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POETICS OF TIME AND SPACE IN MINIMALIST PROSE

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Annotation: This article examines the poetics of time and space in minimalist prose. The study focuses on the artistic organization of these categories based on the principles of reduction, fragmentation, and implication. It is shown that in minimalist texts time and space are presented in a compressed and symbolically enriched form, while their interaction forms specific chronotopic structures. The research concludes that time and space function not only as descriptive elements but also as essential meaning-making components of the text.

Keywords: minimalist prose, poetics, time, space, chronotope, fragmentation, reduction, implication.

Аннотация: В статье рассматривается поэтика времени и пространства в минималистической прозе. Исследуется художественная организация данных категорий на основе принципов редукции, фрагментарности и импликации. Показано, что в минималистическом тексте время и пространство приобретают сжатую и символически насыщенную форму, а их взаимодействие формирует особые хронотопические структуры. Делается вывод о том, что данные категории выступают не только как описательные элементы, но и как важные смыслообразующие компоненты текста.

Ключевые слова: минималистическая проза, поэтика, время, пространство, хронотоп, фрагментарность, редукция, импликация.

Introduction

The poetics of time and space in minimalist prose constitutes a structurally dominant mechanism of narrative construction, where meaning is generated through strategic reduction, controlled omission, and semantic intensification. In contrast to classical realist narration, which relies on continuity, causal transparency, and descriptive fullness, minimalist prose operates through a fundamentally different narrative logic: it replaces representational completeness with interpretative density. In this system, time and space are not neutral coordinates of the fictional world but active semiotic structures that organize perception, cognition, and emotional response.

From a narratological perspective, minimalist temporality is governed by the principle of discontinuous segmentation. Narrative discourse does not unfold as a homogeneous chronological flow but as a series of isolated temporal nodes. These nodes are selected according to their experiential intensity rather than their causal relevance. Consequently, transitional durations are systematically eliminated, producing what Genette conceptualizes as ellipsis, yet in minimalist prose this is not an occasional device but a structural default mode of narration [8;34].

Raymond Carver's "Cathedral" demonstrates how this temporal structure functions at the level of narrative cognition. The text does not reconstruct the narrator's biographical continuity; instead, it isolates a limited set of present-tense interactions that function as temporal condensations of latent history. The narrator's psychological trajectory—marked by alienation, jealousy, and emotional blockage—is not narrated retrospectively but emerges through interactional triggers within the present situation. This creates a model of temporality in which the past is not represented but activated inferentially through discourse gaps [5;63]. The reader reconstructs temporal depth not from narration but from semantic absence, which becomes structurally productive.

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In Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants," temporality is further radicalized into a condition of discursive suspension. The narrative eliminates explicit temporal markers such as duration, chronology, or retrospective framing [3;20]. Instead, it constructs a pure situational present in which the temporal axis is flattened. The central conflict is never temporally resolved because it is never linguistically articulated. This produces what can be defined as anti-teleological temporality, where narrative progression is replaced by cyclical and unresolved dialogue patterns. Time here does not move toward resolution but remains in a state of permanent epistemic deferral.

From a theoretical standpoint, this mode of temporal organization aligns with post-classical narratology's emphasis on readerly completion of narrative gaps. Time becomes a cognitive construct rather than a textual sequence; its continuity exists only in the interpretative activity of the reader. Thus, minimalist prose transforms temporality into a distributed structure of inference, rather than a linear representational chain.

Spatial organization in minimalist prose follows a parallel logic of semantic compression and symbolic expansion. Spatial descriptions are intentionally reduced to minimal lexical markers, yet this reduction functions not as simplification but as semiotic intensification. The absence of detailed spatial specification forces space to operate as a functional and affective structure, rather than a descriptive background [1;81].

In Carver's fiction, spatial units such as kitchens, motel rooms, or bars are deliberately under-described, yet each space operates as a micro-system of interpersonal dynamics. For instance, in "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love," the motel room is not a neutral setting but a confined discursive environment in which communication breakdown becomes spatially encoded [2;43]. The physical limitation of space mirrors the epistemic limitation of dialogue, producing a correlation between spatial enclosure and semantic fragmentation. Space thus becomes a diagram of communicative failure rather than a geographical location.

Hemingway's spatial poetics is even more structurally symbolic. In "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," the café is constructed as a binary epistemological space, opposing illumination (order, clarity, temporary meaning) to darkness (nothingness, existential void) [6;30]. This opposition is not merely descriptive but ontological, as space becomes the medium through which existential meaning is negotiated. The café is therefore not a setting but a philosophical spatial construct that stages the confrontation between being and non-being.

The interrelation of time and space in minimalist prose is most effectively conceptualized through Bakhtin's chronotope, although in minimalist aesthetics the chronotope undergoes radical compression and destabilization. Instead of expansive narrative frameworks, minimalist texts construct what may be termed micro-chronotopic configurations, where temporal and spatial parameters collapse into tightly condensed semantic units.

Two dominant chronotopic dynamics can be identified:

• **Spatial restriction → temporal intensification**: Constrained environments (rooms, enclosed interiors) generate subjective temporal distortion, often experienced as stagnation, repetition, or psychological entrapment. Time becomes affectively dense due to spatial immobility [6;40].

• **Spatial liminality → temporal indeterminacy**: Transitional spaces (stations, roads, waiting areas) produce temporal instability, where time loses directional clarity and becomes suspended between potentialities rather than actualities[4;73].

Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" exemplifies a highly refined liminal chronotope. The railway station functions as a structurally unstable spatial threshold, while simultaneously producing a temporal condition of decision without resolution. The characters exist in a state of ontological and temporal indeterminacy, where movement is implied but never actualized. The

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absence of narrative closure does not simply end the story; it sustains the chronotope in a state of controlled incompletion, which is central to minimalist aesthetics.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the poetics of time and space in minimalist prose is defined by the principles of reduction, fragmentation, and implication. Temporal structures are presented in a compressed and selective form, where only significant narrative moments are foregrounded, while transitional events are omitted. Spatial representation is characterized by semantic under-determination and symbolic intensity, allowing simple settings to gain deeper psychological and existential meaning. The interaction of time and space generates condensed chronotopic models that require active reader interpretation. Thus, minimalist prose transforms time and space from descriptive narrative categories into complex meaning-making structures that enhance the semantic depth of the text.

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