

# *The Art of Character Creation in Realistic Novel*

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**Abstract** — The article analyzes the novel “Arrowsmith”, which is a prominent example of twentieth-century American realism. In the article special attention is paid to the analysis of the characters in realistic novel. The writer reflects his ideals about the spiritual image of scholars through the characters. Conflict between personality and society found its’ reflection in the protagonist’s fate and worldview.

**Keywords**— Novel, Prose, Character, Realism, Conflict, Prototype.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Sinclair Lewis was the first American writer to receive the Nobel Prize in literature in 1930. One of the central themes in Lewis's works "the man and his profession" repeatedly appears in his novels. The novels of the writer artfully illustrate the fierce, contentious struggles of various specialists to find their place in society. It is well known that in American literature, Theodore Dreiser created the image of business titans; J. London portrayed the controversial fate of a young artist by Martin Eden, and Upton Sinclair, by his work *The Jungle*, depicted the hard work of the hired workers. These experiences of the predecessors in realistic novels have been invaluable for Sinclair Lewis to create the image of the middle class in prose. The novel “Arrowsmith” is considered to be a masterpiece that reflects the moral dilemmas of scholars and researchers of American society in the early twentieth century.

## II. MAIN PART

The novel “Arrowsmith” was published in March 1925, after three years of work. The main character of the novel Martin Arrowsmith, a bacteriologist, undergoes the events that reflect the young scientist's struggles for maturity and they shape different outlook on the duty of a man in medicine. *Lewis’s dominant motive in writing Arrowsmith was to extol the truly professional spirit in medical teaching and research,*

*and to expose all intruding chicanery, greed, egotism, and ignorance* [1, 25].

The novel was written in a realistic method, and it described the world of science, the spiritual world of scholars, the relationships of students and professors for the first time in American literature. It is known that at the beginning of the last century, like many other fields, medicine was actively commercialized in American society. The influence of bourgeois ideology to the most valuable asset of humanity – health care, can lead to unprecedented social disasters. Realizing this fact, the novelist expressed his views on scholars, researchers, medical workers, and their commitment to their duty through the heroes of the novel.

Martin Arrowsmith is the main character of the novel, and the title of the novel is the name of the protagonist, which is characteristic of Lewis' creative style. The story begins with a picture of Martin’ teenage years, his student life at Winnemac University and the educational process there. The University of Winnemac has a comprehensive educational process, with a lectures on "Sanskrit, from the history of Voronezh, to department store advertising," which makes it a "well-known ford factory producing standardized products"[2,14]. It is noteworthy that Sinclair Lewis is known for being a master of satire, and in each line of his novels, he shows a great deal of

humor and a wide range of feelings. Particularly, Martin is distinguished by his eagerness and his zeal for science.

After classes, Martin helps Professor Max Gottlieb, an immunologist, and his research lab opens the door of science for Martin Arrowsmith. Gottlieb embodies an image of a devoted scholar, whose life credo is the search for the truth. The story of Gottlieb's experience with the guinea pig is one of the points where the writer's ability to create a realistic character was revealed. As students discuss the experience, a well-developed individualization of personalities is exposed: Dyer, a leading materialist, argues that a professor could earn more if he dealt with something serious instead; Ira Hinkley discusses the religious side of the issue. While Fatty Pfaff does not hide his fear, Martin Arrowsmith speaks of his teacher with a great reverence. Thus, in a small episode Lewis reveals the temperaments and hidden inclinations of the four characters.

Sinclair divides the characters of the novel into two contrasting poles, constantly and secretly fighting one another: genuine intellectual scientists, and "commercial scientists" who take advantage of the science as a weapon to become rich. In the novel, Rosco Gick, an otolaryngologist who is giving lectures to students, is introduced as a "real businessman." He teaches future doctors how to earn more in a medical profession: *Knowledge is the greatest thing in the medical world but it's no good whatever unless you can sell it, and to do this you must first impress your personality on the people who have the dollars. Whether a patient is a new or an old friend, you must always use salesmanship on him* [2,97].

The adverse effect of bourgeois ideology on the unwritten rules of medicine and the ethics of science is masterfully embodied in various life events and portrayals of the novel. After the graduation, a young biologist Arrowsmith and his wife Leora were sent to a remote Witsville village as a doctor. Local farmers do not value Martin's efforts because of their selfishness and narrow-mindedness. Unable to adjust to the local rules, Martin Arrowsmith headed to Nautilus, in the presence of Almus Pickerbaugh, chief of the health department. The image of Pickerbaugh is a vivid example of caricature; he is described as a flamboyant speaker, a courageous leader. He always attracts the audience with his rousing and rhyming speech. The author described "health fair" organized by Pickerbaugh during the election campaign for Congress as follows: *"no fair in the world has seen so many acts and no fair has given so many opportunities for advertising..."* [2, 264.]

Dr. Pickerbaugh is the image of a mean pseudo scientist, and the way Lewis approached to create this character resembles Twain's satire. The author effectively uses contrasting as means to reveal character's psychology. For example, in the section that illustrates how Martin spent months trying to publish his articles, and how many nights he was awake, Dr. Pickerbaugh's scientific work is as follows: *"Now Almus Pickerbaugh had published scientific papers - often. He had published them in the Midwest Medical Quarterly of which he was one of fourteen editors. He had discovered the germ of epilepsy and the germ of cancer - two entirely different germs of cancer. Usually it took him a fortnight to make the discovery, write the report, and have it accepted. Martin lacked this admirable facility"*.[2,280]. When

Martin replaced Dr. Pickerbaugh, he realized that he had spent his "time talking and publicizing". Lewis, though predominantly in prose, uses the elements of poetry to create character. For example, the author uses poetry elements to create the image of Pickerbaugh in the novel. Each of Pickerbaugh's ideas is presented in a rhyme with high-pitched words:

*You can't get health  
By a pussyfoot stealth,  
So let's every health-booster  
Crow just like a rooster*[2,214].

The government of Nautilus cannot bear Martin's "arbitrariness" and forces him to move out of the city. This episode of the work of shows Martin's intense internal conflict. Afterwards Martin is offered a job in a private clinic by his classmate Angus Dyer. Disillusioned, helpless and depressed, Martin compares himself to Angus Dyer, wealthy, arrogant, renowned clinician. Where did he go wrong? What is a doctor's duty? Is it impartial humanity or businessman? Why is it hard for those like Martin to achieve recognition? Why are people willing to pay for the expensive carpets of clinics rather than cure? In fact, in the early part of the last century, these questions were at the forefront of the rapidly expanding American society.

This medical factory, whose main purpose is to make patients pay, soon disappointed Martin. The next location the McGurk Institute in New York opens the door for Martin to explore. There, his mentor Gotlib collaborates with him, and as a result of a tenacious attempts Martin discovered bacteria-phage, which he worked in the lab. The institute's administration sends Martin to the island of St. Hubert, where the plague is taking hundreds lives. Max Gotlib, Martin's scientific leader, insists on vaccinating only half the population of the island with bacteria phage. This is the only way to prove the practical scientific value of bacteria phage. But the disaster-stricken island, the poor and unspoiled lives of its inhabitants, has a profound effect on Martin. The young scientist faces a serious dilemma: would it be better to save all the population immediately from the plague, or to save the entire human race from it? While Martin is suffering from ethical questions, his wife, Leora, dies of the plague which makes him eager to vaccinate everyone. Martin's decision points to the need to prioritize humane values in a medical research. To be more precise, the main message of the novel is that science's highest mission is to save mankind from destruction.

The conflict in the novel is not only a man versus society. The protagonist, an honest and diligent researcher, fights bravely against hypocrisy and ambition. While the conflict between personality and society is characteristic of the novel, Lewis's character struggles not only against the society in which he belongs to but also against his temptations and his own self. After years of hardship, Martin gains prominence, wealth, and leadership. However, Martin abandons all of this and, with his colleague Terry Wickett, moves to a strange hut on the outskirts of the forest to pursue independent research.

Some American critics have seriously criticized Lewis for providing a fairy tale solution to the novel. This conclusion indicates, firstly, the author's rebellion against the consequences of commercialism of the science. Secondly, the prominent work "Walden or Forest Life" (1854) by a transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau had a considerable effect on Sinclair Lewis. The aforementioned work, which reveals the inner boundaries of self-discovery through living in a forest, is a precious heritage of American literature. The departure of Martin Arrowsmith to the forest is symbolic, in which the author expresses the hero's adherence to his ideals. He does not defeat but definitely overcomes both the internal and external struggles.

Lewis's realism is characterized by a high "factuality", reliance on documents, and prototyping of almost all the characters. In particular, the image of Professor Max Gottlieb is based on the life and work of the famous American bacteriologist Frederick George Novy. Lewis works closely with the scientist Paul de Kruif in the creation of the novel, and together they made a special trip to the island of St Gubert, where the events of the novel take place. Even though Sinclair Lewis is far from the scientific world, he has managed to depict a true picture of medical academia in the novel "Arrowsmith".

Naturally, the language of the work is rich in scientific terms and describes the research processes in detail. For this reason, the novel is intended for an intellectual audience and the author draws their attention to moral, philosophical and social issues. In addition, the original sense of satire provided a poetic output, in combination with a realistic-objective image. The author's ability to create a portrait is unique. To individualize their characters both the authors make use of non-traditional stylistic tools. S. Lewis describing the character's speech enables a reader to listen the phonetics of the speaker: *...his baritone was mellow. 'Dr. Arrowsmith, I trust we shall do more than merely say you are welcome here; [2, p 307]; She was a rich young woman, she dressed with distinction, she spoke with finishing school mock-melodiousness... [2,p 295]. She rose to shake hands -a firm, competent grasp -and to cry in her glorious contralto...[2, p. 308]; Terry Wickett's croak was as irritating a sound as Martin had ever heard. He answered in a voice curiously like that of Rippleton Holabird: 'I don't think you need to worry. I happen to be married already! [2, 309 p.]; Terry croaked, 'Don't trust maths, too much, son,'... [2,323p].*

### III. CONCLUSION

The art of character creation is considered of primary importance in realism. Sinclair Lewis demonstrated a particular mastery in the novel "Arrowsmith" by depicting realistic, rounded and unique characters. The book has been guiding a number of generations to choose high moral principles and still attracts the youth of different cultures.

"Arrowsmith" brought fame to Sinclair Lewis, and in 1926 he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. But Sinclair refused the award. In the adherence to high ideals and moral principles, he resembles Martin Arrowsmith, his favorite protagonist as he himself admitted in one of the interviews.

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