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FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE NOVEL “DEATH OF A HERO” BY RICHARD ALDINGTON

ANNOTATION

The literary process in the first half of the twentieth century acquires new styles, new techniques, it combines modernism and realism. For literary works, fantastic absurdity becomes characteristic, as a new experimental form. If in the nineteenth century, literary works described clear objective subjects, for example, love, evil, family and social relations, then in the updated literature of the twentieth century, abstract psychological methods are used primarily to describe a particular thing. The First World War became the cardinal theme of the art in the first half of the twentieth century, determined the personal destinies and formed the artistic personality of such writers as Richard Aldington. The novel “Death of a Hero”, which appeared in 1929, put the author – at that time already a well-known poet, critic and translator – into a list of prominent English novelists. “Death of a Hero” is the key work, created by the writer in the first two decades of his literary activity. This is a turning point and the most notable milestone. The shortcomings of the novel are now more obvious, but its merits are still indisputable; the sincerity of the confession, the passion and persuasiveness of the denunciations, the spontaneity and originality of the artistic expression. This book is written with the blood of a heart-dejected, sorrowful, but sympathetic.

Literature is filled with a special philosophy. The main themes used in literature are war, revolution, problems of religious perception,

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РИЧАРД ОЛДИНГТОННИНГ «ҚАҲРАМОННИНГ ЎЛИМИ» РОМАНИДА АЁЛ ОБРАЗЛАРИ

АННОТАЦИЯ

Йигирманчи асрнинг биринчи ярмидаги адабий жараён янги услубларни кашф этди – модернизм ва реализм каби услубларни бирлаштирди. Адабий асарлар учун фантастик абсурдлик янги эксперимент шакли сифатида ўз хусусиятлари эгаллади. Агар ўн тўққизинчи асрда яратилган адабий асарларда аниқ объектив мавзулар, масалан, севги, ёвузлик, оилавий ва ижтимоий муносабатлар тасвирланган бўлса, йигирманчи асрнинг янгиланган адабиётида, асосан, муайян нарсани тасвирлаш учун мавҳум психологик ёндашувлардан фойдаланилди. XX асрнинг биринчи ярмида, Биринчи жаҳон уруши адабиёт ва санъатнинг бош мавзусига айланди, кўплаб ёзувчиларнинг тақдирини белгилаб берди, бадий шахсни шакллантирди. Ана шу даврда ижод қилган ёзувчилардан бири – Ричард Олдингтон эди. Унинг 1929 йили ёзилган “Қаҳрамоннинг ўлими” романи ёзувчини ўша даврнинг таникли шоир ва ёзувчилари сафига қўшди. “Қаҳрамоннинг ўлими” асари ёзувчи адабий фаолиятининг дастлабки йигирма йилида битилган асарларнинг марказида туради. Бу асар муаллиф фаолиятининг энг муҳим даврини белгилаб берди.

Романда туйғулар, икромнинг самимийлиги, танбехларнинг эҳтиросга тўлалиги эътиборни тортади. Ушбу китоб юрак қони билан ёзилган – тушкун кайфият акси, ғамгин асар бўлиши билан бир вақтда, кўркем ижод намунасидир.

and most importantly – the tragedy of a person, a person who, due to circumstances, has lost his inner harmony. Lyrical heroes become more daring, decisive, extraordinary, and unpredictable. At the beginning of the 20th century, mass literature appears. Works that did not have a high artistic value, however, were widespread among the population. In this article we will try to describe the images of women in the novel “Death of a Hero”.

Key words: humanist writer, literary critic, creativity, stream of images, intellectual cognition, anti-war beliefs, interpersonal relations.

Мазкур асар ўзига хос фалсафа билан тўлдирилиб бойитилган. Ўша давр адабиётига хос бўлган асосий мавзулар – уруш, инқилоб, диний идрок муаммолари ва энг муҳими, ўз ички мувозанатини, ўзлигини йўқотган инсон, шахс фожиаси билан характерли эди. Мазкур мақолада айнан шу мавзулар устида, яъни қаҳрамонлар, аёллар образлари, уларнинг тақдири таҳлил қилинади.

Ушбу мақолада тадқиқотчи қаҳрамонни излайди, Ричард Олдингтоннинг ижодий йўли, у иштирок этган Биринчи жаҳон уруши йиллари, унинг дунёқарашини белгилаб берган асарлар шарҳи тадқиқига эътиборни қаратади. “Қаҳрамоннинг ўлими” асари, ундаги оила мотиви ва аёл қаҳрамонлар образларини таърифлашга ҳаракат қилади.

Калит сўзлар: гуманист ёзувчи, адабиётшунос, ижодкорлик, образлар оқими, интеллектуал идрок, урушга қарши эътиқод, шахслараро муносабатлар.

INTRODUCTION

Through the innovations, which started in numerous locales and underwent global transformation, the Introduction outlines how authors and works in the last century pluralize the very term “world literature”, signaling the transition to “world literatures” [<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/>].

The name of Richard Aldington is well known to the readers all over the world. Almost all of his novels were published in many countries: “Death of a Hero” (1932), “The Colonel's Daughter” (1935), “All Men Are Enemies” (1937), “Very Heaven” (1988), “Seven Against Reeves” (1968). The novels “Death of a Hero” and “All Men Are Enemies” were published several times. In 1961, the book of stories “Farewell to Memories” was published.

However, in England Aldington is known mainly as a poet and literary critic. The writer's novels are almost never republished in his own country, and his works between two World Wars are practically ignored. Aldington lived a long life (1892-1962). One can argue about where Aldington's talent manifested itself more clearly – in poetry or prose, but there is no doubt that the study of his early works is important for understanding all his creative talent.

For the first time, Aldington's works – these were poems – appeared in print in 1912. The poetry of the pre-war decade in England was called Georgian. It is characterized by a calm, lyrical tone, the predominance of the landscapes of rural England. Poets admire everyday things and sing them, avoiding the philosophical themes of rhetoric inherent in Victorian poetry. “The Georgians were distinguished by

their narrow outlook on life and love for everything small. They took a small weekend trip to a small cottage, where they wrote a little poem on a small topic. Aldington wrote in his memoirs, emphasizing the limitations of Georgian poetry. From the very beginning of his work, he adjoins a small, but much more active group – the Imagists.

The theoretical founder of Imagism was English poet and critic T.E. Hume, a student of the French philosopher A. Bergson. The subjective-idealistic doctrine of Bergson, which proclaimed intuition as the basis of knowledge, was developed by Hume as applied to art. Bergson argued that the stream of experiences was the only true reality. Opposing life, as a stream of consciousness, to the world of matters, Bergson criticized the intellect and denied the possibility of intellectual cognition of reality. This, in his opinion, is cognized through mystical intuition – philosophical and artistic. The perception of life as a stream of experiences was reflected in the attempts of poets to reflect it in a stream of images. Based on Bergson's irrationalism, Hume denied the need for a connection between the two [Antipova I.A., 2011; 78]. The illogicality was combined with the clarity of the image, with the condemnation of decorativeness and bombast in poetry. Avoiding abstractions, the poet strove to save words so that any poetic technique would fully justify itself, being in accordance with the general purpose of the work.

MAIN PART

Careful selection of poetic means, experimentation, the formalistic play of rhythms and colors, the widespread use of free verse – all this heralded the beginning of a new stage in the development of English poetry. But the group did not last long, during the war it broke up. While honing their works, the Imagists reduced them excessively, brought them to a minimum, with a focus on form. At the same time, a lot of philosophical content was lost, poems turned out to be photographs, perhaps accurate and elegant, but of some microscopic and insignificant phenomena of reality. Like the Georgians, the Imagists created a narrow world for themselves. Their poetry was not so much a renewal of literature as a striving for it. From the Georgians, however, they are distinguished by a sense of trouble, a premonition of change, a consciousness of the complete unsuitability of dilapidated poetic techniques for expressing new moods that they caught in the pre-stormy atmosphere of the eve of the First World War [Aldington R., 1998].

Young Aldington in Imagism was attracted by the spirit of innovation. He knew the history of English literature well and was sensitive to everything that was imitative and banal. It is not surprising that he found himself among the artists who condemned vulgarity, looking for new ways in art.

The titles of Aldington's early poetry collections emphasize the poet's connection with Imagism.

Rebellious spirit, aversion to everything banal and vulgar, i.e. those moods that led Aldington to Imagism became important in his work, leading him to search for his own path. The best poems of early collections, such as “Poplar”, “Childhood”, “Two Years”, reflect not a fantastically beautiful, but a very real world of impressions

and experiences of the poet in all its originality. But Aldington's way – from early collections to the peak of his work, the novel “Death of a Hero”, a book that absorbed many of the motives of his poetry, – lay decades later, through the First World War [Ionkis G.E., 1998;10].

The year of entering the military service (1916) was a turning point in the work of Aldington. The poet felt that the illusory world of his early poems was crumbling and he wrote:

In this confusion and passion / In a fierce struggle / In this immense sea of excruciating tension / I will cut off some peace / I will understand that the gods are unchanging / My anxiety grows every day / Pure forms elude me / I am powerless I contemplate countless suffering / And still dumb.

Herbert Read, a contemporary and friend of Aldington, calls this poem prophetic and expresses the essence of his work [Herbert R., 1936]. It is about a painful crisis, but at the same time about the maturation of talent. Mr. Read does not share the unfair opinion of those historians of English literature who believe that Aldington was unable to overcome the consequences of the trauma of the war.

The years of the First World War, in which Richard Aldington was a participant, determined his worldview. He went to war as one of the leading poets of English Imagism; he returned from the front rethinking life and took a fresh look at its true values [Aldington R., 1935; 92]. He recognized the greatest of them as a man and devoted his work as a writer to the struggle for him. Aldington kept his faith in man until the end of his days. A humanist writer, he defended it in the fight against the aesthetics of modernism and expressed it in the artistic images he created.

If at the beginning of his career Aldington believed that such a poet as T.S Eliot “poured new strength into the intellectual tradition of English poetry” [Averintsev S.S., 2004] and James Joyce and Aldous Huxley attracted him by the search for new paths in art, then over the years his assessments of these writers vary. He calls “Ulysses” a monstrous slander against humanity “[Encyclopedia Britannica] and not only does not accept, but also strongly condemns Joyce's pessimistic point of view on life and his dispassionate experimentation. “Can our admiration for Joyce’s talent be allowed to blind us enough so that we do not notice his false views on life?” [Gender Politics. Oxford English Dictionary] – asks Aldington in one of his post-war articles, not allowing himself the possibility of such blinding. Joyce's Freudian position and his anti-humanist view on man became not only alien, but also hostile to him. It is no coincidence that in the post-war years Aldington decisively breaks with Imagism and speaks negatively of formalistic trends in the field of poetry. And if earlier he was carried away by the struggle with the outdated canons of post-Victorian poetry, then already in the period of the 1920s nihilism and the deliberate non-objectiveness of the creations of the decadents turned out to be completely alien to him.

We stopped at polar books, representing literature about the First World War, polar in the pathos expressed in them: from revolutionary optimism to complete pessimism and despair. At the same time, we can also highlight the artistic features that make the books about the war in common:

- *anti-war pathos;*
- *accusatory tone of condemnation in the search for those to blame for the war;*
- *uncompromising criticism, very personal, because the authors themselves went through the war.*

The war became for him that frontier, which marked the beginning of a new period of his life and work. Having known suffering and pain, fear and despair, it was no longer possible to remain the same – an esthete far removed from life. Reality has shown its rights. Life supplanted the conventional world of non-existent beauty. Contemporary themes have taken a leading place in Aldington's work. This is clearly felt in the poems of the collection "Images of War" (1919). And yet these were only the first steps towards great art that could excite contemporaries.

A valuable contribution to English literature was Aldington's novel "Death of a Hero", one of the finest anti-war fictions of those years. It appeared at the same time when "All Quiet on the Western Front" by E.M. Remarque and "Farewell to Arms" by E. Hemingway were published. These three novels have been categorized by critics as "lost generation" literature.

Like many of his peers, Aldington belonged to that part of the young bourgeois intelligentsia, whose illusions and hopes were destroyed in the fire of war. The war forced the representatives of the "lost generation" not only to become disillusioned with the norms of bourgeois life, but also to lose faith in the perspectives of capitalist society. And their isolation from the people and insurmountable individualism led to the fact that the circle of suffering and despair, closed in a tight circle around them, gave rise to the motives of hopeless melancholy in their work.

Richard Aldington also went through all this. The war aroused in him hatred to "good old England", which sent her sons to death. The war led him to endless pessimism. The heroes of the writers of the "lost generation" were not given the opportunity to gain that clarity of consciousness, that revolutionary insight, which in the fire of the war became the property of the heroes of Henri Barbusse "Fire", 1929. The great truth and meaning of life remained hidden for them. Devastated and broken by the war, the heroes of the "lost generation" writers die. But even those who survived do not become active participants in it. "I love life not as an action, but as an experience", says Anthony Clarendon, the hero of Richard Aldington's novel "All Men Are Enemies", and these words very accurately define his view of life and his place in it.

However, it would be unfair to emphasize only this side of Aldington's work, as, indeed, and other writers of the "lost generation". His books, created in post-war England, when the crisis of bourgeois culture, accelerated by the events of the war years, were clearly manifested, resisted the wave of modernist literature. These were books of the harsh truth of life; they taught hatred of war, told about the tragedy of millions of ordinary people who became victims of the imperialist massacre.

Unlike the modernists, Aldington does not take the position of cynical nihilism. Despite the hopelessness and pessimism that so often resound in his works, he is characterized by humanism. In the preface to "Death of a Hero", Aldington wrote: "I

believe in people, I believe in some basic decency and a sense of camaraderie, without which society cannot exist”.

Aldington's novels are written in the tradition of critical realism. The writer remained faithful to it throughout his career. However, he did not come to a decisive condemnation of individualistic psychology.

The fallacy and inconsistency of individualism and flight from life have long been condemned by the very course of history. And yet the experience of the people of the “lost generation” did not pass without leaving a trace. It teaches a lot and makes you think about the erroneous position taken by them. Richard Aldington also leads his hero to the realization of it. And in this regard, the evolution of the character of his hero is of undoubted interest.

During the 1930s, he published six more socio-psychological novels: “The Colonel's Daughter”, “All Men Are Enemies”, “Women Must Work”, “Very Heaven”, “Seven Against Reeves”, “Rejected Guest”. The writer's creative upsurge was associated with the intensification of social and political life in England in the 1930s, with the aggravation of the class struggle in the country. In his novels, Aldington addresses the pressing problems of his time: The First World War and its consequences, the crisis of bourgeois consciousness and bourgeois culture, shifts in the consciousness of the intelligentsia, faced with the threat of fascism and the impending Second World War. In almost each of his novels, Aldington refers to the conflict that inevitably arises between a person who does not want to obey the norms of bourgeois life, and his environment. The strength and significance of human individuality is measured by its ability to withstand the decaying, but still tenacious bourgeois world. And Aldington sees signs of decay in the decline of culture, and in the spiritual impoverishment of the ordinary bourgeois, and in the disintegration of the family, and in the “crisis of the spirit” of the bourgeois intellectual, whose inner world was especially close to him and whom he makes the main hero of his works. The focus of the writer is on the human character in all its uniqueness and, at the same time, in its conditioning by others. Aldington consistently defends the value of human personality, firmly believing that “people in general are not spoiled even by the hideous brutality of war, that they can be beautiful even amid the vile vulgarity of everyday existence” [Gender. Oxford English Dictionary]. He sees the source of the crisis of the modernist novel in an attempt to show the hero outside of time and social connections. Such an attempt deprives the writer of the ability to create a “life hero” [Munitionette. Oxford English Dictionary]. Richard Aldington himself creates the images of his characters based on the knowledge of life, revealing the conditionality of character by the social environment. His hero is an English intellectual forced to live in a society that “treats with such care for its paper wealth and with such contempt for living wealth, for living human beings” [Potter J., 2008]. The conflict between man and society in Aldington's novels has a very definite social basis.

In “Death of a Hero”, Aldington recreates the story of a generation that “hoped fervently, fought honestly, and suffered deeply.” He writes his book in order to tell the truth about the war that has just passed, to warn the young generation about the

impending military catastrophe. The writer does not know the ways to prevent a military threat, but he is looking for them persistently. And he regards his book as a contribution to the solution of this most important task of the era. "This is why I am writing a biography of a man killed in the war. It is the Atonement, a desperate attempt to remove the guilt of the shed blood. Perhaps the method is not correct. Perhaps the poison will remain in me. Then I'll look for another way. But I will look for it. The theme of redemption is intertwined in Aldington's novel with the theme of retribution.

As Aldington notes, the lives of all people who survived after the war split into three segments: *pre-war*, *war* and *post-war*. And in his novel, these three periods are represented. Two of them are connected with the history of the childhood and adolescence of George Winterbourne, with the history of his life at the front and his death in one of the last days of the war. The life of post-war England appears in the passionate and angry words and judgments of the narrator, whose image occupies no less important place in the novel than the image of Winterbourne.

Kind, old Victorian England is described by Aldington in satirical tones. Panting with rage, he writes about it – about its imaginary prosperity, about the hypocrisy that has permeated all the pores of its public and private life, about feigned official optimism.

There is not a grain of sentimentalism in Aldington's assessments, and most of all he loathes any kind of idealization. He, too, says goodbye to the past, to the "prehistoric" pre-war era and one of its most controversial figures – Queen Victoria, whom he compares to an ichthyosaur. But this goodbye sounds like a curse: "Wonderful old England! Syphilis hit you, old bitch! You made meat for worms out of us." Along with the description of the war, the most powerful pages of the novel are devoted to the family life of George's parents. They are also of great interest because they provide an opportunity to be convinced of the process of destruction of the traditional form of family romance taking place in the 20th century English literature.

In the English literature of the 1920s, little attention was paid to the family theme. The complete destruction of family ties is narrated in all of Aldington's novels. He is a supporter of the complete emancipation of a human and in each of his novels he exposes the evil that lies in the hypocritical family morality based on the interests of a monetary nature. In his portrayal, the bourgeois family has long turned into a kind of trap, liberation from which is an indispensable condition for a full, meaningful life. Georgie Smithers, the heroine of Aldington's novel "The Colonel's Daughter", becomes a victim of a vulgar existence in the bosom of a family life, devoid of genuine feelings of mutual trust, love, and respect. The energetic and courageous Etta Morrison is striving for an independent life (the novel "Women Must Work"). Only after breaking with the "well-being" of bourgeois existence in the grip of "consecrated by marriage" family relations, Tony Clarendon finds his love and happiness ("All Men are Enemies"). A true parody of a family life looks like the existence that the parents and sister of Chris Heylin ("Very Heaven") lead.

However, it is not Isabelle and George Augustus' personal flaws that are measured by their guilt before their son and society [Urnov V.M., 1968]. The

images of the Winterbourne seniors embody the typical traits of the English middle bourgeoisie. Millions of such Winterbournes preferred to close their eyes to the events taking place in the world and in their own country; they were consumed by their own selfish interests. “A tremendous drama played out in front of their noses, and they did not even notice it”. Together with his hero, Aldington pronounces a harsh and merciless verdict on the generation of fathers. Aldington tells the story of a young man – his contemporary. One of the main themes of the literature of critical realism of the preceding century – the theme of a young man of bourgeois society – continues to develop in the novel of the 20th century. In the works of writers of the 1920s, it receives an in-depth psychological development; however, most often to the detriment of the analysis of social relations.

In “Death of a Hero”, Aldington avoided this extreme. Written in the form of an intellectual and psychological novel, the narrative style of which is characterized by very frequent transitions to the transmission of the “stream of consciousness”, Aldington's work organically combines in-depth psychological analysis with a realistic transfer of characteristic signs of social life in pre-war and post-war England. Corresponding to this is the image he created of George Winterbourne – a representative of the young generation of the bourgeois English intelligentsia, and his death is presented as a symbol of a “disgusting, cruel, damned, absurd catastrophe” that befell his homeland, as a symbol of the tragic consequences of the war. And it is no coincidence that the novel opens with a message about the death of its hero: “Winterbourne, Edward Frederick George, Captain, 2/9 Battalion, Royal Foddershire Regiment, killed in action”. Aldington begins the story of a young man of his era with the words of his death. This is what is important for him to emphasize first of all. All the rest – a description of the hero's family, school and independent life in London – leads to an understanding of the reasons for this death [Herman M. Yu., 2005; 350].

DISCUSSION

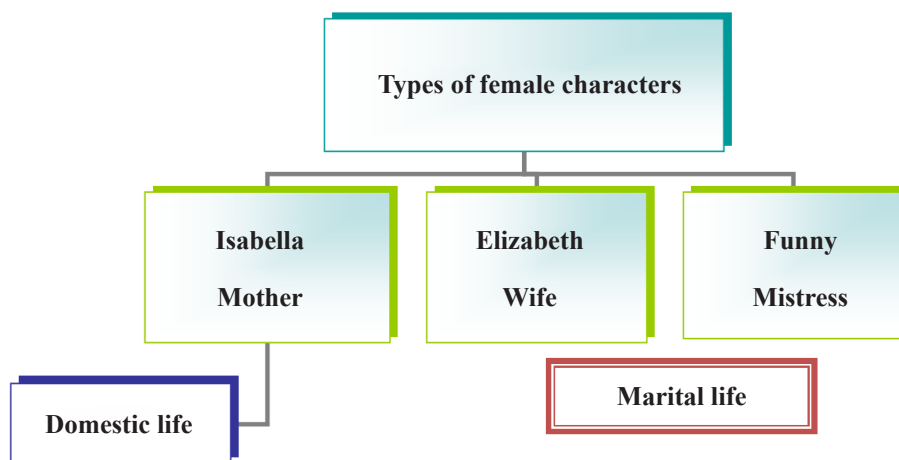
The novel begins with ironic title, and the whole novel is built on irony and sarcasm of human relations. “*I am inclined to think that **George** and **Elizabeth** should be regarded as a national **hero** and **heroine** in this respect*” [Aldington R., 2013; 149]. With this view the author gives a hint to a reader to narrate not about only of one couple, but to raise some more global issue – how history decided the destiny of millions of people: *Adult lives were cut sharply into three sections – pre-war, war, and post-war. It is curious perhaps not so curious but many people will tell you that whole areas of their pre-war lives have become obliterated from their memories. Pre-war seems like pre-history. What did we do, how did we feel, what were we living for in those incredibly distant years? One feels as if the period 1900-1914 has to be treated archeologically, painfully recreated by experts from slight vestiges. Those who were still children at the Armistice, who were so to speak born into the war, can hardly understand the feeling of tranquil security which existed, the almost smug optimism of our lives.* [Aldington R., 2013; 177].

The novel is narrated from the point of view of George's friend, as if he is retelling

the memoir of war: *“I knew quite a lot about him. He told me all about his parents and about Elizabeth and Fanny, and about his childhood and his life in London and Paris”*. The narration begins with John’s death; the author uses the flashback writing technique to stress upon the psychological roots of this action. Constantly applying flashbacks and flash forwards (common for modernism) he describes Winterbourne’s childhood, youth and adulthood. Those who end their life with suicide usually suffer from the strong emotional collapse or psychological breakdown. Moreover, the author informs at the beginning whom to blame in death of the hero. *“But I know because he told me himself that he had rather relied on four people to take some interest in him and his fate. They were his father and mother, his wife and his mistress”* who received the information about tragic death quite indifferently. And *“If he had known what actually occurred with these four at the news of his death I think he would have been a little shocked, as well as heartily amused and perhaps a bit relieved. It would have freed him from certain feelings of responsibility”* [Aldington R., 2013; 2].

George’s family members took the information about his death differently. The author uses this episode to reveal the features of secondary characters through the description of their reaction on this sad news. To do this the author reflects on the Winterbourne’s domestic and marital identities.

Picture 1. Types of female characters in the novel *“Death of a Hero”*



Winterbourne’s domestic identity as a son and husband in *“Death of a Hero”* is not as prominent as his martial identity. The protagonist’s role as a son is downplayed as he does not communicate with his parents during his war service. Upon his death, his parents do not show great emotions: *“His father did grieve and pray for his son’s soul but did not live long afterwards, while his mother found the news of her son’s death “rather exciting and stimulating at first, especially erotically stimulating”* [Aldington R., 2013; 6]. George’s relationship with his parents did certainly not actively make up his domestic identity as a soldier. Aldington describes the parents of the protagonist in the ironic mode. His mother is portrayed as rather heartless, uncaring and obsessed with sex and money. The generation of his parents has different values and morals

than his own generation. The author bitterly describes: *“A very different England, that of 1890, and yet curiously the same. In some ways so fabulous, so remote from us; in others so near, terrifyingly near and like us. An England morally buried in great foggy wrappings of hypocrisy and prosperity and cheapness. The wealth of that England, the maritime power of that England, its worse than R. L. S. optimism, its righteous cant! Victoria, broad-bottomed on her people’s will; the possessing class, heavy-bottomed on the people’s neck”* [Aldington R., 2013; 27].

Aldington describes the family brought up on Victorian morals according to which husband and wife had to live together even being unhappy. George’s mother is shown as a woman full of hypocrisy, cynicism, ambition, lust, and false mother feelings. It is well known that for a child it is very important to feel safe and loved by his mother, and George, a future painter, being very sensitive from his childhood could easily see falsehood, and insincere in family relations. The image of pure maternity common for child’s perception was ruined by constant love affair of his mother. George’s farther closed his eyes on all these adulteries: *“He messed up his wife’s life by being weak with her; messed up his children’s lives by being weak and sentimentalish with them and by losing his money – the unforgivable sin in a parent; messed up the lives of his friends and clients by honestly losing their money for them; and messed up his own most completely”* [Aldington R., 2013; 2]. *“Old Winterbourne was in London, “doing war work”, when the news of George’s death came. He would never have done anything so positive and energetic if he had not been nagged and goaded into it by his wife”* [Aldington R., 2013; 5]. The work was found for him by his wife and put him into a position where it was impossible for him to refuse.

The change of roles in the family is also shown even in minor details. When the telegram about death was delivered to their house, it was Isabella (George’s mother) who opened it and read: *“Such an excitement for her, almost a pleasant change, for it was pretty dull in the country just after the Armistice. She was sitting by the fire, yawning over her twenty-second lover, the affair had lasted nearly a year – when the servant brought the telegram”*.

ANALYSIS

The author constantly returns to the femininity of Mr. Winterbourne and masculinity of Mrs. Isabella Winterbourne, to show flaws of the whole Victorian society where one would expect an “Angel in the House” type woman character but, instead, gets a fallen woman with marital certificate, and a decisive, strong and supportive farther is substituted by an egoist.

Mrs. Winterbourne played a role of grieving mother: *“clasped both hands to her rather soggy bosom, and pretended to faint. The lover, one of those nice, clean, sporting Englishmen with a minimum of intelligence and an infinite capacity for being gulled by females, especially the clean English sort, clutched her unwillingly and automatically ... The tears Mrs. Winterbourne shed were not very natural, but they did not take long to dry. Dramatically, she ran to the telephone. Dramatically, she called to the local exchange”* while his farther “Mr. Winterbourne remained on his knees

for some time. But, as the hall tiles hurt his knees, he went and knelt on a hassock at the prie-dieu in his bedroom ... After dinner, of which he ate sparingly, thinking with dreary satisfaction how grief destroys appetite" [Aldington R., 2013; 8]. The author uses bitter irony and sarcasm while depicting George's parents emotions and attitudes.

In spite of the fact that the author shows Isabella as a lady of "mature charms", who loved to fancy herself as a delicious young thing of seventeen [Aldington R., 2013; 6-7], nevertheless, he makes an attempt to explain the social and historical roots of such behavior. And he comes to the conclusion that the blame should be imposed on the constantly glorified Victorian morality. According to it, interpersonal relations and intimate felling were a taboo at those times and John's parents, like many other family couples, were ignorant in this field. The first night together brought much suffering to Isabella, because she was raped by her "mild" husband, who even didn't understand the nature of physical relations between a man and a woman. Mutual understanding and delicacy in intimate relations must prevail, states the narrator. Dissatisfaction and pain, psychological trauma made a great influence on her morality and led to her moral degradation. These consequences reverberated in the quality of her maternal instincts. Soon after she delivered George, a child who was not expected consciously and therefore deprived of ordinary maternal love about whom she says: "I was only a child when he was born a child with a child, people used to say and we grew up together. I was so young that I did not put up my hair until two years after he was born" [Aldington R., 2013; 98].

Her son for Isabella was just a sort of property: "At any rate, some of George's possessions were sent to the country address, and, although directed to his father, were unscrupulously seized by his mother. And the remainder of his military kit and the pay due him went to his wife. Old Mrs. Winterbourne was fearfully enraged at this. Stupid red tape, she said it was. Why! wasn't her baby son hers? Hadn't she born him, and therefore established complete possession of him and his for the rest of her natural life? What can any woman mean to a Man in comparison with his Mother? Therefore, it was plain that she was the next-of-kin, and that all George's possessions, including the widow's pension, should come to her and her only. After his death she is more worried about pension rather her loss" [Aldington R., 2013; 98]. Materialism of Victorian people is also shown here.

We also may give a label to Isabella half-man, because of her masculine features that but dear Mamma could not allow dear Papa even the semblance of authority, respected not even the forms of Limited Domestic Monarchy, and cut in: "Your Papa is right, George. The question is now, what are you going to do in your Profession?" ... the terror of disobeying dear Mamma, already dominant? He murmured something about "getting in with a respectable and old-established firm in London". "I cannot hear of London, George. It would break my heart and bring your dear Papa's grey hairs" (dear Papa hated to be reminded that he was bald) "in sorrow to the grave, if you went to the bad in that dreadful town. And the narrator adds that "His mother was a dominating old bitch who destroyed his initiative and courage, but in the 'eighties hardly anyone had the sense to tell dominating bitch-mothers to go to hell".

The author himself gives following mathematic calculations to show how children merely copy family relations, how psychologically they are bound or even dependant to imitate their parent's relations.

The problem may be stated thus:

Let X equal the ménage dear Mamma-dear Papa, or a typical couple of the 'seventies and eighties;

And let Y equal the ménage George Augustus and Isabel, or a typical couple of the 'nineties and 'noughts;

And further, let Z equal Elizabeth and George, or a typical bright young pair of the Georgian or European War epoch;

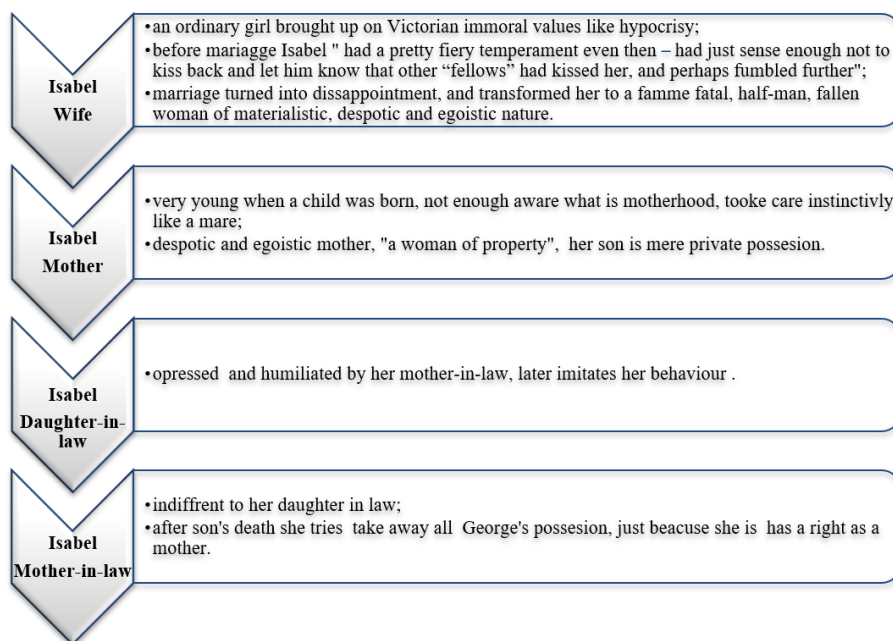
Then, it remains to be proved whether Z is equal to, or greater than, or less than X and/or Y.

I am naturally prejudiced in favour of Z, because I belong to their generation

Furthermore, here has been identified that main hero's parents George Augustus and Isabella and their parents – Winterbournes and Hartlys, ironically called by the author "Dear Papa" and "Mama", are all of the same nature, children are direct copies of their parents – mothers and grandmothers are Household Generals and fathers are submissive egoists. Continuous interference to their own children's life ruined all relations. Earlier Victorian literature gives much rosier picture of such relations. In Dickens' novels a father dominates in the family rather than mother.

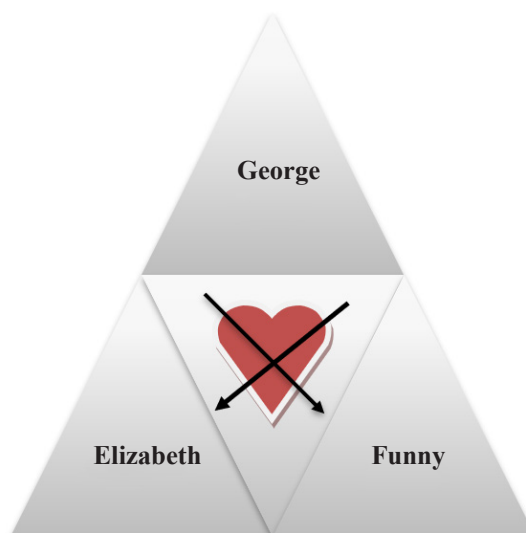
After some scandals with "Dear Mama" Isabel returned home and was happy: *"Put it to yourself, now. Suppose you had been one of an innumerable family, enduring all the abominable discomforts and lack of privacy in that elementary Soviet System. And suppose you had then been uncomfortably impregnated and most painfully delivered, and then bullied and pried into and domineered over and tortured by dear Mamma: wouldn't you be glad to have a home of your own, however humble"*, and however, Isabel reunites with her husband but uses all new skills *"learned from dear Mamma"* to make her husband a diligent gentleman. A reader may feel that the author tries to show a fair picture about this character. She is not positive; however, she is also not negative, she is just a heroine of her own time. Briefly, the transformation of George's mother's identity is given in the following chart:

Picture 2. Transformation of George's mother's character



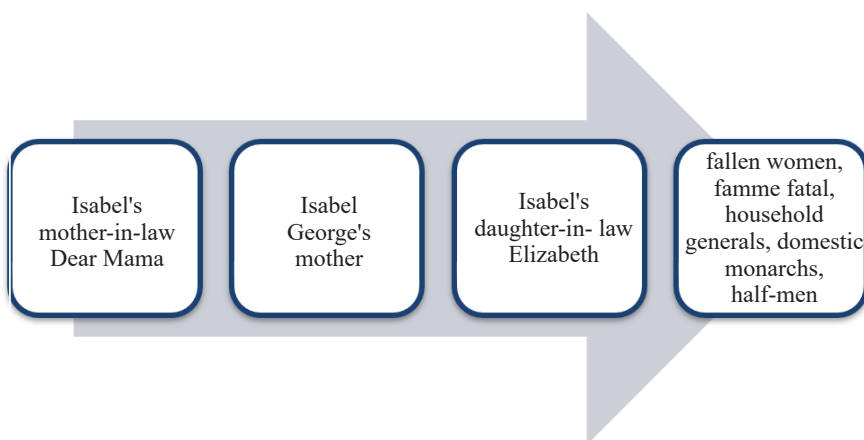
The next women in George's life are his wife Elizabeth and his mistress Fanny.

There was a so-called love triangle, Elizabeth at George, and then Fanny at George, and then – epic contest – Elizabeth at Fanny. Poor old George got so fed up, he went off and joined the infantry, fell into the first recruiting office he came to, and was whisked off to a training camp in the Midlands. But, of course, that didn't solve the situation.



Winterbourne's marriage to Elizabeth and his romantic relationship with Fanny mostly made up his domestic identity as a soldier. He writes them letters and visits them both on leave. During his service, he is constantly worried about them and *"in the general disintegration of all things he had clung very closely to those two women"*. Elizabeth and Fanny gained *"a sort of mythical and symbolical meaning for him"*. They were separated and detached from the horrors of the war. When he returned to London on leave, both Elizabeth and Fanny had found other men to replace him with. All the women in *"Death of a Hero"* are represented as unfaithful to their husbands or in Fanny's case, lovers. However, *"for George they represented what hope of humanity he had left, in them alone civilization seemed to survive" during the war. While Winterbourne was surrounded by death, violence and the callousness of the war, he believed "in them alone the thread of life remained continuous", "They were two small havens of civilised existence, and alone gave him any hope for the future"* [Aldington R., 2013; 202]. This confirms the traditional notion of masculinity and femininity. Traditionally, women are viewed as life-givers rather than life-takers. To the main character, Fanny and Elizabeth represent life among the horrors of the war. However, the stereotypical image of women as saints is altered in the novel as both women have flaws and are ultimately represented as rather indifferent to the protagonist's death. The stereotype of the women as a femme fatale is present in the sense that Fanny, Elizabeth and even George's mother have multiple lovers throughout the novel. Additionally, Winterbourne's relationships with Fanny and Elizabeth were not the only significant relationships he had during the war.

Elizabeth is like Isabel. Isabel learned her lesson from her mother-in-law. Subconsciously John chooses his wife like his mother. That's why they belong to the same type of characters as shown in the chart. The author demonstrates here his own knowledge of psychology of human relations. At the beginning of the XX century psychology and psychoanalysis developed by leaps and bounds. Popular works in this field touched upon every aspect of human life: childhood, marriage, crime and others. And the author narrating about them says in the novel: *"They both had that rather hard efficiency of the war and post-war female, veiling the ancient predatory and possessive instincts of the sex under a skillful smoke-barrage of Freudian and Havelock Ellis theories"*.

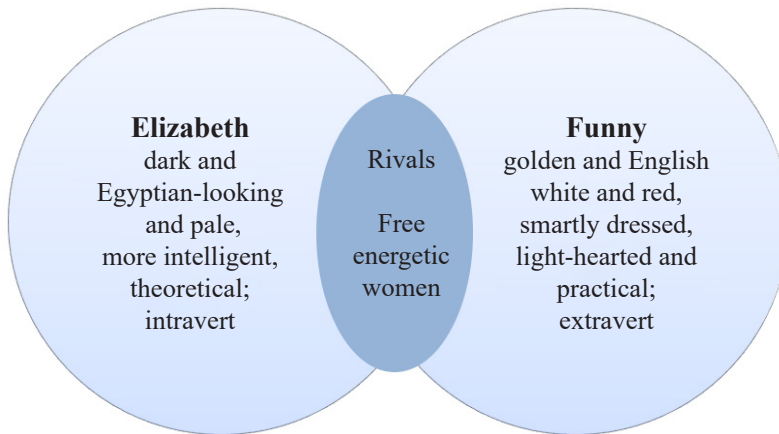


Although the women given in the above-mentioned chart are similar to each other, nevertheless, they have specific features typical only of each of them. Isabel and her mother-in-law belong to the pre- and while WWI period, while Elisabeth – to post-war period. The author uses sarcasm and irony while depicting post-war women. They adjusted to the war with marvelous precision and speed, just as they afterwards adapted themselves to the post-war: *“Such wise young women! You thought; no sentimental nonsense about them. No silly emotional slip-slop messes would ever come their way. They knew all about the sexual problem, and how to settle it. There was the physical relationship and the emotional relationship and the intellectual relationship; and they knew how to manage all three.... they knew that freedom, complete freedom... The man had his lovers, and the women had hers. But where there was a “proper relationship”, nothing could break it. Men must be “free” and women must be “free.” This was simple ideology Elizabeth and Fanny followed and George believed all this. He “had an affair” with Elizabeth, and then he “had an affair” with Fanny, her best friend: “But, darling”, she said, “isn’t it very expensive always going to an hotel? Can we afford it? And don’t you mind?”*

“Oh no”, said the innocent George; “I shall run round and spend the night with Fanny as usual, you know”. So his life before the war resembled swinging of the pendulum from one side to another.

Outward appearance of Elizabeth and Fanny are shown in the contrast to demonstrate the opposition of two characters: *“Fanny was just a little taller than Elizabeth (George disliked short women); and where Elizabeth was dark and Egyptian-looking and pale, Fanny was golden and English (not chocolate-box English) and most delicate white and red. There was something both gem-like and flower-like in Fanny. Perhaps that was due to her eyes...you are instantaneously absorbed by the eyes. But, unlike so many vivid blue eyes, they were gem-like rather than flower-like; they were not soft or stupid or sentimental or languid, but clear, alert, and rather hard”* [Aldington R., 2013; 157]. The author portrays his characters with the skill of an artist as if showing George’s sketches.

In the description one may feel love to both of them. It is strange, of course, but George himself was a bit strange painter, a man who was naïve and sensitive: *“With Elizabeth you saw not the eyes alone, but the whole head. Oddly enough, on analysis Elizabeth’s eyes proved to be quite as beautiful as Fanny’s, but somehow less ostentatiously lovely. They were deeper and softer, and, which is rare in dark eyes, intelligent. Fanny’s blue eyes were intelligent enough, but they hadn’t quite the subtle depths of Elizabeth’s, they hadn’t the same reserve”.* *“Elizabeth lived very much in and on herself; Fanny was a whole-hearted extravert... She was emotionally and mentally far less complicated than Elizabeth, less profound ... Perhaps the remarkable quality of Elizabeth’s mind and character is best showed by the fact that she never said or implied anything mean or nasty about Fanny’s clothes”* [Aldington R., 2013; 159].



The characters' description also demonstrates that George had a good understanding of feminine nature, and felt deep respect to both his women. These two women didn't much care about John, but both "*didn't want to lose him and didn't want to "take him away" from each other*" not until much later when Elizabeth started the struggle [Aldington R., 2013; 187].

George was annoyed with continues scandals and rivalry of two women, and finally joined the army. It was a form of escape. But war, of course, didn't bring much relief to him: "*He was living in a sort of double nightmare, the nightmare of the War and the nightmare of his own life. Each seemed inextricably interwoven. His personal life became intolerable because of the War, and the War became intolerable because of his own life... Probably what had distressed him most was the row between Elizabeth and Fanny*" [Aldington R., 2013; 201-202].

Many young people participated in the war. Men and women who witnessed what is life in the battlefields knew the true value of love and friendship. But not Elizabeth and Funny.

There's an episode in the novel when a soldier returns back home for some days of holiday. Elizabeth and Funny saw how the war changed him considerably from a romantic person, he turns into a nervous, brutal soldier. Elizabeth and Funny crossed George out of their lives immediately: "*It's quite useless*", said Elizabeth; "*he's done for. He'll never be able to recover. So we may as well accept it. What was rare and beautiful in him is as much dead now as if he were lying under the ground in France. And Fanny agreed...*".

George tried to share his war experience with them but failed: "*Winterbourne did not know why he felt so awkward and silent. He seemed to have nothing to say to Fanny. He had tried to tell Elizabeth some of his War experiences. Just as he was describing the gas bombardment and the awful look on the faces of men gassed, he noticed her delicate mouth was wried by a suppressed yawn. He stopped abruptly, and tried to talk of something else. Fanny was sympathetic, but he could see he was boring her too. Of course he was boring her. She and other people got more than enough of*

the War from the newspapers and everything about them; they wanted to forget it, of course, they wanted to forget it" [Aldington R., 2013; 321]. The essence of his life, his wife and mistress, his paintings turned into his past, war made his present, while future was bleak for him.

Such ladies like Funny and Elizabeth are vivid examples of how a woman may misuse her authority, how freedom may bring to moral degradation.. War killed men, but George was morally killed by his women's indifference. George's women took the last hope away: *"they failed to see that in the way they went about it they were merely setting up another tyranny—the tyranny of free love. Why shouldn't people be monogamous if they want to be? Maybe it suits them"* [Aldington R., 2013; 199].

Hence, freedom, equal rights transformed feminine identity and proposed a new status for women. Freedom of rights got by women at the end of Victorian and Edwardian Eras and followed by more significant changes during and after WWI puzzled many women. Many didn't merely know how to use this freedom. What is freedom? Having education, antimilitary struggle, pacifism or having free love relations and live for own pleasure like Isabel, Elizabeth, Funny? These problems make the gallery of female characters diverse.

CONCLUSION

Historical, cultural and political context influences the formation of new characters in fiction in general, and, in our case, the transformation of female identity, in particular. Analysis of novels of the 1st half of the XX century may assist to identify more wide and diverse range of female types characters.

In conclusion, the books on family relations can be appreciated as the only manual for existence. The author's anti-war beliefs are constructed in the novel through the opposition of masculine and feminine identities. The novel "Death of a Hero" has revealed the types of women that fall into the following category: fallen women, domestic monarch, household general, and femme fatal. The author demonstrates the transformation of female characters of several generations to show the role of women in the family and society. The author questions what freedom is for women and how to use this freedom. He hates stupidity and ignorance of Victorian women but he also hates extreme behavior and indifference of post-war women. He is highly concerned with hypocrisy and disappointment in family relations, and is also annoyed with excessive use of their power, taking theoretical.

It has been also identified that in the XX-XXI century the word feminist got a broader meaning. Initially feminists were women who struggled for their rights. But it has revealed that men also may become "Male feminist" like John Winterbourne. Traditionally, when scholars say feminism they mean women in art, society, family, their social struggle for equal rights. Unexpectedly, it may be concluded that men also can be feminists, as the novel demonstrates George Winterbourne's views that might be called feminist.

The image of a fallen woman is quite a popular phenomena in British literature of XIX and XX centuries. But Aldington almost "digs out" the reasons of such behavior.

There are such types of characters in the novels of Ch. Dickens, W.M. Thackeray, who are mainly shown from socio-historical angle, while Aldington goes deep into interaction and interplay of social, cultural, and psychological aspects of women's behavior. The author is absolutely anxious and worried about the interchange of men-and-women roles in the society.

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