

THE IMAGE OF A WOMAN IN DAPHNE DU MAURIER'S WORKS

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Daphna du Maurier is a noted English woman writer of XX century (1907–1989), whose works provoke readers' unfailing interest. Her works are often considered in scientific studies as a product of popular literature. Methods: The article covers important novels by Daphna du Maurier from the viewpoint of significance and functions of female images. A particular interest in the direction of the designated problem is the discussion of the novels written in different periods and belonging to various forms of artistry. The typology of female images is analyzed in the novels "Spirit of Love" (1931), "Rebecca" (1938), which the critique refers unanimously to the literature of fiction, in the novels "Marie Ann" (1954) and "Glassblowers" (1963), which are considered to be the literature of nonfiction. Results: All attention of the writer is centered on the problems of modernity. At the same she can immerse into the world of the past or plainly fantastic in order to find answers to timeless questions. It is a woman with her intuitive skill to put her finger on the truth who takes the most active part in this search. Discussion: Despite the fact that in all works by Daphna du Maurier the world is seen with the eyes of woman, this writer's works fall beyond both the so-called women's prose and feministic literature. The authoress had created her bright female images for more than half a century, which is undoubtedly reflected in representation and dynamics of these images. Summary: The analysis of typology of female characters is conducted on the basis of correlation of different narrative discourses (pseudoromantic, sentimental, modernistic). At the same time the principal feature of all Daphna du Maurier's female characters is the desire and capability to overcome the gender stereotypes.

Keywords: *Daphna du Maurier, female image, typology of character, English novel, genre specifics.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Daphna du Maurier is a noted English woman writer of XX century (1907–1989), whose works evoke unfailing interest in readers [1]. In scholarly studies her works are often considered as a product of popular literature. One can agree with it if to treat this notion as «numerous varieties of literature, appealed to utmost wider general audience of contemporaries...» [2], and «love-story (ladies', women's, rosy) novel» [3].

In recent years the research interest is focused on genre specifics of her works. So, Liz Hoggard writes in her article: "Once dismissed as a Gothic romance, as "women's fiction", Rebecca is now regarded as the most extraordinary psychological thriller..." [4]. E. B. Borisova and L. V. Paloyko in their work also note that in du Maurier one can find the elements of love-story novel, psychological detective novel and intellectual thriller. Besides, the traditions of women's Gothic novel are observed [5].

In the light of our problem the dominant of women's position marked by criticism generates a lot of interest. Irrespective of genre specifics of a work the authoress's attention is centered on the problems of

modernity in order to find answers to eternal problems. It is a woman with her intuitive skill to put her finger on the truth who takes the most active part in this search.

2.METHODS:

The authoress had created her bright female images for more than half a century, which is undoubtedly reflected in representation and dynamics of these images. In this connection the aspect such as typology of female images is actualized. Therefore, there are good reasons for considering the novels written in different periods and belonging to various forms of artistry. The material of study are the novels "Spirit of Love" (1931), "Rebecca" (1938), which the critique refers unanimously to the literature of fiction, in the novels "Marie Ann" (1954) and "Glassblowers" (1963), which are considered to be the literature of nonfiction.

3..RESULTS:

3.1. "Spirit of Love" was written in the context of a very difficult and interesting epoch of modernism, characterized metaphorically as the epoch of "twilight of the gods" [6]. The title of the novel is a line from Emily Bronte's poem and is indicative of connection with romantic esthetics, with its cult of individuality and deep knowing of spiritual ideal getting over momentariness of mortal life [7]. The theme of life and death is implicitly represented in the title of the novel, which indicates indubitable value priorities of the author in the age of "twilight of the gods". D. du Maurier writes her first chronicle in genre of family covering the life of four generations. Without going into detail of the traditions of this genre that has become classical, note that the English authoress makes a woman the central character in her novel. Her Janet Kumbe, who was at the point of origin of the history of the family of seamen and shipwright, becomes the head of this family and the guiding star. In contrast with the other representatives of the family, Janet Kumbe is distinguished by strength and non-ordinariness. Her only weakness is awareness of her being woman: «Сильнее, чем когда бы то ни было, чувствовала она порыв и желание собрать все силы и идти быстро, но, взглянув на свое уродливое, бесформенное тело, закрывала лицо руками, стыдясь того, что родилась женщиной»[8]. / "Stronger than ever it was, she felt an impulse and desire to strain every nerve and go quickly, but having looked at her ugly, shapeless body, hid her face in her hands, ashamed of the fact that she was born a woman". So, du Maurier in her first novel already touches upon the problem having been subsequently called gender. It is interesting that prior to writing and publication of the first novel by du Maurier, in the English literary circles there had been public discussion about the published theoretical essays by Virginia Wolf ("A Room of One's Own" 1929, "Three Guineas" 1928)[9]. But one cannot say that the problems of feminism stated by V. Wolf became the leading in du Maurier's quest for inspiration [10]. Both writers' world outlook was formed by artistic environment of their families, but the philosophy of aesthetic principles proved to be different. So Wolf was aspiring to an outright experiment, while du Maurier was finalizing her first author experience as a traditional chronicle. Exceptionality of her female character is determined not by revolutionary views on sexual equality and right of choice of the sexual partner but her integrity, entrancement by the sea and its mysteries. "In this book I have almost too many ideas. I want to give life and death, sanity and insanity; I want to criticize the social system, and to show it at work, at its most intense." [11]. It seems that du Maurier experiences these doubts but they belong to V. Wolf. At the same time du Maurier managed to "describe life and death, health and madness" and to render the reality using the romantic symbols and the image of bright but dead woman. And if aesthetic search for new expressive means led Wolf to creating the text of "stream of consciousness", then du Maurier in her first novel preferred the technique of classical narration connected with the real fact that was the basis for unfolding the plot of the novel "Spirit of Love."

3.2. "Rebecca" is the most well-known novel by du Maurier. Criticism considers it as one of the versions of women's gothic novels. Accepting this opinion, it is worth noting a very interesting interpretation of

Gothic embodied in female images. The name of the female character died long before narrating is the title of the novel. She like the female character of “Spirit of Love” keeps on being present invisibly in the life of people knowing her. Like Janet Kumbé, during the whole narration she remains an inaccessible ideal, for the narrator of this tragic story anyway. Obviously, du Maurier plays on the motif of death of the beautiful woman who almost drove Edgar Poe’s mad: “a nairy and spirit-lifting vision more wildly divine than the phantasy which hovered vision about the slumbering souls of the daughters of Delos” [12] («воздушное и возвышающее видение, своею безумной божественностью превосходящее фантазии, что осеняло дремлющие души дочерей Делоса» [13]). But the authoress’s view turns out to be somewhat sensible in comparison with a great American romantic. Introducing a Gothic element, the author actualizes the aspects of the being such as death, crime, mystic horror, mystery, irrational. It turns out at the end of the novel that they all connected with the “ideal” Rebecca. She was killed by her husband in a fit of madness induced by infinite cynicism and impudence of his beautiful wife. A fascinating and at the same time frightening secret of this women exposes the problem which has captured the human minds for centuries and which is common to refer to “the war of sexes”. One of the most attracting moments of this novel is that even at the end, when the vitals have been torn out, it remains opaque who is, however, the main character – Rebecca or Mrs de Winter, calm, modest and very well-wishing? From our point of view, du Maurier, breaking the accepted stereotypes of the existing ideas about types of female nature, creates two polar female images being sides of the same coin. It is true, a woman can drive one crazy (as in the novel “The Spirit of Love”), but she also can also give strength for revival (and this motif is again from the novel “The Spirit of Love”)

3.3. Criticism relates the novels “Marie Ann” and “Glassblowers” to the nonfiction literature, because the basis of these works is Daphne du Maurier’s family legends. The prototypes of the female characters of these works are the great grandmothers of the writer. Literary biographies of these women have much in common with the heroines of the novels discussed above. The two are bright, talented, strong and well-adjusted persons who strive to become firmly established in life accordingly to their own ideas. Very early, as a little girl, Marie Ann Clark realizes: «Мальчики хрупки, мальчики плачут, мальчики изнежены, мальчики беспомощны. Мери Энн прекрасно знала это... Мужчины тоже хрупки, мужчины тоже плачут, мужчины тоже изнежены, мужчины тоже беспомощны. И к этому выводу Мери Энн тоже пришла на основе собственного опыта. Но мужчины ... зарабатывали деньги или сорили ими... Где-то здесь была скрыта несправедливость. Нарушилось какое-то равновесие» [14]. / “Boys are fragile, boys cry, boys are, boys are helpless. Marie Ann pretty well knew it ... Men are also fragile, men also cry, men are also effeminate, men are helpless too. And Marie Ann also came this conclusion from her own experience. But man ... earn money or spend money like water ... Somewhere there was a hidden injustice. It disturbed a balance”. That is, a gender problem is again stated. And, of course, it is no coincidence, as it was repeatedly marked by ambiguous sexual orientation of the authoress [15]. However, the problem is much wider than it is actually formulated in the very novel: «...ей удалось выяснить, к чему стремится мир, которым правят мужчины. Следовательно, надо стать им равной. Играть по их правилам, в полной мере используя свою интуицию» [16] / “... she succeeded in finding out what the world ruled by men aspires to. Therefore, it is necessary to become their match. To play by to their rules, making the most of her intuition.”

Du Maurier stresses the main quality of this heroine to be active optimism of her nature. This is confirmed by the analysis of the artistic space biography of Marie Ann, who is always going somewhere, changing the countries, cities and streets. «Они все время куда-то переезжали. Нигде не задерживались. Ее постоянно охватывало нетерпение, она никак не могла усидеть на месте – Элен называла это «мамина божественная неудовлетворенность», и в один прекрасный день начинались сборы, упаковывались сундуки, перевязывались коробки, и все трое отправлялись в дорогу в поисках какого-то недостижимого Эльдorado» [17] / “They always moved to somewhere. Stayed too long nowhere. She was always seized with impatience, it was hard for her to keep her place - Ellen called

it “mother's divine dissatisfaction”, and one fine day they packed suitcases, tied up boxes, and all three started on their journey in search for an unattainable Eldorado.”

The exceptionality of the heroine has the character of individualistic rebellion, but not romantic, as it was in “Spirit of Love”, or pathologically irrational, as in “Rebecca”, and it is purely earthly. «Она не будет терпеливо ждать, когда ей сделают предложение. Она не превратится в няньку и посудомойку» [18] “She will not await with patience when she will be proposed. She will not turn into a nurse and a scullery maid”. Intuition involves her “into the men’s world which has so little to do with broken cups, children being ill and dirty linen” [19]. Symptomatic is that the material symbol of the desired goal becomes an attribute of the man’s suit— a silver button “which was previously on the prince’s jacket”. They are to find the lost button, «и благоденствие семьи восстановится» [20] / “and prosperity of the family will be restored”. The famous courtesan will pass her way of ups and downs, and she will find the silver button. It is obvious that moral principles is not a strong point of this heroine. But the ethical issues do not occupy a central place in the work. The image of the main character is formed not at the expense of the psychological experience but thanks to her hair-trigger reaction to external impulses of a hostile world, which is ruled by man: «Один урок она усвоила навсегда: когда в момент опасности приходится принимать решение, нужно выбирать именно то решение, которое первым пришло в голову» [21] / “She learned a lesson well forever, when in a moment of danger one has to make a decision, one needs to choose exactly the solution that is the first to come to mind”. Even as a child she strongly rejected the mother's life stance: “I had no choice” and chose her own one to act. An event final of the novel disappoints: all the men that she had in her life are dead, and she being faithful and forgotten returns to the place once hated. But important is quite another matter. Marie Anne Clarke’s life, reconstituted in the novel by Daphne du Maurier, was the road to herself.

3.4. “Glassblowers” can also be called a novel-biography that focuses on a man of marked individuality again. Here one can trace all the features revealed in the analysis of previous works: development of the literary traditions; the dominant role of the main female character, which is not less important with her death, and, at times, it gains strength; an active position in life in spite of the established stereotypes and norms; manifested rebellious nature almost in childhood allows us to clear formulate life goals. At the same time, 56-year-old Daphne Du Maurier view of the fate of women changes. The heroine of “Glassblowers” is close to the ideal image. At the same time it is devoid of romantic exclusivity of Janet Kumble, Gothic mysticism of frantic Rebecca, or ethical promiscuity Marie Ann Clark. Image of Magdalena evokes admiration and pride for her involvement in the destiny of women, for the dignity with which this character: «После целого дня хлопот по дому и по хозяйству на ферме... способна была написать письмо на три страницы по поводу цены на партию товара, отправляемого в Париж, потом бежать и варить кофе отцу и остальным мастерам, работающим в ночной смене, вернуться домой, поспать час-другой, а потом встать в пять часов, чтобы присмотреть за утренней дойкой» [22] / “After a day of trouble around the house and household on the farm ... is capable to write a three pages letter about the price of a consignment of goods to be sent to Paris, then to run and make coffee to father and the rest of the craftsmen working in the night shift, to go home, to get some sleep for an hour or two, and then to get up at five o'clock, to supervise the morning milking”. All this because she «она была свободна, могла организовать свою жизнь так, как она считала нужным. Здесь не было строгих глаз, которые могли бы за ней следить, некому было ее критиковать или обвинять в нарушении традиций или обычаев, а если родственники ее мужа и осмеливались это делать, то она ведь была женой управляющего, и у них быстро пропадала охота повторить свои попытки» [23] / “she was free, able to organize her life with her own decision. There were no stern look at her, no one could criticize her or accuse of violating the traditions or customs, and if the relatives of her husband dared to do this, she was the wife of the manager, and they were discouraged from repeating their attempts.”

4 .GENERAL CONCLUSION.

To summarize, it should be emphasized that the analysis of several works of the writer cannot guarantee exhaustive depth of the problem study. However, by way of the example of the discussed novels one can draw certain conclusions. So, it is obvious that Daphna Du Maurier prefers to recreate the world seen with the woman's eyes, not only because she is a woman herself. She has the novel written under the authority of man ("The House on the Bank"). Of greatest interest is the fact that every story told by her has no time finishedness. Whether it is about the life of generations of one family ("Spirit of Love"), the mysterious events of Gothic Menderli ("Rebecca"), dramatic twists and turns of the courtesan's fate ("Marie Ann") or difficult everyday life of the woman maintaining large family ("Glassblowers"), a source of strength of all her characters is an intuitive sense of connection of times. An artistic image content may vary from the romantic interpretation to the "realistic" everydayness, but this feeling is always indispensable key to the continuation of life.

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