

**FEATURES OF THE ARTISTIC HERO,
IN MARIANNA GRUBER'S NOVEL "TO THE CASTLE"**

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Annotation: *The recent novel of an Austrian writer Marianne Gruber (1944) «Into the Castle» written in the post-modernistic style, a variation of the topic of the famous novel of Franz Kafka «The Castle», is analyzed. The paper focuses on the concepts of «a new hero» and «new readers» related to the novel key images.*

Keywords: artistic hero, game with the reader, reader-model, image-cliché, imagematrix, naivety, possible world, magic fairy story, parabola.

The last novel of the Austrian writer Marianne Gruber (b. 1944) *Into the Castle* (Ins Schloss) (2004) includes some of the main motifs of her work, being a kind of “intertextual frame” [12, p. 43], the perception of which “depends on the reader's experience in reading other texts” [12, p. 43]. The satellite novel orbiting the Kafkaesque “Castle” (1926) remains at the same time an authentic work in the style of postmodernism. Initially perceived by the reader as a kind of Kafkaesque parabola, the text, according to the writer herself, is a “parable about a modern man in a modern situation” [5, p. 330]. This opinion of Marianne Gruber about her own work is supplemented by the point of view of the author-narrator (which does not coincide with the personality of the writer). The author-narrator in relation to his own text appears as a neutral and faceless figure commenting on what is happening, while the created text is carnivalized, corresponding to “the notions of classical theater: the narrator is there only to raise the curtain; the play is played, in fact, on behalf of eternity and, as it were, without it” [2, p. 164]. Using the terminology of Umberto Eco, we can say that the author-narrator is playing some kind of intellectual “game with the reader” [12, p. 368], even a kind of hunting for the reader, and in this context, the very term “reader” means an ideal imaginary “reader-model” (Lettore Modello) [12, p. 17], which meets the requirements of the modern text. He needs, for example, “naivete” [12, p. 350] and, at the same time, a certain intellectual level that allows one to fall into all the complex “text traps” [12, p. 350] and, to create their own “possible world” [12, p. 371], to find a way out of the labyrinths of the author's text. So, for example, the teacher, one of the protagonists acting in the novel, inspires the character “K.-second” (and the reader-interpreter) with a version about the essence of the Castle, playing on the ambiguity of the parable about him: “- Labyrinth? It would suit you. After all, if the castle is a labyrinth, then everything is justified by this ... The labyrinth cannot be understood” [4, p. 38]. From the reader's point of view, external to the text, the novel is a modern product of endless intertextual layers. The writer follows the plot of Kafka's novel, populating the novel's space with images-twins dating back to the richest literary tradition of doubleness (from E. T. A. Hoffmann to F. M. Dostoevsky). Similarity to Kafka's characters begins with names: the protagonist of the novel, called “K.”, at a certain moment of the action distinguishes his novel “I” from his own prototype, calling himself “K.-second”, and his double - “K.-first” [4, p. 100]. The self-identification of the protagonist of the novel may remind the reader interpreting the text, in particular, of the Kabbalistic doctrine of metempsychosis, the doctrine of reincarnation. For example, according to Manly P. Hall's theory of reincarnations, “personality number two contains in its very fabric the experience of personality number one, but since this experience is completely depersonalized and assimilated by the essence, then in person number two it already manifests itself as character, temperament and to what extent -some degree even as a bodily structure” [11, p. 49]. In this regard,

it is interesting that some provisions of the doctrine of metempsychosis, often reduced to the level of clichés, are also used in the modernist one [6, p. 114] and postmodern literature, where they become elements of the genre of pulp fiction - "a mechanism for transforming a work of elite art into mass art" [6, p. 73]. A similar transformative device, to some extent, applies to the novel *Into the Castle*, which is intended for both intellectual and mass readership. In turn, the ambivalent nature of the protagonist of the novel, who owes his existence to a certain intertextual prototype, also determines the universality of the image for the reader's perception. The method of carnivalization of the reader's perception has much in common with the organization of a possible world according to the principle of a fairy tale, as Umberto Eco understands them. Thus, the concept of a possible world, used by W. Eco in his study on the semiotics of the text "The Role of the Reader" (1979), suggests such a reader's point of view on the text, from which "the world of characters looks like the world of the reader himself" [12, p. 354]. We are not talking here about the classic fairy tale as a literary genre, but about some of the invariable canons of the fairy tale genre, used, in particular, in the postmodern literary game of the author with the reader - a potential consumer of mass plots. Such a game is understood as "midcult" or "kitsch" [12, p. 277] and, as one of the possible components of the postmodern style, characterizes the plots of the mass novel, "based on the binary oppositions of a fairy tale" [12, p. 277]. According to W. Eco, the form of a work is largely determined by the laws of creation by the reader-demiurge of a possible world that exists within the limits of the reader's interpretive perception and therefore is a true mystery. The concept of a possible world by U. Eco also means "a possible course of events - the world is imaginary, desired, expected, sought, etc." [12, c. 375], which is also close to the world of fairy tales.

It can be assumed that the structure of Marianne Gruber's novel is also not devoid of some features of a fairy tale, which in the framework of this article is considered as a "sign of postmodernism" [3, p. 47]. Some of the classic canons of a fairy tale, used by the author of the text as a literary device, help the reader of the novel in creating his own possible world, convincing him that "one's desires and expectations can be taken for (or even turn into) reality" [12, p. 365]. So, for example, the object of the hero's search - the Castle - in accordance with some classical canons of a fairy tale (for example, with "the thesis about the complete uniformity of the structure of fairy tales" [8, p. 80]) is somehow in a different dimension or, in a fairy tale terminology, in another realm. The hero in his quest for the Castle in this case is part of a stable fairy tale system, where "the impossible is possible" [12, p. 364].

The naivety mentioned by U. Eco as one of the characteristic features inherent in the image of the new ideal reader-model distinguishes the main character of the novel by M. Gruber, K., from the second. And if, according to the theory of M. Bakhtin, some classical heroes "very naively express that final moral and ethical idea that they embody from the point of view of the author" [1, p. 47], then K. the second not only explains to the reader his role, asserting the identity of the role and life, but also postulates its seriousness: "I, as an actor, play my life, although I don't want to be an actor, I don't know my role and don't see what is drawn on the back of the stage where the performance is taking place..." [4, p. 56].

The new artistic hero is not only the equivalent of the postmodern "homo ludens" - a person playing, according to J. Huizinga [10, p. 17]. Rather, it could be defined as *homo ludens amoto ludo* - a man playing in earnest, an image that continues the motif of a sad harlequin, characteristic of Marianne Gruber's prose.

Within the framework of postmodern discourse, which assumes "happening" as the author's "game with the reader" [7, p. 6] - shocking the reader's perception - the very existence of such a new hero speaks of the possibility of a way out of the endless "dead ends of postmodernism" [9]. Unlike the hero of Kafka, K. the second, reminiscent of many Americanized heroes of the modern "world of possibilities", seems to be programmed to achieve a specific goal - penetration into the Castle. In the

course of the action of the novel, the new K., and with it the new naive reader, who entered the novel as a double of the literary character, discover that the "new Castle" also evolves, like a living structure. Believing that the Castle is a living being, K. the second struggles with the windmills of his own ideas about it: "The castle is alive," thought K., looking around again and gazing into the darkness that now hid the Castle. Alive - and this is its vulnerability" [4, p. 83].

The struggle between the new artistic hero and the new reader accompanies the development of the plot, and the reader's distrust often outweighs the hero's faith, but the hero still triumphs over the reader's doubts. In the middle of the novel, "the new K." plays the role of Jesus Christ, unexpectedly declaring himself the first and last ... conqueror:

"I want to end my old world," thought K., suddenly seized with despair. "I must put an end to my old world so that a new one can come" [4, p. 180]. It seems that the new hero and the new reader are moving along the Möbius strip — the front and back surfaces of the text, turning into a two-faced image and uniting at the same point in the text space: inside the Castle. At the end of the novel, the hero still ends up in the Castle. In the empty Castle-Theatre, K., the second, who, like a card joker, outplayed other actors, proposes to build a new world alone: "And everything seemed to K. primordially new and submissive to him, as if the earth and silence were waiting for him to master them and give everything new names..." [4, p. 325].

"The leap from the Old Testament to the New consists in shifting the emphasis from justice to mercy, from law to love" [5, p. 345], says the writer in her own essay commentary on the novel. Thus, the play of the old and the new in the novel leads to a series of transformations: the text from the theater of the absurd turns into a complete picture, the new hero undergoes evolution, successively passing through various stages of formation: from rebirth to penetration into the castle, and the new carnivalized reader is carried away by the text and is included in game.

The last scene of the novel, with its picturesqueness, no longer resembles a theatrical performance, but rather the canvases of old masters, which is also characteristic of many works by Marianne Gruber: the new hero looks out of the window of the Castle at the snowy plain and people leaving the village. The new naive reader of the novel is no longer a participant in the stage action: he is again outside the text, turning into a contemplator of the picture, leaving the impression of completeness and at the same time mystery, silence. This is the trend towards which all postmodernist works gravitate.

Thus, the multilevel structure of the author's text is based on three components - the idea of a possible world of the reader's fantasy, the presence of a new reader creating a possible world, and a new hero acting in this possible world. Due to its original duality, the new hero is likened to postmodern "ambivalent heroes" [3, p. 11], his otherness makes him also an "anomalous" hero [3, p. 15]. The image of the new hero K. the second complements the motif of the sad harlequin characteristic of Marianne Gruber's work and gives reason to speak of this hero as *homo ludens amoto ludo* - a person who plays seriously. In the philosophical sense, the concept of "possible world" probably intersects with the phenomenon of modern "possibilism" [9, p. 7] — "accentuated modality of possibility" [9, p. 7], helping to "get out of the deadlocks of postmodernism" [9, p. 7]. The term *homo ludens* is also found in one of the novels of the Strugatsky brothers, whose work is well known to Marianne Gruber.

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