

Summary

„Literary portraits of reputed women from the times of Julio-Claudian dynasty (based on selected examples)”

The period of the fall of the Roman Republic and the beginnings of the empire filled with fights for a political influence are the times of life and activity of Julius Caesar, Octavian Augustus and Marcus Antonius, however, women related to them played a vital role, made their mark in a history and their achievements cannot be marginalized. The acts of female members of Julio-Claudian dynasty arouses the interest of contemporary authors and readers, as evidenced by not only their presence in compositions as supporting role, but also whole novels dedicated to them, because of sensational threads, and complicated family and private relations appearing in their lives, both on roman and egyptian manor.

The fundamental purpose of this dissertation was the analysis of the literary portraits of specific women related to the ancient affairs. This research is interdisciplinary; methodologies practiced by historians and literary scholars were used: both literary portraits and historic sources were collated, with references to hermeneutics. As elementary research tools were used: descriptive, historico-critical and comparative. Because the main topic of considerations in this dissertation are portraits of women, to some extent it is based on establishments of feministic-oriented literary studies.

The structure of dissertation is chronological and problematic. It has been divided into five chapters; its two main parts can be distinguished. The first of them contains theoretical establishments and concerns issues related to historical fiction, especially its current, popular view. Relationship between literature and history has been literary scholars' object of interest for many years. They were characterized at the beginning of the Chapter 1. Later, some specific terms concerning biographical novel and its relation to historical fiction. The last subsection of the first part involves antique inspirations in literature. Ancient epoque is today's background and excuse to literary work creation in order to reflect the mechanisms of authorities, formation of psychological portraits, social problems analysis.

In the second chapter, relying on findings of historians, the state of affairs of women during the reign of Julio-Claudian dynasty, pointing out to the difference between Roman

Republic and Egypt. Ancient societies were patriarchal, which had an impact on the collateral position of women and their submission to men in a public sphere of life. Particular importance of women's existence becomes visible in dynastic politics of principles from Julio-Claudian dynasty. As mothers and wives of successive reigns they guaranteed durability of the dynasty and the transmission of imperial power within it. In the last part historical-political background and the status of women in Rome and Egypt has been adumbrated, focusing on their everyday and public life. The majority of descriptions involve the characterization of their everyday life, because in Rome women were mostly part of domestic, private life. Offices and political activity were available only for men. Sources preserved and found in Egypt show some differences when it comes to women's privileges. Still, they were facing some restrictions, although, they were allowed to be a part of a governance as mothers and wives of successors, perform functions of priests, even rule, but still rarely bore the title of pharaoh and could not conquer, but - most often - with a male representative only.

Subsequent parts of dissertation consist of analysis of literary representations of chosen action heroines. Each of them begins with a critical discussion of the source texts, which were an inspiration for the novelists.

The third chapter is a depiction of Cleopatra VII. The last ruler of Ptolemaic dynasty became a popculture icon, which eagerly explored her private life. After characterization of the historical background, the focus was on text image of the queen in specific historical novels, available on Polish publishing market. In further subchapters, literary elaborated individual stages of Cleopatra's life were characterized: from her youth to gaining power through Julius Caesar's protection, relationship with Marcus Antonius, war with Octavius Augustus to repeatedly presented in art - queen's death.

The fourth chapter is devoted to Livia Drusilla, wife of Emperor Augustus, mother of his successor Tiberius. It is considered, that she had a huge influence on her husband's decisions and left an impact on the empire's system, created during her lifetime. From historians' messages emerges an ambiguous image of a woman - for those authors who favored her, she was a role model. For others, she was an intriguer, who caused several felonies in order to claim the throne to her son. The dissonance between official, positive image of Livia, shown as perfect mother and wife, and a negative portrayal preserved in culture. For that matter in this chapter a chronological layout was adopted, performing the analysis of Livia's literary biography since her youth, which was largely a figment of imagination of creators and full of dramatic events

through the relationship with Octavius Augustus until gradual process of falling from power, death of her husband and decay of relationship with her son.

The fifth chapter regards to literary appearances of Agrippina the Younger; sister of Emperor Caligula, wife of Emperor Claudius and mother of Emperor Nero. Ancient historians depicted her as extremely ambitious and ruthless woman; such an appearance of her preserved in literary tradition. She was crossing the boundaries set to women in ancient Rome and had a real share in governance during the life of her husband, and then, her son. This chapter presents the analysis of the literary picture in chronological order, pointing out to the most important moments of her life divided into three stages: difficult experiences during the reign of Caligula who exiled her, return to Rome, marriage to Claudius and gaining political influence, then leading to her son's succession, gradual loss of authority, death.

In reference to all the heroines in this dissertation, their literary legend becomes riveting. In works of this nature, some events from the biography are being emphasized, or those, which disturb 'the legendary portrayal' of a person, are omitted. In case of Cleopatra, three such cases can be demonstrated - relationship with Julius Ceasar, then, after he had died - marriage with Octavian, then tragic end. When it comes to Livia Druzylla, she married Octavian in an atmosphere of a moral scandal, then leading to her son Tyberius's succession. But the nodal points of history are the individual stages of her path to the position of the most powerful woman in the empire (especially her marriage with Claudius), the culmination of which was the seizure of power by Nero, and then the death of the ruler.

Roman empresses and aristocrats were sometimes secondary literary figures, less often they were devoted to independent novels - otherwise it is in the case of Cleopatra, one of the most frequently portrayed women living in antiquity in the culture. Meanwhile, these are heroines whose ambitions went beyond the social framework of ancient times.

The dissertation attempts to articulate that in popular historical novels there is a potential for further research, reflection on the literary depiction of the past and searching for an answer to the question of how we see the past and people living in the past.

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