being considered as a part of the best works in Latvian literature. They are a peculiar source for studying the identity of Latvians, yet they are not even included in school syllabus for literature. Guntis Berelis gives the following characteristics of E. Līvs' works: "He [Līvs] made a début in 1962 with this story and sketch collection "Selgas vīri" (The Men of Deep-Sea); this collection as well as the following prose fiction books mostly focus on the life of fishermen. The best landmark of his best stories is the classical novella – unpretentious, laconic, yet simultaneously sufficiently expressive, at times slightly ironic (..), but more often tragic or dramatic (..)" (Berelis 1999, 139). His literary legacy includes 5 collections of short prose fiction and the novel *Velnakaula dvīņi* (*Devil's Bone Twins*). Līvs has also produced many screenplays for movies in Latvia and Lithuania, e.g. *Kapteinis Nulle* (*Captain Zero*) (1964), *Nakts bez putniem* (*A night without birds*) (1979), *Pirmā vasara* (*The first summer*) (1974), *Rīta miglā* (*In the morning mist*) (1966), co-author with Ēriks Kūlis, *Parāds mīlestībā* (*Debt in love*) (1984). Soon after the publication of the novel *Velnakaula dvīņi* it was staged in four theatres in Latvia. The paradox of the author's simultaneous popularity and lack of official recognition may be accounted for by political reasons: E. Līvs served in the Latvian legion of Nazis in 1942–1945.

E. Līvs is one of the first writers in Latvia in the 1960s to use psychologism as an opportunity to escape ideological layers, he developed the trend of the so-called psychological prose fiction that are later continued by such masters as Visvaldis Lāms, Alberts Bels, Regīna Ezera, etc. Almost in all of his works E. Līvs takes up description of the harsh reality of the sea. His heroes are the fishermen seasoned in the hard life, their family members waiting for the return of their husbands, fathers, children, people living on the coast and totally depending on the sea. In the Latvian literature of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, descriptions of the sea are not so many and they as a rule have a tinge of tragedy. E. Līvs opened for the Latvian readership a new, realistic sea reality that is for

the first time described from the viewpoint of an experienced fisherman: E. Līvs has worked in Liepāja fishery port for 15 years.

In E. Līvs' works the sea has a different semantics and significance in revealing the general conception of human, sometimes the whole action in a work is set on the sea, sometimes just a small part, sometimes the action is set on the coast, but the sea is an intrinsic part of the described environment and forms the consciousness of the main heroes produced by the writer.

On the whole two major variants of the manifestation of the sea concept can be singled out in E. Līvs' works: (1) the sea as the space of the rite of initiation, (2) the existential sea that preserves or takes life. This division does not reflect all diversity of the specificity of the sea topic representation in E. Līvs' prose fiction but sketches out the major peculiarities that will be regarded further on the basis of one prose work where the particular peculiarity is manifested most expressly.

4. The sea as the space of the rite of initiation

Most widely the sea is represented in the story *Kapteinis Nulle* (*Captain Zero*). The action of this work is basically set on the sea. The young seaman Valdis Nulle, who had recently left nautical college, was appointed a captain on a fishery ship and took it with a great joy. His uncle who had brought him up, also a seaman, seeing Valdis off and expressing sincere joy for him, warned him that leading a crew of seamen could be quite tough and he turned out to be right. Having arrived to the place of appointment, the young captain learned that the ship "Forele" (Trout) where he was appointed was considered to be most unlucky, that season they had never drawn a catch, besides the crew consisted of the most uncouth and unprofessional workers who were not used to discipline; hence, in the port, instead of taking turns to guard the ship, they recruited aunt Jule and paid her with ration while entertaining themselves. The appearance of the captain on the ship made the crew slightly change their lifestyle, put the ship in order and stop their jaunt. Yet the experienced fishermen seasoned by the harsh sea life looked down on the young captain with distrust and disrespect, showing it in all possible ways. The captain was young and inexperienced, besides his family name was Nulle (Zero), the semantic field whereof was related to inability for any constructive, significant actions. Y. Lotman points out that the general meaning of a person's name in its utter abstraction is approximated to myth. In the sphere of person name there is approximation of a name and denotation that is characteristic of mythological notions (Лотман 2000, 529). In E. Līvs' story *Kapteinis Nulle*, the protagonist's name has a unanimous denota-

tion and a negative, symbolically connotative meaning accentuated by the plot. The whole narration is opposing the semantics of the family name, proving the protagonist's capability, aptitude, and professionalism.

In the open sea, apart from the hostile and distrustful attitude of the crew, the captain faces another problem – how to find and catch the necessary load of fish; this becomes the basic stage in the captain's personality development. Providing a good catch on the ship rumoured unlucky means to go through initiation on the way to one's professional and personality formation, to win the respect of the crew, establish oneself in the eyes of the fishery ship management, finally to make sure of one's ability of being a captain. Finding himself in the closed space of the ship, Valdis encounters a complex psychological situation – there is no one to consult, to tell about his problems, or simply have a friendly talk. The complexity of the situation is aggravated by the fact that at home his beloved girl is awaiting him; she has suffered in an accident and is sending cables to Valdis about her feelings; he would like to be with her but he replies with brief phrases because his thoughts are occupied with the events on the ship. The closed space of the ship is a part of the endless vastness of the sea. Having set the ship in order and won the crew's respect, Valdis will prove his ability to be a captain and fight with the unquenchable element of the sea and take an upper hand over her. The ship is a micro-model of the society, and Valdis' ability of becoming a real captain means that he will be respected in the society not only on the sea but also on mainland. The closed space of the ship and the sea raving around it create a border situation. At the beginning of the story Valdis says that a man is best known on the sea. The events in the story justify his words; the situation his crew gets into gradually grows more and more heated: the unlucky ship with the untrained and slack crew spends some days at the place of fishing without drawing any catch, while other ships fulfil and even overfulfil the plan. Having changed the place, the crew manages to draw a big catch in a day and everybody waits with impatience and pleasure for the new day when they will continue fishing but the management decides to try out a new trawl on their ship as the average indicators for the days spent on the sea are very low. The first day of fishing with the new trawl proved unsuccessful and then a storm breaks out that lasts for several days. Many crewmembers get seasick, some get angry with the captain and stay in their cabins. Exactly at this time of the highest psychological tension, the personality traits of the crew members are expressed distinctly who are in a border situation, each of them making a choice between the good and the evil, strength and weakness, truth and lie. At the end of the story everybody realizes who may be considered to be a rightful member of the crew, who can be relied on in any situation. The first impression about several heroes changes to an opposite, e.g.

the foreman of trawling, Juhans behaves in the first days of the captain's presence on the ship in a rude and conceited way, after that he openly declares that he would not work with Valdis, but in the end he appears to be an honest, open person and a professional seaman. The wheelsman Bauze, just the opposite, first seemed to be a neutral intelligent man but at the end of the story proves to be a traitor with whom no one wishes to communicate. Traditionally, sea vessels are regarded as masculine in Latvian culture and a woman on a ship is taken as unacceptable and ill omen. But in the story *Kapteinis Nulle* this cliché is first established and later turned down. Aunt Jule is closely related to the space of the ship; she keeps a watch on it upon the request of the crew members. Her presence on the ship is directly related to the semantics of destruction and ill luck. The space of a ship guarded by a woman at the time when the crew are on the spree assumes absurd and chaotic features losing its initial essence. The young captain dismisses aunt Jule from the watch, thus renewing order on the ship. But during the run another woman appears on the ship – the trawling expert Sabīne who is appointed by the management. She arrives as an unexpected and unwelcome guest; she is blamed for the failure to draw a good catch, thus snatching away an opportunity of resisting the established ironic perception of the ship. The situation is aggravated by the fact that she is a woman and her presence is associated with ill fortune. From the start the crew treats her rudely and the captain openly expresses his dislike, though he tries to refrain himself in his expressions. Sabīne tries to win the trust of the crew but her first attempts fail because the new trawl does not function in the due manner. During the long storm, Sabīne little by little manages to win the captain's confidence as she is a brave, openhearted girl who takes certain steps towards achieving her goals. Valdis is impressed by the way she stands the seasickness that struck many seamen off their feet. Sabīne is not scared by difficulties, and having encountered the harsh sea reality, she does not run away from the ship but decides to fight it to the end. She manages to solve the technological problem of the trawl and as soon as the storm is over, the crew fulfils the plan in some days' time, filling all the barrels with fish. Thus E. Līvs proves that the cliché about a woman bringing misfortune to a ship is wrong. On the sea the decisive thing is a person's individual psychological peculiarities, e.g. purposiveness, braveness, professionalism and not one's gender. Sabīne exceeded in some of these qualities some of the experienced seamen and proved that she was a rightful member of the sea community.

Ship has a great significance for a seaman – it is not just a temporary place of abiding, it is a living organism investigated to the greatest detail, a comrade that would always come to rescue. The degree of the mutual understanding and help of seamen and a ship determines whether the voyage will be successful or

not. Like a living being, a ship is given a name that reflects its essence and often has a symbolical fateful meaning. However, E. Līvs using the well-known idea of the symbolical significance of a ship's name suggests his own interpretation. Formally the ship in the story is named "Forele" (Trout). For a fishing ship it is a proud, well-sounding name as trout is a valuable and demanded species of fish. But in the given case the associative range is destroyed as the ship is unlucky in fishing business. After some days of unsuccessful run on the sea, the ship receives an unofficial name after the name of the captain – Nulle (Zero). According to the management and the seamen on other ships this name reflects the essence of the ship in which nobody trusts any more. But the captain by means of the crew and specialist of trawling accomplished what seems impossible – they draw the necessary amount of fish despite all obstacles – small experience, the storm, and new experimental trawl. But the old name is not given back to the ship. The semantics of the word "zero" loses its initial meaning and gains a new one that symbolizes will power, purposiveness, ability to overcome any obstacles, change the established public opinion. All these qualities that are characteristic of the captain and have let him reach the set goal are transferred to the ship. The captain is the joining and driving force on whom the fate of the ship and the crew depends. Captain Zero demonstrates all the traits vital on the sea with such power that his name is given to the ship.

There are not many descriptions of the sea space in the story, the whole action is focused on the ship, the events are so saturated and the psychological tension so great that no time is left for general observations. Seamen are focused on concrete actions, the sea does not exist for them as an object of reflection, it is important only in its concrete manifestations that facilitate or, just the opposite, interfere with fishing. On the way to the place of fishing the sea is calm, so the fishermen are able to prepare the ropes and they hope for a good catch, while a lot of foreign ships gathered in one place, just the other way round, cause anxiety and dispose one towards a long-standing battle. The topic of battle, overcoming obstacles is one of the major in the story; descriptions of the sea space are subjected to the idea of a battle with the elements superior of man. Therefore a description of calm sea in bright weather appears only once in the story functioning as an introduction. "Last days of June were warm, with high bright sky and just some mist in the distance. Sometimes seagulls came flying from the invisible land sunken beyond the line of the horizon. Softly spreading their wings they flew above the ship and disappeared in the blue. The air above heads was light, transparent, and floating, and the skyline seemed to merge with the water. Around the ship there was blinding vastness – quiet and majestic sea

vastness – such that a man would fall in love with seeing it, being far away from all coasts in a heated suffocating day” (Līvs 1984, 73).

In the given description of the sea space details are very significant, they charm a reader, attract reader's attention by their mysteriousness and unusualness. Seascape is unique with its endless vastness and therefore the love of seamen for the sea is special. But the sea is unpredictable and changing: the serene sea surface may change by light wind into a mighty storm that may not only destroy all plans for a good catch or fast return but completely reign over the human's fate. It is exactly during the storm when the true character traits of the human are revealed. “Dark and heavy waves grew beyond the board. The sky filled with the roar of the wind slipped to the tops of waves and it was impossible to tell whether it was darkness rocking the ship or the rocky sea. Hoisting the trawls from the depth of the sea, men in the spotlight, spreading their arms and skidding on the slippery shipboard were running to and fro like mad. Where Juhans had ordered one man, there were three men holding on to one another. Throwing white and ominous foam balls, waves were rolling over the declining board. Juhans was growling and running among the people like a tamer among lions in the arena” (Līvs 1984, 81). Līvs describes how the storm makes the young seamen freeze with terror and run from the shipboard forgetting about their comrades and their duties. The crew in the story experiences two mighty and lengthy storms, thus going through a trial for braveness and steadiness and acquiring unity.

Thus, the sea in the story *Kapteinis Nulle* appears as the place of the rite of initiation. The young captain Nulle, in the closed space of the ship being close to death, goes through all ordeals successfully and proves himself as being able to manage a ship, organize work on board, and win the respect of the crew. The crew, the majority of which were poor professionals without any motivation for work and who did not believe in their power, also grew into a strong, helpful, professional team that is capable of reaching their aim in most complicated circumstances. The ship also goes through the rite of initiation; changing its character the ship acquires another name with a deep symbolical meaning.

5. Existential sea that preserves or takes life

The only novel written by E. Līvs, *Velnakaula dvīņi* (*Devil's Bone Twins*) is set during World War II, mostly ashore, yet the sea is silently present in the rhythm of people's life, it shapes their destiny, gives a chance to survive. The protagonist of the novel, Kaspars Velnakauls finds himself in the novel in a situation of

existential battles and survival. His wife has died in childbirth leaving two babies whose survival is provided by the milk of the single cow. One of the Germans, Ferdinand, who is left in the village as an overman, sympathizes with Kaspars and realizes that his children will die without the cow's milk, so he warns Kaspars that the following day Germans would come to confiscate all cattle. Kaspars takes a decision to escape taking along the cow and babies, but the only way to get out of the German siege is by sea. In the dark, cold autumn night the protagonist ties up the cow, puts it into a boat along with the twins and some household items and sets out to the sea. Being an experienced fisherman, Kaspars is excellent at finding his way in the sea. At the dawn it becomes foggy that makes it more difficult to find the way but at the same time it shelters Kaspars' boat making it invisible from the coast. Being in a border situation, when any incident (change of the weather, wind, stronger hit of oars, cow's mooing, etc.) may lead to loss of his life, Kaspars thinks over his life, all the hard psychological blows he had suffered. The fate proves beneficial for the people in the boat and they successfully pass to the territory free from Germans. The description of the harshness of the border situation makes psychologism in the novel more profound. Kaspars' way to another village is described in great detail, including various details. External circumstances, that neither Kaspars nor somebody else can change, matter a lot in this respect. Hence, great attention is paid to the depiction of the sea. In this sense the novel is exceptional in E. Līvs' writing, as in other of his works the writer provides few descriptions of the sea, the way it looks, its character, etc. In the novel *Velnakaula dvīņi* it depends on the sea whether the protagonist and his babies will survive or not, therefore its description is so detailed. Depiction of the sea sustains psychological tension, producing a wave-like rhythm in the text, when the depicted circumstances are drawn either maximally close to the climax or fall again. At first the sea is very still, no wind at all, thus audibility is very good and Kaspars must be utterly careful, so that somebody would not hear him leaving. The author focuses on the fact that babies are very small, so they may suddenly start crying. Later on the author points out that fog has grown thick, and this is a very positive moment, because as soon as Kaspars would go some meters from the shore, his boat will not be seen anymore. In the open sea the fog becomes dangerous as the protagonist may get lost in it easily, yet Kaspars is a skilled fisherman who can find his way home even in fog. This kind of growing and then falling tension in the protagonist's situation is repeated several times, while he is on the sea.

In the episode of Kaspars' hiding the sea is generally characterized as the space that is benevolent to the strong-willed hero. Like in other works by E. Līvs, life by the sea shapes a particular identity of a person – only a truly strong man

can get intimate with the sea and survive in this communion. Hence, Kaspars' identity of a fisherman matters greatly and he is proud to be aware of it. In an episode he defines his identity of a fisherman as different from and superior to that of a peasant. Kaspars's everyday life is related to the sea not only as a source of subsistence, an opportunity to go fishing that he likes, but also an intrinsic part of his life and personality. This is proved also in his psychological characteristics and on the level of the plot. The hero's sensations are compared to the process on the sea, e.g. "Kaspars' thoughts were swinging like a seagull in the storm" (Līvs 1984, 285). It is significant that the central part of the novel is attributed to the depiction of Kaspars' life in wintertime. It is harsh not only because his family has no place to live and nothing to eat but also because the strong man cannot prove himself in work, cannot realize his identity of a fisherman and even loses it for the time being. The protagonist's conduct has become untypical as he, instead of taking care of himself and his family, is bound to accept mercy from the villagers in order to provide subsistence for his children. Kaspars impatiently awaits for the beginning of spring, he is one of the first to prepare boats and urges others to get ready for the new fishing season.

Each time when a fisherman goes to sea he finds himself in a border situation between life and death, he feels unity with the sea space and can survive only risking his life, when drawing a big catch that will provide food for himself and his family. Communion with the sea and ability of facing daily border situations determine the specific identity of *the people on the coast* that includes the strength of spirit, and Kaspars Velnakauls possesses it to the greatest measure. The protagonist's life in the fishing village, the incessant fight for survival with his babies – search for food in the dead of winter, making home, everyday life with other fishermen – these are proofs that Kaspars Velnakauls is a strong fisherman who can not only care for himself but also take responsibility for other villagers.

In E. Līvs' works the sea is a border space between the good and the evil, life and death, the space that discloses the true essence of a man and does not tolerate effeminacy. In the descriptions of the sea space, the realistic approach dominates with emphasis on psychologism. The sea is a fateful element that often instils fear and takes complete power over a human life. However, E. Līvs always keeps his focus on a human who is seasoned in the fight with the sea, is equal with it and makes his own life. The sea is the space that brings out all the character traits of a person – only a truly brave, strong, purposeful man can be a fisherman; this is the focal point of the prose fiction of E. Līvs.

The personality of E. Līvs was politically inconvenient in the soviet period because he had served in the Latvian legion (1942–1945) and then was deported (1945–1950). Hence, at the beginning of his career as a writer, he had to find

a politically neutral style of writing and subject matter devoid of any ideological connotations. In the works where the sea thematic is specifically significant, E. Līvs manages to balance on the edge between the compulsory dues to the soviet ideology and depiction of the subjective world perception. The analysed works manifest the positive image of a strong personality inherent for the literature of the trend of socialist realism, yet depicting this image in a border situation determined by action set on the sea or by the sea provides the needed ratio of psychologism and verisimilitude. Description of the sea as border space, being ideologically neutral, performs the function of psychological deepening. Thus the sea as an object of depiction provides an opportunity for the writer to make psychologically deep scenes at the time of strict ideological censorship. In turn, the depiction of characters' actions in extreme situations conditioned by the sea makes it possible to introduce elements of modernism – subjectivism, individualism, the idea of fate – in realistic works.

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JŪROS TEMATIKOS SPECIFIKA EGONO LYVO PROZOJE

Santrauka

Baltijos erdvėje jūra tradiciškai yra sudėtinė peizažo dalis, gyventojų kultūrinę savimonę struktūrizuojantis elementas, mitologinis, folkloro ir individualios kūrybos vaizdinys. Jūra kelia susižavėjimą, baimę, pagarbą ir formuoja žmogaus tapatybę. Jūros semiotikos specifika, jos skirtingumas nuo žemyno semiotikos pasireiškia tuo, kad šios erdvės aprašymo imasi tik autoriai, gerai pažįstantys visus šios aplinkos funkcinius ryšius. Vienas iš tokių retų autorių latvių literatūroje yra Egonas Lyvas, kurio kūryboje jūra yra būtinas vaizdavimo objektas. Specifinis

jūros tematikos vaizdavimas jo prozoje yra šio tyrimo objektas. Su tuo susijęs tyrimo tikslas yra sisteminis analitinis jūros tematikos specifikos E. Lyvo kūryboje aprašymas, akcentuojant jos semiotikos įvairovę ir atsižvelgiant į biografinius ir kultūrologinius veiksnius.

Jūros aplinką traktuojant kaip specifinę, nuo žemyno besiskiriančią semiotinę sistemą, kuri visgi funkcionuoja pagal žemynui būdingus dėsnius, atrodo tikslinga taikyti semiotinę metodologiją, leidžiančią apžvelgti jūros konceptą ir sintagminiu, ir paradigminiu aspektais. Jūros tematikos specifikos analizė E. Lyvo tekstuose pasitelkiant semiotikos metodologiją leidžia apibrėžti jo darbuose sukurtą žmogaus koncepciją ir aprašytą pasaulio modelį, o tai yra svarbus literatūrinio teksto analizės tikslas. Apskritai E. Lyvo darbuose galima išskirti du svarbiausius jūros koncepcijos realizavimo variantus: 1) jūra – iniciacijos ritualo vyksmo erdvė; 2) egzistencinė jūra, išsauganti arba atimanti gyvybę. Šis skirstymas neatskleidžia visos jūrinės tematikos įvairovės E. Lyvo darbuose, tačiau nubrėžia kontūrus būdingiausioms ypatybėms, kurios toliau bus nagrinėjamos remiantis vieno prozos darbo pavyzdžiu, kuriame konkreti savybė pasireiškia ryškiausiai.

Plačiausiai jūra aprašyta apsakyme „Kapitonas Nulis“. Pagrindinė veiksmo dalis vyksta laive. Jūra čia pasireiškia kaip iniciacijos ritualo vyksmo vieta. Jaunasis kapitonas Nulis (*Nulle*) uždaroje laivo erdvėje būdamas netoli mirties sėkmingai išlaiko visus išbandymus ir įrodo esąs pajėgus valdyti laivą, organizuoti jo darbą ir pelnyti komandos pagarbą. Ir komanda, kurios didžiąją dalį pradžioje sudarė neprofesionalai, neturintys jokios motyvacijos dirbti bei netikėję savo jėgomis, virto stipriu, veiksmingu, profesionaliu kolektyvu, galinčiu pasiekti savo tikslą sudėtingiausiomis aplinkybėmis. Iniciacijos ritualą išgyveno ir laivas, kuris pakeisdamas savo tapatybę įgijo kitą, gilią simbolinę prasmę turintį pavadinimą.

Vieninteliame E. Lyvo romane „Velniakaulio dvyiniai“ veiksmas vyksta Antrojo pasaulinio karo metu, daugiausia krante, tačiau jūra yra nepastebima žmonių gyvenimo ritmo dalyvė, lemianti jų charakterius, formuojanti likimus ir leidžianti išgyventi. Pagrindinis romano herojus Kasparas Velniakaulis patenka į egzistencinę kovos dėl išgyvenimo situaciją – jis yra priverstas kartu su mažais vaikais ir karve bėgti laivu per jūrą į kitą kaimą. Autorius kuria stiprią pagrindinio herojaus asmenybę, galinčią išgyventi bet kokioje situacijoje. Akcentuojama Kasparo socialinė tapatybė – jis yra žvejys ir didžiuojasi suvokdamas tokiu esąs. Kasparo gyvenimas kasdien susijęs su jūra, o jūra jam yra ne tik pragyvenimo šaltinis ir galimybė užsiimti jam patinkančia žvejyba, bet ir sudėtinė jo gyvenimo bei asmenybės dalis.

Kiekvieną kartą žvejui išplaukiant į jūrą, jis patenka į gyvybės ir mirties paribį, čia jis jaučia vienybę su jūros aplinka ir tik rizikuojant gyvybe čia galima išgyventi, pagauti didelį laimikį, tapsiantį jo ir jo šeimos pragyvenimo šaltiniu.

Būtent vieningumas su jūra ir gebėjimas kiekvieną dieną atsirasti paribio situacijoje yra būdinga kranto žmonių tapatybei. Pagrindinio herojaus gyvenimas žvejų kaime, nuolatinė kova dėl išgyvenimo kartu su kūdikiais – maisto paieškos rūsčios žiemos laikotarpiu, namų įrengimas, sugyvenimas su kitais žvejais – yra įrodymas, kad Kasparas Velniakaulis yra pajėgus žvejys, galintis pasirūpinti ne tik savimi, bet ir prisiimti atsakomybę už kitus kaimelio gyventojus.

Apskritai E. Lyvo darbuose jūra ir paribys tarp gėrio bei blogio, gyvybės bei mirties yra tikrąją žmogaus esmę atskleidžianti erdvė. Jūros aprašymuose dominuoja realistinis metodas su psichologizmo akcentavimu, kuris XX a. 7-ojo dešimtmečio latvių literatūros kontekste yra labai svarbi savybė, nes E. Lyvas laikomas psichologinės prozos pradininku to laikotarpio literatūroje. Jūra jo prozoje yra likimo stichija, neretai gąsdinanti ir visiškai valdanti žmogaus gyvybę. Tačiau E. Lyvo dėmesio centre visuomet yra stiprūs žmonės, užgūdinti kovoje su nevaldoma jūros stichija, nepasikliaujantys likimu, bet patys kuriantys savo gyvenimą. Jūra yra ta erdvė, kurioje išsikristalizuoja žmogaus charakterio savybės – būti žveju, jūrininku gali tik drąsios širdies, stiprus ir siekiantis tikslo žmogus.