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### **ОБРАЗ РЕБЕНКА В ПРОЗЕ СТИВЕНА КИНГА**

В статье анализируются образ ребенка и концепция детства в рассказах Стивена Кинга как в контексте современной американской литературы, так и в более широком плане. С этой целью образ ребенка в рассказах Стивена Кинга исследуется диахронически и синхронически и анализируется в мифологическом, психоаналитическом и социокультурном аспектах. Устанавливаются связи с писателями, которые могли повлиять на творчество Стивена Кинга. Автор приходит к выводу, что в отличие от своих современников, Кинг изображает детей невинными жертвами иррациональных злых сил и показывает, как они, подвергаясь различным испытаниям, взрослеют, пронося свои детские травмы через всю жизнь.

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*This article analyzes the image of the child and the concept of childhood in Stephen King's stories in the context of contemporary American literature in a wider context. For this purpose, the figure of the child is investigated diachronically and synchronically and the child characters in S. King's major stories are examined in mythological, psychoanalytic and sociocultural aspects. Linkages are made with the relevant authors who may have impacted the writer. The author of the article concludes that, unlike his contemporaries, King portrays the children as innocent victims of the irrational evil forces and illustrates how they mature into adulthood as they undergo all the ordeals carrying their childhood traumas throughout their lives.*

*Key words and phrases:* Stephen King; child's image; horror fiction; infantile regression; concept of childhood.

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### FIGURE OF THE CHILD IN STEPHEN KING'S PROSE

The beginning of the gradual change of the child's image in the history of American literature dates back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, this does not mean that the concept of the child had not appeared in the literature before that time. The current article is based on the literary figures that have played a vital role in the development of the literary image of the child, as well as on the fundamental ideas and conceptions of a particular writer Stephen King. Detailed analysis of S. King's works about children helps to realize in what way his writings fit into the concept of childhood specific to the American literary tradition and into the world literature in general.

S. King's concept of America embodies a frightening picture. He is not only an acknowledged master of horror fiction, but also an unacknowledged chronicler of his nation, and an unappreciated observer of the American psyche. His writings might be said to follow in the footsteps of great writers like E. A. Poe, N. Hawthorne and B. Stoker.

Although S. King's writings extend well beyond the genre of both horror fiction and fantasy, it is impossible to fully comprehend the writer's outlook and aesthetic principles without understanding his willingness to let the elements of fantasy dominate in his works. His writing is seen as genetically related to the traditions of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century science fiction where the conflict moves into the moral sphere. Stephen King shares common ground in responding to the important world issues with such well-known writers as R. Bradbury, K. Vonnegut, G. Orwell, J. R. R. Tolkien and others [9].

The **aim** of the research is to construe the concept of childhood and figures of the children in S. King's work in connection with cultural and literary traditions of the USA. The **tasks** that the article endeavors to achieve are:

- to track the development of the concept of childhood in the literature;
- to explore the concept of childhood in Stephen King's stories.

The **relevance** of the research is in its approach to children as a literary device and exploration of the various purposes to which it has been utilized by Stephen King. The **scientific novelty** of the article consists of its insight into the concept of childhood in the context of horror fiction and analyzing Stephen King's stories from multiple perspectives, such as mythological, psychoanalytic and sociocultural.

The appearance of the "new literary child" was closely related to the revolution in sensibility in the so-called "Romantic revival" [3, p. 29]. Unlike other countries, in America the child was freer to decide its fate. In the context of the famous "American dream", the child became the main figure of the society. The Romantic idea of a child's intuitive, pure sensation of the world was of special importance to American literature.

The figure of the child in English and American Romanticism was inspired by the ideas of J. J. Rousseau, one of the outstanding philosophers of the Enlightenment. He applied for the theme of public's attitude towards the child and saw it as a paradigm of innocence, contending that children were innately pure, and their purity had to be protected from seductive influences of the society. Whilst the 18<sup>th</sup>-century literary fiction ignored the gist value of the child's figure and viewed it as a "miniature adult", Romanticism accented the main qualities of the child and childhood. Children embody the highest ideals of Romanticism such as innocence, beauty, harmony, unconsciousness and poetry and therefore, Romantic writers considered children as attributes of an ideal world. The figure of the child was a perfect tool used by Romantic writers to express their ideas.

The main motif of William Blake's "Songs of Innocence" and "Songs of Experience" is the loss of blamelessness and the exploration for a new mixture of innocence and experience. The poet mentions that the child embodies the ability to deploy wholeness, primitiveness and kindness to the world whereas adults have lost these qualities and pine for the past. Distinctive attention to the figure of the child in American literature was revealed by American transcendentalists, firstly by R. Emerson and H. Thoreau. They believed that perception of the child must be unencumbered by historical and cultural associations, focused on the present. It is for this reason that the child was of particular interest to art [7].

A new level in the development of the literary image of the child is associated with the works of H. James who was famous for his psychological writings. The contest between the ideas of innocence and fault is reflected in his novels in a specific way. The child's contradictory nature, its good and evil, psychological complication of characters are reflected in his novels "The Turn of the Screw" (1898) and "What Maisie Knew" (1897).

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the theme of childhood was used to keep away from the standardized ethics and aesthetics. The myth of childhood extended and deepened the image of a human being, his potential and his relations to the irrational thinking. Addressing the essence of childhood that is untainted by reason was a new stage in understanding of beauty notion in art.

In the history of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, English literature representatives J. Joyce, K. Mansfield, D. H. Lawrence and V. Woolf made a particular contribution to the development of the image of the child. "Cruelty, tyranny, sadism, hypocrisy constitute in their works a part of the child's nature along with humanity, selflessness, willingness to sacrifice, and imagination – such a fascinating variety of traits, which can be explained by the writers' awareness of the irrational element of the child's nature, produces the effect of a highly realistic image" [10].

Apparently, the motif of childhood is one of the essential themes in the world literature. For years, the image of the child and the apperception of childhood were obligatory affairs all over the world and for all that the attitude to the image of the child has changed drastically.

The child is esteemed as a pure model of a moral human being, hence there is such citation that "unless you change and transform like a little child, you will never enter the Heaven" [11]. In different times Alice Byrnes ("The Child: An Archetypal Symbol in Literature for Children and Adults"), George Boas ("The Cult of Childhood"), Alexander F. Chamberlain ("The Child and Childhood in Folk-Thought"), Mikhail Bakhtin, Carl Jung and other scholars referred to the concept of the child and childhood in varied ways. Alice Byrnes was interested in the archetypal role of the Child-Savior in folklore and hence, she turned to a biblical myth of David and Goliath. In his work, George Boas tried to shed light on the problem of the women and children within western culture. Carl Jung believed that the image of the child was introduced in folklore with the help of some supernatural beings as a dwarf or an elf. Despite this fact, the true attitude of childhood concept (as an aesthetic element) was the important phenomenon during Romanticism.

In the contemporary American literature, the literary image of the child plays a vital role as a basic idea and concept, as well as the moral and mental problems of the child. One of the modern American writers who emphasizes the image of the child in his works from different points of view is Stephen King. With his nicknames such as "The King", "The King of Horror", "The Master of Mystery", S. King has won great fame in the world literature. His works are reputable and focus on the arduous problems of the modern postindustrial society. Nevertheless, the writer tries to predict some social and moral phenomena which had not been done before. Most of his works address the motif of childhood, the problems of the children in modern American society, the role of families and surroundings in the child's psychological development and all these crucial ideas provide enough reason to call Stephen King a "master writer of the literary image of the child" and an important versatile writer of the modern American literature.

According to the experts, the theme of childhood in Stephen King's works may be explored from mythological, psychoanalytic and sociocultural points of view. "The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon", "The Talisman", "Carrie", "Pet Cemetery", "The Shining", "The Dead Zone", "The Body", "Children of the Corn", "Sometimes They Come Back", "Suffer the Little Children", "Cain Rose up", "The Monkey" are some of his works that illuminate the image of the child and childhood in general. His collection of four novellas "Different Seasons" are not typical explicit horror stories and although they do not appeal to the use of the supernatural, they do contain elements of worldly horror.

The novella named "The Body" consists of 27 chapters and is different from S. King's other novellas. Being a semi-autobiographical story, it also employs adventurous context and narrates the story of a 12-year-old boy called Gordon who goes through several ordeals and finally realizes that he is an adult and a real writer. One summer day, a group of four boys (all are 13 years old) hear about the death of another boy in the forest and cannot resist the temptation to go and look for his body. During their journey they face different wonders and dangers and it becomes a turning point in their lives. After this event they grow from childhood into adulthood. Gordon's older brother died a few months ago, his parents do not pay much attention to him and his mother always talks about missing her dead son. In their journey, the friends suffer from starving, experience fear and all this adversity makes them outgrow. The boys get back to town, years pass, and Gordon hears about the death of his three friends. He never loses his stamina, but he also cannot forget what he felt. Meanwhile, he decides to write about all of his struggles in a book. The canonical path of the "mythological adventure" of the hero is represented in the order of a passage: separation – initiation – return [12]. Thus, Gordon, a mythological hero, goes from the daily life into the area of the supernatural where he encounters magic forces and overcomes them. It gives him a chance to make his society blissful and solve his own problems.

The subtitle of the novella is "Fall from Innocence," which has clear resonances with William Blake's poetry, and we immediately associate it with its counterpart: experience. The characters in the book experience something which will usher in their own maturity. It is not by chance that King chose late summer and early autumn as settings for his story: these are the times of ripening, maturation and harvest. The boys, in a similar fashion, will also reap their harvests, and what they gain during this expedition will change their lives. They are also about to start a new phase in their lives in the academic sense; junior high school is awaiting them and they will have to decide whether they are going to orient themselves for college prep courses or stick to the trade-oriented shop courses [4].

In this story, S. King presents a rather dark view of the society. The adults in this society are mean, hypocritical and weak. They do not provide their children with moral and emotional support they need. The friends' dangerous journey takes them away from their homes. For these teenagers, home is not the loving place of the ideal childhood, but a place where drunken fathers, weak mothers and aggressive siblings threaten their daily existence.

Arthur W. Biddle sees the adventure of these boys as the quintessential example of the mythic journey in which the hero has to undergo different trials in order to return as a new man. The archetype of the journey underlies a series of tales and mythological stories, where the hero goes into the outside world, is put to the test, faces certain challenges and then comes back [2, p. 83-97].

In the short story "The Raft" from the collection "Skeleton Crew" [6], Stephen King unfolds the protagonists' lives by means of Sigmund Freud's motives of infantile regression and repression. The main point of the story is the childhood's impact on the adult life.

Willing to enjoy the last day of the summer and celebrate the end of their childhood, four college students go out to swim in the lake. The students are so happy and cheerful that they do not stand to thinking about their future. They are full of emotion, try to retract their childish feelings and decide to get on the raft. After they swim out onto the raft, unexpected things happen, a mysterious oil slick-like creature appears in the water. The creature draws the students' attention and lets them fall into a hypnotic state. The contact with this creature is terribly painful, and finally, the monster seizes everybody on the raft and kills them [Ibidem, p. 10-11]. The creature symbolizes the irrational forces of childhood; the adults are no longer able to fight for them, it is only the child who can survive in such a trial.

Stephen King writes about personal interaction as well. Even as horror encircles the protagonists, they appreciate their relationships, compete for social status and think about sex. This implies that S. King can closely relate to the teenage social dynamics. There are also some elements of "dark romanticism" in "The Raft". As it is known, dark romantics made up the images of Satan, devils, ghosts, ghouls and vampires. For the members of this movement, the natural world is dark, decaying and mysterious. This story is very dark and horrible; therefore, we can assume that S. King may have been influenced by E. A. Poe. Throughout the story, the plot takes place on the raft and the events revolve around the raft which could represent a supernatural being. The death of nearly all of the friends in the story is also a characteristic feature of "dark romanticism".

The appeasement of infantile recollections and their effect on the person's development are clearly illustrated in "The Library Policeman". The story is from the collection "Four Past Midnight" which was published in 1990 and mixes childhood trauma and supernatural horror in a most unsatisfying way. The Library Policeman is a character in contemporary American children folklore. This mythical alien punishes the children who borrow the books from the library and do not return them in time. The repression of the protagonist's reminiscence about the aggression lets the evil that manifests itself as the "library policeman" come to the adult person to control him. A lack of understanding (which according to S. Freud signifies the complex) is the cause of the protagonist's neurosis, he is to obey the rules of the irrational evil.

In the case with the main hero, the maniac uses the image of the terrible creature known to every child to frighten the little boy and force him to conceal the truth from others. The child becomes even more scared as the incident occurred on his way to the city library when the boy wanted to return the overdue books. It is the hero's strong will manifesting the conscious journey from symptom to cause that provides him with the effective weapon and helps to combat the evil. Only through acceptance of infantile reminiscences he manages to reach adolescence [9].

Sexual abuse is a challenging subject to write about in fiction. This problem offends all prudish people and it is really a hard and sensitive theme that S. King has never touched before. It is not by chance that S. King chose such kind of theme. Not only in America, but also all over the world, even in the Eastern countries, "the sexual abuse of a child" is a serious problem. These things happen in real life, some people sensationalizing it, others ignoring it, and both things are harmful for societies' safe development and mainly children's psychology. In his story, S. King describes the rape in grotesque detail. According to some experts, S. King's family dysfunction unconsciously forces him to write about such kind of unpleasant topics. On the other hand, as a master of horror fiction, it is his mode to make the reader uncomfortable and on edge.

From the psychoanalytical point of view and according to the main principles of the horror genre, Stephen King uses the images of childhood to demonstrate the malignancy of the regressions to an infantile stage of childhood development ("The Raft", "Sometimes They Come Back", "The Library Policeman"). Another Freudian idea determining the essence of Stephen King's conception of childhood is the treatment of neuroses by forcing out unpleasant infant reminiscences and their further influence on the evolution of the individual ("Gerald's Game", "The Library Policeman", "The Monkey", "Blind Willie") [8].

Additionally, in the short story "Sometimes They Come Back" from the collection "Night Shift" (1978), "The Monkey" from the collection "Skeleton Crew" and in the novel "Gerald's Game" (1992), Stephen King used the modern techniques of psychoanalysts to illuminate infants' psychological world.

In his stories "Children of the Corn", "The Long Walk", "Rage", "Carrie", "It", "The Boogeyman", Stephen King mentions every level of American society (family, school, church, etc.) from sociocultural point of view. The author deplores his country's past and present and, obviously, shows the figure of the child as a victim, judge and also executor of the brutal society and civilization. S. King strives for gathering the pieces of the problems in the society in literary aspect and shows that children are aggressive, hard-hearted, mentally and morally weak because of their disinterested families, nothingness of educational system, greediness in sovereignty and excessive correlation to religion.

**In conclusion**, we can say that childhood is a unique and crucial part of human life which we all experience and are never able to escape from its psychological effects. Childhood complements our personality and makes us what we are and, perhaps more importantly, shows us who we are as a society. For these reasons, the concept of childhood has become a relevant topic in American literature. As it is mentioned in the article, the figures of children have made their consistent appearance in literature since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, developing from an image of childhood and children of the Romanticism. W. Blake, R. Emerson, H. Thoreau and other writers of the Romanticism used children's images to embody and cherish innocence and return to nature. Adherents of the Realism, such as H. James, showed both the purity and cruelty of the children in the context of American society. The analysis of Stephen King's stories gives every reason to believe that they mirror acute problems of modern American society and western civilization in general in a vivid and convincing way. The author purposefully uses the figure of the child as a symbol of wholeness, the manifestation of consciousness and unconsciousness, the conjecture of rebirth and death, the stability between experience and innocence, responsibility and independence, weakness and strength and at the same time as painful transition into adulthood.

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#### ОБРАЗ РЕБЕНКА В ПРОЗЕ СТИВЕНА КИНГА

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В статье анализируются образ ребенка и концепция детства в рассказах Стивена Кинга как в контексте современной американской литературы, так и в более широком плане. С этой целью образ ребенка в рассказах Стивена Кинга исследуется диахронически и синхронически и анализируется в мифологическом, психоаналитическом и социокультурном аспектах. Устанавливаются связи с писателями, которые могли повлиять на творчество Стивена Кинга. Автор приходит к выводу, что в отличие от своих современников, Кинг изображает детей невинными жертвами иррациональных злых сил и показывает, как они, подвергаясь различным испытаниям, взрослеют, пронося свои детские травмы через всю жизнь.

*Ключевые слова и фразы:* С. Кинг; образ ребенка; фантастика; инфантильная регрессия; концепция детства.