

THE MOTIVE OF FREEDOM IN JACK LONDON'S NOVEL «MARTIN EDEN»**Maryna Derii**

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Summary

Jack London used a variety of motives in his works: mythological motives, the motive of adventure, the motives of friendship and love, the motive of lust for profit and true humanity, and also, the motive of freedom takes honorable place in this list. Freedom is a magnificent word, and it is also main purpose for humans, even if it might not be the only one. The freedom is not philosophical speculation, but the possibilities for human action under the restraints of existential conditions in real life. Free people are not abstract concepts, but real individuals in real life, because this is precisely what concerns literature. Due to the individual's numerous difficulties in socialized life, how to obtain freedom, that is, the possibility of choice for the individual in life, has been an important topic in literature from ancient times to the present. From this another topic is produced, so-called fate and whether it can be predicted.

The philosophical question of what is freedom and how to use it in real life is very popular in literature. «Martin Eden» by Jack London offers insights on the American social class structure during the early- to mid-20th century, which is still relevant today. The protagonist is a representative of the lower-class, having worked a blue-collar job before deciding to become a writer. The motive of a person's destiny is broad and multifaceted, it is closely related to the motives of fate and the motive of freedom. A person's destiny can be influenced by character, human values, and fate. The desire for freedom is one of the important factors that influence a person's destiny.

Keywords: Jack London, the motive of freedom, Martin Eden, social belonging, work class.

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1. Introduction

The iconic American novelist, short story writer, journalist and social activist. Jack London was born in San Francisco, California on January 12, 1876. Works such as *The Call of the Wild* (1903), *The Sea-Wolf* (1904), *White Fang* (1906), *The Iron Heel* (1908) and *Martin Eden* (1909) have all remained firm favourites among readers both in America and around the world. However, in contrast to much other popular fiction, these books by London have also acquired an iconic status as modern literary classics.

In a similar vein, Andrew Sinclair, one of London's many biographers, also pointed to the impact this continued popular appreciation of London's work has had on the critics: «In the past decade, intellectual fashion and literary criticism have begun to resurrect Jack London as a great American author, whom the people have never forgotten». More recently, Alex Kershaw locates London's lasting appeal in the fusion of life and work that lies at the heart of his writing: «That millions around the globe still read his books is testament not only to the brilliance of his descriptive imagery [...] Above all, what keeps Jack London alive – long after his death – is the passion and energy with which he lived, and which still sustains his best prose» (Schwebel *M.* 2009).

2. Creativity of Jack London

Jack London had working-class origins and this fact influenced on his writing and it makes him such an unusual American author in the twentieth century. Irving Stone writes in particular of the decisive effect London's formative years had on him: He was raised in poverty, he knew hunger and deprivation, he had learned harrowing lessons about the fate of the labouring man (*Paul, R., 2010*).

Jack London possessed, to an extreme, the characteristics associated with creativity. A newsboy already at the age of 10, he was self-assertive and self-reliant. A Yukon gold prospector, he was motivated by internal, rather than external, rewards to go northward and suffer the hardships of the journey and the work to fill his notebook with characters and storylines, and exhibited no inhibiting fear. As a writer, from his young years he was powerfully motivated and had enormous egostrength to maintain his disciplined schedule. His way of life exhibited openness to new experience, a diversity of interests, and a tolerance of ambiguity. In his young life, and the later years as author and speaker taking unpopular stands, he exhibited courage to a high degree (*Schwebel M. 2009*).

Jack London used a variety of motives in his works: mythological motives, the motive of adventure, the motives of friendship and love, the motive of lust for profit and true humanity, and also, the motive of freedom takes honorable place in this list. Freedom is a magnificent word, and it is also main purpose for humans, even if it might not be the only one. The freedom is not philosophical speculation, but the possibilities for human action under the restraints of existential conditions in real life. Free people are not abstract concepts, but real individuals in real life, because this is precisely what concerns literature. Due to the individual's numerous difficulties in socialized life, how to obtain freedom, that is, the possibility of choice for the individual in life, has been an important topic in literature from ancient times to the present. From this another topic is produced, so-called fate and whether it can be predicted.

The philosophical question of what is freedom and how to use it in real life is very popular in literature. The individual living in a specific society is continuously subjected to a variety of regulations from politics, ethics, customs and religion, and also from family, marriage and sexual relationships that impose numerous restrictions on the individual's action. In modern societies since the 20th century, totalitarian politics and ideology especially have regulated people's actions, and furthermore even shackled their thinking.

One Spanish writer and professor of Spanish literature at the University of Girona wrote: «The novel enjoys a freedom that no other literary genre enjoys. This is a privilege, and perhaps also a guarantee of its sustainability, on condition that we know how to make the most of that freedom». The popular American author Jack London used the motive of freedom in his novels a lot. He used this concept in his creativity both for writing and plot. We mean, that Jack London's novels are full of facts, the simple words, the pictures of real life, he described a real life. And the same time, the motive of freedom was used in the plot, we can notice it in dialogues, heroes' actions and descriptions of events (*Lackner M., Chardonnens N. 2014*).

3. Autobiographical novel «Martin Eden» by Jack London

Can a Cinderella become a Princess? Or should she have a noble family to be a Princess? The answers on these questions we can find in a modern Cinderella tale «Martin Eden» by Jack London.

Jack London's novel *Martin Eden* (1909) centers on the character Martin Eden, a poor young sailor who has grown up in a working-class family without receiving any education: «The one opened the door with a latch-key and went in, followed by a young fellow who awkwardly removed his cap. He wore rough clothes that smacked of the sea, and he was manifestly out of place in the spacious hall in which he found himself. He did not know what to do with his cap, and was stuffing it into his coat pocket when the other took it from him» (*Martin Eden*, 1909). «*Martin Eden*» by Jack London offers insights on the American social class structure during the early- to mid-20th century, which is still relevant today. The protagonist is a representative of the lower-class, having worked a blue-collar job before deciding to become a writer.

He falls in-love with a young woman from the upper-class society of San Francisco: «And then he turned and saw the girl. The phantasmagoria of his brain vanished at sight of her. She was a pale, ethereal creature, with wide, spiritual blue eyes and a wealth of golden hair. He did not know how she was dressed, except that the dress was as wonderful as she. He likened her to a pale gold flower upon a slender stem. No, she was a spirit, a divinity, a goddess; such sublimated beauty was not of the earth» (*Martin Eden*, 1909). Martin dreams of being a writer and rising in the ranks of social class to show the world and his love Ruth what he can do. He goes to the library and teaches how to write poems. Ruth actively helps him, trying to remake him for the people of her society. The main problem, that girl does not really believe in the success of Martin's plans. Ruth advises him to go to school, but Martin Eden fails all exams except grammar. Ruth is disappointed, but Martin does not give up his attempts to become a writer. Martin is very persistent, he rents a typewriter and learns to use it.

The protagonist of the novel «*Martin Eden*» liked a book by the philosopher Herbert Spencer, which completely changes his outlook on life. His love, Ruth does not share this passion for Spencer's work, but she does not interfere with Martin either. The main character reads her works to her, but Ruth easily finds formal flaws in them, she can't see Martin's talent. The main hero tries himself in various genres, but not one of his lines is printed. He hasn't got any money to live. It gets to the point that Martin pawns his coat, watch, bicycle and even starts to starve. Suddenly, a well-known magazine decides to publish one of the works of Martin Eden, but for this he is willing to pay only \$ 5. After that, suddenly, he started to get money from various magazines for the publication of his work.

4. The motive of freedom

Mykhailo Pylynskyi in his work described the concept of freedom: «Firstly, since God created people as equals, this implies that no one has jurisdiction or dominion over another. Thus, the freedom is an ability to act according only to own will, without the will or authority of another person. A second explanation is founded on the idea that, as God created people, we are all his property and so only He could take away what was given – life, possessions, or freedom. Thirdly, the idea of freedom is tightly connected with the philosophy of property, as possessions» (*Pylynskyi M.*, 2020).

When Martin was a sailor, he had more freedom. When he started his career as a writer, there were industry and social pressures. However, he soon found that being a writer was more difficult than being a sailor. The writing process is lonely and the publishing industry, he soon found out, was corrupt and exploitative. Finally, Martin realizes that he only loved the image that he himself created from the girl. The main character buys an island in the Marquesas Islands and goes there to live in a hut.

The author describes the strict conditions that society makes on the art and literary world. When he was being rejected by publishing companies, and the woman he fell in love with began to lose faith in him, he realized that people's perception of others is fickle. When he became successful, his detractors, including Ruth, acted as if they had always supported him.

The motive of social belonging is a very important topic in the novel. Martin is a sailor from a working class background, who feels uncomfortable but inspired when he first meets the bourgeois Morse family. He loves Ruth Morse, that's why he started the program of self-education, with the aim of becoming a famous writer and winning Ruth's hand in marriage. As his education progresses, Martin finds himself increasingly distanced from his working class background and surroundings. Eventually, when he finds that his education has far surpassed that of the bourgeoisie he used to look up to, he finds himself more isolated than ever. In this novel Jack London implements a very important idea of destiny of man.

The motive of a person's destiny is broad and multifaceted, it is closely related to the motives of fate and the motive of freedom. A person's destiny can be influenced by character, human values, and fate. The desire for freedom is one of the important factors that influence a person's destiny. A free person chooses his destiny freely, neither society nor origin can influence him. Motives of freedom are used in Jack London's novel, the writer emphasizes that the main hero is free, because he can choose his destiny. At first, Martin was a sailor, then he started self-education and became a writer, disillusioned with high society, he becomes a sailor again... and he committed suicide: «Turning off the light in his room so that it might not betray him, he went out the port-hole feet first. His shoulders stuck, and he forced himself back so as to try it with one arm down by his side. A roll of the steamer aided him, and he was through, hanging by his hands» (*Martin Eden*, 1909).

5. Conclusions

Jack London used a variety of motives in his works: mythological motives, the motive of adventure, the motives of friendship and love, the motive of lust for profit and true humanity, and also, the motive of freedom takes honorable place in this list.

The freedom is not philosophical speculation, but the possibilities for human action under the restraints of existential conditions in real life. Free people are not abstract concepts, but real individuals in real life, because this is precisely what concerns literature.

So, in the novel «Martin Eden» by Jack London the author uses different motives, one of the often used is motive of freedom. We can notice the features of freedom everywhere, in hero's actions, author's thinking about destiny and, even, in the final of the novel. When Martin realized that his writing career was built on illusions of celebrity and synthetic social relationships, he decided to commit suicide. The novel also examines how individuals perceive their place in society and how to try to change it. It shows their individual and freedom to think broader and deeper.

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