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MANIFESTATION OF GENDER INEQUALITIES IN “THE LITTLE FRIEND” BY DONNA TARTT

The current research is an attempt to look at the peculiarities of gender inequalities and gender discrimination in the southern states of the United States of America. The problem of feminist literary criticism is neither new nor well researched at this point of time; therefore any research in this sphere is rather relevant. Being progressive country, where feminism is well developed in the north, situation in the southern states of the USA was and still is rather different: people in those states tend to support and rely on old norms and practices, and that means that women are perceived not as fully functioning members of society, they were facilitators for men's success and advancement in social circles and professional life. Feminism and women's studies are one of the most relevant trends of modern theoretical research. These issues are pertinent to sociology, psychology, linguistics and the last but not the least literary studies. Literature, especially fiction, is the sphere where both new and old ideas find their implementation and interpretation and it is additionally the vast field of languages' pragmatic aspect realization. On the basis of the literary work by an American writer Donna Tartt the authors of the current piece make an attempt to analyze the functionality of a southern American family and the roles of females in this family in particular and the whole society in general. Having looked at the discourse of the main characters of the novel the authors of the study come to the conclusion that the role of women was largely underrated. Males had the opportunities for development, prestigious career, professional growth and, most importantly freedom of choice. Females were left with submission, emotion, lack of ability to react and make decisions as well as overcome difficulties and be capable of presenting a sound judgment. In “The Little Friend” by an American writer Donna Tartt readers come across peculiar characteristics of females' societal functioning in the southern states America; Donna Tartt gives opportunity to the readers to interpret those peculiarities in the manner acceptable for them (thus making the readership a collective co-author).

Key words: feminism, feminist discourse, modern literature, literary fiction, female characters.

Problem statement. Under the current trends of globalization and integration multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary approach [1] has become methodologically relevant both in education and science. Literary criticism as well as comparative literature issues can no longer be studied without connections to philosophy, psychology, sociology and other spheres of scientific knowledge.

The problem of feminist literary criticism is neither new nor well researched at this point of time. In this piece we are not going to try and debate that the category of gender is primarily a social and cultural construct, however we are planning to

accentuate the fact that a literary work is a battle field where gender as an instrument of further oppression is used for control and dominance [2]. However, it should also be noted that, on the other hand, it may well be used as an instrument of fight and resistance. Literature and literary criticism are extremely reactive to all the changes that take place in social, cultural and political spheres, that is why it would be naïve not to consider literature as a source of influence on society; a means of communication of mainstream ideas and ideology; a means of propaganda, control or historical retrospect based on the scope of engagement.

From the scientific point of view such scholars as Sigmund Freud, Wilhelm Reich, and Margaret Mead; philosophers of the Frankfurt School – Herbert Marcuse and Theodore Adorno; gender literary theory representatives Lisa Tuttle, Elaine Showalter, Jennifer Baumgardner, Ami Richard, Kate Millet, Judith Felterbey, Michelle Wallace. Simone de Beauvoir, Naomi Littlebear and many others researched the issues connected with feminism and feminist discourse. The main purpose of feminist is to grasp women's oppression, paying attention to gender, race, social status and sexual preferences.

In European context, feminism is one of the most influential trends of the XX century. On the one hand, it is a broad social movement for the rights of women, or the feminist movement, and on the other – a complex of socio-philosophical, sociological, psychological, cultural and linguistic theories that analyze the status of women in society, and these studies are known as feminist theory. At present, feminism offers an alternative to the existing picture of the world, the opportunity of which you must first believe. This gives some scholars the reason to speak not only about the feminist movement or the feminist theory, but also about “feminist theology”, which is “the theology of experience trying to expose, comprehend and improve the situation in a society related to the abuse of women's rights” and their discrimination [3]. Today it is assumed that the time of the birth of feminist ideas refers to the Renaissance with its relation to man as a co-creator of God. It is in this era that the first treatises of Christine de Lysan and Cornelius Agrippa appear, in which openly the suppression of the personality of a woman and the unfair treatment of her from society appear [4].

The history of the struggle of women for their rights, being part of the history of mankind, is almost unknown to most people. Only in recent decades, feminism has become the subject of public debate, research and academic discipline at universities. In the modern Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, feminism is defined as “the theory of equality in society, as well as a social movement in order to achieve equality between sexes, primarily by expanding the women rights and opportunities for women in all spheres of life” [5].

It is believed that the term “feminism” was coined by a French socialist and theoretic Charles Fourier in the early XIX century. He perceived a feminist as anew woman, someone who will change the social life and its standards and at the same time will be changed herself under the conditions of reciprocation. It was Fourier conviction that

the social progress is tightly connected with the extension and expansion of women's rights [6]. The use of the word “feminism” as a term that refers to the ideology of equality of women in society is known, according to Anglo-American historians, since 1894 and by the beginning of XX century. This very term – “feminism” – has been used by women's rights fighters and advocates not only in the US, UK and other Western European countries but also in less industrialized countries such as Russia, Japan, India, Egypt, Turkey, and Argentina.

The Civil War (1861–1865) has not only revolutionized and politicized women's public life, but also had a great impact on their private affairs. That war radicalized women's consciousness: even those who were not engaged in politics previously joined the political thought and got involved in political debate. Educated women of the late XIX century in their letters and diaries increasingly affected political issues. However, the cultural tradition separating the women's sphere of activity from the socio-political one again and again forced them to be ostracized for their audacity.

In the late XVIII – early XIX centuries many supporters of early feminism in America regarded marriage as the main tool of oppression of women. A similar situation was in England. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) in her work “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman” described in detail the state of ignorance and miserable submissiveness, in which, by virtue of social prejudices and system of education, women were doomed to live in [7]. The theoretical foundation has strengthened the position of feminism: it became diverse in form and content. By the beginning of the XX century, suffragettes were active both in the USA and throughout Europe. They advocated the political and legal equality of women; and at the same time Socialists defended the idea of equal wages for women's labor and women's participation in trade unions. This was also the time when radical feminists started to propagate the ideas of conscious motherhood and birth control. As a result of the slow gains of all these feminist activities, by the end of the XX – early XXI century public stereotypes and norms already allowed a woman to go beyond the boundaries of the home in order to get education, and they even allowed them work and to be widely ridiculed for doing it.

Aim of the research. The aim of the current research is an investigation of the peculiarities of feminist discourse in the novel “The Little Friend” by an American writer Donna Tartt.

Presenting main material. Feminism is a theory that has identified discrimination against women and an analysis of its causes. Relying on the methodological basis of the XXI century one can state that there are many trends in feminist theory (Marxist analysis, phenomenological, psycho-analysis, discursive practices, etc.) today. Common to all these varieties is a gender approach to understanding the nature of people, “where the focus of attention is the sex of a person and the main object of interest is “the nature of a woman” [9, p. 10]. In the 1970s, centers of feminist studies appeared in Western universities, with special programs including specialists in biology, physiology, anthropology, ethnography, philosophy, history, and philology. They have moved a dispute that divided feminists into adherents of the “egalitarian” approach and preachers of “female subjectivity”. With the proliferation of women’s studies, this dispute has not only been resolved, but has spread opponents in different directions. Researchers, whose analysis was based on the juxtaposition of “male” and “female” roles in different situations in different periods, offered their way out of this impasse. They proposed to introduce a new concept of “gender” – socially entrenched division of roles into male and female. They seek to translate the analysis of gender relations from the biological level to the social one, to finally abandon the postulate of the “natural purpose of sex”; to show that the concept of “sex” is one of the same meaningful concepts as “class” or “race” [10, p. 36]. After some recession, feminism is experiencing its second birth in the 1960’s and 1970’s along with radicalism, which is based not on the ideas of equality but rather on differences. There are many trends in the very ideology of feminism, depending on their methodological basis. In 1970, the work “Sexual Politics” by Kate Millett appeared, thus setting a new direction in analyzing the problem of the subordinate status of women in cultural aspect. This work also marked the next stage in the development of gender-based differences. Namely, Millett is shifting its focus from the socio-economic sphere to the field of psychology, consciousness, culture in the broad sense of the meaning.

Theory in feminist studies is inseparable from practice. The return from general theoretical schemas to the meaning of a particular human life, the rehabilitation of another as a female subject – this became the new tasks of feminine discourse. S. Sherwin, comparing the methodology of philosophy and the methodology of feminism, concludes that in Western philosophy Descartes

Method – from the general to the special is relevant, while in the case of woman studies it is better to apply Socratic Method – from the special to the general [10, p. 38].

The beginning of the theory of stereotyping formation was laid by American scientists. In 1922, Walter Lippman’s book “Public Opinion” was published and it was this particular book that introduced the concept of “stereotype” to scientific circulation. Analyzing the definition of gender, scientists have come to a deeper understanding of gender and, in particular, the role of gender stereotypes of behavior in the process of education. Any society is characterized by a set of stereotypes as signs that facilitate and simplify the process of social communication; they are one of the tools that help a person to navigate through events that occur daily.

Returning from the early attempts of fighting gender inequalities to present day one may come across an extremely logical question of whether the fight for equal rights is over. Have women achieved what they longed for? The issues of gender inequalities and discrimination as well as racial discrimination and segregation in southern American states have been highlighted in literary fiction by numerous authors, among them there is Donna Tartt. A writer, born in Mississippi, she deeply understood advantages and disadvantages of the region, its history and future opportunities, and what’s more important its opinions and attitudes.

Her second novel “The Little Friend” is a slight reminiscence of “To Kill the Mockingbird”, with a young girl as a protagonist and the issues of female submissiveness and gender inequalities on the background. The novel tells a story of a typical family in the American South; a family where a young boy dies under suspicious circumstances and leaving his family in a completely dysfunctional state. The mother gets into half catatonic state, as well as the elder sister Alison, which leads the father to changing jobs and moving to a different state in the search of the life accepted and understood by the society, while the younger daughter Harriet sets a goal of finding the person who killed her brother Robin and destroyed her family.

“In the mind of the town, and of Robin’s family, there was little question that Robin had met foul play of some sort. Exactly what sort, or by whom, left everyone at a loss. Twice, since the 1920s, women of prominent family had been murdered by jealous husbands, but these were old scandals,

the parties concerned long-deceased. And every now and then a black man turned up dead in Alexandria but (as most whites were quick to point out) these killings were generally done by other Negroes, over primarily)" [8].

This quote serves as bright illustration of gender and racial issues that permeated the society. Being killed was acceptable for a woman or a black; however, it was way too much for a white male child to die under suspicious circumstances. It was something incomprehensible for the minds of refined American society of the American South. The author implies that had it been one of the girls who was murdered the outcome might have been different for the family, as far as girls were not that precious comparing to the boys. Donna Tartt further depicts the sisters with natural drawbacks either in their appearance or character, while Robbi is portrayed as a miracle, someone who was joy to everyone's eye and a great pleasure for the whole family.

In spite of being sisters, the girls were extremely different both in physical appearance and emotionally.

"Sleeping or waking, the world was a slippery game: fluid stage sets, drift and echo, reflected light. And all of it sifting like salt between her numbed fingers" [8].

Alison was severely traumatized by the death of her brother, however, even regardless of this horrific event she was not much like Harriet from the beginning and later in her life. She was a beautiful disengaged girl, who was relatively popular at school, observed the traditions and eventually would become the real southern woman, without much to say and ready to do what she was told to by a man. Allison was emotional, irrational, nurturing, and weak. At the same time Harriet was everything but weak and willing to conform. She hated wearing dresses and looking beautiful, she wanted power and control, was it due to her natural unattractiveness or rebellious character that was what drove her.

"Harriet, the baby, was neither pretty nor sweet. Harriet was smart. From the time she was old enough to talk, Harriet had been a slightly distressing presence in the Cleve household. Fierce on the playground, rude to company, she argued with Edie and checked out library books about Genghis Khan and gave her mother headaches" [8].

According to the societal norms a girl, of course, could read, whether she should read was a completely another issue. A smart daughter, a rebellious daughter who wanted a say, who

wanted to be considered was a nuisance for a decent southern family. A girl must go to church and pray, not hang in the library and read. That was destiny of every girl; no female, whether she is young or old, could have freedom of choice. If you are a female you cannot be an independent human being, a fully functioning member of the society, responsible for your own decisions, financially independent with prospects for professional development:

"Dixon, who though a decent provider financially had never shown his daughters much encouragement or concern. His carelessness was nothing personal; he was a man of many opinions, and his low opinion of girl children he expressed unashamedly and with a casual, conversational good humor. (No daughter of his, he was fond of repeating, would inherit a dime)" [8].

The role of a man was to provide for the family, the role of a woman was to be silent, to look beautiful and take care of the house and please the man; there was no role for women in making any decisions bigger than dinner menu. Donna Tartt was far from being the only author who tried to draw attention to the problem of gender discrimination in literary fiction of American South; however, she is the one who enlightened this aspect in recent years.

"But everyone who knew Dix knew that he hadn't moved to Tennessee for the good of his family. Dix wanted a showy life, with Cadillacs and card parties and football games, nightclubs in New Orleans, vacations in Florida; he wanted cocktails and laughter, a wife who always had her hair fixed and the house spotless, ready to pull out the hors d'oeuvres tray at a moment's notice" [8].

Harriet's father did not choose to support his wife in the time when she could not cope with the grief after losing their son, instead he wanted a happy and easy life, without sadness and sorrow; he did not want to fight for his family, for his wife and daughters, because it was not appropriate for any man to express his feelings to inferior creatures like his wife or daughters.

Conclusions and suggestions. It may be believed that fight for gender equality is over; that today women can do absolutely the same as men do, however this is far from being either correct or true, and to get on men's territory requires women great effort. Military College Citadel in North Carolina with almost 200 years of history for the first admitted a woman as its undergraduate only in 1995 after a Supreme Court Ruling. And it took the administration over 20 subsequent years

to get over and appoint its first female regimental commander. The situation with gender and racial inequalities in southern American states is not new, and it changes very slowly. There cannot be too few sources to address this issue, highlight its relevance and draw attention to it. Fiction literature is not an exception. The novel "The Little Friend" by an American writer from Mississippi draws attention to this matter. In the novel the writer in a very natural manner depicts the status quo of southern American women. Donna Tartt talks about inferior positions that are characteristic for women. Their place is at home, Sunday prayer, church and community work, however these women do not have much of a say; they are not literally abused, and are even taught to love their position and role both in family and society. They are trained from the early age to be lady-like and follow the old society rules. They are still being taught that being inferior to men is not something they should hate and fight against, but cherish and be grateful for.

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Мунтян А. О., Шпак І. В. Виявлення гендерної нерівності в романі «Маленький друг» американської письменниці Донни Тартт

Дослідження є спробою поглянути на особливості гендерної нерівності в південних штатах Сполучених Штатів Америки. Хоча ця країна досить прогресивна, на її півночі фемінізм набув значного поширення, проте в південних штатах, як і раніше, вважають за краще дотримуватися «старих» норм і практик, коли жінки вважаються не самостійними членами суспільства, а доповненнями чоловіків, які забезпечують їхній успіх і соціальний розвиток. Фемінізм та дослідження, пов'язані з визначенням жіночої ідентичності, залишаються одним із найбільш актуальних наукових напрямів. Ці питання мають відношення до сфер соціології, психології, лінгвістики, а також до літературознавства та літературних студій. Літературна белетристика – це сфера, де як нові, так і старі ідеї знаходять своє тлумачення. Також це сфера реалізації прагматичного аспекту мови. На основі літературного твору американської письменниці Донни Тартт автори роблять спробу поглянути на функціональність південноамериканської сім'ї та роль жінок у такій родині, а також на їхню роль у соціумі. Розглянувши дискурс головних героїв роману, автори доходять висновку про те, що роль жінок у цьому суспільстві була значною мірою недооціненою. Належність до чоловічої статі давала можливість для розвитку, кар'єри та, що найголовніше, для вибору, тоді як належність до жіночої статі означала підпорядкування, емоції, відсутність здатності реагувати та приймати рішення, а також долати труднощі й бути здатною на здорове оцінювання. За допомогою художньої літератури Донна Тартт підняла проблемні питання американського Півдня та дала можливість читачам інтерпретувати ці проблеми прийнятним для них способом (таким чином автор надає читачеві роль співавтора).

Ключові слова: фемінізм, дискурс фемінізму, сучасна література, художня література, жіночі образи.