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**PECULIARITIES OF THE REPRESENTATION
OF CONCEPT «CHILDHOOD» IN THE NOVEL
«A PRAYER FOR OWEN MEANY» BY JOHN IRVING**

The article investigates the specifics of the implementation of Concept «Childhood» in the novel «A Prayer for Owen Meany» by J. Irving. The components of the concept and its main features (young man, temporal characteristics, condition) are analyzed. It is indicated that Childhood is the central theme of the novel. It is revealed through the fate of the main character, his aesthetic views, ideals and values. Much attention is paid to the linguistic means used by the writer in the process of characterizing the main character and the events taking place in his life. The article states that the Concept of Childhood is realized in the work through literary devices such as metaphor, comparison, epithet, synecdoche and paraphrase. They reveal the inner world of the main character, his attitude to the surrounding reality. The article with specific examples substantiates that in the J. Irving's novel the Concept of Childhood realizes in four aspects.

Key words: concept, childhood, realization, novel, literary devices.

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**Дж. Ирвинг «Молитва об Оуэне Мини» романындағы
«Балалық шақ» концептісінің репрезентация ерекшеліктері**

Мақалада Джон Ирвингтің «Оуэн Мини жайлы дұға» («Молитва об Оуэне Мини») романындағы балалық шақ концептісінің жүзеге асу ерекшелігі көрсетіледі. Концепт компоненттері мен оның негізгі белгілері (жас, уақытша сипаттамасы, жай-күйі) қарастырылады. Балалық шақ тақырыбы романында маңызды болып табылады. Ол кейіпкердің тағдыры, оның эстетикалық көзқарастар, идеалдар мен құндылықтар арқылы анықталады. Бас кейіпкердің өмірінде кездесетін оқиғаларды сипаттау процесінде жазушының пайдаланған лингвистикалық құралдарына көп көңіл бөлінеді. Мақалада балалық шақ концептісі ауыстыру, теңеу, айқындау, меңзеу, перифраз сияқты әдеби әдістер арқылы жүзеге асырылады. Олар басты кейіпкердің ішкі әлемін, оның айналасындағы шындыққа деген көзқарасын көрсетеді. Мақалада Джон Ирвингтің романында балалық шақ концептісі төрт аспектілерде көрсетілуі нақты мысалдар негізінде дәлелденеді.

Түйін сөздер: концепт, балалық шақ, жүзеге асырылуы, роман, әдеби әдістер.

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Особенности репрезентации концепта «Детство» в романе Дж. Ирвинга «Молитва об Оуэни Мини»

В данной статье раскрывается специфика реализации концепта «Детство» в романе Дж. Ирвинга «Молитва об Оуэни Мини». Анализируются компоненты концепта и его основные признаки (человек малых лет, временная характеристика, состояние). Указывается, что тема детства является центральной в романе. Она раскрывается через судьбу главного героя, его эстетические взгляды, идеалы и ценности. Большое внимание уделяется языковым средствам, используемым писателем в процессе характеристики главного героя и событий, происходящих в его жизни. В работе указывается, что концепт детства реализуется в произведении через такие литературные приемы как метафора, сравнение, эпитет, синекдоха и перифраз. Они раскрывают внутренний мир главного героя, его отношения к окружающей действительности. В статье на конкретных примерах обосновывается, что концепт детства реализуется в романе Дж. Ирвинга в четырех аспектах.

Ключевые слова: концепт, детство, реализация, роман, литературные приемы.

Introduction

The novel «A Prayer for Owen Meany» since its publication has repeatedly been the subject of attention of criticism, and, for the most part, in periodical publications.

T.F. Davis and K. Womack note that this work has a special style, somewhat reminiscent of the style of C. Dickens: «His recognition that the visceral, material accretion of detail is what represents the singularity of a setting or character complements his devotion to the novelistic forms of Charles Dickens, another master of such techniques» (Davis, Kenneth, 2004:10). Stephen King gave a high assessment to the novel, noting that Irving is «who writes novels in the unglamorous but effective way Babe Ruth used to hit home runs, deserves a medal not only for writing this book but for the way he has written it» (King, 1989: 40).

According to literary critics, the novel «A Prayer for Owen Meany» is a bildungsroman. Therefore, E.M. Zagarina, analyzing the traditions of the bildungsroman in J. Irving's prose, notes that the hero goes through certain phases of education and becomes a believer by overcoming numerous tests. Plot is based upon the story of the narrator's childhood years, his friendship with an unusual boy named Owen, memories of growing up and Owen's death. The main character played out in three ways: childhood, adolescence, adult stage after the friend's death. Owen's death became a turning point for Johnny, because after that, he began to believe in God, and this belief grew deeper every day.

The novel by J. Irving can be characterized as a bildungsroman. Literary critics referred to peculiarities in this aspect: «In his life journey, the main character, like the hero of Irving's previous novel, goes through certain phases of development and, undergoing numerous tests, becomes a believer. The writer uses the method of immersion into the past as an element of the poetics of the novel, as he captures the main, key events in the life of the hero. In this novel, the author describes in detail the life of America in the 1960s and 80s, social movements, the policies of statesmen and other problems of that period. One of the remarkable features of the novel «A Prayer for Owen Meany» is the author's addition to the traditional description of the hero's life motives. Irving gives the image of the positive hero Owen Meany, under whose influence the spiritual evolution of the narrator takes place » (Campbell, Irving, 1998: 35).

Experiment

The concept of childhood in this novel is implemented in three versions:

1. in relation to the narrator,
2. to Owen Meany,
3. to those children who meet on the way of heroes at different times.

The main core of the concept is the key word «Childhood», but the lexeme «Children» is often found in the novel:

«My grandmother thinks there're too many *kids* in the house already – when they're here», I explained...» (Irving, 1989: 20).

«INDOORS, AT MY HOUSE, WOULD NOT BE A LOT OF FUN BECAUSE MY PARENTS ARE RATHER STRANGE ABOUT *CHILDREN*» (Irving, 1989:21).

Children of different age, their presence and quantity in families can be a subject of disagreement between adults:

«Is it about *children*, Tabitha?» my grandmother asked one evening at dinner, and Lydia and I sat at attention to hear the answer. «I mean, does he want them do you not want another? Orisit **the ot her**-wayaround?» (Irving, 1989: 30).

Lexemes «Children» can acquire a negative value, as in the case with the attitude of Johnny to the children's team after the death of his mother:

«Indeed, not only had Owen and I quit the team – and that infernal game forever; other members of our Little League team had used the upsetting incident as a means to get out of a tedious obligation that had been much more their parents' notion of something that was «good for them» than it had ever been their sport of choice» (Irving, 1989: 35).

The lexeme «boys» is often found in the novel. The lexeme gives the statement an additional degree of diminution in relation to children:

«The *boys* get up early», I said, «but Hester sleeps a little later-or at least she stays in her room longer» (Irving, 1989: 30).

«To a boy from New Hampshire, an armadillo resembled a small dinosaur» (Irving, 1989: 15).

In the novel, there is a designation of non-adult as *kids*:

«One of the *kids* in the back seat spoke up» (Irving, 1989:96).

«One of the *children* was instantly beside me».«What was it? the *child* asked» (Irving, 1989:112).

Also «not adult» is realized with the unit «baby»:

«I have some outgrown things of Johnny's that will fit you, Owen,» my mother said (Irving, 1989:22).

«*BABY CLOTHES*, I SUPPOSE,» Owen said, but he stopped walking; he leaned his head on his bike's handlebars (Irving, 1989:22).

Newborn infants are represented as characters of the Christmas pageant:

«ALL THOSE *BABIES*», Owen said. «JUST TO GET ONE TO LIE IN THE MANGER WITHOUT CRYING – DO WE HAVE TO HAVE ALL THOSE *BABIES*?» (Irving, 1989:44).

«But it's like the song says, Owen,» the rector told him. «'Little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes»

«OKAY, OKAY,» Owen said.

«BUT ALL THOSE *BABIES* – YOU CAN HEAR THEM CRYING. EVEN OFFSTAGE, YOU CAN HEAR THEM. AND ALL THOSE GROWN–UPS!» he said. «ALL THOSE BIG MEN PASSING THE *BABIES*IN AND OUT (Irving, 1989:44).

In the following example, there is no lexeme «Child», author transmitted the time when the narrator was born:

«When they'd been growing up in the big house on Front Street, it was my Aunt Martha who brought the boys from Gravesend Academy home to meet my grandmother and grandfather – Martha was the older, and the first to bring home «beaus,» as my mother called them. But once the boys saw my mother – even *before she was old enough to date*– that was usually the end of their interest in Aunt Martha» [4, 6].

A child in the novel can be a specific little person, and they can use this word with a certain degree of abstractness when a pregnant woman is expecting a child. These types of concept implementation are displayed in the following examples:

«Maybe she'd said, «I met a man on the good old Boston and Maine-and now I'm pregnant!» Maybe she said, «I'm going to have a *baby* as a result of a fling I had with a total stranger I met on the good old Boston and Maine-someone I never expect to see again!» (Irving, 1989:12).

An indication of age can serve as an adjective «small». Remarkably, this passage compares small and abnormal people:

«I thought they would think that dressing up in Grandfather's clothes was either *baby* play, or morbid, or both...» (Irving, 1989:21).

At the next stage of growing up, author describes young people:

«Mr. Hurd was known to patrol Water Street in downtown Gravesend, looking for *youthful* offenders: specifically, *young men* who would not doff their hats to him, and *young ladies* who would not curtsy. In payment for such offense, Emery Hurd was happy to give these *young people* a piece of his mind; near the end, only pieces were left» (Irving, 1989:9).

Also the author referred to adolescents, people who not adults yet, but not children, and the «decoding» of this concept is immediately given (not entered into puberty):

«Whenever it was, Hester and I were still in our *pre adolescent years-our pre sexual years*, if that's safe to say; perhaps that is never safe to say in regard to Hester, but I promise it is safe to say of me» (Irving, 1989: 17).

Hester seems to have been «delayed» 12 years old:

«Hester made everyone nervous: in good light, in close-up, she looked her age-like a large, *overly mature twelve-year-old*. But from any distance, with any assistance from the shadows, she looked *eighteen* – and like a lot of trouble, too» (Irving, 1989:37).

Adolescence is commented by characters:

«Dan Needham described the situation in the form of a headline: «*Teenage Traumas Run Wild in Sawyer Depot!*» (Irving, 1989:73).

An assessment of this age is given by Johnny himself, however, from the standpoint of an adult, that is, at the time when he writes his memoirs:

«There we were, in our rented tuxedos, boys more afraid of pimples than of war» (Irving, 1989:77).

The «non-adult» component is also implemented with the imaginative characteristics that are given to the characters by their teachers, parents, friends:

«If he was occasionally capable of being a stoic in the air, he was always a stoic when Mrs. Walker accused him of *childish* behavior» (Irving, 1989:4).

«Not an adult» in relation to the narrator is also an indication that he is small, but will grow definitely. In this example, two ways to implement the concept of childhood can be singled out: using the adjective «small (little)» and the verb «to grow» (in English: old enough):

«I was *little* Johnny Wheelwright, father unknown, and-at the time-that was okay with me. I never complained. One day, I always thought, she would tell me about it-when I was old enough to know the story. It was, apparently, the kind of story you had to be «*old enough*» to hear» (Irving, 1989:5).

In the following passage, we can trace the implementation of the concept of childhood in several ways: with an indication of family ties (brothers), the fact that we are speaking about boys and girls, and indicating the lexeme «younger»:

«I know that Hester especially looked forward to my visits because she suffered from being the constant inferior to her *brothers* – not that they abused her, or even teased her. Considering that they were *boys*, and *older*, and she was a *girl*, and *younger*, I thought they treated her splendidly», (Irving, 1989:16).

The following example also displays two different ways of implementing the concept of childhood: this is an indication of the role of the child in the family (brother, cousin) and implementation using the lexeme «boy»:

«... and that the only way she could repay her *brothers* for out skiing her (on water and on snow), and for hurting her off sawdust piles, and for cramming her *cousin* into a basket with her old underwear, was to intimidate every girlfriend either of them ever had and to fuck the brains out of every *boy* they ever knew» (Irving, 1989:16).

Examples related to the role «children of teachers» are mainly characterized by Johnny:

«Faculty *children-faculty* brats, we were called-could automatically attend the academy» (Irving, 1989:8).

«What a relief this must have been to my grandmother; she'd always resented that her own children couldn't go to Gravesend Academy-she'd had *daughters*» (Irving, 1989: 8).

The fact that Owen was short in stature influenced in his invitation to the role of baby Jesus in the Christmas pageant. In the novel, a lot of attention is paid to this, and the emphasis is constantly placed on the size of Owen:

«I KNOW SOMEONE WHO CAN FIT IN THE CRIB,» Owen said. «*SOMEONE SMALL ENOUGH TO LOOK LIKE A BABY*», he said. «*SOMEONE OLD ENOUGH NOT TO CRY*» [4, 44].

«Mary Beth Baird could not contain herself! «Owen can be the Baby Jesus!» she yelled». Owen Meany smiled and shrugged.

«I CAN FIT IN THE CRIB», he said modestly (Irving, 1989:44).

Lexemes «small», «baby» in this context indicates the size of Owen.

In this passage in the original work there is no characteristic indicating small size of

The language realization of the concept «Childhood» in the novel also provides for the availability of means of artistic expression. Among them we noted metaphors, comparisons, epithets, synecdoche, paraphrases.

Epithets are:

- – youthful offenders;
- funny little guy;
- – STUPE BABY;
- in awe;
- the privileged louts of the luxury class-spoiledbratsinneed of discipline.

In general, epithets are used to transmit external signs (funny little guy), to characterize a group of adolescents and young people (youthful offenders); to convey the negative attitude of teachers to the «elite» young people (the privileged louts of the luxury class-spoiledbratsinneed of discipline).

Comparisons are:

Characterizing the main heroes (Owen and Johnny):

- because he was the smallest person I ever knew;

- «a little doll», the girls called him;

- He was mortally cute; he had a furry animal attractiveness-except for the nakedness of his nearly transparent ears, and the rodent like way they protruded from his sharp face;

- boysmoreafraid of pimples than of war;

Characterizing other heroes:

- ... mygrandmo the rcalledthem «the warriors;

- – You’re such a kid yourself...

Characterizing inanimate creatures:

- – ... anarmadilloresembledasmalldinosaur.

Comparisons are mostly used to emphasize how unusual Owen (he had a furry animal attractiveness) was. To characterize the concept of childhood, comparisons that draw parallels between adults and children are important (You’re such a kid yourself... -), show how a small child perceives a creature, unfamiliar to him (resembledasmalldinosaur), reflect the attitude of young people to war (boysmoreafraid of pimplesthan of war).

The synecdoche is noted in this example:

My grandmother was Appalled <...> to her, he was «that boy,» or «that little guy», or «that voice».

In this case, the boy in is perceived only as a voice, as it was an unusual voice that was one of the most striking signs of Owen.

Metaphors are highlighted in the following cases:

Characterizing Owen:

he was *the instrument of my mother’s death*,

Characterizing Johnny:

- – Iwas *little Johnny Wheelwright*,

- – «*My fling*», she would occasionallycallme, with the greatest affection. «*My little fling!*»

- Faculty children – faculty brats ...

- «Good-bye, *darling!*»

Metaphors in the implementation of the concept of childhood are used for imaginative characteristics (Faculty children – faculty brats), for transmitting the mother’s feelings (darling, fling), for assessing the characteristics of the birth of Johnny (little Johnny Wheel wright «Mylittlefling!)), and also for displaying the feelings of the hero, associated with the death of the mother and with his relationship to a friend (the instrument of my mother’s death).

Periphrase is used to characterize Hester:

But from any distance, with any assistance from the shadows, she looked eighteen-and like a lot of trouble, too.

The author emphasizes that Hester looks older than his years.

Results and discussion

Thus, the basic principles for the implementation of the Concept «Childhood» in the novel are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 – Principles for the implementation of Concept «Childhood» in the novel «A Prayer for Owen Meany» by J. Irving

Core	Characteristics		
	Temporal	Not an adult, young man	Condition
Reference to age	Thematical series: Boys, girls, kids, children, little, teenager		«Fixation» of Owen in childhood
	Social roles: son, schoolboy		
	Figurative characteristics		

Table 2 – The role of literary devices in the implementation of the Concept«Childhood» in the novel «A Prayer for Owen Meany»

Literary devices	The role in the implementation of the concept	Examples from the novel
1	2	3
Metaphor	figurative characterization of characters	Faculty children – faculty brats
	transfer of feelings to the mother	darling, fling
	assessment of the features of the birth of Johnny	little Johnny Wheelwright «My little fling!»
	display the hero’s feelings related to the death of the mother and his relation to a friend	the instrument of my mother’s death

Continuation of table 2

Literary devices	The role in the implementation of the concept	Examples from the novel
1	2	3
Comparison	emphasize how unusual Owen was	he had a furry animal attractiveness
	draw parallels between adults and children	You're such a kid yourself...
	show how a small child perceives a creature unfamiliar to him	resembled a small dinosaur
	reflect the attitude of young people to war	boys more afraid of pimples than of war
Epithet	external descriptions	funny little guy
	potential characteristic of a group of adolescents and young people	youthful offenders
	transfer of the negative attitude of teachers to the «elite» youth	the privileged louts of the luxury class-spoiled brats in need of discipline.
Synecdoche	underlines the singularity of Owen's voice	«that boy,» or «that little guy,» or « <u>that voice.</u> »
Periphrase	Hester's Characteristic	she looked eighteen-and like a lot of trouble, too.

Conclusion

The analysis of the novel «A Prayer for Owen Meany», allows us to conclude that the Concept «Childhood» is realized in this work in several aspects: the actual childhood, the core of the concept, concept, indicating the time, concept of non-adult and in a state in which Owen seemed to be fixed. Literary devices serve to convey the feelings of the heroes, for their figurative characteristics and to display the peculiarities of the relations between

the characters. All of them serve for figurative descriptions, for transferring the state of heroes, their thoughts. The concept «Childhood» is realized not only on the general principles of attitude towards the child, characteristic of fiction as a whole, but also on the basis of national specificity and the genre of the work by J. Irving. Investigated bildungsroman, enriched by trends in socio-political prose and auto documentary (memories). This approach allows us to get a more complete picture of Owen himself, and to reveal the peculiarities of the Concept «Childhood».

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