

Post-modernism in the works of J. Fowles and I. Murdoch

Guzal Solieva,
JSPI

Umida Fayzullaeva Ass.prof.,
JSPI

Abstract. This article is dedicated to the Iris Murdoch and John Fowles works. The creative method of Iris Murdoch and John Fowles fully reflects in modernist (existential) tradition, and with the more distant Victorian, Gothic, detective novels. John Fowles' novels are often attributed to postmodern literature, but although the writer himself does not deny the influence of modern literary and philosophical trends on his work, he strongly emphasizes the connection with the realistic tradition of European literature. The specificity of Iris Murdoch's novel heritage also makes it necessary to recognize the syncretism of her creative pursuits: her works contain features of the detective genre, Gothic, romanticism and psychological realism.

Key words: post-modernism, literature, influence, novel, tradition, modern, prose

Iris Murdoch and John Fowles enter English literature in the middle of XX century — a period when there is an active process of changing cultural paradigms. The post-war world realized that a lot had been experienced. It was a post-Holocaust, post-atomic world, post-ideological, post-humanistic and post-modern, and it was not surprising that this concept had already been formed by that time. Modernism has ended and even devalued — the deaths of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Yeats and Freud only intensified this feeling, writes Malcolm Bradbury in the book 'The Modern British Novel'. Of course, the statement about the devaluation of modernism, especially in English literature, seems to be an artistic exaggeration. However, it is undeniable that the course of history itself set new requirements for literature. "A distinctive feature of postmodern literature in England is a return to the comedian of Fielding, Stern, Dickens, James, a dialogue with the realistic literature of the past based on a rethinking of traditions and patriarchal conditions of island life," N.B. Mankovskaya points out in her monograph 'Aesthetics of Postmodernism'. The creative method of Murdoch and Fowles fully reflects this article: in their work we find a dialogue both with the nearest — modernist (existential) tradition, and with the more distant — Victorian, Gothic, detective novels. Such an uneasy synthesis makes critics speak of John Fowles as an 'anomaly, a kind of literary contradiction' who simultaneously follows tradition and creates an innovative meta-prose. These words are also true for evaluating the Murdoch method. John Fowles' novels are often attributed to postmodern literature, but although the writer himself does not deny the influence of modern literary and philosophical trends on his work, he strongly emphasizes the connection with the realistic tradition of European literature. However, John Fowles' creative path casts doubt on the category of this statement. His first novel, "The Collector" contains all the elements of life-likeness, but at the same time the characters of the actors are conditional. In the second novel "The Magus" not only the characters, but also the time of the novel become conditional.

The existential philosophy with which Conchis and his actors are endowed dominates the logic of the plot here. The novel "The French Lieutenant Woman" is a stylization of a Victorian novel, however, and it is conditional, the reader is constantly reminded that both he and the author live in the XX century. The novel "Mantissa" — one of the last written by John Fowles — is a vivid example of a postmodern game exaggerated in its plot. And "Maggot" is a detective story, the finale of which is devoid of denouement and suddenly turns into a historical chronicle. However, some critics, on the contrary, saw such a variety of styles in John Fowles' work as a sign of the writer's aesthetic helplessness. For example, the well-known Russian literary critic called John Fowles' genre and style omnivorous a writer's weakness, noting that an extremely remarkable feature of John Fowles' writing style is the fact that his creative method itself exists in conditions of a very unstable equilibrium, each time (i.e. in each new work) experiencing a threat when the content emphasis shifts to be in the dangerous zone of pseudo-realism.

The specificity of Iris Murdoch's novel heritage also makes it necessary to recognize the syncretism of her creative pursuits: her works contain features of the detective genre, Gothic, romanticism and psychological realism. The writer positions herself as a guardian of the traditional forms of the European and English novel, as a follower of the writing style of Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and Leo Tolstoy. This is manifested in the use of classical narrative techniques and methods of analyzing the spiritual world of the characters. At the same time, she argues that today it is impossible to write in a realistic manner due to philosophical and epistemological reasons. And thus it denotes difficulties, but at the same time the potential of modern prose, especially British. Thus, her worldview and creativity characterize the modern novel well, points out one of the researchers of the work of the British novelist R. Todd.

Simultaneously with the elements of the classic novel of the XIX century, there are forms of experimental writing in Iris Murdoch's works therefore, in trying to determine the specifics of the writer's artistic manner each critic uses a compound construction with the words however, at the same time. A. Massie characterizes the duality of her artistic method, noting that "on the one hand, the novelist declares her belonging to the realistic tradition of the 19th century. She carefully writes out the social environment in which her characters operate, their history and family relationships. But at the same time, her complex and extravagant plots combining comedy with the grotesque and elements of the terrible are based on artificial templates ..." W. Allen, in general, does not appreciate Iris Murdoch's artistic talent very highly: "Iris Murdoch's best novel is *The Bell*. The rest of her novels, especially the most recent ones, are a random collection of heartfelt passages, as if immersed in a fog—semantic, not verbal: Iris Murdoch cannot be called a 'difficult' writer in the usual sense of the word." But he calls her 'the leading representative of symbolism in the prose of her generation' Iris Murdoch herself talks quite a lot about the prospects for the development of modern European literature in her essays and, in particular, divides modern novels into 'existentialist' (existentialist novel) and 'mystical' (mystical novel), while using the first concept in a different sense rather than the philosophical novels of Sartre and Camus.

However, Iris Murdoch is not limited to this classification. In her program essay 'Against Drunness', she introduces a new typology of the modern novel. The novel of the XX century is usually represented by two types – 'crystal' and 'journalistic'. The writer understands this or a small quasi-allegorical literally as the rigid binding of the novel's hero to the historical time and environment, as well as the presence of social analysis (something that in Russian criticism has always been considered an achievement of realistic aesthetics). Based on this thesis, she contrasts the modern novel with the works of the previous era, emphasizing the more perfect status of the latter (this statement is contained in several of her essays): The most obvious difference between the novels of the XIX and XX century is that the novel of the XIX century is better. Another clear difference is in changing attitudes towards society.

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