

**THE ARCHITECTONICS OF CHRONICLE NARRATIVE IN GEORGE W. CABLE'S
«THE GRANDISSIMES»**

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Abstract

This article analyzes the architectonics of chronicle narrative in George Washington Cable's novel *The Grandissimes* (1880) as a representative example of the family chronicle genre in nineteenth-century American literature. The study situates the novel within the historical and ideological context of the Reconstruction era and traces the evolution of its critical reception from early polemical responses to later postcolonial interpretations.

Special attention is given to genre-specific principles of the family chronicle, including linear chronicle time, multifocal genealogy, historical depth, structural cohesion, and aesthetic completion. The analysis focuses on the three-generational structure of the Grandissime family and the parallel genealogical line of the "colored" Grandissimes, demonstrating how Cable constructs a chronicle of Creole society undergoing historical transformation after the Louisiana Purchase.

The article emphasizes Cable's use of documentarity, retrospection, and symbolic framing as key architectonic devices and interprets the opposition between the two Honoré Grandissimes as the central compositional axis of the novel. It concludes that *The Grandissimes* functions as a chronicle of cultural crisis and historical transition in the American South.

Keywords

family chronicle; chronicle narrative; George Washington Cable; *The Grandissimes*; architectonics of narrative; Creole culture; Reconstruction era; genealogy; race and identity

**АРХИТЕКТОНИКА ХРОНИКАЛЬНОГО ПОВЕСТВОВАНИЯ В РОМАНЕ
ДЖОРДЖА ВАШИНГТОНА КЕЙБЛА «ГРАНДИССИМЫ».**

Аннотация

В статье анализируется архитектура хроникального повествования в романе Джорджа Вашингтона Кейбла «Грандиссимы» (1880) как репрезентативный пример жанра семейной хроники в американской литературе XIX века. Исследование помещает роман в историко-идеологический контекст эпохи Реконструкции и прослеживает эволюцию его критического восприятия - от ранних полемических откликов к поздним постколониальным интерпретациям.

Особое внимание уделяется жанрово-специфическим принципам семейной хроники, включая линейную хроникальность, многофокусную генеалогию, историческую глубину,

структурную цельность и эстетическую завершенность. Анализ сосредоточен на трёхпоколенной структуре семьи Грандиссимов и параллельной генеалогической линии «цветных» Грандиссимов, что позволяет показать, как Кейбл выстраивает хронику креольского общества, переживающего историческую трансформацию после покупки Луизианы.

В статье подчёркивается использование Кейблом приёмов документальности, ретроспекции и символического обрамления как ключевых архитектурных средств, а оппозиция двух Оноре Грандиссимов интерпретируется как центральная композиционная ось романа. Делается вывод о том, что «Грандиссимы» функционируют как хроника культурного кризиса и исторического перехода на американском Юге.

Ключевые слова

семейная хроника, хроникальное повествование, архитектура повествования, креольская культура, эпоха Реконструкции, генеалогия, раса и идентичность.

**JORJ WASHINGTON KEYBLNING «THE GRANDISSIMES» ROMANIDA
XRONIKAL RIVOYATNING ARHITEKTONIKASI**

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada Jorj Vashington Keyblning *The Grandissimes* (1880) romani XIX asr Amerika adabiyotida oilaviy xronika janrining vakillik namunasi sifatida xronikal rivoyatning arxitektonikasi nuqtai nazaridan tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot romanni Rekonstruksiya davrining tarixiy va mafkuraviy kontekstiga joylashtiradi hamda uning tanqidiy qabul qilinish evolyutsiyasini dastlabki polemik munosabatlardan keyingi postkolonial talqinlargacha kuzatadi.

Maqolada oilaviy xronika janriga xos bo'lgan tamoyillarga alohida e'tibor qaratiladi: xronikal vaqtning chiziqchilik, ko'p fokusli genealogiya, tarixiy chuqurlik, strukturaviy yaxlitlik va estetik yakunlanganlik. Tahlil Grandissime oilasining uch avlodli tuzilmasiga hamda "rangli" Grandissimelarning parallel genealogik yo'nalishiga qaratilib, Keyblning Luiziana sotib olinganidan keyin tarixiy transformatsiyani boshdan kechirayotgan kreol jamiyatining xronikasini qanday yaratganini ko'rsatadi.

Maqolada Keyblning hujjatlilik, retrospektiya va ramziy ramkalash (symbolic framing) usullaridan asosiy arxitektonik vositalar sifatida foydalangani ta'kidlanadi hamda ikki Honoré Grandissime o'rtasidagi qarama-qarshilik romanning markaziy kompozitsion o'qi sifatida talqin qilinadi. Xulosa sifatida *The Grandissimes* Amerika Janubida madaniy inqiroz va tarixiy o'tish davrining xronikasi sifatida faoliyat ko'rsatishi asoslab beriladi.

Kalit so'zlar

oilaviy xronika, xronikal rivoyat, rivoyat arxitektonikasi, kreol madaniyati, Rekonstruksiya davri, genealogiya, irq va identiklik.

Since the publication of *The Grandissimes* (1880), George W. Cable's work has provoked sharply polarized reactions and remains an object of scholarly debate. Even during the author's lifetime, the novel became a focal point of ideological disputes associated with the Reconstruction era. Northern criticism received the book favorably: *The Atlantic Monthly* editor

W. D. Howells called Cable «the moral conscience of the South» for his refusal to romanticize the region.¹ At the same time, the Southern press responded harshly: *The New Orleans Times-Democrat* described the novel as «an insult to Creole honor.»²

The source of this polarity lies in the author's critical stance toward Creole society and the institution of slavery. Cable consistently dismantles patriarchal myths, exposing the internal contradictions of Creole culture and the moral responsibility borne by white society for the fate of the enslaved. His artistic program is articulated in the portrayal of Creole pride as «fantastic, suicidal pride»³ while slavery is represented not as a paternalistic idyll but as a constant generator of social tension.⁴

From the 1960s onward, Cable underwent an academic rehabilitation. William L. Andrews regards him as «a forerunner of African American fiction,»⁵ while M. Crèvecoeur characterizes him as an «internal dissenter of Southern culture.»⁶ In postcolonial frameworks (F. Fanon, E. Said, M. L. Pratt), *The Grandissimes* is interpreted as a chronicle of cultural hybridity in which Louisiana emerges as a «contact zone» of intersecting cultures.⁷

Within the genre of the family chronicle, *The Grandissimes* is organized around the history of several generations of the Grandissime lineage, enabling the reader to trace the transformation of Creole culture within a changing historical context. As E. V. Nikolsky notes, «the family chronicle is constructed not around a hero but around a lineage; its meaning lies in observing change.»⁸ Cable employs a classical three-generational model.

The patriarchal generation is embodied in Agricola Fusilier, Honoré Grandissime's uncle. He represents the authoritarian colonial patriarch for whom racial hierarchy, the dueling code of honor, and rejection of Americanization appear self-evident. His response to the Louisiana Purchase is expressed in his conviction that the treaty was «spurious,»⁹ and that French

¹ Howells W. D. Editor's Study // *The Atlantic Monthly*. — 1880. — Vol. 46. — P. 321–325.

1. Nikolsky E. V. *Semeynaya khronika kak zhanr* [The Family Chronicle as a Genre]. Moscow, 2005.

² The New Orleans Times-Democrat. Reviews of *The Grandissimes*. — New Orleans, 1880.

³ Cable G. W. *The Grandissimes: A Story of Creole Life*. — New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907. — P. 104.

⁴ Cable G. W. *The Grandissimes: A Story of Creole Life*. — New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907. — P. 118.

⁵ Andrews W. L. *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography*. — Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 1986. — P. 52–54.

⁶ Kreyling M. *Inventing Southern Literature*. — Jackson : University Press of Mississippi, 1998. — P. 89–92.

⁷ Pratt M. L. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. — London : Routledge, 1992. — P. 6–7.

⁸ Никольский Е. В. *Семейная хроника как жанровая форма*. — М. : Наука, 2007. — С. 41–42.

⁹ Cable G. W. *The Grandissimes: A Story of Creole Life*. — New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907. — P. 66.

dominance will soon be restored.¹⁰ He formulates racial hierarchy with cynical directness: «we always mean we white people... whatever is not pure white is... pure black.»¹¹

The intermediate generation is represented by the white Honoré Grandissime, who exists within a moral and ideological rupture. On the one hand, he accepts principles of pragmatic expediency («buy cheap and sell at a profit»);¹² on the other, he recognizes the ethical ambiguity of compromise.¹³ His advice to Frowenfeld «You must get acclimated... in convictions too»¹⁴ underscores the necessity of cultural adaptation. The third generation is represented by younger characters, most notably Clotilde Nancanou, who shows less dependence on Creole prejudices and greater openness to intercultural dialogue.¹⁵

A distinctive feature of the novel's chronicle architectonics is the parallel genealogical line—the «colored» branch of the Grandissime family headed by Honoré the mulatto. This line functionally doubles the white lineage but unfolds under conditions of social exclusion. The episode of his exclusion from the quadroon ball demonstrates the rigidity of racial barriers.¹⁶

The novel's temporal structure realizes the principle of linear chronicle time. The action takes place in 1803-1804, immediately after the Louisiana Purchase by the United States. Cable precisely fixes the historical context: «in the year 1803»;¹⁷ «in the year in which the First Consul of France gave away Louisiana.»¹⁸ The seasonal frame (autumn to spring) lends the narrative a symbolic dimension: a transition from the old world to the new. Chronicle linearity is complicated by retrospections connected with the story of Bras-Coupé and Louisiana's colonial past.¹⁹ These excursions do not break temporal logic; rather, they deepen historical perspective. Genealogical insertions («In the year 1673...») create an effect of historical depth characteristic of the chronicle genre.

Cable actively employs techniques of documentarity: exact dates, meteorological data, topographic detail («rue Royale,» «rue Bienville»),²⁰ and legal discussions of land titles.²¹ These

¹⁰ Cable G. W. *The Grandissimes: A Story of Creole Life*. — New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907. — P. 67.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 73

¹² Ibid., p.74

¹³ Ibid., p. 157

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 159

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 161

¹⁶ Cable G. W. *The Grandissimes: A Story of Creole Life*. — New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907. — P.161

¹⁷ Ibid., p.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.

²⁰ Ibid., p.

²¹ Ibid., p.

elements generate the effect of historical authenticity. Structurally, the novel is framed: the opening masquerade at the Théâtre St. Philippe and the concluding scenes of reconciliation form narrative «brackets.» The masquerade functions as exposition and as a symbol of social masking.²² The removal of masks («an unmasked, noble countenance»)²³ signifies a drive toward authenticity. The central compositional axis of the novel is the opposition of the two Honoré Grandissimes. This dichotomy structures all major conflict lines. Frowenfeld and Agricola Fusilier form an ideologically contrasted pair: the American idealist versus the Creole conservative.²⁴ Female characters (Aurora Nancanou and Palmyre) also form a system of parallels.²⁵

The plot is organized as an interweaving of several lines-romantic, genealogical, racial, property-related, and ideological. All converge in the final resolution. The spatial structure is likewise carefully designed: the Grandissime house, Frowenfeld's apothecary shop, and the districts inhabited by free people of color together constitute a symbolic map of society.²⁶

The ending realizes the principle of aesthetic closure. The white Honoré's recognition of his colored namesake as a business partner and his return of land to the Nancanou family symbolize the restoration of justice.²⁷ The marriage of Frowenfeld and Clotilde symbolizes the possibility of cultural synthesis.²⁸ Palmyre's storyline receives a tragic yet philosophically coherent resolution.²⁹

Thus, the architectonics of chronicle narrative in *The Grandissimes* is governed by the generic principles of the family chronicle: linear chronicle time, multifocal genealogy, historical depth, structural cohesion, and aesthetic completion. The Grandissime family functions as a microcosm reflecting the macrohistorical processes of the American South.

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3. The New Orleans Times-Democrat. Reviews of *The Grandissimes*. - New Orleans, 1880.

²² Ibid., p.

²³ Ibid., p.

²⁴ Cable G. W. *The Grandissimes: A Story of Creole Life*. — New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907. — P.

²⁵ Ibid., p.

²⁶ Ibid., p.

²⁷ Ibid., p.

²⁸ Ibid., p.

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