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**THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE
IN THE NOVELS "THE HEAVENLY WAYS" BY I.S. SHMELEV
AND "THE PRECIPICE" BY I.A. GONCHAROV**

SUMMARY. The article deals with the comparative analysis of the narrative structure in the novels "The Heavenly Ways" by I.S. Shmelev and "The Precipice" by I.A. Goncharov. The relationships between the author and the character as well as the plot and compositional role of the narrator are analyzed. The connection of narrative field with the genre and style of these novels is set.

KEY WORDS. Shmelev, Goncharov, narrative structure, narrator.

The narrative pattern as a meaningful and formal basis of a novel can demonstrate the peculiarities of its style and genre, and illuminate the characters and indicate the dominants of a plot. Not raising an issue about I. Goncharov's influence on I. Shmelev's work, we compare the narrative structures of "The Heavenly Ways" and "The Precipice" to elicit some new aspects of artistic identity of the writer (an expatriate) and the degree of his rootedness in the literary traditions of the 19th century.

I. A. Ilyin was the first who noticed the stylistic harmony of adult Shmelev's heritage with the work of Goncharov, a "famous Russian novelist". I. Ilyin found some analogies of lyric-epic meditateness of "Rosstani" ("Crossroad"), "Leto Gospodne" ("Jubilee"), "Bogomol'e" ("Pilgrimage") in Russian classics. "Here the style of Shmelev achieves this delicacy of paints, this elegant bar relief and this soulful fragrance, that we have to go to the sweetest drawings by Gogol, Goncharov, Tolstoy to find the resemblance of Shmelev's style", a critic wrote. [1; 155].

Various similarities in artistic solutions are found in "The Heavenly Ways" and "The Precipice", far removed from a vivid description of the "intellectual style". First of all, the principles of ordonnance of the narrative structure are concerned.

Shmelev, as well as Goncharov, "<...> decided on a daring experiment in the sphere of the author and character's relationships <...>" in his novel [2; 393]. The personality of the narrator helps to believe the reality of Darinka and Veidengammer in "The Heavenly Ways". Boris Raisky, the artist, is vested with the same power in "The Precipice". The images of Raisky in "The Precipice" and the narrator in "The Heavenly Ways" are similar functionally and meaningfully. They perform the centripetal and compositional function in both cases; and the plot of the novel is organized and the key points are highlighted owing to their "efforts".

However the character of "The Precipice" is not a narrator as we used to understand, "<...> his functions are more significant, then the functions of an ordinary narrator. The novelist assigned Raisky the role of an observer and a judge of life, gave him his own understanding of the events and the characters" [3; 156]. Thus the narration seems to double, appearing in the form of the author's (Goncharov's) text, or realizing in the character's speech. The last is complicated by inconsistency of Raisky's voice. His artistic nature is inclined to the mix of fantasy and reality.

The character takes life counter intuitively; the dream and the reality dramatically stand in an opposition to each other. Within this context, the search of the ideal, including the real beauty, can be interpreted as the search of the harmonic integrity. But for Raisky the work and the life penetrate each other so much that he frequently cannot differentiate them. Yet in the university the character "<...> described Russian life the way that it was in his poetic dreams <...>" [4; 90], but long after he complained: "<...> I write about life and as a result I get a novel" [4; vol.6; 30]. The origins of doubling are in him that is why even in the relationships with Vera the character "<...> enjoyed felicity and suffered from double joy and torment of a man and an artist. He did not know himself where the one was, when the other disappeared or when they mixed" [4; vol.6; 31].

Shmelev's narrative structure is complicated by a "living" word of Veidengammer, who delegated his recollections to the narrator, and by the "voice" of Daria Koroleva, which goes from her "suicide note" to the close ones. The narrator biographizes Viktor Alekseevich and Darinka, based on the available evidences: recollections of the participants and the witnesses, diaries, letters. He highlights the most important events in the character's life from different points of view at once. Thus, at first, the memorable "conversation in the carriage" was commented by the biographer and then confirmed by the extracts from Veidengammer's diary and Daria Ivanovna's notes.

The benefits from the literal efforts of Raisky in the form of sketches about Natasha and the extracts from the novel "Vera" and also from the character's diary perform the functions of "a text within a text" in "The Precipice".

In this way it is natural that neither Goncharov's nor Shmelev's functions of the images that we are interested in are not limited by the compositional role. However if the artist Raisky is a full character, who interacts with the other characters of the novel, then the narrator Shmelev refers to the category of the concealed narrators. In the beginning of the novel he claimed: "I heard this wonderful story, in which the earthly merge with the heavenly, from Viktor Alekseevich himself <...>" [5; 5]. He does not reveal himself directly again, does not identify himself. He only tells about his role in the closing stages of Veidengammer's and Darinka's lives: "<...> the last chapters of her life were in front of my very eyes" [5; 5]. And actually, the references to the character's recollections and the documents, which confirm the originality of the events, are getting far less in the second volume of this novel, in comparison with the first one. Therefore we can speak about a greater degree of "reliability" of the events in the second volume, where the narrator-biographer was personally both the witness and the observer.

Still the most delicate episodes of the novel, connected with the intimate experience, remain unclear till the end. For example, it does not deal with Vagaev

“blue letters”’s story, which called for a great tact from the narrator. We know that Daria Ivanovna read those letters and “gave them to Viktor Alekseevich to read them” and that “the interpretation of Darinka” was their main content. And though they were written “about everything” (so Vagaev complied with the heroine’s request not to speak about the feelings) Veidengammer could not speak about it patiently even after many years.

And the narrator’s voice in “The Heavenly Ways” and Raisky’s word in “The Precipice” complicate the chronotope of the novel by means of flashbacks, which both of them willingly use. In the first case this circumstance is conditioned by the plot: the story of a complicated “release from darkness” of Veidengammer, the skeptic and the rationalist, is represented by the narrator after some time, after the death of the main heroine and soulful “straightening” of the character. As shown in the notes to the third unwritten volume of “The Heavenly Ways”, the final turn of Veidengammer to the spiritual life should have been made after the tragic death of Darinka.

Generally the time shift in a form of recollections or creative daydreaming is determined by the flight of riotous imagination of a young romanticist in “The Precipice”.

The flow of time in the novel “The Heavenly Ways” is biographical. Yet the narrator organizes the historical series, presenting the most crucial critical events in the character’s life. The choice of the episodes is determined by his esthetic preferences, engrained in the Orthodoxy that is why time reading dates by the church calendar. “It happened on 11 January, Tuesday, at vesper’s service of Great-Martyr Tatiana [5; 320]; “on Saturday at Saint” [5; 40], “in the morning of Baptism of our Lord” [5; 312]. The meeting with Darinka, which had changed all Veidengammer’s life, took place at Holy Monday night. The Orthodox Calendar assigns a new high sense to at first glance everyday situations. As if biographic time of the characters passes into the eternity, the life of Darinka and Veidengammer is integrated with the events of Sacred History, such as Christmas Day, the Epiphany, and the Easter”.

The shift of the “points of view” to the occurring situations takes place in the culmination of “The Precipice”. The parts of the novel, where Raisky is in Malinovka, are to the large extent represented through the perception (fantasy) of the artistic character. “The direct writer’s vision and the “sight” of the character cross each other fancily, causing the “flows” in the text, which are marked by the impact of Raisky’s fantasy” [2; 394].

The “character’s viewpoint on values” (M.M. Bakhtin) is also reflected in the narrative possibilities of the two novels. But if the extreme subjectivism of Goncharov’s artist is often corrected by the author’s assessment, then the narrator will be more independent and enjoy the author’s boundless confidence in Shmelev’s novel. Here and there this form is close to Shmelev (in “The Heavenly Ways”, it is possible that it is an autobiographic form — [8]), but the author has something in common with his character, that is why Goncharov’s and Shmelev’s characters do not have the author’s knowledge neither in the first case nor in another one.

* As a side note, according to S.V. Sheshunova, the Christmas origin in “The Heavenly Ways” evidently prevails over the Eastern one, which is a sign of Shmelev’s devotion not only to the testaments of the 19th century literature, but to the principles of Russian symbolism [7; 65].

In "The Precipice" this circumstance is connected with the character of Boris Raisky, who by virtue of his age, nature, and life experience does not have an opportunity to judge patterns of the course of life. "Is it my business to draw the pictures of morals and manners, to understand and highlight the living base?", the character cries in his letter to Kirilov. And he summarizes: "It is not in my nature to dive into the complicated mechanisms of life!" [4; vol.6; 258].

Thus, the assessment of the occurring situations and their understanding are represented in the total combination of the author's and the character's voices. However, the author's omniscience is spread not only over the physical fact, but also over the mysteries of the artist's inner life. So the total of the ambiguous date of Raisky and Marinka is accompanied with thoughtful comments. These comments respond to the hard-hitting questions of the character's inner voice. "Does the ministering angel protect her invisibly? Or the grandmother's fate guarded her? Or ... what?" [4; 269], asked Raisky, meaning the girl's purity which resisted the temptation. The author clears his puzzlement up: "Is this "or" hidden in her holy shy ignorance, in the obedience of Bishop Vasily's sermon, or finally in her dull character. Yet still it was in her nature and not in his..." [4; 269].

Contrary to the omniscient author, the narrator in "The Heavenly Ways" every now and again discovers his incomplete knowledge or complete ignorance of those facts and circumstances of Veidengammer and Darinka's life about which they prefer not to talk. "But he did not speak of what happened to him in Saint Petersburg" [5; 248]; "Her dream was "insane", she was ashamed to tell it" [5; 196]. The narrator's knowledge is restricted and even in those cases when the characters remember the past events not well enough. "She did not remember what had happened..." [5; 200]; "They did not remember what they had spoken about" [5; 229]. Any hint of approximate knowledge is a sign of the author's invisible presence. "Darinka had dim recollections: she ought to go to the Hermitage for some purpose, to have breakfast" [5; 166]; "Darinka dimly remembered that Vagaev kissed her hands, her dress, was on the rampage <...> seemed to kiss her eyes..." [5; 189]; "They were somewhere, where there was nothing and nobody. There were only them and a blizzard <...> "as if they decided to go together". -Darinka remembered all these dimly" [5; 229].

In contrast to Raisky, who was changeable, always looking for something, Shmelev's narrator was mature, self-consistent, and strong in his faith, inclined to generalizations. "So when there was a dark March night, on Tverskoy boulevard, where those, who seek for a fling, came across, the tracks of two lives crossed: Viktor Alekseevich Veidengammer, 32, a mechanic engineer, and Daria Ivanovna Koroleva, 17, a gold-embroideress" [5; 22]; "The bright morning of May, when something "irremediable and fatal" happened, <...> was a crucial moment in his life. The other part of his life, as the road-to-Damascus and escape from darkness, started from this moment" [5; 48]; "Daria Ivanovna and Viktor Alekseevich spent the most important part of their life in "Uyutovo" outside Mtsensk" [5; 353].

It is known for certain that the narrator in "The Heavenly Ways" is a man of faith. Concerning the circumstances of the character's life, he resorts to church terminology: "revelation", "temptation", "possession", "wonder", "sin", "enticement". The narrator is

a like-minded person of the "late" Veidengammer and when the disposition of Providence* in the character's fate is concerned, their voices begin to be in harmony.

What is indisputable truth for Shmelev's narrator, according to which he compares life and organizes narration, Goncharov's character only gets ready to realize it. The notions of "Plan", "Way" have not become the beliefs of Raisky, but he already hazily guesses them in complicated, at first glance, course of life. "Peering into the picture of his own life and any other lives, looking now at the life of Vera which has just begun, he saw more clearly the game of artificial circumstance, some wandering flames of evil deceptions, dazzlements, sprang in advance traps, with mistakes and as if chance outcome from the tangled knots..." [4; vol. 6; 74]. "Where is the clue to the comprehension of a responsible way?" [4; vol. 6; 74], the character wonders. Shmelev in his "The Heavenly Ways" just writes the story of this complicated "comprehension".

Raisky like Veidengammer is inclined to delude himself about the whirls of fortune, referring the traces of Plan to the "game of artificial circumstances". And he suspects that the testaments of "grandmother's moral" contain the answers to the questions of life which exercise him. Vera as Darinka understood this long ago that is why the girl gives a decisive answer to the artist's hardball question about where is the truth. "Right there, she said, pointing at the church, we were there right now! ..." [4; vol. 6; 78].

For all that Shmelev's narrator, who had been tested in faith, is more close to Raisky then it may seem at first glance. It became evident that the spiritual origin is not the last in Boris Raisky's dreamy chaos of pursuits, motives and system of values. The researchers proved that the "meaning of Boris Raisky's image reveals only by looking at the problems of the novel as the Christian ones" [6; 327]. Thus the artist is familiar with the fear of sin, the languor by sin, and the penitential deprecation of it: "Running ideally through the bond of his life, he remembered which infernal pains shot him, when he fell down, how slowly he got up, how quiet the pure spirit woke him up. The spirit called him for the endless labor, helped to get up, encouraged and soothed him, het back his fate in the beauty of the truth and the good and the power to get up, go on and higher up ..." [4; vol. 6; 39]. Goncharov's main character was always horrified when he discovered the tracks of the evil and the darkness, wild motives of his bestial, blind nature, "<...> I wrote her an execution and drew the laws, destroyed the "old man" in myself and create a new one" [4; vol.6; 38]. Raisky is not selfish in his pursuit of transformation, sending for Vera to "<...> show her the vestal fire inside him and to recall it in her <...>" [4; vol. 6; 39].

Obviously, these weak and illogical motives cannot be compared with Darinka's spiritual work, because Vera does not need urgent help of the pious spirituality, and Raisky is not a pure holder of it. In case with Marfinka and Sophia Belovodova the faith is not concerned. Boris Raisky aspires to develop the characters according to his own ideas about the due, pretending to some educational mission, whereas

* According to A.M. Lyubomudrov, the notions of "Plan" and Providence do not always coincide in "The Heavenly Ways". The idea that life is predetermined is for certain not Christian-like if we origin from V. Solovyov's theory of the predestination [9; 24-25].

the researchers see the echoes of “growing-up novel” in the story of the artist’s long youth and his achievement in all the situations in the novel [2; 436].

In “The Heavenly Ways” Veidengammer pretends to be an educator. From time to time, the didactic motives of the character become thoughts about the fact that Darinka, who was taught only church things, should certainly be mentally developed. Once again these ideas came into Viktor Alekseevich’s mind on his way to Uyutov after he read “Anna Karenina”. “When they settle in, the character thought, we should make a rule: every day we should find at least one hour to Darinka, to develop her, to help her understand what she does not, to fight her shyness and ungrounded mysticism” [5; 361].

Meanwhile the feeling that seized the character hid all the didactic plans, about which he remembered from time to time with a shame. The story of Vagaev’s “blue” letters offended Veidengammer for real. These letters as Viktor Alekseevich brokenheartedly noticed were not without interest to his wife. Darinka calmly explained: “I asked him not to write me about his feelings anymore, now he verses and writes me intelligent words, and this is interested to me. I do not know much indeed. I want to know so much”. Viktor Alekseevich realized that he had nothing to do with Darinka and submitted” [5; 334].

In “The Heavenly Ways” the “growing-up novel” is won by the “spiritual novel”, within the context of which the achievement of personhood of the character has a conceptual and spiritual orientation. The plotline, which goes from the “growing-up novel”, does not receive the traditional development effort, it is polemically overcome by the cause of spiritual control, which is as well as in “The Precipice” realized in conceptual image-cause of the way. The simplest words of the illiterate gold-embroideress turn out to be the new “Columbus’s egg” of the character who is tempted by the sciences. This “Columbus’s egg” praises a person “<...> from ash to the altitude, up to the basics, the Eternal, the Absolute!..” [5; 546].

The peculiarities of the genre influenced the character of the narration of the concerned novels. The synthetic form of the spiritual novel, and in this way Shmelev himself determined “The Heavenly Ways”, obviously, adopts the experience of Dostoyevsky’s religious novels. However, the plotline, connected with the image of negativism, links “The Heavenly Ways” and “The Precipice” to another literary tradition, which ascends to the genre of anti-negativism novel, which was widely spread in Russian literature in the 60-70s of the 19th century. First of all the artists are brought together by the criticism of the ideology of destruction which is carried out from the perspectives of Orthodoxy. The transposition of the problem of negativism from the political-social plan to everyday one is distinctive for both writers, and the stress is on the most essential things in the theory of negation: earthliness and permissiveness.

At that the anti-negativism pathos of Goncharov’s novel echoes in “the heavenly Ways” comically. Veidengammer, who lived through the feeling of release from destructive ideology, critically analyzes the ugly forms of the provincial negativism. The attitude of a 20-year old medical man Kostya Uyutov looks as vain and inappropriate farce.

“Who do you imitate: Bazarov or Mark Volokhov?”, Viktor Alekseevich asked the confused “cynic”, and added: “<...> the poor negativism turned out to be in fashion ... province-mother” [5; 372, 374].

“The Heavenly Ways” and “The Precipice” bring together the character of artistic imperfection. The common drawback of the novels can be treated as the excessive “ideology of narration” [2; 413]. The researchers noticed long ago that Goncharov who is inclined to the didactic mood stepped across the line, which “differentiates the art from sermon” in the last parts of “The Precipice”. “Yet the tendency of the novelist has not been followed from the course of events, arrangement of the characters, from the artistic concept of life automatically, and was dictated, imposed and introduced by the artist himself” [3; 156].

In due time, the similar reproaches were directed to Shmelev. Characterizing the final work by the writer, I.A. Ilyin noted: “The novel slowly develops into “life” and “preaching”. <...> A sermon is added to the art; the creative act consists of the feature of the premeditation and the programs, the contemplation is complicated by the instruction <...>” [10; 365].

Thus, the comparison of the narrative structure of the novels “The Heavenly Ways” and “The Precipice” gives an opportunity to assess the uniqueness of the final book by I.S. Shmelev, to elicit the historical and literary dependence of the writer’s style, to shed the additional light on the character of his artistic evolution and creative links with Russian classics.

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