



## Markers of artistic time in the memoir-autobiographical text “Notes of a cavalry girl” by N. A. Durova

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### Abstract

The urgency of the problem stated in the article is due to the fact that memoirs and autobiographical prose in recent decades are again in the focus of philologists. In this regard, this article is aimed at studying the genre specificity and features of the embodiment of an individual author’s picture of the world in the text, including through spatial-temporal categories. This article analyses nominatives as lexical representatives of the temporality category, and also sets out the features of their functioning in the “Notes of a Cavalry Girl”, taking into account the genre specifics of the text, where a special temporary narrative from the past to the present and a look at the past through the present is revealed. For authors of the article, nominatives with a temporary meaning are most interesting, creating, in particular, the factual accuracy of the narration in the literary text. During the collection of nominatives using the continuous sampling method and their subsequent consideration in the context, it was concluded that the linguistic means of creating artistic time and the methods of their objectification in the “Notes of the Cavalry Girl” make it possible to form an idea of the features of the individually-authored picture of the world N. A. Durova.

**Keywords:** art time; nominatives; memoir-autobiographical prose; individual author’s picture of the world; autobiographical memory

## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, memoirs and autobiographical prose have been again in the focus of attention of philologists studying both their genre specifics (Prikazchikova, 1995; Bolyukh, 2001; Boldyreva, 2009) and the peculiarities of the embodiment of the individual author’s picture of the writer’s world in the text of these genres, including and through spatial-temporal categories (Pogodina, 2002; Bibina, 2003; Vakhnenko, 2007; Ivygina, 2012a).

One of the grounds for such interest in the texts of such genres is the narrative about the past through the prism of the present and the future, a subjective approach to its interpretation. For these reasons, the time through which the author comprehends the events of himself and the world around him takes on special significance in this genre. This, in particular, is associated with the transformation of time and the emergence of idio-style elements of the linguistic embodiment of the category “time”,

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the formation of a complex system of text space with the functioning of various kinds of linguistic means with temporal meaning.

The genre-style nature of the “Notes of the Cavalry Girl” (hereinafter referred to as the “Notes”) is heterogeneous: they can be classified as memoirs prose, military memoirs and fiction and a work of the autobiographical genre. According to the material and the reliability of the transmission of facts, memoirs come close to an autobiography, but researchers generally tend to breed these concepts: “An autobiography is focused on its character, the description develops under the pressure of forces, and memoirs, on the contrary, are centrifugal in nature. Their author, as it were, crumbles in his public guises” (Zlatař, 1998). E.E. Prikazchikova (1995) defines the “Notes” genre as memoir-autobiographical prose: she calls the first part of the first chapter an attempt to “create a romantic autobiography on the basis of memoirs”, relates the second part of the first chapter and the second chapter to “images of a retrospectively processed diary”.

Thus, autobiography and memoirs are heterogeneous genres. However, the authors believe that the author of “Notes” skilfully combines both the autobiographical genre and memoirs in his work.

The material (biography facts) that underlies memoirs and autobiographical prose is determined by the individual characteristics of autobiographical memory – one of the types of long-term memory – whose mechanisms are closely monitored by scientists from the second half of the 20th century (Gardiner & Richardson-Klavehn, 2000; Morson, 1994; Niesser, 1978; Nourkova et al., 2004; Tulving, 1985). Autobiographical memory operates with memories of personally significant events and conditions of a person and is directly related to the subjective perception of time.

### *1.1. Literature Review*

In literary criticism, there are two main approaches to the study of artistic time and space. Chronotopic implies an inseparable relationship between temporal and spatial relationships and is widely represented in the works of domestic (Frank, 1987, Torop, 1984) and foreign (Frank, 1987; Kestner, 1978; Morson, 1994) researchers.

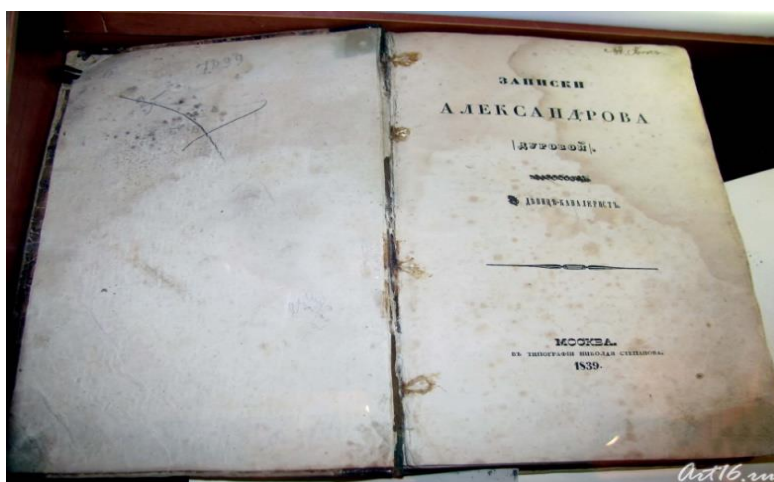
Time, being the basic category of human existence, as an object of knowledge is inevitably reflected in language. In linguistics, various approaches to the study of the phenomenon of “time” are distinguished. The theory of the lexical and grammatical field of time, which is a description of the interaction of lexical and grammatical means of temporality, is presented in the works of V.G. Admoni (1988), A.V. Bondarko (1966), E.V. Gulyga and E.I. Shendels (1969), M.M. Gukhman (1968), K.-E. Zommerfeld (1988) and others. Of particular importance are semantic studies, which were most widely used in the 20th century, in which time is considered as a semantic category or lexico-semantic field. This approach is highlighted in the works of M.A. Krongauz (2001), E.S. Yakovleva (1994).

The authors share the point of view of researcher V.V. Nurkova (2008): “Deprived of the memory of a unique individual past, a person would exist in a constantly elusive, renewing present and would not be able to realise himself as a subject extended in time identical to himself”. For the authors, the thought of the Academician D.S. Likhachev (1967) on the direct connection of artistic time and the genre of the work is also fundamentally important. The scientist devoted special sections to them in his book “Poetics of Old Russian Literature”. Exploring the “poetics of art time”, the scientist identified such properties as: objectivity and subjectivity, “closeness” and “openness”. D.S. Likhachev (1967) argued that the historical evolution of verbal art reflects the process of acquiring the “freedom” of time in a work. At the same time, there is a movement from “closed” time (characteristic of folklore and medieval literature), which takes place within the plot and is not associated with an event outside the work, to “open”, included in a wider time stream, a specific historical era. It is worth noting that the “Notes” were created in the 30s of the 19th century – the time of the active development of realism in

literature, and, according to D.S. Likhachev (1967), “each literary direction develops its attitude to time.” Therefore, it can be stated that the selection of N. Durova's temporal vocabulary in the “Notes” is determined by three key factors: the individual author’s picture of the world (in particular, the subjective perception by the writer of time and events in time), the genre of the work, and the type of artistic thinking (way of displaying reality).

## 2. Method

The aim of this work was an attempt to analyse nouns as lexical representatives of the temporality category, as well as to establish the features of their functioning in the “Notes of a Cavalry Girl” (Figure 1), taking into account the genre specifics of the text, where a special temporary narrative from the past to the present and a look at the past through the present is revealed. For authors of the article, nominatives with a temporary meaning are most interesting, creating, in particular, the factual accuracy of the narration in the literary text.



**Figure 1.** Title page of Durova's “Notes of a Cavalry Girl”, 1839  
Source: Art16.ru (2009)

The material for the study of the problem was: text of memoirs of N.A. Durova “Notes of Cavalry Girl” (1979), the biography of the author. The choice of memoirs of prose is determined by this author was determined, first of all, by the peculiarity of the life position of the cavalry girl, her eternal search for herself and her place in life, which undoubtedly was clearly reflected in the explication of the category “time” (Durova, 1979).

For the solution of the tasks set, in the process of studying scientific papers on the category “time”, interpreting memoir prose as a genre, and also analysing nominatives with the meaning of time in memoir-autobiographical prose, N. A. Durova(1979) used a combination of methods, both general scientific and philological: a method of systematising sources on the topic of research; a synthesis method to summarise the best practices in the study of the time category; continuous sampling method – when collecting illustrative material from the memoirs “Notes of Cavalry Girl” (hereinafter “Notes”), reflecting the author’s concept of perception of the category of time; a description method when working with context, contextual analysis was used to determine the contextual and dictionary values of the studied lexemes; a method of interpreting a literary text – when specifying the functional significance of lexemes; the method of contextual-situational analysis in the reconstruction of the individual author’s time model in memoirs, the method of interpreting a literary text – when specifying the functional significance of lexemes. All this allowed talking about an integrated approach to the analysis of the text and the identification of features of the functioning of time in the discourse of N.

A. Durova (1979). Based on the results of the data obtained, the authors came to the conclusion that there were implicit and explicit nominatives that create real, cyclic time in the analysed text. The result of collecting nominatives and their subsequent consideration using the described methods in context allowed concluding that the linguistic means of creating artistic time and the methods of their objectification in the “Notes of Cavalry Girl” made it possible to form an idea of the peculiarities of the individual author’s picture of the world by N. A. Durova (1979).

During the study of the problem, the authors of the article used the works of Russian and foreign scientists. To determine the genre specificity of the work, the dissertation of E.E. Prikazchikova (1995) was one of the key works in determining the genre specificity of the “Notes”. The point of view of this researcher, in the authors’ opinion, to the greatest extent reflects the actual boundaries of the concept of “memoir prose” applicable to “Notes” by N. A. Durova (1979). In determining the specifics of the concept of “autobiographical memory”, the authors resorted to the research of J.M. Gardiner & Richardson-Klavehn (2000), G.S. Morson (1994), U. Niesser (1978), V.V. Nourkova and E. Tulving (2004). Work of E.I. Goroshko (1996) was useful in this article because it examines the choice of linguistic means in a work through the prism of gender characteristics of the author of the text. The category “time” is of particular importance in memoirs, since within the framework of it the author comprehends events, himself, the world around him. The temporary organisation of the text is a valuable and rich source of various kinds of information: semantic, social, etc. The basis for the study of artistic time was the work of both domestic scientists: M. Bakhtin (1975, 1986, 1997), P. Torop (1984), and foreign: D. Frank (1987), J. Kestner (1978), G.S. Morson (1994). In the question of lexical and grammatical means of expressing time, the researches by V.G. Admoni (1988), A.V. Bondarko (1996), E.V. Gulygaand E.I. Shendels (1969), M.M. Gukhman (1968), K.-E. Zommerfeld (1988) were used. Researches of M.A. Krongauz (2001), E.S. Yakovleva (1994), V.G. Huck (1997) contributed to consideration of time as a semantic category.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

Artistic time in the studied text, which is dictated, first of all, by the genre itself, is real, therefore non-fictional characters act in it and the events that occur are distinguished by chronological sequence, historical accuracy and reliability. Therefore, the main function of the lexical means of creating time in the “Notes” is the reflection and transmission of the most important facts that tell about the life of the author-heroine (the heroine and the author of the text are the same person – N. A. Durova (1979)). Along the way, it is worth noting that the author told only about certain facts from her biography, intentionally losing sight of several years (for example, marriage) or long periods when N.A. Durova (1979) did not keep a diary (in particular, the service in the Mariupol regiment). For these reasons, the narrative is intermittent, which is revealed upon closer examination of the biography of the cavalry girl in documentary sources (Begunova, 2006).

In addition, it is worth expressing the idea of discreteness of artistic time in the “Notes”, which can be explained by the alternation in the memory of a person (in this case, N. A. Durova (1979)) of the so-called subjectively “empty” time periods (of which there are no clear memories) and subjectively eventfully “dense” (time saturated with memories) (Nurkova, 2008). The individual characteristics of autobiographical memory are also determined by gender, age, personal and sociocultural characteristics of the subject. In other words, about some facts of his biography N.A. Durova (1979) could be silent, and other events could be “erased” from her memory, which, in authors’ opinion, could be caused by the author’s rejection of the traditional role of women in society. At a certain stage in life, there was gender self-determination of N.A. Durova (1979), and this, in turn, contributed to a reassessment of past situations, some of which ceased to be subjectively significant. After the author of “Notes” found her destiny in the service of the Fatherland, her life became filled with subjectively

significant events, and her autobiographical memory became memories. As a result, there is an episodic fixation of some facts of the biography in “Notes”: the prevalence of stories about military service and a relatively small number of cases from childhood (and complete absence – from the period of marriage), when N. Durova (1979) was forced to perform hateful “female” occupations.

Researcher E.I. Goroshko (1996), studying sexual dimorphism of linguistic means, identifies the functional asymmetry of the brain and the specialisation of the central nervous system of a person as the main reason for the differences between the speech of a human and a woman. As a result of practical research, the author encountered the following gender characteristics:

- Men: tend to use nouns and adjectives; the dominance of abstract nouns and adjectives; tendency to use imperfective verbs in the active voice; low frequency of incomplete and elliptical structures; the prevalence of subordinates of time, place, purpose.

- Women: dominance in the speech of specific nouns; preference for the use of perfective verbs, conjunctions and numerals; increased frequency of incomplete and elliptic sentences (Goroshko, 1996).

Considering the “Notes” by N. Durova (1979) from the perspective of a gender aspect, the following can be noted:

1. The author uses a minimal number of constructions in which the temporal component functions implicitly. Basically, Durova(1979) uses nominatives expressing explicitly time periods, sometimes even accurately indicates the amount of time, actively using numerals: “The official rushed away from me and two minutes later again appeared: “His Excellency kindly asks you to visit him; he sent carriage” (Durova, 1979, p. 77), “Four weeks have passed since this accident ...” (Durova, p. 1979, 62). A feature of the author, therefore, is the desire to recreate the entire course of real time, calculated in weeks, hours, minutes, seconds.

2. Durova practically does not use indefinite nouns such as eternity, only indirectly indicating the passage of time. The time in its text is clearly defined either by the calendar time or by the daily scale: “In the evening he brought me to the musicians who played different things before the dawn ...” (Durova, 1979, p. 4).

3. Nadezhda Andreevna very often uses time periods in phrases, giving them certain characteristics: “... the night was cold and bright ...” (Durova, 1979, p. 19).

4. The desire for an accurate indication of age: “She languished, faded, became ill and died in her thirty-fifth year from birth ...” (Durova, 1979, p. 15); “I have come to the fifteenth year ...” (Durova, 1979, p. 13).

However, time periods can also be accompanied by emotional characteristics, acquiring the meanings of images (for example, temporal lexemes day and night).

So, it can be stated that in “Notes of Cavalry Girl” temporal tokens are able to convey gender characteristics. It is difficult to attribute Durova’s prose to a purely feminine one, but it cannot be said that she is entirely masculine, since it combines male and female types of speech. But it can be noted that the male traits in it prevail over the female ones. The first part of “My summer years” is based on the female type of speech. This is due to the fact that this part is devoted to the childhood of the heroine and her growing up. The other two parts (“Notes” and “War of 1812), which describe the military operations, are constructed according to the type of male speech. At the end of the first chapter, Nadezhda Durova (1979) is finally determined with the choice of a life path. Now she is a warrior and defender of the Fatherland. Therefore, all subsequent narration can be called male prose.

Nominal markers indicating the temporal accuracy of the narrative, which became the object of this study, are confirmation of the presence of the male type of speech in the analysed text.

The main criterion for distinguishing nominative markers is the degree of temporal accuracy: absolute and relative (Zhukova, 2008). The nominatives in combination with the numerals indicating the specific date of the events are absolutely accurate. Dates form the basis of the explication of time in the diary part of the text: “June 1807. Friedland” (Durova, 1979, p. 53), “May 22nd 1807. Gutstadt” (Durova, 1979, p. 41), “May 24th. Passarzh Coast” (Durova, 1979, p. 43). These temporary markers only precede further narration, being a subtitle to the main content, and thereby create the structure of diary entries in the second part of the first chapter. In the main compositional part of the narrative of this kind, digital designations are not used by the author. Their main functional load is the transmission of accurate historical data with factographic accuracy. Therefore, in structure and content, this chapter resembles a travel essay rather than a pure memoir. Relative time markers in the text include lexemes are indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Relative time markers in the text

No	Time markers	Examples
1.	hour time	“... my mother, who did not love me wholeheartedly ... did not allow leaving her for half an hour” (Durova, 1979, p. 5); “At eleven o’clock in the evening I came to say goodbye to my mother ...” (Durova, 1979, p. 17).
2.	daily time	“The girl who looked after me, finding me completely dressed in bed every morning, told my mother about this ...” (Durova, 1979, p. 9); “He used to come to me every evening for half an hour” (Durova, 1979, p. 18).
3.	names of the months	“March 17th. Today we said the last forgive Plater’s hospitable home, our cheerful home in Dombrowice and everything that loved us, and everything that captivated us!” (Durova, 1979, p. 55), “August 24th. The wind has not calmed down! At dawn, the vest gun rattled menacingly” (Durova, 1979, p. 45).
4.	the name of the season	“Late autumn makes my walks not so pleasant” (Durova, 1979, p. 59); “In the spring, another aunt came to us, Znachko-Yavorskaya, who lives near the city of Luben; she loved me and asked my grandmother for permission to take me to her for the whole summer” (Durova, 1979, p. 12).

This layer of temporally marked vocabulary indicates the period of the described events, their duration, creating a cyclical and linear narrative in the text. Lexemes of this group allow restoring the chronology of the life of the author-heroine and determine the most significant events of her childhood and youth. Nominations that create a relative temporal narrative in the text, in addition to indicating the time period, are a means of transmitting the internal state of the author-heroine and the formation of a special emotional background of the text. The key here is temporary lexemes day and night, endowed with subjective author's characteristics and forming a special space-time continuum of the text (Ivygina, 2012b). In literary texts of the first half of the 19th century, which include the “Notes”, night always posed a danger to human and aroused fear in him. Consequently, the perception and interpretation of day and night by the author-heroine of the Notes is not traditional. Firstly, the perception of the night as open space and day as closed space is formed in the childhood of the author-heroine and is associated with the role of the mother, limiting her external and internal freedom: “From morning to evening I sat at work, which, I must admit, was the worst in the world, because I couldn’t, wasn’t able and didn’t want to be able to do it like the others, but tore, spoiled, confused, and a canvas ball stood in front of me, on which a strip of disgusting confusion stretched – my lace, and I sat patiently behind him all day, patiently because my plan was already ready and the intention was accepted” (Durova, 1979, p. 9). The night becomes a time of dropping the shackles and gaining freedom: “... I continued to walk and, surrounded by the dead silence of the forest and the darkness of an autumn night, fell into thought: “So I’m free! Free! Independent!...” (Durova, 1979, p. 20). Secondly, time periods can acquire qualitative characteristics: the young heroine’s desire to walk at night characterises her as a bold and fearless person: “It seemed to me very strange that my peers were

afraid to be alone in the dark; on the contrary, I was ready at midnight to go to the cemetery, to a forest, to an empty house, to a cave, to a dungeon” (Durova, 1979, p. 7).

In the following chapters of the “Notes” and “War of 1812”, the greatest accuracy in temporary organisation is achieved by using nouns in combination with numerals. This becomes especially relevant in the second part of the memoir, called “Notes”, because it is it that is being built as a travel diary of the author-heroine. Among temporal lexemes in this part of the story, numerals are actively used, indicating the time period in combination with nouns indicating the one-year time for concretisation of the described events: 22nd of May 1807, 24th of May, 29th and 30th of May, June 1807. It is noteworthy in this regard that one of the chapters of the memoir is called the “War of 1812”. The peculiarity in the use of data of temporary units is their use to transmit accurate factual data of specific events. They precede only certain military events; in the main compositional part of the narrative of this kind, digital designations are not used by the author.

A special group of temporally marked vocabulary of this part of the narrative is composed of indirect time markers in that part of the memoirs when the narrative is about military events, in particular, in 1812, of which N. A. Durova (1979) herself was a direct participant. Markers with an implicit time characteristic have a pronounced pragmatic orientation, building the relationship “author – storyteller – character – reader” and indirectly indicate a specific time period. Turning to the reader’s horizons, they include in the process of artistic communication both known historical facts and events from the past of Russia, and events that are important only to the author himself (Compare the chapters “The War of 1812” and “Polotsk 1807”). Such nominatives are objectified through words-realities with implicit temporal meaning, which help to create the colour of the era of the beginning of the 19th century and orient the reader both to specific historical events in the life of the country, and to events important for the author-heroine of “Notes” (in the chapter “Polotsk” 1807”the fate of the author-heroine is decided: will she be allowed to stay in the army and serve in her ranks). This role is played by the names of specific historical events, for example, the name of the chapter “The War of 1812”, and the names of historical figures: “We have a new commander in chief: Kutuzov! .. I heard this, standing in a circle of orderlies, adjutants and many other officers crowding near a lighted fire. The Hussar General Dorokhov said, stroking his grey moustache: “God grant that Mikhail Larionovich come and stop us as soon as possible; we scatter like downhill” (Durova, 1979, p. 72) or real place names: “In the evening our whole army settled down bivouacs near the village of Borodino. Kutuzov wants to give the battle that everyone has long wanted and expected” (Durova, 1979, p. 76).

Implicit time markers that refer to specific historical persons or events in the text can be not only separate words or phrases, but also whole sentences with periphrastic units: “After a while, our ancient capital was aflame in many places! The French are completely indiscreet. Why are they burning our beautiful city?” (Durova, 1979, p. 69). This passage allows a reader to uniquely determine the time of the events described as September 14, 1812.

Such precedent names with an implicit indication of time allow a reader to formulate an idea of reality reproduced and described in the text.

The formation of the temporal continuum is created both by markers of individual groups, and by their combination within the whole sentence: “The consequence of this unreasonable severity was that on one stormy autumn night my mother ... got dressed, and, taking a salop and a hood, in stockings only .... quietly opened the door to the hall, closed it quietly, quickly ran over it and, opening the door to the garden, like an arrow flew along a long chestnut alley ending at the gate itself” (Durova, 1979, p. 1); “The Cossacks were ordered to speak; they came out on September 15, 1806” (Durova, 1979, p. 17). The combination of several units with the semantics of temporality allows the marker to acquire a complex character and detail the depicted facts of reality, which significantly enriches the lexical

potential of the temporal space of the text. During a continuous sampling during the collection of factual material of language time markers, it was revealed that the most frequent in use are constructions of the type “hour time + daily time”. So, for example, the double time marker found in the fragments quoted below performs two functions simultaneously: arranging the time and indicating the length of the time interval: “At eleven o’clock in the evening I came to say goodbye to my mother ...” (Durova, 1979, p. 17); “He used to come to me every evening for half an hour” (Durova, 1979, p. 18).

#### 4. Conclusion

Thus, “Notes” is, above all, the artwork with a dominant narrative beginning, backed up by descriptive paintings. Therefore, in general, temporal nominatives perform the function of clarifying and creating a real picture of ongoing domestic and military events. Time is an integral element of the narrative and the conditions for its formation are directly related to the biography of the author-heroine of “Notes”. The picture of the time in the text is cyclical, as indicated by the presence of time markers with the semantics of seasonality, the use of lexemes describing natural and artificial cycles; clearly structured, as evidenced by the active use of time units; it is individual, which can be seen in the use of culture-bound terms with an implicit temporal meaning and the presence of an opposition day/night model.

The following areas of work are promising for this study: the study of temporal lexemes on the material of the entire creative heritage of the cavalry maiden N.A. Durova; a comparative analysis of the perception of time by N. Durova with the works of other writers of the 19th century; consideration of the features of the interconceptual interaction of time with the concepts of “space”, “man” etc.; explication of the category of space and time in works based on real events and of particular historical and cultural value; the study of the author’s text field in a gender perspective, which can also be the subject of new research on the creative heritage of Nadezhda Durova.

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