

ленного и общественным и этическим абсолютам, что "война и мир" была и остается близкой духовному прогрессу революционного человечества. Именно поэтому Шолохов более всего олицетворял на опыте Голстога, развивая этот опыт, и сегодня "Тихий Дон" и "Юнона и Мир" стоят рядом. За пределами романа-эпопеи — как жанровой разновидности, отразившей путь человечества от неэпического состояния мира к состоянию подлинно эпическому — развивается в творчестве Шолохова, Леонова, Федина, Симонова и ряда других писателей социалистического реализма новая разновидность монументальной художественной формы, с новыми жанровыми содержаниями и специфической поэзией. В центре наиболее известных ее образцов — "Русском десе", Л. Леонова, трилогий К. Федина и К. Симонова, незаконченном повести Шолохова "Они сражались за Родину" — находится социально-эпический и свободный народ, творческий гармонический мир и защищаемый его. Формирующаяся на наших глазах эпопея развитого социалистического общества обретает дополняющий свет на зовущий роман-эпопею с ее проблемами великого перехода и место в этой зовущей или "Тихого Дона".

1. Социалистический реализм и классическое наследство. М., 1960, стр. 340.
2. Слово о Шолохове. М., 1973, стр. 418.
3. О стиле Шолохова. В кн.: "Теория литературы", т. 3, М., 1965.
4. Проблемы художественной формы социалистического реализма, т. I, М., 1971.
5. Слово о Шолохове, стр. 451.

LUBELSKIE MATERIAŁY NEOFILOLOGICZNE — 1975

Jerzy Duszyk

The Concept of the Narrator in *Wife to Mr Milton* and *Count Belisarius* by Robert Graves

The two works by Robert Graves, *Wife to Mr Milton* and *Count Belisarius*, are books of hybrid nature. Although it is difficult to ascribe them to some literary genre, it can be easily noticed that fiction prevails in both books. Among many devices of fiction that are used by Graves, the first reason narrator seems to be the most important one. The importance of the category of the narrator is pointed out by Michal Glowinski in one of his essays in *Sty kwiesiowe*, where he states that the choice of the narrator influences the remaining categories.¹ This remark is also true about the two books discussed here.

The first book is devoted to the private life of Milton and Marie Powell — his wife. The author is interested here in the questions concerning their reasons for getting married and their life together. Milton's poetry or political problems of the epoch are not important.

The other book is much more typical of Graves whose interest in the ancient times is well-known. The scope of the narrator's observation is much wider here than in the case of *Wife to Mr Milton*. In *Count Belisarius* historical, military and social problems are of great importance. The difference between the two novels explains the use of two different narrators, a narrator-insider who is also a fictitious character in *Wife to Mr Milton* and an objective narrator-observer in *Count Belisarius*. This paper is to show the connections between the narrators and the character of the two books.

The narrator in *Wife to Mr Milton* is Marie Powell. The title of the book explains who Marie was and the subtitle /The Story of Marie Powell/ gives her name. This suggests that Marie will be the subject of the book as Milton's wife.

The first person narrator and the presentation of Marie's thoughts and scenes from her intimate life are the features that make the book look like a memoir. The first chapter of the book even seems to suggest that it will be a diary. In this chapter Marie gets a present from her aunt. It is a book with blank pages which Marie is to fill with descriptions of her own life. She mentions the existence of the diary very often:

"This was a great mercy, worthy to be recorded in my book." 2

or
 "... but I live yet, as this writing proves, though indeed I am not the brisk Marie Powell / or Mary Milton/ who wrote such hot and ignemperate sentences in the velvet book, which I have again by me." 3

There are many other examples of the kind presented above. Yet very soon it becomes clear that the actual narrative is not the content of the diary. Here is an example:

"... yet with no least suspicion that before I had turned twenty - one this half page would read as strange as a history of China or Abyssinia - the pleasant company scattered, the house no longer in our possession, even the Christmas feast abolished by order of Parliam-ment." 4

The diary is thus a recurrent motif in the story. Mentions of the diary are not introduced without any purpose. They give the book a more intimate character. Besides, they explain the fact of presenting very exact and detailed descriptions of different events, at the same time strengthening the verisimilitude of the story. The narrator never uses statements like: "I do not remember how it really happened." or "It was too long ago to remember exactly." On the contrary, she presents all the details of different people's behaviour and all minor facts from her family life.

The narrator of the story is always aware of writing a memoir, as is proved by the following quotation:

"Let this evil news from Ireland close this chapter, then I shall write one more and make an end." 5

Even the footnotes are constructed in such a way that they seem to come from Marie Powell - the fictitious narrator and character and not from the real author. This may be seen in the following examples:

"I have two little sisters of the same name, Elizabeth..." 6

and "These pits put me in mind of a confection that we made at Easter..." 7

All the above mentioned features give the book the form of a memoir. Since the book resembles a memoir, Marie is the fictitious narrator and character at the same time. She participates in the majority of events presented in the book and is its moving force. Being the narrator and

character, it is Marie that characterizes herself. She does it either directly, as may be proved by the following quotation:

"I am below the usual height for a woman, but my legs are proportionable to my body. /.../ My bosom is good and has never lolled upon my ribs. My skin, as I saw it in the mirror, was not staring white, but rather the colour of a peach..." 8

or by presenting some scenes /e.g. her quarrels with Milton/ which evidently show her contempt for Puritans and her pride. Describing her family and the people she was living with at her birth - place at Forest Hill is also a means of self - characterization. Marie was under a strong influence of her parents and shared many of their political and religious beliefs. Her father and all his friends were Royalists, contemptuous of Puritanism. They were leading a happy life, spending their free time on feasts, balls, hunt-ings and other entertainments. Their contempt for Puritanism is shown in some episodes and in short remarks like:

"...though why His Majesty should have played the Puritan in this matter of long hair, passes my comprehension." 9

or
 "...the Governor spoke against the ungrateful folly of abstinence, and against the ritual manner of living like Nature's bastards, not her sons." 10

A lot of space devoted to characterization of Marie and her family was necessary - since the relationship of the two persons having completely different features of character and different political and religious beliefs is the main subject of the book. The conflict of characters between Marie and Milton has its equivalent in the background where the conflict between the Puritans and the Royalists is shown.

Marie being personally involved in the story cannot be objective.

Neither can her picture of Milton be that. The attitude of Marie towards her husband becomes evident even in the way she calls him. Here the form "Mr Milton" is very frequent, although the form "my husband" is also used. As a person of quite different beliefs and character, she is the kind of narrator ready to show and criticize his Puritan features, altogether an unsympathetic narrator. Very often she presents some scenes from their life which are to characterize Milton:

"Then boldly he asked me, did I not consider he had a fine hair? I replied merely: "Yes sir. I have no fault to find with it." Whereat he appeared more than a little dashed in his pride, yet said nothing." 11

Almost every chapter contains some scenes where Milton is characterized as a tyrant. Very often Marie writes of him with irony. The following

quotation is very typical of that:

"Mr Milton's stature /to write figuratively/ was not above the middle, yet he hoped, by taking religious thought, to add four or five cubits to ¹² it and straddle across 'any hall or court like a Colossus of Rhodes."

Some scenes containing quarrels between the couple are also presented quite often. The following quotation gives an idea of Marie's attitude towards her husband. The way she speaks to him is not unusual for the book:

"Do not provoke me to brandy the rhetoric of Furnhill Street /.../ with you, Stinker, Base Stubberdellion, Cheesy Plagiarist, Immortal Whip Arse, Rater of Stinking Beef /.../ Do you take me for Issachar's ass that I should bear all your scandals revilements and submit to them in patience?"

Marie is contrasted with Milton and the world she represents is contrasted with what Milton stands for - Puritanism. The one-sided presentation of Milton gives the book a debunking quality.

The period described in the book was full of political events and documents about them are easily available. Graves, however, does not write about the epoch. It mainly serves as a background, introducing an element of historical novel into the book. As it has been already mentioned, Graves is mainly interested in private matters, especially in Milton's character. The choice of Marie Powell for the narrator is very proper here: Marie is neither interested in Milton's poetry nor in the political life of the time. She presents only those events that she or some of her best friends personally took part in. It seldom happens that Marie offers information about political events directly. As she is not interested in those things and can hardly know much about them, she usually presents other characters' opinions concerning politics.

The fact that Marie is not interested in politics or Milton's poetry limits the scope of her observation and consequently only some of Milton's features are shown. These are the features of Milton as a private person and they introduce an element of debunking to the book.

Employing the type of narrator that Marie Powell represents has thus several functions. She, being a person who must have known much about Milton's life, stresses the verisimilitude of the book, being a narrator and character at the same time and feeling a dislike for Milton, Marie introduces an element of debunking to her story. The choice of such a narrator also limits the amount of the material that is presented in Wife to Mr Milton, making it possible to concentrate on some problems only, avoiding the panoramic presentation of the epoch.

The other book, Count Belisarius, is much more typical of Graves's writing because it stands much closer to historical novel which is the main interest of Graves as a prose writer. Although the title says that it is a biography of the famous count, it is at the same time a history of the declining Roman Empire.

Such a concept of the book demands a different type of narrator that the type of a book that Wife to Mr Milton represents. The narrator in the book is the slave of Belisarius's wife, Antonina. He introduces himself in the first chapter:

"I, the author of this Greek work, am a person of little importance, a mere domestic, but I spent nearly my whole life in the service of Antonina, wife to this same Belisarius, and what I write you must credit."

Saying this Graves explains in what way his narrator could be informed so well. Eugenius - the narrator, is well informed indeed. He knows everything about his mistress, about Belisarius and about the problems of the Roman Empire. Being a eunuch, he knows all the secrets. This is what the narrator says about the role of eunuchs at those days:

"Now, we eunuchs are a prominent feature of Eastern Roman civilization, and perform a very useful part in it. /.../ It is a principle first learned by our Emperors from the Persian Court that eunuchs, since they are ineligible of founding dangerously powerful families, can safely be honoured with royal confidence and used as a bulwark against the possible usurpation of the Throne by a conspiracy of powerful nobles. Eunuchs on the whole make milder and more industrious officials than their unstoned colleagues, and their pettiness in routine matters /.../ is a strong conservative force."

This quotation explains why the narrator could always accompany his mistress and her husband, being Antonina's servant. Eugenius was a witness of almost everything that happened to his mistress. Choosing a eunuch for a narrator is, then, a device helping to strengthen the verisimilitude of the book.

Eugenius seldom speaks of himself and is trying to present and evaluate some historical events only, while the narrator of Wife to Mr Milton is also important as a character. Although in constant contact with the protagonists, Eugenius does not influence them, he does not act. The narrator of Count Belisarius is not similar to the first person narrator Głowinski writes about in his Gry Powieściowe. Głowinski compares books using the first person narrator and those which make use of other types of narrators and concludes:

"Czytelnik powieści w pierwszej osobie nie znajduje się w tak przywilejowym położeniu, jego udziałem jest swolista niepewność co do

zwartości informacyjnej zmięła, nie może odwołać się do aurytary-
wnego narratora skoro w relacji w pierwszej osobie jest on taką samą
postać jak inne..." 16

This is only partly true about Eugenius, since his role as a character is very insignificant. The narrator in Count Belisarius is not so individualized as Marie Powell is. He characterizes or rather introduces himself in few words only. He is passive as a character - mainly observes and writes about various political events. He is a historian. The following fragment of the text seems to be quite typical of the book and shows Eugenius as a historian:

"In most histories that are published nowadays one battle reads very much like any other. It will be a test of my historical skill henceforth if I can tell you enough about those battles fought by Belisarius to indicate their difference in character one from another without wearying you with too much detail..." 17

Even the style the narrator employs or the things he describes show that he is a historian. The quotation presented below is very characteristic of the book:

"I have now made it clear why Belisarius was ordered to take an army to the invasion of Sicily." 18

The narrator tries to select his material and writes mainly about wars and battles. From time to time he explains his arrangement of the material, as may be seen in the quotation that follows:

"It would be out of place to give a full account of the race; but let me at least describe the seventh and the last lap of it." 19

Eugenius does not reconstruct the inner life of characters. He is not interested in it, because this is not the task of a historian. He presents deeds and words rather than thoughts. The narrator tries to write a history of a certain period of the Roman Empire and in such case no presentation of the inner life of characters is necessary. From time to time Eugenius makes remarks of the kind:

"What thoughts were passing through his mind I cannot tell, but I can make a fair guess." 20

A remark of Gzowski made in Gry Powlesciowie is very true about the narrator of Count Belisarius. Gzowski writes:

"Powieść w pierwszej osobie jest /.../ tą specyficzną formą opowiadania, w której wielką rolę gra nie tylko wiedza, ale także niewiedza autora." 21

Saying that he does not know something, the narrator strengthens the verisimilitude of the narration and proves his objectivity. He does not take for granted something he is not sure of - this strengthens his position as a historian.

The observations concerning the two narrators, presented in this paper, show that there is a direct connection between them and the character of the books. The narrator who is a young woman, not in the least interested in politics or literature, is used in the book that was meant to present domestic affairs only. The narrator who is a historian occurs in a book that resembles historical novel and deals with many political, social and religious problems. The narrator who is personally involved in the story and has a very unsympathetic attitude towards the main protagonist is used in the book with an element of debunking, while the objective narrator of Count Belisarius seldom evaluates but rather describes.

NOTES

1. "Wybór zaimka osobowego stanowi decyzję określającą wiele następnych wyborów." Michał Gzowski, "O powieści w pierwszej osobie In GRY powieściowe, Warszawa, 1973/.
2. Robert Graves, Wife to Mr Milton. The Story of Marie Powell, /Harmondsworth, 1968/, p.93.
3. Ibid., p.23.
4. Ibid., p.369.
5. Ibid., p.121.
6. Ibid., p.266.
7. Ibid., p.58. /also pp.113, 141, 203/.
8. Ibid., p.41.
9. Ibid., p.95.
10. Ibid., p.177.
11. Ibid., p.38.
12. Ibid., p.182. /also pp.189, 363, 378/.
13. Ibid., p.222.
14. Robert Graves, Count Belisarius, /New York, 1938/, p.3.
15. Ibid., p.159.
16. M.Gzowski, op.cit., pp.60, 61.
17. Robert Graves, Belisarius, p.25.
18. Ibid., p.275.
19. Ibid., p.60. /also pp.119, 221, 401/.
20. Ibid., p.28. /also p.417 "If am right in interpreting his thoughts, a great disappointment was in store for him."/.
21. M.Gzowski, op.cit., p.62.

LUBELSKIE MATERIAŁY NEOFILOLOGICZNE — 1975

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Arthur Blaim

Approaches to Utopia

The problem of whether Thomas More's Utopia was a serious sociopolitical treatise or a mere jeu d'esprit did not appear to be particularly vexing to its Renaissance readers. They accepted the formulation that More himself introduced in the full title of the work, which seems to be totally disregarded by some of today's scholars. This "Truly Golden Handbook" was meant to be "No Less Beneficial than Entertaining"¹ and was received as such by More's contemporaries. Erasmus recommended the book to Ulrich von Hutten, a German humanist knight, because it pointed out where and from what causes the European commonwealths, and particularly the English one, were at fault.² In a letter to Thomas Lupset, William Bude thanked him for having sent a copy of Utopia and drawing his attention to what is very pleasant reading as well as reading likely to be profitable.³

The understanding of the aim of Utopia weighs heavily on its interpretation. The majority of twentieth century critics ignore the Renaissance understanding of the work and its function. This failure is directly connected with the reasons behind the revival of interest in Thomas More and his writings in the second half of the nineteenth century, a revival which was twofold. On the one hand, the development of utopian and scientific socialism gave rise to a search for the forerunners of socialist ideas in order to furnish the newly formulated doctrines with a respectable heritage. This tendency is best represented by Karl Kautsky who christened More "the father of modern socialism."⁴ On the other hand, More was recognized as a martyr for the Catholic faith against the protestant oppressors, and became a very popular figure during the Catholic revival in Britain.