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## FEATURES OF CHRONOTOPE IN *THE WORDS* BY JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

**Alvard Mayilyan\***<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1276-1686>*Armenian School of Atlanta, US*

The article analyzes the features of the chronotope in the autobiographical novel “The Words” by the famous French writer Jean-Paul Sartre. The center of the analysis is the ways in which Sartre creates a complex and multi-layered domain of actions for his heroes, where time and space become not only physical but also philosophical realities. Particular attention is paid to how Sartre uses the chronotope to develop ideas of freedom, responsibility and existence. Through the analysis of everyday situations and the inner monologue of the main characters, the article reveals how the chronotope becomes an integral part of the concept of human existence in Sartre’s world.

The article also analyzes the transformation of the classic chronotope in an autobiography, new manifestations of the spatiotemporal concept, as well as the chronotope of retrospective depiction through the author’s personal memories.

**Keywords:** *existentialism, chronotope, spatiotemporal, memory, transfer, concept, freedom.*

### Introduction

An autobiographical novel is a type of literary work which synthesizes elements of autobiography and fiction. The underlying literary technique between an autobiography and memoirs consists in the fact that the former is fictional. Names of people and places often change, events are recreated for them to become more dramatic, while the storyline still resembles a lot the author’s life story. Despite the fact that the novel is about the author’s life, claims to exact veracity cannot be found in it. Events can be exaggerated or changed for aesthetic purposes.

The aim of the article is to study the chronotope and highlight its features in the genre of the autobiographical novel based on the example of the novel “The Words” by Jean-Paul Sartre. Therefore, the goal of our work is to study the characteristics of the autobiographical novel, to reveal the characteristics of the chronotope in the literature of existentialism and especially in the novel “The Words”, to differentiate

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\* [alvardmayilyan@gmail.com](mailto:alvardmayilyan@gmail.com)

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the literary tools typically used in diary novels from the ones which are applied in “The Words” and similar autobiographical novels.

According to criteria, for a novel to be considered autobiographical the main character of it should be the author himself, with a plot focusing on his life story. All the novels that don’t meet these criteria or are further distanced from true events are sometimes called semi-autobiographical. Many novels about intense, private experiences such as war, family conflict or sex, are written as autobiographical novels.

Some works explicitly call themselves “non-fiction” novels. The definition of such works remains vague. The given term has been widely used for the first time in Truman Capote’s “In Cold Blood” non-autobiographical work. The emphasis has been laid on the creation of the work, which essentially is true in the context of studying value system or another aspect of reality. Such works start with claims partly confirming the fictitious nature of events in question, however the author states that these events are “mainly” true. The novel “The Words” by Sartre is of disputable nature regarding its being an autobiographical novel. The term “anti-autobiography” is frequently used when the novel is referred to. In researchers’ works it is very often called “autobiographical story” entailing emphasis on the everyday storytelling autobiographical features of the text.

In this regard, the controversial issues of “The Words” testify to the topicality of the genre analysis of novel.

### **Chronotope in the context of existentialism**

The human being with their relationships with the surrounding world is the epicenter of existentialist studies. and works. The theories of such philosophers and authors as Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Miguel de Unamuno had an enormous influence on the formation of existentialism as such. Subsequently, many renowned philosophers supported and developed theories of existentialism i.e. Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers in Germany, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus in France, Lev Shestov and Nikolay Berdyaev in Russia (Kandalintseva, 2001). In Sartre’s view a person carries responsibility not only for himself but also for others (Sartre, n.d.). A person’s self-discovery leads to the discovery of others, thus making the latter as real and authentic as he himself is. Other people’s existence is indispensable for a person’s own existence and self-recognition. Atheistic existentialism is based on the premises that God doesn’t exist so human beings are allowed everything.

French philosopher, representative of atheistic existentialism, writer, playwright, essayist Nobel Prize winner (in 1964 he declined the prize) Jean-Paul Sartre was concerned with such issues as freedom, feeling of alienation, dialectics.

Sartre claimed that being free means making a choice for which a person is to be held accountable.

### **Sartre's theory on absolute freedom**

One of the pivotal concepts of Sartre's entire philosophy is the perception of freedom. Sartre viewed freedom as something absolute which is given forevermore: "A man is condemned to be free" (Sartre, 1943).

It precedes essence. Sartre perceived freedom not as freedom of spirit, leading to inaction, but rather a freedom of choice which cannot be taken away from a person; a prisoner is free to make a choice of either to accept his fate or fight for his liberation and subsequent events will occur which are beyond the philosopher's power.

Sartre attaches special importance to the issue of alienation. He thinks that the underlying reason for a person's alienation from his own self and from others lies in the process of materialist production. In his opinion alienation still exists which is the upshot of the inner relations that connect a man with his surrounding world (Sartre, 1943). Sartre asks himself whether he goes back to Hegelian perception of alienation, answering himself – yes and no. Sartre's understanding of alienation is a transformed perception of Hegelian doctrines. For Hegel any objectification leads to alienation of spirit, self-consciousness since according to Hegelian philosophy, the spirit itself fails to self-express without objectification. Thus, for Hegel objectification, in this regard, is not only the alienation of spirit but also its self-expression. But Hegel sees the man as a non-objective spiritualistic creature as an embodiment of self-consciousness, whereas Sartre identifies the man with his material objective experience (Kalizev, 1999).

The evolution of Sartre's perception of freedom is expressed in the fact that from freedom in *Cogito* he passes to freedom in practical act, from ignoring social and material conventions to acknowledging them, from idea, negative liberty to a more positive creative freedom.

Sartre elaborated the concept of free will in his "project" according to which individuality of a man is not given but rather it projects "collects" itself as such. The man is entirely responsible for himself and for his actions. "Existence" as such is the ongoing live moment of standard actions. In "Nausea" Sartre illustrates that the world lacks meaning, the "self" lacks intention. Through consciousness and choice, the "self" gives meaning and value to the world (Sartre, 1938).

In almost all his works Sartre reiterates his main philosophical ideas (existence precedes essence, man is projection, it doesn't matter that only later he will become who he will make of himself, no causality exists, man is free, a morality as such doesn't exist. Dejection, absence of rationalization and meaning give rise to

permanent panic and melancholy) which, however, are made more accurate and expanded.

It is the man who chooses himself, but his choice is preconditioned by social circumstances. A man is free until he reaches a certain point of necessity and only within the limits of that necessity is he free. This is Sartre's essential elaboration.

Thus, heroes seem to be free in their choices, in fact, even choices are imposed on them, although they naively think that it is they who had made that choice.

### **Characteristics of concepts “space” and “time”**

Jean-Paul Sartre wrote his autobiographical novel “The Words” (1963) when he was 59. It included the first ten years of his life. Frequently comparing the novel with Jean-Jacque Rousseau's “Confessions” critics claim it to be a masterpiece of self-analysis. Being of autobiographical nature “The Words” studies how words, language and books written and read are connected with human experience. Books and words played a crucial role in Sartre's life and he thought that they defined his existence. Striving to discover who he truly was, he had to go back to his childhood. Meanwhile, Jean-Paul Sartre wrote “The Words” as his farewell to literature.

Sartre starts the first act “Reading” with a brief description of his family history. Then he passes on to his early childhood and how isolated he was. He was very young when he experienced the all-consuming fear of death. He struggled with feelings of worthlessness. One of the characteristic features of “The Words” consists in the fact that its text is a very compelling autobiographical metaphor concealing the profundity of the novel. The chronological order is preserved only in the Introduction and Conclusion of the novel. As for the events and feelings occurring in the mid parts they are described as if they were happening right at the moment.

Most of the events described in the “Reading” take place from 1909 to 1914. Whereas the events in the second act “Writing” being slightly insignificant compared to the former ones take place from 1912-1917. Sartre was an extraordinarily self-aware child. He was extremely isolated and introverted, preferring his own company to playing with his friends. Words and books were his main company and he liked it that way.

Sartre was undoubtedly the first author to have come up with techniques of autobiography based on adoption of unique method i.e. disguised child memories being materialized in a classical book. It is not about the application of general theory to his autobiography but rather a modification to the given theory. All the events both spatial and temporal without exception are reconstructed via main character's memories. “The universe was at my feet, and every object humbly asked for a name: giving it a name would allow me to create and possess it at the same

time. If I had not fallen into this fundamental mistake, I would never ever have become a writer” (Sartre, 1993).

Sartre talks about his own family and about his own father. His grandfather had the most profound impact on his life and philosophical ideology (Sartre, 1964). His mother Anne-Marie Sartre, after her husband’s untimely death, returned to her paternal house, whereas Sartre’s grandfather became a father figure for him. “My mother’s friends told her that I was sad and always dreaming about something. My mother hugged me laughing. ‘This is news. But you are always happy with me, always singing. And why would you be sad? You have everything you want.’ And she was right: a spoiled child is not sad. He’s bored like a king. Like a dog.” (Sartre, 1993). With hindsight Sartre thinks that his mother lost self-identity when she went back to the house of her childhood. The reverse change of space forces his mother to develop a sense of stagnation.

Without many friends and a large family on whom he could rely, Sartre resorts to the help of books and writing. He would read books from his maternal grandfather Charles’ enormous library. He doesn’t understand these books, as they were too complex for a preschool age child, but he likes to look through the old books, trying to understand the world. Most of Sartre’s early childhood memories refer to the library. The library here embodies the chronotope of the alternative designated to change the character’s stable temporal-spatial state and a means to escape from the present.

But for Sartre’s family that noticed his fondness of reading but for their praise for the latter he isn’t sure that he would continue going to the library that often. After pondering over such issues for years Sartre now wants to isolate himself from the words and books as he wants to understand who he truly is and what he wants to know.

In the space of the autobiographical novel the signs of time are detected, whereas space is perceived and measured through time. The space of a chronotope in memoirs and autobiographical novel is always a real one. Memories don’t distinguish between a fictitious or imaginary space; however, the space is also reconstructed through human memory, thus, it is also subjective. In the given aspect of chronotope the documentary feature of the memoirs is expressed more vaguely as compared to its expression in time. The topos in an autobiography or memoirs is otherwise close to the criteria used for portraying space in fiction. It can be localized at some points or include the panoramic conception of the events occurring in different places; space can be open or closed inner or outer. The spatial picture of the memory is that of an either literal or figurative route. In this picture Bakhtin sees the important manifestation of the chronology found in the novel (Bakhtin, 1986). This becomes mandatory for the description of memories dedicated to the hero’s life path.

The author's (narrator's) individuality is always found in the center of the spatial-temporal unfolding of memories. The latter is both unbiased and extremely subjective as the author's individuality is interested in what is to be said, to some extent, reconstructing the world known to him. The ingenious literary model of memories is ubiquitous in the autobiography "The Words". The metaphor of life, a child's desire to read who is still to master reading, the grandfather's attitude towards classics, all these memories turn into a text, opening the lyrical pages of the author's memories - memories that take him back to the past. It doesn't matter what emotions the past evokes, the author comes to understand that it is part of his spiritual experience which cannot be denied, forgotten or ignored. Memories accumulating man's personal experience turn into the property of others, becoming part of life and existence in general. Thus, the "chronology of memoirs" is a concept which records such temporal cues as retrospection of the narrative, autobiographical time, inclusion of the narrator's personal time within the context of the given historical time along with his/her subjective experience and evaluation. The time of memories flows in the real space which, generally, is endowed with characteristics of literary topos.

In "The Words" Sartre's description of Paris is through his personal subjective experiences and memories. Those descriptions clearly serve as chronotope representing the concrete space: his home, the family house, grandfather's library. The portrayal of the space is quite centered and densified expanding the stratification of time. In the novel the characters share the same space while living their lives under the same roof. Therefore, the characters share the same chronotope, interacting in the same space and locations, thus sharing the same spatial and temporal environment.

In the second part of the novel entitled "Writing" Sartre discusses his earliest work and his love for writing. Finally, he contemplates how his childhood affected his adult life and whether it is possible to detach himself from his writing. "No matter how insignificant or meaningless they consider this work is, I want them to put it above all my previous work. I agree that all my work should be cursed, but the chronological hierarchy should be respected; it is the only guarantee that tomorrow I will create something better, the next day even better, and finally, I will end up with a masterpiece" (Sartre, 1993).

### Conclusion

Thus, the chronological order is only preserved in the preface and epilogue of the novel. All the events and emotions in the middle part of it are described as if they were happening at that particular moment.

Sartre doesn't show his origin completely, the child's story is interrupted right at the beginning; this is partly fiction but not an autobiography.

In the novel Jean-Paul Sartre describes Paris through his personal, subjective experiences. Here the author portrays a concrete space which can be very subjective and fictitious as it is reconstructed via character's childhood memories. The depiction of the space is quite focalized and densified, but narrative is constructed via Sartre's childhood memories. The given factor really broadens the stratification of the time. The text of the novel "The Words" is a very compelling autobiographical metaphor with covert profundity as a child's memories are illustrated from a mature writer's perspective.

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ՕՐԻՆԱԿՈՎ)

Ալվարդ Սայիլյան

Հոդվածում վերլուծվում են քրոնոտոպի առանձնահատկությունները ֆրանսիացի հայտնի գրող Ժան Պոլ Սարտրի «Բառեր» աշխատության մեջ: Վերլուծվում են այն ուղիները, որոնցով Սարտրն իր հերոսների համար

ստեղծել է գործողությունների բարդ ու բազմաշերտ տիրույթ, որտեղ ժամանակն ու տարածությունը դառնում են ոչ միայն ֆիզիկական, այլև փիլիսոփայական իրողություններ: Առանձնահատուկ ուշադրություն է դարձվում, թե ինչպես է Սարտրն օգտագործում քրոնոտոպը ազատության, պատասխանատվության և գոյության գաղափարներ զարգացնելու համար: Առօրյա իրավիճակների վերլուծության և գլխավոր հերոսների ներքին մենախոսության միջոցով հողվածը բացահայտում է, թե ինչպես է քրոնոտոպը դառնում Սարտրի աշխարհում մարդկային գոյության հայեցակարգի անբաժանելի մասը:

Հողվածում վերլուծվում է նաև դասական քրոնոտոպի փոխակերպումը ինքնակենսագրական ստեղծագործության մեջ, տարածաժամանակային հայեցակարգի նոր դրսևորումները, ինչպես նաև հեղինակի անձնական հիշողությունների միջոցով հետահայաց պատկերման քրոնոտոպը:

**Բանալի բառեր՝** *էկզիստենցիալիզմ, քրոնոտոպ, տարածաժամանակային, հիշողություն, տեղափոխում, հայեցակարգ, ազատություն:*