**Aesthetic and Timbre Peculiarity of Somerset Maugham’s novels (on the basis of “Theatre”, “The Painted Veil”, “The Moon and Sixpence”)**

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William Somerset Maugham was an eminent British writer, who followed the precepts of naturalism and achieved mastery in characterization. Although the author’s creative works are not rich in means of artistic expression, his novels, which gained popularity among his contemporaries, still awaken avid interest both on the part of the readers and literary criticists. The writer’s works are traditionally associated with laconic language, which, however, does not mean that his novels lack skillful storytelling, evocative descriptions and believable characters, whom the reader cannot but sympathize with. Besides, despite of simple plots, lack of variation in themes and protagonist types, the author’s works are still appealing to many readers. Moreover, Maugham’s books may be regarded as emotionally resonant, since there are some artistic means the author uses to bring his characters and settings to life. Thus, the celebrated writer’s works arouse considerable interest among linguists, for it is Maugham’s individual style that should be analyzed to shed light on the literary figure’s remarkable success.

The current study is dedicated to aesthetic and timbre peculiarities of Maugham’s prose based on three novels: “Theatre”, “The Painted Vail” and “The Moon and Sixpence”. Analyzing these pieces of art comparatively allows us to distinguish some characteristic features typical of the author’s individual style. Working with the texts we should be guided by the terminology developed in Moscow State University, specifically Timbre Strings, “mental associations drawn in the course of reading between the words of the text” [Konurbaev: 20] and semantic, metasemiotic and linguopoetic levels of analyzing fiction. In other words, we aim at studying the choice and organization of linguistic means used by Maugham and explaining how the famous author manages to make his works unique and easily recognizable.

The strategy according to which the writer evolves and presents the system of characters serves to display aesthetic and timbre peculiarities of his works, and it definitely takes a special skill to portray their linguistic personas in such a manner that they look self-contained and distinct. This is what Maugham, who aspired the works of naturalists, strived to, so he wanted his characters appear most believable and used various artistic methods to bring them to life. Hence, the fragments chosen for our analysis present analogues dialogues, so it becomes possible to single out some of the key features characteristic of the writer’s individual style, which covers aesthetic and timbre peculiarities of the works. Since the three passages have a lot in common – the dialogues reflect disagreements between the characters showing their astonishment and put their hearts on display – there is an opportunity to identify a common denominator, which refers to thematically similar texts written by Maugham.

 The analysis of the fragments shows the author’s technique for adjusting the pace of reading in accordance with the context. Thus, it becomes faster when depicting the characters losing their temper and suffering, or slower when portraying them being calm. In order to change tempo Maugham introduces rows of extremely short or long sentences, which contrasts with other parts of the text and, consequently, attracts the reader’s attention. To give an example, there is a range of sentences that seem endless because commas, colons, semicolons and dashes replace full stops, which shortens pauses, so the process of reading resembles a fast-flowing stream.

There are numerous instances of using anaphors with personal pronouns when the author conveys his character’s speech. Such a device helps the writer to emphasize his protagonists’ feelings or attitudes, so the recurring pronoun “I” occurs when a character contrasts himself to his interlocutor, “you” when a speaker concentrates on a woman he converses with disapproving her actions. Sometimes these anaphors do not relate to the characters’ speech, so it is the author’s voice that describes a situation slowing down the tempo and capturing the reader’s attention. Hence, such repetitions become meaningful in the contexts of the novels influencing timbre and aesthetics.

Nevertheless, repetitions are not confined to anaphors for they are numerous in Maugham’s prose. The writer invariably presents a problem first lexically and then grammatically or the other way round. Thereby, direct and indirect artistic means supplement each other conveying the same idea. Besides, having outlined a problem, the author invariably returns to it using synonyms in different parts of the text or words of the same semantic field. We may assume that these repetitions direct the intensionality of some elements to design the aesthetic picture of the novels.

Contrasts in Maugham’s novels are always very clear. When it comes to stressing the difference between some characters the writer opposes their speech, which is of high interest because linguistic personas presented in his books are always distinct and self-contained, so it is not only the protagonists’ reactions that differ but also the corresponding linguistic expressions. Even when a character is agitated or taken by surprise in an unusual situation, his linguistic persona is still identifiable and clearly traceable, since the author preserves peculiarities of his characters’ vocabulary, syntax, tropes and figures of speech.

In summary, there are vivid means of artistic expression, which in spite of their small number fulfill their purpose of directing the reader's attention and composing a complete aesthetic and timbre picture.

Literature

1. Konurbaev M.E. An Outline of English Timbrology. M., 2022.