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Monumental and Ephemeral Chronotopes in Iraida Barry's Polyphonic Autobiography

This article analyzes the usage of quotations from *ephemeral primary texts* in autobiographical narrative. By *ephemeral primary texts* I mean firstly diary entries and regular correspondence, but also newspaper articles, memoranda, receipts, and other forms of daily writing. By contrast, (auto-)biographical narrative is composed from a holistic perspective that attempts a *monumental* written representation of a person's life. This paper takes as object of analysis an unpublished manuscript from the Bakhmeteff Archive at Columbia University: *The Silver Ring* (1951) by Iraida Barry. It is part of a larger collection of autobiographical writings by Barry called *Mirror Shards* (*Zerkal'nye oskolki*). Drawing on Bakhtin's conceptual apparatus, I differentiate the ephemeral chronotope from the monumental one. I demonstrate the discursive effects of abrupt shifts in chronotope. I argue that the co-presence of the two chronotopes produces a polyphonic autobiography.

Iraida Barry's *Mirror Shards* (*Zerkal'nye oskolki*) is an unpublished, semi-fictionalized, 560-page collection of heterogeneous autobiographical writings housed at the Bakhmeteff Archive of Russian and Eastern European History and Culture at Columbia University. The author, Iraida Viacheslavovna Barry (Sevastopol', 1899–Istanbul, 1980) centers each of the seventeen sections, called shards, around a person close to her. The first shard, *The Silver Ring* (*Serebrianoe kolechko*, Barry 1951) focuses on one of Barry's suitors, the Russian Navy Lieutenant Pavel Nikolaevich Kon-

dratovich¹, who was killed in a Bolshevik purge in Sevastopol' in December 1917. A striking aspect of *The Silver Ring* is that it contains numerous extended quotations from the diary entries and personal correspondence—both the author's own and those of others—as well as ephemeral forms of daily writing such as newspaper articles, notes, memoranda, receipts, etc.

This article analyzes the usage and function of these *primary-text* quotations in their various contexts. I argue that Barry uses the immediate temporal perspective of diaries and letters as

¹ Barry alters the spelling of his name to *Konatovich* in *The Silver Ring*.

a contrast to the distancing effects of retrospection, memory and synthesis that are inherent in the telling of life stories. Further, by quoting primary texts like diaries and letters in her narrative, Barry relocates the textual artifacts of her life into a discursive context of her own making. Rewriting these primary texts into a new composition, Barry reenacts the process of re-interpretation that is at the essence of any autobiographical project.

Autobiographers and memoirists write from a point of view that can comprehend an entire life as a unified whole. They unavoidably represent experiences in light of their consequences. The inclusion or omission of a given episode or occurrence depends in large part on its compatibility with such a unifying schema. By contrast, diarists and correspondents tend to be responding to the immediate past: they recall the events of the day, or write in reply to their interlocutor's most recent letter. In other words, diarists and correspondents are almost always closer in time to the events they describe than memoirists and autobiographers are. In *Mirror Shards*, Barry puts quotations from diaries and letters alongside memoir-style life narrative

to create dramatic irony and modulate emotional distance.

An additional word to clarify the two categories being drawn here, 1) the *autobiographical narrative* of a typical memoir or autobiography, as opposed to 2) the *primary-source* writing of a personal diary or correspondence. As noted above, works of the former category tend to be narrated in the past tense while those of the latter tend to be in the present, but narrative tense per se is not the differentiating factor between the two. It is a question of the deeper orientation of the text toward time and space, as reflected in the self-positioning utterances of the authorial subject. Diaries and letters are brief, reactive, iterative, transient, and usually marked with the date and occasionally even the time of writing. Autobiographies and memoirs aspire toward a unitary, synthetic and comprehensive representation of an individual over a wide span of years and events. Needless to say, the autobiographer retains this generally holistic comprehension of time when writing in the present tense, just as the diarist remains concerned with proximate events and consequences when narrating in the past tense.

In this sense, I characterize memoirs and autobiographies as

monumental whereas diaries and letters are *ephemeral*. The autobiography is all-encompassing; each event is treated in terms of its place in the grand scheme of a lifetime. The letter or diary entry is ad-hoc and makes no pretense of comprehensiveness. Of course, the diarist cannot know the outcomes and consequences of contemporary events. By the same token, the autobiographer cannot recall an episode of the past *without* consciously or unconsciously situating it in the context of its results. Barry exploits this knowledge differential between the monumental and the ephemeral to produce the effects of dramatic irony and emotive proximity mentioned above. Additionally, the co-presence of the two, with their distinct orientations toward time, renders the autobiographical text polyphonic.

The very ephemerality of primary-source texts facilitates their function as private and intimate spaces for introspection. The monumentality of autobiographical narrative seems to necessitate a thorough, public self-assessment in terms of normative social behavior. No single letter or diary would be held up as representative of an individual life in such a way. For an autobiographer coming from a position of societal marginality,

this self-assessment can be fraught with anticipated criticisms of irrelevance or impropriety. In *Mirror Shards*, Barry responds to both anticipated critiques of her autobiographical project in several ways. One method is the assertion of a religious, didactic motive for her unconventional life writing. Another is the extensive quotations from primary sources.

The primary distinction between the two categories drawn here—the *monumental* autobiographical narrative versus the *ephemeral* primary-source diaries and letters—can be discussed in terms of the position of the author relative to the events they describe. The former kind of writing is characterized by temporal, spatial, cognitive and emotional distance while the latter is characterized by proximity. This is an oversimplification, but a useful one. With diaries and correspondence, the author stands quite close to what they write, often occurrences of the same day. In the case of autobiographical narrative, the author's perspective is distant. This last fact manifests itself in both destructive and constructive ways. On the one hand, memory lapses, death, destruction, etc. delimit what can be told. On the other, the autobiographical-narrative chronotope allows for

fabrication, alteration, omission, and re-reading, all of which are creative processes.

The concept of the chronotope as Mikhail Bakhtin applied it to literary studies clearly recommends itself here. Defined as “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (Bakhtin 1981: 84), the chronotope is a pragmatic notion for distinguishing the authorial knowledge-perspective of autobiographical narrative versus that found in primary sources. I understand the chronotope as a single term amalgamating all the author’s temporal and spatial self-positionings relative to the text, and relative to the events they write about. These *self-positionings* only come in the form of words, of course, and analyzing them is a question of close reading rather than epistemology or ontology. Doing so is not an attempt to resurrect the persona of the author as the determinant, transcendental signifier of the text, even of an autobiography. The author is dead, her verbal self-positionings are ever active in the text.

For a literary-historical critic like Bakhtin, the chronotope provides a means to differentiate stages in the development of lit-

erary genres. The formal concern of *Forms of Time and of the Chronotope* is the historical poetics of the novel, and Bakhtin demonstrates that different configurations of the chronotope underlie the apparent evolution of literary genres. Yet the notion of the chronotope is perhaps even more apropos to the situation of life writing. By the epilogue to his article Bakhtin is irresistibly drawn to the example of autobiography in order to make the point that the author is never identical to the subject of their story.

Even had he created an autobiography or a confession of the most astonishing truthfulness, all the same he, as its creator, remains outside the world he has represented in his work. If I relate (or write about) an event that has just happened to me, then I as the *teller* (or writer) of this event am already outside the time and space in which the event occurred. It is just as impossible to forge an identity between myself, my own *I*, and that *I* that is the subject of my stories as it is to lift myself up by my own hair. The represented world, however realistic and truthful,

can never be chronotopically identical with the real world it represents, where the author and creator of the literary work is to be found. (Bakhtin 1981: 256)

The preceding is equally valid in the case of diaries and letters. Even though the events described in a diary tend to be in close proximity to the moment-of-writing, they can never be co-terminous with that moment. An author inevitably occupies a separate chronotope from the subject of their writing. In just the same way, the *I* that is the subject of a diary or letter is not the same *I* that is the subject of the autobiographical narrative, and neither of them is identical to the historical personage who inscribed them on paper. This is not a matter of the sincerity of the author or the veracity of their representations but rather one of the very nature of writing.

In her preface to *Mirror Shards*, Barry mentions her inclusion of primary sources almost in passing, without explaining her motivation for doing so. “The middle of the book contains intermixed with the ‘shards’ – ‘diaries’ and ‘letters’” (Barry 1951: 4). The appearance of quotation marks around the word “shards”

(*oskolki*) is understandable since Barry is introducing her personal usage of this word to refer to the sections or chapters of her writing. It is less clear what the quotation marks surrounding the “diaries” and “letters” are supposed to signify in this context. There is no reason to think Barry means anything by “diary” except for its dictionary definition. The syntax seems to suggest that the diaries and letters comprise separate sections from the shards, but this is not the case. The shards are the basic fundamental unit of the text, and each shard contains some autobiographical narrative along with a variable amount of primary source texts.

Of the seventeen shards, some have no primary sources (*My First Love, Iursha*), while others are almost entirely in epistolary and/or journal format (*Centenary Week, 1958 Notebook*). The initial shard, *The Silver Ring*, intermixes the two chronotopes in a distinctive manner. From a literary-critical perspective, *The Silver Ring* is the most felicitous of the shards. A major reason for this is the skillful juxtaposition of primary sources from 1910s Russia with an autobiographical narrative that tells of that time and place while remaining thoroughly aware of its chronotopic

distance, being written in Istanbul in 1951.

Both poles of the chronotope are necessary. The narrative perspective here could be said to be located somewhere in between 1910s Russia and 1950s Istanbul. The situation is the following: writing about time A and place A from time B and place B constitutes the autobiographical narrative chronotope. The situation-of-writing (B) is never identical to, nor absent from depicted subject's position in time and space (A). Hence the term *chronotope* as I am using it here is more than simply *spacetime*. As a literary term, it refers to the intrinsic relatedness of authorial position B to authorial position A. In the case of a diary or letter, A and B get very close to each other but can never overlap entirely, as Bakhtin is keen to argue. Deconstruction as a literary critical technique insists that writing on any given A retains traces of B, even the most dispassionate works of positivism.

The shard *The Silver Ring* begins with a passive-voice dedication that, like titles and epigrams, floats in an atemporal space of the situation of the book. The next two sentences lack verbs, but the subsequent lines clearly demonstrate the *monumental* autobiographical narrative chronotope. The language is

marked by temporal self-positionings that evince meta-autobiographical authorial self-awareness.

Посвящается светлой памяти друга моего Павла Николаевича Конатовича... Павел Николаевич Конатович... Высокий стройный мичман с красивым лицом... *Когда я думаю о нем теперь, для меня ясно что тип его лица был безусловно не русским, а скорее восточным. Ему бы очень подходил бы кафтан и чалма... Но тогда, в глаза бросался только его чудный румянец, пробивавшийся через загар, да темные широкие брови над смеющимися карими глазами. Забавно было слышать, как он картавил. Легко и приятно было его поддразнивать.* (Barry 1951: 6. Emphases mine, M.D.)²

² "Dedicated to the sacred memory of my friend Pavel Nikolaevich Konatovich... Pavel Nikolaevich Konatovich... A tall, well-built midshipman with an attractive face... *When I think about him now*, it's clear to me that his face was clearly not of the Russian type, but more of an Asian one. A kaftan and a chalma would've looked great on him... *Back then*, what stood out in his face was the marvelous rosinness breaking

The word “now” or “already” (*teper*) specifically signifies the present as distinct from a past situation. The autobiographical-narrative present-tense (“as I think back on him now... [in 1951]”) creates a contrast with the autobiographical-narrative past tense (“back then, what struck the eye... [in 1917]”). This contrast serves to reiterate the distance between the events themselves and the moment of writing. Such temporal self-positionings are characteristic of the *monumental* chronotope of the life-story teller. In terms of syntax, the imperfect operation of the autobiographical memory is marked by the doubled impersonal imperfective constructions “*zabavno bylo*”, “*priiatno bylo*” suggesting incompleteness, generalization and lack of specificity. The following passage dramatizes the act of rereading as a potential countermeasure against incomplete memory. Barry’s personal archive is introduced as the repository of primary sources, to which she will return time and again.

through his suntan and the wide, dark eyebrows above his smiling brown eyes. He spoke with an amusing lisp. It was easy and pleasant to tease him”. All translations of Irida Barry’s texts are mine, M.D.

Я много раз собиралась писать о нем... Несколько раз начинала... В моем архиве - старинный сундук резного дерева, - я нашла два совершенно однотипных начала... Я перечла их. К моему большому удивлению я решительно не могу вспомнить что легло в их основание... [...] теперь я совершенно не в состоянии вспомнить источник этих сведений? ...Правда, что от времени нашего знакомства с Павликом Конатовичем прошло 36 лет, и не менее 25 с того времени, как я впервые пыталась писать о нем. Лишь только теперь я твердо решила взяться за перо чтобы рассказ о моих воспоминаниях о нем, тех, которые не изглядятся никогда,- довести до конца. И так, начинаю с одного из моих “начал”. С того, которое если судить по почерку и по бумаге,- мне кажется было написано первым. (Barry 1951: 6)³

³ “I planned writing about him many times... I got started several times. In my archive—an antique trunk of carved wood—I found two completely similar introductions. I reread them. To my great surprise, I cannot remember a

Rereading is a significant motif in *Mirror Shards*. Barry is constantly rereading her own work as well as the letters and diaries she cites. Barry goes on to quote her own “beginning”, written potentially up to 25 years prior theretofore, as a kind of framed story. This “beginning” is entitled *October 5, 1914* and will be discussed further below. It is worth pausing on Barry’s direct reference to the 36 years that have elapsed since the events she narrates because it is one of her most overt temporal self-positionings. Possibly even more interesting in terms of chronotopic perspective is the statement that she has been writing about Pavel Konatovich on and off for the past quarter-century, but “only just now” (*lish’ tol’ko teper’*) has decided to “bring to

thing about the events that laid at their foundation. [...] now I’m entirely unable to remember the source of this information? It’s true that 36 years have passed since my acquaintance with Pavlik Konatovich, and no less than 25 years since I first attempted to write about him. Only just now have I firmly decided to pick up the pen in order to bring to an end the story of my recollections of him, of those recollections that will never be smoothed over. And so, I begin with one of my ‘beginnings’. With the one that, judging by the handwriting and the paper, seems to have been written first”.

an end” her story. Why “only just now”?

Can we find a motivating factor for the (auto-)biographical project in the memory lapses Barry mentions immediately before? It is something of a well-worn trope that autobiographical writing seems to offer a means or a hope for combatting the process of forgetting. The text does not give an obvious answer. The final sentence quoted above, however, connects her resolution to complete writing with the statement that some memories will never fade. That is to say, Barry’s writing project is spurred on by the persistence of her memories rather than by their fading away. If one allows that certain memories “will never be smoothed over” (*ne izgliadiatsia nikogda*) in Barry’s mind, we begin to understand how the writing of a 60-page text could occupy 25 years or more. Barry never claims her recollections could be subject to entirely faithful representation in writing, nor that she herself is capable of writing them that way. Nonetheless, if an individual were to have an eternally indelible memory, then the limiting factor for the potential written recording of that memory is that individual’s ability to put pen to paper before dying.

Ultimately, the urgency (*lish' tol'ko teper' ia tverdo reshilas' vziat'sia za pero*) of Barry's writing project is not a response to the inevitability of forgetting. It rather has to do with a recognition and awareness of mortality, both her own and of others. A subtext that emerges later in the shard is that both of Barry's parents died separately within one month of each other in the spring of 1951. *The Silver Ring* was written over the following months and is marked as completed September 4, 1951.

Я пишу это летом 1951 года... В последнем бюллетене Общества бывших морских офицеров, присланном мне из Нью Йорка в отделе о скончавшихся помещено первым извещением о скороступижной смерти моей матери – правнучки, внучки и дочери морских офицеров, скончавшейся в Истанбуле 27-го апреля... Через несколько строк ниже было объявление о том, что мой отец умер в Санта Барбара в Калифорний 24-го мая. И сейчас же после него шло объявление о смерти Капитана 1-го ранга Льва Петровича Муравьева, последовав-

шей 26-го мая в Сан Франциско в Калифорнии тоже... Да, войдя тогда, зимой 1918 года, в переднюю нашей квартиры мы были готовы узнать, что Лев Муравьев погиб тогда в последних расстрелах с семьей... Однако выяснилось со слов Даши, что они все уехали в самом начале февраля с надеждой пробраться во Владивосток... Что за наше отсутствие было два-три про- довольственных обыска у нас. Но что квартира в порядке... (Barry 1951: 45-46)⁴

⁴ "I am writing this in the summer of 1951... In the most recent bulletin of the Society of Former Naval Officers sent to me from New York, in the obituaries section, there is first the notice of the early death of my mother, the great-granddaughter, granddaughter and daughter of naval officers, who died in Istanbul on April 27th... A few lines below is the announcement that my father died in Santa Barbara, California, on May 24th. And just below that is the obituary of 1st Rank Captain Lev Petrovich Murav'ev, which took place on May 26th in San Francisco, also in California... Yes, returning home that winter of 1918, in the entrance to our apartment we were prepared to learn that Lev Murav'ev had perished along with his family in the latest round of executions. However we learned from Dasha that they all left in early February with the hope of getting to Vladivostok... That in

The passage quoted above clearly demonstrates the bipolarity of the monumental, autobiographical-narrative chronotope. The initial sentences bring the focus back to the moment-of-writing, where Barry is once again reading. Clearly, facts she provides to the reader are not news to her. She dryly narrates the dates of her parents' deaths as though quoting them from the bulletin. Lev Petrovich Murav'ev, the brother of Barry's stepfather, provides continuity between the moment-of-narration and the winter of 1918. These two poles simultaneously comprise the monumental chronotope. The autobiographical narrative makes note of the specific years yet switches between the two perspectives (*Ia pishu eto letom 1951 goda..., da, voidia togda, zimoi 1918 goda...*) with cinematic ease and quickness. The shift to the ephemeral chronotope tends to be more jarring because the situation of writing is totally different.

So, it is in 1951 with her parents' obituaries in hand that Barry rummages around in her wooden trunk in search of what she had written sometime after 1926.

our absence there were two or three requisitioning searches of our place. But that the apartment was in order..."

What she finds occupies the next seven pages of *The Silver Ring*. This story, *October 5, 1914* is told in the third-person with access to Pavel Konatovich's thoughts and memories. It tells of his first experience in a sea battle and of his childhood. Barry claims the undated manuscript is her earliest writing about him, making it likely a product of the late 1920s. Strictly speaking, *October 5, 1914* is a quotation of a primary source. The text does not partake of the ephemeral chronotope of diaries and correspondence. Rather, *October 5, 1914* is in the chronotope of a short story or novel. It narrates the events in Kondratovich's life up until his acquaintance with Barry (then Kedrina) and then a few additional months, up to the date that comprises the title. Quoted below is the end of this text and the transition back to the predominant autobiographical-narrative chronotope.

Павлик любит свою Бакику и не хочет, чтобы кто-либо страдал бы из-за него...Тщетно он старается в этой окружающей его тиши найти то примиряющее настроение которым закончились его переживания в

ту первую ночь – дня объявления войны...

На этом обрывается рукопись “5 Октября 1914 года” то я перейду теперь к своим личным воспоминаниям...Что касается меня, то я познакомилась с Павлом Николаевичем, как с его приятелем, перед самым объявлением войны, когда я вернулась из своего первого самостоятельного путешествия в Одессу к родственникам... Познакомилась я с ними со всеми у нас на Мичманском бульваре. (Barry 1951: 13)⁵

The parallel references to the date of the declaration of war is a rather overt means of linking the two chronotopes. Barry’s statement that she is switching over from *October 5, 1914* to “her

⁵ “Pavlik loves his Bakika and doesn’t want to cause anyone to suffer. He strives in vain to find amidst the silence around him that same reconciliatory feeling that eased his worries on that first night, the day war was declared... Here the manuscript of *October 5, 1914* cuts off, so I will move on to my personal recollections. As for me, I met Pavel Nikolaevich and his friends just before the declaration of war, after I had returned from my first solitary trip to Odessa to visit relatives... I met all of them on Midshipman’s Boulevard”.

own memories” might seem disingenuous since after all she is the author of both pieces. Yet *October 5, 1914* narrates events prior to their acquaintance that Barry could not possibly know or recall, since they take place in Konatovich’s thoughts and emotions. It is worth reflecting on this very unconventional gesture with which Barry begins the first part of a text that is nominally about her: she inhabits the thoughts and mind of another person and tells *his* lifestory up until about the time the two of them met. Later, Barry will quote Konatovich’s diary and his letters to her at considerable length.

Barry’s assumption of the ability to narrate Konatovich’s interior life is facilitated by her sense of herself as his literary executor and also by the emotive content of his writings about her. In another brief chronotope shift from monumental-autobiographic to ephemeral-documentary and back, Barry receives a dryly-worded notice from the revolutionary authorities that she could claim the possessions of Konatovich, who was shot during one of the many summary executions of naval officers that took place in Sevastopol after the October Revolution.

И еще через несколько дней в газете появилось объявление, что родные шести расстрелянных офицеров (среди них – Конатовича) могут явиться в Революционный Трибунал за получением их вещей. Я немедленно написала в Революционный Трибунал, что зная адрес отца П.Н. Конатовича, находящегося в Одессе, я могу взять на себя переправку ему вещей его сына, если таковые будут мне выданы.

В начале января я получила следующий ответ:
2.1.1918⁶ Совет депутатов солдат и рабочих.

Следственная Комиссия.
 И-4906/1591

И. Кедриной, Екатериненская 22, кв.6. Севастополь.

Следственная Комиссия вам предлагает настоящим явиться в ее помещение на предмет получения вещей убитого лейтенанта Конатовича.

Председатель Я. Ирха.

Секретарь.....

⁶ Unlike all the other quoted *primary texts*, the original of this document is not contained in the Irida Barry Papers Collection at the Bakhmeteff Archive.

На другой день я вновь трепетно поднималась по широкой мраморной лестнице дворца Командующего Флотом... Опять проникла в большую залу, столь дорогую мне по чудным детским воспоминаниям... (Barry 1951: 40)⁷

The quotation of the notice from the Revolutionary Tribunal

⁷ “And again a few days later an announcement appeared in the newspaper that the relatives of the six executed officers (among whom Konatovich was one) can appear at the Revolutionary Tribunal to recover their possessions. I immediately wrote to the Revolutionary Tribunal that P.N. Konatovich’s father lives in Odessa and I know the address, so I could take responsibility for sending him the possessions of his son, if such were given to me.

In the beginning of January I received the following response:

2.1.1918 Council of Soldiers’ and Workers’ Deputies

Prosecutorial Commission. I-4906/1591

I. Kedrina, Ekaterinenskaia 22, Apt 6. Sevastopol.

The Prosecutorial Commission informs you that you may appear on its premises for the purpose of receiving the possessions of the killed Lieutenant Konatovich.

Chairman Ia. Irkha

Secretary...

The very next day I again nervously ascended the broad marble staircase of the Fleet Commander’s Palace... Again I entered the grand ballroom, so dear to me from my marvelous childhood memories...”

functions similarly to the quotations of diaries and letters. It disrupts the perspective of autobiographical narrative (in this case, spread between the poles 1917 and 1951) through the insertion of a voice that has both poles in 1917. The contrast in chronotopes here adds to the sense of inhuman bureaucracy conveyed by the revolutionaries' jargon. The quotation is closed with a return to the autobiographical-narrative chronotope: Barry recalls her positive childhood associations with the building the revolutionaries occupied as a headquarters. The code number or serial number "I-4906/1591" is not useful information for any reader. It is present here to evoke the situation of the document itself. Barry might have simply narrated the fact that she received a response from the tribunal without pausing to quote the entire notice in all its technocratic atrocity. By doing so, she obliges the reader to encounter the cold, unfeeling document in a kind of reenactment of the process of reading it for the first time. The situation of reading and re-reading a shocking text is repeated when Barry quotes the entirety of Nikolai II's abdication speech verbatim. I do not find it necessary to quote the abdication speech in its entirety below,

but Barry evidently did. Further, she hand-copied the speech from a newspaper into her diary, and then typed out that entire section of her diary in an extended passage from her diaries during the February Revolution.

2.3.17 Только что прочли напечатанные известия, что Государь Николай Александрович отрекается от престола, что регентом до назначения Учредительного Собрания назначается Вел. Кн. Михаил Александрович, что старый кабинет весь смещен, что Морским Министром назначен Гудков. Завтра об отречении будет объявлено официально в газетах.

4.3.17 Ужасно больно было читать об отречении: — «В дни великой борьбы с внешним врагом, стремящимся почти три года поработить нашу родину, Господу Богу угодно было ниспослать России [...] вывести Государство Российское на путь победы, благоденствия и славы.

Да поможет Господь Бог России.

Николай.

5.3.17 Сегодня наш дорогой Адмиральчик⁸ подал в отставку [...] (Barry 1951: 27-28)⁹

The abdication speech is framed by diary entries from the February Revolution. I am not entirely sure to what chronotope one should attribute the words of the Tsar. It is a different type of discourse altogether. The high style and imperial *We* of the Tsar's language stands out from the breathless sentences of seventeen year old Kedrina's diary just as much as the sparse, bu-

⁸ Admiral Piotr Petrovich Murav'ev, Second Deputy Naval Minister, Barry's host in Petrograd in his apartments in the Admiralty.

⁹ "2.3.17 I just read the printed announcement that the Sovereign Nikolai Aleksandrovich is abdicating the throne, that Gr. Dk. Mikhail Aleksandrovich is being appointed regent until the appointment of a Constituent Assembly, that all the old cabinet has been displaced, that Gudkov has been appointed Naval Minister. Tomorrow there will be an official announcement in the newspapers.

4.3.17 It was terribly painful to read about the abdication:

"In days of great battle with an external enemy striving for nearly three years to enslave our native land, the Lord God has willed to send down upon Russia [...] to bring the Russian State to the path of victory, prosperity and glory.

May the Lord God aid Russia.

Nikolai.

5.3.17 Today our dear Admiral'chik resigned [...]."

reaucratic writing of Chairman Irkha did. Why include both of these *other voices* in one's life story? How can we understand this?

The abdication speech maintains the comforting verbal patterns of aristocratic Russia; re-reading it, despite the content, could be a balm or source for optimism. The revolutionaries' letter, however, refuses to yield to humane reasoning after any number of readings. Barry is able to reenact her encounter with absurd, faceless bureaucracy by quoting it in full as part of her life story. Quotation as a kind of repetition is also a kind of rereading and reinterpretation. She nestles dire texts in her own words in order to neutralize their fatal destructive power.

The third-person voices of Nikolai II and Irkha contribute to a polyphonic autobiography. Barry surrounds the quotations with her own autobiographical narrative but, she allows the others to speak for themselves. She does the same with her own diaries and letters, in essence aiming to allow a *past version* of herself to speak in the present tense. As noted above, this can create dramatic irony and a sense of emotional proximity. This is clearly demonstrated in Barry's representation of the February Revolution in Petrograd through

a shift to the ephemeral chronotope of her diary.

Но во всяком случае [Павел Конатович был] у нас в грозный день кануна революции, где из записи в моем журнале явствует, что даже тогда мы были далеки от мысли, что это может дать и даст...

Из моей тетрадки.

26.2.17 Что написать? Что видела милого “Paul”а; что забастовка продолжается....

27.2.17 Тревожная ночь. Вчера все ограничилось тем, что в 5 ч. ночи звонили по телефону и всех разбудили. Сегодня дела серьезнее. Никто и не думает о сне. Все одеты. Часть моих личных денег спрятана, часть со мной. Все приготовлено, чтобы бежать, но куда? Сейчас куда занятнее быть в частной квартире. Во дворе масса солдат козачков. Мимо одних окон только что проходила артиллерия. Мимо других – пехота. В городе начались пожары. Тюрьмы открыты. [...]

12 и ¾ ночи Казаки со двора ушли. Вдали слышны пушечные вы-

стрелы. По-видимому берут Петропавловскую крепость... (Barry 1951: 26)¹⁰

It is later in this very same diary that Barry copies down the Tsar’s abdication speech. The synthesizing perspective of the monumental chronotope can be observed in the first sentence. The ephemeral chronotope of the diary seems to near hyperventilation with a series of short, descriptive statements. At a number of moments in the dia-

¹⁰ “In any event [Pavel Konatovich] visited us on the terrible day before the revolution, where from the entries in my journal it’s clear that even then we had no idea what it could and would bring...

From my notebook.

26.2.17 What to write? That I saw dear “Paul”; that the strike is continuing...

27.2.17 A nervous night. Yesterday the worst of it was a 5 a.m. telephone call that woke everyone up. Today it’s more serious. No one’s even thinking about sleep. Everyone’s dressed. Part of my money is hidden and part is on me. Everything is prepared for us to flee, but where? Right now it’s a lot more entertaining to be in a private apartment. There are a ton of Cossack soldiers in the yard. The artillery has just gone past one window. Through the others – the infantry. Fires have started in the city. The jails are open. [...]

Quarter to one o’clock in the morning The Cossacks have left the yard. In the distance I hear cannon shots. Apparently they’re taking the Peter and Paul Fortress”.

ry, the hope that everything will go back to *normal* is expressed. In such places, the record Barry puts forward of her own voice starkly contrasts with the world-weary perspective from which she narrates the majority of *Mirror Shards*.

Continuing to pursue Bakhtin's terminology, the ephemeral chronotope and the monumental chronotope can be seen as being in a dialogic relationship in *Mirror Shards*. As a verbal device, an abrupt shift from one

chronotope to another can have a number of effects, some of which are noted above. But the chronotope shift has no meaning inherent in itself. It is an effect produced by the interactions and points of contact between the two. Both are changed through this interaction. The co-presence of voices of different chronotopes produces a polyphonic autobiography.

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