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“FAMILY CHRONICLE” IN ENGLISH LITERARY CRITICISM

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Nadejda Lokteva

Doctor of Philosophy in philological sciences (Ph.D.), Lecturer, Uzbekistan State University of World Languages, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

The article explores the meaning of the genre of literature ‘family saga’ in modern American literary criticism. The general meaning of ‘Family saga’ gives us a definition that this genre chronicles represent the way of life and traditions of a family or several related or interconnected families over some time. The article aims to present traditions that are emerging, evolving, and how they are handed on over time. ‘Family saga’ gives us glimpses beyond the daily struggles of life in ways that resonate with our deepest connections to our own families. The article has an analytical and historical approach to the study of these novels. The scientific novelty of the research work lies in the aspects forming family values of American families who lived in the period under review are compared, as every literary family has its secrets and stories that can be difficult and heartrending. The article examines the question posed in world literary studies about the genre of family chronicle, the peculiarities of its principles in general, and individual families in particular. The study reveals a peculiar form of a story about the life of a particular society.

KEYWORDS

Saga, America, literary criticism, word, definition, genre, family, events, traditions

INTRODUCTION

In English-language literary criticism, the approach to the problem of the family chronicle genre is somewhat different; both the terminology and the principles for defining the specifics of the genre differ.

The family chronicle in American literary criticism is usually called the "family saga":

“Saga – a narrative telling the adventures of a hero or a family; originally (12th to 14th centuries) a story of the



families that settled Iceland and their descendants but now any prose narrative that resembles such an account” [16].

Saga (Icelandic, plural “sögur”) is a literary genre developed in medieval Iceland that is a historical prose story, fictional story, or legend.

The word is derived from the verb sega, “to tell”, “to retell” (in German sagen, in English to say). The author of the saga, often anonymous, is sagnamaðr (plural agnomen).

The UK's Encyclopedia of Fantastic Literature correctly notes that the English word "saga" comes from Icelandic:

“The word saga meaning saying comes from the Islandic language and refers to Old Norse and Islandic family stories” [14].

THE MAIN RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In modern American literary criticism, the following definition of the family chronicle is given: “the family saga is a genre of literature which chronicles the lives and doings of a family or several related or interconnected families over some time. In novels (or sometimes sequences of novels) with serious intent, this is often a thematic device used to portray particular historical events, changes in society, or the ebb and flow of fortunes from a multiple perspective. The typical family saga follows generations of a family through a period of history in a series of novels” [9, p.46].

According to the American literary critic L. Vine Day: “The family saga is defined as a genre of literature that follows generations of a family through historical events, changes in social circumstances, or the gain and loss of wealth from multiple perspectives over

some time” [4, p. 73]. This definition seems to us to be correct in principle since the specificity of the family chronicle lies precisely in the epic coverage of several generations of one family in a reasonably wide period. At the same time, the family chronicle is characterized by a fairly large number of characters belonging to different generations. This genre is called a chronicle precisely because it captures all the most important events in which members of this family participate. But on the other hand, the definition of L. Vine Day seems to us too broad, since it allows us to include in this series not necessarily a work of art, but historical works, etc.

In American literary criticism, there are several synonyms for the term “family saga” - “family saga”, such as “epic”, “chronicle”, “legend”, “folk tale”, “romance”, “traditional story”, “history”, “narrative”, “adventure”, “fairy story” and “myth” [17].

The use of the word "saga" often leads to confusion. In this case, they are identified with the concept of an epic work. In this sense, the word "saga" is used colloquially today to refer to a multi-volume cycle of novels or works of an epic nature, even if they do not rely on a literary basis like the animated film "Deerslayer" or the cinematic "saga" Star Wars. But the saga is also used in the literary criticism meaning that interests us. American criticism considers the family chronicle as a literary genre: – “A deeply moving consideration of family relationships in historical, social and political context” [1]. At the same time, the emphasis is on the chronicity of the life of several generations of one family.

According to Regis Boyer: “... a saga is a story in prose that talks about the life and deeds and deeds of a hero who remains in memory for many reasons, from his birth to death, without missing either his ancestors or subsequent generations” [10]. In general, this

definition, in our opinion, is correct, since the saga or family chronicle implies a detailed description of the life of the characters. But at the same time, it can be attributed not only to the genre of family chronicles.

The famous American literary critic Bernard Ruhrbach believes that the family chronicle: - "It is a work of fiction, names, characters, places, and incidents either are the products of the author's imagination or are used factiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental" [11, p.178]. Indeed, the family chronicle is most often based on fiction, but novels can also be written on documentary material. A family chronicle, as a work of art, can also tell about real people involved in historical events.

American writer Kathleen H. Wheeler gives her definition: "The family saga chronicles of related American writer Kathleen H. Wheeler gives her definition: "The family saga chronicles of related lives and doings of a family or several interconnected families. The typical novel follows the generations of a family through a period to portray particular historical events, changes of social circumstances, or the ebb and flow of fortunes from multiple perspectives" [6].

Defining the genre of the family chronicle, Kathleen H. Villiers appeals to her writings and shows why her duology "The Shame Of Her Youth" - 1987" and "Brought To Our Senses" - 2016" can be considered a family chronicle. She identifies four features of her dilogy.

Kathleen H. Villiers considers the image of 5 generations of heroes to be the first feature of this genre: "5 generations of the family are represented".

The second feature of her novels, according to the writer, is the depiction of the historical conditions in

which this family exists: "The Great Depression, 1970' divorce revolution, the Alzheimer's epidemic in the new century and beyond."

The third feature is that the family story is told from four points of view: each of the four sisters expresses her attitude towards her parents and the events taking place in the family.

And, finally (the fourth feature), the writer believes that the family chronicle should cover a sufficiently large period (in her novel, events take place over 75 years, from 1934 to 2009).

In one of the interviews, answering the correspondent's questions, Katherine Villiers emphasizes:

"– My novel meets all the criteria that define a family saga. It's nice to have that much figured out! » [6].

When asked about the genre of her works, the writer defines them as a family chronicle: "My novel falls into the genre of literature known as the family saga. You might even consider my new book to be women's fiction. There's no need to pigeonhole it though. It's about coming to terms with a family in conflict and caring for aging parents. Most importantly, it's about finding the way back home to family when they're needed most – when the going gets tough" [6].

Supporters of the American definition also emphasize the history segment of the family chronicle: "The family saga is a genre of literature which follows generations of a family (and/or interconnected families) through a period of history (typically represented in a series of novels). Most of them can be classified as "historical fiction" since actual historical events and persons are woven throughout"[18].



According to the American literary critic Cynthia Crossen, "... The favorite family sagas not only tell a story from several points of view but also give voice to characters from three, four, or five generations. If aunts, uncles, -laws, and godparents stick their noses into the plot, so much the better. Family sagas are about genes and the odd ways they're diluted, amplified, and perverted over the years. Sometimes it's a mercy that great-granny never knew what happened to her children's children"[4].

In American literary criticism, the terms "family saga" and "family chronicle", both denoting the Russian family chronicle, were used as synonyms until the middle of the 20th century. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, there was a "separation" of these two terms - only the term "saga" began to be used to refer to works of art, and family chronicles. With the light hand of J. Galsworthy, the term "family saga" was fixed and entered the English and American literature; while the term "chronicle" began to be used to refer to fictionalized family chronicles of statesmen and historical figures, famous scientists, writers, athletes, and other prominent people.

"Family Chronicle" was created and is being created and sow the day "by order", but it was published and is being published in limited quantities. Customers want to restore the history of their ancestors, to acquaint a certain number of readers with it - acquaintances, give them to friends, guests, etc. However, for "custom family chronicles" the term "family saga" is still preserved, such as "The Zelmenyaners: a family saga" ("The Zelmenyaners: a family saga") [7], "The Saga of the Marx family" ("The Marx family saga") [5], "Daisy Turner's kin: an African American family saga"[2], "Master O'Rourke's children: an Irish family saga" ("The children of Master O'Rourke: an Irish family saga") [13], "The sisters: the saga of the Mitford family"

("The sisters: the saga of the Mitford family"). This list can be continued indefinitely [8].

In American literary criticism, the "southern school" (a concept that has developed in literary criticism) of family chronicles is also distinguished. According to R. O. Stevens, this little-studied variety of fiction is often used by writers of the US South, and its roots go back to the Old Testament: "A family saga is a literary form much practiced in southern writing but little analyzed in scholarship and criticism.

According to R. O. Stevens, "... The basic elements of the saga are oral family stories, enlarged upon and transformed in the novels and nonfictional chronicles" [12, p.36]. Subsequent American literature has given vivid examples of novels of this genre.

Among the authors who further developed the southern family chronicle, R. O. Stevens names T. S. Stribling and W. Faulkner, Caroline Gordon, Allen Tate, and Andrew Lightle. Family history novels by writers such as Katherine Ann Porter, Eudora Welty, and Shirley Ann Grau are based on the oral tradition of American Southern folklore that was circulated among women and reflected matriarchal-patriarchal generational conflicts. Authors such as Margaret Walker, Ernest Gaines, and Alex Haley, Toni Morrison depict the struggle of African Americans for freedom and their rights. And according to critic Robert Stephens, "The third-generation writers, such as Reynolds Price and Lee Smith, reached beyond history in their sagas to find moments of mythic vision, or they reduced family and public history to the past less present of popular culture" [12, p.138]. The southern family chronicle is still developing today. According to R. O. Stevens, she makes an invaluable contribution to the study of this living tradition, both in southern writing and in the study of this genre in other cultures. – "The Family Saga in the South will make an

inestimable contribution to understanding this vital tradition in southern letters while pointing the way for studying the genre in other cultures” [12, p.138].

CONCLUSION

Thus, summing up the assessments of the family chronicle genre by Russian-language and English-language literary criticism, one can make a final definition. The author, who has chosen the genre of family chronicle, is faced with the task of talking not only about the life of one or several generations, since it is about the family, but also about social life and the historical fate of the nation. In family chronicles, the general is given through the particular, which shows that this or that family depicted in the work is an exact reproduction of the whole society in miniature. Therefore, the studied genre represents a peculiar form of a story about the life of a particular society.

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