

A HISTORY OF WOMEN'S PROSE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Abstract. This article talks about the appearance of women's prose in English literature and the role of women in literature, and also reflects on the evaluation and views of women's work in the process of the formation of women's prose. The article shows that women's literature developed almost simultaneously in Britain and America.

Key words: women's prose, women's literature, feminism, feminine, feminist literary criticism

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Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada ingliz adabiyotida ayollar nasrining paydo bo'lishi va ayollarning adabiyotda tutgan o'rni haqida so'z boradi hamda ayollar nasrining shakllanishi jarayonida ayollar ijodiga berilgan baho va qarashlar haqida ham fikr yuritiladi. Maqola shuni ko'rsatadiki, Britaniya va Amerikada ayollar adabiyoti deyarli bir vaqtda rivojlangan.

Kalit so'zlar: ayollar nasri, ayollar adabiyoti, feminizm, feminin, feministik adabiy tanqid

ИСТОРИЯ ЖЕНСКОЙ ПРОЗЫ В АНГЛИЙСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ

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Аннотация. В данной статье говорится о появлении женской прозы в англоязычной литературе и роли женщин в литературе, а также размышляется об оценке и взглядах на женское творчество в процессе становления женской прозы. В статье показано, что женская литература развивалась практически одновременно в Британии и Америке.

Ключевые слова: женская проза, женская литература, феминизм, женственность, феминистское литературоведение.

INTRODUCTION. Recently, more and more female names have appeared in literature. Women's prose in English is very popular among readers all over the world. However, as noted in one of the dissertation studies, the true role of women in literature has always been questioned. Yu. G. Remaeva proves that male writers in English are represented by the word "writer", while female writers are called "woman-writers". The researcher also says that works written by women are called "woman's fiction" and men create "fiction" or "literature" because "men write about things that are important to all mankind" and "women write about things that are important to them"[1]. Some scholars question a woman's ability to be creative, believe that the creative use of language is given to men, or that a woman does not have the same qualities as male writers, so she is not capable of being a genius. Others believe that genius is a male phenomenon, and talent is a female phenomenon. However, there are supporters of the third point of view, who do not doubt the right and ability of creativity of women.

For example, according to M. V. Rabjaeva, female writers discovered a new world in their novels: the world of women is depicted through the eyes of a woman. Writers in their works offered society not only new topics, but also new behavior, defended a woman's right to make an independent choice and an independent destiny [2]. The appearance of female authors writing novels, where the woman who created her own life is at the center of the story, marked the beginning of the phenomenon of women's prose [3]. However, there is still no agreement among researchers on this phenomenon. The most pressing issues are related to problems of definition and the existence of many texts grouped under the name of "women's prose". Despite the fact that the concept of "women's prose" has firmly entered the everyday life of both authors and readers, some researchers consider the existence of this concept to be doubtful, and this is confirmed by the absence of its definition in literary dictionaries.

MATERIALS AND METHODS. In addition, according to A.A. Korbeinikova, in modern literary criticism, one can observe the unanimity in the negative attitude towards women's prose, which is manifested in the description of the works of female authors: second-rate romantic novels, the fragmented heiress, etc. [4]. However, despite all the controversy caused by the studied concept, it cannot be denied that women's prose has its place in modern society, and the ambiguous attitude towards it confirms this once again.

At the same time, it should be noted that cultural dictionaries give the following definition of women's prose: "women's prose is a socio-cultural phenomenon that occurs during the development of women's public space and is expressed in the emergence of artistic texts that describe the world, social experience and practice". If we agree that language is a reflection of the history, spirit and national identity of a certain people, and that works of art express language in writing, then, without a doubt, it is necessary for the emergence of this concept to occur in society. We can talk about the existence of a certain connection between the phenomenon of female prose and socio-cultural processes. Thus, researchers believe that the women's movement in the West in the 9th century coincided with the emergence of women's literature, but during this period, women's prose appears in the form of small texts. First of all, representatives of feminist literary criticism, widespread in Western Europe and the United States, were engaged in the study of women's prose. Almost every major American university offers courses on feminist literature and criticism and the gender aspects of literary production. As Professor I. A. Jerebkina noted, the main requirement of feminist literary criticism is the need to revise traditional views on literature and writing practice, as well as to create a social history of women's literature [5].

Thus, within the scientific article "Feminist literary criticism" I. A. Jerebkina examines such a phenomenon as women's literature. Following Elizabeth Gross, the author of the article divides feminist criticism into the main components: 1) women's literature - the gender of the author is emphasized; 2) women's reading - emphasis is placed on the student's perception; 3) attention is paid to the style of women's writing; 4) women's autobiography - the content of the text is emphasized. I.A.Jerebkina, according to the above classification of E. Gross, distinguishes three main types of texts: 1) women's texts - written by women authors; 2) texts specific to women - written in a culturally called "feminine" style; 3) feminist texts - written deliberately against the methods, goals and tasks of dominant patriarchal literary styles.

The above article is the most detailed review of methodological works on the theory of "women's literature", "women's reading", "women's letters" and "women's biography". The author elaborates on the main theoretical principles of the aforementioned components, as well as issues such as gynocriticism, female-oriented literature, female experience, female authorship, etc. Thus, analyzing the concept of women's literature, I.A. Jerebkina stops at the work of "New feminist criticism" by Elaine Showalter, which includes classic works of feminism's poetry. The main task of «Women's literature» is to study the topics and genres of literature created by women; study of the psychodynamics of female creativity, linguistics and the problems of women's language, the history of women's literature, as well as the study of individual writers and their works. In addition, E. Showalter confirms two main methods of analysis of "women's literature": "feminine criticism" and "gynocritic". The first method involves reducing the patriarchal sexual code of women and the gender stereotypes of male-created literary history, the essence of which is the exploitation and manipulation of traditional stereotypes of women [6]. Gynocriticism begins when we make women stop writing in the spaces between the lines of male literature and focus on the newly visible world of authentic female culture.

In addition, E. Showalter is known for her another work "A Literature of Their Own", in which the author describes how women's literature in Great Britain from the Victorian era to the 1960s developed. It is known that English literature is clearly represented by female names such as Fanny Burney, Maria Yedgworth, Mary Shelley, Bronte sisters, Elizabeth Gaskell, G. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Bowen, Ivy Compton Bennett, Muriel Spark, Iris Murdoch, Jane Austen. The author divides the process of the formation of women's prose into three periods, which implies three stages of the development of the feminist movement: feminine phase (starting in the 1840s, when women used male pseudonyms and ending with the death of George Eliot in 1880), feminist phase (1880-1920) and female phase (1920-1960). E. Showalter wrote that she was considering literary subcultures such as African-American, Canadian literature and Anglo-Indian literature, she tried to define women's

literature as a product of a subculture developed in the main direction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to E. Showalter, the phase of feminine is represented by authors such as the Bronte sisters, Elizabeth Gaskell, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Harriett Martineau, George Eliot, Florence Nightingale, Charlotte Young, Dinah Mulock Craik, Margaret Oliphant and Elizabeth Lynn Linton. These female authors attempted to merge with the male tradition, resulting in the conflict of “subjugation and resistance” that can be observed in many of their works. Although female authors filled the novel market at the time and made up the majority of readers, they still felt “paralyzed by metaphor” because they were confined to the confines of Victorian bourgeois morality. In the second period, women emerged as a middle class, suddenly attacking traditional standards and values, demanding recognition of their independence and rights. In this period, women’s struggle for their rights takes many forms: they address the poor, slaves, working class and women of light virtue, and thus freely pour out their sense of injustice. This period is known by names such as Mary Braddon, Rhoda Broughton, Florence Marryat, Sarah Grand, Elizabeth Robbins and others. The third period can be characterized as a period of liberation from dependence on the opposition as a means of self-determination. Authors such as Dorothy Richardson, Catherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf, as required by the polarization of the world, develop gender differences and turn to female aesthetics. However, E. Showalter criticizes them for their androgenic nature.

In general, E. Showalter’s work is considered one of the most important in terms of considering the process of formation and evolution of women’s prose in Britain, despite the fact that it received a number of critical comments later.

As for the theoretical simplicity of the author, twenty years later, in “Twenty Years on: A Literature of Their Own Revisited” the author does not defend her previous work, but rather in the field of feminist criticism announces that she allows intellectual disputes.

The genesis and evolution of American women’s prose is traced in Kathryn van Spankeren’s “A Brief History of American Literature”, in which one chapter (“Women Writers and Reformers”) is devoted to the work of American women. The first American woman to have her work published was Anna Bradstreet. His collection of poems was published in England in 1650. As Kathryn van Spankeren points out, colonial writers such as Anna Bradstreet, Anne Hutchinson, and Sarah Campbell Knight had a significant impact on society and literature despite the harsh living conditions and dangers of the time. In addition, the researcher believes that the best poetry of the colonial era was written by a slave named Phyllis Wheatley, and the author calls her an important African American writer.

Feminist philologists later discovered a number of other writers, including Susanna Rawson, Hanu Foster, Judith Sargent Murray, and Mercy Otis Warren. The correspondence between Mercy Otis Warren and Abigail Adams played an important role in the lives of American women. Abigail Adams demanded the inclusion of provisions guaranteeing the independence of women’s rights in the Constitution.

However, women’s literature in the United States began to develop in the 19th century, and, of course, this process is related to the socio-historical processes characteristic of the country at that time. The ideas of feminism and social movements awakened not only Europe and Great Britain, but also the United States. As Kathryn van Spankeren points out: “In the 19th century, American women experienced many manifestations of inequality. They had no rights, vocational schools and most universities were closed to them. They could not speak openly or even attend meetings; they could not own property. Nevertheless, various women’s societies appeared. Through letters, personal friendships, official meetings, newspapers, and books, women accelerated social change”.

At that time, the concepts of “women’s rights” and “women’s liberation” were used in the sense that we understand the word “feminism” today [8]. Early feminists, who included both women and men, advocated for women’s equal rights in social institutions, the family and home, and education. One of the first works dedicated to the protection of women’s rights was the English writer, philosopher and feminist Mary Wollstonecraft’s “A Vindication of the Rights of Women”, published in 1792. The author states in her essay that the reason why women seem to be at a lower stage of development than men is their lack of education. She believes that men and women are intelligent beings and proposes to build a society based on intelligence. In the 1830s, social movements began to emerge in the United States based on his ideas, one of which was known as abolitionist. Representatives of this movement

demanded fundamental changes in the social system, for example, the abolition of slavery. As mentioned above, there were many women's groups during this period, and their activities served as the basis for the emergence of new literary traditions. According to Kathryn van Spankeren, sentimental novels by women writers were very popular [7].

They appealed to the students' emotions and often dramatized pressing social issues, especially those related to the family, women's role and responsibility. At the forefront of the abolitionist movement was Lydia Child, who in her "History of the Position of Women in Different Ages and Among Different Nations" (1855) argued for equal rights for women and pointed to their historical achievements. The works of Lydia Child had a great influence on another writer of the publicist - Margaret Fuller. Fuller's "Nineteenth-century woman" is considered one of the first studies of the role of women in a society that is generally very American. Kathryn van Spankeren says that the writer often uses the democratic principles and theses of transcendental scholars. It analyzes the many cases and harmful consequences of sexual discrimination and suggests specific measures to be taken against it. Many of his ideas are surprisingly modern. She emphasizes the importance of the "self-independence" that women are deprived of, because "they are taught to recognize their rights externally, not to discover them within themselves".

Other famous fighters for equality and the abolition of slavery were the sisters Sarah and Angelina Grimke, who were the first women to address public lectures to an all-male audience. The Grimke sisters saw a parallel between racism and discrimination against women in their works. "Although roughly two centuries have passed since the Victorian era, it is clear that women writers still struggle for recognition and acknowledgement, especially in the literary genres where men appear more dominant than women" [9].

CONCLUSION. As can be seen from the above, women's literature appears in Great Britain and the United States at about the same time, which is associated with the ideas of feminism, which first spread in the West, and then in the United States. However, for modern women, the ideas of feminism cease to be interesting and relevant, because they have already achieved freedom. Of course, we must pay tribute to this movement, which contributed to the independence of women and the self-identification of women in society, this led to the recognition of their equal social status with men. It is evident that women writers still battle for recognition and credit in the twentieth century even though the Victorian era was nearly 200 years ago, especially in literary disciplines where men are more prevalent, greater than women.

The most independent and free literary works by self-assured women authors emerged in the twentieth century, ultimately redefining and reshaping women's literature.

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