

**FORMS AND MEANINGS:  
AESTHETICS AND POETICS OF LITERARY WORK**

**ФОРМИ ТА СМИСЛИ: ЕСТЕТИКА І ПОЕТИКА  
ЛІТЕРАТУРНОГО ТВОРУ**

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**TEMPORALITY OF THE NARRATIVE  
OF CONTEMPORARY TRAVEL LITERATURE  
(Based on Cees Nooteboom's work)**

У статті розглянуто темпоральність нарративу в дискурсі сучасної мандрівної літератури у контексті соціокультурної динаміки, пов'язаної з цифровізацією життєвих форм, соціально-культурних взаємодій та новітніх моделей осмислення, опису та уявлень про реальність у літературних текстах. Проблематизовано постання новітньої картини світу в трансформаціях літературних дискурсу та нарративу. Феномен мандрівної прози нідерландського письменника С. Ноотебоома розглянуто під кутом зору репрезентації проблематики трансформації темпоральності нарративу в сучасному метажанрі мандрівної літератури.

*Метою* статті є визначення напрямів трансформації темпоральності нарративу в дискурсі сучасної мандрівної літератури у контексті трансформації життєвих форм людського світу та жанрової специфіки цього метажанру. *Завданням* дослідження є також з'ясування змісту онтологізуючого функціоналу мандрівної літератури та її гуманістичного потенціалу, що розкривається в екзистенційному, аксіологічному, ідентичнісному та трансцендентному аспектах темпорального нарративу.

*Методологія* дослідження є комплексною та міждисциплінарною. З цією метою було залучено історико-літературний, історико-філософський, герменевтичний, наратологічний, феноменологічний, компаративний, нарративний *методи*.

*Результати дослідження.* У контексті трансформацій горизонту смислів сучасної людини (homo digitalis) та розвитку метажанру мандрівної літератури маємо наголосити на релевантності світоглядних впливів літератури як індивідуальної та соціальної практики, сегменту соціальної комунікації та культури на формування ідентичності сучасної людини та спільнот.

Принагідно до мандрівної літератури темпоральність нарративу алгоритмізує та структурує рецепцію реальності, що є актуальним навіть для таких мовних конструкцій, які безпосередньо не мають маркерів часовості, причому акцентується здатність такого нарративу до конфігурації та реконфігурації форматів розуміння і смислів художнього твору і на формальному, і на змістовому рівнях. Темпоральний нарратив у мандрівній літературі сутнісно корелює з принципом інтертекстуальності. Також він передбачає практику комеморації між суб'єктами текстів включно з читачем. Темпоральність нарративу сучасної мандрівної літератури передбачає також посилення ролі імагологічного аспекту, тобто візуалізації в опорі на зображення чи дескрипцію, що відображає постання віртуальних піджанрів метажанру.

Творчість С. Ноотебоома репрезентує тотальну оптику подорожі як модусу людського існування, нерозривно пов'язаного з трансцендентальним запитуванням і смислогенерацією, а також віднайденням ідентичності на всіх рівнях – від культурного до гендерного. Онтологізм темпоральності нарративу у творах С. Ноотебоома репрезентовано в розгортанні симультанних практик побудови нарративу, використанні інверсивних ігрових технік і прийомів, притаманних модерну й постмодерну. У пізніх творах присутній вплив естетики метамодернізму, зокрема принципу метаксису.

*Ключові слова:* темпоральність, наратив, мандрівна література, Сейс Ноотебоом, мета-жанр, інтерпретація, інтертекстуальність.

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## Introduction

Contemporary social and cultural dynamics are shaping new formats and mechanisms for the reception of working with information and, above all, for the reception of both the direct flow experience of perceiving reality and the spaces of experience formalized by semiotic codes, among which the leading one is linguistic. In the context of the digitalization of life forms related to sociocultural interactions and communication, modern people generate the latest models of comprehending descriptions and ideas about reality and, in general, a picture of the world. Importantly, since Wittgenstein's project of a universal grammar (language as the boundary of the human world), the virtualization of cultural forms, including literary discourse and narrative, after postmodern and metamodern denials of the spatial and temporal structure of reality description, has led to the blurring of the boundaries of time and space in both linguistic practices and literary discourse. Ironically, contemporary travel literature, whose very genre specificity implies the use of narrative as a spatial and temporal marker, and temporality itself as the narrative and existential essence of textual reality, is in line with Einstein's intuitions about the correlation of time and space in a continuum or John McTaggart's conceptual denial of the existence of time. Moreover, in travel literature, the correlation between the past, present, and future seems to be a *modus operandi* of self-positioning and self-identification of the author, narrator, and characters. It forms the semantic message and reception of the text both on the logical "plane of immanence" [Taylor, Winqvist, 2001, p. 289] and at the level of cognitive settings of consciousness, System 1 [Kahneman, 2024]. The study of travel literature from the perspective of temporality thus seems to be heuristic for contemporary literary studies, philosophical anthropology, and cultural studies.

## Degree of research on the problem

The problem of temporality has been explored in such aspects as worldview narrative and culture [Kropyvko, 2022], in synchronic and diachronic terms from the perspective of cultural consciousness and literary tradition [Lishchuk-Torchynska, 2011; Papusha, 2013; Tkachenko, 2018; Ulitska, 2006; Shevtsov, 2021], in the linguistic aspect [Barchuk, 2011; Romaniuk, 2012]; in the narratological dimension [Genette, 1980; Fludernik, 2002; Nikolaienko, 2002; Savchuk, 2013; Rymar, 2014], etc. In the context of the narratology's origin in the late 1960s, this problem arose as a result of the functionalists' reinterpretation of the traditional structuralist paradigm and the return of the subject as a bearer and marker of temporality to the focus of literary studies. In the first place, this is related to the works of Gérard Genette, Gerald Prince, Wolf Schmid, Claude Bremond, and others. Prince argues that the events are presented sequentially in a narrative that captures human experience and features anthropomorphic characters and practically emphasizes the unity of the ontological as substantive and formal semiotic aspects of temporality in a narrative, and their distinction depends only on the initial attitudes of the interpreter [Prince, 2003]. Schmid, explaining the distinction between narrative and descriptive texts [Schmid, 2003], practically forms two types of temporality: semiotically eventful (narrative) and visually descriptive. The author emphasizes that the concept of narrativity is universal since the boundary between narrative and descriptive is blurred. Genette [1980] argues that

the concept of focalization (a narrative feature that denotes the optics of interpreting textual events, i.e., the angle of view of the author, narrator, character, and their inherent limitations) practically means that narrative perspective gains meaning through temporality as a structural constant of the text, which, we note, can also be considered an ontological constant, since the change of states is not only a change in the points of view of agents of sensory perception of reality, but, above all, a change in the states of reality itself. Papusha argues that “narratives always contain a certain combination of storytelling and other discursive processes” [Papusha, 2013, p. 211]. It may mean that the temporality of the narrative is immanent in the existential status of the subject or cognitive agent as author, recipient, interpreter, observer, or reader.

Given the profound elaboration of the temporality problem in both literary and linguistic studies, in the context of our topic, we emphasize the ontological dimension of time in literary studies. The point is to emphasize the relation between the phenomenological and factual (real) dimensions of artistic reality and to find out the hypothetical vector of its transformation. It is known that the philosophy of literature was conceptualized in an instrumental but not a metaphysical sense by Husserl’s student Roman Ingarden. Unlike Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty’s metaphysical approach, Sartre’s existential approach, or Poulet’s philological approach, he considers a literary work as an exemplary intentional object of consciousness that is not ontologically autonomous since it does not belong to real objects. However, he “becomes independent of the consciousness that his experiences grew out of and now acquires relative existential autonomy” [Ulitska, 2006, p. 118]. Thus, the temporality of the narrative as a description of a sequence of events from the perspective of the aesthetic category of interest acquires an ontological dimension. Basically, Ingarden asserts the ontological status of the imaginary, which is structured as a narrative.

At the end of the twentieth century, Taylor, within his distinction between the romantic and the modern, argues that “there is a parallel modernist attack on the time-consciousness and modes of narrativity [...]. The objectified view of the world that disengaged reason produces involves a spatialization of time” [Taylor, 2005, p. 592]. Rejecting the mechanistic view of time as a series of discrete moments connected by causal relationships, the philosopher asserts modern temporality as an epiphany to the experience of temporality, defined as the “time of events,” syncretized both in terms of the metaphor of the time arrow and the temporality of the author, character, and recipient of the text (reader). On the other hand, Ricœur, explaining the correlation between the mental and physical dimensions of eventfulness, refers to Donald Davidson, an analytical philosopher, to “insert actions into an ontology, not a hidden one but a declared ontology” [Ricœur, 2002, p. 92], which explicates the eventfulness development both causally and teleologically. It is noteworthy that such a view allows us to consider the stochasticity of the event as the “sudden fissure that transforms the faulty construction of a bridge into an event that causes a catastrophe” [Ibid., p. 95]. Ricœur’s metaphor of the fissure is congruent with Deleuze’s concept of folding that denies the nomological nature of sequence, including the narrative one. Therefore, Deleuze’s time [2015] (Aeon – Chronos) is a combination of the mental subjective time of human life and descriptive time, i.e. the former lacks the past and the future, while the latter includes the present not only as signs but also as ontological markers.

Thus, the temporality of narrative as a construct of imagination, text, and event description is non-linear, a rhizomatic entanglement of the somatic, rational, and affective. This leads to Derrida’s concept [1991] of the unity of time dimensions in a single temporal act where the gradual movement of time is replaced by the simultaneous presence of past, present, and future, while temporality is ontologized through stochastic eventfulness. Thus, Ingarden’s anti-psychologism in the optics of modern and post-modern traditions acquires the features of “empty time” as depersonalized, derationalized reality (here-now-and-so) as a permanent reference point for presence, action, self-awareness, description of oneself and the world, and the identity of the subject. It should be noted that this view on temporality significantly undermines the foundations of the anthropocentric paradigm [Bekhta-Hamanchuk, 2017] of literary and linguistic studies, as it involves reformatting human subjectivity in the context of the challenges of non-anthropocentrism, which further demonstrates the transformative potential of temporality as an ontologizing factor in the human world-view in the context of the digitalization of social communication and cultural space. The metamodern paradigm, while rehabilitating the temporality of narratives, discursive practices, and grand narratives as rational structures,

sees it as conventional, non-predetermined in the view on metaxis as an oscillation between the modern and the postmodern, commemoration and reduction of collective and individual memory to a combination of modern categorization and nomology and a postmodern imitative game mode [Kretov, Kretova, 2020].

Contemporary approaches to the ontology of temporality in fiction assume that the text is a model of the world similar to the modeled object but not identical to it [Shevtsov, 2021] or emphasize the self-observation of text characters as a defining feature of both textual temporality and historicism [Tkachenko, 2018], as well as the transformation of the fiction's time by the author's or physical time [Kapystianska, 2012].

Travel literature has been examined in its genre and thematic diversity [Bohdan, 2018; Rozinkevych, 2019; Shulhun, 2017] from the perspectives of worldview and social issues, as well as stylistic and semantic analysis.

The Cees Nooteboom's works are yet to be systematically studied, though some aspects of them have been in the focus of contemporary scholars [Shy, 2024; Schmidt, 2016; Vanderbes, 2007; Wroe, 2006]. Yet, the temporality issue in the work of the Dutch novelist has not been explored.

It is important to emphasize that we are interested in the phenomenon of temporality not primarily in the grammatical but in the ontological aspect, i.e. the category of linguistics, in addition to literature, captures the structure of functional and semantic fields of the lexicon, that is "the marking of the semantic units by the temporal component" [Barchuk, 2011, p. 3] and "the intrinsic potential of the means of expression and functioning" [Romaniuk, 2012, p. 3]. We believe that the potential reveals the syncretic nature of the temporal identity of the modern speaker, narrator, and finally, cognitive agent, in a fiction narrative (except non-fiction discourses). The point is not the "scatteredness" of the speaker and description, narrative and discourse in the coordinate system "past – present – future" similar to an electron in the electron cloud but a total transformation of human modes of interpreting topos as a locus of temporality, which finds expression in the literary tradition from the modern era (Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, etc.), the boundaries of modern and post-modern (Thomas Pynchon, Donald Barthelme, Viktor Domontovych, Valerian Pidmohylnyi), post-modern (Julian Barnes, John Fowles, Umberto Eco, Milan Kundera, Haruki Murakami, Kazuo Ishiguro, Yurii Andrukhovych, Oles Ulianenko, Oksana Zabuzhko, etc.), meta-modern (David Foster Wallace, Jonathan Franzen, Dave Eggers, Volodymyr Dibrova, Bohdan Zholdak, etc.). In other words, the temporal can be implicitly or explicitly interpreted as a function of the spatial and vice versa, and as a conventional human ability to control time through space, a classic example is travelogue or the category of travel literature.

We emphasize that in contemporary literature, the actualization of this issue is associated with significant changes in life forms and mechanisms of staying in the information space, interaction with information and its generation, transformations of social communication and culture associated with the digitalization of the human world, the Foucauldian situation where codes become autonomous to referents, and language simulators generate content that challenges the human nature of literature and book publishing.

The *purpose* of the article is to determine the transformation directions of the narrative temporality in the discourse of contemporary travel literature in the context of the transformation of life forms in the human world and the genre specificity of this meta-genre based on Nooteboom's pieces. Moreover, the study *aims* to clarify the content of the ontologizing functionality of travel literature, and its humanistic potential revealed in the existential, axiological, identity, and transcending aspects of the temporal narrative.

The research *methodology* is integrated and interdisciplinary. To achieve the goal, the author incorporates historical and literary, historical and philosophical, hermeneutical, narratological, phenomenological, comparative, and narrative methods.

### **Visualizing temporality in culture, narrative, and literature**

As Kropyvko points out, "the emergence of Homo digitalis took place as a result of a change in the modern thinking... Discourse turns into the subject of comprehension... The decentralization of previously hierarchical phenomena brings about the realization of the relativity of time

that loses its historical specificity and continuity and ceases to determine human life. The only reality of a human being is recognized as the moment of living” [Kropyvko, 2022, p. 18]. Thus, the concept of journey, or the philosophy of journey, in part loses the semantics of continuity and linearity (i.e., a succession, a change in successive situations of self-awareness and self-positioning of a person). In its place, the moment of being at a certain point as presence is enhanced through the cognitive or emotional-affective aspects of human construction of reality [Kretov, Kretova, 2017].

Paradoxically, the emergence of hypertext, content generated by AI language simulators, and blogging as digital alternatives to traditional writing has leveled the fundamental distance between the author or narrator and the topos of one’s narrative or existence, eventually discrediting the subject-object dichotomy and the fundamental principle of Western philosophy and culture, i.e. the Platonic-Hegelian thesis of the identity of thinking and being, while actualizing *tat tvam asi*, the Vedic principle meaning “that you are”. This metaphor of constellations elucidates the argument that travelogues – and travel literature more broadly – assume an **ontologizing function** in response to the transformative and dehumanizing shifts in the picture of the world. These shifts occur at the levels of structure, the configuration of elements, and content. Travel literature, in this context, serves to document Heideggerian existentials of being and being-in-the-world within the subjective temporality of meaning-making. Through this process, it restores to humanity the objective spatiality that has been lost. One might even assume that travel literature creates a specific Umwelt [Schroer, 2019], a syncretic and receptive-synesthetic environment similar to the concept of the space-time continuum in modern theoretical physics. The travel time defines the space of human existence.

In the context of literary discourse and fictional narrative, this suggests a challenge to the *fundamental logical structure of the statement*. Specifically, the predicate no longer necessarily explicates the content, quality, feature, or contextual circumstance of the subject but instead acquires its subjectivity. A notable example of this procedural disintegration as a foundational narrative principle can be observed in Donald Barthelme’s *The Dead Father* and Julian Barnes’s *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*. Under this interpretation, a journey, wandering, or any form of movement does not produce temporality as a criterion or means of fixation; rather, it emerges as a product of temporality itself. One might argue that this perspective constitutes a paraphrase of the classical Heraclitean dictum πάντα ρεῖ καὶ οὐδὲν μένει (“everything flows, and nothing remains”), in which the terms “everything” and “flows” are effectively interchanged. In this reformulation, “everything” as a static metaphysical absolute – traditionally used to describe the world – becomes merely a special case within the broader, relativistic principle of “flows” as the fundamental condition of change. As the accessibility and instantaneous availability of information, communication tools, audio-visual content, and both original and artificially generated texts render the world increasingly compressed and constrained, travel literature emerges as a vital medium for expanding human perception. It offers not only new horizons of meaning and greater depth but also a renewed capacity for sense-making. This function extends beyond the traditional notions of psychological parallelism or the recreational value of travel literature. Rather, it speaks to a new epistemic power in an era where scientific consensus suggests that the informational reservoirs for AI training have been depleted.

Narratology, as a perspective on text in its broadest sense, functions as an interpretive framework that situates narrative within the wider cultural context of artistic creation. At its core, it emphasizes the semantics of processing, humanization, and interpretation – conceived as the recombination of elements within an existing whole. Ryan’s approach to narrative as a virtual reality being constructed within the existing semiotic code seems important in the context of our topic: “reality – conceived as the sum of the imaginable rather than as the sum of what exists physically” [Ryan, 2013]. In other words, narrative universes are formed by stories that, in principle, reject the differentiation of the factual as real and imaginary. Thus, the temporality of the narrative is conventional and relational to the extent it is determined by the meaning-making mechanisms of the text. Therefore, when distinguishing between the narrative aspects of literary discourse and text – such as cognitive and semiotic dimensions – based on the categories of consciousness, thinking, and artistic speech [Savchuk, 2013], it is essential to recognize that both cognitive and semiotic (speech) activities are preceded by self-awareness. This self-awareness,

understood as the subject's self-identification as a cognitive agent, is contingent upon the differentiation of the author's or narrator's self in both time and space. Moreover, in narrative, the primacy of temporality appears evident, as its continuity and coherence unfold over time, whereas space is typically a derivative construct shaped by the narrative framework of human consciousness.

Narrative temporality, therefore, to some extent, algorithms and structures the perception of reality, a phenomenon that remains relevant even in linguistic constructions lacking explicit temporal markers. This suggests that, even at the syntactic level, the logic of temporality is inherent in any statement, description, or text – a principle exemplified by the structure of the universal grammar of reality description in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Therefore, when considering narrative production as a conditional social game (Prieto) that integrates imaginary constructions and ideas into concrete reality, it is essential to recognize that narrative is not merely a collection of elements forming a superadditive whole. Rather, it is a structured entity whose configuration is shaped by temporal and semantic architectonics. Furthermore, the temporality of a narrative, unlike its meaning, is immanent in linguistic constructions at the formal level, while meaning, sense, and absurdity involve cognitive operations of understanding and interpretation being secondary to temporality. It can be argued that temporality anchors the narrative, enabling it to be understood as it unfolds in terms of meaning and sense.

Contemporary linguonarratology posits that the analysis of a literary text is not driven by its content (fabula or plot) but rather by an examination of the means and modes through which the author constructs and semiotizes experience and reality within the categories of literary narrative [Savchuk, 2013]. In this regard, the narrative temporality is its defining constant as an artistic and interpretive phenomenon in relation to reality.

Fludernik's typology of narratives [2002] allows us to consider the narrative temporality concerning its macro-genre determined by the communicative goal and discursive forms of its realization. In this typology, travel literature is a narrative macro-genre that includes traditional genres of literature, cinema, and communication and unfolds through the fixation of a narrative sequence in description. The narrative macro-genre has a paradigmatic feature of fixation on events and actions [Nikolaienko, 2002], implying sequence as a configuration, narrative homeostasis (as a violation/restoration of the event and descriptive balance), indicating that temporality determines not only the formation of the plot but also the meaning-making. Thus, Fludernik's concept of macro-genre, which identifies prototypical, idealized types of texts, incorporates temporality not only as a criterion for distinguishing between macro-genres but also as a framework for categorizing the modes of discourse that define traditional literary and artistic genres, grounded in narrative and the semiotic code of language. Hence, the established notion of narrative strategy inherently involves both event and temporal components. Given that both the author and the recipient of the text exist in real time, with which the narrator's time and the overall time of the literary text are challenging to correlate, it becomes evident that it is the temporality of reality perception – recording the changes and sequences of situations and conditions of perception – that shapes the category of space. This temporality enables the creation of linguistic and philosophical pictures of the world, allowing us to transcend experience through the verbal depiction of imaginary realities.

It is worth noting that the alleged obviousness of the fact that narrative discourse endows any described fact with event status [Rymar, 2014] needs to be clarified. For the concept of narrative multi-eventfulness denoting the "step-by-step communication" of the referential events of narrative discourse as the meaning-making events of plotlines within which a sequence of connections and communications between the characters of the textual universe is formed, does not in itself fully reveal the mechanism of the emergence of textual reality, not only as a succession but also as simultaneity, advance, event expectation, etc. Therefore, the very criterion of narrative eventfulness is inherently tied to the principle of temporality. Its defining signs and conditions – including factuality (the event's occurrence within the textual reality), the degree and nature of eventfulness (the event's significance, unpredictability, subjective meaning for the characters, inevitability, irreversibility, and uniqueness), and effectiveness (the event's integration into the narrative's cause-and-effect structure and continuity) – necessitate an additional scaling perspective. This perspective enables an examination of the plot and the narrative structure

of the text as components of a broader semantic system that is explicitly non-linear. The view on the narrative event appeals to the interpretation of the world and human history as a text as well as functions as a principle of the given recurrence of all possible events in the temporal integrity of human reception of reality. This perspective encompasses the Heraclitan dialectic of time, the previously mentioned relationship between the individual and the collective (which becomes historical if history is understood as a compilation of narratives), the principle of “that you are,” and Ecclesiastical notions of the fluidity and cyclical nature of existence. From a formal standpoint, it also entails an endless sequence of allusions and reminiscences. Not surprisingly, this view on temporality at the semantic level is significantly closer to the phenomenon and principle of intertextuality in modern, post-modern, and meta-modern aesthetics. Basically, any semantic unit of speech or text, if forming a narrative, already indicates an event or, in the case of a performative utterance, is itself an event.

Thus, a word, a statement, or a linguistic description of a particular state of affairs – when succeeded by another – functions as an event that establishes and reinforces a complex network of temporal relations, which manifest as semantic relationships. Moreover, this construction is similar to Deleuze’s rhizome or Kristeva’s *khôra* (in Plato’s *Timaeus*, the *khôra* is the possibility of distinguishing between existing entities, their limits, and their transformative power). Meanwhile, the narrative temporality does not determine its orientation toward the conventional past, present, and future since their subjective simultaneity is a defining feature of Husserl’s noesis as a way of adjusting human cognitions. Therefore, viewing the chronotope merely as a component or feature of the narrative appears insufficient, as the very capacity for spatio-temporal deixis is embedded in the semiotic code of language. However, it is not confined to the textual universe but instead serves as a means of transcending reality through human consciousness in the process of engaging with a work of art. Saussure’s *parole* paradoxically embodies the Kantian transcendental subject because the boundary between the knowable and the unknowable is overcome in narrative event sequences through the realization that “I am a small particle in world connections” – not through explanations [Fylypovych, 1989].

It is worth emphasizing that Ricœur’s categories of narrative temporality (real life time, the phenomenological aspect of time, verb forms of the time category, configuration games with time categories) [Lishchuk-Torchynska, 2011] only in part cover the new property of narrative temporality in contemporary digitalized culture transforming not only the textual thesaurus but also, above all, the forms of access and reception of textual reality. Phenomenological time, encompassing noesis and noematic facts, does not transcend the traditional subjectivity outlined by the self-concept, while contemporary practices of text reception, reading, and commemoration involve joining supersubjective communities (e.g. hypertexts, gamebooks, fanfiction literature, text messengers, MMORPGs, social and communication platforms). This leads to transcending the subject, who goes beyond own experience and the boundaries of the imaginary. This way, a new narrative identity is being formed that transcends the practices of reading or creating texts and can form a new life form and level of cultural thesaurus. Therefore, it seems appropriate to formulate a **transcendental dimension of the narrative temporality**.

Integrating phenomenological and hermeneutical approaches entails reinforcing the correlation between the textual thesaurus and the subject’s experiential framework and shaping the existential dimension of cognition and emotion to time. This process unfolds within metanarrative temporality as a broader abstraction of human cultural praxis. By *meta-narrative*, we do not refer to Lyotard’s discursive dominant paradigm, which aligns closely with the concept of ideology. Rather, we understand it as a set of interpretive life practices grounded in temporal narrative – an integration of temporality and eventfulness – resembling the notion of social and cultural habitus.

Thus, we can single out the following areas of transformation of narrative temporality in contemporary literature and the meta-genre of travel literature, in particular:

– *ontologization of the narrative temporality* as a fundamental feature of human existence, imagination, and experience manifested in syncretic visions of the phenomenology of presence and historical and cultural continuity, of man and culture in time;

– development of the *transcending potential* of travel literature following the transformations of the model of the space-time continuum;

– re-ideologization of anthropogenic temporality, implying the rehabilitation of Lyotard’s grand narratives and meta-modern metaxis as well as a shift in the interpretive framework of the existential and ontological dimensions of human temporal perception – from a negative to a positive orientation. This may indicate the emergence of a new humanist view on Homo digitalis and an alternative to non-anthropocentric pejorative discursive practices;

– *reinforcement of the imagological aspect of narrative temporality*, through the visualization of eventfulness, closely aligning narrative and descriptive elements within the newest genres of the meta-genre of travel literature.

### **Travel literature: time as a spatial metaphor**

It is worth considering the phenomenon of temporality to the meta-genre of travel literature. It unites both individual genre forms and semantically accentuated variants (travel literature, literature of relocation, literature of wanderings, literature of asperities, journey, travel literature, travelogue, travelogue) [Bohdan, 2018]. Importantly, contemporary travel literature focuses less on the factual relocation and more on the phenomenological aspects of the experience it causes. It is worth emphasizing that temporality in contemporary travel literature, in our opinion, generates a new view on space as extremely conventional and relational or virtual. (For this reason, multiplayer video game streaming is a popular genre of modern video blogging, where viewers travel through the virtual space as the blogger plays the game, following one’s comments).

When reflecting on narrative identity, Ricœur argues that the latter can be revealed “only in the dialectic of selfhood and sameness” [Ricœur, 2002, p. 169], referring to *configuration* as the term revealing the aforementioned dialectic as a correlation between story being told, narrative and character, subject, self, he points out that “contemporary narrative theory has attempted to give to this correlation the status of semiotic constraint” [Ibid., p. 173]. The understanding of narrative as a series of functions and the formalization of eventfulness are completely impossible because sameness means a certain status quo of a narrative or character, selfhood, though, implies all possible configurations of this status quo. In other words, appealing to Aristotle’s concepts of myth and mimesis, the scholar argues acting models as eventual narrative templates with the full probability of any configurations and transformations.

Thus, the philosopheme of travel pertains to processuality, unfolding between the possible and the actual, experience and imagination. It serves as an extrapolation of human temporality, existentially given, onto the spatiality of the universe, phenomenologically perceived: “Literary fictions differ fundamentally from technological fictions in that they remain imaginative variations around the corporeal variations on the self and its selfhood. Furthermore, in virtue of the mediating function on the body as one’s own in the structure of being in the world, the feature of selfhood belonging to corporeality is extended to that of the world as it is inhabited corporeally. This feature defines the terrestrial condition as such and gives to the Earth the existential signification that was recognized in their way by Nietzsche, Husserl, and Heidegger. The Earth here is something different, and something more, than a planet: it is the mythical name of our corporeal anchoring in the world. This is what is ultimately presupposed in the literary narrative as it is subjected to the constraint making it a *mimesis* of action” [Ricœur, 2002, pp. 180–181].

Thus, human corporeality is the cause and prerequisite for the practice of traveling as leaving the Self to find the Self through the Other and Others. From this perspective, travel literature in the context of contemporary dehumanizing transformations probably seems the only natural *modus operandi* of existential resistance to the technologization of life practices. To paraphrase the title of Eco’s famous essay, humanity should not only abandon the hope of escaping books but should also recognize that, ultimately, all world literature functions as a travelogue – a journey both away from and back to itself, much like Borges’s garden of forking paths. Thus, the narrative temporality in the optics of travel literature can, in addition to its functional and formal features, acquire an ontological dimension.

It is noteworthy that the current debate [Rozinkevych, 2019] on the definition of meta-genre and travel literature genres appeals mainly to the formal feature – the way texts correlate with empirical reality (fictional/non-fictional narratives, documentary/fictional, singular/plural,

etc.). In our opinion, the completeness of the scientific descriptions of texts paradigmatically belonging to travel literature should be based on the appropriate categorical concept. The very notion of travel – encompassing any relocation or shift in locus, whether real or imagined – as one of the oldest human practices and philosophemes enables an interpretation of the meta-genre of travel literature as possessing both ontologizing and transcendent potential. This potential manifests in its role as an artistic interpretation of the crisis-ridden worldview, a reflection on transitional thinking through the reassessment of cultural and historical landmarks, global transformations, the definition of national identity, the reexamination of representations of the “self” and the “other,” the establishment of cultural dialogue, the search for personal existential anchors, and the emphasis on shared meanings [Shulhun, 2017, pp. 2–3].

Moreover, it seems important that the recent travel literature, traditionally combining the real and the imaginary in the journeys of consciousness (Jorge Borges, Italo Calvino, Cees Nooteboom, Yurii Andrukhovych, etc.), is far from the experiential syncretism and realism that bring them extremely close, practically homologating them. A contemporary scholar asserts that “the imagological aspect is becoming increasingly significant in modern travel. The convergence of intentions among writers from different national literary traditions suggests the presence of a broader trend – literature’s engagement with global transformations, the construction of a new worldview, and reflection on meta-geographical and meta-historical dimensions” [Shulhun, 2017, p. 4]. In our view, the emphasis on conveying the figurative dimension of temporal narrative in the contemporary meta-genre of travel literature signifies a shift away from modernist and postmodernist aesthetic and poetic techniques, which are characterized by temporal inversion and various manipulations of temporal markers within the text. One could argue that contemporary travel literature reflects a return from the journeys of Joyce and Meyrink to those of Montaigne or the medieval travelogue, albeit within the framework of digital culture – manifested, for instance, in the memetic dimension of visibility, the practice of network surfing, or virtual travel.

The temporal structure of recent travel literature appears to follow a principle of **non-linear discreteness**, wherein the plot progression and the shifts in the characters’ locations are governed by a sequence of events distinguished by three interrelated dimensions: physical presence, the perception of empirical reality, and the imaginative reconstruction of that reality. One can use the metaphor of a picture made of puzzle elements: a narrative, like an image, implies a certain final integrity, but the addition of individual puzzle elements does not necessarily depend on the semantic or formal algorithms of the text, including the plot. Moreover, the contemplative model of reception – characterized by the perspective of a “God’s spy,” as described by M. Proust – primarily shapes interpretive approaches that emphasize the visibility of images rather than relying on the conventional metaphysical framework of the text. The contemporary travelogue tends to visualize as a silent presence, if silence refers to the avoidance of explanations and didactics, which is quite consistent with the aesthetics of meta-modernism completely denying historical discourse [Kretov, Kretova, 2020] and interpreting temporality mainly as presence and movement as a consistent change of viewpoints on the environment (Nooteboom’s *All Souls’ Day (Allerzielen)*, 1998), *Roads to Santiago (De omweg naar Santiago)*, 1997), *Venetië-de leeuw, de stad en het water (Venice: The Lion, The City and water)*, 2019) and Foer’s *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2005) are cases in point). The metamodern attitude of *metaxis* – characterized by oscillation between rationality and modernity, and irrationality and post-modernity – shapes the aesthetic principle of “new sincerity” (so-called ironesty). This perspective influences contemporary understandings of narrative temporality, not merely as a formal textual marker, a discourse type, or a semantic feature that defines temporal modality, but more fundamentally as an implicit acknowledgment of temporality as both a mode and a space for human meaning-making.

Notably, the recent Nobel Prize laureate in Literature, Olga Tokarczuk, in her programmatic essay titled *Ognosia*, references Camille Flammarion’s famous engraving, which depicts a traveler “who, having reached the edge of the world, extends his head beyond the earthly sphere to gaze upon a meticulously ordered and harmonious cosmos.” She observes: “Since childhood have I been in love with this amazingly metaphorical painting, which every time opens up new meanings and outlines the human essence in a completely different way compared to

Leonardo da Vinci's well-known drawing, which depicts a static and triumphant Vitruvian Man as a measure of the universe and oneself" [Tokarchuk, 2022]. The contrast between dynamics and statics is significant, as is the attention to sacred symbolism, including the sage traveler's cane and traveling cloak. The author contends that in a world diminished by technological advancements, only the experience of travel can liberate individuals from the catatonic stupor induced by constant technological immersion.

### **Narrative temporality in Nooteboom's pieces**

The works of Cornelis Nooteboom, one of the most translated contemporary Dutch authors, a multiple Nobel Prize nominee, and winner of many literary awards, are illustrative in the context of the topic of our study. His numerous prose texts and poetry collections are thematically and content-wise related to travel literature, including *Reizen een vorm van mediteren* (Travel as a Form of Meditation, 2008), *Waar de herinnering woont* (Where Memory Lives, 2006), *Berlijn 1989-2009* (Berlin 1989-2009), *De schrijver als hoofdpersoon: lezen als avontuur* (The Writer as Protagonist: Reading as Adventure, 2015), etc. Essentially, most of Nooteboom's artistic travelogues are accompanied by visual elements, such as photographs or drawings, reinforcing the idea that the imaginative and figurative dimensions of temporality are integral to human existence and that the metaphor of life as a journey remains relevant.

It is worth remarking that his first novel *Philip and the Others* (*Philip en de anderen*, 1957), which intertwines myth, fairy tale, fantasy and realism in a postmodern manner, creates Emmanuel Vanderley, a young traveler hitchhiking across Europe in search of a Chinese woman who invents games in an imaginary reality. The young man, like Don Quixote of Lamancha, is in love without an object of love and travels without a goal as a destination. The temporality of events in the novel constitutes both its content and meaning. Through this progression, the protagonist – serving as the writer's alter ego – undergoes self-realization, identity formation, and, ultimately, self-discovery.

The second novel, *The Knight Has Died* (*De ridder is gestorven*, 1963) tells about the intention of the narrator, a friend of the deceased Andre Steenkamp, to write a novel about another dead writer and realizes his mission to finish this book based on his friend's drafts as writing the book of own life. The novel employs characteristic post-modern manipulations of time and space, where continuity is not perceived as monolithic or multidimensional but as an open-ended semantic construct. It resembles a sphere with a center at every point and a circumference extending infinitely – an idea reminiscent of late scholastic conceptions of extra-spatiality and timelessness, particularly as articulated by Nicholas of Cusa. Furthermore, an individual does not remain static in time, like an insect trapped in amber, but instead undergoes expansion. This expansion is bounded only by imagined constraints – thought, experience, and the semiotic structures encoded in language. As the character travels, he finds himself on a certain remote island, where he meets people of art, falls in love, experiences existential crises, and dies. Steenkamp, to reconstruct the conventional space of creativity, traverses twenty-one topoi – unnamed sections of the book – that interlock like puzzle pieces to create a unified space of perpetual motion. This dynamic framework encapsulates movement within movement, history within history, and fate as both a reflection of and an interplay with other destinies. Steenkamp remains alive as long as his book remains unfinished. However, the temporal nature of human existence and culture ensures that the book will continue to be written even after his death. As we can see, his early novels employ both modern and postmodern techniques of creating a narrative and interpreting temporality. By and large, the novel lacks a conventional plot driven by a sequential chain of events. Instead, its dynamics emerge from the continuous expansion of context and the scaling of narrative space. This effect is made possible by a conception of temporality as both discrete and syncretic, extending in all directions, where the sequence and distinction of events remain fluid and non-essential. Although real time correlates with the subjective experience of time by the characters in Nooteboom's works, the latter has no defined intentionality and can be transformed in any way. Therefore, it may be argued that Nooteboom's wandering philosophical prose transcends the classical notion of chronotope developed in the writer's third novel, *Rituals* (*Rituelen*, 1980).

The novel, which can be seen as a coming-of-age novel, portrays Inni Wintrop across different stages of her life as she struggles to impose a schematic order and symmetry on reality. However, her efforts are not driven by a desire to overcome existential alienation or nausea, as seen in Sartre or Camus, but rather by a confrontation with the indifferent inaccessibility of truth itself. The escape from the absurd does not occur within time but rather through time, as the novel presents temporal experience as exceeding the spatial boundaries of self-awareness. Human temporality acquires the features of a *modus vivendi*, a picture of the world, and ethics. These elements prevent Inni from succumbing to the cynicism of her antagonists, the father and son, Arnold and Philip Taads. In the novel, temporality transcends formal text structures and does not serve as a mere sign or marker of narrative. Instead, it takes on the meaning of pleroma – an absolute fullness of possibilities – that eliminates the constraints of time and space. Significantly, the Gnostic tradition refers to pleroma as a combination of aeons as timeless entities reflected in Deleuze's interpretation of temporality in his distinction between Aeon and Chronos. The three parts of the novel correspond to distinct fragments of Wintrop's life: 1963, 1953, and 1973. By disrupting the chronological sequence, the writer emphasizes the incongruity of real time and the subjective existential non-linear experience of time. The tragedy of human existence, contextualized by world history, culture, and personal experience (such as the destruction of Pompeii, the bombing of Nagasaki, and the events in The Hague), arises from the human condition both within and beyond the confines of time. Human beings are bearers of temporality on multiple levels: in cognition and perception, consciousness and imagination, as well as nomologically through their physical existence. On the other hand, humans generate temporality, enabling them to postulate the existence of an external reality and transcend its boundaries. This transcendence occurs, for example, through emotional and affective states, the cathartic surge of creativity, and communication with Others, expressed through modes such as love, hate, and others. Nooteboom's time is simultaneous, combining fragments of different times and spaces into one whole referring to the concept of pleroma, completeness, syncretism, unity before any separation.

It may be assumed that for all its apparent traditionality, Nooteboom's text is meta-modern, combining features of modern and post-modern poetics. Wintrop's imagination lacks a sequence of temporal thinking: the present is a combination of the possible and the impossible, and of what has existed, exists, or will exist. Moreover, any fact upon which attention is focused generates a new temporal model of reality. For instance, the experience of assisting the priest during the Eucharist leads to the realization that it is symbolically linked to the Minotaur. Similarly, the assumption that Chamberlain did not go to Munich is validated by the color of port wine, which corresponds to the moment when the grapes used to make it had not yet been harvested from the vine [Nooteboom, 2000]. Thus, human in the novel is not a part of a whole, history, culture, time, etc., but rather a whole itself, not unfolded. Therefore, it is not history and time that impart meaning to Winthrop's life; rather, he becomes and remains himself by creating his history, shaping the temporality of his environment, and constructing his experiential tunnel, or *Umwelt*. The narrative eventfulness and the characters' experiential development do not fully encompass temporality, which, as a human totality, compresses thousands of lives into one. This evokes Pascal's reflections on human frailty and strength, as well as Donne's assertion that no man is an island. The syncretism of the narrative's temporality ontologizes the human being in existence, generating space as a function of time.

*Lost Paradise (Paradijs verloren, 2004)* ironically reflects on reading as a means for the writer to return to oneself through one's book in the reader's hands. This initiates a compositional and semantic conflict when the novel's beginning sees a woman on an airplane holding a *Lost Paradise* and the end sees him meeting the same woman on a train, but with Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The motif of travel – the movement of people and objects through space – attains an ontological dimension, paralleling the wanderings of ideas and meanings. The book centers on Australia, exploring the tensions between industrialized society and the archaic traditions of the continent's Indigenous peoples – contrasts readily apparent to contemporary cultures. However, the main semantic conflict is the clash of the native and the new, the alien, sedentarism and nomadism as existential and cultural strategies that form specific tracks, trajectories of human life, where space always seems secondary to time at the

level of the phenomenology of flowing experience and existing. Thus, the exile from paradise and the quest to rediscover it serve as the central symbolic message and overarching metaphor for human life as a journey.

The writer is “playing” with history in the meta-modern tradition, placing the context of his novel in the context of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667), written more than 300 years ago. In the first part of the novel, the young Brazilian woman, Alma, serves as the narrator. She travels to Australia with her friend Almut, envisioning it as a lost paradise – a return to natural origins, pre-industrial harmony, and justice. Reality takes a traumatic turn as signs of globalism, social injustice, and capitalist exploitation undermine naïve notions of a lost paradise. The novel’s temporality does not simply contrast past, present, and future as modes of imaginary reality construction. Instead, following Lyotard’s *le differend* [Taylor, Winquist, 2001, p. 99], it highlights the distinctions between the tenses and discourses (phrasal modes) of Alma and Almut as markers of heterogeneity – an unbalanced system with multiple potential trajectories of development. Moreover, temporality in the novel is shaped by presence within both spatial (objects) and temporal (moments) dimensions of existence. The presence of individuals in Nooteboom’s travelogue aligns closely with Heidegger’s conception of presence [Taylor, Winquist, 2001, pp. 313], which frames the here and now as a dynamic state – neither fully past nor yet future, but a mode of being in continuous becoming. Meanwhile, Derrida’s approach [1991], which deconstructs the Saussurean binary of speech and writing, as well as presence and absence, dissolves the distinction between temporal invariants in discourse. It instead foregrounds language as Plato’s pharmakon (*Phaedrus*) – an ambivalent force that functions simultaneously as both remedy and poison. In other words, the temporal narrative, while fixing an event in time, simultaneously deprives it of chronological certainty and clarity. It may be assumed that Nooteboom’s prose represents both visions of time as presence entirely consistent with meta-modern aesthetics.

The events of the second part take place in Europe, namely in Austria. Alma becomes a traveler, embodying Nooteboom’s metaphor of the traveler as one who carries a desert within the heart. This desert does not signify inner emptiness as an ethical failure but rather represents emptiness as a precondition for meaning-making – where movement and change serve as pathways to self-discovery. Erik Zondag, the antagonist of the second part and a Dutch literary critic, encounters Alma at the resort where she works as a masseuse. He recalls having previously seen her in Perth, Australia, where she took part in an art project, portraying an angel concealed within a closet. Zondag daydreams of angels as symbols of the ideal lost by man, evoking Origen’s well-known metaphor of man as a “frozen angel,” with time serving as the ice in which one is trapped. The motif of concealment and secrecy does not create a cryptic, mystical, or esoteric context in the travelogue but serves to remind a human being of one’s existence, true scale, and a nature different from that of an angel. After all, humans have a choice, unlike angels. Thus, the existential and topographical trajectories of the characters create a complex multi-dimensional structure of meaning-making that unites Aboriginal and contemporary art, medieval philosophy and gender issues, etc., returning to human experience a large-scale vision of reality, an ontological dimension.

Notably, many of Nooteboom’s travel books are illustrated with photographs by his wife Simone Sassen [Sassen, 2016]. Thus, *Tumbas. Graves of Poets and Thinkers (Tumbas: graven van dichters en denkers, 2007)* is not merely a report on visits to the graves of poets and writers around the world (this tradition is not new in world literature) but is practically the establishment of a new genre. The book sees the reception phenomenology not conditioning the receipt and systematization of information on a rational level but an existential presence in a form of timelessness. The phenomenology is shaped by the combination and interweaving of times as meanings, putting a person “above” time, thereby transcending it. The writer draws upon his personal experience in West Berlin to construct a space of temporal culture where multiple elements coexist simultaneously: the ritual symbolism of death in cemeteries, the urban topography of death represented by the Berlin Wall, the rhizomatic continuum of imagination, cultural allusions and reminiscences, and the processes of meaning-making at the level of ideas, ethical frameworks, and identities. Therefore, defining the writer as a Nomadic Writer or literary nomad does not merely refer to the frequency of his travels but rather to

his distinct perception of time through space and vice versa. This perspective underscores the ontological potential of travel literature and the unique ontology of narrative temporality. Presumably, such forms of narrative are close to the concepts of prolepsis and procatalepsis in discourse, as they combine past, present, and future in a single view on a simultaneous whole.

Fenoulhe [2013] argues that the philosophical interpretation of travel in Nootboom's work encompasses the subjective experiences of death, writing, love, sex, and crisis as modes of action that unfold over time, shaping one's perception of temporality. This, in turn, enables individuals to exist and construct their identity through the oscillation between truth and falsehood, external imposition and intrinsic essence. In a 21st-century interview, the author states that after first traveling from the Netherlands to Belgium as a young man, "I have never really stopped since" [Wroe, 2006]. More than 60 years of traveling and numerous travelogues have made the writer both an innovator of transformations and an exemplary classic of the meta-genre of travel literature. Interpretations of Nootboom's work can be broadly categorized into two perspectives. The first views the traveler's detachment as indicative of the meaninglessness and timelessness of travel, reducing it to a mere shift in geographical coordinates (Coetzee, Hainders). The second, by contrast, interprets travel not as an escape from oneself but as a quest for self-discovery (Fenoulhe, Shy). We designate these approaches as ***spatial-semiotic and existential-phenomenological***.

Coetzee's famous essay establishes the tradition of interpreting Nootboom's work as a view on the world of a sophisticated, detached stoic who is "too urbane, to be able to commit himself to the grand illusioning of realism, yet too little anguished by this fate—this expulsion from the world of the heartfelt imagination – to work it up into a tragedy of its own" [Coetzee, 2011, p. 6]. An alternative to the critique of literary tourism as a commodified practice within the publishing industry is the following interpretation of his works: "Time stretches away in either direction, suggesting infinite possibility, yes, but at some point, Time measures our limits [...] too" [Shy, 2024]. The key concept is the "frame perspective" – the framing of narrative temporality – which precisely encapsulates the discreteness of time as a form of separation. This very separation, paradoxically, enables the continuity of events.

The writer says, "I [...] found myself writing about a man who wakes up and is astonished about where he is. Because he is in Lisbon, but last night he went to bed in Amsterdam. You surprise yourself" [Štefančič, 2016]. Notably, this emphasis on surprise serves as a marker of transcendence—an expansion beyond personal experience, the flow of perception, and even one's identity. To be oneself, paradoxically, requires a simultaneous distancing from oneself, enabling self-reflection within temporal and spatial dynamics and within the temporal perspective that shapes human space. Moreover, we emphasize that, from this perspective, temporal narrative aligns with the element of surprise inherent in the fluid, ever-changing reality (within symbolic deixis). This sense of wonder, as Aristotle asserts in *Metaphysics*, serves as the foundation of all philosophy.

Notably, in line with the perspectives of Italo Calvino and Vladimir Nabokov, and similarly to Yurii Andrukhovych, Cees Nootboom conceptualizes time as a discursive space rather than merely a collection of practices or techniques. The potential for change within this space arises from the continual reconfiguration and movement of its constituent elements, which are in a constant state of flux or "flickering." Furthermore, the ideological and philosophical dimension of his travelogues is not defined by their content or plot as a mere sequence of events. Instead, it emerges from a perspective that considers events to time – its scale rather than its structured progression within the conventional model of "past-present-future." In this regard, the writer's temporal narrative can be considered ***extra-historical***, as history in his works is understood as character formation. This aligns with what Philip Broadbent refers to as the "phenomenology of absence" [Broadbent, 2009]. Without being didactic, the details of everyday experience in the dynamics of time as a permanent change and reconfiguration of elements of reality give rise to philosophy and "sneak up on you, appearing unexpectedly, breathtakingly" [Vanderbes, 2007].

In our view, the implicit metaphysical dimension of Nootboom's texts arises from the function of intertextuality, which serves as a means of unveiling space – whether in the form of literary tradition or a thesaurus. Meanwhile, the carriers of time and temporality, as modes of operation, are embodied by both the characters and the author. As Schmidt considers intertextuality and memory in Nootboom's works notes, "intertextuality is part of the 'memory

in the text', as well as the 'memory of the text'". The text's conceptualization of memory sees pretexts as external repositories for the narrator's recollections, aiding in their organization and structuring. Simultaneously, the concept of memory within the text illustrates how intertextuality itself creates an external intertextual memory space, enabling Nooteboom's novel to engage in dialogue with other texts. Additionally, intertextual references function as a reminder of the author's presence, thereby challenging the postmodernist notion of the "death of the author" [Schmidt, 2016]. Therefore, we highlight a new, to some extent metamodern, form of humanism within travel literature as a whole, and in the works of the Dutch writer in particular.

Nooteboom's *All Souls' Day* utilizes the problem of temporality as a means of deconstructing history within the opposition between amorphous and structure, meaning and absurdity in the human description of reality and discursive practices. For the characters, European history primarily functions as a space of semantic attractors, where the division between East and West Berlin is not merely topographical but fundamentally semantic. The novel's heroine, Elik, the protagonist's lover, engages in the study of Hegel. To quote: "*What on earth were you supposed to do with that enormous mass of words? Every once in a while, a fragment would catch your eye before it swiftly reverted back to rigid dogma or an almost religious attempt at systemization: the Utopian organ notes of an unproved prophecy, a future in which the Weltgeist – whatever that was – would become, it she had understood it correctly, conscious of itself as tree. and then all the contradictions that had plagued the world since time immemorial would be resolved. It sounded ghastly. She felt an innate resistance to Hegel's mile-long sentences [...]*" [Nooteboom, 2001, p. 223]. The characters attempt to align the meanings of world culture with the topography of Berlin but only succeed in experiencing the intense reality of exile within the phenomenological realm of personal time. The novel's characters – Arthur Daane, the cameraman who visualizes twilight as a universal boundary; Arno Tieck, the philosopher; Victor Leven, the sculptor; and Zenobia Stejn, the physicist – each employ their discursive practices in different temporal modes. This does not produce Bakhtin's polyphony within the chronotope. Instead, it creates in the reader's imagination a visual representation of the fractal homeomorphism of time, a concept existing without truly existing and enabling the existence of abstract categories such as history and culture.

To quote: "[...] *as a weaving of the historical and the ahistorical world. No, don't roll your eyes... It's related to what I was just talking about. The historical world is the world of events, the things you've filmed in the course of your career [...]* Names, facts, dates, dramas. But that other world, the everyday world of the unseen, of the anonymous – or whatever word you used – he little insignificant things that nobody notices because they're always there..." [Nooteboom, 2001, p. 277] the philosopher Arno tells Arthur about the fragments of his filming twilight. Thus, the temporal mode of the narrative and the phenomenological time of the reader correlate paradoxically, i.e., not coinciding in dimensionality, they coincide in spatiality as a presence within time.

Time is profoundly subjective in both this novel and *The Knight Has Died*, where clocks – symbols of time – are notably absent, along with memories and images of time. Similarly, *Rituals* represents a rejection of the symbolization and poeticization of time, a characteristic inherent in both classical and, to some extent, modern traditions. The time of a clock is merely a term, a measure; a clock is not a symbol but a sign, an emblem. True time, however, represents a mode of human existence – both being in oneself and searching for oneself. The disconnection between the spatiality of things and the temporality of human presence – fatal yet devoid of tragic connotations – defines Nooteboom's texts. This theme can be compared, for instance, to Yurii Andrukhovych's collection of essays *Disorientation on Location* (1997) or Eugène Ionesco's play *The Bald Soprano*. The plots of his novels consist of one person's journey to another through a series of objects that point to people. This structure equates reading with the experience of a journey. The characters and the author, to paraphrase the title of Dürrenmatt's story, observe the observer who observes the construction of objective space in the subjective experience of human temporality. Therefore, we can assert that the temporality of the narrative in the writer's texts takes on fundamentally ontological characteristics, even though it appears to be shaped by formal features. This is evident, for instance, in the rejection of event simultaneity in the *All Souls' Day* plot, which, while not strictly linear, is complicated by the interweaving of philosophical and historical digressions, memories, and even dreams.

It can also be argued that the **temporal narrative employs the tools of ritual and play: the former captures the procedural aspect of an event's structure** (such as the development of the relationship between Arthur and Elik), while the latter embodies elements of uncertainty, rule changes, and the intervention of chaos (as seen in Arthur's thought games with the Others). To quote: "And we? No opinions, no judgments. That's our mandate. Oh, we do feel an occasional touch of surprise at your incomprehensible ways, though we should be used to them by now. The elusiveness of your actions, the connection between events and emotions. The myths, stories, and theories you devise by way of explanation, your attempts at knowledge, your numerous detours through the absurd, the loose ends, the surprising moment in which you suddenly see someone else standing before you in the mirror" [Nootboom, 2001, p. 314].

*Roads to Santiago (De omweg naar Santiago)*, the collection of travel essays, represents another aspect of the writer's work. The work does not follow a traditional plot. Rather than merely connecting new topoi through a sequence of authorial reflections – a characteristic feature of ancient, medieval, and modern traditions from Xenophon's *Anabasis* to the writings of Cervantes and Swift – it constructs a unified whole from fragmented elements. It serves as a contemporary homo iter, assembling a new perspective on the continuity of the time-space continuum of human culture through a mosaic of travel notes, photographs, and textual visualizations. The author, despite his apparent detachment, not only acknowledges his presence but actively emphasizes it. He presents world culture as a palimpsest, where temporal layers of meaning and semiotic codes intersect and interact. Rather than forming a closed textual chronotope, this structure functions as an open-access program code – a meaning-making model of human experience characterized by fluidity and dynamism, capturing history as it is "frozen" within the continuum of human temporality. To quote: "It is impossible to prove and yet I believe it: there are some places in the world where one is mysteriously magnified on arrival or departure by the emotions of all those who have arrived and departed before. [...] An idea becomes visible in matter: that is always wondrous" [Nootboom, 1997, p. 3] Given that, according to the Christian canon – an idea shared across all Abrahamic religions – human beings embody the divine Plan, the travel literature in Cees Nootboom's work, in the twenty-first century, serves as evidence of the humanistic potential for resisting the challenges posed by technological non-anthropocentrism.

## Conclusions

Thus, considering the evolving horizon of meanings for the modern digital human (homo digitalis) and the development of travel literature as a meta-genre, it is essential to highlight the continued relevance of literature's worldview influences. As both an individual and social practice, as well as a segment of social communication and culture, literature plays a crucial role in shaping the identities of contemporary individuals and communities. In this context, one might consider the ontologizing function of travel literature, which, by capturing the existentials of Heidegger's Dasein in the subjective temporality of meaning-making, symbolically restores to humanity the objective space it has lost. Through new modes of information processing, travel literature expands the depicted world, offering a renewed engagement with reality.

In other words, the temporality of the travel literature narrative shapes the space of human self-awareness. This not only problematizes the logical structure of the statement but also paradoxically renders the eventfulness of travel not merely a predicative function of the subject but an autonomous entity in itself.

In travel literature, the narrative temporality serves as an algorithm that structures the perception of reality. This influence extends even to linguistic constructions that lack explicit temporal markers. Moreover, such a narrative demonstrates the capacity to configure and reconfigure the frameworks of understanding and meaning within a work of art, operating on both formal and semantic levels. The humanistic potential of travel literature manifests through the existential, axiological, identity-related, and transcendental dimensions of its temporal narrative.

The transformation of narrative temporality in contemporary literature and the meta-genre of travel literature can be observed in the following key areas: *ontologization of narrative temporality*, establishing it as a fundamental feature of human existence, imagination, and experience; development of the *transcendent potential* of travel literature, aligning with shifts

in the conceptualization of the space-time continuum; *reideologization of anthropogenic temporality*, shifting the interpretive framework of existential and ontological aspects of temporality from a negative to a more positive perspective; *strengthening of the imagological dimension of narrative temporality*, where the visualization of eventfulness increasingly blurs the boundary between narrative and descriptive modes in emerging genres within the travel literature meta-genre.

The temporal narrative in travel literature is fundamentally linked to the concept of intertextuality, establishing specific modes of interaction that function as trigger zones between texts, narratives, and various discursive and linguistic practices. Temporal narrative encompasses the practice of commemoration among the subjects of texts, including the reader. The temporality of contemporary travel literature appears to be structured under the principle of non-linear discreteness, wherein the plot development over time and the shifts in the characters' locations inherently involve a sequence of events differentiated by three dimensions: somatic presence, the perception of empirical reality, and the imaginative construction of that reality. The narrative temporality in contemporary travel literature also emphasizes the growing significance of the imagological aspect – that is, visualization through imagery or detailed description – which contributes to the development of virtual sub-genres within the broader meta-genre.

The contemporary temporal narrative of travel literature is also shaped by the oppositions between syncretic and discrete structures, as well as by the interplay between temporality – as a phenomenological marker of human perception and experience of reality – and spatiality, which serves as a medium for interaction with the Other and Others. Nootboom's work encapsulates the comprehensive optics of travel as a fundamental mode of human existence, inherently tied to transcendental inquiry, meaning-making, and the exploration of identity across multiple dimensions, ranging from cultural to gendered perspectives.

Two primary approaches can be identified in the Nootboom's work, which can be classified as the spatial-semiotic and the existential-phenomenological perspectives. One approach highlights the Nootboom traveler's detachment as a reflection of the meaninglessness and timelessness of travel, reducing it to a mere shift in geographical coordinates (Coetzee, Haiders). The other approach, however, interprets travel not as an escape from oneself but as a quest for self-discovery (Fenoulhe, Shy). The temporal narrative in the writer's texts can be described as extra-historical and transcendental, incorporating elements of ritual and play as key narrative devices.

The ontological dimension of narrative temporality in Nootboom's works is manifested through the application of simultaneous narrative construction techniques, the use of inverse game strategies, and methods characteristic of both modernity and postmodernity. His later works are shaped by the aesthetics of metamodernism, particularly the principle of metaxis. Thus, the key trajectories of transformation in the temporality of travel literature narratives are exemplified in the Nootboom's works. The perception of narrative temporality as the totality of human presence within experiences of change, development, reideologization, and the reconfiguration of actions and events establishes ontologism as a defining characteristic of the writer's work.

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## TEMPORALITY OF THE NARRATIVE OF CONTEMPORARY TRAVEL LITERATURE (Based on Cees Nootboom's work)

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**Key words:** *temporality, narrative, travel literature, Cees Nootboom, metagenre, interpretation, intertextuality.*

The article examines the temporality of narrative in the discourse of contemporary travel literature in the context of socio-cultural dynamics associated with the digitalization of life forms, socio-cultural interactions and new models of comprehension, description and representations of reality in literary texts. The emergence of a new picture of the world in the transformations of literary discourse and narrative is problematized. The phenomenon of travel prose by the Dutch writer C. Nootboom is considered from the perspective of representing the problems of transformation of the temporality of narrative in the contemporary meta-genre of travel literature.

*The aim* of the article is to determine the directions of transformation of the temporality of the narrative in the discourse of modern travel literature in the context of the transformation of life forms of human world and the genre specificity of this meta-genre. *The task* of the study is to clarify the content of the ontologizing functional of travel literature and its humanistic potential, which is revealed in the existential, axiological, identity and transcendental aspects of the temporal narrative.

*The research methodology* is comprehensive and interdisciplinary. To achieve this goal, historical-literary, historical-philosophical, hermeneutic, narratological, phenomenological, comparative, and narrative *methods* were used.

*Research results.* In connection with the transformations of the horizon of meanings of modern man (*homo digitalis*) and the development of the meta-genre of travel literature, we must emphasize the relevance of the worldview influences of literature as an individual and social practice, a segment of social communication and culture on the formation of the identity of modern man and communities. Perhaps, in this context, we can talk about the ontologizing function of travel literature, which, by recording existentials of being here-here in the subjective time of meaning generation, symbolically returns to man the objective space lost by him, expanding the world depicted by new modes of operating with information. The time, the temporality of the narrative of travel literature determines the space of human self-awareness, which also means the problematization of the logical structure of the statement and paradoxically makes the eventfulness of travel not a predicative function of the subject, but an autonomous entity.

In the case of travel literature, the temporality of the narrative algorithmizes and structures the reception of reality, which is relevant even for such linguistic constructions that do not directly have markers of temporality, and the ability of such a narrative to configure and reconfigure formats of understanding and meanings of a work of art is emphasized both at the formal and at the content levels. The humanistic potential of travel literature is revealed in the existential, axiological, identity and transcendental aspects of the temporal narrative.

The temporal narrative in travel literature is essentially correlated with the principle of intertextuality, fixing modes of interaction, peculiar trigger zones between texts, narratives, discursive and speech practices. The temporal narrative involves the practice of commemoration between the subjects of the texts, including the reader. The temporality of modern travel literature seems to be organized according to the principle of nonlinear discreteness, when the plot unfolding in time and the change of the characters' localization points necessarily implies a sequence of events that is differentiated by the spheres of somatic presence, reception of empirical reality, and imaginary construction of this reality. The temporality of the narrative of modern travel literature also implies an increased role of the imagological aspect, that is, visualization based on images or descriptions, which reflects the emergence of virtual subgenres of the meta-genre.

Also relevant for the modern temporal narrative of travel literature are the oppositions syncretic/discrete and temporality as a phenomenological marker of human perception and experience of reality and spatiality as a medium of interaction with the Other and Others. The work of C. Nootboom represents the total optics of travel as a mode of human existence, indissolubly linked to transcendental inquiry and meaning generation, as well as the discovery of identity at all levels – from cultural to gender.

Regarding the work of C. Nootboom, two main approaches can be distinguished, which we can designate as spatial-semiotic and existential-phenomenological. One of them emphasizes the detachment of the Nootboom traveler as a sign of the meaninglessness and timelessness of travel as a simple change of geographical coordinates, the other interprets travel not as an escape from oneself, but as a

search for oneself. The temporal narrative in the writer's texts can be characterized as extra-historic and transcendent, as well as one that uses the tools of ritual and play. The ontologism of the temporality of narrative in the works of C. Nooteboom is represented in the deployment of simultaneous practices of narrative construction, the use of inversive game techniques and methods inherent in modern and postmodernism. In the later works, there is an influence of the aesthetics of metamodernism, in particular the principle of meta-axis.

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