

Филипп Рот, писавший свою книгу в 60-е, когда выступления феминисток были наиболее сильны и полемичны. Ф.Рот, молодой талантливый писатель, занимает в романе двойственную позицию по отношению к своей героине. Сочувствуя ей, психологически точно мотивируя ее поведение, создавая сложный, достоверный женский образ, он в то же время по-мужски не прощает ей все те качества, которые его предшественники в литературе не прощали Джейн Эйр. Ф.Рот наказывает свою героиню смертью.

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### **Masculine Reaction on Feminism: Philip Roth's Novel *When She Was Good***

At first sight Roth's novel "When She Was Good" appears to be a purely social novel. But the social problem lying at the base of this novel, the tragedy of a young woman, Lucy, who grew up in the family with very moderate means, who had to work in the milk bar for a few years to save enough money to go to college, who had to give up college because of unplanned pregnancy and found out upon marrying that her husband was as irresponsible as her own father and infantile into the bargain, is viewed by Roth from a moral standpoint.

The binary opposition on which the novel is constructed is the opposition of civilized—right. The first sentence of the book states that Willard Carroll, Lucy's grandfather, has always tried "to be civilized – that was the dream of his life." [Roth, 1967.3] But his notions of goodness and civilized behavior bring only misfortune to his family and himself. Being unable to take a strong stand in respect to his son-in-law, a drunkard and a thief, being unable to rid his daughter and granddaughter of him, he is indirectly to blame for Lucy's traumatic psychics, for her social inferiority complex and her early death.

For Lucy the most important thing is always to be right. The title of the book is an allusion to the children's poem about a girl "who had a little curl **right**

in the middle of her forehead." Roth lays emphasis on the meaning of the word "right", expressing the moral position of an individual. Lucy was brought up in the family where the father hadn't solid moral principles. She despised him for his flaws and, contrary to him, has forged an unbreakable code of moral behaviour for herself. She demands that others should follow these moral principles as well. But the world surrounding Lucy lives according to other moral rules, hypocrisy being one of the main laws of social life. Hence Lucy's conflict with her world which ends up in heroine's death.

The change of gender stereotype taking place in this novel is determined

By Lucy's position as a strong woman surrounded by weak and irresolute men who are unable to act.

The feminist binary opposition of the novel is Lucy—her mother, too tender, in love with her unworthy husband, devoid of self-respect and self-dignity. The paradox of the novel consists in the fact that it's Lucy who tries to defend her mother, but not v.v. Maternal love, so important in the upbringing of girls, is basically



absent in mother—Lucy relationship. Lucy's mother plays a fatal role in Lucy's life, she is first and foremost responsible for her death.

Too strict unbending moral stand of Lucy alienates people from her and makes them hostile to her. Lucy is right – and doomed in the society, which doesn't forgive her straightforwardness, resolution, moral inflexibility, or summing it all up, her non-feminine behavior.

In one of her essays Erica Jong recalled the negative reaction of the press on "Jane Eyre" and explained the reason of this reaction: "her self-respect...her worth—an unforgivable thing in girls and women." [Jong, 1998. 50]. These are the supreme qualities Philip Roth endows his heroine with.

Roth wrote his novel in the 60-s, when feminist movement in the USA was especially strong. So, his attitude to his heroine is dual: he sympathizes with her, he creates a psychologically true woman character, he motivates her behaviour; but being a man he can't forgive her all the qualities that his predecessors in literature didn't forgive Jane Eyre, and punishes his heroine by death.

**Литература**

1. Roth P. *When She Was Good*. N. Y., 1967.
2. Jong E. *What Do Women Want*. N. Y., 1998.