

DESCRIPTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEOPLE AND SOCIETY IN JOHN STEINBECK'S "THE GRAPES OF WRATH"

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Abstract: John Steinbeck is the prominent literary representative who greatly contributed to the development of world literature. In the following article there have been drawn some views about description of the relations of people and society in the novel "The Grapes of Wrath". The novelist created his work at a time when the spiritual, moral and social situation in the country was complicated. The main characters fight against injustices and frauds that occur in public and everyday life.

Key words: John Steinbeck, American tragedy, fate, society, nation, significant, writer, novel, theme, character.

Introduction It is known that the concepts of man and society are the directions of an integrated system that is interconnected. Man cannot exist without society and society also reflects the activities and attitudes of people. People and society, their relationship has been much studied in fiction and is still one of the current actual topics in the field of literary criticism. Everyone, regardless of age and social status, strives to explore the world as they are born, grow up and work. Literature plays an invaluable role in people's understanding of the world, in the perception of life events. It is no coincidence that the novels of the great writer John Steinbeck are able to express the relationship between the world and people in bright colors. It is no exaggeration to state that John Steinbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath" is a classic novel of American literature. In the following article there will be drawn some views about the description of the relationship between person and society in the novel "The Grapes of Wrath" by John Steinbeck.

Main part. “The Grapes of Wrath” occupies a significant place in the development of modern world literature, as it is able to reflect social life honestly, deeply and perfectly. His finest works continued and enriched the realistic traditions of twentieth-century American literature. The author’s works represent a number of topics that have not lost their relevance even today. Basically, we can see the image of family relationships in a number of his novels and short novels. Each protagonist is embodied around family members, within a family that is a small community. A.S. Mulyarchik states that this novel which witnessed the “angry” 1930s, reflects the spirit of a period with full of great exclamation that created an unprecedented level of despair [4]. The central theme of “The Grapes of Wrath” and its social philosophy is significant because it depicts man and society in an interconnected way.

Steinbeck’s “The Grapes of Wrath” naturally mirrors the social structure and culture of its time. The relationship between man and society has been marked by contradictions, so man has always struggled within the issues of his interest. Steinbeck portrays not only the hardships of the dominant environment but also difficulties of immigrants during the Great Depression in the United States, too. The Joads is a typical American family who represents the familial system of the period, each member is unique and with a diverse moral perspective. Character make important decisions for their own hopes, dreams, and destinies, and their bitter fate reflects a wide range of period problems. The author’s peculiar style is evident in the composition of the novel. The accuracy and power in illuminating advanced ideas in a novel depends on many ways to its composition. The novel consists of 30 chapters, 14 of which devoted to the fate of the Joads, the rest of them are additional ones where the author directly expresses his thoughts and comments using colorful events. These chapters demonstrate episodes of U.S. life, depicting scenes of the farmers’ movement driven from their native lands to California. However, we cannot say that there is no connection between these chapters. It is noticeable that the aim of the writer was to create a literary work, where he could clearly describe his attitude towards the events happening around him. All these chapters come together to embody the overview of the various social strata in the United States, where among them there are a farmer who has been evicted from his land, an anxious businessman, a lowly and ignorant landowner who thinks only of the benefits that come from the labor of those who work for him. But the closest one to Steinbeck is the fate of the semi-literate, ordinary Joad family. The story of Joad’s bitter destiny on the road from Oklahoma to California is the story of a rare heroic epic of the twentieth century. The author does not try to “decorate” his heroes, but depicts them in a natural way, expressing his attitude to the fate of the Joads, who became tough due to the prevailing environment.

According to Shukurov, the theme of a work is determined by its subject. The subject of the work of is the various states of human life, struggles, dreams and

aspirations, attitudes to nature and reality [6]. A single work can cover a number of themes, which serve as auxiliary, complementary themes in the coverage of the main theme. As realism grows in literature, so do the themes. Family and familial relations are the most essential ones in the “Grapes of Wrath”.

In the novel John Steinbeck introduces a familial system which initially relies on patriarchy. As the plot develops, however, such form of control disintegrates, as Pa fails to fulfill his responsibilities as a patriarch to provide for the Joads. It is the female characters, who, amidst adversities, begin to take a more significant and active role. Ma advances as the backbone of the family, trying to keep the family together; similarly, Rose of Sharon develops into a paragon of life’s continuity as she chooses to act beyond personal welfare and feeds a starving man with her life-filled milk. Ultimately, the switch in gender roles presents different forms of leaderships that men and women display within the society; while men are responsible for providing the family materialistically, women strives to provide spiritual unity and stability. Earlier on in the novel, the female characters appear much reserved than the male characters. The lyrical vignettes in the first few chapters reveal the Oklahoman farmers of the Dust Bowl era. The bleak landscape marked by droughts and hardship provides a circumstance that drives the migration of Oklahoman farmers. In contrast to the “dust-filled” setting characterized by uncertainty, the men appear extremely calm and authoritative; they are “silent and [do] not move often”, and are described as “hard and resistant” [9]. On the other hand, the women, taking a more passive role, secretly “studies the men’s faces” to make sure things are alright. They wait for their husbands to make decisions, and believe that “no misfortune [is] too great to bear if their men [are] whole” [9], illustrating their dependency towards men. At this point, the men are the primary decision makers of the house as they are the ones who “sit still –thinking– figuring”, trying to decide for the future of the family amidst the inclement weather and starvation. By introducing the Joads after the description of the general setting, Steinbeck suggests that the Joads family parallels with the society at large, including the distinct gender roles established by the characters. Just as in the first chapter, the female characters of the Joads family appear reserved and dependent at first. Upon the decision to migrate westward, Ma conveys a sense of uncertainty and apprehension. “I’m scared of stuff so nice, she admits, as she claims that she has no faith in the journey the Joads are about to embark. Rose of Sharon, another female character, is also undeveloped at this point. Constantly reminding herself that she is pregnant, she complain[s] about things that [don’t] really matter” [9]. Her selfish view of the surroundings seems unchangeable, as she is preoccupied with the baby’s health and is reluctant to help her family pack for the journey. She shows dependency on Connie, who she believes would bring her out of poverty and hardship. It is evident that Rose of Sharon, like most women of the era, considers her man as the materialistic provider of the family at this point.

Conclusion. Thus, despite the breakup of the Joad's family, the novel ends with some sort of a rekindled hope, underscoring the importance of cooperation and unity amongst people. The change of gender roles in "The Grapes of Wrath" conveys Steinbeck's important messages to readers. The advancement of female characters highlights the latent yet important role of women within the family, who strive to keep the family intact and emotionally stable. Moreover, such a transformation reveals the duality of mankind; that leaders can be followers, and followers can be leaders, depending on the area of responsibility and obligations.

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