

ОРИГИНАЛЬНАЯ СТАТЬЯ

DOI: 10.26794/2226-7867-2020-10-6-131-134

УДК 82(045)

Детство и юность в рассказах Джеймса Джойса «Сестры» и «Аравия»

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АННОТАЦИЯ

Рассказы Д. Джойса (1882–1941 гг.) «Сестры» и «Аравия» из сборника «Дублинцы» (1905 г.) стоит рассматривать как репрезентацию начала жизненного цикла. В статье рассматриваются темы детства и юности в перцепции Джойса, и то, как он их развивает в обсуждаемых текстах, помещая в центр проблему перехода из одного состояния (детство) в другое (зрелость). Этот переходный период определяется как подростковый, когда дети теряют свои лучшие, по Джойсу, качества из-за «психологического потрясения». В работе также рассматривается мотив «духовного паралича», которым поражены все жители Дублина, – комплексный образ всех человеческих пороков. Хотя Джойс описывает Дублин, скорее, как трансцендентальное пространство, он все еще пишет об актуальных социальных проблемах не только Дублина, но и всей Ирландии. В статье проводится анализ наиболее значимых символов, наделенных многозначностью, через которые раскрываются отношения детей и подростков с миром. Кроме того, рассматривается язык обоих рассказов, репрезентирующий особенности детской речи, которая свидетельствует о неполном понимании мира.

Ключевые слова: детство; юность; Джойс; Дублинцы; Ирландия; духовный паралич; католицизм; полисемия

Для цитирования: Анютин А.Р. Детство и юность в рассказах Джеймса Джойса «Сестры» и «Аравия». *Гуманитарные науки. Вестник Финансового университета*. 2020;10(6):131-134. DOI: 10.26794/2226-7867-2020-10-6-131-134

ORIGINAL PAPER

Childhood and Adolescence in James Joyce's "Sisters" and "Araby"

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ABSTRACT

The stories "The Sisters" and "Araby" are the part of *Dubliners*, both put at the beginning of the compilation, which can be considered as a presentation of the whole life cycle. This article develops what childhood and adolescence mean to Joyce and how he presents it in these two texts, the theme of the transition from childhood to adulthood being central. This transition period is considered as adolescence when children lose their merits, which only can happen if the child will receive a "psychologically traumatic blow". This essay also considers the motif of a "spiritual paralysis" – a collective image of human vices, which all Dublin citizens are cursed with. Though Joyce describes this city as a mythic kingdom, he is still writing about current social problems, which refers not only to Dublin but also to the whole of Ireland. This article develops the most remarkable symbols, endowed with polysemy, through which the relationship of children and adolescents with the world is revealed. Furthermore, the author discussed the language of both stories, as it has features of children's speech in it, which presents the lack of complete understanding of the world.

Keywords: childhood; adolescence; Joyce; *Dubliners*; Ireland; spiritual paralysis; Catholicism; polysemy; traumatic blow

For citation: Anyutina A.R. Childhood and adolescence in James Joyce's "Sisters" and "Araby". *Gumanitarnye Nauki. Vestnik Finansovogo Universiteta = Humanities and Social Sciences. Bulletin of the Financial University*. 2020;10(6):131-134. DOI: 10.26794/2226-7867-2020-10-6-131-134

As has been said, “The Sisters” and “Araby” are the part of *Dubliners* which can be considered as a presentation of the whole life cycle. The cycle starts with the childhood, so it is chronologically put in the beginning of the compilation. “The Sisters”, “An Encounter” and “Araby” (hereinafter childhood trilogy) constitute a prologue of the life story of *Dubliners*. Throughout the collection there will be stories about youth, adulthood and Dublin’s social life. It is possible that childhood theme is developed to present the fullness of life with all its stages.

All stories are connected with the place of narration — Dublin. This city is a place of “moral, spiritual and intellectual paralytics”, which was described by Joyce as a “mythic kingdom, a microcosm” [1, p. 33]. Though it is a mythic kingdom, Joyce is writing about current social problems, which refers not only to Dublin, but also to the whole Ireland. Therefore, he extrapolates his attitude towards Dubliners to all Irish. Nevertheless, he concentrates on Dublin as on the most familiar place to him and as on the centralization of human vices. Joyce argues that spiritual paralysis is Dublin’s defining feature: “I call the series *Dubliners* to betray the soul of that hemiplegia or paralysis which many consider a city” [2, p. 55]. Dublin becomes a small world which presents problems of the whole country.

The most evident symbol referred to this theme is the broken chalice in “The Sisters”. According to A. S. Golovkina, the broken chalice in “The Sisters” symbolizes that “young Irish have their hopes shattered since childhood” [3, p. 28]. This probably means that Catholicism destroys children in the face of Father Flynn. That would explain the narrator’s feeling of becoming freed when the priest dies. The explicit meaning is that he is freed from daily boy’s routine and emotional visits. Nevertheless, the implicit meaning is that the boy feels freed because he is no longer connected with the church that was disfiguring him. He no longer needs to participate in things that he does not understand.

E. A. Koshkina claims that the chalice in “Araby” symbolizes Ireland’s spiritual life and the fact that it is empty means that “there is no spiritual life there” [4, p. 133]. It is not a very accurate interpretation, as the main meaning of the chalice, carried by the boy, is the representation of the Holy Grail. Naïve child imagines himself

as a knight: “I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes” [5, p. 21]. All stories about the Holy Grail were written as poems included in *La matière de Bretagne* (classification by Jean Bodel) which suggested courtly knighthood as the main theme. Thereby, the boy, carrying the chalice, is feeling himself a knight with his beloved, carrying the Holy Grail.

Joyce himself names the main theme of *Dubliners* — “spiritual paralysis”, thus, making this theme explicit. The spiritual paralysis is the collective image of human vices, though the most important of them can be defined as indifference. It seems that all adults in the childhood trilogy are dominated by it. For example, the parents of the narrator in “Araby” do not care about him — his father forgets about his promise and gets drunk. Then, when the boy meets a salesgirl, she does not pay attention to him, talking to two young people. The whole world is closed to the child, leaving him alone with his thoughts. In “The Sisters” old Cotter does not care about the narrator’s feelings and says that “it’s bad for children” [5, 6] to spend time with an old priest. Therefore, in the childhood trilogy Joyce mostly concentrates on one part of the spiritual paralysis — indifference.

While growing up, children become a part of adult’s world. This transition period can be defined as adolescence. In “The Sisters” and “Araby” narrators do not finally grow up, but they come close to it. Both stories are dedicated to the first meeting with adult’s world and both stories end vaguely — it cannot be said that children have joined adult’s world and have got spiritually paralyzed, though they change from their initial state. They are experiencing their first moral fracture, which Florence Walzl considers as a “psychologically traumatic blow” [6, p. 222]. This blow is caused by boy’s ruined aspirations, confronted with the paralyzed world of Dublin.

At the end of the “The Sisters” the boy becomes conscious of the fact that the priest is dead: “I knew that the old priest was lying still in his coffin” [5, p. 12], though before he did not entirely believe. This comprehension is the first step of growing up, the boy begins to realize death. At the end of “Araby” the boy looks at the sky and sees himself “as a creature driven and derided by vanity” [5, p. 24]. This moment can be called an epiphany, as before the boy was blind to himself. The word “blind” is important for both stories, though it does not mean blindness in any cases.

In “The Sisters” this word is repeated twice, meaning shutter or curtain. This can be arguably interpreted as a barrier between children and adults, which means that children do not see the real world, they are blind to it. The same motif is provided by the word “blind” in “Araby”, where it means a dead end of the street. Though it is not directly spoken, and the main meaning of the word “blind” is implicit, it becomes understandable, as in the end of “Araby” the narrator sees himself clearly at the first time. Therefore, it can be suggested that children in *Dubliners* are blind to vices, surrounding them. Though adults see them clearly, this cause susceptibility to the spiritual paralysis.

A. S. Golovkina suggests that “in terms of ideological and artistic content, all three stories convey the idea that a child, while entering life, faces the fact that his inner world is in conflict with the surrounding world of the lack of spirituality and stagnation” [3, p. 24]. From this it can be stated that the transition period between childhood and adulthood, which can be defined as adolescence, represents a moral conflict. This conflict, according to Joyce, leads an adolescent to the spiritual paralysis. An adolescent accepts the paralysis to correspond the world around him. Though, it is not a personal decision to change their personality, it is a world, and more specifically Dublin, that changes young Irish. Joyce sympathizes with children, as the surrounding world and especially Catholicism disfigure them.

It is important to notice that in the childhood trilogy narrators are homodiegetic. This probably can represent the sincerity of children, as they tell their stories by themselves, though the narrative voice of “The Sisters” (and “Araby” to a lesser extent) is not the one which feels completely natural for a boy of his age.. By contrast, stories about adulthood (for example, “A Little Cloud”) have heterodiegetic narrators which forms a barrier between a protagonist and a reader.

Furthermore, another notable part of the narration is language. As both stories are told by children, they have some features of children’s speech in them. The boy in “The Sisters” does not know some words but still he can ponder them. Thus, he thinks about the word “paralysis” referred to Father Flynn. This is the moment when the spiritual paralysis gains a physical form, as Father Flynn was bedridden.

In “The Sisters” only the phonetic form of the word has sense, the meaning becomes unimportant. This can be called “defamiliarization” (a term invented by V. Shklovsky) which means describing something familiar and common in a strange, unfamiliar way. It needs to distance the reader from the word (or a phenomenon) to look at it in another way. Thereby, Joyce makes the reader look at familiar words (gnomon, paralysis, simony) from child’s point of view, so it will provoke new associations. By looking at these words from the point of their strangeness, Joyce brings together words with different semantics.

Children’s speech also presents the lack of complete understanding of the world. It can be seen in “The Sisters”, where the uncertainty is important. The boy says “it” many times (about the world “paralysis”), as he has no confidence what he is talking about.

One of the most remarkable themes is the theme of liberation which is dedicated to children’s feelings in both stories. This theme connected with the word “sensation” that appears both in “The Sisters” and in “Araby”. In “The Sisters” this word appears when the narrator is pondering Father Flynn’s death: “I felt even annoyed at discovering in myself a sensation of freedom as if I had been freed from something by his death” [5, p. 8]. In “Araby” this word shows that the narrator can feel life fully: “These noises converged in a single sensation of life for me” [5, p. 23]. In both cases this word presents that children are opened to feelings. It is remarkable that this word is used only according to children and is not connected with adults. It appears that this cause misunderstanding between children and adults, as the former are still open to the world and the latter are paralyzed. Furthermore, in both stories “sensation” appears at happy moments in narrator’s lives.

As has been said, in “The Sisters” this word is connected with the moral liberation. It can be argued that the liberation means growing up, though it is a paradoxical situation. Losing his object of obsession, the boy is freed from love and at the same time he is growing up. Losing his friend, the narrator of “The Sisters” is growing up, while perceiving that the priest is dead. Therefore, children are freed from their naivety, but at the same time they are cursed with the spiritual paralysis. Ultimately, Joyce writes about childhood as about the opposite to

the state of the spiritual paralysis. Childhood means to him innocence, sincerity and naivety. The world view of little Dubliners comes into a conflict with adult's apathy. To become an adult a child needs to come through a transition period — adolescence, which only can happen if the child will receive a traumatic blow. Joyce does not describe adolescence extensively, but

the endings of both stories bring children to this point. Children grow morally as they face situations that require reflection.

Between children and adults Joyce would sympathize the former, as he writes himself that adults in Dublin are paralyzed. Children's perception is closer to Joyce, as it allows to look at common things in an unexpected way.

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Статья поступила 10.11.2020; принята к публикации 30.11.2020.

Автор прочитала и одобрила окончательный вариант рукописи.

The article received on 10.11.2020; accepted for publication on 30.11.2020.

The author read and approved the final version of the manuscript.