

Abstract

The diploma thesis concerns the topic of nautical metaphors in modern literature in a broad sense of the term as defined by Silvio Vietta. Thus besides the topic itself and its main focus on the work of Franz Kafka it also covers the process of evolution of its attributes, which led to the specific imagery of modernism on the brink of the 20th century. The work as a whole derives from the conception of the nautical space as a smooth space of nomadism as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari.

The first part is based on the propositions of Bachelard's theory of material imagination. It deals with the characteristics of the literary space shaped by the sea element and the possibility of allegorical reading of such images. The hydraulics of the sea provides the nautical space with its unique qualities: shapelessness, flexibility and ambivalence. These enable to perceive the nautical space not only as the space of happenings, but also as the happenings of the space. Thus it puts emphasis on the activity and dynamic plasticity of the substance.

The second part reveals the ancient and Christian roots of nautical imagery and its tradition in the European literature. The work of Comenius exemplifies the change in the symbolism of the ship with the arrival of the Age of Exploration which rendered the ship a representant of the technical progress. This part also reveals the importance of the nautical landscape for romantic sensibility in connection to the discussion on the sublime. It initially affects the visual arts whose absorbance in the technique of depiction leaves an imprint in the literary production as well. The chapter hence treats certain common features: their fascination in the happenings of the space, a focus on reception and the way in which the sublime correlates with the smooth space.

The final part provides an interpretative analysis of nautical metaphors in the work of Franz Kafka and how it enforces its specific qualities, especially the focus on the phenomena of metamorphosis, language and writing. Deleuze and Guattari compare Kafka's writing to the rhizomatic and nomadic movement in a smooth space. This chapter analyses the strategies of movement and the manner in which a subject in Kafka's work flees the weight of the present moment. It further explores how the sense is constituted through piling up the layers of meaning. The process consists in the metamorphosis between the real (geographical or biographical world) and a limitless mythical space.