

Section 4. Literary Theory

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WILLIAM TREVOR AND IRISH WRITERS IN XX–XXI CENTURY FICTION

Introduction. At the turn of the XX and XXI centuries in the creative work of Irish and Irish English speaking writers there has been a rethinking of ethnic and national stereotypes associated with religious outlook, life and cultural traditions. Over time, taking into consideration the background of modern realities, they have changed. The creative output of Irish writers at the turn of the XX–XXI centuries is the most noticeable phenomenon both in European and in world literature. Due to the fact that Irish literature has long remained in the shadow of English verbal art, it was perceived as literature that is English, and only with the independence associated with the concept of “Irishness” the problem of national identity loss has become extremely relevant in the modern Irish and global literary space. In the intercultural dialogue of countries united by a common historical past the issue of gradual identity loss has become a major one for many modern Irish and Irish Anglophone prose writers, poets and playwrights. The study also notes that the genre of the novel has become the most relevant for Irish writers (for example, W. Trevor, J. O’Connor, A. Enright), since on the one hand, was the closest genre to the English novel, on the other hand — was a powerful way to express their disagreement with the current situation, a kind of resistance to the existing Anglo-Irish period of decolonization.

Keywords: Irish writers; Irish Fiction; XX–XXI century; Past, present and future.

The long process of assimilation of the national worldview with an alien English definitely had irreversible consequences for Irish society, in particular its culture, literature, as a result of which there was a rethinking of ethnic and national stereotypes, symbols and images associated with everyday life, cultural traditions of the Irish. Some contemporary novelists, such as W. Trevor, J. O’Connor, F. Stewart and J. Banville did reject the concept of “Irishness”, considering it obsolete. Moreover, they note that their aesthetic views were being formed due to European culture than the national Irish. At

the same time, the ironic reflections of these authors about the most common motives: splendor expanses of the earth, striking with its lush greenery, the Irish, suffering from the “traumas of the past” and the eternal struggle with the “Brits”, Catholicism with its exaggeratedly terrible secrets within the Church and beyond, only confirm that a number of national traditions that define the concept of “Irishness” are transformed, subjected to rethinking, and not rejected as obsolete.

Undoubtedly, the Irish literary tradition has grown from a strong and distinctive national culture (Gaelic), carried through the centuries, and continues to evolve, taking challenges of our time. Harmonious and at the same time contradictory Irish and English literature, the very phenomenon of English-Irish literature, the status and national specificity of which is still controversial (as well as the status of many Irish writers, such as W.B. Yeats, O. Wilde, J. Joyce, S. Beckett, etc.), as well as the synthesis of Gaelic and English, which has been developed over a long period of time, are those unique features that distinguish the modern Irish literature from a number of other literatures at the turn of the centuries, respectively.

As we can see, the following dominants can be traced in the modern Irish literature: on the one hand, the attraction to bold experiments and the search for new means of artistic expression, on the other — the tendency to preserve traditions, due to the cult of the historical memory, carried through the centuries and revered.

All in all, the place and role of mythologism in the modern Irish literature is difficult to overestimate. It is important to note that because of the coming to replace each other trends of the time myths have evolved over time and become less stable and as a result are no longer perceived as universal. Due to the fact that neomythologism or secondary mythologism respond to the requests of a certain society in a certain period of time to take into account definite realities, myths gradually have become heterogeneous and multidirectional. Historical events, the status of a famous person could be mythologized, i.e. freely interpreted, and this further contributed to the polarization of the image, respectively. Consequently, myths were actualized and subsequently used by many Irish and Irish Anglophone writers to demonstrate their creative energy and bright individuality. The reinterpretation of ancient myths, archetypes and mythologems under the given circumstances, modern realities has become for the authors a kind of departure from the existing reality (Anglo-Irish) and a powerful means for creation its alternative, more favorable or clear version.

It should also be noted that in the middle of the XX century in Irish literature there were two trends laid down by J. Stephens and J. Joyce while working on the harmonious coexistence of fact and fiction, one of which is based on the ancient Celtic mythology or literary traditions of the middle ages, the other — an experimental novel or antinovel. Thus, the reinterpretation of ancient Celtic mythology, the medieval tradition and the tradition of antinovel acquired special significance for the Irish An-

glophone writers of the mid and late twentieth century, including William Trevor. It is necessary to emphasize that the writers J. Joyce and J. Stephens had an impact on the development of not only Irish, but also European, world literature, having studied and demonstrated the possibility of combining fact and fiction in their works. It should also be noted that in the middle of the XX century in Irish literature there were two trends laid down by J. Stephens and J. Joyce while working on the harmonious coexistence of fact and fiction, one of which is based on the ancient Celtic mythology or literary traditions of the middle ages, the other — an experimental novel or antinovel. Thus, the reinterpretation of ancient Celtic mythology, the medieval tradition and the tradition of antinovel acquired special significance for the Anglo — Irish writers of the mid and late twentieth century, including William Trevor.

The concept of “literary genre”, as well as its formal and substantive basis have caused and continue to cause numerous discussions in intellectual circles. In connection with the beginning in the XVIII century process of “decanonization” of genres and the shift from formal to substantive aspects of genre structures (in the XX century) in Irish literature, along with traditional genres, canonized in a certain historical period, th new, more flexible ones appeared. Having free, open structures genre formations became the most relevant and therefore hierarchically rose in contrast to those that were authoritative in the previous historical period. However, this does not mean that some genres have been completely supplanted, they have evolved and modified in accordance with the historical period and the demands of the Irish society. It should be noted that genres arise in response to extremely important events, phenomena of cultural and historical life and their evolution is due to shifts primarily in the social sphere of a certain society.

It would be wise to emphasize that the genre of novel, short story, essay are not differentiated and are marked by a common genre of short story in Irish literature. Given the close connection of this genre of flash prose with the genres of ancient Irish folklore, among researchers there were no discrepancies about the origin and involvement of a short story to the traditional genres of Irish literature (as it was previously with the genre of the novel). Also, the relevance of the genre of the short story can be due to the following fact: despite the limitation in volume, this genre of flash prose has proven its ability to embody not only the private life of people, but also the events of national-historical scale (often in allegorical form), which was previously characteristic mainly for the genre of the novel. So, a short story, despite the compactness of the depicted events, was able to accommodate all the upheavals that had to go through the Irish society at the turn of the century, namely: the postceltic period, the forced migration of citizens who were disappointed in the existing reality, the decline in the authority and influence of the Catholic Church and as a consequence of the rethinking of family values, their gradual loss, etc. These extremely significant events,

the phenomena marked the dominant range of problems in the short stories of many Irish and Anglo-Irish writers (L. O'Flaherty, G. Moore, M. Lavin). In short stories can also be revealed the truths characteristic of the parable, as well the rethinking and playing with mythological subjects, as well as the works of unsurpassed predecessors (J. Joyce, S. Beckett, S. Heaney, M. Ó Cadhain, etc.) that proves the existence of a special neomythological consciousness characteristic for aesthetics of modern Irish writers, including William Trevor.

Conclusion

The general results of the research are summarized that at the turn of the XX–XXI centuries Irish and Irish Anglo-Irish writers, including William Trevor, truthfully and comprehensively reflect modern realities in their works and urge society to rethink many ethnic and national stereotypes. Thus, William Trevor, an Anglo-Irish writer, made a huge contribution to the development of the contemporary Irish literature. His diverse creative work, represented by novels, collections of short stories, non-fiction convinces us that he truthfully continues to show the modern realities in which the Irish society at the turn of the century is and reflects on the fate of her native country, its past, present and future.

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