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**STEPHEN KING AND THE THEME OF CHILDHOOD IN THE ANGLO-
AMERICAN LITERARY TRADITION
(thesis abstract)**

General description

The theme of childhood is one of the key themes in world fiction. Over the years the conception of childhood and the attitude to the image of the child have changed considerably. Research into literary conceptions of childhood and child images, both in the history of English and American literature as a whole and in the work of individual writers, provides valuable information on the culture and mentality of Western civilization.

The works of Stephen Edwin King, are credited with addressing the crucial problems of modern postindustrial society; more than that, the writer managed to predict a number of social phenomena which had not been thought about by the time his books were produced. Most of the novels and stories of this world popular author directly address the topic of childhood, which gives every reason to consider Stephen King as one of the most influential contemporary writers in creating the literary image of a child. It is especially important to understand what is behind the lively interest of the American writer in the topic of childhood and the image of a child.

The beginning of the evolution of the child's image in the history of English and American literature dates back to the late 18th century. It seems inescapable that the appearance of the “new literary child” was closely related to the revolution in sensibility in the so-called “Romantic revival”¹. Of course, it doesn't mean that the image of the child had not had appeared in literature before the 18th century. Since time immemorial this image has existed as the symbol conveying certain philosophical and world view ideas. In the famous quotation from the New

¹ Coveney, Peter. The Image of Childhood. – London, 1967. – p. 29.

Testament: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Mat. 18:3) the child is considered to be the model of a moral human being. Alice Byrnes in her work *The Child: an Archetypal Symbol in Literature for Children and Adults* emphasizes the archetypal role of the Child-Saviour in Folk-Thought, illustrating this idea with the biblical myth of David and Goliath as well as the Anglo-Saxon myth of Beowulf². Mikhail Bakhtin wrote about such typical form of the “grotesque body” as infancy and about using the child images in the Carnival as “the most universal symbol of constantly dying and reviving life”³. In his work *The Cult of Childhood*, George Boas states that the history of Western culture has known several periods of so-called “anti-intellectualism”, when the child together with the peasant and woman served as the model of a “cultural primitivist”⁴. Carl Jung said that in folklore the motif of the child is expressed through the image of a dwarf or an elf, thus representing the “sacred forces of Nature”⁵. Alexander F. Chamberlain in his monumental work *The Child and Childhood in Folk-Thought* analyzes the myths of different peoples and singles out, among other key roles, the image of the child as linguist, as actor and inventor, as poet and musician, as teacher and wiseacre, as judge, as oracle-keeper and oracle-interpreter, as weather-maker, as healer and physician, as hero, as fetish and deity⁶, etc. However, only Romanticism showed true interest in childhood as an independent phenomenon that can serve as the crucial element of aesthetics, as the object of worship and the ideal of humanity.

To appreciate the variety of the material under investigation the author of the dissertation has taken a systematic approach when reviewing the artistic evolution of the image of the child in the history of English and American literature. Sources from various disciplines have been applied when studying the problem: literary criticism, psychology, sociology, philosophy, cultural anthropology, and

² Byrnes, Alice. *The Child: an Archetypal Symbol in Literature for Children and Adults*. – N.Y., 1995. – p. 7-10.

³ Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and his World*. – M., 1990. – p. 276.

⁴ Ref.: Boas, George. *The Cult of Childhood*. – London, 1966.

⁵ Jung, Carl. *On Psychology of the Archetype of the Infant // Self-awareness of the 20th Century European Culture*. Ed. by R. Galtseva. – M., 1991. – p. 124.

⁶ Ref.: Chamberlain, Alexander F. *The Child and Childhood in Folk-Thought*. – London, 1896.

aesthetics. The analytical overview covers a period of two centuries, the works of more than fifty English and American writers have been examined. The research is based on the literary texts 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 related to the figure of the child and the image of childhood which were reflected in 19-20th Century English and American literature. The importance of such an analytical overview cannot be overestimated, as tracing the long tradition enables the reader to grasp the specific essence of the topic of childhood in the artistic conception of an individual writer; the works of Stephen King are not exceptions.

So far, Russian literary theorists have not done any fundamental and systematic research into the artistic evolution of the image of a child and the topic of childhood in the history of English and American literature⁷, to say nothing of the exploration of the conception of childhood in the works of Stephen King. Meanwhile, detailed analysis of King's writings about children helps to

⁷ Among a few works dealing with the problem in question one can mention:

the article by M. Epstein and Ye. Yukina *The Images of the Childhood* touching upon a number of important trends and peculiarities in the development of the image of the child in Russian and world Literature;

the doctoral thesis by I. Shishkina *National Mentality in English Fiction for Teenagers. The Late 19th and Early 20th Century*, where the author explores the evolution of the topic of childhood in English literature;

the PhD thesis by L. Fedotova *The Image of the Teenager in English, American and Russian Literature: the Second Half of the 20th Century*, which despite its promising title is limited to the analysis of the works of three randomly chosen writers;

the article by A. Zavarova *The Myth about Childhood* which, although not large in size, can also attract the specialist's attention;

the monograph by N. Itkina *The Poetics of Salinger* generally focusing on the problem of childhood in the American literary tradition;

Up to now, Russian literary critics haven't tried a systematic approach when addressing the theme of childhood in the literary tradition. Nevertheless, there are several works which deserve to be mentioned in relation to the issue under discussion. Thus, N. Berkovsky in his book *Romanticism in Germany* explores the ideals of German Romantics, stating that to this period the image of the child is of major significance. Mikhail Bakhtin in his monumental work *Rabelais and his World* offers an interesting observation about the role of child's image as one of the carnivalesque form of manifestation. In turn in Soviet literary criticism there have been a number of studies of the images of teenagers and youth in English and American literature, which most of the time were of a strong ideological nature and beside this the emphasis was placed mostly on the images of the “youth a dults”. However they involved detailed inquiry into the problem of a child's alienation from the adults' environment – the most acute problem in Western Literature in the latter half of the 20th century. Among the works related to this theme are:

“Стивен Кинг.ру – Творчество Стивена Кинга” (<http://www.stephenking.ru/>)

the books *Consumer. Rebel. Fighter* by G. Andzhaparidze, *The Image of a Young American in the Literature of the USA* by T. Morozova, *Without the Past and the Future* by R. Orlova and L. Kopelev, *Descendants of Huckleberry Finn* by R. Orlova; the PhD thesis by Yu.Pokalchuk *The Problem of the Youth in American Fiction of the 1950-60s*; the article by A.Yelistratova *Moral Crisis of the American Youth in American Fiction*, etc.

Worth mentioning for the subject of the present research is the book by I. Vlodavskaya *The Poetics of the English Educational Novel of the Early 20th Century. Typology of the Genre*. As the critical writings related to the subject in question are rather scarce, the author of the dissertation has to use the experience gained by Western literary critics (mainly in the USA, Great Britain and Germany).

understand, in what way his works fit into the conceptions of childhood specific to the English and American literary tradition and into the world literature context as a whole. Hence, there are grounds for believing that the subject of the research in question is urgent.

The subject of the PhD thesis is original, because for the first time in Russian literary criticism there has been made an attempt to explore the conceptions of childhood in the works by Stephen King in the broad theoretical and cultural-philosophical discourse.

The aim of the research is to examine the concept of childhood and images of children in the works of Stephen King, in connection with the literary and cultural traditions of Great Britain and the USA. Hence, the main goals pursued by the author of the dissertation can be formulated as follows:

1. To study the network of vital social, philosophical, aesthetic, cultural-anthropological, psychological ideas influencing the theme of childhood in the English and American literary tradition.
2. To study the major trends in interpreting childhood and children in English and American literature.
3. To explore Stephen King's outlook and aesthetic viewpoint lying behind his artistic interpretation of childhood.
4. To define the role and explain the significance of childhood and the images of children in the works of Stephen King.
5. To demonstrate cultural and artistic contexts of the typology of the images of childhood in the works of Stephen King.

The **object** of the PhD work is the conception of childhood in the English and American literary tradition.

The conception of childhood and the images of children in Stephen King's fiction became the **subject** of extensive analysis carried out in the PhD thesis.

The investigation has been carried out on the **basis** of the works which are considered to be the most notable examples in paying special attention to the images of children and the topic of childhood. Among these works are: *The Girl*

Who Loved Tom Gordon, It, The Talisman, Carrie, Pet Sematary, Cujo, Firestarter, The Shining, Gerald's Game, Dolores Claiborne, The Dead Zone, The Long Walk, Rage, 'The Body', 'The Apt Pupil', 'Low Men in Yellow Coats', 'The Library Policeman', 'The Langoliers', 'The Sun Dog', 'The Boogeyman', 'Children of the Corn', 'The Raft', 'So metimes They Come Back', 'Suffer the Little Children', 'Here there be Tygers', 'Cain Rose Up', 'The Monkey'.

The PhD research is guided by sound **theoretical** and **methodological** principles expounded by such critics as L. Badley, R. Barthes, G. Boas, S. Buessing, A. Byrnes, M. Collings, A. Compagnon, P. Coveney, U. Durst, U. Eco, P. Freese, N. Frye, B. Haferkamp, A. Heberger, R. Kuhn, T. Magistrale, E. Pifer, M. Piotrowska, H. Scudder, E. Spann, H. Strengell, T. Tanners, Tz. Todorov, B. Wiegers, N. Anastasyev, K. Andreev, M. Bakhtin, N. Berkovsky, Yu. Borev, M. Epstein, Yu. Kagarlitsky, Ye. Kovtun, Yu. Lotman, Ye. Meletinsky, V. Propp, B. Uspensky, I. Vlodavskaya, A. Yesin, Ya. Zassursky, and others.

Of great methodological importance for the present investigation were the treatises concerned with general and applied psychology (C. Jung, S. Freud, J. Piaget, B. Bettelheim, E. Neumann, E. Erikson, L. Vygotsky, A. Luria, D. Elkonin, L. Bozhovich, V. Mukhina, L. Obukhova); philosophy (J.-J. Rousseau, R. Emerson, H. Thoreau, F. Nietzsche); anthropology and cultural anthropology (Ph. Aries, C. Lévi-Strauss, J. Campbell, M. Mead, A. Chamberlain, I. Kon, etc.).

The theme of childhood in literary works by Stephen King was studied from mythological, psychoanalytical and sociocultural points of view. The methods of textual analysis supported by techniques of comparative theory, were also applied to the material under investigation.

The hypotheses to be proved in the course of investigation:

1. Being directly connected with the crucial cultural-philosophical conceptions which affect the development of the Western civilization's mentality, the topic of childhood reflects major changes in the cultural-philosophical environment of Western civilization.

2. The conception of childhood in the English and American literary tradition is based mainly on the following fundamental cultural-philosophical concepts:

- J.-J. Rousseau’s “theory of natural man” as the model of a moral human being and hence as the ideal state for mankind;
- S. Freud’s ideas about childhood as the period of neurosis having a prolonged effect (mostly negative one) on an individual’s future life;
- C. Jung’s theory of the deep psychological significance of the child archetype as the symbol of wholeness, integration of consciousness with unconsciousness, the balance between innocence and wisdom, freedom and responsibility, weakness and strength;
- the writings by J. Piaget about the peculiarities of a child’s cognitive perception and thinking which are related to the mythological mode of thinking and perception.

3. There have been different approaches to the above-mentioned (among others) concepts in the literary traditions of Great Britain and the USA. For example to develop and embody ideals of J.-J. Rousseau in 19th Century Art and Literature the ‘virgin’ territory of America happened to be more favorable than urbanized and civilized England. Also, the topic of childhood in American literature is closely connected with the concept of “American Adam” as an integral part of the ‘American Dream’.

4. While analyzing the texts of Stephen King’s works the author of the dissertation pay special attention to the following aspects of the problem under investigation: sociocultural, psychoanalytical, and mythological.

5. Stephen King is a significant writer of the modern times, who’s works are of great artistic merit. In these works he managed to raise acute problems of modern American society and Western civilization as a whole. The writer’s contribution to the development of the theme of childhood in the world literary tradition is considerable.

The subject of the PhD thesis is of theoretical value because the results achieved can lay foundation for the comparative study of the conceptions of childhood in world fiction and encourage further research into Stephen King’s literary activity. The scientific community is introduced to a number of works written by Western literary critics which so far have been unknown to Russian scholars.

The practical significance of the research lies in the fact that its findings can be applied to the educational and teaching process by the academics majoring in the history of the 19-20th Century world literature. The results are expected to encourage undergraduates specializing in English and American fiction and literary criticism to write essays, reports and carry out their degree projects. The developments can be used by high school teachers when planning additional courses.

Presentation of the thesis. The main points of the PhD thesis were discussed at the Department of Russian and World Literature of Samara State Pedagogical University. The applicant attended a number of international conferences on Culture, Linguistics and Literature and presented the basic ideas of his research. The author of the PhD thesis has six publications on the subject of the research; several ideas of the dissertation are reflected in the manual designed for the students of the philological faculty.

The structure of the PhD thesis. The table of contents of the PhD paper is as follows: Introduction, Chapter I, Chapter II, Chapter III, Conclusion, Bibliography including 382 titles (among them 215 in Russian, 131 in English, 35 in German and 1 in Polish), and appendixes. The PhD paper is 187 pages long.

The main contents of the PhD thesis.

The **Introduction** deals with explanation of the rationale behind the novelty value in the research, its theoretical and practical significance, and identifies the material, the object of the investigation, and its methods.

Chapter I of the dissertation – **The evolution of the image of the child in the history of English and American literature of the 19-20th century** –

expounds the main ideas and conceptions related to the figure of the child and the image of childhood that emerged and developed in English and American literature in the 19-20th century.

In Section 1 of Chapter I – The conception of child hood and images of

children in English and American literature of the 19th Century the author of the dissertation points out that the image of the child in English Romanticism was inspired by the spirit and ideas of **J.-J. Rousseau**, one of the most eloquent philosophers of the Age of Enlightenment. J.-J. Rousseau’s unconventional views antagonized social thought of that time. For example he challenged the prevailing public’s attitude towards a child and questioned the absolute value of adult rationality. J.-J. Rousseau saw the child as a paradigm of innocence, claiming that children at birth are innately good, not evil, and that their natural tendencies should be protected against the corrupting influences of society. He argued for the value of the child state itself, rather than a mere model of a future adult.

Rousseau’s writings profoundly influenced Romanticism in English literature. Romanticism established a kind of cult of the child and childhood. Whereas 18th

Century fiction saw the child as a ‘miniature adult’, thus ignoring the independent value of childhood per se, Romanticism emphasized those qualities of the child and child’s thinking which would be inevitably lost by adults. The huge role attributed to the child by the Romantic writer was evidenced by the general clash of the 18th and 19th centuries, namely by the contradiction between reason and feeling, where the child embodied the latter. On the other hand, the innovative idea of the primeval “innocence” of the child contradicted with the more archaic conception of the universal sinfulness of the human race.

Deeper insight into the historical and sociological background of the subject under investigation illustrates what is behind the major social and cultural shifts in the Age of Romanticism which are reflected in diversifying human activity and psychology, enhancing the value of individuality and consciousness, etc. Within the course of a few decades the child emerges from comparative unimportance to become the focus of unprecedented literary interest. It is not only the artistic value

of childhood that attracts the writer's attention, but the specific mode of social reflection, adult expectations and disappointments. For Romantic writers children were symbols of some perfect world, like it used to be with the 18th century 'happy savages'. In childhood lay the perfect image of the 'Golden age', paradise, immortality, when people have not experienced good and evil; children embodied the highest ideals of Romanticism – innocence, unconsciousness, poetry, beauty, and harmony. It is the image of the child that symbolizes the oppositions which are significant to the Romantic writers' outlook - feelings and reason, wholeness and incompleteness, artist and society, nature and civilization, innocence and sin, possibility and realization.

Thus, the leading motif of **W. Blake's** collections *Songs of Innocence*

(1789/1790) and *Songs of Experience* (1794) is the loss of innocence and the search for a new synthesis of innocence and experience. To the poet, the child embodies the ability to convey wholeness, simplicity and kindness to the world; adults have lost these qualities and yearn for the past. In Blake's writings one can read the lines worshipping the nature of the child ('**A Cradle Song**'); the image of the child is used to criticize the society of the time ('**Holy Thursday**') or personify the muse, the symbol of the poet's relation to the subconscious, to the creative force ('**Introduction**').

William Wordsworth, one of the "Lakers", who famously said "The Child is father of the Man", affirmed the idea about the child's wisdom in the poem

'**Anecdote for Fathers**' (1798). In his ode *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of early Childhood* (1802/1804) the poet speaks of the close connection between childhood and deity and the omniscience of the child.

The child featured in Romantic writings was not a realistic one, but rather an abstract symbol of all the virtues mentioned above. While proposing the value of childhood, Romanticism idealized it, made it into myth.

The image of the child was an excellent tool used by Romantic writers to express their ideas, whereas in the Victorian era for which was characteristic trying to hold together a universe which was exploding and sharpened awareness of the

inevitability of progress and of deep disquiet as to the nature of the present, its role changed significantly.

For many writers of this period, innocence in the image of the child, took on a pathetic character and quite often points to the writers' escapism. Children often became innocent victims of circumstances, they were manipulated by cruel society (*Jane Eyre*, 1847 by C. Brontë, *Oliver Twist, or the Parish Boy's Progress*, 1838 and *Great Expectations*, 1861 by Ch. Dickens). Writers were preoccupied with the motif of death of the innocent child, as the only escape from the evil and cruelty of real life (the death of Helen in the novel *Jane Eyre*, Dombey the son in the novel

Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son (1848)). In general the literary images of children in the Victorian Age were greatly idealized.

An important characteristic of the 19th Century Realist literature is the close connection between the image of the poor and the image of the child. Ch. Dickens combined the images of the miserable (deprived adults and children) in one of the most popular 'heroic tandems' of Victorian literature. (*Hard Times for These Times*, 1854, *Great Expectations*). The image of the child in Victorian literature can also symbolize the favorable impact on the adult environment (*Silas Marner, the Weaver of Raveloe* (1861) by G. Eliot, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), *A Christmas Carol* (1843) by Ch. Dickens).

While comparing English and American literature of that time one can see some obvious differences in the evolution of the image of the child. In America, the country of 'unlimited opportunities', the child was more free to decide its fate. The child became the key figure in the context of the famous 'American dream'. America embodying Eden, the child was considered to be a perfect symbol of the new "American Adam"⁸, the ideal model of a man who hasn't experienced either good or evil. The Romantic idea of a child's intuitive, naive perception of the world was of special importance to American literature. It is this view which many writers choose to take up the challenge of conquering and developing a new

⁸ The term was invented by R.W.B. Lewis (*The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*). – Chicago, 1966.

continent. Ingenuous perception was the basic method fit for accepting and assimilating the reality.

On the other hand through the all American literature permeates the motif of initiation as the tragic loss of innocence. It is said to have started with **N. Hawthorne**'s short story ‘**Young Goodman Brown**’ (1835) where initiation is interpreted as experience of evil and the fall from grace.

Special attention to the image of the child in American literature was inspired by American transcendentalists, first of all **R. Emerson** and **H. Thoreau**. They believed that perception of the child unencumbered by historical and cultural associations, focuses on the present. It is for this reason that the child is of particular interest to art. The ability of the child to perceive the object without drawing any logical conclusions was first noted by **J.-J. Rousseau** and appreciated by Romantic writers. In the opinion of several researchers, particularly in the American literary tradition, this feature found its fullest embodiment. The ideas of transcendentalists were poetically manifested by **H. Longfellow** in his poem ‘**Children**’ from the collection *Birds of Passage* (Flight 1, 1858), and earlier – in the poem ‘**To a Child**’ from the collection *The Belfry of Bruges and Other Poems*

(1846).

Both in England and the USA, social thinking experienced the collision of two ideas: the religious idea, proceeding from the conception of the fall from grace, and the new idea based on the conception of the child's innocence. It should be noted, however, that, partly as a result of overcoming this dichotomy the development of realistic images of children in American literature somewhat preceded the same process in England. The novel by **Th. Aldrich** *The Story of a Bad Boy* (1869) introduced the type of the so-called “bad boys” which was innovative for the history of American and European literature. In connection with this, one should mention the brilliant novels of **M. Twain** as well as the novel by **J. Habberton**

Helen's Babies (1876), which is reputed to be somewhat unknown worldwide. J. Habberton's novel established the tradition of “novels of adolescence”.

The term “bad boys” does not mean that the hero is ‘bad’ per se, but he is bad in the adults’ opinion. This kind of novel opposes the long tradition to portray children as angels having nothing in common with real life. However, American literature does also have a lot of examples of ‘angel-like’ children: Evangeline from the novel by **H. Beecher Stowe** *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), Tom Luck from the short story by **B. Harte** ‘*The Luck of Roaring Camp*’, (1868), Emily Grangerford from the novel by **M. Twain** *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) or Annie from the short story by **N. Hawthorne** ‘*Little Annie’s Ramble*’ (1835).

The image of Huckleberry Finn from the famous novel by M. Twain “**The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn**” was a significant milestone in the genesis of the image of the child in world fiction. Huckleberry’s naivety, his both critical and ironic view as a natural and unrefined teenager, justifies the important role of **M. Twain** in the genesis of the child’s image in world fiction, and his major influence on other writers cannot be overestimated (among the authors he was followed by one can mention **Sh. Anderson, H. Lee, J. Salinger, E. Hemingway, T. Wolfe**, to some extent, **W. Faulkner** and others.)

A new stage in the development of the literary image of the child is associated with the writings of **H. James**, famous for his psychologically complex works. The struggle between the ideas of innocence and sin are reflected in his novels in its own, specific way. The child’s ambivalence, its good and evil, and psychological complexity of characters are reflected in the novels *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) and *What Maisie Knew* (1897). H. James’s works are supposed to attract the 20th

Century writers to the psychology of the child. Among them are **J. Joyce, K.**

Mansfield, W. Woolf, D. Lawrence.

Section 2 of Chapter I– The conception of childhood and the images of children in 20th Century English and American literature traces the further development of the image of the child in fiction which is closely connected with research into infant and child cognition. The new scientific discipline *psychology* and, primarily, *psychoanalysis* forced the writers to change their approach to the

way they used to show the human's inner world. The idea of psychology in literature has transformed drastically.

The development of the theme of childhood in the history of Western literature has been considerably influenced by the theory of S. Freud, a consistent and confirmed rationalist (in this sense a Rousseau opponent). Freud was not under the illusion of the 'Golden age' of humanity as the natural prehistoric state nor did he believe that the 'personal' Golden age for a man is his childhood.

Along with S. Freud, the works by J. Piaget and C. Jung contributed much to the literary image of the child and to the concept of childhood in 20th Century world fiction. By means of direct observation and interaction, J. Piaget discovered the syncretic essence of the child's cognitive structure (which is inherent in the mythical perception of the primitive man). Child's cognition is not burdened with the notions of subject and object, material and ideal, single and multiple, static and dynamic, substantial and attributive, spatial and temporal.

According to Swiss psychiatrist C. Jung, the child, like the primitive man, has more intimate relation to the "collective unconscious". For C. Jung, the mythological primitive thinking belongs not only to the past, but to the present. The collective unconscious is a shared pool of memories, ideas, and modes of thought. The Swiss psychiatrist draws a distinct line between the collective unconscious and the neurosis of individual unconscious, which determines his attitude as a psychologist to the concept of childhood. Whereas S. Freud believes that childhood is mostly the time of neurosis affecting adulthood, C. Jung sees the child as something that, compared with the adult, has more direct contact with the "fundamental contents of human soul". C. Jung gives the rationale for the belief of Romantics and Modernists in the child's genius; thus he theoretically supports the 20th Century writers pursuing the Romantic tradition in their attitude to the image of the child.

20th Century fiction saw the banning of taboo subjects and the application of new artistic and stylistic techniques (the use of various cultural codes and colloquialisms, "stream of consciousness", etc.). Equipped with the latest

developments in psychoanalysis, writers were able to raise the image of the child to a new level of artistic excellence. There is an obvious general trend to develop the image of the child on the basis of scientifically proven psychological observance.

Many Modernist writers challenge the 19th century values and reject them; cultural modus experiences the shift from reality towards imagination, from credibility towards illusion, from concrete towards abstract. In this context, for the Modernist writer, image of the child became more and more relevant and attractive. Like 19th Century Romantics, quite often modernists use the figures of infants and primitive people in their writings. Rousseau's “natural man” is experiencing revival. The interest in the primeval, pure, naïve, virgin, lies behind the concern in cognition, sense perception and creative capabilities of the child. The theorists of Modernism **B. Croce, H. Read and A. Breton** highlighted the importance of artistic perception being close to the childish one. During the period of Modernism the status of childhood changed dramatically, with the voice of the child coming to the forefront (both perception + expression).

The concern of modernist writers in the concept of childhood is determined by a number of factors. Firstly, by manifestation of their non-traditional methods of artistic comprehension of reality; secondly, by the peculiarities of perception attributed to the child as well as the primitive man which were supposed to be unspoiled by reason (aesthetic self-conscious of modernism is known to be implicated in the rebel against “instrumental reason”; natural language was rejected, among other things, through the use of the capabilities of the child's, in other words mythological' consciousness which is alternative to symbolic thinking.) Thirdly, in the effort to overcome a severe mental crisis, writers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries sought to restore the wholeness of the split world and the human's pre-reflexive perception. Therefore they applied irrational techniques of humanity harmonization, the revival of the myth of childhood being one of them.

At the turn of the 19-20th 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. Addressing the essence of childhood, that is untainted by reason, was a new page in understanding the notion of beauty and the beautiful in art.

In the history of early 20th Century English literature **J. Joyce, K. Mansfield, D.H. Lawrence, E. Bowen, 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. Their works are considered to be mainly autobiographical. Central to their thinking is a more detailed (compared with the previous literary styles) and delicate inquiry into child psychology. H. James and J. Joyce were the first to emphasize patterns of consciousness rather than sequences of events in the external world. In his novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914/1915) **J. Joyce** is reconstructing spoken patterns at various stages of child's consciousness – the feature considered to be innovative for that time. Using a similar technique in her stories, ‘**How Pearl Button was Kidnapped**’ (1912), ‘**The Child who was Tired**’ (1910), and

‘**Prelude**’ (1918), **K. Mansfield** achieves the highest degree of the authenticity of the child's image.

J. Joyce, K. Mansfield and **E. Bowen** balance the negative traits of the child against positive ones (the writers do admit that the child has a darker side, but so far the time hasn't come for this evil's dominance)

There is a trend to follow the Victorian tradition of accurate observation and critical appraisal of family and social upbringing. Children in early 20th Century literature are affected by various social environments. The adults' images range from loving guardians to incompetent tutors. There is a shift in the assessment of

the child’s consciousness. The children are no longer naïve and gullible, they are smart and able to think critically.

Nevertheless, in early 20th Century literature the children’s social environment is friendlier compared to the next period, when the issue of the so-called “Problemkinder”⁹ came to the fore. These children are brought up in dysfunctional, impoverished families. The images of the lost children mistreated and neglected by their parents occur in many literary works.

Whereas the sexuality of children and teenagers has long been taboo in English and American literature - a few examples are found in the first half of the 20th century (*Sons and Lovers* (1913) by **D.H. Lawrence**, *A Portrait of the Artist*

as a Young Man by **J. Joyce**, *Light in August* (1932) by **W. Faulkner**) – later this theme gains in popularity. The topic of the child’s loneliness, which was clearly evident in the early 20th Century literature, is turning into its extreme – “alienation”.

The image of the child in English and American literature of the second half of the 20th Century was characterized by the dominance of negative traits over positive ones. The authors not only dealt with childish pranks and defects but also with abnormal development. When portraying the child the authors emphasize more and more their cruelty, rudeness, blood lust, sadism, wickedness, mercilessness, and brutality. More and more often the heroes are children from a socially deprived milieu, who have difficult relationships with their families, school and society. The theme of cruelty is often depicted in representations of parents physically and emotionally abusing their children, divorced spouses not caring about their children or stupid teachers and guardians totally unconcerned about their pupils. The conflict of generations, especially painful for teenagers, is reflected in many works aimed not only at teenagers (it is the time when the first books for teenagers are published) but at adults. What has been said above is illustrated by **J.D. Salinger** (*The Catcher in the Rye*, 1951), **S. Chaplin** (*The Day*

⁹ The term “Problemkind” was coined in the PhD thesis of the German scholar E. Spann (Spann. E. Problemkinder in der englischen Erzaelkunst der Gegenwart. Dissertation. – Tuebingen, 1970.

of the Sardine (1961), **W. Faulkner** (*The Reivers: A Reminiscence*, 1962), **J. Kosinski** (*The Painted Bird*, 1965), **D. De Lillo** (*White House*, 1985), **T. Morrison** (*Beloved*, 1987) and many others.

In Western Art of the 20th Century, the motif of the dehumanization of childhood became popular. Symptomatically appeared such short stories as **R. Bradbury's** ‘**The Veldt**’ (1951) and ‘**The Small Assassin**’ (1946), where the children mercifully kill their parents. Like some other antiutopian writers, R. Bradbury argues that the deterioration of the so-called ‘civilized society’ can be threatened, among other things, by infantile people, in this case represented by children – frightening, alien, hostile milieu insensitive to the adults’ feelings and unmoved by their pleas. The recurrence of this theme is rooted primarily in the ideology of a conforming civilization. People don’t find the idea of going “back to nature” (for a long time manifested by the image of the child) and abandoning real comfort and luxury very appealing. In this context, the novel by **W. Blatty**

Exorcist (1971) should be regarded not as a pseudo-religious story about the collision between good and evil, but the manifestation of the concealed fear of the elder conformist generation against the mass anti-war movement of their children.

In 20th Century literature the former victim (the child) often turns into the executor, whereas the executor (the adult) is doomed to become a victim. The serious, energetic, independent and self-supporting child is opposed to the infantile, naïve and helpless adult. 20th Century writers often apply to the images of cruel and merciless children for flaying contemporary society of infantile adults.

W. Golding in his novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954) shows how easily the child becomes uncivilized, transforming into a primitive and dreadful being. The novel “*Queen of Stones*” (1982) by the English writer **E. Tennant** was in vogue among many readers. In line with the techniques of horror fiction the author shows several girls lost in the forest conducting a special ritual while decapitating the less attractive and the most miserable among them. Following R. Bradbury’s tradition laid down in his short story ‘**The Small Assassin**’ the English writer **J. Wyndham** in his novel *The Midwich Cuckoos* (1957) narrates about a great number of

ominous children capable of telepathy, who have been begotten by an extraterrestrial race. Rejecting all moral values, they smash up everything.

V. Nabokov, the author of the notorious novel *Lolita* (1955), went to another extreme when interpreting the myth about the ‘Golden Age’. For Humbert to escape into Nature means to become sexually obsessed with a juvenile girl. In Humbert’s mania one can see perversion of Romantic idealization of nature which happens to turn against the man in his personal development. The novels by the American writers **I. Levin** (*Rosemary’s Baby*, 1967) and **D. Seltzer** (*The Omen*, 1976) reflect apocalyptic mood caused by the advent of the Antichrist which was quite realistically personified in the image of the child.

Of particular importance is the fact that many authors of the second half of the 20th Century remain faithful to the romantic tradition to portray the child as a symbol of truth and innocence. **R. Bradbury’s** writings provide a perfect example illustrating the complicated relationship between the two extremes in describing the child. On the one hand, these are already mentioned as cruel children in the tales ‘**The Veldt**’ and ‘**The Small Assassin**’, ‘**The Playground**’, ‘**The Sandman**’,

‘**The Shell**’; on the other hand there is a whole range of ideal, ‘romantic images’ in such works as ‘**The Smile**’ (1959), *Dandelion Wine* (1957), *Something Wicked this Way Comes* (1962). In line with this tradition are the writings of **J.D. Salinger** (*The Catcher in the Rye*, 1951), **H. Lee** (*To Kill a Mockingbird*, 1960), **S.**

Townsend (*The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole aged 13 ¾*, 1982), **I. McEwan** (*The Child in Time*, 1987, *The Daydreamer*, 1994), **N. Hornby** (*About a Boy*, 1998),

J.K. Rowling (the *Harry Potter* series, 1997-2007) etc.

The second chapter of the PhD thesis - “The Outlook and Aesthetic Background of S. King”- presents the main points of the outlook and aesthetic background of the writer to give the rationale for S. King’s concern with the theme of childhood and to comprehend the originality of his literary conception.

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 20th Century science fiction (to the genres of philosophical essay, political satire, social forecasting and antiutopia) where the conflict turns 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, J. Vance,

G. Orwell, A. Huxley, Ye. Zamyatin, K. Čapek, Ph. Dick, U. Le Guin, J.R.R. Tolkien, A. Clarke, A. Asimov, F. Herbert, R. Silverberg, A. and B. Strugatskiy, S. Lem, F. Leiber, R. Zelazny and others.

Stephen King's prose writings are works of burning protest against such vices of American social structures and institutions as family (*The Shining*, 1977, *Cujo*, 1981, *The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon*, 1999, *The Stand*, 1978, 'The Boogeyman', 1978, 'Children of the Corn', 1977, 'Thinner', 1984); school (*Rage*, 1977, *Carrie*, 1974, 'Suffer the Little Children', 1993, *Christine*, 1983); the authorities (*The Long Walk*, 1979, *The Running Man*, 1982, *The Dead Zone*, 1979, *Firestarter*, 1980, 'The Mist', 1980); religious fanaticism ('Children of the Corn', *The Dead Zone*, *Carrie*, *The Talisman*, 1984). The author criticizes a malign influence of modern technology and rational knowledge affecting contemporary Western society (*The Stand*, *Christine*, *Pet Sematary*, 1983, *The Tommyknockers*, 1987).

Within the initiation tradition of American literature mentioned in Chapter I (N. Hawthorne, J. Salinger, W. Faulkner, J. Updike, T. Wolfe) Stephen King considers socialization as the great wickedness causing much worse evil. Besides the external causes of evil, Stephen King also reveals personal vices such as: selfishness, moral weakness, conformity, readiness to surrender to the evil - which destroy all human virtues and fledgling merits. In advocating this view, the writer makes his characters live within the grotesque and misanthropic milieu manifested either in supernatural or tangible forces of evil (*Needful Things*, 1990, *Thinner*,

The Green Mile, 1996, *The Tommyknockers*, *The Shining*). Stephen King considers free will and responsibility to be inseparable from the conception of

good and evil. Seeking a way out of a predicament, King's characters have to make the choice: either to struggle against evil or surrender it.

In his writings Stephen King does not invent any original outlook or aesthetic structures. On the one hand, he follows Aristotle who believed that the major function of art is to provide catharsis stimulating the emotions of *pity* and *fear*. On the other hand, the writer shares his readers' common moral values. The outlook and aesthetic cosmos of his books is always morally polarized.

From the point of view of cultural anthropology, Stephen King uses the images of children to condemn the immorality of contemporary Western civilization. Both innocent and wanton children often fall victim to corrupt society or become its product; over and over again the most brutal outbreaks of violence are provoked by immediate surroundings. Central to the author's conception is that determination of the characters' behavior is balanced by the idea supporting the freedom of their moral choice. This principle holds good both to the characters of adults and children.

On the other hand, being affected by the laws of horror fiction¹⁰ as a special subgenre, S. King through his works not only criticizes contemporary society but in some way 'gives' therapy for various phobias arising in daily life, primarily the phobia of death. To fully comprehend the sociocultural background of horror fiction it is important to understand the essence of major phobias: the phobia of existential loneliness and hostility from the outside world, the phobia of untreatable disease - both physiological and psychic, individual and epidemic - the phobia of apocalypses. All these phobias share one common feature - the fear of unexpected, unmanageable changes concerning the person's well-being in the contemporary Western 'consumption society'. For example, in the famous film "Aliens", the terrifying effect can easily be explained as a subconscious reaction of the mass viewer audience, who sees the image of the virus/monster (which it is impossible to get rid of) as a threat of illness, such as cancer, the name of which

¹⁰ The author of the dissertation adheres to Sabina Buessing's classification of horror fiction presented in her book *Aliens in the Home. The Child in Horror Fiction*. - Westport, 1987.

hints at its animal essence. To be bitten by a vampire means to lose one's self-control, i.e. to become insane. Numerous films about the Apocalypse manifest the real mass fear of “Judgment Day”. The theme of the hero frantically trying to escape the beast becomes a popular metaphor to express the inevitability and fatality of death. The beast does manage to seize the man, despite the victim's fierce resistance; any attempt to survive, even armed struggle, is in vain.

Horror literature is known to address ‘vital’ personal fears, whereas the tradition of antiutopia deals not only with political issues, but is also concerned with the most acute moral problems of contemporary society, such as the cloning of human embryos, possibilities of prolonging life and immortalizing mankind. As a matter of fact in the contemporary cultural climate of existential phobia, horror literature can also be regarded and analyzed both as a neurosis and as a kind of the psychotherapy where the illness and its treatment are incorporated into one phenomenon.

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’**, 1982, **‘Sometimes They Come Back’**, 1974, **‘The Library Policeman’**, 1990). 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*, 1992, **‘The Library Policeman’**, **‘The Monkey’**, 1980, **‘Blind Willie’**, 1999).

In the realm of Stephen King's writings, there is an obvious trend towards mythological patterns. To prove this point, we can single out such elements of fairy-tale and myth narration which are characteristic of the writer's works as the basic poles of good and evil, life and death; specific story-telling narrative; breaking taboos as the core of the plot; the magical power of the word, the hero's trial by ordeal, riddles; the presence of the misfortune and counteracting (in general, cosmos versus chaos); the scheme of an initiation ritual, etc. The author

actively and consciously uses the image of the child as a symbol of wholeness, the integration of consciousness and unconsciousness, the anticipation of death and rebirth, the balance between innocence and experience, freedom and responsibility, weakness and strength.

The ideal character in Stephen King’s writings should integrate consciousness and unconsciousness, adulthood and childhood, experience and innocence. This hero (‘adult child’, ‘childlike adult’) is able to cope with irrational chaos rushing into everyday life because he doesn’t suffer from the gap separating rational and irrational. Therefore he is the first to discover the presence of chaos. He manages to understand its essence and he knows how to handle it. To let his readers achieve and enjoy such harmony, the writer introduces the theme of journey which, according to A. Byrnes and J. Campbell, symbolizes the process of individual development, thanks to which the person seeks to become whole. Thus, the theme of the “initiation journey”, popular in Stephen King’s works, should be interpreted as a metaphor of the internal evolution of heroes and readers.

Thus, the formidable effect of King’s writings is ambivalent. On the one hand, it is determined by the underlying principle of horror fiction to use allegories when showing certain real and frightening experience interpreted metaphorically. On the other hand, Stephen King’s works gain their artistic effect from realistic details in copying the child’s way of thinking and behavior, which helps the author (through child-narrators) make his readers believe in the reality of all fantastic events, inspire them to take a more “childlike” perception, integrate adulthood with childhood, rational with irrational. Along with other techniques (specific storytelling narrative; masterful use of everyday details, the realistic description achieved through the inclusion of audio-visual and kinetic perceptions which force the reader to comprehend the content somatically), this method is considered as one of the most distinguishing features of King’s writing style. The way Stephen King understands the major purpose of a “fairy-tale for adults” overlaps with the research of the well-known American psychoanalyst B. Bettelheim. The scientist believed that fairy-tales are sure to relieve the emotional suffering and turmoil

because in them internal processes are transferred to the outside level, and the patient is able to solve his own problems while reflecting upon apparent relations between history and his self or his actual internal conflicts.

Looking at the contents of fairy-tales and horror fiction, one can see that neither fairy-tales nor horror fiction have anything in common with the readers' real life; nevertheless their plot is closely related with the individuals' most urgent problems. Stephen King reinforced this feature of allegorical genres applying to C. Jung's theory: in a number of his works the archetype of the child appears as a symbol of the relation to the subconscious, strong enough to radically affect the person's psyche.

Chapter III of the PhD thesis “Typology of the Images of Children in S.

King's Writings” consists of three sections. On the basis of sociocultural, mythological and psychoanalytical approaches the author of the dissertation analyzes several works of Stephen King.

In **Section 1 – “The Initiation Theme in S. King's Fiction”** the tales ‘**Body**’ and ‘**Low Men in Yellow Coats**’ were analyzed from a mythological point of view.

The novella ‘**The Body**’ from the collection *Different Seasons* (1982) narrates about the 12-year-old boy Gordon who, having gone through several ordeals, finally realizes that he is a real writer and adult person. The standard path of the “mythological adventure” of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation – initiation – return¹¹.

The mythological hero goes on the thrilling adventure from the everyday world into the area of the supernatural where he encounters magic forces and overcomes them. It gives him the ability to make his community happy (accomplishment of the so-called “macro-task” of the “mythological adventure”) and/or to solve his own problems (the “micro-task”).

¹¹ This formula is a standard pattern of so called “minimal narration”, i.e. the movement from one balance state through imbalance to the other similar but not identical state of balance. This inherently archaic formula is typical for many fictional works.

The motif of mysterious rebirth, the status of the unloved junior oppressed both by his parents and his environment, the image of the barren father as a symbol of the barren land – this set of qualities distinguishing the myth and the fairy-tale in the situation preceding the initiation journey features Gordon's character. The walk to the place where the body of a boy, run over by a train, has been found, represents the initiation way symbolizing the boy's transformation into a person of his own free will possessing his inner power source. On the way there are many elements of “mythological adventure” – the call to wanderings (considered as the metaphorical shift of his spiritual essence outside the native community, to the sphere of the unknown), the threshold to enter the area of the unexplored, trial by ordeals, prophetic dream, the vision of deity, the struggle against chthonic powers and unraveling the mystery of death. In the end both objectives are successfully accomplished – the “micro-task” psychologically related to the social status of the hero (establishing his own independent self) and the “macro-task” – beneficial influence of the main hero (who becomes a writer) on the society. It is the description of the journey that makes the naive reader perceive the surroundings the way a child does. As a result of having traversed the road of trials alongside the hero the reader enters into his own psyche to exercise beneficial influence on psychological processes.

In Stephen King's writings there are examples of not so successful initiation of the child when the transition of innocence to experience is burdened by negative powers. Thus, the adolescence of the protagonist of the novella ‘**Low Men in Yellow Coats**’ (from the collection *Hearts in Atlantis*, 1999) Bobby Garfield is directly affected by his suffering from the tragic loss of illusions and self-disappointment. Negative forces driving Bobby into despair are manifested through the image of the wicked, vulgar, selfish and boring world of adults. Central to the boy's initiation journey is the deliverance from his mother's influence symbolizing ‘the murder’ of his infantile ego. Bobby's mother tries to blame her late husband for all the misfortunes and takes every effort to make her son think ill of his father and of all males in general. Being cruel, wicked,

unconcerned, and indifferent to her son's wishes, Liz Garfield reminds the readers the sinister stepmother from a fairy tale¹². Liberation from her influence begins with an older man named Ted Brautigan moving into an adjacent apartment. Ted becomes a second father for Bobby playing the role of a mentor which is characteristic of the “archetype fiction”. It turns out that Ted is being stalked by some mysterious forces - "low men". These forces represent, on the one hand, mythical chaos, and on the other hand, all negative features of the adult environment familiar to the child. One day, breaking “the mother's taboo” Bobby happens to pop in the bar where his late father used to be a regular guest. The boy talks to the bar maid and finds out that other people's attitude to his father differs drastically from that of his mother. Symbolically Bobby accomplishes one of the objectives of the “archetype journey”: he manages to find his father, thus restoring the connection between the past and the present.

The whole story ends in a tragedy when the mother, being herself the victim of the hostile environment, decides to ‘sell’ Ted to “low men”. Bobby wants to alert the old man to the danger but fails to endure the traditional for mythology ordeal that follows. When the boy is faced with a choice - either to sacrifice his life and join Ted and “low men” on their way to the dreadful world or give up and stay with his mother, i.e. come to a compromise with the evil of this world – Bobby chooses to stay. Bobby's fate is tragic: he is making desperate, futile efforts to return everything backwards.

To Stephen King, the ideal result of the initiation journey is the combination of the child's innocence and the adult's experience (the latter being unthinkable without responsibility).

The title of Section 2 (Chapter III) is **The Themes of the Infantile Regression and Repression. Neurosis and the Influence of Childhood on Adulthood in Stephen King's Writings**. Freud's motifs of infantile regression and repression are seen as instruments to unfold the plot and show the originality

12 The image of the wicked mother/stepmother, “chthonic mother” is traditional for the fairy tale and myth. Posing danger to the emerging male origin, this image is supposed to be one of the external stimuli for the teenager to embark on his “initiation journey”.

of the theme of childhood's influence on adult life . In the short story '**The Raft**'

(from the collection *Skeleton Crew*) the author demonstrates the malignancy of the adult attempt to return to a previous stage of development. The protagonists, four college students, go out to swim on a remote Pennsylvanian lake. They want to enjoy the last day of summer and say a symbolic final farewell to their childhood. The students associate the plot in the middle of the lake with summer, with the time when they used to be happy, cheerful and didn't have to think about their future. The heroes try to regress their infantile feelings and decide to get on the raft. After they swim out onto the raft, this oasis of never-ending happiness and pleasant reminiscences, a mysterious oil slick-like creature appears in the water beneath them. Its appearance attracts the students' attention and let them fall into a hypnotic state. Contact with this creature is terribly painful, and finally, the monster seizes everybody on the raft and kills them. The creature inhabiting the water symbolizes the irrational forces of childhood; the adults are no longer able to cope with them, it is only the child who can survive such an ordeal.

The repression of infantile reminiscences and their influence on the individual's evolution is illustrated in the story '**The Library Policeman**' from the collection *Four Past Midnight* (1990). The repression of the main character's reminiscence about the rape lets the external evil that manifests itself as the "Library Policeman"¹³ come to the adult person to manipulate 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. 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. The similar plot, although without the 'happy ending' pattern, is being developed in the short story '**Sometimes They Come Back**' from the collection *Night Shift* (1978)

¹³ The Library Policeman is one of the characters in contemporary American children's folklore. This mythical creature punishes the children who borrow the books from the library and don't return them in time. In the case with the main hero, the maniac used the image of the terrible creature known to every child to frighten the little boy and force him to conceal the truth from anybody. The child became even more scared because the incident occurred on his way to the city library when the boy wanted to return the overdue books.

and ‘**The Monkey**’ from the collection *Skeleton Crew* (1985). In the novel

Gerald’s Game (1992) some unique events, formally resembling the techniques applied by modern psychoanalysts, help the main heroine to get rid of her painful complex. Stephen King’s writings expound on the ambivalence of childhood, on the opposition infantilism vs. childhood.

Section 3 of Chapter III – The Child as a Victim and as an Executioner:

two modes of the Manifestation of Stephen King’s sociocultural Criticism

analyzes the works where the child serves to manifest the author’s sociocultural criticism. The child is seen in terms of a harsh critic of every level of American society: family, school, church, and authorities. The author strongly disapproves of both the country’s past (**‘Children of the Corn’, *The Long Walk***) and the present

(***Rage, Carrie, It, ‘The Boogeyman’, etc.***) Having analyzed S. King’s writings one can single out two main modi of the writer’s sociocultural attitude to the artistic manifestation of the ‘father-son’ relation ship in industrial and post-industrial civilization. In his works the child/teenager can be both the victim of the adult world and its judge and “executioner”.

The final part of the PhD thesis draws the basic conclusions of the research carried out.

The analysis of Stephen King’s writings in the broad literary critic and cultural-philosophical discourse gives every reason to believe that the conceptual sphere of his works about children and childhood is genetically related to the Anglo-American literary tradition which, in turn, has grown under the direct influence of the concept of childhood developed in the treatises of notable European and American philosophers, psychologists and cultural anthropologists.

The fundamental concept underlying the aesthetical-philosophical subject of childhood in English and American literature goes back to the J.-J. Rousseau’s theory of “natural man” reflected in the aesthetics of English and American Romanticism. The way the “natural man” perceives the world became a popular mode of reflecting reality not only for the Period of Romanticism, but also for the 20th Century literature of European and American Modernism.

The topic of childhood in the American literary tradition is closely related to the concept of the “American Adam” as an integral part of the ‘American dream’. The disappointment with the ‘American dream’ leads to a tragic conclusion about the involvement of the child (as a symbol of man’s fate in general) with evil as one of the consequences of growing up (becoming part of society).

Rather than interpreting the child as “not yet a man”, J.J. Rousseau was the first to interpret the child as the “better man” manifesting “aptitude and human destiny”. Since that time, the child has become a perfect instrument of the sociocultural criticism of the adult society which, as a “realization” is supposed to be lower than human potential and destiny. These features of the child were the subject of extensive analysis in Chapter I of the present PhD thesis. It should be noted that the criticism can be manifested both through the child/victim (as it used to be in Romantic and Victorian literature) and through the child/executioner (as denial of the adults’ infantile behavior, or as representative of the initially sinful human nature in 20th Century literature).

The features of the child mentioned above were increasingly used in “socially-oriented” literature; which in the 20th century quite often represents “literature about the extraordinary”. Ye. Kovtun noted that the tradition of this literature is characterized by such elements as “sharpening or condensing the sense” and “the realization of abstractions” where, according to Ye . Kovtun, “the issues exposed by means of various types of fantasy are common to all mankind”.

Stephen King’s writings are genetically related to the outlook and aesthetic context of the social and philosophical science fiction and fantasy unthinkable without preserving and fostering the prevailing set of cultural and spiritual values. This sociocultural aspect of the problem of childhood is widely represented in King’s fiction – the image of the child (both the child/victim and the child/executioner) is used to attack America’s past and present. The author’s criticism extends to every level of American society: family, school, church, and authorities.

The second important concept affecting the contemporary comprehension of the issue under investigation is represented in the ideas of psychoanalysis. These ideas are supposed to have encouraged the early 20th Century art (or the situation can be looked upon in reverse) to scrutinize the phenomenon of childhood. The writers moved toward ever greater precision in their psychological child portraits. From this time the writers are provided with the necessary theoretical background and appropriate means to get a better understanding of every stage of the individual's evolution. The issue of childhood's influence upon the adults' world comes to the fore. Freud sees childhood as the time of neuroses; his theory is a rationale and a final verdict of interpreting the phenomenon of childhood as the tool of authors and readers escapism. Such an escapist function becomes increasingly important in 20th Century literature.

In Chapter II was discussed the capability of horror fiction to deal with fears and phobias of mass consciousness, in the creation of which, horror writers could turn to psychoanalytical theory. In context with this, was investigated the common use of such Freudian motifs as repression and infantile regression in the works of Stephen King. These two motifs can be viewed as important tools of plot-formation and exposing the originality of the artistic conception of the childhood. The author draws a distinct line between the positive qualities of childhood and the negative features of infancy.

The third component of our typology is represented by the mythological trends of S. King's writings. The archetype theory of C. Jung as well as Campbell's wide understanding of myth had a major impact on the writer's artistic conception of childhood. Stephen King sees the archetype of the child as the symbol of wholeness, the integration of consciousness with unconsciousness, the balance between innocence and wisdom, freedom and responsibility, weakness and strength. The initiation motif, popular in Stephen King's works, can be seen as the symbol of internal psychological processes. The writer considers the ideal result of initiation to be the combination of the child's innocence with the adult's experience (the latter is unthinkable without assuming personal responsibility). The

“Стивен Кинг.ру – Творчество Стивена Кинга” (<http://www.stephenking.ru/>)

theme of journey is one of the possible ways to provide harmony for readers and to show the positive qualities of the child archetype which, according to D. Campbell and A. Byrnes, symbolize the process of the individual's evolution. The theme of the “initiation journey” in S. King's fiction should be interpreted as the metaphor of the internal development of the heroes and readers.

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