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PECULIARITIES OF INTERETHNIC CONFLICTS MAINSTREAMING IN AMERICAN LITERATURE OF THE 19TH CENTURY

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Abstract

An attempt is made to analyze several images of African-Americans created by white American writers and to trace some traditions, similarities and differences in the image of black race representatives. The multi-ethnic population structure of the US has always been one of the factors that seriously affect American literature. It is ethnic as well as racial diversity that distinguishes US literature from others. We analyze the problem of African-American character in novels of Toni Morrison "Beloved" and Edgar Allan Poe "The Gold–Bug". The context of literary traditions in the 19th century is taken into account. For many years, the image of a Negro was the object of fiction in America. Folklore of American blacks is one of the valuable parts of the literary work of America. In American literature, where the image of a Negro takes place, the line of existentialism is pronounced. Following the increased attention to the issues of cultural and literary identity of African - Americans at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries, the problem of understanding the character of a black man becomes especially relevant in the works of American writers. The ambiguity of the interpretation of the image of an African-American and the depth of psychological problems associated with the crossing of the racial barrier and the self-identification of heroes allows not only to overcome the stereotypical opinion about black people, but also to create new images of an African-American, outlining the essential issues of racial discourse for African-American literature in the 20th century.

Keywords: Concept, discourse, linguistic culture, multiculturalism

1. Introduction

American literature not only was an expression of America's difficult political, economic, and cultural life, but at the same time greatly influenced its development. The bourgeois-democratic movement against the black population had a strong influence on the development of literature of the 19th century. Some American writers opposed racism and talked about the tragic events that took place with black Americans.

2. Problem Statement

The processes that characterize African-American literature at the present stage are of great importance in the context of inter- and cross-cultural interaction of various branches of US literature. They reflect serious changes in the social and political life of the country, which determined the promotion of socially marked groups that challenged the traditional formation of the literary canon (Adeniyi, 2018; Capuano, 2003; Mastropierro & Conklin, 2019).

3. Research Questions

What are the characteristics of the black person image in literary works of several American writers of the 19th century?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this article is to analyze the image of an African-American in a number of works by several American writers of the 19th century. It is worthy to note that on the back of social and political events that took place in America in the 19th century, all writers without exception turned somehow in their works to the image of the colored.

5. Research Methods

This article is based on the literary works of contemporary American writers Toni Morrison "Beloved" (1988) and Edgar Allan Poe "The Gold–Bug" (1991) that touch upon the problem of bias against the African-American population of the United States. The research was carried out within the framework of decoding stylistics.

6. Findings

The literary text that contains some information on relations among representatives of different ethnic groups according to the concept of the discourse of Paul-Michel Foucault and his numerous followers can be considered as part of an ethnic or national discourse (Dijk, 1984; Foucault, 1996). This hypothesis allows us to believe that the study of linguistic means of expressing behavior and interaction of different ethnic groups characters contributes to a deeper study of real people interactions.

National discourse is also called "we – they discourse" (Vodak, 1997) that implies a binary opposition, the complex social relations of individuals come down to.

Skin color in the United States has always been a source of contradictions and conflicts. Although slavery in that country had been abolished more than a century ago, bias against the African-American population continued. All of that is expressed in the text using the vocabulary and syntactic means of the language, organized by antithesis and metaphor principium. The most explicit racial biases are found at the character level.

The problem of slavery as a starting point of interethnic enmity in the modern world still attracts many authors. One of them is Toni Morrison, a prominent representative of modern African-American literature. One of her most famous novels "Beloved" is about inhuman living conditions, exhausting work of the Negro community at the end of the 19th century.

Through the example of the Negro Sethe life, the main character of the novel, the reader gets acquainted with the tragic fate (plight) of the whole community. The echoes of this tragedy are still perceptible. Step by step, the reader gets to know Sethe's past, her life on a derelict farm with the imposing name "Sweet Home". The Garners treated their slaves humanly: they were allowed a lot that was considered the privilege of whites:

Allowed, encouraged to correct Garner, even defy him. To invent ways of doing things; to see what needed and attack it without permission. To buy a mother, to choose a horse or a wife, handle guns, even learn reading if they wanted to. ... In their relationship with Garner was true metal: they were believed and trusted, but most of all they were listened to. (Morrison, 1988, p. 125–126)

For Garner, blacks were human:

"Garner called and announced them men – but only on Sweet Home, and by his leave" (Morrison, 1988, p. 220).

Sethe's mother-in-law, who happened *to have seen a lot*, considered this attitude special, distinguishing the Garners from other slave owners:

The Garners, it seemed to her, ran a special kind of slavery, treating them like paid labor, listening to what they wanted known. And he didn't stud his boys. Never brought them to her cabin with directions to 'lay down with her' like they did in Carolina, or rented their sex out on other farms. It surprised and pleased her, but worried her too. (Morrison, 1988, p. 140)

During the Garners' time, the name of the farm corresponded to the life on it. After the sudden death of her husband, Mrs. Garner, being afraid to remain surrounded by blacks, invited the Garner's cousin to manage the farm. He was very different from the former master.

"... schoolteacher didn't take advice from Negroes. The information they offered he called backtalk and developed a variety of corrections (which he reordered in his notebook) to reeducate them. He complained they ate too much, rested too much, talked too much, which was certainly true compared to

him, because schoolteacher ate little, spoke less and rested not at all. ... He was as hard on his pupils as he was on them – except for corrections".

"For years ... schoolteacher broke into children what Garner raised into men" (Morrison, 1988, p. 220).

In this case, there is a contrast between the "name" of the character and its content, found in the context. So, the positive meaning of the noun "schoolteacher" contrasts with the negative essence of the character bearing this name.

The teacher regarded blacks as animals, as can be seen from the following examples:

"Schoolteacher'd wrap that [measuring] string all over my head, 'ci my nose, around my behind. Number my teeth. I thought he was a fool" (Morrison, 1988, p. 191).

Typically, such measurements are made in animals to find out their cost. The teacher taught his disciples in the same vein:

"I told you to put her [Sethe's] human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right. And don't forget to line them up" (Morrison, 1988, p. 193).

The context of this example shows what "education" the teacher gave.

The only difference between a Negro and an animal for a teacher and others like him is that he is not worth a penny when he is dead:

"Unlike a snake or a bear, a dead nigger could not be skinned for profit and was not worth his own dead weight in coin" (Morrison, 1988, p. 148).

In the teacher's opinion, there is law against people like Garner:

There's laws against what he's done: letting niggers hire out their own time to buy themselves. He even let them have guns! And you think he mated them niggers to get him some more? Hell no! He planned for them to marry!. (Morrison, 1988, p. 226)

In this example, a clear case of discrimination against blacks is seen, expressed in the paradox: getting paid for work, buying and having weapons is a privilege for whites!

Thus, we can assume that due to the negative content of the character's image, there is a semantic shift in his "name", which is decoded from the novel context and in which the contrast is seen. So, a teacher associated with the upbringing of future generations becomes the guide of racial biases transmitted from generation to generation.

Biases against Negroes unites all slaveholders, both good and bad. So, Garner was afraid to let blacks out of the farm, not because of the laws, but due to the threat they, in his opinion, posed to whites:

"In fact, his order for them not to leave Sweet Home, except in his company, was not so much because of the law, but the danger of men-bred slaves on the loose" (Morrison, 1988, pp. 140–141).

In the context of this example, racial biases against blacks are implied with the help of an oxymoron reinforced by reiteration, adversative conjunction and "in fact" in the opening position.

The Bodwins, the white brother and sister who saved Sethe from the gallows for escaping from the farm and murdering her daughter, helped the Negroes who fled from the owners, not because they loved them:

"... they hated slavery worse than they hated slaves" (Morrison, 1988, p. 197).

The analogy between whites is created through implied sense (connotation), reiterations and amplified by a paradox.

White persuasion of superiority has exacerbated biases and discrimination against Negroes, supported by white fear of being in the place of blacks:

White people believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle.

The more colored people spent their strength trying to convince them how gentle they were, how clever and loving, how human, the more they used themselves up to persuade whites of something Negroes believed could not be questioned, the deeper and more tangled the jungle grew inside. But it wasn't the jungle blacks brought with them to this place from the other (livable) place. It was the jungle white folks planted in them. And it grew. It spread. In, through and after life, it spread, until it invaded the whites who had made it. Touched them everyone. Changed and altered them. Made them bloody, silly, worse than even they wanted to be, s-: scared were they of the jungle they had made. The screaming baboon lived under their own white skin; the red gums were their own. (Morrison, 1988, pp. 198–199)

This example, organized by antithesis and containing a paradox, indicates that it was white people who gave rise to discrimination and turned out to be the monsters whom they so tried to see and suppress in negroes, subjugating them to themselves.

The contrast between whites and blacks is passed by convergence of split-level means, including oppositions of lexical units of positive and negative semantics: real contrasts (Andreeva, 1984) (clever :: silly), potential contrasts, including contextual antonyms and synonyms (loving, gentle, human :: bloody, brought, planted, white people :: dark skin), and is reinforced by the adversative conjunction and parceling.

Having lived a long life, Sethe's mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, made sure that it was white who caused her misfortunes, which is transmitted by means of text cohesion, which include reiterations:

"There is no bad luck in the world but white folks" (Morrison, 1988, p. 89).

"... there was no bad luck in the world but white people" (Morrison, 1988, p. 104).

No less noteworthy is the image of a Negro named Jupiter from the story of Edgar Allan Poe "The Gold Bug" (Poe, 1991).

Jupiter is infinitely loyal to his master. Even after the total liberation from slavery, despite the busting of the Legrand family he served in, the black servant remains with his young lord, "who could be induced, neither by treats nor by promises, to abandon what he considered his right of attendance upon the footsteps of his young 'Massa Will'" (Poe, 1991).

Jupiter heartily protects the owner from all sorts of adversity and is ready to serve him faithfully till the last, although Legrand calls the Negro 'infernal scoundrel', 'infernal black villain' (Poe, 1991).

Analyzing the speech of a black servant, we can notice that in it there really is such a technique as sound-repetition-with-a-difference that was pointed out by Toner (1993). In the dialogues between

Legrand and the servant, the remark uttered by Jupiter sounds like an echo of the utterance of a white man, for example,

L.: Pay attention, then! Find the left eye of the skull!

J.: Hum! hoo! dat's good! why dar aint no eye lef at all! (Poe, 1991).

The Negro's words sound like an echo of the master's speech. In our opinion, this indicates the subordination of the African American to the white master.

One can also note the 'misspelling', and therefore the pronunciation of many words belonging to the emancipated vassal, for example: de instead of the, jis instead of this or nose instead of knows.

The omission of letters in the spelling can be considered as an echo-like technique: po instead of poor, or lef instead of left.

Toni Morrison in her literary-critical work "Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and Literary Imagination" believed that the story "The Gold-Bug" could be seen as an example of the literary techniques of "othering", so common to American literature (Morrison, 1993).

T. Morrison identifies the following techniques: 'estranging language', 'metaphoric condensation', which allows the author to transform social and historical differences into universal ones, that also confirms the creation of stereotypical image of a black person, and 'the economy of stereotype', 'strategies to secure his character's identity' (Morrison, 1993).

7. Conclusion

The studied literary works touch upon the general problem of racial discrimination that indicates its importance. The works of fiction reflect the relationships of real people, based on models of real social situations fictional characters live and act in: relationships in the family, with friends and acquaintances, neighbors, etc. All linguistic means organized by antithesis and metaphor principium are involved in the transmission of ethnic conflicts and biases, which are limited to the interaction of different ethnic groups representatives. It should be noted that ethnic contradictions are revealed at more complex levels of the text, among which the level of character images is dominant.

In conclusion, this study all over again confirms the truth of Vodak's (1997) statements that language serves to spread biases; with the help of the language, biases are formed and implemented in various "packaging" due to the context.

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