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***SIMILAR IMAGES IN NOVELS OF W. COLLINS 'THE WOMAN IN WHITE',
M.E. BRADDON 'HIS DARLING SIN' AND THE STORY BY E. WOOD 'THE MYSTERY AT NR. 7'***

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The article deals with some similar images of writer of 'sensational novel' school. The writers have general themes and deal with problems common for that time. They create quite similar characters. But after analyzing these images, we can find the distinctive features.

The appearance of the school 'sensational novel' in the 1860s brought some changes in the literature of the second half of the XIX century. Some critics and writers of that time were very supportive of such innovations (H. Mansel). The others have reacted to such innovation with skepticism and even fear (M. Oliphant, J. Butterworth).

The term itself was first used by W.M. Thackeray in his own Cornhill Magazine. The peculiarity of 'sensational novel' is that the authors put the figure of woman in the centre of the narration. In the novels there can be found different types of female main characters: a criminal, a victim and a detective. Khotinskaya notes, that irrespective of heroine's character she is 'always either the centre to which all characters' actions are directed or she becomes a generator of dramatic events' [1, p.11].

As mentioned above, we distinguish several female images. The first image, which goes back to the traditional Gothic novel, is a beautiful, innocent and defenseless heroine.

In the novel by W. Collins 'The Woman in White' (1860), it is Laura Fairlie, who goes through different challenges (deception, kidnapping, placement in a lunatic asylum), but eventually finds her happiness, as in the traditional Gothic novel.

Laura Fairlie is defenseless and helpless before her despotic husband and Count Fosco. She is sincere and does not have a strong character. But her sister notices the changes in Laura while reading her letters during the honeymoon, 'I only see a sad torpor, an unchangeable indifference, when I turn my mind from her in the old character of a sister, and look at her, through the medium of her letters <...>' [3, p.177]

The character of the heroine changes throughout the novel and we can see 'the formation of personality'. From an innocent and sweet girl, she turns into a serious and silent woman who patiently endures the husband's jeers. Marian recalls Laura before her marriage: "There was in the old times a freshness, softness, an ever-varying and yet ever-remaining tenderness of beauty in her face, the charm of which it is not possible to express in words, or, <...>, in painting either' [3, p.190]

But, in spite of this, kidnapping and placement in a psychiatric hospital are serious blows for her. After all sorrows, Laura Fairlie becomes like Anne Catherick. She faces with the difficulties in restoring her name: 'The outward changes wrought by the suffering and the terror of the past had fearfully, almost hopelessly, strengthened the fatal resemblance between Anne Catherick and herself. <...> how the likeness, striking as it was when viewed generally, failed in many important points of similarity when tested in detail' [3, p.391].

In the story of E. Wood, 'The Mystery at Nr. 7' (1877), there are two female images - Matilda Valentine and Jane Cross. Jane is 'she was always so lively and pleasant-mannered' [5, p.148], was killed as a result of Matilda's fit, because of jealousy of the milkman, Thomas Owen.

Matilda was a good friend of Jane and 'she had never thought to kill Jane Cross, hardly to harm her, she liked her too well: but in those moments of frenzy she had not the slightest control over her actions' [5, p.174]. She suffers from a mental disorder, which is very similar to Anne Catherick's. But if Anna's illness manifests itself in the protection of her loved ones (mother, Laura), Matilda becomes very aggressive and has fits, during which she does not control herself. She is both an innocent heroine and an insidious villain. She is afraid of a ghost, but she easily comes up with a plan how to escape punishment. But the feeling of guilt greatly affects her health and reason.

In the novel by M.E. Braddon 'His Darling Sin' (1899), also two female figures are on the forefront - Lady Grace Perivale and Miss Kate Delmaine. Like in Collins's work, part of the narrative is tied to the similarities of both women, which creates one of the conflicts in the novel.

The next similar image can be identified as a kind of defender, or beloved of the main heroine (against which various kinds of atrocities are committed). This image helps the heroine to restore justice and punish offenders. Characteristic features of this image are modesty, disinterestedness and complete self-giving, for the

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benefit of the main character. He spares no time, effort or money to help, and uses all ways and means to find those who are guilty.

In the novel by Collins, this is Walter Hartright, an ordinary teacher of drawing. He falls in love with Laura Fairlie at first sight, but leaves, when he finds out t the wedding of Laura and Percival. Walter is the first, who meets the woman in white and begins to investigate this case, as a real detective. He is helped by a smart Marian Halcombe.

However, he has to leave with an expedition abroad, where he gets himself in various situations, and is on the verge of death: 'Death by disease, death by the Indians, death by drowning – all three had approached me; all three had passed me by' [3, p.366].

After all these tests, he still helps Marian and Laura. He earns money for the trial of restoring Laura's name, looking for clues in the deceit of Count Fosco and Sir Percival, and ultimately provokes Fosco, thanks to his friend Pesca.

In the novel 'His Darling Sin', Arthur Haldane can be called a defender. A young man, a popular writer, is in love with the main character. When she gets into a trouble (almost all the noble estate turns away from her, thinking that she secretly married the most unworthy person and traveled in his company), he tries to bring the offender to responsibility: 'he had thought of going to America in quest of Colonel Rannock, with the idea that he, the man with whose name Lady Perivale's had been associated, should himself set her right before that little world which had condemned her' [2, p.174]

The next figure is the figure of the antagonist. The collective image of the villain in works by the writers of the 'sensational' school is a man who can seduce people with his manners. He is well versed in various spheres of life (music, science, medicine), treacherous and ruthless.

Count of Fosco is a typical villain in the novel 'The Woman in White'. The Count not only comes up with all his clever plans, but also helps Sir Glyde to implement them (to hand out Anne Catherick for Laura Fairlie, to remove Marian Halcombe from the game for a while, to fake Laura Fairlie's death).

Count Fosco creates the impression, according to Marian, of 'a man who could tame anything' [3, p.192]. And this is really so, in opposition to Sir Percival (another antagonist), he is cheerful, good-natured, very gallant and incredibly intelligent: 'He has that quiet deference, that look of pleased, attentive interest in listening to a woman, and that secret gentleness in his voice in speaking to a woman, which, <...>, we can none of us resist. Here, too, his unusual command of the English language necessarily helps him' [3, p.194].

This character loves animals, but more exactly to train them. He did the same with his wife, who ' <...> was always talking pretentious nonsense, and always worrying the unfortunate men with every small exaction which a vain and foolish woman can impose on long-suffering male humanity' [3, p.191]. And now, after getting married, she becomes quiet and silent, afraid to say a word without her husband's permission. She performs his orders religiously and humbly (to follow Marian, or copy the letter from the maid, or leave to prepare everything for the kidnapping).

Collins creates a very cunning and clever villain. Count Fosco was a member of a secret society (which he betrayed and because of that is wanted), has extensive knowledge in various sciences. Despite his completeness, he has a quiet gait, which helps him to follow Marian and Laura easily. But in contrast to him, Collins puts a worthy opponent in the face of Marian. Count Fosco openly admires her and even tries to help her (the case when Marian got seriously ill).

Another anti-hero is Sir Percival Glyde. He is the exact opposite of Count Fosco. Unlike the Count, Sir Percival is very quick-tempered and makes decisions without thinking about the consequences. Sir Percival initially appears before us as a gallant and man in love who will do everything for the happiness of his future wife. However, during and after the honeymoon, he shows his real face: a rough, sullen and not sparing feelings of his wife. He mocks her, ruining all her maiden dreams of a caring husband, becoming a man who married her only because of her dowry: 'If I do build you a tomb <...> it will be done with your own money <...>' [3, p.230]

If we consider the negative image in Braddon's novel, we can notice similar features with Count Fosco. Colonel Rannock 'was a reprobate, a man who had long been banished from the holy of holies in the temple of society, <...> ruined other men, <...> who had admired and trusted him ; he was known to have lived in the company of vicious women, to have said to evil...' [2, p. 51-52], but with all his negative qualities, he was ' was the man's personal charm—that subtle, indescribable charm of a high-bred Scotchman who has lived in the best Continental society, and is also a cosmopolitan <...>' [2, p. 52].

The next similar image is the image of the detective. In the narrative a detective can become anyone regardless of sex, age, or occupation. For example, in the story of E.Wood, it is the milkman Thomas Oliver. He wants to restore his good name and wash off the stigma of the murderer: "I told you, sir, as I daresay you can

recall to mind, that I should do what lay in my power to unravel the mystery – for it was not at all agreeable to have it laid at my door' [3, p.170]. He himself was looking for a clue and constantly gave various assumptions about the murder. Thomas independently found out that Matilda was lying at the inquest. She framed Thomas deliberately, lying, that she did not hear him ringing the door.

In the 'The Woman in White' there are two detectives: Walter Hartright and Marian Halcombe. Marian can be called Laura's defender and is a full-fledged detective: she has to crawl on the cornice to hear insidious plots against her, then bribe the nurse to help Laura escape from the hospital. Marian Halcombe is on an equal footing with Walter, unlike Gothic and detective novels, where only a positive hero or detective should. Count Fosco admires her and writes in her diary the following: 'The tact which I find here, the discretion, the rare courage, the wonderful power of memory, the accurate observation of character, the easy grace of style, the charming outbursts of womanly feeling, have all inexpressibly increased my admiration of this sublime creature, of this magnificent Marian'[3, p. 302-303].

If we talk about the novel 'His Darling Sin', then we are presented, Mr. John Faunce - retired detective, engaged in amateur private detective. He is somewhat like Sherlock Holmes, he notices and remembers everything to the smallest detail. But there is one difference, which is not typical for either Collins's detectives or Wood. Mr. Faunce uses false evidence (places a slanderous article on Lady Perivale), so that there is a basis for the trial. In the narrative at first this is not explicitly stated, but in the novel there are enough tips from the author: '- <...> But if there is no libel—if people go on talking and talking, and nobody ever publishes the slander? - Make your mind easy. Lady Perivale. When we are ready for it there will be a libel!' [2, p.109] or 'Then I hope I shall have the pleasure of horsewhipping the writer, and the editor who publishes it' said Haldane, hotly. 'If you please, Mr. Haldane,' cried Faunce, earnestly, 'nothing of that kind.<...>'[2, p.219]

So, we can say that despite the presence of the same in nature of images, each author modified them in accordance with what they wanted to achieve at the end. But still the authors retained one thing in common, they brought the female image to the forefront and it does not matter whether it's a negative or a positive hero. The whole story unfolded from the beginning to the end around the female image.

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