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THE NOVEL AS AN AUTHOR-NARRATOR-CHARACTER PATTERN

Once on a desk Pen and Inkstand were fighting:
— This book's substance is mine — It is my writing:
Enters the author. Braggarts make him merry.
There are lots of such Inkstands and Pens if you query.
I. Krasicki, 1735

1. An aspect of the point of view in the novel

It is beyond doubt that we constantly need to define some elements of a literary work's construction. Strictly speaking we have to continue the task of creating new definitions. The novel, because of its mutability, ought to have the interdependence of its elements constantly checked up and newly determined. The same problem results from the increase of new literary phenomena and new theoretical considerations on their subject.

In the course of the development of the science of literature, a discovery, looking rather like a simple one, was made not too soon. Namely the distinction between author and narrator¹. The discovery of their difference has a great many consequences; some have been already studied², but some aspects, although rather obvious, have been left unformulated, minimalized, slighted, or simply overlooked.

Nowadays, the fact that the author, a person, and the narrator (non-person) are distinct is quite obvious, and yet it had to be pointed at. This is of great importance for our next deductions.

Among those who emphasized this fact, Wolfgang Kayser was such an excessive apologist of the narrator's ease, that he hardly avoided to call him author, but he referred to a concealed narrator when speaking about a mythical creator of the world³. That once he rather missed the point.

¹ W. Kayser, *Narrator w powieści (The Narrator in the Novel)*, translation of the essay in „Twórczość”, 1959, no 5.

² M. Jasińska, *Narrator w powieści. Zarys problematyki badań (The Narrator in the Novel. Problem of its Literary Kind)*, „Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich”, 1962, no 8.

³ Kayser, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

One basic assumption cannot be disregarded: the only one who does exist is of course the author, whereas the novel's world, the narrator and the characters are inexistent fictions. If you set aside this assumption as a wrong or irrelevant one, if you accept the world created by the author in the novel as a real world, you are conducted to a full personification and animation of fictional persons, and you are led to treat them on equal terms with the author, whereas those characters — narrator and heroes — are only the components of a separate autonomous world subordinated to the author.

The above mentioned opinions are so truistic that one feels embarrassed speaking about them, and yet they are so often forgotten.

In consequence of the above assumption we can establish such a division:

- 1 Persons outside the novel's framework: the author⁴ and the reader⁵.
- 2 Persons within the novel's plot's frame⁶: the narrator and the hero.
- 3 Persons included in the action's frame: characters (heroes).

Such a construction admits various displacements, but only unidirectional ones. That is to say, that the author⁷ can enter into the story, either as himself: the author on his proper behalf, or identifying himself with the narrator⁸.

More, the author may even enter into the action: either as author, either acting as narrator, either acting as a character.

It results from this definition that a point of view of a character does not exist, neither does the person of a narrator, he can be only assumed as a mental abbreviation, he is an author's instrument by means of which the author shows the viewpoint of the characters he has created.

The further possibilities are: a narrator (the author acting as a narrator) overstepping his usual sphere of activity and intervening directly in the action as a narrator or as a hero⁹.

⁴ Compare S. Skwarczyńska, *Wstęp do nauki o literaturze (Preface of Literary Learning)*, vol. I, Warsaw 1954, p. 319. (Ch. "Wypowiedzenie odautorskie. Pozycja twórcy. The author's enunciation. The creator's attitude").

⁵ Although Kayser considers the reader as a structural element of the poetic world, the reader is never a separate character, like sometimes the narrator. It may perhaps happen in autothematic works as e.g. S. Zweig's *Sommernovelette (Summer Story)*; see S. Zweig, *Erstes Erlebnis (The First Experience)*.

⁶ We assume that the narrator is somebody who relates the plot, who comes out with pronouncements and happenings; he often hides behind the characters and speaks along with them. The scope of his competence is broader than the character's one, but it is limited, the narrator does not outstep the story.

⁷ The creator of the novel's automatic world is outside of the time of the plot and outside of the time of the story.

⁸ See Skwarczyńska, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 326.

⁹ The displacements in the opposite direction, owing to which the narrator would become the author, or the character a narrator, are theoretically, it means mathematically possible, but void of sense.

The third point: characters, heroes, who are not able to act as author or narrator¹⁰, although the latter can act even as a character¹¹.

We may put it also this way:

1 The author's opportunities of taking an immediate hold upon the reader are limited to the range of such particles of the composition as the introduction, the conclusion, or an author's comment.

2 The narrator's domain of activity is generally the story.

3 The domain of the characters is the action.

Each of these spheres of activity has its peculiar form of expression. These forms cannot be always individuated by means of syntax or other grammatical or stylistic elements¹².

Usually a character expresses himself in the narrative, the report, the description, seldom in the reflection¹³.

The author's means of expression are usually: the author's comment, the author's reflections, sometimes sentences transgressing by their content the limit of the stories time¹⁴.

Further discriminants of the means of expression are to be looked for in oblique speech, but the above context must be taken into account.

The more we enter into modern epics, the more difficult becomes this differentiation¹⁵. One of the few adequate criteria, which can make it easier to individuate the author's statements, the narrator's enouncements and those of a hero, is the possibility to make certain if the enouncement in question falls entirely within the time of the action or the time of the story, or if it does lie beyond it.

As a result of these approaches we can differentiate the viewpoints and de-

¹⁰ On account of the sphere of activity, the character disposing of a narrower sphere cannot assume something that exceeds its possibilities.

¹¹ Instead of the above convention of disposition of parts, one may assume a slightly different one, according to which there would be only characters and an inspirator (author). In this case the narrator is only a character endowed with a little wider scope of knowledge than the others, and only the author is omniscient. The discrimination between author and narrator would be then founded on the would-be omnipresence of the narrator, on the setting up of some justification of such a widened score of knowledge and sight, but only the author may penetrate the unspoken thoughts of the characters. In this case the narrator as well as the characters are considered as really existing persons. A confirmation of the necessity of these discriminations and definitions when analysing literary texts is given by J. C. Gerber, *The Relation between Point of View and Style in the Works of Mark Twain* (p. 142-147), and Ch. R. Crow, *The Style of Henry James. The Wings of the Dove in Style and Fiction*, New York 1959, pp. 172-177.

¹² Compare A. Condivi, *Żywot Michala Aniola* (transl.), Warsaw 1960: *To the readers*, pp. 13-14, or F. Dürrenmatt, *Die Panne*, Part I, or W. Gombrowicz, *Transatlantyk*, Paris 1957, p. 5-7.

¹³ Compare Condivi, *op. cit.*, p. 16, or Dürrenmatt, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹⁴ Compare Skwarczyńska, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 331-333.

¹⁵ W. Saroyan, *Chłopiec na lotnym trapezie* (*The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze*), Warsaw 1961, p. 20.

termine who made this enunciation, from whose viewpoint it has been stated or shown by the author¹⁶.

The difficulty lies in the evaluation of the position of the author relatively to the narrator, when the latter is simultaneously a hero (assuming that N/Ch.). It may also consist in the estimation of the situation of the narrator in relation with a character, when the narrator is concealed behind oblique speech in order to show the character's consciousness from inside¹⁷.

This alternative is considered by Hopensztand who writes about three centrifugal and three centripetal kinds of seemingly oblique speech¹⁸.

First we have to juxtapose some kind of oratio obliqua¹⁹ a) the situation of a character, b) the former or later presentation of this character, c) the way this presentation is based, e. g. on his acting and his behaviour, on the reports other characters gave about him, and the narrator's direct report. Such a juxtaposition allows us to define more closely the points of view, to discriminate the narrator's point of view from the character's ones.

What matters here is that according to L. Edel²⁰ — the author must be aware of the limits of the personality he has imposed upon his characters. The technical appliance of the principle meets with difficulties described by Żurowski in his essay on *Madame Bovary and the Modern Novel's Development*²¹. Many a critic endeavored to solve this dilemma, for instance Percy Lubbock quoted by Żurowski, A. Thibaudet²², B. G. Reizov²³.

Kayser maintains that his assumption of the existence of a concealed narrator is proved among others by the divergence, so often met with, between the portrayed character and the scope of his consciousness, that are not synchronized. He points at the difference between two representations of a hero, one as a narrating charac-

¹⁶ We are concerned here only with the attitude, taken on account of a statement, by the person who uttered this statement, and the characteristic of this person, according to this attitude. We abstract this from the logical value of the statement. See J. Pelc, *O wartości logicznej i charakterze asertywnym zdań w dziele literackim (About Logical Value and Assertive Character of Statements in Literary Work)*, "Estetyka", vol. I, 1960, p. 99.

¹⁷ M. Gorkij, *Starucha Izergil*; see M. Gorkij, *Sobranie sočinenij. Povesti, rasskazy, stichi*, Moscow 1949, p. 337.

¹⁸ Skwarczyńska, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 379–384. (Ch. "Monolog wewnętrzny. Inner monologue").

¹⁹ D. Hopensztand, *Mowa pozornie zależna w kontekście „Czarnych skrzydeł” (Seemingly Oblique Speech in „Black Wings” Text)*. [in]: *Stylistyka teoretyczna w Polsce (Theoretical Stylistics in Poland)*, Warsaw 1946, pp. 306–307.

²⁰ L. Edel, *Psychological Novel*, New York 1955, p. 51–52: "The writer must be aware of the limits of the consciousness he is projecting: he must not make a limited mind too perceptive [...] Each consciousness, in other words, must be kept consistent within itself".

²¹ "Przegląd Humanistyczny" („The Humanistic Review”), 1958, no 4, p. 17. P. Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction*, London 1957, pp. 59–92.

²² A. Thibaudet, *Gustave Flaubert*, Paris 1922, p. 228.

²³ B. G. Reizov, *Tworčestvo Flobera*, Moscow 1955, p. 290.

ter, and one as a portrayed character. The question is reduced to stylistic researches on both ways of representation. Kayser takes as example Felix Krull of T. Mann (portrayed and relating) and G. Keller's Green Henry (in both roles too), and Ismael in Melville's *Moby Dick*²⁴.

What seems questionable in Kayser's point of view is the reducing of the author's activity exclusively to the "play of transformations", when the author is assuming the part of narrator²⁵. Kayser disregards the fact that the author may appear in the story, or action beside of any role, as the author; and first of all, he does not take into account that, not the narrator, but the author himself is concealed under the mask of the "spirit of the story"²⁶.

"Let us mention that the problem of the relation: narrator-author may be of great importance in the interpretation of the work, especially when you have to attribute to the narrator's statements the meaning of judgments *sensu stricto* or quasi judgements" writes M. Jasińska²⁷. Examples of misunderstandings arising from such interpretations are given by D. Hopensztand²⁸ in the above cited essay.

The problem: author-narrator-character gets a particular significance in what we call a workshop novel. The author appears there more distinctly, more expressively than anywhere else, besides he assumes a role in the plot²⁹.

Let us take *Paluba* as example. Numerical proportions are showing that in about 400 pages of the novel's text, about 100 pages (1/4) are direct author's speech, and we find still countless fragments containing immediate author's comment of this kind for instance: "All the *Paluba* offers examples of such latent mental processes and life is swarming with them..."³⁰ There is no doubt whatever that those are the very words of the omniscient author of the novel, as he is the only one who can speak about this novel in its very text. We must once more make it clear that we are speaking here about the author of the novel, and not about the writer Irzykowski as a man, or Irzykowski as a writer generally speaking.

We find also a very striking example of the author's entering not only into the novel but into the very action in Gombrowicz's *Transatlantic*.

"The councillor, half bent in the most complaisant way, fanning with his handkerchief, is leading me to the host and introduces me to him, and praises me as the Polish Grand Master the Genius Gombrowicz the Famous"³¹.

²⁴ Kayser, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

²⁵ Kayser, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

²⁶ Kayser, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

²⁷ Jasińska, *op. cit.*, p. 10

²⁸ Hopensztand, *op. cit.*, pp. 309-310.

²⁹ See Skwarczyńska, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 309-310.

³⁰ K. Irzykowski, *Paluba*, Warsaw 1946 (see K. Wyka, Introduction).

³¹ W. Gombrowicz, *Transatlantyk*, p. 36.

We remember of course that it is a pseudo-diary, and not a fragment of an autobiography. That allows to consider this passage as a proof that we ought to discriminate Gombrowicz as the author of the *Transatlantic* from Gombrowicz the writer.

2. The artistic convention of assuming roles

On the ground of the above considerations we can ascertain, that the truism: "the author and the reader are the only ones who exist" finds once more full application when we are taking into account the roles the author is assuming in order to present or relate to the reader the thoughts or ideas he has chosen. But the aspect of these roles is not confined to one level. It can increase and appear in a piled up, multilayer construction.

Let us go back again to an analytical novel, the same *Paluba*. We find there another variant of the problem. This time it will be the disposition of parts (roles) exclusively in the sphere of the novel's action. It concerns, as we see, the characters (heroes). This fact has been pointed at by K. Wyka³², and lately K. Dąbrowska³³ has dealt with it in an essay on the existentialistic elements of Irzykowski's and Gombrowicz's novels.

K. Dąbrowska examines the following statement about the comedy of the character: "I consider as a comedy of the character — explains Irzykowski³⁴ — some typical, more constant fancies, desires of the mind, to accept certain events, things, relations in such or such a way". Some decades later Gombrowicz adds: "People, when meeting, uniting, impose upon one another such or other ways of living, of speaking, of acting [...] and everybody deforms the others and is deformed by the others too [...] Every act of artistic creation is subject to such a double deformation [...] Henryk creates a dream, and the dream creates Henryk, the action creates itself continually, men create themselves reciprocally [...] and the whole presses forward towards unknown solutions"³⁵.

It results from this statement as well as from the former ones, that the chain of the parts (roles) goes on continually farther and deeper. The roles are the following:

The author in the part of narrator and then in the part of character A, character B, character C — etc. characters in as many varieties as many parts a character is alternatively assuming.

³² The character means psychologically an assumed man (persona). "Persona ist eine Maske, die Individualität vortäuscht die andere und einen selber glauben macht, man sei individuell, während sie doch nur eine gespielte Rolle ist, in der die Kollektiv-Psyche spricht" (C. G. Jung, *Die Beziehungen zwischen dem Ich und dem Unbewussten*, quoted from I. Szondi, *Ich-Analyse*, Bern 1956). The definition of Irzykowski was at this time a striking novelty, it got ahead of the daring definitions of the psychologists.

³³ K. Dąbrowska, *Irzykowski — Gombrowicz — Sartre*, "Twórczość", 1962, no 11.

³⁴ K. Irzykowski, *Paluba*, p. 391.

³⁵ Gombrowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

Such a method leads us, among others, to emphasize the distance between the author's creations: narrator and character, and next between the character and his consecutive roles. In *Paluba*, for instance, this fact is actualised in such a way: Ola, the second wife of Strumieński assumes in turns the parts of a happy wife, femme fatale, a deceived wife etc., the other characters acting likely³⁶.

Here is a skillful manner of safeguarding the reader against the danger of literal perception of the novel's content³⁷. It may threaten him less if he is made aware of its ambiguity, multivocality and its conventions.

One may hazard a conclusion resulting from these approaches. Namely, the author's frequent immediate interference, by means of commentaries, in the story and action, emphasizes the fact that every variant of a character, and even each of its fractional characterisations means a role, somebody's or something's role. It means that an act of creation takes place, that reveals the fact of creationism and of the author's part as a continuous creator of the world of the novel.

The immediate, open interventions of the author happen of course more often in the analytical novel (workshop novel). A novel of this type appears rather late in the course of the novel's development. It is the result of serious experiences and evolved writing craft.

A condition *sine qua non* of the workshop novel is a multilevel structure. Every level has to be treated seriously by the author, each has to be equally important as the others and intimately connected with them.

The main problem of such a novel, the question of the craft itself (the workshop), is revealed only by a light thrown upon the other planes and by their analysis, according to the principle of equality. If the remaining planes were subordinated, the novel would become a treatise on fiction writing.

The analytical novel is so far the greatest beletristic achievement ever attained in this literary kind, its content being enhanced by the analysis of its fiction. In these novels the function of the characters is intensified. That leads us to a further conclusion: the more experienced is the author and to some extent the reader too, the greater is the need of the play of make believe. The composition of the characters gets more expression and the symbol appears more frequently in a still richer variety of meaning.

3. The artistic convention of times

The analysis of times in the literary work allows to distinguish real time from conventional time. The time of objective reality means the time of some facts in the novel³⁸, particularly in a historical novel, it means as well the reader's time,

³⁶ We use the term "content" in the way defined by H. Markiewicz in *Sposób istnienia i budowa dzieła literackiego*, "Pamiętnik Literacki", 1962, no 2.

³⁷ Skwarczyńska, *op. cit.*, pp. 128–129. (Ch. "Wieloznaczność pojęcia czasu w odniesieniu do dzieła literackiego. The Manifold Meaning of the Notion of Time in the Literary Work").

³⁸ Skwarczyńska, *op. cit.*, p. 129. (Ch. "Czas fabuły. The Time of the Story").

his life and the duration of his reading of this very novel. All the other times belong to the autonomous world of the novel, they are conventional times. The conventional times in the novel are seemingly real times, e. g.:

- A. 1) The lifetime of the narrator comprising the time of the story³⁹.
- 2) The lifetime of the characters comprising the time of the action.
- B. The conventional times of the narrator and the characters: one kind of the conventional times is the psychological, inner, subjective time of the narrator, or of the characters; for instance the time of the facts in memory, but not the time of the process of remembering.

We do not intend to discuss the different opinions concerning the story and the action. We confine ourselves to accept the convention of time and carry on some discriminations.

The disposition of the time of such elements of the novel as: action, story, "before-action" and "after-action" is resolved in this work in the following way: the action covers a range of events included in the seemingly real time of the main hero, or the time of other foreground characters. It is the time of the action.

The story, according to this approach, contains as well the time of the action as the time included in the "Vor-Geschichte" and the "Nach-Geschichte" (before-story and after-story). It is the time comprised in the seemingly real time of the narrator.

We set aside the "Vor-Geschichte" and "Nach-Geschichte" in order to avoid useless terminological complications, the more so that according to the convention of time, both those elements are entirely contained in the above mentioned forms of time that are "appartenant" to the characters and to the narrator⁴⁰.

The aspect of the time in the action and the story imposes upon them a different meaning than the one we meet in many school books and theoretical literary dissertations.

We must state that in every literary work, everywhere where there appears a connection of different threads of story or anecdotes a cause and effect relation takes place. Some are grounded on the cause and some on the effect. (We may take *Robinson Crusoe* as an example of the first type, and detective stories as an example of the other).

In the modern novel and short story we meet a continuity of causality where loose associations occur. In Saroyan's short story *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze* the first part is constructed nearly exclusively of equivalent sentences united only by loose associations, the reason of which is unknown to us, but it is clearly shown by the author as a Dream.

³⁹ This opinion is, in some extent, like to the way the problem of time disposition is put by M. Głowiński, A. Okopień-Sławińska and J. Sławiński in their *Zarys teorii literatury* (*Outline of Literary Theory*) Warsaw 1962, p. 357.

⁴⁰ The same analysis is given by Głowiński, Okopień-Sławińska and Sławiński, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

We meet the same mechanism in the inner monologues. Some loose associations occur and their reason is not made known to us.

But a superficial analysis suffices to make it possible to join together all the elements of the related dream into one vision, shown by the author in words according to the time of their appearance in the sleeper's mind, as well as according to the time in which they follow in turns. If we analogically examine Butor's and N. Sarraute's inner monologues, we get the same results. Visual and auditive sensations are reverberated in the heroes consciousness, as well as reflections, memories etc. intrinsically bound with them. They appear in the relation according to the succession of their appearance in the subject's mind.

The second continuity — a continuity of aim — is also a relation of cause and effect. But here a definite reason must bring about the very consequences which are represented by the author. Detective novels are typical examples. They are not concerned with loose associations of any kind, like the former ones. They deal with a sequence of events represented by the author in such a way, that finally an unexpected solution may arise in the reader's mind. Unexpected and yet resulting from the former data. This form of representation does not either keep the chronological sequence of events. When describing the war of Troy, the authors don't begin with the story of Leda's egg; by avoiding this they dramatize the action.

The action may be broken by insertions of fragments of the story situated in seemingly real or conventional times. Later on, we will elaborate upon the occurring complications, and make the new situation clear.

POWIEŚĆ JAKO UKŁAD RÓL

RELACJE: AUTOR — BOHATER — POSTAĆ

Streszczenie

I. Konwencja punktów widzenia

Treścią części pierwszej rozprawy jest zróżnicowanie punktu widzenia autora, narratora i poszczególnych postaci fabularnych w odniesieniu do zawartości dzieła. Autorom chodzi o podkreślenie rzeczywistego istnienia jedynie autora dzieła literackiego i uniknięcie nieporozumień wprowadzanych przez tak częstą animizację narratora i postaci. Wydaje się, że w badaniach literackich szczególnie istotne jest zróżnicowanie treści przedstawianych wprost przez autora w stosunku do treści wyrażanych przez niego za pośrednictwem narratora czy postaci. Jednym ze sposobów służących temu rozróżnieniu jest analiza elementów składniowo-stylistycznych dzieła i takich form wypowiedzi, jak dialog czy monolog charakterystyczny dla postaci; narracja, relacja, opis, czasem refleksja — formy typowo narratorskie, wreszcie komentarz odautorski lub inne odautorskie formy wypowiedzi wykraczające poza czas fabuły. Badania D. Hopensztanda, W. Kaysera, L. Edela oraz twórczość Melville'a, G. Kellera, K. Irzykowskiego, T. Manna, W. Gombrowicza służą tu jako argumenty.

II. Konwencja ról

Sposób, w jaki zostały czytelnikowi przedstawione treści powieściowe, zależy od postawy przybieranej przez autora w trakcie pisania. Są to jak gdyby role. Jest więc rola narratora; jest „wczuwanie” się autora bezpośrednio w postaci, i to w zależności od sytuacji tej postaci, np. postać szczęśliwą, nieszczęśliwą itp.; jest „wchodzenie” w sytuację postaci za pośrednictwem narratora; jest wreszcie komentarz autora o przedstawionym przez niego temacie. Autorski dystans w stosunku do świata powieściowego jest szczególnie widoczny w powieściach warsztatowych, ponieważ zawartość tych powieści obejmuje nie tylko stwarzaną fikcję, ale jednocześnie i jej analizę.

III. Konwencja czasów

Tak punkty widzenia, jak i role przyjmowane kolejno przez autora różnią się od siebie m. in. w czasie. W związku z tym odróżnić należy dla powieści czasy inne niż czas jej pisania i czas czytania (np. przez różnych czytelników), a mianowicie czas rzeczywisty i czasy umowne. Przez czas rzeczywisty rozumiemy czas rzeczywistości obiektywnej, do której odnoszą się fakty powieści (nie dla wszystkich powieści czas ten da się określić). Czasy umowne to czasy istniejące wewnątrz powieści. W tym — czasy pozornie rzeczywiste: czas życia narratora oraz czas życia postaci związany z czasem akcji, a nadto czasy umowne narratora i postaci (np. czas zdarzeń we wspomnieniach). Powiązanie wszystkich wątków czy anegdot w powieściach ma charakter przyczynowo-skutkowy. Przykładem powiązań o charakterze przyczynowym jest *Sen z Chłopca na lotnym trapezie* W. Saroyana. Zdarzenia następują jedno po drugim nie tyle w chronologii występowania, co w kolejności pojawiania się ich w centrum uwagi bohatera. Przykładem powiązań nacechowanych zdecydowanym zmierzaniem do celu są powieści kryminalne, w których kolejność przedstawiania została uzależniona od kolejności pojawiania się w umyśle głównego bohatera minionych zdarzeń, jak i związków między nimi.

Obie formy powiązań przyczynowo-skutkowych odbiegają od chronologicznego układu zdarzeń, dramatyzują bądź uliryczniają treści i w ten sposób uatrakcyjniają akcję.

Teresa i Sławomir Cieślakowscy