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THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMAN'S MIND IN L. M. MONTGOMERY AND WILLA CATHER

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We decided to concentrate on depicting women minds in Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) and Cather's *My Antonia* (1918) as they have similar characteristic traits. Moreover, they were written and published approximately at the same time. Secondly, we have chosen these two particular pieces of literature as they both have some kind of connection to Slovak and Czech readership. Obviously, the depiction of women minds is the main topic of both novels. However there are some differences as well as similarities between them. We have chosen these particular novels as they were written in the same period of time and also speak about similar topics.

Via literary research methods such as analysis and comparison, the initial hypothesis was stated, assuming that:

In spite of uneasy social luggage, such as immigration (the case of Cather's *Antonia*) and alienation caused by one's orphanage (the case of Montgomery's *Anne*), positive spirit and serendipity are the most significant factors which help main female characters to cope with difficulties in everyday life.

The loss of parents is generally considered to be one of the worst things that an individual is forced to go through, especially in childhood. This is proved in both novels. Montgomery's *Anne* is an orphan who lost her parents as a baby. However, due to her positive character, she gradually builds a strong relationship with her adoptive parents Marilla and Matthew. After Matthew's death, she is genuinely shattered but as we later see she keeps her optimistic nature despite of the great loss:

"When I left Queen's my future seemed to stretch out before me like a straight road. I thought I could see along it for many a milestone. Now there is a bend in it. I don't know what lies around the bend, but I'm going to believe that the best does. It has a fascination of its own, that bend, Marilla. I wonder how the road beyond it goes—what there is of green glory and soft, checkered light and shadows—what new landscapes—what new beauties—what curves and hills and valleys further on." (Montgomery, 2015, p. 384)

In the case of Cather's *Antonia*, Cather did not describe the suicide of Antonia's father as an act of triumph but rather as an act of despair which results in hurting other people, especially family. (Woolley, 2017) Even though Antonia still has mother and the rest of the family, she is forced to sacrifice herself for the goodness of the family and start to help her older brother Ambrosio on the field. She spoke of her father with great respect, honor and a kind of melancholy when she says:

"My father, he went much to school. He know a great deal; how to make the fine cloth like what you not got here. He play horn and violin, and he read so many books that the priests in Bohemie come to talk to him. You won't forget my father, Jim?" "No," I said, "I will never forget him." (Cather, 1918, p.142)

This statement clearly proves that Antonia went on and does not have the problem to speak about her father even though she obviously misses him very much.

Secondly, it is very difficult for an individual to be forced to leave the area where he came from. Both novels treat this issue however each of them differently. In the case of *Anne*, when she was adopted, she travelled from the asylum in Nova Scotia to *Green Gables* in the Prince Edward Island. Despite of the fact she leaves her homeland, she is full of positive emotions as she was finally adopted which gives her hope for the better future. The novel

proves this when she says: Oh, it seems so wonderful that I'm going to live with you and belong to you. I've never belonged to anybody—not really. (Montgomery, 2015, p.17)

Cather's novel however speaks about the humble, honest and hardworking nature of Bohemian immigrants. Despite of the difficulties that they had to face in the new country, the whole family but particularly girls- Antonia and Yulka remain optimistic and always keen to go out with Jim to forget their troubles. This proves the statement from the beginning of the novel, when Jim says:

„We knew that things were hard for our Bohemian neighbors, but the two girls were lighthearted and never complained. They were always ready to forget their troubles at home, and to run away with me over the prairie, scaring rabbits or starting up flocks of quail.“ (Cather, 1918, p.36)

Other arguments that support our hypothesis are situations when both main characters had to cope with difficulties which were not the result of their own actions. Cather's Antonia is abandoned by her fiancé after they were engaged and she got pregnant. After that she had to go back to her family with a shame. Despite of that, we see that she remains optimistic and deeply loves her daughter when she says:

“I'd always be miserable in a city. I'd die of lonesomeness. I like to be where I know every stack and tree, and where all the ground is friendly. I want to live and die here. Father Kelly says everybody's put into this world for something, and I know what I've got to do. I'm going to see that my little girl has a better chance than ever I had. I'm going to take care of that girl, Jim.” (Cather, 1918, p.362-363)

On the other hand, Montgomery's Anne was abused by her previous tutors before she was sent to asylum and ends up at Green Gables. However, we see that in spite of the difficulties that she experienced, she keeps the faith that life will be better in the future and has no hard feelings toward her previous tutors. The clear example lies in Anne's reply to Marilla's question whether her previous tutors were good to her when she says:

„Oh, they MEANT to be—I know they meant to be just as good and kind as possible. And when people mean to be good to you, you don't mind very much when they're not quite—always.“ (Montgomery, 1908, p. 54)

The North-American continent was a place where many people met their new destinies, either as immigrants or as new-beginners. However, it would not be only due to the territory, that some of them succeeded and made their way in the world. Cather and Montgomery's novels show us how a person from less than favorable conditions may find happiness and live authentically in spite of material or social discomforts. The serendipity, optimism and never ending faith in the goodness of the world are the factors which are undoubtedly helpful in order to achieve the goals in life.

Both novels offers a whole spectrum of ever-present issues for a research however, in our research work, we have chosen the examination of the depiction of women minds. We decided to examine the novels via literary research methods such as analysis and comparison.

We analyzed passages from both novels which presents the depiction of women minds and compare them in order to prove the hypothesis. Quotes from novels which were used, proved the statement of our hypothesis.

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