

INTERPRETATION OF THE CONCEPT OF THE “AMERICAN DREAM” IN THE WORKS OF THOMAS DREISER BY AMERICAN LITERARY SCHOLARS.

Fayzieva Komila Akhrorovna,

associate professor,

University of Economics and Pedagogy.

E-mail: komila.fayziyeva.85@bk.ru

Tel: (90) 314 84 48

Abstract. *Dreiser wrote fifteen short stories, and the resulting manuscript he called “American Tragedies.” Each story dealt with a topical theme of the time: an American young man, trying to fulfill his dream of becoming rich by marrying a rich woman, decides to commit a crime. In a letter to Jack Wilgus, Thomas Dreiser admitted: “I thought about this story for a long time, because it seemed to me not only to reflect every aspect of our national life - politics, society, religion, business, sex, but it was a story that was so common to every boy growing up in small American towns. It was a particularly true story of what life can do to an individual and how helpless an individual is against it.”*

Key words: *The concept of the American dream; society; middle class; problem; devastating impact; the concept of the American tragedy.*

My identification as a literary critic marks another difference between this work and my previous one. When I began that book, I, like many others, was struggling to understand how to move literary studies beyond formalism. The advent of continental theory had successfully complicated the New Critical Readings, but that theory often seemed to produce a kind of formalism, while at the same time retreating from pressing social and political issues into a textual field that was incomprehensible to those not versed in its specialized language. My work on law and literature was an attempt to move beyond formalism by connecting the study of literature to the important legal issues of antebellum America.[1]

It is difficult to describe literary studies today as a retreat from the political and the social. This book, like my previous book, is concerned with both. Yet it does

provide a more direct answer to what some consider formalistic questions: why do some literary works retain their appeal more than others?

I believe that the appeal of a work does not depend solely on the prepared audience; it also arises from the structural relationships that the work establishes with its readers in relation to the issues it addresses. One answer to my question, then, is that for a work to retain its appeal, it must engage readers in a complex world like history, rather than leaving them confused and insecure about evaluating events both within and outside the text. If I am right, such appeal, while dependent on the specific issues addressed, is not measured solely by the political stances of the work. [2]

It is important to clarify that the impact of a work cannot be measured solely by its political stances, and not simply because we can rarely pinpoint the politics of a work. In my view, there is no such thing as a non-historical category of literary work. On the contrary, what we call literary work today has a history of its own. But because literary work is historically constructed, it has become a form of discourse that is not the same as political stances. Some argue that such a discourse is impossible. But there are, of course, socially and historically determined differences between political discourse and Henry James's novel. Of course, we can take a political stance on the question of whether we should continue to value an institution like literary work. For some, it is not worth maintaining a discourse whose primary purpose is not to take definite positions on particular issues. Rather, I argue that, given the many institutions that allow us to make our politics known, literary discourse can serve an important political function in our society, not only because it serves as a guide for political action, but also because it creates a space in which our political beliefs can be tested and challenged through the dramatization of hypothetical events. [3]

Of course, this is not the only function of texts created and read in the field known as literature. There are also many other ways in which political beliefs can be tested and challenged: for example, by directly confronting and arguing about opposing positions, or by experiencing, observing, and reading about historical events. Nevertheless, my own experience as a reader and teacher convinces me that the method literature provides is valuable. The works reviewed in this book, both realistic and non-realistic, are important to me because reading them in conjunction

with legal history has contributed to a reconsideration of the role of contract.[4] This reconsideration marks another difference between this book and the book on the prewar period.

By the time I finished that book, I had become convinced that the contract in law was simply a means of legitimizing the unjust regime of a market-based economy. As the “failure” in the title of this book suggests, I have not completely abandoned this view. However, as the “promise” in the title suggests, I have modified it. An important way in which I came to appreciate the “promise of contract” was by experiencing the “contract” that realist texts offer their readers.

The methods that realists developed to engage their audience are among the most important contributions to the creation of literature as it is now defined.[5] Through a series of comparisons, I will emphasize that the secret contract between a work of realism and its reader differs from that of other works written at that time.

Of course, the motives for the crimes of Raskolnikov and Griffiths were different, but they were united by a common theme: achieving a high position in society in the easiest way. Both, having made their own internal choices, consciously crossed the line of what was permissible. It is noteworthy that after committing a serious crime, the heroes behave differently.

Raskolnikov confessed to the murder, because he could no longer live as before. Griffiths, in turn, did not change his usual lifestyle after the murder of Roberta and until the end of his life justified himself by arguing that the girl had accidentally fallen into the river and therefore had nothing to do with her death.

Among other things, a distinctive feature of Thomas Dreiser’s *An American Tragedy* is that the characters in the novel are not strictly divided into good and evil, and the author does not use only black and white terms when describing them and describing their actions [6]. The main goal of the writer in this novel was to depict the “American Dream”, to demonstrate through concrete examples that it is impossible to achieve it by legal means. Among the American authors who proclaimed the philosophy of success of the last century, the primacy of pragmatic values, and militant individualism, Thomas Dreiser was one of the first to question the main components of the bourgeois “American Dream” - the embodiment of social and moral ideals of success and prosperity. [7]

Social inequality, the erosion of spiritual values, and internal conflicts of the individual occupy a central place in Dreiser's work. In his works, he highlights complex conflicts between the individual and society, the crisis of human values in a changing social environment. In the novel "An American Tragedy," injustice in society, the struggle for wealth and status, and human errors are deeply analyzed through the character of Clyde Griffiths.[8] In the novel, through the tragedy of Clyde Griffiths, the writer describes the division of American society into class strata, the sharp differences between poverty and wealth, as well as personal tragedies resulting from the erosion of moral values. Through his works, Dreiser encourages the reader to think deeply about human values and the problems of society. The writer is especially critical of the problems of the main social institutions of society - family, religion, education, and the economic system. According to Dreiser, these problems of society are reflected in the personal life of an individual, leading him to a tragic end.[9] The importance of the writer's work lies in the fact that, while remaining true to the principles of critical realism, he was able to openly and clearly depict the social and moral problems of society. The psychological complexity and internal struggle between personal aspirations and the influence of the social environment depicted in Dreiser's works have secured his novels a prominent place in world literature.

The works of Theodore Dreiser are among the finest examples of American naturalistic literature, providing a profound understanding of how capitalist society shapes human destiny. Despite harsh criticism of the writer's approach to naturalism, Dreiser continued to establish himself as a leading proponent of naturalism and realism. His books "The Capitalist" and "The Titans" depict the foundations of capitalist society and the complex interplay between personal interests and the broader social context.[10]

It's difficult to describe contemporary literary criticism as a retreat from the political and social. This book, like my previous one, is concerned with both aspects. However, it provides a more direct answer to what some consider formalist questions: why do some literary works retain their appeal more than others?

I believe that a work's appeal depends not only on its prepared audience; it also arises from the structural connections the work establishes with its readers in relation to the issues it addresses. Thus, one answer to my question is that, to retain its appeal,

a work must engage readers in a complex world such as history, rather than leave them confused and uncertain about their assessment of events both within and outside the text.[11] If I am right, then such appeal, while dependent on the specific issues it addresses, is not measured solely by the work's political stance.

It is important to clarify that a work's impact cannot be measured solely by its political stance, and not only because we can rarely pinpoint a work's political content. In my view, there is no non-historical category of literary work. On the contrary, what we today call a literary work has its own history. But because literary work is historically constructed, it has become a form of discourse that is not identical to a political position. Some argue that such a discourse is impossible.[7] But of course, there are socially and historically determined differences between political discourse and a Henry James novel. We can certainly take a political position on the question of whether we should continue to value such an institution as the literary work. For some, it is inappropriate to support a discourse whose primary purpose is not to take particular positions on specific issues. Rather, I argue that, given the variety of institutions that allow us to express our political positions, literary discourse can serve an important political function in our society not only because it serves as a guide for political action but also because it creates a space in which our political beliefs can be tested and challenged through the dramatization of hypothetical events.[8]

In T. Dreiser's "American Tragedy", the fate of a lonely man Clyde Griffiths reflects the essence of American society at that time. The writer managed to reveal the meaning of the concepts of "American Dream" and "American Tragedy" on his example, and also showed how the "American Dream" turns into an "American Tragedy". In the novel, the destructive social influence on Clyde Griffiths is manifested in his pursuit of false goals and imaginary ideals, like other young Americans, which led to tragic consequences. Having studied the main reasons for Clyde Griffith's crime, we came to the conclusion that not only the young man himself, but the entire American social structure is to blame for the death of Roberta, as well as for the subsequent death of Clyde. Identifying plot similarities between T. Dreiser's novel and the novels of F.M. Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment and M. Puzo's The Last Don allowed us to discover a clear similarity between the main

characters of these works, first of all, like Clyde, they destroy themselves on the way to realizing their ideals.[11]

In general, in the novel *An American Tragedy*, T. Dreiser reaches the peak of his skill as a realist writer. This work demonstrates the close connection between the author's deep psychologism and social analysis, demonstrates the formation of human spirituality under the influence of the surrounding social environment.

We see the prospects for a deeper study of the problem outlined in this article in a more detailed study of such aspects of T. Dreiser's work as the exposure of human vices, the clash between the "American dream" and reality, etc.

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