



Interpretation of the Female Image in The Novel

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Abstract

This article analyzes the interpretation of the female image in the novel *A Farewell to Arms*. The character of Catherine Barkley, created by Ernest Hemingway, is revealed as a symbol of human feeling, love, and devotion within the context of war. The study examines the heroine's psychological experiences, her inner world, and her relationship with the protagonist, through which the subtle aspects of feminine nature are illuminated. The findings substantiate that the female image in the novel functions not only as a symbol of love, but also as a moral support, a source of hope, and an embodiment of humanity.

Keywords

fiction, novel, autobiography, female image, character, apotheosis, realism, symbol, protagonist, war setting.

Introduction

The 19th century is considered the golden age of English literary novels. One of the important themes widely covered in the works of this period is the theme of war. War not only serves as a background for the development of the plot, but also becomes a key factor in understanding human nature, social conflicts, and historical changes. War is also a central theme in the work of Ernest Hemingway. Naturally, the heroes of war stories are men, but a distinctive feature of Hemingway's work is that he constantly pays special attention to the theme of "love in war", and this, in turn, makes him a wonderful creator of unique female characters [1, 2]. Hemingway is not just a writer, he is a creator who strives for the naturalness of the characters he creates, lives with his characters, and deeply penetrates their psychology.

A Farewell to Arms is a novel that is partly autobiographical, reflecting the writer's life. Hemingway, like Frederick Henry, served as a Red Cross ambulance driver in World War I. On July 8, 1918, while delivering supplies to Italian soldiers in Fossatto di Piave, he was seriously injured by shrapnel from a mortar shell. Doctors removed 227 pieces of metal from his legs. Henry is similarly injured in the novel.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the features of the depiction of women in the context of war in 19th-century English literature, as well as to determine the role and symbolic significance of the image of women in Hemingway's work. The analysis not only allows us to understand the place of women in war events from an artistic point of view, but also reveals how the fate of women in wartime was perceived and interpreted by the author [3, 4].

References and Methodology

"In every national literature there are female characters who stand out against the background of other heroes." The image of a woman in the novel "*A Farewell to Arms*" is revealed through Catherine Barclay, one of the most complex and ambiguous characters in Ernest Hemingway's work. As we noted above, "*A Farewell to Arms*" was written based on the author's own experiences during the First World War. It is extremely difficult to connect the concept of "woman" with the concept of "war" [5-7]. The main character is based on the nurse Agnes von Kurowski. She cared for the wounded Hemingway in the hospital and, despite the age difference, Agnes was seven years older than him, promised to marry him, but later refused to go with him to America and married another man. "The psychological portrayal of characters in works of fiction not only helps to understand the content of the text, but also reflects the cultural and value views of society and encourages observation of human nature" [8, 9]. In the work, Catherine's death was a kind of revenge for the writer's first love, for reference, at the time of writing the novel, Hemingway's second wife, Pauline Pfeiffer, underwent a childbirth operation, but both mother and child survived.

Results

Catherine Barclay is an English nurse working in a military hospital during the First World War. "In art and literature, female images are often endowed with the highest human qualities" [10]. At first, her image seems typical of all women: a gentle, caring, selfless woman. Frederick is

completely devoted to her love for Henry. She speaks of her desire to “be everything” for her lover, which meant her denial of herself. Outwardly, Catherine embodies the ideal of femininity: softness, sensitivity, intuition. However, upon closer analysis, it becomes clear that her behavior is a kind of psychological defense caused by trauma. Before meeting Henry, she lost her husband in the war, and her love becomes mainly an attempt to compensate for the loss, to create new meaning in a world dominated by death and chaos. Through Catherine, Hemingway contrasts two worlds: the world of war and the world of love. If war is devoid of logic and humanity, then love becomes the only place where humanity can be saved. The woman in the novel serves as a symbol of salvation, warmth, and inner refuge. It is with her that the hero finds peace and a temporary sense of happiness. In this sense, the image of a woman takes on existential significance - she becomes a support for a person in a meaningless and destroyed world.

Discussions

Now that we have considered how Hemingway created the image of his hero, it should be noted that in the first half of the 20th century, the themes of love and premarital sex were uniformly condemned in many works. The novels of Hemingway's contemporaries and compatriots, for example, in Theodore Dreiser's “Jenny Gerhardt” and “An American Tragedy” and William Faulkner's “The Sound and the Fury”, depict the morality of pre-war American society, showing that premarital sex was absolutely forbidden for representatives of all social classes, and that the birth of a child out of wedlock turned a woman into an outcast. The writer repeatedly repeats this through the words of Catherine's close friend Ellen Ferguson, who spoke out against their attitude. At a time when such premarital sex was unanimously condemned in literature, Hemingway's hero was almost a revolution. As a true realist writer, E. Hemingway tries to justify the actions of Catherine's character with a tragic past. The death of her fiancé, whom she had known and loved since childhood - the author, apparently, wants to convince the reader that this sad experience prompted the girl to violate the rules of behavior typical of women in the first half of the twentieth century. On the first day of their acquaintance, Catherine says the following about her deceased lover to Frederick Henry: “...if he wanted, I would spare him nothing. If I had understood a little, he could have achieved what he wanted. I would have married him, or I would have satisfied him without marrying him. Now I understand all this. But then he was going to war, and I did not understand anything, I did not have enough insight” [11]. The girl very clearly hints to the young man that there is no point in prolonging their courtship during the war, that is, she clearly states that she is ready to enter into a marriage before marriage. The next day, he kisses her, and two days later he confesses his love for her, which completely surprises Frederick Henry. However, from the point of view of literary criticism, interpretations of Catherine's character are somewhat controversial. Some scholars consider her an idealized “male embodiment” of a woman - passive, completely devoted to a man, devoid of an independent life goal. Others focus on her inner strength: Catherine consciously chooses love as a form of resistance to war and death. Her calmness, readiness for self-sacrifice, and lack of complaints demonstrate courage, not weakness. The meeting in the hospital, where Frederick is wounded and Catherine comes to work, ends with their transformation into a real “couple”. The man takes the initiative, and the woman fears that their relationship may be interrupted. She repeatedly asks Frederick if he loves her:

“– Do you love me?”

- Yes.
- Really, you said you loved me, didn't you?
- Yes, - I lied. - I love you.
- I didn't tell him that" [12]. Frederick avoids answering.

As the characters get closer, we observe a certain change in the image of Catherine, which E. Hemingway does not directly explain, but which is very consistent with his desire to portray the ideal lover from a male perspective. First of all, Catherine constantly says that she gives up her own identity and dissolves and disappears in the man she loves: "There is no such thing as "I". I am you. Do not separate me" [13]. The desire to live only for the interests of Frederick Henry leads Catherine to completely lose her instinct for self-preservation: she stays on duty at the hospital all night, almost collapses from exhaustion, and sails with him to Switzerland on a boat, although she is officially not allowed to leave Italy. The apotheosis of the heroine's altruism is the scene of childbirth, at which time she thinks not about herself or even about the child, but about whether Frederick has eaten dinner or not, and blames herself for causing him and the doctor so many problems. Catherine's attitude towards the unborn child is also very controversial. When she finds out about her pregnancy, she is the first to try to abort the fetus: "What did I do wrong? I tried everything, but to no avail" [14, 15] She does not want to tell Frederick about this, because she is afraid of hurting or worrying him. She does not feel any joy from the pregnancy, does not worry about her health and is not interested in buying things for the child. Before her death, she understands that she is dying, but the author does not tell us whether she knows or not that the child is stillborn, Catherine worries only about Frederick, she does not say a word about the child. She does not know herself as a mother at all, she focuses on understanding herself as a beloved.

Conclusions

Hemingway's image of Catherine violates all the canons of female images in the literature of that time: she takes the initiative in relationships, willingly agrees to intimacy, clearly enjoys it, does not demand official marriage, does not want to become a mother and is not interested in her child, focusing entirely on her love for a man. Before Hemingway, such a characterization would have been quite negative, but from the writer's point of view, Catherine tries to portray the ideal lover and what a woman should be like. Catherine's image does not correspond to the laws of realism, but it clearly answers the question of what men want. Catherine Barclay is also a very touching character. A fragile girl loses her lover during the war, fate gives her a meeting with another man, but her soul is wounded and she is afraid to enter into a new relationship again. She behaves strangely with her new friend - after first trying to kiss him, he gets a slap, and then the girl kisses him herself. These actions reveal her desire for protection and support, as well as her fear of losing everything again. Catherine worships her lover unconditionally, like a god, and does everything to earn his favor. She considers her pregnancy a problem, because it was not part of her man's plans. She admits that she is not real, but a part of her lover.

The tragic ending enhances the symbolic weight of the image. Catherine's death during childbirth destroys the illusion of salvation: even love cannot overcome the reality of war and fate. A woman becomes a victim, just like men, of the world of destruction that destroys men at the front. At the end of the work, the image of a woman is combined with the theme of loss and loneliness -

the heroine is left alone in the face of the meaninglessness of existence. Thus, the interpretation of the image of a woman in "Farewell to Arms" goes beyond the love story. Catherine Barkley is a symbol of lost harmony, a symbol of hope, and at the same time a tragic confirmation of Hemingway's idea of the fragility of happiness. Through her, the author shows that in a world of war, even the most sincere feelings become defenseless against fate.

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