

Sense and stylistic analysis

Business



Sense and stylistic analysis “ The Escape” I would like to consider sense and stylistic peculiarities of the text that I have recently read. The title of the story is “ The Escape”, it was written by Somerset Maugham. First of all, some facts from the author’s biography. William Somerset Maugham is one of the best known English writers of the 20th century. He was born in 1874 in Paris. He received a medical degree; however he never practised medicine, but all his life he had a great desire to write.

The first novel “ Liza of Lambeth” he wrote at the age of 23, but it had no success. For about 10 years he wrote manifold plays and novels and starved. But he did not give up. In 1907 he produced in London a comedy of manners “ Lady Frederic” which finally brought him luck. Soon afterwards Maugham became internationally celebrated. So he became independent and began to travel.

He came to know Europe, the United States, China, Spain, the South Seas. Some of his another famous works are “ Cakes and Ale”, “ Moon and Sixpence”, “ Ashenden”, “ Don Fernando” etc.

He died in 1965 at the age of 91. Now let’s return to the story “ The Escape”. It relates to the relationships between men and women. The main characters of the story are the narrator, his friend Roger Charing and a woman Ruth Barlow.

The plot of the story is quite simple, but interesting at the same time. At the beginning of the text the narrator proposes a thesis that “ if a woman once made up her mind to marry a man nothing but instant flight could save him”. But he says that not every man could manage to escape.

And here the narrator tells us a short story, settled in one complex sentence, which has something in common with the following and the main story of the text. One narrator's friend, having realized that a woman wanted to marry him, decided for a flight. He took ship.

The author uses here parenthesis “ with a toothbrush for all his luggage, so conscious was he of his danger and the necessity for immediate action” in order to emphasize that a man was ready for everything to escape this marriage.

Then he spent a year travelling around the world, but the first person he saw when he returned was that woman he tried to flee. The irony runs through the narration, supported by such words and phrases: “ instant flight”, “ inevitable loom”, “ menacingly”, “ thinking himself safe”. So, this short story serves as the introduction to the one following below. Then the narrator says that he knew only one man who managed to extricate himself in such situation. His name was Roger Charing.

He was no longer a young man, but strong and hefty, and had plenty of money.

He possessed a common sense and worldly wisdom, and was prudent. But when he fell in love with Ruth Barlow, “ he went down like a row of ninepins”; this simile used by the author adds to the satirical tone of the narration. Mrs. Barlow was twice a widow, and now she made up her mind to marry Roger. She was very unfortunate person, sufferings followed her; this fact is underlined in the following sentence constructed in the form of parallel

construction: “ If she married a husband he beat her; if she employed a broker he cheated her; if she engaged a cook she drank”.

Besides, Ruth Barlow had pretty, pathetic appearance and splendid dark eyes which were always ready to fill with tears. The author uses such epithets describing her as “ splendid dark eyes”, “ the most moving eyes”, “ poor dear”, “ helpless little thing”, “ lovely eyes”, “ pathetic”, “ unfortunate”, “ rotten time”. It was not surprising that she touched the strings of Roger’s heart, and he wanted to do something for her, to protect her, to save her from the hazards of life. And when he decided to marry her and commit such a good action, he was very proud of himself.

Here we must admit that everything was not so ambiguous. At first sight we should be sorry for this poor woman, be in sympathy with her, and admire Roger’s kind heart.

However, we feel that all the mentioned above stylistic devices make a humorous, ironical effect, and we understand that everything is not so sweet and sincere in this story as it seems at first sight. Further on the narrator characterizes Ruth already from another side; the author uses the epithets “ stupid” and “ scheming” and the simile “ as hard as nails”, so that we see her false nature and the narrator’s negative attitude to her.

Indeed, this woman was not so helpless, defenseless and poor, but rather cunning and artful; she used her pathetic appearance and various tricks in order to achieve her purposes, to arouse Roger’s compassion and in the long run to marry him. The author gives us to comprehend that Ruth just wanted to seem helpless and poor, but indeed she was not. As for Roger, he, on a

sudden, fell out of love. The phrase “ on a sudden” supposes that this was not a deep, sincere feeling, but just a shallow, surface passion.

Now Roger realized what the sort of woman he had to deal with. Of course, he already did not want to marry her. But it was awkward for a man to jilt a woman and in order not to get a bad reputation he needed Ruth to release him by herself. That is why he thought over one scheme. He said Ruth nothing about that change in his feelings.

He remained attentive to all her wishes, he took her to dine at restaurants, he sent her flowers, he was sympathetic and charming. And they arranged to marry as soon as they found a house that suited them. Then the house-hunting began.

They examined a great number of houses, but Roger always found a fault that made a house unsuitable. He said he couldn't bear to ask his dear Ruth to live in any but the perfect house. The narrator says: “ Sometimes they were too large and sometimes they were too small, sometimes they were too far from the centre of things and sometimes they were too close; sometimes they were too expensive and sometimes they wanted too many repairs; sometimes they were too stuffy and sometimes they were too airy; sometimes they were too dark and sometimes they were too bleak”.

The author deliberately uses parallel constructions to emphasize the duration of the similar actions. The author ironically depicts how long they were looking for a suitable house, how many houses they examined and inspected, and how tiresome and tiring was this business. It was obvious that Roger was trying Ruth's patience and was waiting for her to be the first to

break their relations. Of course, Ruth guessed his plan and finally lost her patience. Ruth's letter to Roger is the climax of the story, because all the events preceding this one have been tensing the atmosphere.

Her letter, where she informed Roger she was going to marry another man, was the final point in their relationships.

So Roger reached his aim. As for me, I sympathize with none of them. I think they make a pair: Ruth had a scheme to marry him, Roger had a scheme to escape. They lied to each other, they tricked each other. I think the main idea the author wanted to bring to us is the importance of being honest.

He reminds that one should stay honest to a person, even if one has fallen out of love with. But the relations based on trickery and scheming are doomed from the beginning.