

## THE CHILD'S IMAGE IN THE WORKS OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING WRITERS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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*This article is devoted to the analysis of novels, created by English writers such as, A.A. Milne, J.M. Barry, and W. Golding. The development of children's theme and diversity in kid archetype is shown in the literature of twentieth century. A comparison with the image of a child of previous centuries is given. The contrast between the image of a kid of the twentieth century in novels and fairytales is shown.*

**Key words:** British literature, image, fairy-tale, novel, character, children's literature, A.A. Milne, J.M. Barry, W. Golding.

The image of a kid is a traditional object of research in philology, psychology, sociology, philosophy and many other sciences. In English literature, this topic is eternal, has a deep social and psychological subtext. Each of the writers, creating images of a child, shows the formation of a strong, pure and thinking personality, which is formed in present-day realities.

James Matthew Barry, Alan Alexander Milne creates their fairy-tale worlds as a reflection of a child's view of life or models of the big world, which the little reader will enter.

The main attention is focused on the analysis of the problematic, plot motifs associated with the images of children, in order to determine the new archetype of a child generated by the culture of the twentieth century.

The main purpose of this article is to analyze the image of the child, to determine its diversity in the works of English-speaking writers, to trace the development of the children's theme in the literature of the 20th century. It has been found that the development of the image of the kid in the English literature of the 20th century is continued through the refraction of the traditions of the 19th century. The image of a kid of the 20th century has a more tragic coloring compared to the humanistic tradition of the previous centuries.

Autobiographical motives are clearly expressed in the image of a child in the work of James Matthew Barrie «Peter Pan»: James' older brother, David, tragically died as a child. In the memories of his mother and James, David

forever remained a 13-year-old golden-haired boy: the image of childhood, forever «frozen» in time, was imprinted in Barry's imagination and reflected in Peter Pan and other works of the writer. As the narrative moves towards the end, nostalgic notes intensify: loneliness, bitterness of a failed marriage and unfulfilled fatherhood.

Wendy, Michael and John are involved in the Neverland because this world lives in their imagination and dreams; Peter is alien to the cozy home world: he, like his creator, is forced to look through the window glass at the only joy that is forbidden to him, a happy family idyll (someone else's family idyll) from outside, from behind the window bars.

The main action takes place on the island of Neverland, where Peter Pan takes Wendy and her brothers. This is a materialized world of children's dreams and fantasies, a kind of shelter from the adult world. The island's life and all its nature are subordinated to Peter, his fantasies.

The children are happy on the island of dreams, but in the end they return home. Everyone, except Peter Pan, chooses growing up, preferring real life to the game. But Peter Pan was afraid of entering adulthood and life in all its manifestations, he voluntarily got stuck in the world of childhood, and this can befall any kid.

Perhaps the main features of the child's image in the Barry's work are the basic characteristics of Peter Pan: natural beginning, gaiety, innocence and heartlessness.

The comfort of the children's world and the gentle leaving it we find in the books about the

teddy bear Winnie the Pooh.

Milne's books became so famous because they truthfully reflected the inner world of the child, his view of things, his problems, discoveries, games, sorrows and joys.

A.A. Milne continued what L. Carroll and J.M. Barry had started. Their character is not fictional, but a real child with a special logic, a special world, a special language. All this is comprehended by the writer, not in the dry form, but in a fun literary game.

Christopher Robin is the main character of all the writer's children's books. But if in poetry he is the most ordinary boy with funny character traits and flaws, then in the stories about Winnie-the-Pooh he is a kind of ideal. In some images, the boy's ego is psychologically reflected. Christopher Robin is the smartest and bravest, the object of universal respect and awe. The fact is that in them, he is the only child, and all the other inhabitants of the forest are animated by his imagination and embody some of his features. Being thus freed from some of his character traits, Christopher Robin in his games is the smartest, strongest and bravest inhabitant of his fictional world.

In Milne's work, the image of a kid is revealed not only in the human character, but also in the personages of the animal world.

Considering the other characters of «Winnie the Pooh», we can, on the one hand, interpret them as different types of children's images, on the other, as masks that almost every child tries on.

The most optimistic part of child's personality is embodied, of course, by Winnie the Pooh. This character is open to the world, friendly and sure that the world is friendly too. By nature, he is a bit selfish, but there are times when he can feel the trouble of another, and when this happens, the only possible way for him to express his sympathy is immediate action. So, Pooh looks selfish only because he is sure, like any child at his age, that the world exists specifically for him.

Being a poet, the author of wonderful «noisemakers», «grumblers» and other original works, Winnie-the-Pooh embodies the creative energy of a child and has a way of understanding things that is the opposite of logical.

A completely different character is Piglet, the embodiment of childhood fears. Being very

small, he is timid and anxious, and this gives Christopher Robin the opportunity to feel strong and necessary. In fact, he is very active and enthusiastic. But his unease turns out to be stronger in the end than his thirst for adventure.

When Piglet is next to Christopher Robin, he is not afraid of anything, like a child next to his parents. With Winnie-the-Pooh, he feels less confident and uses any opportunity to escape.

Tigger is the embodiment of ignorance, he learns along the way, most often from mistakes, giving others a lot of trouble. This character is needed to affirm the benefits of knowledge, and he appears when Christopher Robin begins systematic education. Owl, Rabbit, Eeyore are variants of the maturity, and some real adults are reflected in them. They are ridiculous with their toy solidity, attempts to strengthen their intellectual authority. The owl speaks long words and pretends to be able to write. Rabbit emphasizes his intelligence and good manners, but he is not smart, but just cunning. Smarter than others is Eeyore, but his mind is occupied only with the «heartbreaking» spectacle of the world's imperfections, he lacks a child's faith in happiness.

«Doing nothing» is a time devoted to trying to understand yourself. But adults often do not respect this fundamental need, constantly pulling the kid.

In Milne's books, a child, playing roles and doing «nothing», acquires his own individuality. Some of Pooh's songs are imbued with a sense of how great it is to be Pooh. To feel like the one and only is a natural state of a kid, giving him comfort. That is why it is so difficult for him to understand another person who is not like him.

Milne's books also reflect the child's special relationship with time. We all live in a time dimension: we remember past misfortunes and mistakes, we worry about the future. Psychotherapists teach us to live for today, but it doesn't really work out. But that's how we all lived in childhood. We, adults, can sacrifice something in the present for the sake of future success, but it is useless to promise something in the distant future to a child («Study well and one day you will become rich and famous»). The kid can't wait long. At the same time, he cannot keep the past in his memory for a long time – good or bad. He lives in the present.

A separate interesting topic is a speech portrait of a preschooler, which Milne gives in his books, showing what a word is for a child, how he handles language and how, mastering language, he masters the world around him.

Every child experiences the greatest event at the very beginning of his life – he learns to speak and does it almost independently, while simultaneously learning to think and understand the world and himself. The world that opens to a child is full of miracles, but the opportunity to tell someone about these miracles makes it even more wonderful.

In Milne's works, there is no traditional negative pole for a folk tale. The characters and therefore the image of the child have their flaws, but none of them can be called «negative» and evil does not invade the life of the forest.

The essential features of the child's image in Milne's works are friendship, optimism, ingenuity, fantasy, kindness, but such qualities as cunning, cowardice, selfishness also manifest themselves.

Unlike Barry or Graham, who let evil and fear into the children's world, Milne leaves his characters in the framework of a toy, home world that gives children a sense of security.

In the history of English literature of the first half of the XX century, D. Joyce, D. Lawrence, and V. Wolf made a special contribution to the history of the development of the child's image.

The works of these authors are largely autobiographical. Perhaps, for the most part because of this, a distinctive feature of these writers is a more subtle, compared with the previous era, penetration into child psychology.

Cruelty, sadistic tendencies, hypocrisy are part of the child's nature in the works of these authors, just like humanity, selflessness, sacrifice, fantasy. Such a wide range of characteristics, due to the irrational element of the child's essence, causes the effect of a high degree of realism of the image.

The theme of loneliness of children, noticeably manifested in the listed authors of the first half of the XX century, later develops into its extreme form – into the theme of alienation of the personality of the little character.

In general, it can be argued that the second half of the XX century is characterized by the

further development of the main trends in the image of the child, both laid down at the turn of the century and started by romantics. Nevertheless, it should be noted that in comparison with previous periods, a further feature of the modern image of a kid is an undoubted preponderance of negative qualities. At the same time, we are talking not only about children's leprosy and shortcomings, but also about abnormal development. Cruelty, rudeness, thirst for murder, sadism, depravity, ruthlessness, inhumanity – this is just an incomplete list of examples. [2, p. 9-11].

Undoubtedly, in literature, the founder of the new tradition of depicting children was William Golding (1911 – 1993), who conceived his famous novel «Lord of the Flies» as a parody of children's literature of the Victorian era. As a contemporary of fascism and a school teacher, Golding decides to destroy the old myths and presents a «realistic view» [4, p. 196] on kid psychology.

The events of the novel are attributed to the time of the alleged Third World War: during the evacuation, a group of English schoolchildren finds themselves on a desert island. After a nuclear catastrophe, the best part of humanity, namely children, is saved, the future of European civilization is connected with them, which is quite traditional. But, ironically, being in the bosom of the beautiful virgin nature of an uninhabited tropical island, English schoolchildren do not show their best qualities. On the contrary, unity with the natural principle awakens instincts, leads to gradual degradation. Caught in the captivity of the elements, children feel absolutely helpless, since the sum of rational knowledge cannot help them in self-determination and cognition of the chaotic world, reasonable arguments do not free them from fear of darkness and the unknown. Children compensate for the growing horror of the incomprehensible world around them by violence against others.

The world of childhood in Golding's novel is not opposed to the world of adults, as it was in the works of romantics, but rather is likened to it. Once on the island, students perceive their activities as a game. At the very beginning, everything that children planned to do was connected with the intention of "having a good time" until adults took them away [5, p. 77]. They in-

tended to play the noble characters of famous children's books, but it took work, effort on themselves (compliance with the rules). Therefore, they are more and more under the rule of the Lord of the Flies, from whose mouth the words about entertainment already sound threatening. An unrestrained thirst for entertainment generates aggression towards everything that hinders the achievement of this goal, as well as frees from duties and duty.

Destroying the romantic utopia about the exclusivity of childhood by virtue of innocence and purity, Golding opposes the doctrine of original sin and the idea that vices are a consequence of human nature itself. Therefore, the result of the tests is the realization of the "darkness of the human heart", the innate human capacity for evil and violence. As a result, the novel of the English prose writer gives a fundamentally new interpretation to the image of the child, linking with it the motives of crime, the power of instinct, questions about the true essence of human nature and ways of salvation.

Having considered the English literature of the 20th century for different age groups, we can come to the conclusion that English literature intended for younger children, namely in fairy tales, the image of a child in comparison with previous eras has negative features, nevertheless they are not dominant and do not spoil the kid at all, do not make him bad or a villain. In the literature of the same period intended for a more adult audience, the image of a child is over-saturated with flaws, and they prevail over good traits. A.A. Milne, J.M. Barry preserves the world of childhood full of magic and kindness, while, Joyce, D. Lawrence, V. Wolf and W. Golding make it more realistic and crueler, forcing the vices of the children to overcome all the good that is given in the images of children from fairy tales. Thus, if earlier, with the help of an infantile image of a kid, writers of the previous century expressed a critical attitude towards the harsh inhuman society of adults, then in the XX century, inhuman and harsh children often become critics of the society of infantile adults.

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