

PHILOLOGICAL SCIENCES

DEPICTION OF CALIFORNIA IN LATE STYLE OF «BLUE NIGHTS» BY JOAN DIDION

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Edward W. Said in his book «On Late Style» (2006) has discovered the significant importance of *topos* – the place – in construction of fictional landscape created by artist in their lateness. His analysis of Constantine Cavafy's book «Poiēmata» (1935) shows that «Alexandria haunts his poetry» [1, p. 133], – all stories are going on within its walls through history passage. Poem «The City» says: «won't find another shore // This city will always pursue you <...> // You'll always end up in this city» [1, p. 133] and the reader can feel how the doom of these words goes through the live of each character and the artist himself.

Currently, the discourse of lateness is represented only by male narrative of postmodernism literature, and our goal is to bring the attention to the tremendous number of female writers who also create and participate in literary arts. Following this purpose, we introduce Joan Didion late work «Blue Nights» (2011) as the glimpse of female late style narrator example. The paper is based upon the depiction of California as *the topos of past* in Didion's «Blue Nights».

Joan Didion was born in California and therefore California has never left her pages. Within decades thousands of researches from West to East put their own word in the phenomena of Joan Didion. Precluding authors from Vogue, New York Times, New Yorker and same famous magazines around the world, is needed to mention the names of following researches: Carol Fairbanks Myers, Tracy Chevalier, Lynn Marie Houston, Mary Louise Pratt, Lynne Hanley, W. Ross Winterowd, Chris Turner, Jennifer Brady.

E.-S. Zehelein in her article «A good deal about California does not, on its own preferred terms, add up»: Joan Didion between Dawning Apocalypse and Retrogressive Utopia» calls her «America's highly personal cultural/literary historian, and one of the most gifted and perceptive authors of and on California and the American West» [2] and revising themes and subjects represented through the West in such essays as «Run River», «Slouching

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Towards Bethlehem», «Where I Was From», and «The White Album». Zehelein points the way of depiction California as the part of «auto-mythologizing» [2] that responds not only for the author's own emotional condition but to the atmosphere of the time and America in general. Keeping the pulse of the nation on the pages of essays, fighting contradictions of the ideal and ideas of West – recreating it as concept and «personalized version of a retrogressive utopia» Didion proclaimed the start of cultural destruction of her time. Landscape of fictionalized prose she refers as «cultural topos» underlining the politics, regimes, violence, injustice, war and cultural problematics denouncing the very core.

The essayistic work «Blue Nights» (2011) balances between autobiographical confessions, novelistic prose, and a magazine's article. Her style reaches in this work to the absolute directness and simplicity of narrative and stylistic construction, which, as never before, brings it closer to E. Hemmingway's.

The late style of Didion simultaneously revives the past of California of the 1960s and 1970s and destroys its image in the present, as if it had ceased to exist from the moment the writer got into her car and left for New York.

The death of her husband John Dunn and daughter Quantana Roo – changed her own thoughts on death that brought themes of fear, vulnerability and weakness in her art and body. Awareness of aging as a continuous and inevitable process that has led to digging into the past, looking for motherhood mistakes and self-blaming. At the end of the preface to the book, Didion writes: «I found my mind turning increasingly to illness, to the end of promise, the dwindling of the days, the inevitability of the fading, the dying of the brightness» [3, p. 3]. By such a pessimistic passage, the author immediately outlines what Theodor V. Adorno and Edward W. Said spoke of – the moment of the artist's realization of own death, the feeling of the coming end and the concentration of all artistic and personal history in the fictional space. The title of her book itself resonates with self-perception – «Blue Nights» – as «the gloaming» [3, p. 3], a special color of summer nights, which Didion says can only be found in New York and never experience in California.

Each significant change of her emotions and/or life reflects on depiction of flowers that symbolize the beginning and the end, life and death, past and future: «the stephanotis and mint were dead by then, killed when the man who was buying the house insisted that we ride of termites <...>» [3, p. 8]. The last memory of a California house is directly related to their leaving and also connected to flowers – she brings up the episode that even weeks after moving in a new home in New York, unpacking, she felt (or imagined) the smell of

Vikane that killed magnolia and other flowers – she said herself that California was a decade before the smell of Vikane [3, p. 11].

«Time passes. Memory fades» [3, p. 13] summarizes Didion, as if comparing the fading of flowers and memories with the passage of time, nothing remains the same.

The depiction of California is not only sentimental memories of flowers or Quantana as a child, but it's also snakes crawling under the hood of a car, sandy winds blowing from canyons, tearing down rooftops and scattering the walls with ash. In this way, she reveals to the readers that it is not only a time and a place where everything was perfect – there were always difficulties or things that are impossible to get used to.

Didion quotes the words of the song «Hotel California» (1976) by Eagles: «You can check out any time you like – // But you can never leave» – [3, p. 40], which resonates with the previously mentioned words in Cavafy's poetry – sometimes there a place that you cannot leave even if you eventually did it. California is exactly such place for Didion – it constantly reappears in her books.

The technique of defining the time as seasonality is also appears in the book. California embodies a summer – the blossoming of a life filled with happiness and power of mind. New York embodies a winter, nevertheless it has never been presented as such in the text. Past and present. About the future Didion says only the following: «I have not yet located the season in which I do not hear her crooning back to the eight-track» [3, p. 68], as emphasizing that perhaps there is still some hope and time for a spring.

Didion frankly describes her feelings of deterioration, mental exhaustion and inability to write again as she did before. Fear is easily readable on every page – to lose her mind, her power as an artist and her identity. Expressing the biggest concern to her writing style: «I was doing no more than sketching in a rhythm and letting that rhythm tell me what it was I was saying» [3, p. 103]. But it is still impossible not to guess her authorship even without looking at the cover: the technique of concentrating on certain details of the image reminds the photograph from Vogue (on which she worked for several years) or a scene from a Hollywood movie and picturing California of those years. Impressive ability to build a character only by outlining the dressing style or habit of giving dinner parties, helping friends with the most intimate problems and holding a glass of champagne on a yacht in the Pacific? Didion is the master of presenting thousands of episodes of pictures-memoirs-visions (a synthesis of just a few) of California people as they were – as we still see them in movies and on pages of old magazines, memoirs and photographs.

The topos of California in late prose of Joan Didion is the depiction of the past, time that passed and cannot be brought back. Gone, vanished and destroyed – is what has left from her house and from her life as she knew it.

The deep sadness and inevitable changes of the body and mind revoking and facing the upcoming end of the artist's career and life itself. Late style narration represented foremost in plain fear of death, recreation of past as the interfering part of the present that objecting future as possibility for oneself but for forthcoming generations. The charm of California and her style, the women, Didion's family coexists with the fog, fire and rain – a real beauty in the middle of the disaster. It has become a starting point of re- and deflection of autobiographic motives and fictionalized glimpses of history.

References:

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3. Didion, J. (2011). *Blue Nights*. Vintage, 208 p.

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE IMAGE OF OLGA IN OF THE «OLD OF KIEV LEGENDS» NATALENA KOROLEVAS

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A literary work only then fulfills its functional purpose when it enters into the consciousness, imagination and emotional sphere of the Other. Then there is its «assignment», which is preceded by a peculiar process consisting of perception, understanding and interpretation. Known scheme «author – work – reader» can be implemented in completed form, provided the practical understanding and interpretation of the content of the work, transmitted in some artistic form. Being a literary phenomenon is determined not only by the aspirations and creative activity of the author, fixation on writing in the form of text, but mainly by the intertextual and spiritual work of the researcher or reader, who reproduces, enlivens and interprets the images and meanings of the once created artistic world. Ever since there is an artistic word, since then its interpretation has been carried out [2, p. 5].

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