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## MODERN DISASTER BY DYSTOPIAN (MASHA, OR THE FOURTH REICH, NOVEL BY JAROSLAV MELNIK)

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**Summary.** *The article examines the concept of catastrophe, one of the main themes of art, extremely relevant in our time, marked by signs of entropy. It can be argued that this phenomenon is growing and affects many spheres of human life – both external, global (social), and internal (psychological). The author of the article focuses on how the awareness of the approaching catastrophe reflects a modern dystopia. Jaroslav Melnik's novel "Masha, or the Fourth Reich" is viewed from this angle. The article emphasizes that the dystopias of our time correct the attitudes of the classic dystopia, they tend to the diffusion of new genres, acquiring the features of a novel-parable, a novel-myth, a novel of alternative history. The controversy of the new formations, in which signs of utopia and its antipode are interspersed, is also noted. As for the ideological and thematic component, the author of the article states: Jaroslav Melnik focuses both on the traditional problems of humanism and the relationship between "man and society" and on the issues of the catastrophic dehumanization of the individual in the conditions of turbulent modern challenges.*

**Keywords:** *humanism, catastrophe, dystopia, freedom of choice, utopia, human.*

Modern reality with its acute social, public and human catastrophes once again actualizes the genre of dystopia, which assumes a counterargument of utopia. It is obvious that apocalyptic dystopian narratives are becoming more and more popular, personifying the premonitions of peoples and of each individual, in particular. Interest in the studied genre is also growing in Ukrainian modern literature. Publishers, satisfying the interests of the reading public, republish classic works, but also new representatives of the dystopia genre appear, such as T. Antipovich "Chronos", A. Irvanets "Ochamimrya", I. Fingerova "Placebo", A. Chapai "Red Zone". We will consider a novel by a European writer of Ukrainian origin, who continues to write in the Ukrainian language despite emigration. "Masha, or the Fourth Reich" is a strong, bright, horrifying, but healing novel, a new bright word at the junction of genres, but the fundamental genre of which is still dystopia.

Philosophers, as well as representatives of other humanities, often turned to the topic of catastrophe as an object of analysis of cultural reality. Starting with Aristotle, also I. Kant, G. Hegel, Z. Freud, A.F.Losev, U. Eco addressed this problem.

But the heightened sense of a social and cultural crisis and imminent catastrophe makes one turn again to dystopia as a novel of foreboding. We believe that a more detailed study of this layer of modern literature can contribute to the assimilation of the important functions of dystopias – both the warnings present in them and the perspectives of humanity in choosing the further path of development.

The purpose of the work is to reveal the main methods of artistic embodiment of both global and personal catastrophe in the work "Masha, or the Fourth Reigh" by Jaroslav Melnik.

Etymologically, the word catastrophe comes from the Greek catastrophe – turn, upheaval and consists of two roots – kata down and strepein – turn. It denotes the moment of resolution of a tense situation, which was created by the struggle preceding the catastrophe. Synonyms of catastrophe are collapse, disintegration, damage, death. Any definition of a catastrophe indicates its destructive nature and irreversible consequences.

In literature, the term catastrophe denotes the final denouement of the narrative plot, which reveals the intrigue and completes the work on the plot. We find arguments about the importance and types of catastrophe in drama in Aristotle's "Poetics". Simple and complex catastrophes, as well as eucatastrophes (a term introduced by J.R.R. Tolkien) are considered.

Jaroslav Melnik chooses a not quite traditional method of narration. The catastrophe proposed by him occurs before the beginning of the narrative; he prefers genre diffusion to "pure genre"; this author is no stranger to optimism. The novel by Jaroslav Melnik does not show a specific point of social catastrophe, but we understand that we are being referred to the Second World War and the victory over fascism. On the eve of the exhibition, Melnik creates a neo-humanist model of future society, proposing a distant future (the 29th century) as an alternative history in which fascism wins. The world described by the author seems ideal: there is no crime in it, but there is technological progress and full provision of every need. The structure of life is subordinated to the principles of rationality and well-thought-out algorithms.

Nevertheless we feel the growth of catastrophe from the very beginning of the story, when we meet the main character Dima in the butcher shop: "An animal tied to a rack was being transported to the slaughterhouse by one of the conveyor belts. The executioner attached an electric probe to the animal's ear and pressed a button with his finger. There was a scream – and the animal fell on the tape, already dead. Within a minute, she was being separated in the processing shop, sorting the body parts. The tastiest places went straight to the packing room, where, placed in special bags, they were ready to go straight to the shops" [4].

At the same time, the main character compares an animal with a person, and even tries to identify them: "If this "hoof" is called a "foot" (the same external similarity with a human limb), then the world will be destroyed. It turns out that man eats man" [4]. The roots of the author's understanding of fascism are contained precisely in this ambivalent attitude to murder, the concept "not everything is clear" is present, the general binary nature of the narrative emerges. In this way, a simplified attitude to everything related to the emotional component, its suppression and abolition is formed.

The main character, who is in conditions of formal well-being, is nevertheless lonely: "My wife and son were the only people in the world with whom I did not want to live, so much so that I felt unnecessary, redundant" [4]. After getting acquainted with a human-like animal, Masha progresses, and Dyma's understanding of the human nature of an animal increases, and her rejection of the "human" person, the closest ones, increases: "Elsa, son – they were close, but ... they did not reflect me. That is, they reflected me, but in such a way that I was more and more terrified. I wasn't myself with them. These were not the people who could understand me in secret – understand and perhaps explain myself to me" [4].

The world of the hero is conditionally free, but it is secretly limited: "... it is forbidden to promote any ideas that come from the so-called "doctrine of conservative humanism". Persons who spread these harmful and extremely dangerous ideas will be detained and isolated from now on" [4]. We observe the gradual stagnation of any desire to think in the "wrong" direction, since it will not lead to anything. Thus, the hero reconciles, feeling his own insignificance and general hopelessness, leaving reality and ritualizing the last hopes for a better world.

Strengthens the argumentation and environment of the hero. In a conversation with Dima, Dubov convincingly articulates: "The only thing that is scary and unacceptable is what you do on your own, for the first time. But it should become a tradition – how it is sanctified and becomes common. Couldn't the great-grandfathers be wrong! They couldn't be cannibals!" [4].

Realizing the flawedness and falsity of his way of life, the main character, nevertheless, does not try to change it: humility and a passive attitude towards others continue to prevail in the hero's consciousness. The catastrophe is metaphysical, it is inside, behind the facade of apparent well-being. The horror of the banality of evil (which in general is not considered evil, it is justified by necessity and socially legitimized) finally pierces the reader after the murder of Ryzhya: "The redhead was no longer screaming with her own voice – from terror, from the fear of death" [4]. And then I clearly understood that there was a person standing in front of me. A real person, only naked and beaten by me" [4].

The novel "Masha, or the Fourth Reich" is a vivid embodiment of the most important feature of dystopia: the lack of alternatives to what is happening as a basis for humility and the inner decision of the hero's departure from reality. The dominant belief is that there is simply no other form of existence; the proposed system is the only possibility of existence.

The end of the novel is a powerful ode to the utopia. The attraction to a fairy-tale denouement causes the reader to naturally doubt the "honesty" of our hero and the author himself: "He was still saying something, but I wasn't listening anymore. I took Masha's hand, and we, smiling at each other, were the first to descend into the valley, riding on our buttocks" [4]. The author, as it were, emphasizes faith in the power of love, however, such a fairy-tale-fantasy denouement works rather in opposition to the real hope for a "better world" and leaves the reader with this same hope for a bright future.

So, while studying the plot and genre-forming system of Jaroslav Melnik's narration, we note the importance of direct speech, which, however, is presented in contrast with the illusory possibility of overcoming.

In the novel "Masha, or the Fourth Reich", Melnik clearly debunks the myth about the possibility of the existence of an ideal society, levels the superiority of ideas about personality in contrast to human-like beings – stors. Staying in the illusion of security and satisfaction with life, a person must not and cannot "wake up", enter into a confrontation with this very society, elevate himself, neglect the possibilities of the social system in which he is embedded. The only thing the main character is really capable of is to get carried away by his own fantasy, fueled by the hope he has raised. This, for the author, is a social catastrophe – the impossibility of crossing a border, immersion in an unreal world and a fairy tale instead of purposeful struggle and overcoming.

Conclusions and perspectives of further research. Thus, taking into account the traditional stylistic and dystopian means of narration of this work, we should, however, note an excellent resulting vector of the novel: departure from reality as a reflection of the behavior of our contemporaries. And yet there is a general concept of world order and personal behavior in a disaster situation. The author insists that contemporaries need to pay immediate attention to how they exist. The fact is established: the catastrophe of dystopia turns into a real catastrophe.

The perspectives of the subsequent works consist in deepening the understanding of the root causes of the emergence of stylistic and substantive features of dystopias, ways of representing the utopian and artistic means of enhancing catastrophizing within the framework of narratives.

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