

**SOCIAL PROBLEMATIC AND ARTISTIC PECULIARITIES
OF THE NOVEL «EFFI BRIEST» BY THEODOR FONTANE**

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The artistic originality of the artwork and its correlation with the principles of poetic realism is given in the article. Peculiarities of the novel are analyzed from a psychological and social point of view.

Theodor Fontane (1819–1898) is a bright representative of poetic realism in German literature. His main masterpiece is the novel «Effi Briest» (1895), where the writer implemented a number of motifs and themes from his previous works using all of his preceding aesthetic experience.

The novel has a clear composition and text organization that emphasizes the gradual development of the plot and denotes main stages in the life of the main female character – Effi Briest. The composition of the novel is carefully designed and accurately organized, and is rather traditional: the set-up, the development of the action, the climax and the denouement can be singled out easily. The set-up is the story of a young Effi, a girl from a noble family, who is married to Baron Geert von Innstetten. At the beginning of the novel she is cheerful, blithe and full of energy. A teenage girl who grew up in the atmosphere of love and friendship, she is outgoing and communicative, the way she thinks and behaves is the manifestation of life itself.

Already in the first chapters of the novel there happens an event which is unnatural and inhuman in its essence: the girl marries the man, who is in the appropriate age to be her father. Effi's marriage to Innstetten is prompted by her mother who wants her daughter to succeed in life. Effi admits that she is afraid of Innstetten, but her mother tries to convince her, saying: «Besides, he is a man of character, position, and good breeding, and if you do not say «no», which I could hardly expect of my shrewd Effi, you will be standing at the age of twenty where others stand at forty» [1].

Effi gets married, because she is accustomed to following her parents' will and by the age of sixteen she has learned to view mercenary marriage as a source of comfort and well-being. In addition, the girl believes that she fulfills her duty to the family, because Innstetten is a wealthy person who occupies a prominent place in the society, and who successfully goes up the career ladder.

However, having left the parental home after her marriage, the main character is miserable and lonely. Her new husband is bothered by a single thought: if his marriage to Effi will help him get the majority of votes when he tries to get into the Reichstag. Innstetten remains a selfish person, thinking first and foremost about his interests. He goes to Bismarck's estate at a word, leaving Effi in an empty house and not even considering the possibility of her being scared and sad.

The main character is indecisive, radical judgments are alien to her. Effi realizes that she and her husband are very different people. In her attitude towards her husband there is respect, mixed with reverend fear, but no love. She is too young and cannot find intimacy with a man who is much older than herself, who is closed and reserved. However, the young woman does not think about divorcing Innstetten and living in accordance with her own views. Effi embodies perishing beauty and ruined human opportunities. Fontane suggests that it is impossible to be happy in the society divided by class barriers. The writer condemns the marriage of convenience and presents it as one of the forms of human oppression, which violates personality.

When Effi is in Kessin, she feels lonely among the provincials and gossips, she does not find the moral strength to resist Crampas's courtship. She sympathizes with Crampas just because he treats her as an equal, shows concern and respect towards her. However, this relation is short-lived. It ends due to outer circumstances when Innstetten is assigned to Berlin. Effi hopes that she is over with her past.

Effi's love affair is almost not shown in the novel, and Crampas's character is practically not disclosed. What Fontane wanted to show was not the story of a cheating wife, but a typical picture of his time – the tragic fate of a lonely person on the background of defective society.

The climax of the novel is the scene when letters to Effi are accidentally found by her husband, and Innstetten learns that his wife had an affair with Crampas. Innstetten tells Crampas he wants to duel, the latter agrees and is killed by Innstetten, then a family breakdown follows. Innstetten destroys Crampas's and Effi's lives as well as his own, but he is not motivated by blinding jealousy, he wants his wife to be punished and her lover to die.

After the separation Effi tries to do something useful, but she encounters hostility and suspicion everywhere. Only after doctor Rummschüttel's letter the woman finds refuge in her father's house. But memories of the past continue to stab her heart. Thus, the reader gets the opportunity to trace a sort of evolution of the main character: after a carefree childhood she lived to a sad adolescence, and her adulthood never came. Despite the

contrast between Effi's image at the beginning and the end of the novel, the hardships of life could not change one trait of her character: she still has something of a helpless teenager.

The compositional trait of the novel is symmetry. The action starts on the playground in front of the Briests' family house. Here Effi talks to her friends and mother about her future husband, here the girls play hide and seek. From this place Effi goes to Kessin as Innstetten's wife. Many years later she returns here, broken and hopelessly ill, to die. Her place of peace will be the same playground in front of the house.

The novel is divided into small chapters. The author introduces dialogues, which are connected with the most important moments of the main character's life. They summarize the previous stage of life and at the same time contain forecast for the future. In the novel there are letters that complete each semantic chapter of the novel, and also mark the most important milestones in the heroine's fate.

The writer uses the techniques of silence and hints with great skill. Showing Effi's monotonous life after marriage, Fontane refuses to describe routine, and briefly depicts a picture of the evening in Innstetten's house, representing the suffocating atmosphere of a provincial German town. Dialogues of the main characters - Effi and Crampas - are peculiar in the fact that common phrases contain deeper meaning, there is often subtext. Understatement in the dialogues of the characters can be found on those pages of the novel, where the author writes about subtle, intimate experiences.

Story line in «Effi Briest» is intermittent. The writer omits moments that have a decisive effect on the heroine's fate. Fontane does not describe the engagement, the wedding, or the trip to Italy. These events happen somewhere behind the stage, the reader learns indirectly about them, from the dialogues of the characters and Effi's memories. After the description of the engagement, the writer focuses the readers' attention on the feelings which overwhelm Effi's parents. Effi's feelings are not described, they are just not there, as she is too naive and does not understand the importance of this event.

Some traits of poetic realism are reflected in the novel. One of the most typical techniques of this literary style is the memories technique. It is found in the scene when madam von Briest accepts Innstetten as her daughter's fiancé and remembers how he was courting her in the past, but she preferred adviser nobility von Briest to him.

In the system of characters there is Hoffman's duality principle: the characters in the novel can also be divided into «musicians»³ (Effi, her friend Gieshubler, maid Roswitha) and «philistines»⁴ (Effi's parents, Innstetten, secular society of the town of Kessin). The world of philistines is much greater than that of the musicians.

Fontane uses symbols with great skill. Describing Effi and Innstetten's life, the writer introduces the story of the Chinese into the narrative, which has a mysterious sense. Thanks to this story the writer reveals longing and loneliness of a young woman. She is weak and unstable, the power of her charm is the sincerity, kindness and tenderness. When Effi gets scared of a ghost, she asks her husband to move to another, safer and more convenient housing, but Innstetten refuses. He fears that if he tells the true reasons for the move his career will be ruined, and he himself will become the object of ridicule.

There are symbols connected with light in the novel. The narration begins and ends with the description of the landscape. Describing Effi as a charming teenager, the writer prefers as a background a shining landscape, shimmering with bright colors: blinding rays of the sun, harsh shadows, an alley lined with colorful tiles, white gate, windows which are overgrown with wild grapes. Everything disposes for good spirits and joy. In the final chapter the same playground is perceived quite differently: «It was a month later and September was drawing to an end. The weather was beautiful, but the foliage in the park began to show a great deal of red and yellow and since the equinox, which had brought three stormy days, the leaves lay scattered in every direction» [1]. On this background a simple white grave where Effi rests is depicted. The picture of a dying nature in the final chapter deeper emphasizes the tragic fate of the main character, it is the sad ending of the novel.

Some details of the landscape appear repeatedly in different periods of Effi's life and point out the tragedy of her fate. In the landscape the colors, smells and sounds are organically combined. Landscape gives a feeling of space. Describing it, Fontane conveys the emotional world of the character. The author draws the readers' attention to a number of details that will be important for the development of events. So we see a pond with a footbridge, a swing, windows which are overgrown with wild grapes. These everyday objects become symbolic. It is worth pointing out that the swing, where the main character swings, is mentioned in the novel repeatedly. In one of the concluding chapters Effi once again comes to the swing as she used to do in her childhood, takes off and plummets down. She feels as if nothing happened, there was no tragedy, and that her happy and carefree childhood continues. The heroine thinks that she is flying directly into the sky, where everything is good, where

³ Musician – romantic, dreamer, «enthusiast», a man not of this world. He looks at life with horror and disgust, tries to get rid of heavy load of the life, runs from life in his imagination in a perfect world in which he has a recreation, harmony and freedom.

⁴ Philistine – a smug petty bourgeois, who is characterized by hypocritical, self-righteous behavior, the person without spiritual needs, the one who does not appreciate art, does not share the related with art aesthetic and spiritual values.

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there is a lot of air. Effi is depressed, frustrated and broken, she realizes that it is over and her careless past will never come back.

Speech characteristics are important, they are additional methods which help describe psychological state of the characters. From the way Roswitha talks we can conclude that she is simple-minded and good; from a conversation with Johannes it becomes clear that he is a reasonable and soulless person. Briest is kind and absent-minded, and his wife is calculating and narcissistic. Speech of Effi as a teenager is harsh and impulsive. In conversations with her parents before the wedding she tries to look adult, but the presentation manner shows that she is still a child. In conversations with Innstetten Effi is hesitant, compared with her husband she feels too young. The way Innstetten talks shows that he is an army man. He makes up long sentences, uses foreign words.

The novel «Effi Briest» is one of the most significant pieces of psychological and social-critical prose in the literature of German realism. Fontane highlights the actual problems of his time and shows the life of defective society which depends on the established rules and regulations. In his novel Fontane uses a complex of artistic devices: the harmony and symmetry of the composition, the intermittence of the story lines, the technique of silence and hints, the device of memories, the combination of the principles of duality and typification, symbols, special attitude to nature, speech characteristics. All these give the novel ideological and artistic integrity, harmony and completeness; help reveal social problems (burgher morality, the role of women in marriage, the collision of people with the established norms of bourgeois society). Thanks to these artistic devices Fontane achieves a balance between criticism and idealization of reality, which is one of the leading distinctive principles of poetic realism in Germany.

REFERENCES

1. Theodor Fontane «Effi Briest» [Electronic resource] / T. Fontane. – Mode of access: <https://ru.scribd.com/document/187734535/Effi-Briest>. – Date of access: 18.01.2017.