

The Phenomenon of Unreliable Narration in the British Intellectual Prose of the Second Half of the Twentieth Century (Golding, Murdoch)

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Abstract: The article is devoted to the consideration the problem of the phenomenon of an unreliable narration in the British intellectual prose of the second half of the twentieth century (Golding, Murdoch). The meaning of the words “narrator”, “unreliable narration” is investigated. The unreliable narration is reviewed based on the example of the novel “Rites of Passage” by Golding (1980). It is noted that the aforementioned work has a vibrant didactic component. It has been found that Golding uses a wide range of narrative techniques. The emphasis is made on the critical analysis by other literary scholars of the novel “Rites of Passage” by Golding. The use of narrative strategies in accordance with the scientific classification by Genette (1980) is investigated. The markers of unreliability of the narrators are emphasized. Attention is focused on the fact that a high degree of unreliability is based on the limited knowledge of the heroes, direct participation in the events, a problematic system of values. It is noted that the unreliability of narration in the novel “Rites of Passage” by Golding forces the reader to doubt not only the narrator but oneself. The use of the narrative method in the intellectual prose of the British writer Iris Murdoch is investigated. It has been found that the novel “The Black Prince” by Iris Murdoch (2006) is one of the best examples of an unreliable narration. The genre specifics of the novel are emphasized, which combines the forms of the diary, of the memoir and of the confession. In addition, Murdoch creates a narrative strategy, which combines signs of various forms of “I am the narrator” within the framework of one narrative. In addition, “The Black Prince” is a unique model of modern artistic and philosophical metatext genre formation.

Keywords: *Narration, narrative, percentage of unreliability, view of the narrator, markers, extradiegetic, intradiegetic, metadiegetic.*

How to cite: Shapoval, O., Bakhov, I., Mosiichuk, A., Kozachyshyna, O., Pradiqlianna, L., & Malashchuk-Vyshnevskaya, N. (2022). The Phenomenon of Unreliable Narration in the British Intellectual Prose of the Second Half of the Twentieth Century (Golding, Murdoch). *Postmodern Openings*, 13(2), 273-286. <https://doi.org/10.18662/po/13.2/453>

Introduction

The study of an unreliable narration as a separate type of the storytelling is now relevant in modern narratology. The modern philological science was influenced by the latest scientific paradigms, which gave impetus to literary scholars to revise views on the object of text analysis as a product of speech activity, which captures the process of linguistic communication (Bekhta-Hamanchuk, 2017).

It is commonly known that postmodernism is a literary trend of the second half of the twentieth century, which is characterized by non-standard thinking of the characters. The British writers Golding and Murdoch are representatives of the postmodern literature. Their works are not aimed at the mass reader, so they are full of unusual plots, unusual events, adventures in non-trivial circumstances. The authors tell the story from the first or third person, supplement the plot with diary entries and stories. Postmodern writers resort to an unreliable narrative, with which they manage to convey the entire philosophical depth of the plot, to show metaphorical diversity, however, under simplicity we see the drama of a private person. Obviously, all the authors' attention is focused on the image of the individual, presentation of problems that the individual has to overcome. In addition, an individual finds oneself in very unfavorable circumstances, so it is difficult for one to survive in the midst of problems. Therefore, unusual stories interest the reader, who is happy to turn every page of the work.

The review of literature makes it possible to assert that the research of narrative techniques "narratology" engaged foreign and domestic scientists: Bekhta-Hamanchuk (2017), Booth (1983), Chatman (1978), Phelan (2007), Rymar (2016), Schmid (2003), Shen (2013).

According to Schmid's definition (2003, pp. 64-65), "The narrator is an addresser of fictitious narrative communication". The concept is quite widespread, so it is equated with a narrator or a story-teller. The narrator is noted in the text and is perceived by the reader not as an abstract function, but as a subject, which is endowed with human-like traits of thinking and language. In addition, Schmid (2003) noted the main features of the narrator, such as: omniscience and omnipresence, the ability to penetrate the most secret corners of the consciousness of literary characters, the presence of a certain point of view on events and situations.

A significant contribution to the development of the theory of narratological poetry was introduced by Genette (1980). The literary scholar notes that any study of the narrative mood requires a distance between the

narrator and the history. He defines five functions that exhibit the degree of intrusion of the narrator in his story, based on the desired degree of the level of detachment or participation. In addition, in narratology the story-teller is always located at a certain time regarding the history he tells.

According to Bekhta-Hamanchuk (2017), the narrator has a major role in the discourse space of the artistic work, because it provides the integrity of the structure and composition of the text. Almost throughout the whole structure of the current English-language fiction text, the narrator and literary characters who form the background of a literary work clearly appear before the reader.

According to the dictionary of narratology (Prince, 2003), we find out that a narration is considered unreliable if there are author's markers that create an inconsistency between the author's and narrator's levels.

According to Shen (2013), if a narrator does not report correctly, interprets or underestimates, such narrator is unreliable. In rhetorical works, narrative unreliability is fixed by the author as a rhetorical tool.

As long as Booth focused on the study of the theory of unreliable narrations, Phelan (2007) improved the distinction between the types of unreliability as defined by Booth, describes the principles of structuralist, cognitive, feminist and rhetorical approaches to the narrative. It is worth noting that Phelan (2004, p. 50) indicates that "narrators play three main roles: report, interpret and evaluate, sometimes they play the roles simultaneously, and sometimes – successively". The author classifies unreliability, focusing on three axes: facts, values or ethics.

Chatman (1978, p. 234) rightly noted that "the sphere of unreliability is the view of the narrator on the level of discourse, and not the personality of the narrator", since the problem personality of the narrator becomes the reason for unreliable rendering.

In his article, Rymar (2016) emphasizes that a person as a character in the works of the writers of the second half of the twentieth century appears not just as a participant in socially significant events, but as a special psychological type, and also as a component of the fiction and aesthetic system.

From the publication of Fish (1980), we see that the author saw a narrative strategy: in the process of reading, a reader constructs the values that can contradict each other, change each other, but do not disappear at that, but coexist at different stages of reading.

The purpose of the article: to analyze the main elements of the phenomenon of unreliable narration in the British literature on the example of the works of Golding and Murdoch.

It is commonly known that, at the present stage of development of literary studies, there are two ways to enounce the narrative form: the narrator positions himself in the first person, that is, “I” and the narration and the narrator are in the third person, that is, an objective presentation. Therefore, the narrative is a story that is reported by one, two or more narrators of one or several truthful or fictional events. From this it can be argued that narratology focuses specifically on human communication. It is commonly known that a person constantly feels the necessity to communicate: whether with his relatives, whether with friends, whether with colleagues (Nerubasska & Maksymchuk, 2020; Nerubasska et al., 2020). Building phrases from words, reporting information from the addressant to the addressee, respectively, an opinion bears a semantic and emotional load. A phrase is the foundation in any story: whether it is a story, or a novel, or a drama. Certainly, when a person tells his own or a fictional story, one grows into one’s own imagination, experiencing events in his own way, compares everything with his own life. Consequently, it turns out that the same event can be represented by narrators in different ways, because the narrator creates his version of the seen or experienced.

The Unreliable narration in the novel “Rites of Passage” by Golding

For a review, let’s take a novel by William Golding “Rites of Passage” (Golding, 1980), which has a bright didactic component. The peculiarity of this work is that its didacticity is not revealed openly, but through the reader’s knowledge and awareness.

In her article, Lastochkina (2017) claims that in his novel, “Rites of Passage”, the British Nobel Prize winning author William Golding (1980) uses narrative techniques to create an intellectual and emotional prose. It is the unreliable narration that helps the writer to be guided by the level of confidence in the narrative.

Let’s note that the novel describes events of the days of the Napoleonic wars, that is, the beginning of the XIX century. Day after day, both Talbot and Colley, two main narrators, fix events onboard the ship and their impressions of the voyage in their own journals. In addition, there is another narrator in the novel, it’s captain Andersen, who also constantly renders facts to the ship log.

According to Olson (2003, p. 95), “the reader reads literally until the text markers and indicators force him to reconsider his interpretations”.

According to Genette’s classification (1980), the narrators fall into four types: there is a heterodiegetic narrator in the extradiegetic situation (the narrator reports a story, but he is not a character), a heterodiegetic narrator in the intradiegetic situation (the narrator of the second degree in the story in which he is not present), a homodiegetic narrator in the extradiegetic situation (the narrator tells his own story, where he acts as a character), a homodiegetic narrator in the intradiegetic situation (the narrator of the second degree in the story where he tells his own story).

The narrator Talbot starts the journey, and the story begins. From the first pages of the novel, we imagine Edmund Talbot as a funny character and a story-teller, because the author points to his numerous shortcomings: a weak level of knowledge about the environment, self-confidence that he often demonstrates, ambiguous moral views, gaps in fixing events of the novel. Moreover, it should be noted that he has an ironic tone in his speeches, furthermore, he likes the habit of adding numerous literary associations to his phrases.

Hence, at the beginning of the novel, the narrator Edmund Talbot provides a description of the entire crew of the ship, adding sarcastic comments to each character. It should be noted that he does all this on the request of his godfather, who gave him a journal to record meaningful events during the voyage.

Talbot’s narration in Golding’s “Rites of Passage” (1980) belongs to the third type according to Genette’s classification (Genette, 1980), a homodiegetic narrator in an extradiegetic situation. At the time of the events, the narration is simultaneous, i.e., events unfold at the same time. Talbot tries to note everything down to the last detail, but the more diligently he works, the fewer events he manages to write down. After one week, he loses all sense of time and cannot relate unrecorded events to a particular day. Loss of control over the narration and over oneself results in the emergence of an unreliable narrative.

So why is Talbot a representative of an unreliable narration? As is well known, the events take place at sea, the voyage is accompanied by sailors who use a certain slang that Edmund cannot understand. Being exhausted morally and physically because of nausea, Talbot resorts to strong sleeping aids. Therefore, spending time on sleep, Edmund does not note down events.

In addition, Edmund Talbot is constantly looking for a scientific explication to events that take place around him and talks about classical writers and famous figures. Unfortunately, his observations and evaluations that are recorded in his journal are unreliable, because they are subordinated to his limited knowledge.

Another narrator in "Rites of Passage" (Golding, 1980) is Reverend Colley. His narratives can be attributed to the fourth type, as he tells his own story. Collie writes a letter in the form of a diary, in which he presents the events of the recent past and the near future. By scope, the text is much smaller than that one of Talbot. But it's interesting that the letter is addressed, obviously, to the sister who lives in England, besides the sentences are full of sincerity and warmth. It is worth noting that other passengers are not endowed with such attention. Colley was a priest, so he treated the crew of the ship in a Christian-like manner, he relied on the will of God in everything. The records of the Reverend Colley in the diary are correlated with the notes of Talbot the aristocrat, complementing each other, but we see events through the prism of different views.

From the article by Miroshnychenko (2010), we understand that Colley's metadiegetic narrative reproduces the lost truth, adds new facts and compensates for the inconsistency of the main narrator's story. The plot of the novel reveals that the Reverend Colley crossed the personal space of one of Billy Rogers' sailors, thus violating the law of the sea.

As it is known, Colley is a romantic and naive man, he is able to admire the beauty of nature and appreciates it. The journal of Talbot reflects the irrational and reasonable, and he sees the environment around the ship as unattractive and stinking. Colley, on the contrary, sees an earthly paradise in this seascape: his records are emotional, from which we notice that the character loves the beauty of nature. This fact reduces the credibility of Talbot, demonstrates limitations of his perception. Phelan writes about this kind of unreliability (Phelan, 2007, p. 225), calling it closer: "Differences between descriptions, interpretations and assessments of the narrator are the conclusions of the author's audience..."

Undeniably, the narratives of Talbot and Colley are different. Even the death of the pastor is considered from different viewpoints: Talbot has a subjective view of this, and from Colley's notes we see the internal experiences of the hero. It should be noted that the secret of Colley's death was in the fact that he died of his own shame, thoughts that did not give him peace.

Depicting two equally subjective narrators, Golding (1980) gives various versions of the same events, and then the reader himself finds errors in each story. Reading two narratives, the reader has the opportunity to make his own assumptions, imagines various events, is aware of the multifaceted nature of perception and doubts the reliability of information. Obviously, in his story Talbot will present the events that interest him first of all, and he will not simply pay attention to the rest. Colley is also an unreliable narrator, because, when evaluating people, he pays attention to the attitude of other people to himself and approaches this extremely emotionally. Therefore, the facts in both journals are distorted, indicating the unreliability of information, which in turn makes it impossible to find out the truth.

It should be noted that the records in the journal of Talbot do not allow the reader to find answers to the question: why an uncomfortable atmosphere reigns onboard the ship, for what the captain hates the clergy? Only at the end of the novel we find out from Colley's records that all this happened through a sharp class difference. The passengers of the ship were placed in different parts of the vessel: simple people and emigrants lived in the front of the ship, and aristocrats - in the other parts.

Thus, having read the novel, we argue that the author showed a conflict of the good and the evil in himself, drew attention to the knowledge and strength of a man, as well as the most important thing that he is worried about is darkness in the human soul. Therefore, in general, the main sources of unreliability of the narrators are the limited knowledge of the narrator, his own participation and observance of moral and ethical values. It should be emphasized that in the work, we observe postmodern signs, such as: randomness, discretion, openness, fragmentarity, so it complicates the understanding of the reader of the reality of events and fiction.

Consequently, the unreliability of narration in the novel "Rites of Passage" (Golding, 1980) forces the reader to doubt not only the narrator, but also himself.

The use of the narrative technique by Iris Murdoch in the novel "Black Prince"

In the article of Dooley (2004), attention is focused on the fact that most critics argue that the novel "Black Prince" by Murdoch (2006) is one of the best samples in which the phenomenon of unreliable narration in the postmodern literature is traced.

In the publication of Sulcas (1989), the author tried to investigate the relationship between the storytelling techniques of Murdoch (2006) in conditions of realism through the narrative theory. In addition, the fiction of the British writer includes comedy, romantic and gothic elements in the framework of the orthodox truthfulness, using the collision between these genres.

Undoubtedly, all forms of identification of characters in a fictitious narrative require empathy. Readers sympathize with fictitious characters as they spend a lot of time communicating with them while reading. Besides, compassion and experiences not only arise, but also completely develop between the reader and the characters. Without a doubt, unreliable narratives either interrupt or block the possibility of increasing the common feelings between readers and characters through a number of elements. As is known, in unreliable narrative, empathy is formed on the basis of the speech of the narrator, so any discrepancy causes distrust to the narrator and, obviously, affects the interaction between the reader and the characters.

Graver (1973) highly estimated the above work emphasizing that Murdoch (2006) offers an unusual connection of pleasures: ingenious storytelling, elegant design, provocations of myth and philosophy.

In the novel "The Black Prince", (Murdoch, 2006) the author shows the lives of young women who make choices on women's independent individuality. The writer neglects the principles of modern novel and confidently uses the narrative structure of the text. The novel combines the forms of the diary, of the memoir and of the confession.

Women's characters in the novel are quite different, they have different problems, they have their own destiny. The author depicts a woman's life in different situations: in one situation, a woman tries to escape, and in another – she is satisfied with the circumstances. Murdoch (2006) chooses a man as a narrator to submit an ironic comment on the paradox of fiction literature. Using this approach, the author strives to show the feeling of the experience as a unique "I".

The main narrator is a story-teller who renders events from the first person, Bradley Pearson, a former civil servant, who retires prematurely in order to meet his ambitious dream – to write a great novel about art and love. Murdoch (2006) uses an experimental narrative strategy in which the signs of various forms of "I-narrative" are grown in the framework of one narrative. The plot of the novel unfolds through the prism of three female characters.

The narrator of the novel introduces Julian to the reader - a young girl who has her own life goal, arranges her life in accordance with her vision, despite social judgements and parental expectations. The daughter disappoints her parents with her own actions. In addition, we get to know that Julian reconsiders her life and even regrets the uselessly spent years. The love life of Julian and Bradley was destroyed by the arrival of his father - Arnold, who revealed three truths to his daughter that Bradley silenced. Pearson lied to the girl about his real age, concealed the secrets of the suicide of Priscilla, in which he was involved, as well as letters from her mother, Rachel. Therefore, after revealing the deceit of Bradley, Julian loses confidence in him and breaks up with him. This also shows signs of an unreliable narration.

Let's recall a sudden falling in love with Julian, the daughter of his literary rival Arnold, who at that time had the glory of the popular prose writer. Soon, he falls in love with Julian's mother - Rachel. Then, he asked himself: whether it was love, or just something else. In fact, Bradley is depicted in these scenes deeply focused on his own thoughts that the suffering of the young Julian did not touch him. Therefore, there is a number of rhetorical questions: whether it was a true manifestation of sincere love between an immature girl and a writer, or just an attempt to return to youth, or, possibly, just a revenge on Arnold?

Murdoch (2006) emphasizes that young girls at that time possessed more freedom than their mothers. In addition, she believes that economic and spiritual independence are important to establish a woman's identity.

On the example of the image of Priscilla, the narrator shows a cruel reality when a woman without independence and self-improvement does not deserve a luxurious life. Priscilla is responsible, attentive to the senses of her loved ones, sympathizes with the pain of others. So, the first appearance of Priscilla in the novel is an unwanted visit to Bradley's apartment. The woman quarreled with her husband, and she has nowhere to go. There is only one way out: to find support from her brother, Bradley. In the life of Priscilla, there are three male figures - a father, a brother, a husband whom she considers to be cruel. From Priscilla's records we find out that she compares her own house with a dirty pig breeder, and according to her husband - purity and order reign in the house. Therefore, Priscilla's notes undermine sympathy to her. Her brother refused to provide timely assistance to Priscilla, his departure brings the sister to despair, and she dies through the overdose of sleeping aids a day after.

Pearson considers that the main character of the novel is Rachel, who has a strong sense of female consciousness and is aware of gender differences: all men despise women, physically they are stronger. Accordingly, domestic violence enhances the feeling of female inferiority. When Rachel learns that her husband is flirting with another woman, she writes to Bradley to have a secret relationship with him and thus make her husband jealous. In her opinion, this is the key to perfect happiness. But unfortunately, Rachel killed her husband with a strong blow.

The third female character is Christian - the former wife of Bradley. Feeling depression in marriage, misunderstanding with Pearson, she divorces and marries an American named Evandale. Christian is a special character with feminine individuality, but she lacks good education.

The novel ends with four postscripts - Christian, Francis, Rachel and Julian, who contradict the narration of Bradley, cast doubt on the written. Obviously, each point of view is subjective, and therefore the characters complement one whole. Pearson tells his story while in prison, that is, in a retrospective dimension, it is possible that his story is deeply meaningful. In addition, we know that he was unfairly sentenced to life imprisonment for a murder he did not commit. None of the authors of the postscript are able to understand Bradley, everyone makes his accusation, only his friend Loxias sympathizes with him.

According to the researcher Malii (2013), a prominent place in the novel belongs to the author, who tells his story through: a) silence; b) omissions; c) ironic repetitions of plot lines; d) doubling of images; e) plot tricks.

The narrator is constantly in search of the form, the perfect balance of semantic and formal “ingredients” to really prove the phenomenon of authorial style.

So, can we believe Bradley, could he, the main narrator, misreport, improperly remember or even distort some kind of conversation he told? Let's recall his lies in front of Julian, whom he repeatedly lied to, or Priscilla, whom he did not want to help as a brother. Bradley, mauled in the novel, is constantly experiencing anxiety, tries to convince himself and others of his artistic talent. The reliability of the narrator can be questioned, because in any case, the reader remains with his own thoughts at the end of reading the novel. Furthermore, Bradley himself admits that he changed the reality in accordance with the form of art, having conceived a life drama. So, Bradley is an unreliable narrator. The reader's confidence in him is undermined by

often unreasonable decisions, ambitions and irresponsibility in actions. But still, among the positive features of Bradley, one can note his sincerity. He wants to realize his dream, so he assures that the love of art is only real, which is a true testimony and one of the available methods in order to prove the truth. Reading the novel, it seems that the content of reality is doubtful, but with the help of allegations of other characters there is a more consistent idea of the truth.

It should be noted that the dialogues and monologues carry semantic and emotional perceptions, help the characters express themselves, report events, atmosphere, thoughts of the characters.

The novel *The Black Prince* (Murdoch, 2006) proves that the author is involved in a constant struggle against himself, seeks to overcome her own weaknesses and, above all, to form what she believes in so that it is real and reliable. Through philosophical meditation, the writer emphasizes that art and love, goodness and morality have their roots. The novel focuses on the dual nature of love, the depiction of the tension that exists between selfish and selfless love: the former deprives a person of full access to reality, and the latter - gives him a moral vision.

Thus, “*The Black Prince*” (Murdoch, 2006) is an intense, self-reflexive novel that truly conveys the moral value of metafiction.

Thus, the novel by the British novelist Iris Murdoch “*The Black Prince*” is an unreliable narrative whose readers do not empathize with the protagonists due to the experimental structure of the narrative, but still perceive the novel due to their own competence, experience, reason, the ability to perceive and imagine.

Conclusions

The literature review makes it possible to state that foreign and domestic literary critics studied narratology.

It has been studied that narration is used mostly in epic works, expressed through the third-person pronouns, as well as emotionally coloured words in case of the presence of the first-person pronouns. Certainly, when a person tells his own story or a fictional one, he plunges into his own imagination, experiences events in his own way, compares everything with his own life, and this becomes the impetus for an unreliable narrative. It has been found that a narrative is called unreliable if it contains author’s markers, which create a discrepancy between the author’s and narrator’s levels.

Depicting two equally subjective narrators, Talbot and Colley, Golding (1980) presents different versions of the same events, and then the readers themselves have the opportunity to make their own assumptions, imagine different events, realize diversity of perception and doubt the reliability of information.

It is worth noting that the novel “The Black Prince” (Murdoch, 2006) is a unique example of modern artistic and philosophical metatext genre formation.

It is worth noting that among the British intellectual prose of the second half of the twentieth century, the novels “Rites of Passage” (Golding, 1980) and “The Black Prince” (Murdoch, 2006) are among the best examples of unreliable narration.

Thus, postmodern writers in their works convey their thoughts, worldview through the deliberately depicted chaos in the work of art. On the contrary, in postmodernism they emphasize abnormality, unnaturalness in the realities of life. These novels “Rites of Passage” (Golding, 1980) and “The Black Prince” (Murdoch, 2006) combine spiritual alienation, destruction of values, a sense of integrity, fragmentation of the text.

Acknowledgement

Thus, the authors’ contribution to the article is as follows: documentation: Olha Shapoval; data collection: Ivan Bakhov; data processing: Antonina Mosiichuk; writing: Oksana Kozachyshyna, Liudmyla Pradvlianna, other activities Nataliia Malashchuk-Vyshnevskia.

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