



Section 3. Literature

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SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S INNOVATION TO THE AMERICAN LITERATURE. BASED ON MATERIALS OF THE COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES "WINESBURG, OHIO"

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Abstract

This article provides information about the brightest representative of American literature of the 20s-30s of the XX century, short story master, Sherwood Anderson and his invaluable contribution to the development of the novella genre in the US literature. The given article is based on the short stories from the collection "Winesburg, Ohio".

Keywords: *novel, folklore, novelistics, plot, content, realism, social injustice, average American, characters, image, town, play, narration, plot, composition, realistic novel, grotesque, innovation, dialogue, monologue*

Introduction

Sherwood Anderson played a defining role in the formation of that period of US literature that is called "The New Renaissance", the most brilliant period in the "short story" development. He is considered to be one of the significant and undervalued representatives of critical realism in the USA, the writer, whose creative work by many of its sides has prepared the magnificent art of Hemingway, Faulkner, Caldwell, Wolfe, Saroyan and others.

Back in the 19th century the novel genre has a very special place in the American literature. The novels of Washington Irving, Edgar Poe, Bret Harte, Mark Twain, Jack London, O'Henry and others literally made this

genre a national one. Among historical facts underlying this phenomenon are distinctive features of the American realism of the last century, ethnographic diversity of population, the diversity of cultural makeups, fast pace of life. All this could not better reflect the novel – surprisingly flexible and sensitive genre. The culture of oral storytelling was of great importance. A particular role in the dissemination of the novella genre was played by the system of journalism: for purely financial reasons, magazine owners preferred works of the small genre.

Short stories of the 20s are characterized by a discard of standard intrigue. Sherwood Anderson, being the novelist-reformer, along

with T. Dreiser led a campaign against a standard magazine novel with a sophisticated story. But the controversy about the plot that started in the 20s is not just an aesthetic debate. They are based on deep social background: the struggle to broaden and deepen the subject matter, the battle against the officially established optimistic outlook on life, against the tradition of "gentle realism". So the struggle for a new form was a struggle for a new content.

Literature review

By the early 20s "industrial" problem in its various aspects comes to the fore in the American literature. This topic was especially relevant in the era of the 30s. The global economic crisis has exposed the fundamental contradictions of industrial development and turned out to be the most powerful stimulus to radicalism which deeply reflected in art. At this time, a working novel flourishes, presented by such significant works as "Tobacco Road" (1932) by Erskine Caldwell, "Beyond Desire" (1932) by Sherwood Anderson, "Dubious Battle" (1936) by John Steinbeck. The meaning of the novel "The Disinherited" (1933) by Jack Conroy was determined primarily by the fact that using Larry as an example, the writer showed, without simplifying and straightening, the path of an ordinary American to the awareness of the social position and the ideals of the working class. Anderson set himself a similar task in his novel "Beyond Desire" (1932). His heroes, coming from the middle class, painfully try to overcome their duality and go over to the side of workers. An average American is one of the frequent characters of the American literature. An outstanding American critic Van Wyck Brooks wrote in his book "The Confident Years" that attention to the image of an ordinary man is a distinctive feature of American literature, its characteristic national feature. According to Brooks, a typical man, not burdened by ranks and titles, always was "a favorite of the American imagination", and this for a long period of time fundamentally distinguished American writers from their European colleagues who as Brooks stated, more frequently gave preference to "an officer and a noble man".

Research Methodology

One of the main trends of the American short story of the 20th century becomes psy-

chologism. The basic genre features of a psychological novel are deep revelation of the inner drama of characters and events caused by the cruelty and inhumanity of the capitalist existence, along with the concentration of action around one tense psychological situation. The founder of this very novel in the American literature is considered Theodore Dreiser, who as W. Faulkner expressed figuratively, is "Sherwood Anderson's older brother".

A deeply conscious approach to the issues of innovation distinguishes Sh. Anderson from formalist experimentation. And this approach became one of the most important causes of the writer's creative achievements. Sherwood Anderson sees his task in an honest depiction of reality, "tragedy and comedy of life" (p. 15), in the sincere protest against social injustice (p. 13), in the deep and all-around cognition and comprehension of the reality. The writer strives "to maximize his ability to feel, see, hear, smell", "be free, proud, courageous, to perceive the land, people, streets, houses, towns", absorb and digest as much as possible" (7, 173).

Analysis and results

The author was able to fulfill these creative principles more deeply for the first time in his collection "Winesburg, Ohio". Anderson's merit as a realist writer lies primarily in his depiction of the grey, joyless life of the American provincial outback. He was one of the first in the American literature who depicted the results of the pernicious influence of reality on the little man of the province – a little clerk, intellectual, farm worker. Most of the novella characters are crippled by this reality.

The life of Wing Biddlebaum ("Hands") is tragic and hopeless. The author skillfully introduces the social background that is the cause of Wing's tragedy. The stupidity of moral squalor and the emptiness of the town's inhabitants, who were not only to appreciate but even to understand the extraordinary poetry and tenderness of Wing's nature, have become a source of tragic conflict in the story. As a result, Wing suffer from a moral shock, a disease, an alienation from people.

- For twenty years Adolph Myers had lived alone in Winesburg. He was but forty but looked sixty-five. The name Biddlebaum he got from a box

of goods seen at a freight station as he hurried through an eastern Ohio town... He had been ill for a year after the experience in Pennsylvania, and after his recovery worked, as a day laborer in the fields.

Many other inhabitants of Winesburg and its surroundings also live their gloomy lives. With astonishing psychological prowess, the author shows their eternal dissatisfaction and search for truth, loneliness and confusion, lost love and the desire for understanding. Unable to adapt to reality the heroes cannot resolve their doubts, find the right path in life. Under the pressure of living conditions, the heroes reach a religious fanaticism (Jesse Bentley – “Godliness”) and misogyny (Wash Williams – “Respectability”):

- Wash Williams was a man of courage. A thing had happened to him had made him hate life, and he hated it whole-heartedly, with the abandon of a poet. First of all, he hated women.

Languishing in aimless waiting and searching for lost love (Alisa Hindman – “Adventure”, Kate Swift – “The Teacher”):

- Behind a cold exterior the most extraordinary events transpired in her mind. The people of the town thought of her as a confirmed old maid. In reality she was the most eagerly passionate soul among them, and more than once, in the five years since she had come back from her travels to settle in Winesburg and become a school teacher, had been compelled to go out of the house and walk half through the night fighting out some battle raging within.

Become dark loners (Enoch Robinson – “Loneliness” and madmen (Elmer Cowley – “Queer”), incurable alcoholic (a stranger – “Tandy”).

They are all somewhat eccentric and morbid, and the author calls them grotesques. In many stories there is a noticeable contrast between George Willard and the main characters, who are trying to get close to a young newspaper reporter. G. Willard, as the unity of the scene (the town of Winesburg), is the link that unites the stories in the collection. It is no coincidence that the characters are drawn to George: they open their souls to

him, they talk about their troubles and sorrows. George has not yet been dragged into the mud of bourgeois life of Winesburg, and has not been spoiled by it. Feeling his purity and spontaneity, Wing Biddlebaum, Kate Swift and some others want to save the young man from the inertia and vulgarity of Winesburg and teach him to live. Wing Biddlebaum warns him against imitating and trying “to become like everyone else in the town”. In the story “Mother”, George becomes the cause of a conflict between his father, who, in the name of prosperity, wants to stifle his youthful dreams, and his mother, who seeks to develop in her son those healthy shoots that were destroyed in her by bourgeois respectability. An important place belongs to the story “The Teacher”, in which Kate Swift, caring for a young journalist, patiently and passionately explains to him how to understand life correctly, how to portray it truthfully and honestly.

- “You will have to know life,” she declared, and her voice trembled with earnestness. She took hold of George Willard’s shoulders and turned him about so that she could look into his eyes. A passer-by might have thought them about to embrace. “If you are to become a writer you’ll have to stop fooling with words,” she explained. “It would be better to give up the notion of writing until you are better prepared. Now it’s time to be living. I don’t want to frighten you, but I would like to make you understand the import of what you think of attempting. You must not become a mere peddler of words. The thing to learn is to know what people are thinking about, not what they say.”

Of course, these words also revealed the author’s attitude to the tasks of literature.

But the significance of the image of George Willard is not limited to the fact that it connects the stories in the collection. This is a completely independent image given in development, in knowledge and study of the secrets of life.

The writer shows his spiritual and physical maturation and final liberation from the stuffy atmosphere of Winesburg (“Departure”). And besides, this is not an escape. A

deeply receptive nature, he moves from simple curiosity and a limited understanding of life to the desire to actively participate in the events of the town, to understand life deeply and widely. Therefore, his role varies from story to story. In the first stories, at the beginning of the collection, he is given a small place: he listens, observes and receives advice more, but acts little and is often passive (“Hands”, “The Philosopher”, “Mother”). George Willard gradually begins to take a more active interest in events (“Respectability”), realizing that one can only write about what he himself has seen and experienced (“The Thinker”), tries to write stories, staying in the editorial office of “the Winesburg Eagle” late at night (“The Strength Of God”). The young and strives to learn something and knows how to comprehend life. The author shows that the young journalist’s path to learning about life is not simple and straightforward. And he had days when he felt unhappy, vague aspirations and secret inexplicable desires took possession of him, too. Getting acquainted with the ordinary workers, George comes to express deep sympathy and extraordinary affection for them (“Drink”).

The life of the workers like the fate of many other heroes of Anderson’s stories, is difficult and sometimes tragic; the author’s attitude towards them is always deeply sympathetic. Anderson’s great advantage as a realist writer is that in his stories he revealed the social reasons causing the suffering of a “little man”. Masterfully using artistic detail, the writer very expressively, although sparingly, depicts a significant group of owners, the culprits of the joyless and unpromising life of “little people”. They are bankers, rich farmers, shop and tavern owners, newspaper publishers, agents of various companies.

Skillfully drawing parallels between the 20th century and the last third of the nineteenth century in the life of the United States, in a number of stories the writer shows how the uncontrollable passion for acquisitiveness arose in America, how in the process of capitalist development some families rose and others went bankrupt (“Sophistication”, “Thinker”). Anderson in the collection “Winesburg, Ohio” acts as an innovator in the development of the American psychological short story. Here for the first his multifaceted

art of storytelling was clearly demonstrated. The author’s psychological characterization occupies a prominent place in the stories; external actions are subordinated to the disclosure of the inner world of the characters. Usually the story begins with a brief description of the scene and a portrait of the hero, with the external portrait being closely subordinate to the internal. The external features of the portrait of the characters are given as if in passing, but much attention is paid to the main internal features of the heroes of the stories. Describing the agricultural worker Ray Pearson, the author emphasizes in him the qualities caused by the plight of a large family and the hard physical labour of the worker:

- “Ray was a quiet, rather nervous man of perhaps fifty with a brown beard and shoulders rounded by too much and too hard labor. In his nature he was always serious.”

In a number of stories, any external detail that most clearly catches the eye and represents the most significant feature of the hero’s appearance becomes the leitmotif of the entire narrative (hands of Wing Biddlebaum – “Hands”, paper balls of Dr. Reefy – “Paper Pills”).

Wing Biddlebaum talked much with his hands. The slender expressive fingers, forever active, forever striving to conceal themselves in his pockets or behind his back, came forth and became the piston rods of his machinery of expression. The story of Wing Biddlebaum is a story of hands. Their restless activity, like unto the beating of wings of an imprisoned bird, had given him his name.

This technique serves as a vivid psychological characteristic of images. The psychological portrait is dominated by features that show the unusual behavior and character of the hero shaken by some blow or crisis. Thanks to this Sherwood Anderson was able to embody the most essential features of a little man during that period in the United States, showing the uncertainty of his position, complexity of quests and contradictory feelings.

An important role in the creation of psychologically complex images in stories belongs to dialogues and especially monologues. A Dialogue in stories is natural and accurate and, being one of the means of recreating the inner world of the characters,

reflects their everyday experiences, the illusory nature of happiness and the ugliness of the existing social reality.

Conclusions

With the help of an internal monologue, the writer penetrates into the most secret corners of the characters' inner world, revealing the complexity of their psychological development depending on the outside world. In the story "Loneliness" with the help of an internal monologue, the author shows how Enoch Robinson's gradually growing break with life leads him to complete loneliness. The final monologue reinforces the tragedy of the old man's loneliness:

- "I'm alone here, I'm quite alone, – the voice told. – It was warm in my room, I had friends there, but I have no one here, I'm alone".

Loneliness

Skillfully using a variety of artistic techniques, Anderson created unique psychological images, showing their dialectical dependence on the phenomena of social reality. The collection of stories "Winesburg, Ohio" became a bright page in Anderson's creative activity, a true work of critical realism in American literature.

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