

**VERBALIZED MOTHERHOOD EXPERIENCE IN THE  
SHORT STORY "TRESPASS" BY S. SCOFIELD**

With the development of the feminist thought, modern literature strongly influenced by its contributions, a female's peculiar biological experience is being made more and more explicit. In American literature of the end of the XIX century — the beginning of the XX century the role of a mother was predominantly based on the existing pattern of gender stereotype, when woman was evaluated through her influence on her child and her attitude to it. The undisguised description of maternal practice was considered to be tabooed, thus was not present in the literary works.

The XX century drew the authors' attention to the problem of revealing the concealed experience of a mother, both "positive" and "negative", re-valuating it from the point of view of a woman, due to which the analysis of the process of verbalization of motherhood is very topical.

In her research of the memoirs of maternal experience of contemporary women I. Brown claims that: "the authors <...> feel conflicted about their position as mothers mostly because of the persistent myth of "natural" mother and persistence of traditional gender practices they challenge them in their writings" [1: 20]. The researcher also states that with the arrival of the new baby, women-writers become aware of the return of traditional gender practices into their family lives and perceive the increase of inequality

and a loss of their power in the gender relationships, leading to their frustration and discontent.

The image of a happy mother dandling a child is traditional for the Western culture. The famous feminist writer A. Rich in her book "Of Woman Born" explains how contradictory the perception of a woman is. The female body has been seen as "impure, corrupt, the site of discharges, bleedings, dangerous to masculinity, a source of moral and physical contamination; 'the devil's gateway!'" [2: 13]. The woman-mother has to possess opposite characteristics, that is she ought to be "beneficent, sacred, pure, asexual, nourishing" [2: 73]. She contends that the female body "is the terrain on which patriarchy is erected" and that motherhood is "'sacred' so long as its offspring are 'legitimate' — that is, as long as the child bears the name of a father who legally controls the mother" [2: 20]. This results into the creation of the standard, which presupposes a pattern of emotions a woman has to experience and a pattern of rules she has to obey to support the image of ideal mother. Her real emotions that don't fit in the existing limits according to patriarchal stereotype are concealed.

The controversial emotions of a mother are revealed in the short story "Trespass" (1983) by S. Scofield. Here the experience of motherhood is represented rather naturalistically, the author depicts physical feelings of the protagonist Katie: <...> *the gargled sucking of the baby shifted into an intense, rhythmic tug; Katie felt it in her breast and neck and groin* [3, 9].

Despite the deep love towards her baby, without enough sleep due to suckling of her baby and other negative concurrence of circumstances, a mother may feel irritation and even aggression to her baby. In the short story, such borderline feelings are presented in the Katie's attitude: <...> *Katie spread her free hand over the baby's fuzzy soft head. Though the urge was gentle, maternal, Katie felt the fine hint of hostility in her hand* [3, 9].

Being positively connotated the adjectives *gentle, maternal* verbalize her love towards her child. The word combination *hint of hostility* has pejorative connotation and marks the existence of a negative emotion in her attitude. Such opposite feelings make Katie horrified. But her mother calms her down by telling that she also experienced this: *Katie's mother said, "<...> a week later, I was sane again, and mortified at what I'd done. It's a serious thing to hit a tiny baby. I never hit you again."* [3; 11].

Nowadays it has been proved that some new mothers suffer from postnatal depression, which results into negative emotions towards their babies. But earlier such female experience was concealed, as each manifestation of any emotion contradicting the traditional image of the mother was con-

sidered inadequate. One of the achievements of the feminist movement is granting a woman access to the wide-range female experience, tabooed in different societies at different times. So, the experience of motherhood in the short-story is verbalized by lexical markers with both positive and pejorative connotations as they reveal not the ideal traditional image of a mother but the true-to-life controversial experience of a woman.

### **Literature**

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2. Rich A. *Of Woman Born*. — N. Y.: WW Norton and Company, Inc., 1995. — 352p.

3. Scofield S. *Trespass // Ploughshares: The Literary Journal*. — Boston: Emerson College. — Winter, 1983. [WWW-документ] URL <http://www.ploughshares.org/issues/article.cfm?prmarticleID=1574>