

РОЗДІЛ 6 РОСІЙСЬКА ЛІТЕРАТУРА

УДК 821.161.1

COVERAGE OF EXISTENTIAL PROBLEMS IN WORKS OF L. ANDREEV ВИСВІТЛЕННЯ ЕКЗИСТЕНЦІЙНИХ ПРОБЛЕМ У ТВОРАХ Л. АНДРЕЄВА

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The article studies the works of an outstanding Russian writer L. Andreev and proposes an ideological as well as thematic analysis of his novels. Such works of the writer as "The Story of the Seven Hung Up Men", "Thought", "The Life of a Man", "The Story about Sergey Petrovich", "The Abyss", "The Wall" and some others are analyzed. A comparison of the works of L. Andreev with the works of F. Dostoevsky, J.P. Sartre, F. Nietzsche is provided. The characteristics of "small, insignificant" people and "superhuman", revealed the manifestation of animal nature in behavior are analyzed. Such existential problems as the sense of human life, behavior in border situations (between life and death) are investigated.

Key words: existential problems, sense of life, abyss, wall, symbolism.

У статті досліджується творчість видатного російського письменника Л. Андрєєва та виконано ідейно-тематичний аналіз його творів. Проаналізовано такі роботи письменника, як «Розповідь про сім повішених», «Думка», «Життя людини», «Розповідь про Сергія Петровича», «Бездня», «Стіна» та деякі інші. Наведено порівняння творів Л. Андрєєва з творами Ф. Достоєвського, Ж.П. Сартра, Ф. Ніцше. Проаналізовано характеристики «маленьких, нікчемних» людей і «надлюдини», розкрито прояв тваринної природи в поведінці. Досліджено такі екзистенційні проблеми, як сенс життя людини, поведінка у критичних ситуаціях (між життям і смертю).

Ключові слова: екзистенційні проблеми, сенс життя, безодня, стіна, символізм.

В статье исследуется творчество выдающегося русского писателя Л. Андреева и выполнен идейно-тематический анализ его произведений. Проанализированы такие работы писателя, как «Рассказ о семи повешенных», «Мысль», «Жизнь человека», «Рассказ о Сергее Петровиче», «Бездна», «Стена» и некоторые другие. Приведено сравнение произведений Л. Андреева с произведениями Ф. Достоевского, Ж.П. Сартра, Ф. Ницше. Проанализированы характеристики «маленьких, ничтожных» людей и «сверхчеловека», раскрыто проявление животной природы в поведении. Исследованы такие экзистенциальные проблемы, как смысл жизни человека, поведение в пограничных ситуациях (между жизнью и смертью).

Ключевые слова: экзистенциальные проблемы, смысл жизни, бездна, стена, символизм.

Formulation of the problem. Leonid Nikolaevich Andreev (1871–1919) is a distinctive writer whose work amazes and attracts by the richness and beauty of the artistic word, the depth and relevance of raised psychological and philosophical themes and problems. His outstanding creativity was influenced by Russian writers F. Dostoevsky, L. Tolstoy, M. Gorky and philosophical thought, in particular, by A. Schopenhauer and L. Shestov; and, of course, by the uniqueness and authenticity of the life and personality of the artist. Immeasurable loneliness, failures and disappointments in love, attempts to interrupt the existence, as well as great happiness to be and "carry your cross" affected his work. The works of L. Andreev are his thoughts, an attempt to understand life and tell people something very important and necessary.

Objectives. The aim of the article is to provide an ideological as well as thematic analysis of the novels of an outstanding Russian writer L. Andreev and propose the comparison of his existential ideas with the ones of J.P. Sartre and other writers.

Analysis of recent research and publications

The work of L. Andreev attracts attention of modern researchers around the world. F. White presented the first English translation of important collection of memoirs dedicated to the Russian author [16]. I. Moskovkina studied "pre-postmodernist complex" in Leonid Andreev's prose and dramas [11; 12]. Ch. Chian analyzed Andreev's story "The wall", writing about the bodily suffering experience which becomes the only reality of existence [15]. T. Guseva wrote about a harmony and chaos: the concept of an

existential man [6]. Though the author's work is still generating interest, there hasn't been done a thorough analysis of the existential problems raised by L. Andreev in his literature yet, which caused this research.

Presenting main material

Walls and chasms

"When at night a man remains in front of the mirror, he is always a little creepy and strange at the thought that he sees himself" L. Andreev wrote in "There is no forgiveness" [2]. Every spring, for three years now, he thought about death, and this spring he decided that it was time to die, he was not in love with anyone, he had no grief, and he really wanted to live, but everything in the world seemed unnecessary, senseless, and therefore repugnant to disgust, to fastidious convulsions in the face. Lost, he went to people with a silent question [1; 2].

What are these questions that the hero of the novel "Spring" asks, the answers to which the author himself is looking for? These are the questions about the purpose and meaning of existence, about God, about life and death – "cursed questions" [2]. V. Vorovsky believed that in his early stories L. Andreev was astonished by the mystery of life: Who are we? Why do we live? And in almost every story he looked into one or another corner of the life of human society and everywhere he saw absurdity and nonsense, evil and violence [5]. The heroes of L. Andreev are people put in a "borderline situation" (between life and death); F. Nietzsche's "superhuman"; small people, "humiliated and offended", seen through his intellectual and artistic prism, understanding and attitude.

Along with definite images (Garas'ka, Basil, Kerzhentsev, and others), Andreev created abstract, symbolic ones – lie, laughter, darkness, abyss, walls. Symbolic images of the wall and the abyss were key ones in the writer's work. Later they will appear in the philosophy of existentialism. It is believed that L. Andreev was the first Russian writer to follow the path (focusing on F. Dostoevsky), that existentialists A. Camus and J.P. Sartre would later follow.

In the core of the philosophy of "existence" is a person "thrown into the world" and doomed to loneliness. But while existentialists perceive loneliness as true freedom, Andreev, on the contrary, "was upset, grieved and cried: he was sorry for the person", G. Chulkov wrote in the introduction to the book "Letters of Leonid Andreev" [13]. He cries with tears of Garas'ka – a downtrodden little man, a drunkard, hounded like Kusaka (a dog from the story with the similar name), who was always called only by his nickname, when suddenly the policeman's wife calls him by his first name.

Andreev's tears are tears of fearlessness in the face of the death of a person – the tears of Vasily Kashirin from "The Story of the Seven Hanged Men". Every person knows that he is doomed to death, but he behaves with the thought that this will not happen soon, someday at the end, when you will get tired of living. And here the heroes of the story are put in a "borderline situation". Similar things happen in the novel of J.P. Sartre "The Wall", in which the author traces not only psychological but also physiological changes in the body of prisoners on the verge of death. L. Andreev describes images of seven different in age, gender, social status, views on life people to show that everyone is equal in front of death. What happens to them? The picture is depressing. Some images are idealized, such as Tanya Kovalchuk. It is hard to imagine that a person behaves in this way before death. But Vasily Kashirin, who "consisted entirely of one continuous, unbearable horror of death", behaved quite naturally. "For the instant, being the embodiment of will, life and strength, he turns into an animal waiting to be slaughtered". Yanson, learning about the impending death, shouts like an animal. Tsyganok "stood on all fours <...> and howled a shaking wolf howl" [1; 2]. Their bodies are "still full of life, but they are already agonizing", wrote J.P. Sartre in his "The Wall" [14, p. 186]. Sergei Golovin, the hero of the story by L. Andreev, thinks: "Death is not there yet, but there is already no life". Memories rush in the brain, the question arises: why? "Life was not worth a penny, because it was doomed in advance" [14, p. 188]. But neither the prisoners, nor Sartre or Andreev – nobody knows the answer. Huge shocks are going through a man waiting for death from minute to minute. What happens next? Here is what Sartre's hero says: "If at that moment I was even announced that they would not kill me, and I could quietly go home, it would not break my indifference: you lost hope of immortality, what difference how long you have to wait – a few hours or a few years" [14, p. 189]. Andreev expressed this idea too. There is a moment when before execution, in the forest, one of the soldiers throws a gun. Perhaps seven strong people could escape death, but do they want it? Judging by the fact how Tsyganok screams to the soldier in a trace – no. After all, they died long ago – over there, in prison. Only the body remains, which cannot be controlled.

"I concentrated my thought so much on the psychology of my unfortunate seven, that unwittingly shared their dying grief myself. A few days as I finished the story and now there is nothing better. I look brightly at the noisy avenue, at the people, at the guests!!!", wrote L. Andreev after finishing his work [9].

“The story of the seven hanged” is a kind of protest against the death penalty. Human life is sacred and nobody, neither “superhuman”, nor Raskolnikov or Kerzhentsev have the right to take it away from another. They do not have, but, in fact, they take it away. Why? In the story “Thought” L. Andreev raises this topic, which worried many philosophers and writers. Doctor Kerzhentsev, who is he: the smartest of all or a madman? Kerzhentsev is a strong man, who by his congenital inclinations can become an outstanding personality, a hero of his time. He is intelligent, talented, courageous, endowed with sobriety of mind and truthfulness. Therefore, Andreev decides to give him the story-confession. With a few exceptions (“Thought,” “Red Laughter,” “The Diary of Satan,” “My Notes,” and some other), the author usually tells the story from the third person. Critics accused Kerzhentsev of megalomania, of devilish malice, that the hero of the story by Andreev didn’t know any other God except himself, not revenge or jealousy led him to murder, but a crazy idea that got stronger in a sick brain. Kerzhentsev put himself, his “I” above everything and everybody. “I didn’t love anyone in the world except myself, and in myself I didn’t love this vile body, which is also loved by vulgar people – I loved my freedom” [2]. In the image of Dr. Kerzhentsev, the author debunks the Nietzsche’s “superhuman”. According to Nietzsche, he needs to step over moral norms. But when this happens (Kerzhentsev kills a friend – the husband of his beloved woman), then his intellectual death or insanity begins. What is the matter? The idea does not work, not justified, not confirmed by practice.

Kerzhentsev is aware that, wishing to become a “superhuman”, he became a “super naught”. He hates people, but at the same time envies them. After all, he has no return to the “natural” truth of life. Neither repentance, nor hard labour (“I am not Raskolnikov!”) can save him from his own mischief. The crime is committed not by the person, but by the “crazy” Kerzhentsev. Instead of freedom he gets slavery of the spirit, and after that its disintegration, which took the form of madness; instead of domination over people – the “sinister loneliness” of the victim. It turns out that the idea is not worth even one human life. The other side of this problem is when a person rises, putting a hand on his own life, instigated by one of the Nietzsche’s theses: “If your life fails, death will succeed”. “Hey, you <...> rock, the devil or life, I call you to fight” – the hero of the play “Life of a Man” by Andreev exclaims, realizing that he is only a puppet in someone’s invisible hands [3].

Whether you are rich or poor, beautiful or disfigured by sores – behind your back is the one who

lights and puts out the candle, spins and interrupts the threads. But it is in your power to challenge fate. It is interesting to dwell on a specific image created by L. Andreev in “The Story about Sergey Petrovich” (we can associate him with Kirillov from “Demons” by F. Dostoevsky [7]). In the center of this story is the leading problem of the writer’s early work: “man and destiny”. Sergei Petrovich is in a position that gives him the opportunity to see, feel, and realize his dependence on the “fate”. In the diary L. Andreev wrote down the main theme of the story: “This is a story about a man who acknowledged that he has the right to everything that others have and rebelled against nature, which made him insignificant, and against people who deprive him of the last chance for happiness. He ends up with a suicide – “free death”, according to Nietzsche, under the influence of which the spirit of indignation is born in my hero” [2].

Under the influence of the Nietzsche’s idea of the “superhuman” in ordinary Sergei Petrovich, an ideal of a man of “strong, free and courageous in spirit” arises, and he understands how far from this ideal he is. But he is not strong, not free, not only because he is deprived of bright talents, but also because the social structure does not give him any opportunities to develop his own abilities. The hero of the story suddenly realizes that he “is useful for statistics and history, like that nameless unit that is born and dies, and on which people study the laws of population”; “It was the usefulness of a corpse, in which they study the laws of life and death” [2]. Sergey Petrovich decided to die, thinking that his death would be a victory. His suicide is a step of despair, a riot, and a triumph of the winner at the same time.

You can have different attitudes to these heroes. What did they prove to others? The death of Kirillov and his idea, caused bewilderment, misunderstanding, and, perhaps, did not greatly affect his friends and relatives. He said: “If you cannot win – you need to die” [7]. But a “thirst for life” can be traced, nevertheless, in all these ideas! For “without despair in life, there is no love of life”. Sergey Petrovich remains to live for one more night. “He realized that, like everyone, he could undress and go to bed, and he would be awakened tomorrow, when a new day came, and Sergei Petrovich would live like everyone else, because he did not want to die” [2]. When Sergey Petrovich went to bed, it seemed to him that the saved life rejoices in all the smallest particles of his body: “To live! Live! – thought Sergey Petrovich. May he be miserable, persecuted, destitute; let everyone despise him and laugh at him; Let him be a nonentity, mud, shaken from his feet – but he will live, live! He will see the sun, he will breathe... he will live... live!

And this is such happiness, such joy, and no one will take it away, and it will continue for a long, long... forever! An infinite number of days ahead lights its dawn, and in each of them he will live, live!" [2].

They wanted to live, see beautiful dreams, do their work, look at the sun and the starry sky. They wanted to, but became "Gods" dying. So they thought. Since, to leave free, to rise, to break with vanity – it takes courage. It is necessary to overcome the instinct of self-preservation, which lives in our blood and brain from immemorial time.

There was a feast of animals

A man and a beast or a man-beast. Where does the line between animals and people begin or end? What distinguishes them, what raises a man above a beast? Do people often act like animals? Leonid Andreev tried to look at a person and his life from different sides, turn his soul inside out, delve into the subconscious. Creativity of the writer caused mixed reviews. Many of his works, being too frank for that time, raising unconventional topics such as intimate relationships, shocked refined readers. Andreev was accused of loving to enjoy the baseness of the phenomena of a wicked human life.

L. Andreev portrayed what he saw around him. The writer thought that every human being hides animal features. Almost in all his works he compared a man with an animal: a tired horse, an angry wolf etc. Yet not many of us would agree with the writer, who argued that anyone put in the same conditions as Nemovetsky, the hero of the "Abyss", "regardless of his degree of culture and class position, would have done the same: would have fallen into the "abyss". It is difficult to imagine that a young intelligent man who sincerely loved a girl could have treated her that way. On the other hand, he loved her different: clean, beautiful, tender. And then he sees her after the "feast of animals". But let us give the word to the hero himself: "I knew that at that moment she needed me, and I wanted to caress her, calm her down and encourage her, and instead of all this, I felt the cold of some kind of loathing go on and freeze my heart. She became physically nasty, disgusting and completely alien to me. And I pushed her. I know that then it was not a man who spoke in me, but a beast". "We are all beasts and even worse than beasts", said Nemovetsky, "because they are sincere and simple, and we always want to deceive ourselves and anyone else, that everything bestial is alien to us. We are worse than beasts <...> we are mean animals" [2]. Which of the Nemovetskys is true: affectionately loving or violent? Who is he – a man or a beast? What is a man by nature and what are his instincts? Contemporaries understood that there were no ready

answers in the "Abyss", that everyone should find the answer himself.

The theme of the story "In the Fog" is the following: "a high-school student who is clean and decent is essentially small, but outwardly corrupted, like everyone who suffers from a venereal disease, kills the prostitute and himself". And behind all this lies despair, deep thoughts about life, the desire to achieve spiritual purity, beauty, goodness, the desire to love and be loved. But fate falls on it all with a heavy boot. Or, on the contrary, does a man create his destiny? "The Abyss" and "In the Fog" are about the formation of human emotions. Their artistic task is to reveal the fragility, vulnerability and sometimes uncontrollability of the sensual world of young people who are drawn to the purity, and fall into the "abyss" [9]. These stories are united by Andreev's thought that many actions of people are performed on unconscious motives, deeper than moral norms, beliefs and principles. We cannot deny it, even if these situations are not typical.

"I do not believe death"

Leonid Andreev depicted existential problems, a variety of situations, destinies, personalities, most of which had a real basis. He and his heroes (the great, thinking people, the insignificant beasts, the loving, the unfortunate) searched for the sense in God and in themselves, in their soul, in nature and in life itself, vain and unfair, but still beautiful. They understood and appreciated this beauty of the very concept of "life" and a person. Kerzhentsev, the hero of Andreev's "Thought" said: "I really love life. I love it when golden wine is sparkling in a thin glass; I love, tired, to stretch in a clean bed; I like to breathe clean air in spring, to see a beautiful sunset, to read interesting and clever books. Life is interesting, and I love it for the great secret that is in it" [2].

So, maybe that's where the answer to this "damn question" is. The meaning of life is in this "great mystery", in a beautiful sunset, in wine, in spring, in love, in a mysterious moon and distant stars, in music – in life itself. Is it naive and simple? Why did L. Andreev and J.P. Sartre, L. Tolstoy, F. Dostoevsky and A. Schopenhauer were "puzzled" all their lives, created theories, ideas? Did they find what they were looking for? Or is it beyond the control of the human mind? Again questions, questions... And other people will come. They will make their own, and repeat our mistakes. They will live and think: "why, and what for". And someone will repeat the words said long ago by Nosach from the "Rules of Goodness" by L. Andreev: "But I need such an answer so that it suits all times and for all occasions, and that there are no contradictions, and you always know what to do, and that there are

no “mistakes” [2]. Let’s come back to the “Story of Sergei Petrovich”. Waking up in the morning, Sergey Petrovich would have perceived the world outside the window with a new feeling of joy. He would have sighed all over his chest and would have gone through life with new forces, would have seen everything with different eyes, as a doomed patient or a convict from the “Idiot” by F. Dostoevsky sees, for example, miraculously recovered: “What if not to die! What, if to turn a life back! And all this would be mine! Then I would turn every minute into a whole century, I would not lose anything, I would count every minute, I would not waste anything!”[8]. But Sergey Petrovich acted differently. We want to exclaim after J. London: “Damn them, all these ideas!” Leonid Andreev wrote: “I never believe in life as much as when reading the “father” of

pessimism, Schopenhauer: a man thought so and lived. It means that life is mighty and invincible. Let all-conquering life be an illusion, but I believe in it, and the misfortunes of this day will not take away my faith in the future” [1].

Conclusions. To sum up, the article proposed an ideological as well as thematic analysis of the novels by L. Andreev. A comparison of the works of L. Andreev with the ones of F. Dostoevsky, J.P. Sartre, F. Nietzsche was provided. In conclusion it is necessary to mention that the problems raised in the beginning of the XX century by the outstanding Russian writer are still up to date, because they are the eternal existential issues of the sense of human life, behavior in border situations (between life and death). The writer’s works are worth studying.

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