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РОЛЬ ОПИСАНИЙ ПРИРОДЫ В РАСКРЫТИИ ОСНОВНОЙ ИДЕИ РАССКАЗА Ш. АНДЕРСОНА «НЕВЫСКАЗАННАЯ ЛОЖЬ»

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена исследованию описаний природы в рассказе Шервуда Андерсона «Невысказанная ложь» и их роли в раскрытии основной идеи произведения. Описания природы в данном рассказе не просто служат фоном для происходящих в рассказе событий. Наличие эмоциональной связи между главным персонажем и природой дает автору возможность показать силу воздействия красоты окружающего пейзажа на героя. Воспоминания о прошлом, вызванные в памяти героя красотой природы, заставляют его задуматься о настоящем, что, в свою очередь, приводит его к эмоциональному срыву, чувству протеста против неудавшейся жизни. Противопоставление красоты природы и унылой человеческой жизни помогает читателю понять глубину отчаяния героя, осознающего, что он не смог реализовать свои мечты, построить жизнь по-своему.

Ключевые слова: Шервуд Андерсон, «Невысказанная ложь», короткий рассказ, природа, пейзаж, описание, противопоставление.

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Research Article

THE ROLE OF DESCRIPTIONS OF NATURE IN REVEALING THE MESSAGE OF THE SHORT STORY *THE UNTOLD LIE* BY SHERWOOD ANDERSON

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Abstract. The article deals with the descriptions of nature in the short story “The Untold Lie” by Sherwood Anderson and their role in revealing the story’s main idea. In the story under consideration, the descriptions of nature do not merely serve the purpose of creating a background for the events. Unveiling the emotional bond between the protagonist of the story and the landscape around him, the author shows the reader how much the character is affected by the beauty of nature. Recollections of the past evoked by a beautiful landscape around him make the protagonist think about his present life, which results in a feeling of frustration leading to an emotional outburst, a protest against life. The contrast between the beauty of nature and the ugliness of people’s lives helps the reader understand the depth of the protagonist’s despair caused by his unrealized dreams and his inability to be master of his own life.

Keywords: Sherwood Anderson, “Untold Lie”, short story, nature, landscape, description, contrast.

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The collection of short stories *Winesburg, Ohio*, which is often referred to as a cycle of stories or a fragmentary novel, has been the center of attention of readers and literary critics for more than a hundred years since the date of its publication in 1919. One of the earliest voluminous criticisms devoted to the works of Anderson appeared in 1927. In the preface to his book, N. Bryllion Fagin outlined Anderson's method as a storyteller: "The art of Sherwood Anderson has expressed itself in terms of stories of certain people, insignificant to readers with a differing standard of selection, but significant to him. Life has brought to him an understanding of these people against the background of the forces that have moulded their lives. He has found expression for his own personality in the telling of their simple stories" [Fagin: x].

Since then, there have appeared numerous research papers, monographs, and articles studying various aspects of Anderson's literary heritage, many of which concentrate on *Winesburg, Ohio*, undoubtedly one of the most prominent books by Anderson. Among them are works by American authors: John E. Basset, who reviews Anderson's short fiction and novels; Forrest L. Ingram, who conducts a thorough analysis of the cycle *Winesburg, Ohio*, focusing on the narrator's role, the author's writing style, and some other aspects of the book; Robert A. Papinchak, who demonstrates "the links between the author's fiction and his life, the relationship between various stories" in the cycle, dwells on "Anderson's innovations in the field of short fiction"; Bruce Falconer, who focuses on "how *Winesburg, Ohio* changed American literature" [Basset: 63–87; Ingram: 143–178; Papinchak: 20–28; Falconer].

In the articles published in the Russian language, the scholars have given attention to various problems related to *Winesburg, Ohio*: intertextual links in the stories of the cycle [Idilova]; the system of characters, including grotesque personages [Saryvelli; Varlamova 2007; Vetoshkina, Mikhova]; psychological insight of the author [Morozkina; Pinaev 2013, 2019]; search of national identity [Varlamova 2014]; the author's role in a fragmentary novel [Marianovskaia 2020]; chronotopy as organizing principle in the cycle [Atlas]; Russian translations of the stories [Beliaeva; Marianovskaia 2019, 2021]. There are papers in different languages on symbolism in Anderson's stories [Astvatsaturov: 219–225; Ingram: 179–191; Odeh].

The above-mentioned papers and a great number of others devoted to Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* prove the fact that the book and problems raised in it remain topical in philological research. Deeply studied as it is, this area of modern philology still provides material for profound and extended research on numerous aspects of Anderson's short fiction.

In the present article we have sought to analyze descriptions of nature in *The Untold Lie* from the short

story cycle *Winesburg, Ohio*, as well as show what role they play in revealing the message of the story.

In *Winesburg, Ohio* by S. Anderson [Anderson: 25–119] we frequently come across descriptions of nature around Winesburg. Very often it's the fields around the town. The story *Sophistication* opens with a description of Winesburg's environs. "On the Trunion Pike, where the road after it left the town stretched away between berry fields now covered with dry brown leaves, the dust from passing wagons arose in clouds". "The dust rolled away over the fields and the departing sun set it ablaze with colors" [Anderson: 109]. Thus the scene is set for the event the townspeople have been waiting for – the Winesburg County Fair.

In *Loneliness* Anderson describes the woods and the gardens George Willard passes by on his way to the meeting place with Enoch Robinson. "In the woods in the darkness beyond the Fair Ground water dripped from the black trees. Beneath the trees wet leaves were plastered against tree roots that protruded from the ground". "In gardens back of houses in Winesburg dry shriveled potato vines lay sprawling on the ground" [Khrestomatia: 86]. The sight of nature in rainy weather sets George in a sad mood and prepares him for listening to the story of Enoch Robinson.

But landscapes do not only serve the purpose of providing a background against which the events in the stories take place. In *The Untold Lie* [Anderson: 94–99] descriptions of nature play an important role in revealing its message.

The protagonist of the story, Ray Pearson, is a farm hand. He works in a field in the midst of nature. Interestingly, he does not usually take any notice of it as he is very busy working. The author points out that he is a man with "shoulders rounded by too much and too hard labor". Nevertheless, there are three scenes in the story in which the landscape around Winesburg affects the mood of the protagonist and helps us understand his character and the problem weighing heavy on his soul.

The first case occurs when Ray and Hal, "his fellow employee", are standing in the field in which they have been working, and Hal is telling Ray about his affair with Nell Gunter. Talking to Hal, Ray straightens his back and looks across the fields. What he sees produces a great impression on him: he "was affected by the beauty of the country".

Why is the impression so deep? The picture of the country in the fall reminds him of his youth, the time when he was happy, when "on such days he had wandered away in the woods to gather nuts, hunt rabbits, or just loaf about and smoke his pipe". These activities enumerated by the author illustrate what kind of happiness it was. He seemed to enjoy being alone and doing things adolescents like to do.

What strikes the reader in every mention of the beauty of the country is that it awakens a spirit of protest in Ray.

To understand why the beauty of the country, on the one hand, evokes pleasant recollections of the past and, on the other hand, a spirit of protest, we must consider the subject of the conversation introduced by Hal. He wants to discuss his own problem as, according to his words, he “got Nell Gunter in trouble”. The euphemism *trouble* used by Hal suggests that she is pregnant and he doesn't know what to do. Metaphorically, he speaks about marriage, which is “*the right thing to do*”, as about getting “*harnessed up and driven through life like a horse*”. He is afraid of losing his freedom and taking responsibility for the family.

The fact is that Ray was in a similar situation when he was younger, and that situation was also associated with nature as he dated his future wife in the woods. The author resorts to the euphemism *something had happened* to explain the reason for Ray's marriage: the girl became pregnant, and Ray did what was considered the *right* thing to do. It explains the feeling of protest as he was forced to marry by circumstances and by the conventions of society, and his married life differed greatly from the carefree pastime he had been used to when he was a youth.

Thus we come to an understanding of the problem – the marriage that has become a heavy burden for him. The family is very poor; they live in “*a tumble-down frame house*” and their six children are described by the author as “*thin-legged*”, which suggests poor nutrition. As a result, Ray has to work hard, but the reader can suppose that being a farm hand, an unqualified season worker, he doesn't earn enough to provide for such a big family. Can he give the *right* advice to Hal, as he is dissatisfied with his own life and the decision he made years ago?

The second case where the author mentions the beauty of the country occurs in the middle of the story when Ray's wife comes to fetch him home after work. Several times Ray raises his eyes and sees “*the beauty of the country in the failing light*”, but no pleasant memories are evoked. On the contrary, every time he sees the beauty of the country, negative feelings arise in him. He feels like doing something terrifying: “*shout or scream or hit his wife with his fists*”. To explain Ray's reaction, the author resorts to the indirect method of characterization, giving examples of the characters' behavior and speech. On the way home Ray “*trudged behind his wife*”, which indicates his inferior position in the family. It is the wife who comes to the barnyard and calls him, supposedly telling him it is time to go home. In the author's speech and the wife's own speech, we come across the modal word *want*, expressing strong volition: “*she only wanted him to go into town for groceries*”, “*as soon as she had told him what she wanted*”, “*I want you to hustle*”. The imperative quality of the wife's speech is strengthened by the usage of the modal expression *have got to*: “*you've*

got to get to town and back in a hurry”. The author says that she began to scold. She reproached Ray for being slow. The idea of reproach is expressed with the help of the adverb *always* modifying the verb *putter*, used in the Present Continuous Tense: “*You're always puttering*”, “*Why are you always puttering?*” To emphasize Ray's subjugation to his wife, the author introduces the scene in the house in which the wife goes to the bedroom and fetches three silver dollars for Ray to buy some food.

Ray is humiliated by his inferior position. Looking at the beauty of the country, the latter being associated with youth and freedom, arouses a feeling of protest in him – a protest against his very hard life, against the wife who bosses him around, against the responsibility for the children crying bitterly because of the lack of food. But he can't do anything. He doesn't dare. He only “*looked hard at his wife's back*.”

The third scene in which the beauty of the country is mentioned takes place at the end of the story, when Ray is on his way to town. This description is the most detailed of the three, which emphasizes the importance of the scene. In its description, the author uses the adjective *lovely*, which has a positive connotation (“*the scene that lay before him was lovely*”). The description of the hills and bushes is also positive: “*All the low hills were washed with color and even the little clusters of bushes in the corners of the fences were alive with beauty*”. We can understand that everything around is beautifully colored by the glow of the setting sun. The word *alive* is used three times by the author: Anderson resorts to climax, saying that the bushes “*were alive with beauty*”, “*he and Hal had suddenly become alive when they stood in the corn field*”, and now “*the whole world seemed to Ray Pearson to have become alive with something*”. By *something* the reader can understand beauty, freedom, mutual understanding, and harmony.

Again, as before, Ray's reaction to the beauty of nature is a feeling of protest. He begins to run through the field, and “*as he ran he shouted a protest against his life, against all life, against everything that makes life ugly*”. Anderson employs climax again to bring the reader to the question: “*What makes life ugly?*” He juxtaposes the beauty of nature, which gives people a feeling of freedom and harmony, with the ugliness of people's lives. It's people themselves who make their own lives ugly by doing the wrong things and making the wrong decisions. Following the rules of the society they live in makes people feel unhappy, as the society dictates them to do the *right* things, but not what people want.

To underline the contrast between Ray's desires and the reality he lives in, Anderson gives the reader examples of the jobs Ray dreamed of doing before he married. “*He hadn't wanted to be a farm hand*”, but he wanted to “*go west*” and there he “*would go to sea and be a sailor or get a job on a ranch and ride a horse into*

Western towns, shouting and laughing and waking the people in the houses with his wild cries". Why think of these jobs in particular? Being a sailor or a cowboy are jobs for strong and independent men; they are jobs without women and without the politics of a small town. In his dreams, he wanted to be his own man, but in reality he is shy, humble, and weak-willed. Even in his youth, he preferred to walk in the woods alone instead of mingling with people.

Now he thinks of himself as a victim and accuses everyone around him of his failures in life. In the first scene, he accuses God and life: "*Tricked by Gad*", "*tricked by life and made a fool of*". In the second scene, he feels like beating his wife and taking it out on her by doing it. In the third scene, he accuses even his own children of being a burden for him, calling them "*accidents of life*" and imagining "*their hands clutching at him*" as if pulling him back and not allowing him to be free.

The mood of the protagonist is affected by the nature and by the people around him. Each time he contemplates nature, he recollects the past and feels frustrated about the present. Symbolically, the mood of the protagonist changes as soon as he loses connection with the beauty of the nature around him. At the end of the story, it becomes dark: "*...and then his form also disappeared into the darkness of the fields*". The beautiful landscape is no longer seen in the dark, which may symbolize Ray's reconciliation with his life. He even finds something pleasant in it: "*As he went some memory of pleasant evenings spent with the thin-legged children in the tumble-down house by the creek must have come to his mind*". No wonder Ray fails to give advice to Hal when he meets him in town. Ray's own feelings are confused; he seems not to know what the *right* thing is. Was his own decision made years before right or wrong?

The message of this story correlates with the author's idea of truth, which, in the course of time, becomes a lie [Anderson: 27]. Hal must choose his own truth, while Ray's truth, whatever it may be, has become a lie. Thus emphasizing a strong bond between the beauty of nature and the mood of the protagonist, Anderson managed to prove to the reader that the character's feeling of frustration is caused by the inconsistency between the dreams and desires of his youth and his miserable and pathetic life in the present. The realization of his inability to go his own way prevented Ray from telling a lie to his young friend.

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