

NARRATIVE PROJECTIONS OF A MEDICAL RESEARCHER IN *ARROWSMITH* BY SINCLAIR LEWIS

Medicine and literature are deeply related areas, since they both are focused on diagnostics: medicine aims to detect the pathological conditions of the human body, whereas literature is intended for exposing injustice and disclosing the vices of the society. In all national literatures, there is an unquenchable interest in the literary images of physicians as the representatives of the most humane profession, the vehicles of spiritual and intellectual values of mankind. At the same time, each national literature is the mirror of its society, and therefore it reflects the historical context, the spirit of the age and the nation's unique mindset. A literary image is considered by researchers as “an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time” [19, p. 192]. Representations of a literary image in any national literature directly reflect the society's ideas and attitudes toward their real-life prototypes at a certain period of time.

Medical discourse in the world literature is continuously at the center of researchers' attention in Ukraine [1–7] and abroad [8; 9; 13; 15–18]. The aim of the present paper is to explore the features of narrative representation of the physician as a scientist in *Arrowsmith* by Sinclair Lewis (1885 – 1951). It should be noted that the novel's topic is deeply rooted in the author's firsthand experience of the physician's profession. As Sinclair Lewis recollected: “A small boy whose memory is of being awakened by his father's talking to a patient, down at the door; of catching 3-A.M. phrases: “Where is the pain? Eh? Well, all right, but you ought to have called me earlier. Peritonitis may have set in.” A small boy who was permitted to peep at anatomical charts and ponderous medical books in *The Office*. Then his brother going off to medical school — gossip of classes, of a summer's internship, of surgery versus general practice. And behind father and brother, a grandfather and uncle who were also doctors. With such a background, the work and ideals of the doctors have always been more familiar to me than any others, and when I began to write novels (I started my first one just twenty years ago, and the first that was ever published fourteen years ago) I thought of some day having a doctor hero” [18, p. 68]. This ambition was partially satisfied in Dr. Kennicott of *Main Street*, however, he was not the main character, and Lewis “desired to portray a more significant medico than Kennicott – one who could get beneath routine practice into the *scientific foundation of medicine* – one who should immensely affect all life” [18, p. 68].

Arrowsmith (1925) features a literary image of the physician who tries to resist the commercialism in medical science. In fact, the novel foregrounds a range of qualities and competencies that are essential for a medical professional, such as the ability to conduct researches and adhere to continuous self-education [14]. In particular, the omniscient third-person narrator constantly emphasizes the hero's aspiration for research and discovery.

It is necessary to remark that the novel predicted numerous problems that affect today's medicine, such as “the competing needs and goals of clinicians and medical scientists; commercial interests of pharmaceutical companies developing new medications and vaccines versus the need to seek for scientific truth; political and social difficulties in developing programs for protecting a community's public health” [11, p. 372]. Furthermore, the researchers observe that *Arrowsmith's* professional biography is not only a record of progress of “a confused and easily misled young man toward emotional and intellectual fulfillment”, but also “the recapitulation of the development of medicine in the United States” [11, p. 49]. Moreover, *Arrowsmith* is the iconic novel that heralded and popularized the concepts of controlled clinical trials and evidence-based medicine [12].

Martin Arrowsmith is a brilliant researcher who aspires to work for the public good, to help humanity and make the world a better place. As C. Rosenberg remarks, the protagonist “is a new kind of hero, one appropriate to twentieth-century America. Yet Arrowsmith is quite obviously a hero not of deeds, but of the spirit” [18, p. 47]. At some point the physician is distracted from his path towards the commercial side of research. In fact, *Arrowsmith* is a story of moral and spiritual journey, the hero's eventual return to himself, and his “stumbling quest for personal integrity” [18, p. 47].

The novel prioritizes the key role of the physician's continuing self-education: “Doctor, do you find it hard to keep up with medical developments? – No. Read the medical journals” [11, p. 184]. Indeed, the first narrative representation of the protagonist is captured at the moment of studying: “a boy was reading “Gray's Anatomy. His name was Martin Arrowsmith, of Elk Mills, in the state of Winnemac” (“*Gray's Anatomy*” is a seminal work on human anatomy, originally published in 1858 – Yu.L.) [11, p. 3]. Yet another important idea is the significance of the physician's all-round development: “It was true; he was half-educated ... he knew nothing of economics, nothing of history, nothing of music or painting” [11, p. 185]. When the protagonist realized these “gaps” in his education, he “came home ... he fell upon Leora and ... announced that they were “going to get

educated, if it kills us” [11, p. 186]. The physician’s competencies also embrace the command of several foreign languages: “...to read a page now and then of scientific *German* or *French*” [11, p. 53]; “He stole occasional evenings for original research or for peering into the stirring worlds of *French* and *German* bacteriological publications” [11, p. 98]; “His idol was Professor Edward <...> Edwards' *knowledge of the history of chemistry was immense*. He could read *Arabic*, and he infuriated his fellow chemists by asserting that the Arabs had anticipated all their researches” [11, p. 12].

The narrative representation of the physician’s research activity is characterized by sophisticated similes. In fact, scientific inquiry is equated with poetic inspiration and fascinating travelling: “...he began his first original research – *his first lyric, his first ascent of unexplored mountains*” [11, p. 53]; “To be a scientist is like *being a Goethe: it is born in you*” [11, p. 279]; “Martin perceived *new avenues of exciting research; he stood on a mountain, and unknown valleys, craggy tantalizing paths, were open to his feet*” [11, p. 154]. The physician’s research is regarded as “the patient search for truth” [11, p. 361] and “divine curiosity” [11, p. 112], through which a man can approach the God-like sphere of creation. Indeed, research in the novel is interpreted as a specific scientist’s religion: “...he prayed then the prayer of the scientist: “God give me unclouded eyes and freedom from haste. God give me a quiet and relentless anger against all pretense and all pretentious work and all work left slack and unfinished. God give me a restlessness whereby I may neither sleep nor accept praise till my observed results equal my calculated results or in pious glee I discover and assault my error. God give me strength not to trust to God!” [11, p. 251].

Arrowsmith as a medical *bildungsroman* (apprenticeship, or “coming-of-age” novel) focuses on maturation and education of a young physician, who acquires experience by “meeting different kinds of people and learning about their different world views” [10, p. 734]. In fact, the life choices of Martin Arrowsmith are significantly influenced by people surrounding him. Professor Max Gottlieb and his disciple Terry Wickett advocate the “pure science” and reject all types of commercialism in medical research. Angus Duer is a typical “social climber”; Clif Clawson is focused exclusively on making profit. Dr. Roscoe Geake, a professor at the university, resembles a salesman rather than a doctor: “Knowledge is the greatest thing in the medical world but it’s no good whatever *unless you can sell it*” [11, p. 95]. Arrowsmith starts a private practice and succumbs to medical commercialism. As C. Rosenberg observes, “Journalists and historians inform us that the 1920s were years of intense and aggressive materialism” [18, p. 47].

Eventually, Martin is appalled by the rules of this new world. For instance, he is urged to publish his research for the sake of winning the science’s “competition” and getting profit – even if data are not yet well-grounded and reliable. Hence, the hero gradually understands that science should not be a business. Martin’s last statement in the novel expresses the hero’s readiness to face any challenges on his way in order to seek the “truth” and develop medical science: “I feel as if I were really beginning to work now,” said Martin. “This new quinine stuff may prove pretty good. We’ll plug along on it for two or three years, and maybe we’ll get something permanent – and probably we’ll fail!” [11, p. 480].

Thus, *Arrowsmith* by Sinclair Lewis gradually develops the literary image of the protagonist as a true scientist, who eventually finds the right way in both personal and professional terms. The major virtues of the physician’s profession, as depicted by the author, are as follows: working for the public good; helping humanity; striving to make the world a better place; rejection of all types of commercialism in medical research; continuing self-education and readiness to face any challenges on one’s way to develop medical science; all-round development of a medical practitioner. The narrative representation of the doctor in the novel heralded the modern ideas about the core competencies in medical education, such as the physician’s role as not only a practitioner, but also as a scholar with a lifelong commitment to research and discovery.

References:

1. Бандровська О. Т. Ідентичність Іншого в англійському модерністському романі: тіло поза нормою кризь міждисциплінарні підходи // Від бароко до постмодернізму. 2016. Вип. XX. С. 134–140
2. Лисанець Ю. В. Медичний дискурс художньої прози у колі сучасних літературознавчих досліджень // Актуальні питання розвитку філологічних наук у ХХІ столітті: матеріали Міжнародної науково-практичної конференції (м. Одеса, 23-24 березня 2018 р.). Одеса: Південноукраїнська організація “Центр філологічних досліджень”, 2018. С. 26–29.
3. Лисанець Ю. В., Коваленко К. Г. Медикалізація як сучасна тенденція англійського дискурсу // Медична наука в практику охорони здоров’я: матеріали Всеукраїнської науково-практичної конференції для молодих учених (м. Полтава, 9 грудня 2016 р.). Полтава: ВДНЗУ “УМСА”, 2016. С. 122.
4. Ляшкевич П. Дві хвороби святого Валентія // Вісник Львівського університету. Серія «Філологія». 2004. Вип. 35. С.170–178.
5. Заблоцька К. В. Внесок медиків України в художню літературу ХХ століття // Медицина в художніх образах. Донецьк, 2003. Вип. 2. С. 300–313.

6. Пустовіт В. Ю. Медичний дискурс художньої літератури // Літератури світу: поетика, ментальність і духовність. 2016. Вип. 7. С. 102–110.
7. Творчий доробок українських письменників-гуманістів / Фоміна Л.В., Скорбач Т.В., Семашко А.А. [та ін.] // Українська професійна мова: історія і сучасність: Збірник матеріалів регіональної науково-практичної конференції. Тернопіль: ТДМУ, 2016. С. 68–73.
8. Buscemi N. Diagnosing Narratives: Illness, the Case History, and Victorian Fiction. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa, 2009.
9. Engelhardt D. Arzt und Patient in der Literatur // Erfahrungen und Perspektiven eines interdisziplinären Seminars an der Universität Heidelberg Heidelberger Jahrbücher. 1981. 25. S. 147–164.
10. Jones A.H. Images of Physicians in Literature: Medical *Bildungsromans*. The Lancet. 1996. 348. P. 734–736.
11. Lewis S. *Arrowsmith*. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1926. 480 p.
12. Löwy I. Martin Arrowsmith's Clinical Trial: Scientific Precision and Heroic Medicine. JLL Bulletin: Commentaries on the history of treatment evaluation. 2010. URL: <http://www.jameslindlibrary.org/articles/martin-arrowsmiths-clinical-trial-scientific-precision-and-heroic-medicine/> (дата звернення: 05.06.2018).
13. Markel H. A Book Doctors Can't Close // The New York Times. 2009. 18. August: D5.
14. Morokhovets H.Yu., Lysanets Yu.V. Developing the Professional Competence of Future Doctors in the Instructional Setting of Higher Medical Educational Institutions // Wiadomości Lekarskie. 2017. Tom LXX. Nr 1. P. 101–104
15. McLellan F. Literature and medicine: physician-writers // The Lancet. 1997. 349 (9051). P. 564–567.
16. Posen S. The Portrayal of the Physician in Non-Medical Literature – favourable portrayals // J R Soc Med. 1993. 86(12). P. 724–728.
17. Posen S. The Doctor in Literature: Satisfaction or Resentment? Abingdon, OX: Radcliffe Publishing, 2005. 298 p.
18. Twentieth Century Interpretations of Arrowsmith: A Collection of Critical Essays / Ed. by Robert J. Griffin. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 1968.
19. Wellek R., Warren A. Theory of Literature. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949.

Анотація

Ю. ЛИСАНЕЦЬ. НАРАТИВНІ ПРОЕКЦІЇ ЛІКАРЯ-ДОСЛІДНИКА У РОМАНІ СІНКЛЕРА ЛЬЮЙСА “ЕРРОУСМІТ”

У статті досліджено особливості наративної репрезентації образу лікаря-дослідника у романі Сінклера Льюїса “Ерроусміт”. Проаналізовано жанрову специфіку твору як медичного роману виховання. Простежено наративну реалізацію базових компетентностей лікаря у художньому дискурсі. Наголошено на ключовій ролі безперервного науково-дослідницького пошуку як невід’ємної професійної риси лікаря. Відзначено тенденції романтизації й обожествлення наукової діяльності медичного працівника.

Ключові слова: літературно-медичний дискурс, лікар, дослідник, наратив

Аннотация

Ю. ЛИСАНЕЦ. НАРАТИВНЫЕ ПРОЕКЦИИ ВРАЧА-ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЯ В РОМАНЕ СИНКЛЕРА ЛЬЮЙСА “ЭРРОУСМИТ”

В статье исследованы особенности нарративной репрезентации образа врача-исследователя в романе Синклера Льюиса “Эрроусмит”. Проанализирована жанровая специфика произведения как медицинского романа воспитания. Прослежена нарративная реализация базовых компетенций врача в художественном дискурсе. Отмечено ключевую роль непрерывного научно-исследовательского поиска как неотъемлемой профессиональной черты врача.

Ключевые слова: литературно-медицинский дискурс, врач, исследователь, нарратив.

Summary

YU. LYSANETS. NARRATIVE PROJECTIONS OF A MEDICAL RESEARCHER IN *ARROWSMITH* BY SINCLAIR LEWIS

The article explores the features of narrative representation of the physician as a medical researcher in *Arrowsmith* by Sinclair Lewis. The genre specificity of the literary writing as a medical “bildungsroman” has been analyzed. The narrative realization of the basic competencies of the doctor in the literary discourse has been traced. The author emphasizes the key role of continuous research as an integral professional trait of the physician. The tendencies of romantization and deification of research work of a medical professional have been distinguished.

Key words: literary-medical discourse, doctor, researcher, narrative.