

ЛИТЕРАТУРА В НАЦИОНАЛЬНОМ И МЕЖДУНАРОДНОМ КОНТЕКСТЕ

AMERICAN WOMEN OF THE BEGINNING OF XXTH CENTURY (ON THE BASIS OF O.HENRY'S STORIES)

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William Sydney Porter (1862-1910) an American short story writer was born in Greensboro, North Caroline, in 1862. Notwithstanding having a wrack at numerous jobs in his lifetime, which might differ from pharmacy, drafting, banking to journalism, since early years he took a passionate interest in classic literature.

Initially, he began writing just as a hobby, however later he started doing his job professionally for newspapers and magazines. W.Porter's legacy of about 600 stories, efficiently illustrate the general life style of the population in America in his period. Likewise several his masterpiece works have been screened by master actors and actresses. Moreover, there is the 'O.Henry Award' which is a prestigious annual prize named after W.Porter given to outstanding short stories.

Although, some critics judge Porter's writings to be merely, fictional stories, people loved them for their witticism, original point and relevant issues for ordinary people of those times. Even though, the characters of the stories were not real people at all, W.Porter did not significantly improvised as he was to write a story per week, and got inspirational ideas by observing talking people in hotel lobbies.

Analyzing the position of women by reading 'Selected stories from O.Henry' which contains 24 well-known stories, it is obvious that women do not widely figure out in there or in some stories they were not mentioned at all. Even if it was not so far, somewhat a century beyond, yet actions took place in America which is one of the leading western countries, women appear to be intrinsic background characters without much respect or proper position.

However today in a modern society of XXIst century, countries in the world are believed to be developed to what extend women are estimated there. Thus XXth century

made a rapid rush into the world of civilization which stepped to progress by respecting women.

Yet, in the beginning of the past century position of women left much to be desired. People made their worst apprehensions on women, considering them to be witches and even in some earlier manuals they were sentenced as evil made creatures. Women were characterized as weak people without any intelligence or authority who were able to do nothing, but bother men. Even laws treated women as children. Women did not have even basic rights as making decisions affecting their personal lives, for what responsibility took upon their fathers', later husbands' shoulders who they passed to, to be possessed after the marriage. Women were not supposed to express their ideas or say a word against males' wish, as it was considered to be an act of disobedience, for what they might be punished or even seriously harmed. Believing the idea of women should not play a role in a public life, husbands controlled any property they inherited or wages earned. Accordingly, women were expected to be domestic attributes and helpmates for men, therefore only appropriate occupation for them was motherhood or wifehood.

Along the new XXth century, eventually the position of women commenced slight improving both within the family and society. If in the past they dreamed to get married for to be supported financially, then they were able to do it by their own, even they were hired for unimportant occupations. However comparing to men, women were hardly employed or their work was sweated, low paid labor, what is proven in the stories of O.Henry's as well.

The situation is evident from the number of employed women in his stories. For instance, out of about 40 women, only one third had jobs, where five of them were sales ladies, two waitresses, two poetesses, two singers, one stographer-typewriter and one ironer in a hand laundry. If even some women were able to work, they usually were badly paid, as their wages might vary from 5 to 8 dollars per week, however their counterparts' wages started from 18 dollars per week. W. Porter himself as a journalist received 25 dollars per week. Only one woman Mrs. De Ormond Sampson in 'The handbook of Hymen' (page 161) mentioned to have a better job, as a queen of a little

town named Rosa, and owned a two-storey house as she was a widow. But even she being advanced women of her time was amazed by Mr. Pratt, as he was educated and intelligent.

In the beginning of XXth century, education for women was something unachievable but desirable. Illustrating the point of women literacy in O.Henry's works, in a number of more than three dozens of women, a single woman mentioned to have any kind of education. Among 24 stories, an only story 'A municipal report', where W.Porter beautifully described one heroine as a valuable discovery is Azalea Adair (page 234) a fifty-year-old woman whose knowledge of the world was derived from inference and by inspiration, was a home-educated old lady.

Another issue is rights. In stories were never mentioned any kinds of women's personal rights, as fathers, later husbands decided what actions they should take. For instance, 'Roads of destiny' and 'The trimmed lamp' are stories, which demonstrates males' domain over females. In the first one Mademoiselle Lucie de Varennes tells David Mignot about her uncle: 'He has made my life one long terror. I am afraid of his very looks and never before dared to disobey him, but to-night he would have married me to a man three times my age' (page 21). In the second story, once Lou, a flourishing laundry worker tells Nancy about Dan: 'Dan is always wanting me to marry him right away. But why should I? I'm independent, I can do, as please with the money I earn; and he would never agree for me to keep on working afterward' (page 178).

The spheres of public life as education, art, or politics remain the areas where women were totally absent. Despite being ignored by society, they were of a great necessity in a household, as all house work lied upon their fragile shoulders. Knitting and cooking seem to be single recreational activities which might entertain women in their leisure time in the past.

Analyzing the life of women yesterday, I apparently conclude, that female gender had been experiencing discrimination for a long time, whereas today the situation has changed on the whole. At present women figure out in each sphere of social life and reach the highest picks along with their counterparts, leading not only the younger generation but the whole nation towards enlightenment and civilization. So, history full

of obstacles passed on the way and for colossal duty performed women ought to be highly respected and honored!