

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15237540>



INTERNAL CONFLICT IN F. SAGAN'S "BONJOUR, TRISTESSE" THROUGH THE PRISM OF "ETHICS OF CARE" AND ITS INTERPRETATION BY MODERN YOUTH

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Marina Bilotserkovets, Tetiana Fomenko. Internal conflict in F. Sagan's 'Bonjour, tristesse' through the prism of 'Ethic of care' and its interpretation by modern youth. The paper is targeted to explore the internal conflict between different generations, the gap in their moral values and lifestyles, depicted in F. Sagan's novel "Bonjour, tristesse" from the perspective of "ethics of care" and study modern youth's opinions and regards on it. The study sample was 20 students of Sumy State Pedagogical University who majored in French and read the novel for their individual work. Employing the text interpretation method, they were looking for the answer to the research question: where is the bounding line between the loving care that can be accepted by the free will of a person and abusive care that crosses personal boundaries? It was found out that the conflict described in this book was inevitable because the voluntary care and the wish and the ability to receive this care, if not to give it back, did not always correspond with each other.

Keywords: *ethics of care, internal conflict, modern youth.*

According to Gilligan (2008), the ethics of care recognizes that moral decisions are often not made through impartial abstract reasoning at all and that real people are fundamentally different from the caricatured moral agents of traditional philosophy: they are dependent on each other, they are biased because they have obligations to specific loved ones, they have different individual needs, and, finally, they are often in unequal relationships (such as parents and children). Caring always takes place in concrete relationships in which there are two parties – the one who cares and the one who is cared for; therefore, relationships of care are always unequal and not mutual.

The purpose of the article is to reveal the internal conflict of generations, depicted in F. Sagan's novel "Bonjour, tristesse"¹ through the prism of "ethics of care" and explore modern youth's views and impressions on it through the method of text interpretation.

While studying the book for individual reading during the lessons of French by the second year students, who major in the French language and literature, it was decided to explore the text to answer the following research questions:

- was the conflict, described in the book, inevitable, as it edges the voluntary care and the wish and the ability to accept this care if not to return it in response?
- where is the border between the loving care to be accepted by the free will of a person and abusive care that crosses personal boundaries?

The students who participated in the study were 17-18 years old, 15 female and 20 male, the same age as Françoise Sagan when she wrote this novel, so it was suggested that the ideas and plot of the book would be interesting and relevant for them (Bilotserkovets, at el., 2021).

The novel was published in 1954 and became a sensation in the literary life of France. For the young generation of the 1950s, this novel was a kind of manifesto that proclaimed the moral emptiness, hopelessness, and despair of the world in which it began to live, the loneliness of a person in a world of absurdity where all people are strangers to each other, immersed in personal affairs, worries, troubles.

¹ Bonjour, tristesse (French) – Hello, Sadness.

Nevertheless, the writer indicated that love is the potential of every person. All people can reach the pinnacle of love, but many close this path for themselves: some in the name of pleasure, others turn their lives into a pursuit of money, power, and prestige.

The story was told by a seventeen-year-old girl, Cecile, who was relaxing with her father, a wealthy widower businessman, on the seashore at the French Riviera. The father had a mistress, and the daughter, in her turn, started an affair with a young neighbor in a country summer house. This routine was disturbed by the friend of Cecile's deceased mother – Anna Larsen, who came to visit them.

The inner drama of the novel is the conflict between Cecile and Anna. For the main character, life is fleeting, today's, without obligations, without remorse, without serious reflections. She lost her mother in infancy and had been raised by nuns in the boarding school, so she didn't experience the care of a loving person as a child. She started living with her father as an adolescent, perceiving him as a friend and a tutor who had unveiled for her the power gained by pleasure and hedonism over prudence and caring for other people.

For Cecile and her father, love means only personal pleasant feelings from different partners: “... we talked about love, its complications. In my father's eyes, they were imaginary. He systematically rejected the notions of fidelity, seriousness, and commitment. He explained to me that they were arbitrary and sterile. ... I knew that in his case, this excluded neither tenderness nor devotion, feelings that came to him all the more easily because he believed them to be temporary. This concept seduced me: quick, violent, and fleeting loves”² (Sagan, 2011, p. 3).

Anna personifies the dignity and moral values of a decent society. For Anna, love is a spiritual beginning, full of affection and caring: “There's endless tenderness, sweetness, longing...”³ (Sagan, 2011, p. 21). Readers observe the beginning of a love story between Cecile's father and Anna, which does not please Cecile. Anna took care of Cecile's health, upbringing, and education, concurrently limiting her in permissiveness and not giving her complete freedom. She was imposing Cecile's with her views and

² Translated by authors.

³ Translated by authors.

ideals, which contradicted the ones that Cecile's father proclaimed to her daughter: "My daughter will always find men to support her - *said my father nobly.*"⁴ (Sagan, 2011, p. 18). No wonder Cecile saw no value in obtaining a diploma and continuing education.

So, a conflict gradually becomes characteristic not only for the younger generation but also for the older one. Being very young and inexperienced, she realized that a man and a woman with different backgrounds and lifestyles could hardly be happy together for a long time: "*I had never thought of Anne as a woman, but as an entity: I had seen in her self-confidence: elegance, intelligence, but never sensuality, weakness... I understood that my father was proud: the haughty, indifferent Anne Larsen married him. Did he love her? Could he love her for long?*"⁵ (Sagan, 2011, p. 23). Cecile appreciated and admired Anna's human qualities, intelligence, and culture, but she viewed her as an obstacle to her freedom. She initiated a network of manipulation, resulting in Anna's destruction.

In the process of studying, it was revealed that the inner conflict of the book was ineluctable, as all the participants doubted whether Anna's care for Cecile was sincere. Moreover, if care is aligned with imposition, it meets objection and refusal. On the other hand, Cecile, the main character, is dominated by the consumer attitude toward life and the people around her, which leads to infantilism, a gloomy mood, painful reactions, and an inability to take care of or appreciate being cared for.

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⁴ Translated by authors.

⁵ Translated by authors.