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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Literature, Linguistics & Criticism***The spatial organization of the world in Pyotr Vail's *The Genius of the Place* (2006) and *The Map of the Motherland* (2006)**Inna Zarovna¹ , Tatiana Glushchenko¹, Ekaterina Fedoseeva¹ & Ibrahim Abdallah Al-Shaboul²¹Department of Asian Languages, The University of Jordan, Jordan²Department of Modern Languages, Yarmouk University, JordanCorrespondence: i.borisovna@ju.edu.jo**ABSTRACT**

The article explores the features of the spatial organization of the world in the essays written by P. Vail. The objects of study are the writer's books, *The Genius of the Place* and *The Map of the Motherland*. The study subjects are spatial images, the nature of which is essayistic. The images of the USA, Japan, Europe, and Latin America are analyzed as critical components of the world's spatial picture in the work of the Russian emigrant. The emphasis is made on the uniqueness of American culture. It is concluded that the topos and the area stimulate the author to think; his travels are realized in the spiritual world, where thought moves from a real geographic space to the actual topos of imagination or memory and then returns to a specific locality that the essayist had seen before. Another feature of the author is how his thoughts transition to the topos of the work of literature, virtual reality.

KEYWORDS: spatial image, essay, civilization, topos, P.Vail**Research Journal in Advanced Humanities**

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Introduction

The spatiality of thinking in Pyotr Vail's essays does not consist of depicting space as such (this is the purpose of the travel sketch). It is interesting how spatial images are used in an essay, a work of literature in which the author is left alone with the readers and has a private conversation. Firstly, certain topos evoke various reflections from the author, in which he recalls his past, analyzes the current situation, and tries to understand being as such. For him, the space contributes to objectifying maxims and reflections of a different nature. Secondly, the travels in the essay are not carried out in the real world, where the following location goes after the previous one, as is typical for a travel sketch, in chronological sequence. Here, it is better to speak of a spiritual journey, how a thought moves from a real geographical space to the actual topos of a dream or memory and then returns to a specific area that the author had seen before (Akhundov, 1982, p. 222). It is even characterized by the transition of thought to the topos of a work of literature, its being, which is an unreal thing and may not have its analogs in real life. Thirdly, P. Vail's essays are permeated with spatial images due to the specificity of the author's thinking. With their help, it is easier for him to formulate his thoughts and subjective feelings to convey his attitude to reality. Spatial images contribute to this: «The more points there are, the more accurate the graph will be. Maybe, for this reason, we have travels and returns: the more you see something unusual, the more often you place the altered self in another environment, the more likely it is that you will understand yourself» (Vail, 2006, p. 386); «The peculiar aspect of traveling: a foreign country is a metaphor for one's own» (Vail, 2006, p. 439).

P. Vail wrote most of his essay compilations thanks to numerous travels in different periods of his life, moving from one place to another, reflections on this topic, etc. P. Vail's essays are not directly subordinated to finding «one's territory» and recognizing its right to exist. However, the primary goal for P. Vail is its definition, the designation of what can be called 'his' and what territorial boundaries it has: «I was born in the first half of the previous century... So time puts you inside the prose of life without asking. Space is put into history. A Muscovite father with Alsatian roots and an Ashgabat mother from the Tambov Molokans got married in Germany; I was born in Riga, lived in New York for many years; I am writing these lines in Prague» (Vail, 2006, p. 11).

Review of Theoretical Studies

In the books of P. Vail's essays, the search for one's territory occurs according to the principle of an inverted pyramid. In his first collection, «The Genius of the Place,» one can see the general features of what is close to the author. The second book, «Map of the Motherland,» is already defined, firstly, with the concept of «homeland,» and secondly, why precisely this homeland and what the actual attitude towards it is.

An essential aspect of essay searches in both of the writer's books is the process of searching (comprehending, reflecting, creating a concept) for «one's territory,» the essay form of prose becomes a fruitful platform for such searches. According to

T. Shevchenko, «one's territory» in an essay is «a place where a person feels free, where he feels comfortable and cozy, and most importantly, where he finds like-minded people»; it is «a substance of some ideas, feelings, hoaxes,» which for the author «is a kind of continuation of himself, his perception of the world and at the same time a bridge to the traditions existing for centuries» (Shevchenko, 2011, p. 275).

Among all the concepts in literary studies, spatial organization is the one that significantly contributes to the establishment of the narrative and, more so, the concept of the text. From the earliest times, researchers' interest emerged regarding spatial relations and places' impact on characters' actions, narrative arcs, and readers' responses. Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, and Gaston Bachelard are critical theorists whose studies have informed the understanding of spatiality in literature. According to Foucault, heterotopia can be seen as a way of perceiving the spatial particularities of literature. At the same time, the notion of space as a form of power relations can also be used to analyze the spatial aspects of narratives. In this view, Foucault (1986) stipulated that spaces are not just stage settings but are acted upon and imply relations of power that help describe and explain a society's social formation. Another theoretical framework that relates to the role of space in tragedy is Lefebvre's (1991) «The Production of Space,» which does not view space as a background or passive stage but as the socio-material space that is simultaneously produced and struggled over. This vantage point enables the further analysis of Appendix II on literary places and socio-cultural contexts about literary spaces and the

societies in which they belong. «The Poetics of Space» by Bachelard (1994) lays down and expounds on the phenomenological approach to space and how space means to humans. With his work, he leads the readers to reflect on the embodied affective qualities of spaces introduced within literary productions and, therefore, to broaden the way spaces function for narrative and thematic purposes.

This has created more informed and layered approaches towards the theoretical viewing of space in literature. For example, Foucault's heterotopia, which he defined as places that are 'otherwise' than real and existing in a position of contradiction with the real world, can provide a way of studying literary spaces that oppose normalcy. In their occult form, it can be observed in texts situated at the margins of the mainstream that adopted a critical approach to the norms of the society it belongs to (Foucault, 1986, p. 24). Having identified the complexity of spatial constructions in literature and the variety of ways literary spaces are represented and understood, Lefebvre's triad of perceived, conceived, and lived spaces – makes it possible to consider all the possible ways literary spaces operate. The concept of space, as observed in Chapter 3, is differentiated into three aspects these are the perceived space refers to the spatial nature considered as physical and material; the conceived space refers to the arena considered as ideologically and symbolically constructed; and the lived spaces reflect the spatiality of the everyday and personal experience (Lefebvre, 1991). It is also important to note that this triadic model can be valuable in making a deconstruction of the large number of significances that literary spaces have and can shed light on how they work within the framework of the text and concerning the reader (Soja, 1996; Massey, 2005).

To concretize his sociopolitical understanding of spatial experience in literature, Bachelard focused on the poetics of space that underlines the emotional and creative perception of space. He consequently develops away from grand narratives of urban and architectural ambiance and the individual, personal, and confined relations to space where Bachelard creates the ways spaces, in literary texts, may impact passions and memories, making for a dense geography of signification (1994). According to Bachelard, the readers should imagine houses, rooms, or any living space not as a bare building structure or a reality but as a space that upholds individual history and personalities. This phenomenological approach broadens the possibility of understanding the depth of references and associations to which the textual environment corresponds and expands the understanding of the significance of literary places in the narrative (Bachelard, 1994; Tuan, 1977).

Applying the above theoretical perspectives in the analysis of literary texts demonstrates how space and place are intertwined and represented in multiple ways. For example, when analyzing Joycean or Woolfian texts, academicians would be able to utilize Lefebvre's theory of the production of space to explain how spaces depicted in the novels replicate the social and political crises of the time (Lefebvre, 1991). In the same way, Bachelard's work on the poetics of space can also be used to focus on the accurate and vivid descriptions of domestic spaces in what concerns Woolf's «To the Lighthouse» or Joyce's «Dubliners» also to reintroduce how these particular facets overlaid upon these spaces are part of the thematic value and emotional build of the stories they bear (Bachelard, 1994; Lefeb It is argued that Foucault's heterotopias can be applied in currently growing fields like postmodern powers of imprisonment, the psychiatric hospital, and terrible projections by the contemporaries of Margaret Atwood and Kazuo Ishiguro (Foucault, 1986).

The analysis of spatial functioning in literature also entails an examination of the representation of space and the purposes of such representations. Literary geographical representation is not limited to the mere depiction of locales and their physical attributes but also encompasses the roles played by locales about the characters and the plot (Moretti, 1998; Westphal, 2011). Semiotics is such a tool or method that can potentially expose concealed power relations and organizing principles in a society. For instance, colonial discourse within postcolonial literature examines the conflicts between the colonizing dominant and the dominated societies and coming of age as an enterprise (Said, 1978; Pratt, 1992). Theoretical analyses from Foucault, Lefebvre, and Bachelard can be used in decoding those layers and hence being able to explain the role of space in literary texts, as criticized by Soja (1996) and Agnew (2005).

Moreover, recent theories compare the meaning of space with mobility, fluidities, and transnationalism, which is essential in analyzing a contemporary literary text. Some authors, such as Doreen Massey (2005) and John Urry (2000), have sought to expound on space's temporal and relational aspects, hence contesting the fixity and bounded geography of the place. From this perspective, new methods of im/presence are particularly salient in the context of globalization and migration, where spaces are increasingly porous (Massey, 2005; Urry, 2000).

In literature, this can be seen in the narratives of people who have been forced to displace, about diaspora, about hybridity, where spaces are more often than not contested and continually being newly constructed (Mitchell, 2000; Ong, 1999). Complementation of these postmodern theoretical aspects enhances the study of spatial configuration in literature by providing a compelling understanding of how contexts are constituted, perceived, and narrated (Thrift, 2008; Wylie, 2007).

Pyotr Vail's Contributions to Literary Spatial Analysis

Space and its associated issues are identified as the major topics that Pyotr Vail discusses in his essays, which focus on literary analysis. This is not just the spatial imagination; Vail revealed the emotional concept of space, which is about memories and even identity. It can be associated with the theories developed by Lefebvre and Bachelard, who underline the importance of spatial experience in general and the philosophical approach to space in particular (Lefebvre, 1991; Bachelard, 1994). Vail's work primarily deals with the city spaces of post-socialist countries and chronicles the movement from the Soviet era to post-Soviet. He effectively describes these spaces as fluid and contested, where corresponding changes in society and politics are observable. This thematic focus is apparent in his essays, where he analyzes changes in societal landscapes, cultures, and individual memories. This may partly be because Vail's writing style is more descriptive and personal than an impersonal or objective style, such as one gets in purely architectural texts (Bachelard, 1994; Foucault, 1986).

When one compares the aspects of spatial organization presented in Vail's work to other Russian and worldwide literary personalities, one can single out the unquestionable niche of his creations. In contrast to ethereal and rather detached spatial investigations featured in texts by Andrei Bely or Vladimir Nabokov, Vail's essays remind the reader of the materiality of space and the interaction between the subject and environment in the context of everyday practice (Lefebvre, 1991; Moretti, 1998). Other authors like Victor Pelevin and Lyudmila Ulitskaya also explore space. However, unlike them, Vail captures the nuances of the transitional society of post-Soviet urbanity in fragments of time and space. His essays are underpinned by the phenomenological approach that Bachelard proposed, thereby asserting selves into space (Bachelard, 1994). On an international level, Vail's work may be related to other writers who have ventured out into space, such as the Italian novelist Italo Calvino in his book "Invisible Cities" where he integrates the physical characteristics of the spaces with imaginative and even symbolic dimensions (Calvino, 1974; Mitchell, 2000). While both authors analyze space to expose cultural and existential concerns, Vail contextualizes herself within a particular historical and cultural setting of post-Soviet Russia that is more in line with Said's (1978) and Pratt's (1992) conceptualization of metropolitan/contact zone dichotomy.

When it comes to the innovative use of spatial organization as a subject, Vail has made it a focus in some specific essays including 'Genii Mesta' or 'The Genius of Place', for instance. In these essays, Vail employs various narrative features to describe and express the complexity of the space. Through the use of concrete and concrete abstract descriptive emphasis of space, the author not only invites but also necessitates active readers' involvement in the text by making reference to physical space, thereby making them experience the places which are described. His vivid and specific choice of language gives depth and complexity to the text which is clear in stylistic devices, such as references to Old Europe and the author's autobiography. For instance, in his essay depicting Moscow, Vail compares and contrasts the historical locations with the lived spaces of the people thus showing how these locations are also a product of culture and self. This way, not only does the reader feel the spatiality of the city, but the process also points to the parameters of memory, identity, and space.

The narrative strategies used by Vail do not just reveal his focus on the specific story; they also pertain to the overarching topics. His essays contain many reflections about the displacement and the nostalgia of home, referring to how places can become charged with memory and signify identity (Bachelard, 1994; Harvey, 2006). Vail's construct and representation of space are responsive to modern theoretical thinking about mobility and fluctuations (Massey, 2005; Urry, 2000). The instability and fragility of the urban structures portrayed in his works are consistent with the concepts developed by Soja and Thrift concerning space as a constantly evolving and interconnected entity (Soja, 1996; Thrift, 2008). This is elaborated well by Vail in his essays on St. Petersburg, which studies the city's change over time and the conflict between tradition and the contemporary face of the city (Hetherington, 1997; Westphal, 2011).

One can identify a number of ideas and findings that Pé try Vail left for the development of the

methodology of literary spatial analysis. The peculiarities of Russian culture and the Soviet past, combined with his eloquent style of writing, help the reader grasp the intricate understanding of space in its entirety that he provides in the essays. A careful comparison of Vail's works with those of other Russian and world literary authors suggests that his approach is highly qualified by the focus on the practical and subjective aspects of spatiality. The camerawork, voice over, and other features such as the use of detailed descriptions, examples, and historical allusions bring out the sense of place and relationships between memory and identity and space. Vail's work not only resonates but also aligns with the current theoretical paradigms of mobility and fluidity of space as the space is not represented as fixed entity but as a process that is constantly in the making. This critique of Vail's work highlights those spatial arrangements to extend understandings of socio-cultural and existentialist concerns in literary works.

Comparing Spatial Themes in Contemporary Russian Literature

When positioning Pyotr Vail as a writer within the Russian Post-Soviet literary production framework, it is possible to ascertain that the author offered a spatial representation that is simultaneously similar and different from that seen by other writers. Reflecting the post-Soviet American subject's experience of the city and contacts with the ensuing socio-political shifts, Vail's essays belong to a more general literary trend where space is explicated as a chief tool for analyzing the rapid socio-political transformations in post-industrial societies (Lefebvre, 1991; Bachelard, 1994). His peers suffering from the same problem of transforming space and its meaning for oneself and people, in general, are Viktor Pelevin and Lyudmila Ulitskaya. For instance, cultural productions such as Pelevin's texts commonly populate post-Soviet landscapes with utopian and dystopian elements, as Pratt noted (1992) and Foucault (1986) architectures. While talking about each of these authors, it is also vital to note that on the one hand, Vail uses the cities as parts of historical and cultural memory in order to address such issues as mnemonic culture and its transformation, whereas, on the other hand, Ulitskaya employs domestic and historical spaces to discuss such issues as memory and history as well as family relationships (Bachelard, 1994; Tuan, 1977). This comparison demonstrates how authors living in contemporary Russian culture employ the concept of space in distinctive ways to come to terms with the culture's current situation (Soja, 1996; Harvey, 2006).

In this regard, critical analysis of Vail's spatial representations with those of other post-soviet Russian writers ... identifies similarities and differences in how the space is used. Whereas Vail tends to work on physically and pragmatically perceptible and utilitarian structures of the urban, Pelevin's narrations are more or less concerned with the subjective and metaphorical constructs (Pelevin, 1999; Foucault, 1986). Both in the novel «Generation P» and the novel «The Sacred Book of the Werewolf,» Pelevin employs meta fantastic and often meta hyperreal space to satirize consumption and disappointment, political deception, and the degeneration of the value discourse in the post soviet Russian Federation (Pratt, 1992; Soja, 1996). Unlike Vail's urban locations, these spaces are quite different yet serve the same purpose of exposing the post-Soviet transformation's dystopian and, at times, hallucinogenic nature. About Vail's urban setting, Ulitskaya pays more attention to homes, like in the two novels «Medea and Her Children» and «The Big Green Tent,» by acknowledging that homes are an integration of history and by underlining the ability of the private sphere to withstand the changes of the outside world (Bachelard, 1994; Lefebvre, 1991). Such differences reveal how contemporary Russian writers have adopted multiple approaches to employ space as a surface for expressing and questioning the actualities of a given period (Tuan, 1977; Hetherington, 1997).

In the case of the post-Soviet treatment of space, this is also true; tendencies and deviations can be identified more easily. One of the trends that can be observed in the discussed setting is the usage of space as a symbol of the chaotic and unclear conditions of the post-Soviet period. All authors under discussion try to address the decline of the well-known organized Soviet reality and the appearance of new, often amorphous territories (Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 2005). This is evident in his meticulous portrayals of cities' physical and social structures, which historical changes have marked and are constantly changing (Foucault, 1986; Harvey, 2006). In addition, Pelevin has depicted a postmodern, un-real, and dystopian space that contributes to the post-Soviet population's feelings of displacement and instability (Pratt, 1992; Soja, 1996). While in the novels mentioned above, Aksyonov forces together people and events, causing them to collide with one another chaotically, Ulitskaya employs the domestication of spaces, which are rooted in history, work to stabilize the

characters amid the chaos (Bachelard, 1994; Tuan, 1977). This comparison shows how various authors employ spatial frameworks to negotiate and represent the issues of the post-Soviet transformation (Mitchell, 2000; Ong, 1999).

Another significant trend in contemporary Russian literature is space as the place of memory and identification. The topics of Vail's essays reveal how cities store the cultural and personal histories of the people who occupy them, disrupting past and present (Bachelard, 1994; Foucault, 1986). The narrative center of Ulitskaya's text is the focus on spaces infused with family memories and the history of locations (Bachelard, 1994; Lefebvre, 1991). For example, the metaphorical big green tent used by the author, representing the characters' shared experiences and memories of the events under it, helps ground them in the sociopolitical transformation (Ulitskaya, 2015; Bachelard, 1994). Still, Pelevin seems to be closer in his orientation to constructing abstract and allegorical topographies, while memory and identity, the way characters in his works try to cope with the Soviet culture leftovers (Pelevin, 1999; Foucault, 1986), remains an essential narrative subject. This thematic overlap makes space a sound theoretical framework for analyzing memory, identity, and history in postsoviet literature (Tuan, 1977; Massey, 2005).

Thus, there are significant discrepancies regarding spatial topics in how contemporary Russian writers approach them. Vail's essays are descriptive and situated very much in the immediate, giving an almost documentarian view of the cultural realities of cities and their evolution (Vail, 2005; Lefebvre, 1991). In contrast, Pelevin's stories contain more elements of the fantastic and elaborate contemplative view of space as a free and philosophical reflection on timeless questions (Pelevin, 1999; Soja, 1996). Ulitskaya's novel can explain this observation as it interweaves individual and historical stories while symbolizing cultural and genealogical continuity through the concept of space (Ulitskaya, 2015; Bachelard, 1994). These differences reveal the shifts in the spatial theme, which describes the post-soviet space, as well as the specific features of the narrative perspectives in contemporary Russian literature, thus giving the reader a complex picture of the post-soviet space (Mitchell, 2000; Thrift, 2008).

However, the writer's analysis of the space themes in contemporary Russian literature proves that Russian literature has a richer and more complex picture. Therefore, contributions made by Pyotr Vail can be viewed as specific and affecting the identification of post-Soviet cities' qualities as thoughts and transitional societies (Vail, 2005; Lefebvre, 1991). By analyzing the works of Pelevin and Ulitskaya, it is possible to name the different ways of spatial representation. Moreover, it is possible to notice the richness of the approaches and discourses within this literary context (Pelevin, 1999; Ulitskaya, 2015; Bachelard, 1994). The focus on the patterns and concerns in the representation of space depicts the significance of spatial topics throughout the analysis of the post-Soviet identity of the subject (Foucault, 1986; Massey, 2005). Studying these diverse strategies, scholars get a better understanding of how modern Russian writers employ space to think about and analyze the processes of the epoch, which has been changing at a high speed and, thus, deepen the understanding of the notions by Soja (1996) and Harvey (2006).

Methods

Study Approach

This paper, therefore, adopted a qualitative research design to determine the spatial themes identified by Pyotr Vail in contemporary Russian literature. This approach was chosen because Vail's essays were primarily interpretive and required the reader to grasp certain concepts at an analytical level to understand the patterns of motifs and themes. The qualitative approach is suitable for a rich understanding of the meaning and concept of space in Vail's works since it allows precise analysis of the content, the context, and the cultural references. Interpretation of the spatial representations followed textual analysis involving hermeneutics and thematic analysis. This approach was helpful because it focused on the concept of space as the object of analysis and the study's goal of comparing the spatial themes of Vail and other contemporary Russian writers; by adopting a more interpretative approach to space, variations in the construction and representation of post-Soviet literature were more easily identifiable, (Alshraah et al., 2024).

To ensure the primary data was collected rigorously, a multi-case qualitative research design was adopted to compare writings from different contemporary Russian authors to those of Vail's essays. Such organization enabled me to compare and contrast the representation of space in the texts of different authors and overall

determine the peculiarities in its presentation in the chosen genre. Choosing such authors allowed remaining as close as possible to the tendencies of modern Russian literature and helped to portray the general picture of contemporary Russian literature. This approach not only placed Vail's work into the perspective of other literary works but was also utilized to differentiate special features of Vail's spatial representations. Thus, using the multiple case study approach allowed for a more structured comparison of the findings and their dependence on the historical, cultural, and personal contexts within which space was depicted.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection entailed the gathering of both primary and secondary research information. Primary sources include Pyotr Vail's chief essay collections: 'The Genius of the Place' and 'Map of the Motherland' and particular works by other contemporary Russian authors whose work is widely recognized for its spatial interest. Regarding the authors chosen, Lyudmila Ulitskaya, Viktor Pelevin, and Vladimir Sorokin are more versatile options. The following texts were then carefully studied to identify possible themes and motifs concerning spatial imagination. Secondary sources used in this research were journal articles, literary criticism, criticism, and review sources helpful in analyzing these books. This compelling data collection method allowed for analyzing detailed comparative data for each group.

To gain insights into the authors' stance and agenda, the archival investigation was carried out to access non-publication materials, manuscripts, and correspondences unavailable in ordinary bookshops. This data collection method made this study more reliable and valid, creating a formidable database for analyzing the spatial themes in present-day Russian literature. The collection process was systematic, thus covering all the data sources that were needed and sorting out all the data in a systematic manner that was preparatory to analysis. Such an approach helped to ensure the accumulation and subsequent analysis of sufficient background data to examine the spatial representations in the chosen texts.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis started with a thorough thematic analysis of the texts to determine the classification and characteristics of the spatial motifs in Vail's works and to compare them with those of other contemporary Russian authors. The data was translated through identifying modules into patterns that epitomize previously established culture, history, and character of representation. This way, the former and the latter types of themes were determined, thus offering the synoptic view of how space was constructed in people's minds. To achieve the aims of this research, close reading was also applied to identify and explain specific meanings of certain passages and quotes about the overall book.

The following steps were taken to undertake the cross-case analysis that forms part of the comparative nature of the study. This entailed analyzing the themes prevalent in Vail's work against the themes inherent in the texts of other selected authors and then establishing the similarities and differences between them in the manner in which they represent space. The following concerns were to be considered, considering different parameters of space – physical, cultural, and metaphorical-- to understand how space was created in contemporary Russian literature. Thus, the method of discourse analysis allowed for understanding the language and the narratives used by the authors to represent spatial topics, focusing on the rhetoric and the style of the texts to shape the readers' perception of space. The results were analyzed to identify the tendencies and deviations in handling the space in the postsoviet literary discourses.

Result and Discussion

Even though the concept of «one's territory» is a problematic question for P. Vail, reading the first collection of essays, «The Genius of the Place,» one can conclude that the author considers Europe «his own» as such, without being tied to a specific country or theory, locality, city, village. In Europe, in his opinion, the cultural centers of civilization — a key concept for P. Vail — are located. The «genius of the place» is a search for oneself in this world and one belongs to a particular culture. However, with the release of the «Map of the Motherland,» it becomes clear that P. Vail has decided on understanding «his territory.» Therefore, taking this into account, we consider it expedient to refer to everything that is not Europe as the «other (alien) territory» (according to P. Vail). The author points out that European cities are increasingly influenced by the culture of

the American continent, thereby recognizing new signs of «alien» territory that are not entirely acceptable to a person associated with European cultural traditions.

As for P. Vail's general spatial concept, its main large-scale spatial image is civilization. Throughout the book «The Genius of the Place,» the writer seeks the center that gave birth to it, compiled it, and kept it as it is. According to the essayist, the territories that make up this civilizational system include the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Japan.

The writer also has concepts of anti-civilization, which are clearly expressed on the first pages of the essay collection. Anti-civilization creates stereotypes that destroy and debunk the cultural foundations of true civilization associated with the motive of the West. Firstly, it is located in the West (he even calls the first section of the book «To the West of Paradise»). The West is a part of the world where you can get money, value, and measure units in all spheres of life. «America is the quintessence of the West. California is the quintessence of America. There is nothing else left beyond it. Sunset. Night. Sleep. Dream» (Vail, 2006, p. 15);— with these words, the author confirms the opinion that this country is the primary source of degeneration and prostration because if you follow the ideas of the Americans, then the end of culture will come soon because the sun is setting — the sun of culture. Here, sunset is a metaphor: We are talking about the merger of cultures and civilizations and, therefore, the loss of the individual appearance of each of them separately.

The West is a place where concepts are substituted, and mirages are created: «Cinema is California, which is the American West» (Vail, 2006, p. 21), and to this point, he also adds the image of cinematic temples. Indeed, at the inception of cinematography, «everything in cinema as a whole was perceived as a ritual of a new rational religion» (Vail, 2006, p. 21). Cinemas were built on high plots of land to show their value and importance; the actors were perceived as priests, and the glory of Charlie Chaplin was at one time compared with the glory of Napoleon and Christ: «Napoleon as the conqueror of the world and Christ as the redeemer paying for suffering in front of everyone for common sins» (Vail, 2006, p. 20); the film posters are like the «timetable for worship.» Moreover, despite the worldview of Americans, which beholds two dichotomies - cinema as a temple and temple as a cinema, the author is not surprised that cinemas, which are now abandoned, are now used by various religious sects and denominations, and with the words of the Hemingway's character we can now describe a different position: «And St. Mark's Square – isn't it where there is such a huge cathedral that looks like a gorgeous cinema?» (Vail, 2006, p. 20).

The values of the West are valuable, according to P. Vail. Therefore, the consumer of such a culture is «not an analyst, but a rudiment of civilization: a child who opens his mouth next to the narrator. A child who asks for a story that has been heard more than once, because he does NOT need cultural tricks, but a lively bare experience» (Vail, 2006, p. 26). This also reveals the automaticity and simplicity of American civilization because everything in it is done without a soul, based on a template.

American civilization is rooted in antiquity: «The founding fathers looked over the heads of England and all of Europe into antiquity: Greece and Rome» (Vail, 2006, p. 90). However, as if in a distorted mirror, over time and due to the remoteness of continents, the essential content of things and ancient values in America have changed, while only the old names remain. According to P. Vail, America's pseudo-civilization is also perceived as a unique phenomenon.

The author deliberately uses the principle of an unfounded analogy: instead of comparing America with the cultural masterpieces of the world, he compares all the achievements of culture over many centuries with America as a model, a certain standard; this is the author's irony over self-sufficient and self-confident Americans, so Athens reminds him of typical American cities; the author compares a classic Renaissance city with the Wall Street area in New York; the works of the Venetians Carpaccio are compared with Hollywood «that is, the highest skill in building a story, assembling diverse objects, selecting the main characters and close-ups» (Vail, 2006, p. 99). The author draws exciting parallels, for example, between Venice of the XV-XVI centuries and America; hence, these two states, like no others, are capable of revealing the talent of foreigners who did not find recognition in their homeland: «Venice was in many ways the America of the Renaissance» (Vail, 2006, p. 103).

The United States borrowed a lot from modern Italy, in particular, the popular topic of its films about the life of mafia groups: «The ancestral memory of the Irish, Jews, Italians — vivid components of the US ethnic mosaic — which were established in the New World and in such a way. The eternal attraction of the image of

evil in the possession of power» (Vail, 2006, p. 256).

Nevertheless, it was America that imposed the cult of freedom and independence of the individual: «Civilization, which prioritizes personality, reached its heights by the end of the twentieth century. But it turned out that individuals do not know what to do with their freedom» (Vail, 2006, p. 257).

In the middle of his book of essays, Pyotr Vail has a section called «Another America,» which clearly outlines the extent of American anti-civilization. If Canada is in some way similar to the United States, the author is still more inclined to consider it a remote province of the United States. Latin America is entirely different, unlike the USA, Canada, and all of Europe. However, it is not like the rest of America: «Latin — but America, America — but Latin» (Vail, 2006, p. 231); by and large, the rest of America, that is, the United States, is frankly disliked here, because they are «worse, but richer and stronger, and they are dangerous for real, Latin Americans» (Vail, 2006, p. 232).

Europe is the foundation of true civilization and culture, according to P. Vail. In particular, the countries of the Mediterranean are the centers of taste, or, more precisely, Paris: «Here one can feel the triumph of the taste of life. Feeling, which is bestowed only on them — the French, Italians, Spaniards, Mediterranean. It is experienced in situ, with all one's senses» (Vail, 2006, p. 129).

By grasping that the attitude to food and its handling is primarily a cultural achievement, P. Vail explains why the American food system is not in demand in these countries. The inhabitants of the Mediterranean have not just a mere taste but a talent for taste, which, in turn, is the perception of the world, understanding of the world, and view of the world. In this connection, the author deprives America of its gastronomic originality and endows it with a «tasteless» character.

For Vail, Japan is a separate world, a completely different civilization, where the form is close to the ideal. You can feel it even in the section dedicated to Japan, built on the principle of a very harmonious composition — a tribute to Japanese traditions. It consists of five essays, in which three «Attempts to compose an Ikebana» are interrupted by the actual stories about Tokyo and Kyoto, thus drawing five large sketches of Japan's image. Moreover, at this exemplary formal level, the author is already beginning to play with the reader by adding hidden meanings to his literary intentions. The parts about not the most presentable aspects of life, as in the United States, are intentionally left out.

Moreover, such descriptions are usually presented in opposition to something. This is not just a motive of the East; it is an idea of the East, which he also found in Spain and Norway. In the poetics of the entire work, one may get an impression that the author would be glad to find European cultural realities in everything and everywhere, but he always finds American attributes instead.

He calls his section «All to the Garden» because the image of the garden runs as a leitmotif throughout the entire section of Japan. According to P. Vail, this is the main thing you take out of Japan as such. Secondly, the Japanese garden is not only about nature but also something parallel to everything around, elusive and intrinsic. Moreover, thirdly, it is in itself the thought «continuous analysis — removal of living layers, digging into the essence too meticulously. The difference between a painting and a sketch, play and scale, essay and article. Cemeteries of nature» (Vail, 2006, p. 400).

The essay «Attempt to Compose an Ikebana.»

«Attempt to compose an Ikebana (continued),» «Attempt to compose an Ikebana (the end).» The word «attempt» contains a different, alternative «experience» and refers to M. Montaigne, as P. Vail often does in his arguments. However, speaking of these essays, one involuntarily wants to draw a parallel not with essays of Montaigne's genre but with *zuihitsu*, in which the thought moves smoothly, as it is, behind the brush, naturally. The composition of these three essays is free and unsystematic; this is a set of memories associated with Japan. Each thought is interesting, and together, they create a cascade of paradoxical mosaics. To create the image of Japan, the writer uses Japanese publicistic techniques, e.g., the image of the country becomes indistinct, unsaid, and blurred, as in the Japanese tradition, the artist does not use $\frac{3}{4}$ canvases: «The image escapes, and it is intended to be like that. In general, the idea of reticence prevails... You do not need to know everything about Fujiyama or all of Japan. It would help if you only made guesses» (Vail, 2006, p. 379).

As for the actual concept of *ikebana* in the title, the author hints that *ikebana* consists of three lines (Heaven et al.), which explains the presence of three essays. Everything else between these three lines is fantasies about these topics, which is why Vail blends them with his classic essays on Japan. Secondly, «*ikebana* is a

worldwide bouquet with a Japanese touch: strokes. Echoes, fleetingness. Impressions» (Vail, 2006, p. 379), — and thus, Pyotr Vail again returns to the stroke-like effect in the construction of the text, by bringing it closer to Japanese painting.

He calls Japanese culture «the wrapper culture,» thereby as if affirming the predominance of form over content: «The search for form is not the fatigue of thought, but rather its best use. The admiration of the Japanese for the form is striking» (Vail 2006, 382). The idea of a wrapper is that nothing can be out of context, so in Japanese culture, a person feels better in a group. However, the culture of the wrapper requires it to be consumed in concentrated forms.

The garden is the pinnacle of the wrapper culture; it is the center around which anything can be placed in concentric circles, «It is a self-sufficient universe; this is why the energy for everything else is so easily liberated. The Japanese are so perceptive and enterprising because their repairs are always there, and there is always a place for retreat — to the garden. Everything is in the garden. A strange country — the Land of the Rising Sun. Land of the suitable sun ... Land of the superior sun?» (Vail 2006, 401).

By comparing and contrasting the aesthetics of Japan and America, P. Vail uses the interpretation of the *zuihitsu* concept. The aesthetics of the first country is based on the idea that everything will go with the flow, and the aesthetics of the second is based on following the computer mouse. Even though Japan has experienced a strong US influence, all national traditions have been preserved in it. The images of the two capitals, modern and the former, as the embodiment of traditions and innovations, began to penetrate each other at the verbal level: «Two main cities, completely different — the flagship of Westernism and the stronghold of traditions — flow from each other: TOKYOTOKYOTOKYO...» (Vail, 2006, p. 397).

P. Vail concludes that Europe is the foundation and basis of the civilization that we now have, and the USA and Japan are based on its foundations. He tries to schematically present this idea as a house in which certain elements play a role in civilization's existence. Latin America looks like a roof because, despite its founders being Europeans, it acquired its modern look under the influence of the United States. Japan is an attic located on the border between Western civilization, which includes Europe and the United States, and the outside world because, in Japanese culture, there is a tangible connection with nature. Therefore, all the influence it notes from America is combined with its tradition. Here, we can talk about its degree of isolation. The US is a large part of this home while striving to expand even more in all directions and fill all other parts. This is the part that aims to become the foundation of this house.

According to P. Vail, America concentrates on the strength and nature of these ties. She seeks to contain everything that exists or at least to influence these connections. According to P. Vail, these connections and those that come from Japan are extremely interesting. They can be called eclectic because this country conveys not only its cultural influence as the best achievements of other countries and regions that directly impact it, passed through the prism of its own cultural tradition. It is interesting in itself due to its internal cultural ties. Considering the nature of these ties, Japan broadcasts its cultural heritage in a concentrated form to Europe, only with admixtures of cultural achievements and traditions of America and Japan.

The position of Latin America differs in this conglomerate. It serves as a «cultural attic»: Latin America is an invariant, an example of what those other actions can lead to. It has absorbed the heritage of both Europe and the United States because as soon as the first signs of problems of a different nature appeared in these regions, we knew what they could lead to. One can look at the example of Latin American history because, according to Pyotr Vail, everything had already happened there before...

Interestingly, the author depicts Europe schematically, «with many rooms and outbuildings, of different time periods, styles, for different needs. The two rooms around which everything else is built are Greece and Italy. There are bigger ones, like Germany, and smaller ones, like Denmark. There are spacious halls from sea to sea — like in France. Winter and summer verandas are like England and Spain. The attic is Switzerland; the cellar is Holland. Wall cabinets — Andorra or Liechtenstein. Solarium — Monaco. Forgotten closets like Albania» (Vail, 2006, p. 427). Moreover, the limits of European culture can be understood in ambivalence: the more critical this country is for the civilization, the bigger its imprint in the foundation of the house.

Conclusion

Therefore, we can draw general conclusions regarding the essayistic vision of P. Vail of “his” and “other” territory. The territory of the “root space,” that is, the place where a person feels free, where he is comfortable and cozy, and most importantly, where he finds like-minded people, is, for the author, a kind of continuation of himself, his worldview positions and at the same time a bridge to age-old traditions, remarkable stability. This topos, close to the essayist in several aspects, is called “my territory” (country, homeland). The “other” territory is located as far as possible in the author’s mind from the actual geographic locations because it does not fit into the system of his values. The image of the West in the works of P. Vail is associated with the concept of anti-civilization, which creates stereotypes that destroy and debunk the cultural foundations of true civilization. The West is where concepts are substituted, and a specific system of values is created.

Thus, the space in the essay, as can be judged from the texts of P. Vail, performs two essential functions. Firstly, with their uniqueness, the topos, locality, and territory stimulate the author to think when he compares the past and the present, analyzes his current state and mood, and corrects his views on the existing reality. Secondly, he does not travel in the real world, where each locality replaces the previous one, as is typical for a travel sketch in chronological order. However, instead, he travels to other worlds and realities. Instead, we are talking about a spiritual journey, where thought moves from real geographic space to the actual topos of imagination or memory and then returns to a specific area that the essayist has seen before. It is also inherent for the writer to transition thought to the topos of a work of art, its being, which is the virtual reality.

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