

THE RESEARCH OF SUBJECTIVE DIVERSITY OF M. DRABBLE'S NOVEL "THE REALMS OF GOLD" AT ENGLISH LITERATURE CLASSES

Anastasia Blagoveshchenskaya, Irina Ainoutdinova

Kazan Federal University (RUSSIAN FEDERATION)

Abstract

The paper studies the concept of subjective diversity and its research at English literature classes at Kazan Federal University. The relevance of the investigated problem is caused by the change in traditional narrative forms in contemporary literature, where the author's subjective narrative incorporates the characters' points of view. The purpose of the article is to consider the concept of subjective diversity on the example of Margaret Drabble's novel "The Realms of Gold" and to show different narrative techniques which have been revealed in the course of literary analysis with the students.

In the article the concrete textual study of Drabble's novel is carried out on the basis of the comparative-historical method of analysis of her work and the literary process of Britain as a whole. This theoretical approach is combined with literary-historical and literary-critical angles. The analysis proves that while creating this novel Drabble has expanded the number of viewpoints on the portrayed reality, breaking the isolation and the subjectivity of the individual consciousness, which characterized her early novels. In "The Realms of Gold" there is a comparison and contrast between different points of view, as well as forms of narrative. All of this allows us to consider the novel as a dialogue between traditional, modernist and postmodernist narrative forms.

The results of the research could be applied by teachers and educators to master their teaching practice. The basic methods and analysis techniques can be used for reading special courses on contemporary literature, in the study of other foreign authors' artistic styles.

Keywords: research, university student, education, subjective diversity, English literature, M. Drabble, novel, «The Realms of Gold», points of view, narrative forms.

1 INTRODUCTION

Traditional narrative forms in contemporary literature are undergoing major changes. The writers of the twentieth century appeal more frequently to a personalized narrator that distances the author from the character and also complicates the relationships between them, because the author refers to unsubjective forms of presence in the text. N. Kozhevnikova [1] distinguishes two types of manifestations of the subjectivity of the narrative: the author's subjectivity and the subjectivity of a character or narrator. The literature of the twentieth century represents the way from the subjectivity of the author to the subjectivity of the character that is a subjective author's narration incorporates viewpoints and speech reflections of portrayed characters.

The expansion of the range of viewpoints leads to a complex intersection of different views on one and the same subject of speech and "different types of narration come to the forefront, stipulating heterogeneous nature of the text" [1]. This phenomenon Kozhevnikova calls "subjective diversity" [2] and underlines the complicated narrative structure in such literary works because the increase in the number of viewpoints enlarges the number of ways of narration.

2 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In the article the concrete textual study of Drabble's novel is carried out on the basis of the comparative-historical method of analysis of her work and the literary process of Britain as a whole. This theoretical approach is combined with literary-historical and literary-critical angles.

At English literature classes the students are given a list of tasks to implement:

- 1 At first they have to read the whole novel at home and answer some questions on general understanding (When and where does the story take place? Name and give a short description of the main characters. What narrative types are used in the text?).
- 2 Afterwards the learners are to read the selected parts of the novel for detailed analysis (the episodes in Tockley from Part 2, the scenes in Adra from Part 3, some dialogues, etc.), discuss them at the class, paying attention to different viewpoints, their intersection and confrontation.
- 3 Finally the students come to the idea of subjective diversity and its functions in M. Drabble's novel.

3 RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

"The Realms of Gold", a novel written by a well-known British author Margaret Drabble in 1975, can be a striking example of manifestation of subjective diversity. This is a novel about the impact of physical environment on the human character and soul. For studying the human nature various scientific disciplines are involved: archeology, biology, history, geology. None of the previous Drabble's novels contextualize the characters in such a complex network of ideological, historical, cultural and linguistic values. Extensive material and global problems have led the author to search for specific forms of narration.

The main heroine of the novel Frances Wingate is a famous archaeologist, taking part in excavations, giving lectures and presentations worldwide. Outwardly prosperous, the heroine's life is overshadowed by separation from her beloved Karel Schmidt, who is married to a neurotic woman. In her thoughts Frances constantly refers to the past, trying to understand why Karel abandoned her. In addition, the heroine tries to penetrate into the depths of the family's past, remembering her ancestors and childhood in a provincial town Tockley. She comes to her hometown, where everything has been changed.

Along with Frances we are introduced to her cousin David Ollerenshaw, a geologist, and her distant cousin Janet Bird, a housewife living in Tockley. These relatives and other members of Ollerenshaw's family (Frances's brother Hugh, his son Stephen, Frances's parents) are united by the state of hereditary depression, they are prone to mental disorders, suicide, etc. Frances is perhaps the only one of the Ollerenshaw's kind who has managed to avoid this disease.

In the construction of this novel Drabble tried to expand the number of possible viewpoints on the portrayed reality, breaking the isolation and the subjectivity of the individual consciousness, which characterized her early novels. Undoubtedly, Frances Wingate is the main character of the novel, but only because "the moral and intellectual distance" [3] between her and the author is minimal. Other characters mentioned above cannot be considered as minor, since they are not only the subjects of speech, as in previous Drabble's novels, but the subjects of consciousness (according to B. Korman's terminology [4]).

The viewpoints of different characters not just change each other consistently, but come together in complex relationships. The novel includes a wide variety of viewpoints - similar to the author's (Frances's view) and opposite to it (Janet's view), complementary (Frances and Karel) as well as mutually exclusive. There occurs an intersection and comparison of different opinions. For example, the description of the town Tockley and a village Eel Cottage is given from the points of view of two characters Frances and Janet, whose views are diametrically opposed: "How beautiful England was, how lovely a place is in English town" [5] – this is Frances's viewpoint. "Janet thought to herself frequently, if this is a good address, what can be a bad one like? Her parents' home had been a hundred times more pleasant, more homely" [6] – and that is Janet's one. Here we can see that the characters' attitude to Tockley is transferred with the help of free indirect speech or double indirect discourse. While Frances admires the province, she finds the smallest details attractive, even a ditch, which is a symbol of home for her, Janet hates her house, which is associated for her with boredom, dullness and monotony. This change of viewpoints is achieved through the alternation of narrative types assigned to each of the characters.

It should be noted that many of the characters in the novel do not communicate with each other and do not interact in any way. They are sometimes even on different continents, in different corners of the globe. What unites them is the category of time and common moral - philosophical problems contained in the family past of Ollerenshaw.

The main characters are close and distant relatives, what many of them have no idea about. For example, Frances doesn't know about the existence of her distant cousin Janet and her cousin David. Their meetings which take place as if by chance are extremely significant moments in the plot and compositional structure of the novel. In addition, these events are carefully prepared by the whole course of the narrative as the story about heroes even those who are not familiar with each other begins long before their actual meeting and has a lot of explicit and implicit parallels and contrasts which can be called a parallel-contrasting narrative technique of text organization.

The author ironically plays with the coincidence of even the smallest details. For example, in Tockley Frances rings the vicar and Janet Bird. The vicar was eating his supper at that time. "Janet Bird was also eating her supper when Frances Wingate rang. The vicar had been eating shepherd's pie, cauliflower and frozen peas: Janet was eating shepherd's pie and frozen peas too, though she had no cauliflower. There is some limit to life coincidences" [7]. The narrator comes to such a simple conclusion, but the reader must guess that it is something more than just coincidences: the fates of people living in one place are remarkably similar and people's future depends only on their desire and will. Janet is dissatisfied with her life, but does nothing to escape from this grey provincial existence as Frances did.

Compared to the first part of the novel, full of events and reflections on the past, the second part of the story is static, there are few actions and very few historical episodes. Janet's line interrupted by the author's commentaries is diversified by including some contrasting viewpoints of other characters on the same subjects or occasions. The characters' opinions are transmitted using double indirect discourse. For example, the girls dressed in short skirts and platform shoes make Janet feel "either sympathy or envy for them: she was not sure which". Frances, "watching these same girls and boys three months earlier, had reflected on the extraordinary style of the provinces: so avant garde in some respect, so out of date in others. The short skirts had long vanished from the London scene, but the platform shoes had reached heights of exaggeration in colour and form, that none but the boldest would yet have dared to wear" [8].

Such excursions from the general course of the narrative, carrying readers into another time and place, another system of values, create subjective and temporal diversity. The lines of Frances, Janet and David intersect in the second part, with all the contradictions of opinions they detect family and spiritual kinship of heroes, who are destined to meet only in the third part of the novel.

An episode in Adra, a young developing country where Frances goes to participate in a conference, is built on the contrast to the British episodes. Adra is oriented towards the future - the conference participants speculate about it, but they do not forget about the past, because the future will be able to grow only from the past through the present. The conversation with an Italian scholar on family ties reminds Frances of her family past, with which she has to come to terms in order to build her own future. It is therefore logical that in the final part of the novel the heroes return to the past again not in order to discover but to accept it. It is symbolic that despite the disunity and lack of understanding the members of Ollerenshaw family, close and distant, come together at the funeral of their aunt Constance Ollerenshaw, whose death as if connects the characters. Using the same method of parallel presentation of viewpoints the author tells about the thoughts of each character. And suddenly it turns out that the narrator is not omnipotent: "omniscience has its limits." "As for Sir Frank Ollerenshaw and Harold Barnard; who knows what they were thinking? Omniscience has its limits" [7].

The narrator confesses that he cannot understand the character of David, who "was intended to play a much larger role in this narrative, but the more I look at him, the more incomprehensible he became" [9]. The future life of Janet also remains unclear that enables the reader to "think out" her fate, as it was in the final of another Drabble's novel "The Waterfall" [10]. As for the main character, she is to come to a happy end. "A happy ending, you may say. Resent it, if you like. She will not care: she is not listening"[11]. Rejecting all possible doubts and questions from the reader, the author insists on the happy ending of Frances's story: she reunites with Karel, buys her aunt's house and settles with all her family in the countryside. Using the narrative style of the XIX century novels the author even looks into the future, anticipating the marriage of Frances's daughter and Karel's son, Karel's release from his wife, etc.

4 DISCUSSION

The problem of transformation of traditional forms and types of narrative, as well as the role of the author in contemporary literature is becoming extremely relevant. Many Russian and foreign

scientists, such as B. Korman [4], N. Kozhevnikova [1], A. Yesin [12], P. Lubbock, N. Friedman [13] and others have devoted their works to these and other closely related problems. Kozhevnikova proposed the term "subjective diversity" [14] and applied it to Russian literature. Korman classifies the subjects of consciousness in the narrative text as a narrator, a personal narrator and a storyteller. They can take different positions to the represented object. "Different points of view are fixed in certain types of narration", which differ in varying degrees of subjectivity, on the one hand, and in different degrees of approximation to the object depicted, on the other [14]. The English literary critic Lubbock who laid down the principles of narrative typology played a major role in the development of the "point of view" theory. The purpose of his research was "to identify a limited number of narrative forms, which, however, had an infinite number of possible combinations" [13].

5 CONCLUSION

Thus, the narrative techniques of "The Realms of Gold" allow us to consider it as a dialogue between traditional, modernist and postmodernist narrative forms. The novel constructs and simultaneously deconstructs its realistic basis, uses and disputes the traditional novelistic techniques. The narrator encourages the reader to perceive the characters both as real people and fictional characters.

The narrator's role is also ambiguous. It seems that Drabble uses a method of active author's intervention in the story in order to "cut" it, to show that indeed "omniscience has its limits" in the modern world and the modern novel. In fact, she turns the classic novel convention into a postmodern technique by comparing two opposing views on a human personality: an individual self-sufficiency typical for the XIX century, and the post-modern view of the suppression of an individual by cultural, historical, family and social factors. And the subjective and temporal diversity of the novel plays an important role in the author's intention.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The materials of the article may be included in the course of lectures on the history of world literature of the twentieth century for students of humanities. They can be used in the preparation of seminars on Drabble's novels, on the style of English prose of the twentieth century as well as reading special courses on critical reading on the material of English literature [15]. The basic methods and analysis techniques can be applied in the study of other foreign authors' artistic styles.

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