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YOUNG ADULTS' PROBLEMS REFLECTED IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

ABSTRACT

The problems of young people attract the scholars of different spheres, and literature in particular. Young people were depicted under the influence of psychological, social and economic situations. The 20th century literature pays more attention to the psychological aspects of young people's development. In previous studies on young adults' literature, different social aspects have been found to be related to the development of young people's psyche. However, not enough attention has been paid to an individual as the part of the whole social strata. Early examples of research into young adults' literature include Ya. N. Zasurskiy, A.S. Mulyarchik, T.Morozova. Only in the past 50 years of studies literature directly addressed the problem, on how an individual represents the whole society. The article investigates some essential youth problems at the turn of 20-21st centuries reflected in contemporary American literature. The article highlights some important research issues conducted in this field as well as the literary works which need to be studied. The issues like teenagers' behavior at school, their relationships inside their families, community impact on teenagers' world vision are reflected. In addition, the impacts of socially abandoned people, who united into groups and developed a subculture, on young people's lives are shown.

Key words: young adults' novel, subculture, poverty, behavior, decade, psychology, teenager, outsider, isolated.

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СОВРЕМЕННАЯ ЛИТЕРАТУРА О ПРОБЛЕМАХ МОЛОДЕЖИ

АННОТАЦИЯ

Проблемы молодежи привлекают ученых разных направлений, в том числе и литературы. Молодые люди были изображены подвергнутыми влиянию психологических, социальных и экономических изменений. Начиная с XX века критики обращают все больше внимания читателя на психологический аспект развития молодежи. В проведенных исследованиях в сфере литературы молодых людей было обнаружено, что различные социальные аспекты связаны с развитием психики молодых людей. Однако недостаточно внимания уделяется личности как части социума в целом. Ранние примеры исследования литературы молодых людей включают работы Я. Н. Засурского, А.С. Мулярчика, Т. Морозовой. Только в последние 50 лет исследования литературы непосредственно касались того, как человек представляет все общество. В статье исследуются некоторые существенные проблемы молодежи на рубеже 20-21 веков, отраженные в современной американской литературе, а также литературные произведения, которые необходимо изучить. Отражены такие вопросы, как поведение подростков в школе, их взаимоотношения в семье, влияние общества на мировоззрение подростков. Кроме того, показано влияние социально изолированных людей, которые объединились в группы и создали субкультуру в жизни молодых людей.

Ключевые слова: молодежный роман, субкультура, беднота, поведение, десятилетие, психология, подросток, изгой.

INTRODUCTION

The globalization process taking place in the world contributes to the closest interaction of all forms of social consciousness, which results in a new stage of its differentiation. Literature, being a public conscience, is closely interrelated and interacting with philosophy, pedagogy, psychology, sociology and other branches of science and culture. The result of this interaction is interpenetration of methods for researching a person by various branches of science: literary studies, theory of literature, history of literature. These sciences comprise this interrelation as they mirror its century, society, its contradictions, social strata and their interrelationships. The youth - a part of this society - is the object of deep and close study. In the XVII-XVIII centuries when the novel of formation was a new literary genre, the English humanist T. More, points out the dependence of public health and state integrity on the health of human thoughts.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The youth problems initially attracting scholars in 1920s, still occupy one of the most important places in contemporary literature as they comprise the radical challenges of the society. This issue became more and more popular due to the people's growing interest in materialistic values and so-called "American Dream". Literary critics and writers did not remain indifferent to this issue either; in the mentioned period the depiction of young people and their problems came into existence in literary works. There is a large number of published studies (G. Andjaparidze, I. Levidova, P. Balashova) that analyzed such issues as drug, alcohol addiction and children's abuse. Youth issues were also investigated by a number of Russian critics such as V.V. Ivasheva, Ya.N. Zasurskiy, A.S. Mulyarchik. They mostly analyzed the works of English and American writers of the middle of the 20th century. Some of Uzbek scholars also made investigations in this field. James Jones and mass youth protests in American literature were analyzed by E.D. Muratova. Nowadays this issue has become one of the most important in our country due to existence and reflection of youth problems in Uzbek literature. In our article we analyzed the works written by American writers of the 20th and 21st centuries.

The term "teenager" was rarely used before the 1950s. During the Eisenhower years, young people began to see themselves as a distinct group. Their attempts to forge an identity worried adults, who could not understand the shift. This change could also be referred to the nation's welfare. Thus, observing the fifth decade of the twentieth century one is able to find out that much fewer young people had to work full-time job as the situation had been in the war time – instead of it teens worked either part-time or were supported by the family members, who even gave them money for not only very essential things but fun. The booming economy gave the way to a great number of adolescents from prosperous families of the 1950s to spend their time like no other generations. Teenagers expressed scorn towards the authority and challenge the social environment. The parents, mostly, did not trust their teen child, and we bear to say that the reason of mistrust could become the gap in understanding between two

generations.

In addition, the reason could also become the returnees from the World War II who became example to young groups of the population by their defiant, rebellious, let-loose features of suffered characters.

The literature of the 60s-70s reflected the rise of youth movements through the books of M. Bregg, D.Johnson, M.Drebbel, P.Reed, U. Williams. 80s-90s psychological motives were manifested in youth prose of C. Waterhouse and S. Townsend. In the works of literary scholars G.Andjaparidze, V.Ivashova, I.Levidova, P.Balashov, A. Mulyarchik they describe the features of “angry young men” who reject the state of rest in F.Sagan “Hello, Sadness”(1954). Young rebels from "good" families oppose the existing order not so much for ideological considerations as for career ones as in Ch.P. Snow "Dissatisfied" and "Completion". The bourgeois and middle families represent the first stage of social conflict in which the struggle of the young generation with "adult" America initially appeared.

Writers emphasize unpleasant, sometimes repulsive features in their heroes: spiritual limitations, pettiness, contempt for others, inconsistency, careerism, the absence of serious social ideals, i.e. the same social and psychological characteristics of a teenager, noted by modern researchers and literary critics (Arzamastseva I.N., Nikolaeva S.A., 2017) of this age category. Youth attracted not only literary workers but also film makers like F.Tuffo and R.Bykov. Problems of adolescents are not exhausted by the review of the above-mentioned works. Deeply, problematically, sharply, and controversially, it is also represented in such works of domestic and foreign authors as Salinger J.D. *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), Townsend S. *The Secret Diaries of Adrian Moul* (1982). Jerome David Salinger created personages, mostly teenagers, who became psychologically isolated due to the high positions of their parents in the society. The writers like Alan Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and Susan Hinton showed subculture movements of the 1950s. Especially, these movements are clearly and detailed shown in *The Outsiders*.

DATA ANALYSIS

The Catcher in the Rye is one of the young adults' novels belonging to American critical realism of the 20th century. The novel criticized American capitalist reality that appeared not in concord with “American dream” expectancies. Salinger is the follower of Ring Lardner, who satirized egoism, immorality, hypocrisy of American men of the 1920s who enriched themselves by selling military equipment. Deliberately, Ring Lardner was shown in the book as a writer to whom Holden dreamt to call. Salinger's character directed his abilities to the revolt against society, he did not try to adjust to it. He wishes to change it, but he does not know the way how to do it. He tries to escape the reality, going far away from civilization, this feature reminds us the characters of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. Holden is frightened to be spoiled by generally accepted standards. He dreams to go where it is “very pretty and sunny and where nobody'd know”(J.D. Salinger,1968) him.

In Susan Hinton's novel *The Outsiders* two hostile gang bands are depicted.

They are Greasers, those who are from poor families, and Socials, or “Socs” as the former abbreviate their nickname, they are the children of west-side rich families. The prominent features of the Greasers are – they wear long hair, and they are dressed in blue jeans and T-shirts, leather jackets and tennis boots – quite plain and casual clothes. While Socs had good grades, good cars, good girls, madras and Mustangs and Corvairs (S.E. Hinton, 1988), because they are the teens and young people from wealthy families. The members of both groups do not use to walk alone. And commonly, if a group of several representatives meet anyone from an opposite gang they usually start “a war between social classes”.

Another novel *California Generation* (1970) by Jacqueline Brisikin is worth of analysis. It starts with the heroes while at school and continues with young people who show their disobedience, try not to live like their parents. First disobedience was expressed through smoking drugs, guitar parties, and nonessential speeches, which later were replaced by a huge manifestation with thousands of students protesting against the Vietnamese war near the hotel, where President was staying. But, Brisikin ends the story with making all those rebellious natured youngsters common, conventional adults. According to A.Mulyarchik, she showed their radicalism as a consequence of their age. (MulyarchikA.,1988). Conflict between generations is also shown in *The Merry Month of May* (James Jones, 1971). The author includes the whole picture of post war France in it – from film industry to politics.

Rebel of young generation was also noticed in drama, particularly in one of the sensational plays of the 1950 in England by John Osborne *Look Back in Anger* (1956). “The success of the drama was stunning. Success was especially greater among English youth” (Ivasheva I.I., 1984;376.) – writes V.Ivasheva about *Look Back in Anger* after the play first had been performed. There are only five personages acting in the play. And only one of them conveys the moods and interests of the youth of post-war Britain. Everything that is done by him reveals Jimmy Porter’s real features, his conflict with the environment and reality. Jimmy hates hypocritical representatives of higher classes. “According to the author’s intention, – admits V.Ivasheva, the main thing in the play was not to show the characters’ behavior and not even changes in their personal relationships and fates, but the heroes’ state of mind and, ultimately, of the generation they represented” (Ivasheva I.I., 1984). In his conflict with those surrounded him, Jimmy resembles another character of the same time, but, who lives across the ocean – Holden Caulfield. Jimmy dislikes conventional traditions respectable people follow. He thinks all of them look pretty, but, actually, false.

The class discrimination is felt among young people, who, under this influence, are turned into criminals. If we take, for example, hostility between these two gang bands (Greasers and Socs), Greasers, though being originated from lower class families, are much more humane in contrast to Socs who lack humanity. However, Greasers are affected when they come across social injustice. Thus, this desperation leads Greasers and the members of similar gang groups to commit a crime.

"Big time Socs, all right," I said, a nervous bitterness growing inside me. It wasn't fair for the Socs to have everything. We were as good as they were; it wasn't

our fault we were greasers. I couldn't just take it or leave it, like Two-Bit, or ignore it and love life anyway, like Sodapop, or harden myself beyond caring, like Dally, or actually enjoy it, like Tim Shepard. I felt the tension growing inside of me and I knew something had to happen or I would explode. (S.E.Hinton, 1988)

From the given passage we can get an idea of how impoverished youth perceived the social injustice. They witness and experience it but can do nothing to improve the situation. Susan Hinton wishes to render it in her work. And we know the writer was grown and brought up in such a period. Susan Hinton felt the oppression of the established system and prejudices on her own and so, she was able to write about her contemporary reality.

Gang literature which comprises young adults' issues is also well-produced in the 21st century. While reading and investigating gang literature we reveal other challengeable issues that exist in the society. Gang stories usually involve such issues as poverty, isolation, community relations, drugs and migration and problems alike.

It is worth to mention other examples of young adults' writings in this period. This time is productive with novels and novellas for youth. Young Adults genre is perceived as one that is focused on youth and teenagers. However, we, adults, read such works to get the knowledge of what events happen among young people and together try to investigate youth's psychology. Youth psychology started to be reflected in fiction soon after Freud's investigations in this science. Thus, it became a fashionable trend for writers to expose this topic. What gives the way to such an appeal? The answer could be – behavior of young people.

Adults broke their heads over the children's behavior. All around the world gang groups, vandalism, and random violence were spreading and mass media did not stop reporting about different kinds of criminals every day that made the problem seem even huge and terrible. New trends of style came to be used like leather, patterned skirts, ducktail hair styles, and especially the slang was spoken among young people in order to be in movement. One of them who spoke it is protagonist Holden in the novel "*The Catcher in the Rye*".

To find out which children's issues influence the formation of a young adult psyche nowadays we choose the novel "*The Perks of Being a Wallflower*" written by Stephen Chbosky. Through deep analysis of this novel we try to find out more about young adult psychology in our contemporary life. In other words, the analysis of this piece of fiction would help us to get acquainted with different situations in the childhood and adolescence of people that could change the way they think and behave. Though it is only one example out of dozens, which deal with in this period of human beings' life, nevertheless, it is a productive way to learn more about young adults' psyche through youth literature. The author describes routine life of a 15-year old schoolboy through epistolary novel. By using this genre Chbosky effectively shows the way the protagonist (a teenager) feels, behaves and has relations with his peers because the main character himself writes the letters depicting his personal life.

There is another work that also shows the 20th century young man in his school days. School environment with its problems also attracts Sherman Alexie, whose

2007-book *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* tells the story of a 14-year old native American teenager. The novel follows one year in the life of Junior (protagonist). The book includes Junior's written diary and his drawn cartoons as well, some of which are depicted comically. The book starts with the depiction of Junior's days at school. The school is poor and that is why there are not good textbooks available. This concerns Junior a lot, so he decides to move to another school which is wealthier. However, here other problems appear. He lives in the reservation which is located far distance from a new school. His family tries to do their best to support him so that he is able to attend that school. Here Junior is the only Indian among white pupils. When he gets closer relationships with them he finds out more about white people's culture and interrelationships. He also realizes that the ties in his family are much stronger than those of white people. In one year period his family encounters a number of sufferings and troubles. The author wishes to depict the hard life in the reservation, and on the other hand, Alexie illustrates Junior's efforts to achieve his aims despite the challenges.

A totally different issue dealing with a young character is depicted in Bowsher's *My Lost and Found Life*. The book is published in 2006. Melodie Bowsher is a Kansas born journalist. Her main character is Ashley. Her mother is accused of stealing money, after which she disappears. Ashley lives a good time so far, but, now she has to earn her living. Hardships follow Ashley as all her peers and friends abandon her. But Ashley does not care about all these sufferings. The only thing she wonders is her mother's disappearance.

Youth crime has also become a popular topic in contemporary Young Adult literature. Gilstrap's *Nathan's Run*, Flinn's *Breathing Underwater*, Lockhart's *The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Bank* and some others tell the story of young people who under some circumstances become criminals.

Entitled after the main character's name, *Tyrrel* (2006), is a novel written by Booth. It depicts 15-year old boy who wishes to support his family and improve his life. The separation with his family, particularly losing bond with his mother and a little brother, Tyrrel, whose father is in prison, tries to live off by committing crime. In New York gritty streets he finds no way but to become a drug dealer in order to earn some money.

In *Nathan's Run* (John Gilstrap, 1996), being falsely accused on being a cold-blooded killer, Nathan, the protagonist is forced to lead criminalist way of life just to prove his innocence. In both novels *Tyrrel* and *Nathan's Run* we come across a youngster who in self-defense and just in order to survive leads criminalist way of life. Here we encounter the social challenges which give birth to young adults' crime. Why do not both characters miss their classes at school and live off their lives dangerously and wastefully? Do they want to have such life or are there any obstacles that push them to live this way? The investigation of a youth crime novel will certainly give us answers to most of the questions.

CONCLUSION

The existing contradictions in the society inevitably impact the form and content of literary works. We analyzed the main topics of the Young Adults' novels of the 20-21st centuries. American youth rebels against establishment, materialism of the society, conformity of the 1950s, wars and civic unrest of the previous century. These issues were reflected in the works of J.D. Salinger, James Jones, S.E. Hinton in the middle of the 20th century and later, at the threshold of the 20-21 centuries the protagonists of the writers like John Gilstrap, Melodie Bowsher, Sherman Alexie were teenagers who tried to find their identities in contemporary American society.

Most books written during the last decade illustrate the events that took place in the middle of the 20th century. This gives us the idea that contemporary writers agree with the fact that the previous century was full of challenges for young people. We could assume that enormous economic and political progress in the second half of the century led to the appearance of different young adults' issues. And they are still worth to be investigated.

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