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## V. WOOLF'S MINOR PROSE: TO THE ISSUE OF ITS SEMANTICS AND RELATION TO HER NOVELS

Предметом дослідження цієї статті є семантичні особливості малої прози В. Вулф, зокрема її оповідань, нарисів та есе, що розглядаються як такі, які знаходяться у нерозривному зв'язку із її романами.

Особисту історію В. Вулф як письменниці неможливо уявити повністю без усвідомлення того, яке місце в її творчості займають зразки її «малої прози» – від окремих нарисів до циклу есе, які виступають у якості її модерністських експериментів з наративними техніками, котрі пізніше знайдуть продовження в її романістиці.

Якщо саме таким чином сприймати творчість Вірджинії Вулф, то перед нами постає своєрідний літопис розвитку її особистого бачення модернізму з його новаціями та художніми здобутками, прагненням до синтезу мистецтв і суперечливою діалектикою.

Особлива увага у статті приділяється аналізу семантики та поетики окремих есе – «Власна кімната» та «Три гінеї», які є важливою складовою «феміністичної полеміки» Вулф.

*Ключові слова:* В. Вулф, мала проза, есе, модернізм.

Предметом исследования данной статьи являются семантические особенности малой прозы Вирджинии Вулф, в частности её рассказов, очерков и эссе, которые рассматриваются в неразрывной связи с её романами.

Личную историю Вулф как писателя невозможно представить без осознания того, какое место в её творчестве занимает «малая проза» – от отдельных очерков до объединенных в цикл эссе, которые представляют собой эксперименты с техниками повествования, что в дальнейшем получит развитие уже в её романистике.

Если воспринимать творчество Вирджинии Вулф именно в ключе неразрывной связи между её малой прозой и романами, то весь её творческий путь «прочитывается» как своеобразная летопись её личного видения модернизма с его новаторством, противоречивой диалектикой и стремлением к синтезу различных искусств.

Особое внимание в статье уделяется анализу семантики и поэтики отдельных рассказов и очерков, в частности – эссе «Собственная комната» и «Три гиней», которые являются частью «феминистической полеміки» в творчестве Вулф.

*Ключевые слова:* В. Вулф, малая проза, эссе, модернизм.

This article deals with Virginia Woolf's minor prose, its semantics and its relation to her novels. Her essays and short stories cover the wide variety of topics, revealing the writer's thoughts about the nature of art, its changing character in the modern world, on the necessity of major social changes, a woman's role in the XX century, and being at the same time just another field for her experiments with narration. At the same time, her short stories, various in forms and mood, were always seen as a kind of necessary supplement to her novels, because they made it possible to trace the development of her as a writer.

*Key words:* Virginia Woolf, minor prose, essay, modernism.

Virginia Woolf's writings and her own life have attracted a lot of attention in the XXth century, but the the major focus has always been on her novels.

Her desire to «re-form the novel and capture multitude of things as present fugitive, enclose the whole and shape infinite strange shapes» made her experiment throughtout her career not only with the novel, but also with various forms of short fiction, including essays and sketches [1, p. 167].

Her essays cover the wide variety of topics, revealing the writer's thoughts about the nature of art, its changing character in the modern world, on the necessity of major social changes, a woman's role in the XX century, and being at the same time just another field for her experiments with narration.

The similarity between her essays and short stories may be found in the sphere of innovative narrative techniques, experiments with form; although her short stories did not evoke vivid discussions on the level of their content – in contrast to her essays.

Still, the line separating Virginia Woolf's fiction from her essays is a very thin one.

It might be said that the genre of essay and the one of short story simply performed different functions in her writings. The vast majority of her short stories were meant neither to present her social and political views, nor to become a tool of social change. This function was given mostly to her essays.

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V. Woolf was well aware of the difficulties that any author would inevitably face while writing a novel: she said that «novels are frightfully clumsy and overpowering...» and that it is easier and it is very amusing sometimes «to try with these short stories» [4, p. 117].

Most of her short fiction was written in the seven-year period from 1917. The first publication of the Hogarth Press included a volume, containing two short stories – one of them – Woolf's *The Mark on the Wall*.

The only volume of short stories and sketches that V. Woolf published was published in 1921 and had the title *Monday or Tuesday*. The general mood of critical review was not favourable [3, p. 32].

Woolf complained in her diary that they did not find anything particularly interesting in it. However, T.S. Eliot congratulated her on having «bridged a certain gap which existed between your other novels and the experimental prose of Monday or Tuesday» [3, p. 35].

So it may be said that it was not in the novel, but in the short story where Virginia Woolf was able for the first time to feel free in expressing herself as a writer, without necessity to follow the traditional novelistic conventions of the time. This experimental nature may be partially an explanation for such a wide variety that one can find among V. Woolf's short stories.

Some of her shorter works, such as *Solid Objects* and *The Legacy* may be called short stories in the traditional sense – they have plot with firm story lines and include the description of characters.

Others, including *Mark on the Wall*, *Unwritten Novel* remind the reader of lyrical prose typical of the nineteenth-century writers.

There exist some works that closely resemble her fiction – short stories in a form of biographical portraits, for instance, *Old Mrs. Grey* and *Eleanor Ormerod*.

Some of her short stories are connected with her novels: the brightest example of this kind is her *Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street*, which would later become the basis for her most famous novel. It was in this short story when she first found a way to place her narrator within her character's mind and to present character's thoughts and emotions as they appear [1, p. 53].

After having written *Mrs Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf completed eight short stories, which were all set at Mrs. Dalloway's party. In these stories she wanted to show one and the same event through the vision of different characters.

There is definitely a tendency to perceive Woolf's short stories as the ones that have relatively strong connections to her novels: regardless if they are seen as a field for her experimenting with narrative techniques or as a part of certain cycle, where this connection, uniting her minor prose and her novels is direct and more obvious.

At the same time, Woolf's essays are generally seen by as a part of feministic discourse, but they are also undoubtedly a bright example of Woolf's her fiction works. Among those perhaps two of her longer essays – *The Room of one's own* and *Three guineas* – are of the most interest, as they perform different role among Woolf's writings.

*A Room of One's Own* is an extended book-length essay by Virginia Woolf. First published on 24 October 1929, the essay was based on a series of lectures she delivered at two women's colleges at Cambridge University a year earlier. While this extended essay in fact employs a fictional narrator and narrative to explore women both as writers of and characters in fiction, the manuscript for the delivery of the series of lectures, had the first title *Women and Fiction*, and therefore may be considered non-fiction [2, p. 205].

The main subject of the essay is reflection about women's place in the world of that time, her social role and about traditional gender models. Woolf analyzes the conventions and restrictions that are real in the British society at the beginning of the XX century; any woman might face them while looking for her place in this world.

In this essay Virginia Woolf shows that she is well-aware of women's growing necessity to fight for their freedom – in a wide sense of meaning – freedom of thinking, living and creating the way they wanted to do, not the way it was «traditional» and therefore – obligatory.

It may be said that in *A Room of One's Own* Virginia Woolf modernizes the form of *familiar essay*, genre that allows her to combine urgent social polemics with her creativity, her talent to highlight important problems, being writer, not a journalist.

From the stylistic point of view, the narration in *A Room of One's Own* changes from part to part, it seems inhomogeneous – probably, because the main «plot» of the essay includes many additional storylines, brought to life because of the author's random associations or thoughts. Such a structure reminds one of «stream of consciousness» technique, and this impression increases, because Virginia Woolf purposely draws the reader's attention to the process how her ideas appear, how the chain of thoughts is triggered by some insignificant detail. She shows how the mind operates – from within.

Historically, essay as a genre allowed the writers to experiment with their style. This is precisely what Virginia Woolf does in *A Room of One's Own*.

*A Room of One's Own* clearly proves that Virginia Woolf not simply «looked back» on the writers of previous epochs, but they were actively present in her memory and in her mind all the time. In this essay the author often evokes images of famous poets and writers in her text: she thinks how they would possibly react to the modern lifestyle, how all social and political changes could be seen by them, and simply – reflects about them, their lives, their creative works, their mutual influences and the way how their presense re-shaped the history of art.

Jeffry Chaucer, Alfred Tennyson, Christina Rossetti take their place between half-fictional characters – people, with whom the narrator speaks, argues, whom she sees during her trip to Oxbridge.

She states that the changed world dictates new rules, but along with that, it gives new opportunities. Woolf stresses that the invisible bond between the generations of women did not break, «for the great poets do not die; they are continuing presences, they need only the opportunity to walk among us in flesh» [6].

She finishes *A Room of One's Own* with the conclusion that «to work, even in poverty and obscurity, is worth while» – because that will bring closer the re-birth of «new Judith», genial writer, who could live and create neither in Shakespearean time, nor in any other – before the XXth century.

Sally Greene in the collection of articles, entitled «Virginia Woolf and Essay», claims that it was writing *A Room of One's Own* that helped Virginia to develop her unique style – as essayist, and finally found herself able to «write criticism fearlessly» [6].

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