

ENGLISH LITERATURE AFTER WORLD WAR II (1945-1990)

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ANNOTATION

This article tries to analyze the English literature after WWII dividing the period into two parts: the first is the so-called period of “postwar settlement”, and the second began in 1979 with the beginning of M. Thatcher’s premiership. The first period was a combination of social and moral reform, the emancipation of morals - which I assess mainly as progressive - with a huge economic failure, with the failure of hopes for the possibility of a planned economy, which grew so unrealistically throughout the fifties, while the 1970s were just as controversial, widespread dissemination of new modern models, which relatively recently were the property of only the middle class.

Introduction:

In 1945, England ended the war among the victorious powers, but the extreme tension in

the battle with fascism undermined its economic power. In 1939, it was still one of the leading countries of the West, but by 1945 it had lost its former influence in a world divided between two new superpowers, the USA and the USSR. During the war, Great Britain began to lose individual colonies, and the collapse of the colonial system in the next two decades largely determined the dynamics of the development of English culture in the second half of the 20th century. The political history of Britain after the end of World War II is divided into approximately two time periods: the first is the so-called period of “postwar settlement”, and the second began in 1979 with the beginning of M. Thatcher’s premiership.

Research: Fulfilling its election promises, the Attlee government granted independence to India and Pakistan in 1947, and this gave impetus to the flow of immigrants from the former colonies flocking to the British Isles. When the conservatives returned to power in 1951 and W. Churchill, who had led the nation to victory in the war, again became prime minister, an attempt to slow down the decolonization process led to the opposite effect - its expansion. In 1956, England got involved in the so-called Suez adventure, wanting to punish Egypt for the nationalization of the Suez Canal that belonged to it. However, the Anglo-French landing in Port Said was condemned by the UN and even Britain's closest ally, the USA, which forced England to finally abandon its claims to its former geopolitical role.

However, no matter who was in power, Conservatives or Labor, until 1979, domestic policy was determined by ideas going back to J. M. Keynes - the ideas of a cohesive, homogeneous society of equal opportunities, with a developed system of assistance to the poor, universal health care, accessible to the highest education, with strong trade unions, nationalized industry. Following this liberal-socialist doctrine, England increasingly lost in economic competition not only to the United States but to the countries that lost the Second World War, Japan, and Germany. The confrontation between the government and trade unions intensified.

For the 1950s the recently ended war still cast a shadow; The 1960s open with the trial of Lady Chatterley's Lover, during which, after a 32-year ban for obscenity, the court allowed the publication of D. H. Lawrence's novel on the writer's homeland and thereby recognized English modernism as part of the establishment. Interest in the literature of modernism is only part of the general process of cultural emancipation, which was characteristic of the “swinging decade,” the era of rock, hippies, and the “sexual revolution.” London has become the capital of youth music and fashion. The new social role of youth was consolidated by lowering the age of the official majority from 21 to 18 years (after the student unrest of 1968). At the end of the 20th century. biographer of Prime Minister G. Macmillan Ben Pimley sums up the decade this way: “The sixties were a period of the most rapid cultural and social change in the entire post-war period. At this time, the British were getting used to a new level of prosperity, and important humanitarian reforms were underway. It was a combination of social and moral reform, the emancipation of morals - which I assess mainly as progressive - with a huge economic failure, with the failure of hopes for the possibility of a planned economy, which grew so unrealistically throughout the fifties. And as a result of the decade, we had to learn to accept decline. Acceptance of decline is the result of failure.

The 1970s were just as controversial, which today is commonly remembered as the time of Britain’s entry into the EU (to improve the economic situation), rising unemployment, and aggravation of social conflicts. Millions of families are sitting without heat and light (consequences of the oil crisis of 1973), a three-day work week, long strikes - all these are historical facts, but at the same time, there was widespread dissemination of new modern

models, which relatively recently were the property of only the middle class.

These changes were reflected in English culture. As in all Western countries, the social composition of its speakers has changed: if back in the 1930s. The tone in culture, as traditionally for Britain, was set by representatives of the privileged classes, but after the war, with the partial destruction of class barriers, the widest strata of society received access to high culture and education. In this regard, writers of the older generation until the 1970s. expressed concern about the decline in the educational and cultural level of the British. Indeed, parallel to the “massification” of higher education in the 1950s and 1960s. There was an explosive growth of mass culture, especially cinematic and musical culture - the “Beatlemania” that swept the country in the 1960s at times resembled a collective neurosis.

The rapid spread of mass culture had both internal and geopolitical explanations. Winston Churchill in the Fulton speech of 1946 (known for its image of the “Iron Curtain”; I. Berlin took part in its drafting) forms the idea of a new political threat. Hence the idea of the importance of culture for justifying the confrontation between systems, creating a convincing image of the enemy, an average personality and thereby dependent on the state, and the illusion of active participation of citizens in public life. A typical genre of the Cold War era in England was the spy thriller, represented by the novels of Ian Fleming (1909-? 1964) about James Bond, the works of Frederick Forsyth (b. 1938), Len Deighton (b. 1929), John Le Carré (John 1st Sale, b. 1931). The classic spy novel in England arose with the establishment of European intelligence services on the eve of the First World War and was created, as a rule, by people from the intelligence services. The post-war spy thriller continues this tradition, but among the spy heroes, only one is presented in a truly heroic light: British elite James Bond, a counterintelligence officer whose code name 007 has two zeros representing the state-given right to kill. On the contrary, Deighton's nameless protagonist, like le Carré's George Smiley, who resembles an elderly clerk, lacks a heroic aura; these are people tormented by doubts, experiencing failures, and worrying about immoral acts that they have to commit. F. Forsythe's novels are an example of how a spy thriller absorbs real events and characters of modern politics, and how plot attention shifts from the events themselves to their technical preparation.

Around the same time that readers on both sides of the Atlantic became acquainted with Bond, Oxford professor of the history of English J. R. R. Tolkien (John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, 1892-1973) published a book that, in the last years of the last century, the British put on number one on the list of the most important literary works of the century. The current cult status of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (1954-1955) originated in the United States, and in the UK the book was initially lukewarmly received. It has an exceptional impact on the modern mass reader, who is growing up in conditions of ever-increasing religious indifference and needs, albeit in a popular fairy tale, fantastically expressed, but essentially spiritual consolation, in the justification of good. A series of seven novels for children “*Chronicles of Narnia*” (*Chronicles of Narnia*, 1950-1956) by Clive Lewis (a friend of Tolkien) and “*The Lord of the Rings*” became the response of these Christian writers (Tolkien, unlike the Catholic Lewis, never really declared his Christianity) to the challenges of a secular society that has forgotten about God, on the one hand, and, on the other, the challenges of experimental intellectual literature. This latter led to a return to the tradition of an exciting plot. “*The Lord of the Rings*” is a fusion of very different imagery: ancient, medieval, and Wagnerian; The presence in the novel of etymological comments, a map of Middle-earth, and pseudoscientific reference apparatus reveals the author to be a scientist who took part in the work on the Oxford English Dictionary. The story of the hobbit Frodo, who takes

on the brunt of the fight against world evil, affirms such important values for English culture as home, small homeland, friendly loyalty, and mutual understanding. However, no matter how important Tolkien's personal motives were in creating *The Lord of the Rings*, the reception of this book by readers showed that the "pink Christianity" derived from it becomes convenient, politically correct material that can easily fit into the sphere of a broadly understood spirituality.

In the first post-war decades, the most influential English writers were J. Orwell, I. Waugh, and G. Green, who made their mark back in the 1930s. Their post-war works are bitter reflections on the current situation of England, as well as on the prospects for its future development. This literary series opens with the works of George Orwell (1903-1950), which brought him worldwide fame - the parable *Animal Farm* (1945) and the novel *1984* (1949). In them, Orwell reaches the level of Swiftian satire.

"*The Animal Farm*" draws on a long European tradition of allegorical bestiaries and stories about animals that endow them with anthropomorphic features, and is thus very unusual for twentieth-century literature. The form and content of the work were equally unusual. On the one hand, most of the images of the farm's inhabitants develop traditional symbolic characteristics of animals, but some details give these images shades of meaning that are relevant to the history of the 20th century. Thus, the wise old boar Major, the author of the slogan "all animals are equal" and the anthem "All Animals of Britain", whose text is reminiscent of "The International", but the anthem is sung to the tune of "Cucarachi", leads an agitation of animals against people, carried out in a parodic manner. Marxist spirit. The smartest animals, pigs, and dogs, are reminiscent of factional squabbles in political parties. The hard-working horse Boxer and his friend the mare Clover embody the idea of selfless, Stakhanovist labor for the sake of building a new world. The inevitable betrayal of the ideals of the revolution, the seizure of its fruits by the strongest, the passivity of the masses blindly submitting to violence - all these themes were especially relevant at the end of the Second World War, and the author's socialist background, his familiarity with the mechanisms of propaganda gives Orwell the opportunity to create a transparent, outwardly simple text with an amazing level of generalization and hidden intensity of emotions. Orwell reveals in the novel the origins and mechanisms of totalitarian power, which directly leads to the theme of his last novel.

The emergence of English literature into new frontiers, as well as the desire to support it, led in 1969 to the establishment of the Booker Prize, awarded annually for the best novel of the year. Although the Booker Prize, which has quickly gained prestige, has been accused of both the commercialization of literature and the opportunistic decisions of the annually changing jury, its shortlist serves as a fairly reliable list of outstanding works created in English over the past almost half a century. The Man Booker Prize has quickly gained exceptional status among Britain's many literary prizes, with its October ceremony marking the pinnacle of the literary calendar and a means of maintaining the high prestige of literature in England.

In 1958, participants in a revealing debate on the modern novel in *London Magazine* agreed on three points: none of the modern English novelists had real-world recognition; none reflect the post-war changes in British society; no one shows a penchant for innovation in form. Throughout the entire period discussed in this chapter, opinions continued to be heard in various formulations about the narrowing of horizons, the slowdown in the pace of development, the penetration of middle-class conformism into literature, the romantic opposition to technological progress, and the insular isolation of post-war English literature. This kind of the point of view directly projects onto the sphere of culture and literature nostalgia for the great past, "post-

imperial melancholy”, the difficulties of finding a new place in the world after the collapse of the British Empire, after a century and a half of world domination. Critics found a lack of self-confidence and ambition in English writers and interpreted their increasing penchant for allegory and self-reflection as a consequence of the collapse of the imperial consciousness, the product of which was faith in history and historical narrative.

Conclusion: However, today the prevailing opinion is that English literature of the first post-war decades coped with the task of supporting the new status of England, reflected the dynamics of social change, and embarked on the path of combining creative tasks that, until the 1960s, seemed mutually exclusive to most critics. This means that early English postmodernism, represented by Fowles, Lessing, B. S. Johnson, and others, learned to combine social responsibility, the technique of the everyday novel with the type of aesthetic reflection that was previously considered the exclusive prerogative of modernism. Thus, during this period the ground was laid for the flourishing of British postmodernism in the last quarter of the 20th century.

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