

**THE THEME OF THE LITTLE MAN IN RUSSIAN LITERATURE OF THE 20TH CENTURY**

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**Abstract:** The article examines the evolution of one of the central types of Russian literature — the "little man". The transition from the compassionate humanism of the 19th century to the tragic confrontation of personality and system in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods is analyzed.

**Keywords:** little man, transformation, Russian literature of the XX century, personality and system, humanism.

introduction. The problem of the "little man" in the works of writers of the 1840s was not a new phenomenon for Russian literature in general.

Russian writers of the 18th and early 19th centuries could not ignore the suffering of people who were small in their social status and importance in a huge hierarchical state, those who were sometimes undeservedly humiliated and offended. Russian literature originated in the 17th century with the theme of the "poor official" (which later developed into the theme of the "little man" in its traditional sense) ("The Tale of Frol Skobeev"), and was outlined in the Russian novel of the 18th century and the novella of the beginning of the 19th century.[1] The theme of the "poor official" (which later developed into the theme of the "little man" in its traditional sense).

Not a single study by Soviet literary critics devoted to the "Stationmaster" and "The Bronze Horseman" by A.S. Pushkin, the "Petersburg stories" by N.V. Gogol, the early works of F.M. Dostoevsky and the work of writers of the "natural school" of the 40s of the XIX century, could not do without mentioning the "poor official" suffering from the unfairness of the surrounding reality.

Meanwhile, the concept of "little man" is firmly entrenched precisely for the heroes of the works of the 1840s. Despite the sufficient study of the issue concerning the genesis of this image, researchers of the 20th century insisted.

The theme of the "little man" existed even before it was revealed in the works of Nikolai Gogol. The first mention of the "little man" is noted in the works of A. S. Pushkin "The Bronze Horseman" and "The Stationmaster". The image of the "little man" is presented as a poor man, insulted by higher-ranking people, driven to despair, who feels powerless before life and is capable of protest. A given protest always generates a certain catastrophe in life, but the outcome of the protest is madness, death. Pushkin discovered a new dramatic character in the poor official, and Gogol continued to develop this theme in St. Petersburg novels ("The Nose", "Nevsky Prospekt", "Notes of a Madman", "Portrait", "Overcoat"). But he continued in a peculiar way, based on his own life experience.

The problem of the "little man" is also reflected in the works of the writers of the "natural school". The study of his everyday life occupies a central place in the work of writers. However, only the external manifestations of the "little man" image were examined, while the inner, spiritual component remained unexplored. The writers of the "natural school" paid attention to the fate of poor and humiliated people, of whom there were a lot at that time.

The tradition of depicting the "little man" was founded by A.S. Pushkin ("The Stationmaster"), N.V. Gogol ("The Overcoat") and F.M. Dostoevsky. In the 19th century, this type was defined by social disenfranchisement, but possessed spiritual depth. However, the

literature of the 20th century, faced with the era of wars, revolutions and totalitarianism, radically changed the perspective of this hero.

Next, let's look at degradation and "sheathing". This dates back to the beginning of the century.

At the beginning of the century, in the works of Anton Chekhov, the "little man" begins to lose the right to sympathy. If Akaky Akakievich aroused pity, then Chekhov's characters (for example, Chervyakov in "Death of an Official") evoke rather a bitter smile. "Smallness" turns into a voluntary "case", into the unwillingness of a person to grow and take responsibility.

After the revolution, the concept changes. Soviet literature proclaims the cult of the "big man" — the builder of communism. The "little man" must either become part of the mass, or he is doomed.

– E. Zamyatin (the novel "We"): The hero turns into a "number", devoid of a name. This is the ultimate stage of transformation, where "smallness" is the state norm.

– Mikhail Zoshchenko: His characters are ordinary people trying to survive in a new reality. Their tongue-tied speech and everyday problems emphasize the grinding of the soul in an attempt to adapt to the grandiose changes.

– A. Platonov: Platonov's "little man" (for example, in "The Pit") is a tragic figure searching for the "meaning of life" in the midst of a great construction site, but crushed by the scale of this very construction site.

In post-war and "camp" prose, the theme takes on a new lease of life.

– Alexander Solzhenitsyn ("One Day of Ivan Denisovich"): Ivan Denisovich Shukhov is the heir to Pushkin's heroes. His task is not to change the world, but to preserve human dignity in the inhuman conditions of the GULAG. Here, the "little man" becomes a moral giant.

– V. Makanin and "urban prose": The heroes of the 70s and 80s are ordinary employees suffocating in everyday life. Their conflict is a conflict with their own conscience and domestic disorder.

The inclusion of elements of other styles in speech is justified if it is aimed at enhancing the emotional and expressive coloring. Nevertheless, speech etiquette presupposes, first of all, the need to create a comfortable situation for communicants.

In the literature of postmodernism (V. Yerofeyev "Moscow — Petushki", S. Dovlatov), the "little man" finally realizes the absurdity of existence. Dovlatov's characters lack heroic pathos; they accept their "smallness" as the only honest position in a deceitful world.

In the literature of the writers of the "natural school", the desire to protect "little people" is captured. They did this through, as it seemed to them, Gogol's analysis of reality, based on the novel "The Overcoat", which specifically reflects the way of life and customs of officials, pointing to the social conflict of the work.

Thus, "great little people" always strive to appear more successful, which is sufficiently reflected in the works of the writers of the "natural school". However, the material component of the "little man" image always prevails over the spiritual one, which deprives a person of the right to choose and forces them to strive for perfection.

conclusion

The transformation of the theme in the 20th century went from "a man who is a victim of circumstances" to "a man who is a particle of mass" and, finally, to "a man who preserves himself." If in the 19th century literature called for "feeling sorry" for a small person, then in the 20th century it raises the question of his survival as a person. The "little man" has ceased to be a social type and has become the existential image of everyone who resists the depersonalizing pressure of history.

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