**The image of a «little man» in the 19th century literature (on the example of the works of A.S. Pushkin and N.V. Gogol)**

***Getman Olesya***

*Student of Institute of Pedagody,*

*Belgorod State National Research University, Belgorod, Russia,*

*Scientific advisor:*

***Musaelian Elena Nikolaevna***

*PhD in Pedagogical sciences, Associate Professor of Foreign Languages Department,*

*Belgorod State National Research University, Belgorod, Russia*

*E-mail*:[*musaelian@bsu.edu.ru*](mailto:musaelian@bsu.edu.ru)

**Abstract.** *The article examines the image of the «little man» in the prose of the 19th century. The author characterizes the characters in question. Special attention is paid to the works of A. S. Pushkin and N. V. Gogol devoted to the theme of "the little man". In the article, based on the analysis of the works «Stationmaster» and «Overcoat», the main reason for the unhappy life of «little people» is revealed, namely, the social environment. It is stated that the writers not only sympathized with these characters, but also stood up for them. This article will be useful to students when writing their works devoted to the consideration of the image of the "little man" in the works of writers of the 19th century.*

**Keywords: «**little man», literature, Gogol, Pushkin, «Stationmaster», «Overcoat».

In this work we explore the image of the «little man» in the prose of the 19th century. The idea of a «little man» includes a set of character characteristics that are figuratively described in the works of the narrators of the modern era of realism. Traditionally, these heroes occupied a very low position in the social hierarchy: not a major civil servant, a peasant, or even a poor landowner. The theme of the little man is considered as one of the basic themes in the Russian literature of the 19th century. And with the growth of literary and artistic democracy, the above image was interpreted by prose writers more and more often.

«Little people» – a number of diverse characters in the works of Russian writers of the 19th century. All of them are interpreted by similar signs: low position in the social hierarchy, poverty, defenselessness, which determines their specific plot role – victims of public cruelty and insensitive state mechanism, often personified in the guise of a specific «significant person». The socio-cultural prerequisite for the formation of the image of a "little man" in Russian literature was definitely the third estate, which included ruined nobles, former students, and later burghers who sought to strengthen their status as successful and authoritative citizens.

The first phrase «little man» was introduced into use by V.G. Belinsky in his article «Woe from Wit» (1840) when analyzing the image of the mayor in Gogol's «Inspector»: «Become our mayor general – and when he lives in a county town, woe to the little man if he, who considers himself "not having the honor of being acquainted with G. General», will not bow to him or will not give way at the ball, even if this little man was preparing to be a great man!., then a tragedy for the «little man» could come out of the comedy [Belinsky 1979: 226].

The theme of the «little man» has been raised in the works of many writers. She was characterized by an unchanging universality, since her goal was to depict the life of an ordinary person with all its torments, difficulties, troubles and sorrows.

One of the first writers who opened the door to the world of «little people» was N.M. Karamzin. His story "Poor Lisa" had a huge influence on subsequent works. The writer initiated a large cycle of works about «little people», took the first step into a previously unknown topic.

Half-forgotten, oppressed people, their lives, tiny joys and huge troubles seemed insignificant for a long time, unworthy of attention. This attitude to the indicated people was generated by the accompanying era. In the XIX century. in Russian literature, the theme of the «little man» unfolded, by and large, in line with the presentation of the life of an unhappy, vulnerable official. At the same time, there was a transformation of the main character, a rethinking of the motives of his behavior. With each subsequent work, the life of a person from the «lower class» was demonstrated more clearly and more accurately. The «little man» began to get out of his penumbra.

In the literature of the 19th century, Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin was one of the first to describe the appearance of the "little man" in the story «The Stationmaster». The writer's nomination of the stationmaster as the main character is due to the fact that in the 1820s in Russian literature, as is known, the main actor of moral essays, stories was a man from the "lower class". In addition, the genre of travel is being revived, and works appear in magazines with amazing intensity, in which attention is focused not only on picturesque descriptions of the surroundings, but also on acquaintances and long discussions with station keepers.

Such a hero was Samson Vyrin, an official of the lowest class, living in his own tiny isolated world. The narrator characterizes the stationmaster at the postal station. He is a little poor and inconspicuous, but this does not prevent his happiness, which lies in his beloved 14-year-old joyful daughter Doona.

In the monologue that precedes the narration of the «Stationmaster», one can easily trace some negligence and arrogance towards the junior ranks: «Who did not curse the station keepers, who did not scold them? Who, in a moment of anger, did not demand from them a fatal book in order to write into it their useless complaint about harassment, rudeness and malfunction? Who does not honor them as monsters of the human race, equal to the deceased podyachim or, at least, the Murom robbers? Let us, however, be fair, try to get into their position, and, perhaps, we will judge them much more leniently. What is a stationmaster? A real martyr of the fourteenth grade, protected by his rank tokmo from beatings, and even then not always ...» [Pushkin 1967: 38]. It is in this so-called preface that the writer very vividly displays a look down from officials passing by.

But then you can understand that Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin defends his character. «It's easy to guess that I have friends from the respectable class of caretakers. Indeed, the memory of one of them is precious to me» [Pushkin 1967: 38].

The importance of the image of the "little man" in the understanding of A.S. Pushkin was not at all in denouncing the doom of the main character, on the contrary, it was reduced to revealing a kind-hearted and sympathetic nature with a tendency to respond to someone's torment. The character in «The Stationmaster» differs from other similar literary heroes in the depth of his soul, love for his neighbors, kindness and sincerity.

Nikolai Vasilyevich Gogol became the direct successor of the theme of the "little man", who in his cycle «Petersburg Stories» opened the world of «little people» to the reader. The cycle acquires differences in character from the previously written works of the writer. The author draws an official Petersburg in front of us.

The author, following his predecessors, puts forward an excuse for a «little man» – a hunted, disenfranchised, pathetic official. Such a hero in Gogol is Akaky Akakievich Bashmachkin in the story «The Overcoat».

N.V. Gogol himself characterized his hero as poor, ordinary, insignificant and inconspicuous. Akaky Akakievich Bashmachkin was born into a poor family. He is over fifty years old, and he is extremely lonely: Bashmachkin has no family or friends. In life, he was allowed the insignificant role of a copyist of documents of one of the departments. Brought up in an environment of unquestioning obedience and execution of orders of his superiors, Akaky Akakievich Bashmachkin is not used to thinking about the content and meaning of his work.

N.V. Gogol realistically portrayed his character as a victim of inhuman reality. The writer sympathizes with Akaky Akakievich Bashmachkin, who got into these social circumstances. N. V. Gogol formulated his attitude in the delightful lines of the final reflection on the fate and catastrophe of the character: «A creature disappeared and disappeared, not protected by anyone, not dear to anyone, not interesting to anyone, not even paying attention to itself and the nature of an observer who does not miss putting an ordinary fly on a pin and examining it through a microscope; a creature who endured clerical ridicule dutifully and went to the grave without any emergency» [Gogol 2017: 53].

Unlike A.S. Pushkin, N.V. Gogol saw in his «little man» a sufferer worthy of the greatest compassion and regret. It is in his story that one hears a protest against the disenfranchisement of man, a protest against those social orders that enslave man morally, morally and physically.

Thus, N.V. Gogol was the first to talk about the catastrophe of the «little man», respect for which was conditioned by his position in society. The author with empathy represented the cruelty and bias of society in relationships with «little people».

The analysis of the works of A. S. Pushkin and N. V. Gogol demonstrates that the causes of the unhappy life of «little people» lie in social phenomena. Writers of the 19th century defended this image in front of society.

The image of the «little man» became one of the most widely represented literary types of the XIX century. Writers were interested in this character, and in this regard, he became one of the exponents of the features of the era. It is possible to distinguish a common feature in the images of different writers: the unfortunate «little man», having become a hostage of fate, cannot find the strength to improve his social status and life in harmony with the surrounding world.

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