

CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMALE PROTAGONISTS IN THE LITERATURE OF THE VICTORIAN ERA

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ABSTRACT

Victorian literature is one of the most important milestones in the history of English literature. The works of this period are markedly different from the earlier romantic works. Romanticism is replaced by a realistic novel characterized by critical realism, which is reflected in the works of all representatives of Victorian literature. Well-known artists such as Charles Dickens, George Elliot, William Thackeray played an important role in the formation of the Victorian novel. But it was during this period, for the first time, that along with men, Elizabeth Gaskell, sisters Bronte, Jane Austen, and other women writers took an active part. The purpose of the article is to discuss on the characteristics of the female heroines depictions, and contribution to the Victorian literature.

KEYWORDS: *Victorian Novel, Problems Of Women In Society, Bronte Sisters, Jane Austen, Female Protagonists .*

INTRODUCTION

The work of Elizabeth Gaskell, sisters Bronte, and Jane Austen reflected the ideological attitudes of the period, its social structure, and the need to change traditional family and moral norms. But the most worthwhile contribution of the creators is the focus on the role and problems of women in society[1]. Therefore, the place and position of women in society becomes one of the main themes in Victorian literature, and accordingly, the central image in the works of contemporary writers is the female image, which was first revealed in such detail.

The authors pay special attention to the changes in the status of women in English society, as during this period there were great changes in many spheres of life in England [4]:

- In the social sphere (family, work, education, as well as changes in the relationship between men and women);
- In the economic sphere (women's participation in public life, in the economy of their country);
- In the spiritual sphere (changes in the norms of morality and values that determine the behavior of women).

To see these changes in the image of women in Victorian novels, let's take a look at the most famous works by writers of this period who were able to depict the diversity of the image of

women. Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865). Her first novel, *Merry Barton*, depicts the hardships of the Victorian working class, and the author places the protagonist in this complex environment.

Merry is independent enough that she manages to be developed by sense of responsibility for her father and her future for three years after her mother's death. She prefers to refuse to work as a servant because she is not willing to tolerate others telling her what to do and how to do it. Merry has a strong spirit and is ready to endure all hardships by working under control of a tailor just to help her father [1]. From childhood, Merry had her own set of behavioral norms, which she could not avoid even in adolescence. She respects and loves both her parents and relatives, she is calm with men, she does not allow inappropriate words or actions in conversation with Mr. Carson.

Of the other well-known authors, the sisters Bronte can be mentioned, as were English novelists Charlotte Bronte (1816-1855), Emily Bronte (1818-1848), and Anne Bronte (1820-1848), who established critical realism in 19th-century English literature. Bronte's work is of great importance, especially for Victorian period literature and the whole world. The protagonists of Sister Bronte's novels are undoubtedly women, who are mainly strong, morally upright, able to defend their dignity, achieve their goals, responsible for their actions and not to blame anyone for their actions [2].

Charlotte Bronte's first novel, *The Professor*, tells the story of a young man named William Crimsworth, who works as a teacher at a girls' school. Accordingly, there are many female protagonists in the novel. The same system of depicting the three main beauties of the school is used - first of all, the appearance of girls is described, and this or that feature of the character is noted through the expression of appearance. For example, Calmness and sobriety were emphasized on the description of the character of Elijah's beautiful appearance.

Elijah was a tall, beautiful girl with an angelic face; neither thought, nor emotion, nor passion bothered her face, but the eyes were the only sign of life in this great, beautiful body. Similarly, in the depiction of the other two protagonists, Hortensia and Carolina, their appearance and character traits are used in a reciprocal sequence, then their true nature is revealed through a detailed description of the actions, thoughts, and feelings of the three girls.

This is exactly the scheme of depiction, but the opposite depiction is used in Sylvia's image. Charlotte Bronte gives Sylvia an unobtrusive look, bringing to the fore the features of her beautiful inner world. Sylvia was distinguished by her meekness in communication and ease of understanding, she was even quite sincere, but physically she was not perfect; her poor health fell behind her development. Due to her physical shortcomings, Sylvia was destined to spend the rest of her life in a monastery, and she was ready to spend her life on the path of a nun with her heart and mind.

Although the work was written by a female author, the depiction of girls was described as a male author. Charlotte Bronte's other novel, *Jane Eyre*, is about the life of Jane Eyre, a humble but proud and self-absorbed orphan girl. The main advantage of the novel is that there is novelty in almost all aspects.

First, Charlotte Bronte creates the image of a freedom-loving, sane girl; Jane Eyre is endowed with courage, strong moral principles, and she is capable of making independent decisions. The protagonist was often called a rebel because such behavior violated the rules established in Victorian society [1]. Second, the novelty for Victorian period literature is that the protagonist is

not distinguished by beauty, his charm is hidden in the inner world. In this way, the author wanted to emphasize once again that a woman is unique, that she can be a person, not a beautiful toy for her husband. Third, the author does not distance the protagonist from society. Jane is extraordinary because of her inner qualities, but at the same time she does not oppose the world - on the contrary, she is a part of this society and fights for her rights and place in this world [4]. Jane, like most Victorian women, disagrees with the idea that her husband (even if she has a loved one) should be an ash who is completely obedient and does not agree with such a role.

However, knowing that the person she loves the married, she immediately abandons him and wanders the “big roads” without money, because her pride and moral values do not allow her to be with the man she is married to. Emily Bronte’s culmination of creativity and her only novel is *Wuthering Heights*. Like Charlotte, Emily Bronte creates the protagonist of the novel, Catherine Earnshaw, a volatile and vulgar girl, but does not leave her without external charm and gives her a beautiful appearance.

But Catherine, who had been among the upper classes for a while, changed considerably and realized that she was an attractive young girl, and also learned to be hypocritical and self-serving, but to maintain her courageous and angry nature. Thus, Emily Bronte shows how destructive the habits of the upper-class society can be for a young girl’s outlook. Through the heroine of Catherine Earnshaw, the author criticizes the norms of Victorian society that required women [2].

Ann Bronte’s novel *Agnes Gray* is one of the most typical works of 19th-century English literature of this period. In the novel, Ann Bronte speaks easily and simply about events that were wonderful and important to her, but these events are reflected in the destinies of many women in the Victorian era.

"I began this work with the firm intention of not hiding anything and that those who were determined to read it would benefit from it". *Agnes Gray* is Ann Bronte herself. One of the main problems raised in the play is the problem of education and upbringing, and the writer skillfully overcomes these problems by giving the protagonist the qualities necessary to solve it. At the same time, the author pays special attention to the mental purity of the protagonists, their ability to spiritual maturity, the ability to be independent of social status, and like Charlotte Bronte, Anne Bronte emphasizes the inner world and qualities of her protagonist. it gives [2].

For Agnes, her quest for an independent life becomes a disappointment when confronted with a cruel reality. However, Agnes is determined to achieve perfection in her housekeeping work because she is a girl with strong will and unchanging moral principles and strives for perfection, but her efforts have yielded no results. The first failure did not break Agnes and she decided to try her luck in another family. I recovered from the hardships and my life experience increased. For me, I was thirsty to restore the respect I had lost in the eyes of those whose attitude was superior to that of the rest of the world.

However, the strict adherence to social norms in this family could not have been a matter of raising the subject of moral values, which was a difficult factor for Agnes because she was a girl of high morals. Again, the disappointments did not overwhelm him, but rather healed her character and strengthened her sense of self-worth. Anne Bronte also ends her story happily - *Agnes Gray* marries William Weston, a priest, and for the rest of her life, with three children, the Weston family lives modestly and happily, not saying they will reach their wealthy neighbors”.

Jane Austen (1775-1817) was an English writer who was one of the main representatives of realism in English literature. She is an English writer who created a “moral novel” whose works are considered masterpieces of English literature and who are able to attract readers by the sincerity of the plot, the ability to reveal the inner world of all the protagonists [4]. In her works, Jane Austen presents to the reader a variety of stories in which young girls who are the protagonists marry a worthy young man and always end happily, based on mutual love and respect.

Marriage for love is one of the innovations of Victorian society. Elizabeth Bennet (“Pride and Prejudice”) politely but firmly rejects a marriage to her advantageous cousin Collins, Fanny Price (“Mansfield Park”) courageously resists the advances of the wealthy, charming, but completely immoral Henry Crawford, Emma (“Emma”) in general does not plan to marry, she is satisfied with life in her father's house, until her heart has found true love. Thus, Jane Austen describes her heroines as self-sufficient girls, independent of men, capable of firmly defending their views and convinced in the search for true love [1].

In *Sense and Sensibility*, as in many other novels, Jane Austen turns to psychologism as an integral artistic device for portraying characters. Therefore, in creating the images of the main characters of the novel, Eleanor and Marianne, Jane Austen uses the method of introspective psychological analysis, which consists in comprehending the inner world of the heroines through internal monologues. With their help, we learn that the older sister Eleanor is a reserved and well-bred girl, able to hide her feelings, as it was supposed to be by Victorian norms. She analyzes the actions of others and her own behavior, from which she draws certain, logical conclusions. The younger sister Marianne, on the contrary, is too sensitive, passionate, she has a highly developed imagination, which is why the girl often behaves recklessly.

The novel “Pride and Prejudice” is the main asset of Jane Austen and her “beloved brainchild”. The plot of the novel cannot be called entertaining, since the main goal of the author was to show the relationship between people and consider some aspects of human psychology. Therefore, there is no direct description of the main character Elizabeth Bennet in the work - we only learn that she is charming and sweet, but not like her older sister.

The girl does not have special secular abilities, but she is very energetic, has a cheerful disposition and an analytical mindset, but her main advantage is her pride and self-esteem. It is these qualities that define her as an educated, sane and self-willed girl. Thus, in the literature of the Victorian era, for the first time, female characters appear, shown in all their diversity.

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