

THE ARTISTIC REPRESENTATION OF FEMINISM IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF SINCLAIR LEWIS

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Abstract:	Keywords
This study investigates how Sinclair Lewis depicted his views on the social role of women in the heroines of the novels <i>Job</i> , <i>Main Street</i> , and <i>Ann Vickers</i> . In the central ideas of feminism women's movement, profession, and social activity are seen as an important factor ensuring women's socialization, well-being, and emancipation. The qualitative analysis of the novels through the social, family and business context shows that the same idea is conceptually important in many novels by S. Lewis. The ability to influence the life of society through a certain profession, to realize one's identity, and to know one's potential through professional activity is manifested in the characters of Una Golden, Carol Kennicott, and Ann Vickers. However, while the early feminist theorists advocated having work and well-paid jobs in general, S. Lewis expressed in artistic images that meaningful and purposeful work is more beneficial for women. In particular, the novel "Job" shows that the author is against the exploitation of women by the capitalist patriarchy. The findings reveal that S. Lewis's views on feminism are eternal due to their universality, as a continuation of the ideas of humanism; and his works are valuable because they reflect high humanitarian ideas.	Feminism, realistic novel, new women, fiction, gender, narration.

Introduction

For Sinclair Lewis to create images of feminist women, the history of the country provided a huge material of life: Abigail Adams, the first woman who received a higher education in the country, Lucy Stone, the first female doctor Elizabeth Blackwell, writer, journalist Margaret Fuller, suffragists Angelina Grimke, Susan Anthony and Elizabeth Stanton, Mary Mayon, the founder of women's education, Amelia Blumer, who brought freedom to the culture of women's clothing, and many other passionate women. Analyzing the poetic skills of the writer, it should be taken into account that the feminist experience had by this society gave vivid images, deep observations and original fables to his creative genius.

Job, published in 1917, was the first novel by Sinclair Lewis (1889-1951) about women of this era, he later wrote *Main Street* (1920) and *Ann Vickers* (1933) which together are valued as a trilogy about early modern women in American literature. Una Golden created in the novel *Job* is considered to be the writer's first successful character, the first "carrier woman" character in American literature, with the fullness of her inner and outer world. In the characters of his later works, one can observe the logical continuation and improvement of the character of Una Golden. Analyzing the novel *Main Street*, more specifically, the psychology of the main character Carol through the prism of feminism, it became clear that

Carol is not only an artistic image, but also a symbol of a modern American woman who is awakening socially and realizing her identity. The appearance of carols in countries that are changing from an agrarian state to a highly industrialized state is a social law. In the work Ann Vickers Sinclair Lewis expressed his views on socio-political reforms and the activities of social institutions through fiction. In the creation of the novel, in particular, S. Lewis's experience in the suffrage parade in New York in 1912 (according to Mark Schorer, Lewis even helped the suffragists and distributed flyers), publicly promoting the political rights of women. The fact that he supported and gave a speech was very important. These experiences of the writer served for the formation of life characters with photographic accuracy, vivid and complete artistic images.

Methods and Theoretical basis

The main goals of our research are to study the manifestation of early feministic views in the characters, particularly, in the heroines of Sinclair Lewis and analyze how author perceived feminism and projected it in the female characters. To achieve this goal the following tasks were implemented during the study:

- to study how the novelist provide the interplay between facts and fiction to achieve a realistic description of gender issues of the period;
- to compare how the author reflects his aesthetic views by means of the female protagonists in the social, family and business context;
- to analyze the author's approach to narration, creation of individualized speech of the characters;
- to identify similar characteristics of the heroines in the works;
- to analyze the authors' perception of feminism;
- to provide explanation of the similarities between the characters of the novels

To achieve objectivity of the conclusions we applied comparative-historical, comparative-typological, and linguistic methods. The factors that influenced and shaped the personality of the novelist are also taken into consideration. The analysis of the characters revealed that the author mostly displayed his feminist ideas in the three aspects : the **social** life of the heroine, the **family** and the **professional** life of the character.

Feminist Criticism plays major role in the comprehension and interpretation of literary works. What is relevant to our study is the feminist criticism which is related to the image of women in men authors' creation. Kate Millett [Millett, 2018], Carolyn G. Heilbrun¹[Heilbrun, 1982], Mary Anne Ferguson [Ferguson] focused on the characterization of women in literature, particularly in male authors' works. Mary Ferguson studying a great number of literary works, concluded that in fiction and poetry female characters are mostly described in traditional roles in which sexuality is dominant attribute.

¹ Heilbrun C., Toward A Recognition of Androgyny. W. W. Norton & Company. 1982. 189 p.

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Sinclair Lewis's female protagonists represent non-traditional images of womanhood and the article aims to reinforce this conclusion.

The works of Sinclair Lewis, one of major representative of the American realistic novel, are widely studied in world literary studies. Also S. Lewis's Character Creation Skills were the object of special studies in the works by A. Coleman, S. Conroy, S. Daniel, S. Grebstein, B. McKenna, M. Light, C. J. Town, D. Simpkins, S. P. Sherman, L. Richardson, S. Michels, J.M. Hutchison, M.M. Helleberg, D. Dooley, L. Coard, F. Carpenter, M. O. Mendelson, A. B. Gilenson, I. O. Mazirka, A. Kritsky, E. K. Iordanidi. Autobiographical sources by Marc Schorer [Schorer 1961], Vincent Sheean [Sheean, 1963] and Richard Lingeman [Lingeman, 2002] provide valuable information about Sinclair Lewis.

D. Simpkins in his article [Simpkins,2015] describes Lewis as a suffragist writer and highlights the influence of four women on his formation: his mother Isabel Lewis, Grace Hegger, his second wife Dorothy Thomson, and his friend Frances Perkins. Simpkins' analysis of each of the above-mentioned women as a prototype for which character in Lewis's work is important. S. Lewis's female characters were the object of the research in the article "Women in Three Sinclair Lewis Novels." [Maglin, 1973]. By Maglin, Nan Bauer. Analyzing the novels relation to the socio-political context of the time, the author concluded that the works still have strong emotional and political relevance "because the choices for and pressures on women have not been modified". Though Bauer considers the novels "Job", "Main Street" and "Ann Vickers" of not a high literary quality, she believes that the works "present acute historical insight into what life was for women" [Maglin, 1973]. L.Sodowsky investigated the literary art of the author in terms of female characters in general, from minor characters to heroines. The researcher identified and described certain types of the female characters, such as prototypes in early novels, stereotypes, ideal women in S.Lewis's novels. Unlike, the above mentioned research, the present research focuses on heroines to investigate the gender issues depicted by the author.

Results

Gender representation in the heroines of S. Lewis

Each time, the transformation of the image of Una Golden into a socially mature person occurs under the influence of certain difficulties and conflicts. The heroine's spiritual and emotional development is also influenced by the three conflicts that turned into three existential crises in her life: 1. Her father's death: "Her father's death had freed her; had permitted her to toil for her mother, cherish her, be regarded as useful. Instantly still without learning that there was such a principle as feminism she had become a feminist, demanding the world and the fullness thereof as her field of labor" [Job, p.25];

2.) Her mother's death;

3) Unhappy marriage.

Choosing an intellectual librarian woman as the heroine in Main Street, S. Lewis reflected the importance of women's activity for social development in his artistic manner at the

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beginning of the last century. Before Sinclair Lewis' novel, female characters were the heroines in many novels, but most of them were about love, romance, and family life. In the novels of S. Lewis, the author usually reveals the path of the main character's destiny, the mission he is expected to fulfill, using foregrounding tools in the exposition part of the work. In the first pages of the novel "Main Street" it is said that Carol showed a great interest in sociology in college and was eager to read Bernard Shaw. Considering that Bernard Shaw is a progressive reformist dramatist, there is a symbolic hint that Carroll will be preoccupied with social reforms from the beginning of the work.

In the novel "Ann Vickers", Sinclair Lewis' attitude towards feminism, especially suffragism, is shown mainly through the character of Ann Vickers, her destiny, thoughts and attitudes. On the one hand, Ann is a composite image, in which the qualities of active and modern, forward-thinking women of that time are embodied. On the other hand, critics associate the image of Ann Vickers with the name of Dorothy Thompson (1893-1961), S. Lewis's wife. "Dedicated to Dorothy Thompson, whose knowledge and support helped me write about Ann," the writer admits in the introduction to the novel. The first part of the novel focuses on feminism and suffragism in the example of Ann's experience (the word feminism is used a total of six times in the text of the work, and suffragism is used forty-six times) and humanism in the second part of the work.

In America, the suffrage movements show that women's political consciousness is awakening, and their sense of citizenship and social-political involvement are activated in them. The society did not tolerate the suffrage movement at first. This is confirmed by the humiliation suffered by the members of the "The Ball and Chain Squad" in the novel, and the fact that they even received a two-week prison sentence. Ann and her team believe that "...the vote was necessary, both that women might enter public affairs, and that they might be freed from the humiliation of being classed (vide any of Ann's hundreds of speeches of that period) with children, idiots, and criminals. [Ann Vickers, p.60]. However, the fact that not only men, but also women criticized the members of this movement, and that the suffragists were oppressed by the government and ordinary people, is reflected in the work in bright satirical colors. For example, in one episode of the novel, the suffragists invite the doctor Mrs. Wamser for the next lecture:

She stalked out, ahead of an apparently meek little Dr. Wormser, and as they appeared on the stage they were met by a hurricane of ironic clapping, pounding feet, and a blare of "Hurray for the Battleaxe! Hurray for the lady doc! Votes for the skirts!" [Ann Vickers, p.6].

Before the lecture even begins, the crowd shouts "Let the skirts vote" to the group of suffragists. The synecdoche used in this sentence - equating women to a **skirt**, firstly, reveals the gender relations in society, and secondly, it expresses the public's displeasure and negative views of the suffragist movement. The scene at the Tafford rally shows that the government perceived the suffragists as a powerful threat. Suffragists were denied permission to rally by the mayor of Tafford.

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The motif of prison is an important artistic element in Ann Vickers, and the concept of "prison" is actively used in two different senses:

1. "Prison" literally as a social institution of penalty. In its sense, prison is a place designed for serving the sentence of those deprived of their freedom. The work describes prisons such as Tafford, Copperhead Gap and Stuyvesant, through which the writer describes important changes in the character. Ann begins to think deeply about social justice during her two weeks in prison. The inhumane environment in the prison makes Ann more and more interested in social reforms. Ann is convinced of the limitations of suffragist activities, and as a result, she switches to other social activities.

2. "Prison" figuratively as a constraint, limitation or obstacle the person can face. The next part of the article continues the point.

Exposing oppression in the marriage

One of the peculiarities of Sinclair Lewis as a writer is that in almost all of his novels, a special place is given to the depiction of family and marriage relations. In the novel *The Job*, the last chapter is called "Man and Woman", in which the balance, obstacles and stereotypes in the social activities and family relations of a woman are artistically expressed. In this novel, S. Lewis not only tells the reader an interesting story, but also draws attention to the social relations that prevailed in the society of that time, in particular, to various problems and obstacles from the point of view of women's interests.

In the novel *Job* Schwartz's extravagance and loneliness forced Una to get free from her marriage. Una, who is desperately trying to get Schwartz out of the pit of bad luck, who is unemployed and penniless, is not appreciated. Moreover, she is severely oppressed and humiliated by her husband, who is working again. The husband demanded that she should quit her job and not even dream about social activities. Una is forced to move from one cheap hotel to another because of her husband, who is always traveling, and the only occupation she has is waiting for him all day. For Schwartz, this is natural. According to him, the problem is that "entrepreneurs" like Una are unfit for marriage:

"You women that have been in business simply ain't fit to be married. You think you are too good to help a man. Yes, even when you haven't been anything but dub stenographers. I never noticed that you were such a whale of success! I don't suppose you remember how you used to yawp to me about the job being too much for you! And yet when I want a little sympathy you sit there and hand me the frozen stare like you were the president of Standard Oil Company and I was a bum office-boy. Yes, sir, I tell you business simply unfits a skirt for marriage". [*Job*, p.279].

Such insults became regular and clarified Una's views on women and profession. She answers to Schwartz' insult in the following way: "No,...not for marriage that has any love and comradeship in it. But I admit a business women doesn't care being a cow in a stable", " ..the business women will bring about a new kind of marriage in which men will have to keep up respect and courtesy".

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In "Job" and "Ann Vickers" the woman-family-career relationship is a conflict expressed in the foreground in the alleged direction of the entire work, while in the novel "Main Street" this triad is clearly manifested even if it is in the background. The conflict in Carol's mental-emotional world is embodied in three short sentences below: "She could not have outside employment. To the village doctor's wife it was taboo. She was a woman with a working brain and no work". [Main Street, p.84].

In the novel Ann Vickers, the writer uses the motif of imprisonment figuratively, in the context of the subject of the novel, to highlight gender issues and situations that make women victims. The unwritten rules of society that prevent the development of a woman's personality are reflected in the romantic relationships of the main character of the novel. Prison in a figurative sense is not a material space that restricts freedom, but it is reflected in ideas, social customs, and rigid concepts that keep people under arrest, limit opportunities and freedom. The stereotypes of the patriarchal society, the situations of the **"oppressor-oppressed"** model, which keep the woman in an invisible prison, are manifested in the following characters of the novel in a specific case style: Ann's relation with the men such as Glen Hargis, Captain Resnick, Russel Spaulding. After the "oppressor-oppressed" relation with Resnick Ann had no other way but the abortion. The conflict between Ann and Russell is shown with mild humor. What created a chill between them is that Russell brags about his wife's fame in front of others and constantly belittles Ann when they are alone. In particular, the fact that he constantly refers to his wife as "Little Woman" shows the negative aspects of Russell's personality:

"He decidedly wanted her to be Big enough to hold an office which would make them both socially important; he did not mind her paying the rent and grocery bills; he was irritated when she did not show off properly at public dinners and when she fell into clichés like "The first problem of penology is the safe-keeping of prisoners." Only, privately, she had to be a Little Woman..." [Ann Vickers, p.209]

In "Anne Vickers" the motif of prison is an important artistic element, it is seen that at the end of the play, after a long struggle to start a family with Anne Barney Dolphin, she waits two years for Barney to come out of prison, and when he returns, she says: "You, you and Mat, have brought me out of the prison of Russell Spaulding, the prison of ambition, the prison of desire for praise, the prison of myself. We're out of prison!" [Ann Vickers, p.266].

Business world of patriarchy and women

During the development of events in the plot, Una rises from an ordinary secretary to the position of manager of the family hotel business. The skill of S. Lewis as a realist writer is that this transformation of Una's character is consistent and strongly logical, and the character's family environment, the fact that her husband is a traveling salesman, turns out to be an important detail for the plot. As mentioned above, as a result of moving in different hotels, Una, although it was difficult, on the other hand, gained experience, made comparisons, and formed an opinion about the shortcomings and suggestions of the hotel

industry. It seems that the writer uses the conflict in the plot of the work as an artistic tool in creating a character and showing his spiritual development. The conflict in the play is mainly in the form of individual vs. society, more precisely, woman vs. patriarchal capitalist society, which refers to Una Golden and the social, economic, and spiritual conflicts she faced.

The life of Una Golden is the story of a woman who was able to become a socially mature person in an environment dominated by strong patriarchal society stereotypes. In the novel two main obstacle for women in the office world are highlighted: 1. Regular exploitation of female clerks without professional promotion. This is particularly obvious in the relations of Mr. Ross and Una Golden: "A gold-eye-glassed, kitten-stepping, good little thing she was, and competent to assist Mr. Ross in his mighty labors, yet at heart she was a shawled Irish peasant, or a muzhik lost in the vastness of the steppes; a creature elemental and despairing, facing mysterious powers of nature, human nature". [Job, p.236].

The second type of obstacle is dullness of the office work due to the mechanization of the process by various devises such as machines opening and sealing letters, automatic typewriters, dictation phonographs, pneumatic lances and many others. Employees who spend their days doing such small tasks for a meager salary do not realize how life has ended: "She watched with peculiar interest one stratum: the old ladies, the white-haired, fair-handed women of fifty and sixty and even seventy, spinsters and widows, for whom life was nothing but a desk and a job of petty pickings mailing circulars or assorting letters or checking up lists. She watched them so closely because she speculated always, 'Will I ever be like that?'; But now and then one of them would start to weep, cry for an hour together, with her white head on a spotty desk-blotter, till she forgot her homelessness and uselessness. Epidemics of hysteria would spring up sometimes, and women of thirty-five or forty normally well content would join the old ladies in sobbing...". [Job, p.234].

Carol is a female reformer like Una Golden and Ann Vickers. The difference between them is that Carol's personality does not develop in the field of business, like Una, or, like Ann, in penology, that is, within a certain profession. The fact that her reforms are far from her field, the lack of professionalism, special knowledge and skills in any initiative of Carol will lead to failure. Nevertheless, in the example of Carol, a woman has her own place in public affairs, has her own opinion, acts with a sense of belonging to society, feels that she is a part of society's life, and reforms it. Carol's nonconformism temporarily succumbs to mob conformity. However, the last scene of the work shows that Carol returned from Washington with strength, she did not lose her individuality and faith in the realization of her dreams:

"But I have won in this: I've never excused my failures by sneering at my aspirations, by pretending to have gone beyond them. I do not admit that Main Street is as beautiful as it should be! I do not admit that Gopher Prairie is greater or more generous than Europe! I do not admit that dish-washing is enough to satisfy all women! I may not have fought the good fight, but I have kept the faith." [Main Street, p.424].

After Ann was awarded a degree, her work became more intense, she was regularly asked to speak at various organizations. Now the writer refers to Ann as "the Great Woman". And this appeal is used fourteen times until the end of the work. In particular, answering Barney's question at the end of the play, the author gives several descriptions of Ann: "Oh, would you? That would be terribly kind. Oh, Barney!" said in meek ecstasy the Captive Woman, the Free Woman, the Great Woman, the Feminist Woman, the Domestic Woman, the Passionate Woman, the Cosmopolitan Woman, the Village Woman—the Woman. [Ann Vickers, p.271].

At this point, it should be mentioned that the ideas of feminism in the imagination of S. Lewis are in many ways close to the true essence of this movement and serve to provide a constructive solution to the current crisis situation of feminism. It is noteworthy that S. Lewis directly expressed some of his thoughts through the character of Malvina Wormser in the play. In particular, Ms. Wormser believes that this movement, that is, suffragism, is only a prelude, and the movement will not stop with the right to vote. Not only external, but also internal opportunities are needed to preserve the achievements:

- "Do I think a woman'll ever be President? How do I know? But let me point out that women rulers—Queen Elizabeth, that lovely rakehell Catherine of Russia, the last Chinese Empress, Maria Theresa of Austria, Queen Anne, and Victoria—were better rulers than any equal number of kings. Or presidents! [Ann Vickers, p.62.].
- "...I'm not one of the gals who believes that the sole difference between males and females is in conception. Women have special qualities which the human race has failed to use for civilization. I know a woman can be as good an architect as any man—but she may be a different sort of architect. I bring something to medicine that no man can, no matter how good he is. And if you think women can't go to war, remember what the Teuton tribes, marching with their women along, did to the beautiful, virile, professional men soldiers of Rome! ... "No, I don't want to rival men. But I don't want to be kept by the tradition of feminine subjection from the privilege of working eighteen hours a day...". [Ann Vickers, p.62.]

S. Lewis interprets gender equality in his own way. For the writer, the fact that a woman has all social and legal freedom does not make her a man. In the appropriate modern term, S. Lewis thinks similar to the ideas of the direction of "difference feminism". That is, "difference feminism" emphasizes that there are differences between men and women, but there is no criterion for evaluating them, and that both sexes have equal moral status as individuals²[Gilligan, 2003]. In short, S. Lewis does not describe the free, modern woman as a masculine woman. As examples of characters, Ann Vickers, Una Golden, and Carol Kennicott strive to be graceful ladies while being socially active.

² Gilligan, Carol. In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003

Discussion

After Ann was awarded a degree, her work became more intense, she was regularly asked to speak at various organizations. Now the writer refers to Ann as "the Great Woman". And this appeal is used fourteen times until the end of the work. In particular, answering Barney's question at the end of the play, the author gives several descriptions of Ann: "Oh, would you? That would be terribly kind. Oh, Barney!" said in meek ecstasy the Captive Woman, the Free Woman, the Great Woman, the Feminist Woman, the Domestic Woman, the Passionate Woman, the Cosmopolitan Woman, the Village Woman—the Woman. (p.271).; Lewis describes Lil's, a black women's sufferings with deep tragic tone: "In five days more the majestic state would take this living human being out and kill her. There she was, probably mad, old and wizened and ashen, yet full of the miracle of life—eyes magically seeing things and thus making them exist, ears delicate to catch the wonder of sound, womb that had brought forth strong copper— shining sons, hands that had woven bright rugs and mixed corn pone—and in five days, four days, three days now, the state in its wisdom and strength would take her and turn her into a heap of senseless and putrid flesh, and be proud of its revenge, and certain that by thus murdering Lil Hezekiah it had prevented all future murder forever and ever". [Ann Vickers, p.157].

It is noteworthy that in the above excerpt from the novel, the definitions given to a woman include contradictory (captive and free) or different (modern woman, village woman, feminist woman...) adjectives. At this point, the question arises as to why S. Lewis put such definitions next to each other. From the above examples, it can be understood that in the philosophy of S. Lewis, feminism does not distinguish between white and black. Regardless of skin color, a woman is a human being. Even a prodigal prisoner deserves love and attention. Also, feminism, in perspective, should essentially serve the interests of both women and men. S. Lewis's views on **feminism are eternal due to their universality, as a continuation of the ideas of humanism**; and his works are valuable because they reflect high humanitarian ideas.

A number of critical sources about the author indicate that S. Lewis supported the ideas of suffragism and feminism. The analysis of his works showed that in the works of S. Lewis, the ideas of feminism are combined with the ideas of humanism. In the writer's artistic imagination, a woman is, first of all, a human being. If feminism as a movement focused only on the interests of white bourgeois women, in the works of S. Lewis, black women (as in the example of the character of Lil Hezekiah), middle class working women and even those who entered the streets of crime for certain reasons, in short, the interests of the layers of the women are concerned.

Conclusion

In short, Sinclair Lewis is the writer who described a female heroine in the context of social activity, particularly in the professional context for the first time in American literature. Unlike the previous female characters, in Una Golden the rational and emotional aspects of

the female character are proportionally depicted. The new category of women emerging in society is summarized by the example of Una Golden, Carol Kennecott and Ann Vickers. Sinclair Lewis, unlike his contemporary writers, for the first time depicted the active relationship between "woman and society" in his novels. In particular, in the novels "Job", "Main Street", "Ann Vickers" the civil position of women, political rights, role and contribution in the cultural, political and social life of society, professional development and family life, the formation of social thinking in women are depicted in unique artistic colors.

In the central ideas of feminism women's movement, profession and social activity are seen as an important factor ensuring the socialization, well-being, and emancipation of women. This same idea is conceptually important in many novels of S. Lewis. The ability to influence the life of society through a certain profession, to realize one's identity and to realize one's potential through professional activity is manifested in the characters of Una Golden, Carol Kennicott, Anne Vickers. However, while the early feminist theorists were advocating having work and well-paid jobs in general, S. Lewis expressed in artistic images that meaningful and purposeful work is more beneficial for women. In particular, the novel "Job" shows that the author is against the exploitation of women by the capitalist patriarchy.

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