ПРОБЛЕМЫ ПОЭТИКИ ЗАРУБЕЖНОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ

УДК 821.111-94+821.111-343.4. DOI: 10.26170/2071-2405-2025-30-4-141-151.
ББК Ш383(4Вел)64-442.
ГРНТИ 17.07.29. Код ВАК 5.9.2

AMBIVALENCE OF THE ADDRESSEE OF THE 20th–21st CENTURY ENGLISH LITERARY FAIRY TALE

Yulia A. Bashkatova
Kemerovo State University (Kemerovo, Russia)
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1110-7204

Larisa P. Prokhorova
Kemerovo State University (Kemerovo, Russia)
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2311-2385

Abstract. The article deals with the problem of ambivalence of the addressee in the genre of English literary fairy tale. The practical research material encompasses original texts of fairy tales written by English authors over the period of the 20th–21st centuries. The relevance of this work is determined by the interest of the philological theory in the phenomenon of addressing the literary text as one of the most important categories of text generation, specifically manifested in the works originally belonging to children's literature and still insufficiently investigated. This research paper fills a lacuna in the study of the addressed fiction text, especially in the context of the hybrid literary fairy tale genre. The aim of the undertaken research is to analyze the specificity of the genre in the aspect of its addressing, most clearly manifested in the narrative strategy of the author, who uses various linguistic and non-linguistic means outside the narrative space of the fairy tale text to imitate an oral story, typical of the nature of the fairy tale genre, and to establish direct contact with the reader. It is established that the specificity of the ambivalence of the reader's image in a literary fairy tale is due to the hybrid character of the structure and content of the author's text, for which the use of various techniques of realization and maintenance of a live dialogue with the reader is an essential condition, leaving space for interpretation and refinement of meanings depending on the cultural experience and age of the addressee. Dialogue in a literary fairy tale has a creative character and is aimed at game-based communication with the reader, which can actively involve both children and adult addressee. The novelty of the research lies in the complex diachronic analysis of the narrative strategies that form the ambivalent image of the addressee in the English-language literary fairy tale of the 20th–21st centuries. For the first time, the logic of the transformation of these strategies and the image of the addressee during the key period of the genre evolution has been revealed on specific material, which allows the authors to speak not just about a static feature, but about a dynamic component of the poetics of the fairy tale.

Keywords: English literature; English writers; children's literature; literary creative activity; literary genres; literary fairy tales; ambivalence; addressee factor; image of the reader; dialogic nature; English linguoculture

For citation: Bashkatova, Yu. A., Prokhorova, L. P. (2025). Ambivalence of the Addressee of the 20th–21st Century English Literary Fairy Tale. In *Philological Class*. Vol. 30. No. 4, pp. 141–151. DOI: 10.26170/2071-2405-2025-30-4-141-151.

АМБИВАЛЕНТНОСТЬ АДРЕСАТА АНГЛИЙСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРНОЙ СКАЗКИ XX–XXI ВВ.

Башкатова Ю. А.
Кемеровский государственный университет (Кемерово, Россия)
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1110-7204
SPIN-код: 5895-1618

Прохорова Л. П.
Кемеровский государственный университет (Кемерово, Россия)
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2311-2385
SPIN-код: 9610-6394

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается проблема амбивалентности адресата в жанре литературной сказки. Материалом исследования послужили оригинальные тексты сказочных произведений английских авторов периода XX–XXI вв. Актуальность данной работы определяется интересом филологической науки к феномену адресованности художественного текста как одной из важнейших категорий текстообразования, специфично проявляющейся в произведениях, изначально относящихся к детской литературе, и еще в недостаточной мере исследованной. Исследование заполняет лакуну в изучении адресованности художественного текста, особенно в контексте гибридности жанра литературной сказки. Цель предпринятого исследования заключается в анализе специфики жанра в аспекте его адресованности, наиболее ярко проявляющейся в нарративной стратегии автора, использующего различные языковые и не языковые средства вне фабульного пространства текста сказки для имитации устного рассказа, свойственного сказочному жанру в целом, и установления

непосредственного контакта с читателем. Выявлено, что специфика амбивалентности образа читателя в литературной сказке обусловлена гибридным характером структуры и содержания авторского текста, для которого существенным условием является использование разнообразных приемов осуществления и поддержания живого диалога с читателем, что создает возможность для интерпретации и достраивания смыслов в зависимости от культурного опыта и возраста адресата. Диалог в литературной сказке носит креативный характер и направлен на игровую коммуникацию с читателем, в которую может активно включаться как детский, так и взрослый адресат. Новизна исследования заключается в комплексном диахроническом анализе нарративных стратегий, формирующих амбивалентный образ адресата в англоязычной литературной сказке XX–XXI вв. Впервые на конкретном материале выявлена логика трансформации этих стратегий и образа адресата на протяжении ключевого периода эволюции жанра, что позволяет говорить не просто о статичном признаке, а о динамическом компоненте поэтики сказки.

Ключевые слова: английская литература; английские писатели; детская литература; литературное творчество; литературные жанры; литературные сказки; амбивалентность; фактор адресата; образ читателя; диалогичность; английская лингвокультура

Для цитирования: Башкатова, Ю. А. Амбивалентность адресата английской литературной сказки XX–XXI вв. / Ю. А. Башкатова, Л. П. Прохорова. – Текст : непосредственный // Филологический класс. – 2025. – Т. 30, № 4. – С. 141–151. – DOI: 10.26170/2071-2405-2025-30-4-141-151.

Introduction

The literary fairy tale is a unique genre that balances on the edge of child and adult perception. Like any literature for children, it is the result of authors constructing a child's worldview, which creates a binary opposition of "adult vs. child" in the image of the reader. The fairy tale creates a special space where reality intertwines with fantasy, and moral lessons are delivered through the lens of magic. One of the key features of the literary fairy tale is the ambivalence of the reader's image – its duality, which manifests in the text's simultaneous orientation toward two audiences: children and adults. This phenomenon makes the fairy tale a universal genre, capable of speaking to everyone in their own language. It can be said that when opening the text of a literary fairy tale, the reader, whether a child or an adult, embarks on a journey along their own yellow brick road, accompanied by their own fantasies, supported by personal experience and cultural background.

The research methodology is based on an interdisciplinary approach that combines literary analysis with elements of cultural studies and linguistics (analysis of linguistic means of address), intertextual analysis, which allows tracing the author's appeal to the layers of cultural thesaurus of his dual addressee. The historical-literary approach made it possible to trace the evolution of the genre: addressing the question of how the perception of the addressee of the literary fairy tale has changed and what factors influenced this transformation, the work provides a brief overview of the most important works that significantly influenced the formation of the genre in the English literary tradition. Techniques of linguo-stylistic and communicative analysis allowed for a more detailed examination, based on five texts, of how the perceptions of the child-reader as the addressee of the literary fairy tale have transformed over the century-long history of the genre's development in Britain. The identification and description of the mechanisms of creative dialogue as the basis of ambivalent addressivity in a literary tale fills a gap in the study of the category of addressivity in hybrid genres. In this work, ambivalence is for the first time considered not as an accidental property, but as a system-forming feature of the genre of literary fairy tales, providing its aesthetic and communicative specificity.

Specificity of Defining the Genre in Terms of Its Addressivity

According to many Russian researchers: M. N. Lipovetsky [1992], E. V. Namychkina [2010], L. V. Ovchinnikova [2003], L. P. Prokhorova [2012], I. V. Tsikusheva [2008] the literary fairy tale is a completely unique type of literary form. The folk fairy tale played a special role in its formation. Relying on ancient archetypes, the author's fairy tale is oriented not only towards the genres of folk tales but also towards the assimilation of elements from preceding cultural traditions. This includes literary fairy tales by predecessors and 'classics' of the genre from both European and national literary traditions. It also utilizes the ideological principles and plot-compositional models of the novella, philosophical novel, utopia, parable, fable, and other literary genres. This makes it a multi-genre form of literature, realized in the endless diversity of works by various authors. This characteristic proves its hybrid nature and, consequently, the difficulty of classifying it within a single genre.

Since the genre of the literary fairy tale in British culture has been chosen as the object of this study, it is appropriate to provide a brief overview of the terms used to denote this genre in the English-language research tradition. Here, one can't but note a certain terminological confusion, as the term *literary fairy tale*, which corresponds to the Russian definition of the genre *literaturnaya skazka* / *литературная сказка*, is practically not used. In critical literature, the terms *Children's Literature* or *Literature for Children* are more commonly employed, which explicitly indicate a child audience as the key addressee. This emphasis on the addressee factor can be explained by the fact that in Britain, until the 18th century, almost no books were written specifically for children, and the first works of authorial fairy tales gained public and critical approval as children's literature. According to Marina Warner "the Romantic vision of childhood led to the triumph of the imagination, but also to the belief that the faculty of make-belief was a child's special privilege. Grown-ups yearned to regain that paradise – the land of the lost boys – and evoking this secondary world became a powerful spur to new fairy fiction" [Warner 2014: 103].

The emphasis on the content aspect of works

within the genre is evident in terms such as *fairy tale, modern fairy tale, modern hybrid fairy tale,* and *fantasy*. For the Victorian era (1837–1901), which witnessed a peculiar fascination with the fairy-tale realm, revitalizing the literature of the time with a vibrant flourishing of fairy tales, fantasy, and nonsense works, the terms *Victorian fairy tale* and *Victorian fantasy* are used. As L. P. Prokhorova notes in her monograph "Skazka, igra, intertekstual'nost'" ("Fairy Tale, Play, Intertextuality"), the complexity of defining the genre's name in English-language critical literature is largely due to the problem of unambiguous definition of the addressee and the multifaceted nature of works within this genre [Prokhorova 2012: 44]. The aforementioned term *modern hybrid fairy tale*, proposed by Cook [1976], highlights the hybridity of the structure, content, and addressee of the literary fairy tale.

The term *literary fairy tale* is widely used in contemporary studies. Thus, Professor Zipes, a prominent scholar in the field, while arguing on the inherent duality of the genre, notes: "The literary fairy tale was written and is still written for children and adults. In fact, it is a genre that deliberately blurs age boundaries. The surface simplicity and transparency of the fairy tale are deceptive, for they enable the writer to address the wishes and needs of the child while commenting on the norms and values of the adult world" [Zipes 2006: 3]. This highlights the genre's core mechanism: a child-directed plot that carries an adult-coded social or moral subtext.

In his work "The Irresistible Fairy Tale" Zipes also highlights the socio-economic reality behind the ambivalence – the adult is the consumer, the child the end-user, and the tale must satisfy both: "When writers like Perrault, the Grimms, and Andersen began shaping their tales for print, they were always conscious of a double audience: the child to be educated or amused, and the adult who purchased the book and who needed to be assured of its propriety and value. The fairy tale thus became a transactional genre, mediating between adult authority and childhood imagination" [Zipes 2012: 31].

The Golden Age of Children's Literature as a landmark of addressee's image change

It is also noteworthy that the period from 1865 to 1926 was recognized as *The Golden Age of Children's Literature*. The Golden Age of Children's Literature is a period of time in America and Great Britain when fairy tales, fantasy stories and dramas were published for teenage audiences. Children's literature was recognized for its literary significance and became a genre for publishing investment.

The brilliant beginning of the Golden Age of children's literature can be marked by the publication of Lewis Carroll's fairy tale "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" [1865] and, slightly later, its sequel – "Through the Looking-Glass" [1871]. It is known that the first book of the duology came into existence quite by chance: the author entertained the daughters of Henry Liddell, the dean of Oxford University, with an improvised fairy tale. The whimsical invention delighted them so much that the girls later insistently asked the author to write it down. This is how the first handwritten version of "Alice" came to be, and subsequently, L. Carroll significantly reworked the text, adding elements of wordplay and literary parody, thus creating one of the most famous works in the genre of literary nonsense.

"Alice in Wonderland" became a truly innovative book in children's literature: for the first time, the author connected closely with their readership. Victorian literature before Carroll always adhered to moralistic principles and was primarily aimed at parents, who were expected to use the book to instruct their children. Carroll's innovation lay in the fact that his book contained no moralizing. As G. K. Chesterton wrote, "his great achievement was that the game was new and nonsensical, and yet one of the best in the world" [Chesterton 1978: 240].

The ambivalence of the reader's image can manifest in the fact that he or she becomes a co-author of the text. Literary fairy tales often leave room for interpretation, allowing the reader to construct meanings based on his own experience and age. This phenomenon is particularly evident in Lewis Carroll's "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland", where the narrative structure and linguistic devices actively involve the reader in meaning-making, thus transforming them from a passive recipient into a participant in the textual game.

In Carroll's text, the invitation to co-authorship is embedded at multiple levels. First, the pervasive use of logical paradoxes – such as the Mad Hatter's assertion that "*I see what I eat*" does not imply "*I eat what I see*" – challenges the reader's rational expectations and forces a re-evaluation of linguistic and cognitive norms. These paradoxes function not merely as whimsy but as epistemological puzzles accessible primarily to readers with developed logical and linguistic competence, typically adults or adolescents.

Second, Carroll employs sophisticated intertextuality, referencing canonical works from classical and English literature. Allusions to Virgil, Dante, Milton, and Shakespeare presuppose a cultural literacy beyond the reach of most children, thereby creating a dual interpretive layer. For instance, the trial scene in Chapter Twelve parodies the conventions of British jurisprudence and satirizes bureaucraticabsurdity, resonating more strongly with adult readers familiar with legal and political discourse.

Third, the linguistic play – including puns, portmanteau words (e.g., *'slithytoves'*), and grammatical inversions – operates on both phonetic and semantic levels. The famous line, *"Mine is a long and a sad tale!"* uttered by the Mouse, exploits the homophony of *'tale'* and *'tail'*, visually reinforced in early illustrated editions. This kind of wordplay requires metalinguistic awareness, which is generally underdeveloped in young children but highly engaging for adult readers.

Thus, Carroll constructs a text that simultaneously entertains a child with its fantastical plot and visual humour, while offering an intellectually stimulating experience for the adult reader through satire, logic, and literary allusion. As Marina Warner notes, "The adult reader has never quit the scene: as parents, as grandparents, as teachers, as babysitters, we have

continued to read and watch fairy tales alongside the young, simply for our own pleasure" [Warner 2014: 104], underscoring the enduring duality of the fairy tale's address. This layered engagement exemplifies the postmodern notion of the 'active reader' long before its formal articulation, positioning "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" as a precursor to contemporary dialogic and open-ended texts.

The choice of communicative strategy and the concept of addressee

In the first half of the 20th century, the primary audience for fairy tales became children. As writers mastered the fairy tale genre and expanded the form of their works, they created elaborate fairy tale narratives in which the dialogue between the adult author and the child addressee was carried out through play. The literature of each era, as V. I. Tyupa rightly noted, employs its own methods of shaping reader response through a specific choice of communicative strategy, which, in turn, models its own concept of the artistic addressee [Tyupa 2001]. Play, as a specific form of communication in the literary fairy tale genre, becomes a new narrative strategy that preserves the idea of a living dialogue with the reader. As examples, one need only recall such well-known classic works of English literary fairy tales from the first half of the 20th century as Kenneth Grahame's "The Wind in the Willows" [1908], J. M. Barrie's "Peter Pan" [1911], A. A. Milne's "Winnie-the-Pooh" [1926], and P. L. Travers' "Mary Poppins" [1934]. The classification of these texts within the literary fairy tale genre is a subject of rich scholarly debate. Ann Swinfen in "Defence of Fantasy", for example, argues for a spectrum of fantasy subgenres, positioning these works as *'comic and pastoral fantasies'* that are close cousins to, but distinct from, the 'fairytale fantasy' [Swinfen 1984].

Scholars who would support the classification within the fairy tale genre point to the core defining features these books share with the canonical literary fairy tale tradition. Like traditional fairy tales, these stories are not just adventures; they teach lessons about friendship ("Winnie-the-Pooh"), responsibility and imagination ("Mary Poppins"), and the virtues of home, camaraderie, and humility ("The Wind in the Willows"). What is more important, they all contain magical elements integrated into a 'secondary world', which operates on a logic of childlike play and imagination, a form of 'soft' magic. Jack Zipes, while focusing on the European *Kunstmärchen*, acknowledges in his broader definitions that the literary fairy tale is characterized by "the creation of a wondrous world where the extraordinary can happen… for the purpose of enlightening readers about realities in the everyday world" [Zipes 2006: 9]. According to Maria Nikolajeva the characters in these stories blend archetypal and novelistic features [Nikolajeva 2002].

Structural enlargement and the complication of the thematic layers of the authorial fairy tale, along with the shift from short fairy tale stories to the creation of fairy tale novellas and novels, marked the stage of the emergence and development of the new genre – fantasy in English and, subsequently, world literature. A key role in this process was played by the fairy tale novel "The Hobbit" [1937] by the renowned British writer and philologist J. R. R. Tolkien, written as a prelude to his famous epic novel "The Lord of the Rings" [1954].

In his monograph "Tree and Leaf", Tolkien characterizes the main parameters of the fairy tale genre, emphasizing, in particular, that the audience for fairy tales is not limited to children alone: fairy tales are addressed to everyone, being *'bread and wine'* rather than *'milk and sweets'* [Tolkien 1970]. By stating that, he highlights the inherent ambivalence of the addressee in the literary fairy tale genre.

The image of the reader in traditional folk tales is generally absent, as folk tales were originally created and transmitted orally. They were initially intended more for listeners than for readers. Therefore, folk tales of any culture may include indirect appeals to the audience, for example, through narrative formulas such as *'**zhili-byli / жили-были**'* or *'**dolgo li, korotko li / долго ли коротко ли**'* in Russian fairy tales, which create the effect of a dialogue between the storyteller and the listener. In British folklore, the well-known formula *'once upon a time'* serves as a distinctive marker of the fairy tale genre, both in folk and literary traditions, and beyond. For instance, the monograph by the renowned scholar of mythology and folklore Marina Warner, dedicated to the history of the fairy tale genre, is titled "Once Upon a Time" [Warner 2014]. Thus, in classical folk tales, the image of the reader is not explicitly expressed, but there are elements that imply interaction with the audience.

The literary fairy tale seeks to connect with its addressee by employing various techniques to imitate oral storytelling, thereby reviving the memory of the genre's oral origins. In almost every work, one can find stylizations of spontaneous oral speech, expressed through numerous lexical and syntactic repetitions, as well as polysyndeton. No longer anonymous, the author asserts his presence but outside the narrative space: through questions, exclamations, addresses, invitations, and reminders to the reader-listener, who is implied in the use of second-person pronouns and verbs [Prokhorova 2012: 56–57].

In 1902, a collection of short origin stories *('pourquoi stories')* titled *"Just So Stories for Little Children"* by R. Kipling was published, which has become a global classic of children's literature. *Pourquoi stories* (from the French word meaning 'why') are fictional narratives that explain why something happens the way it does, such as why snakes have no legs or why tigers have striped fur. Many legends, origin myths, and folktales are *pourquoi stories*. Kipling introduced his own very simple and child-friendly term for such stories – *'just-so stories'*. Kipling's witty versions of why the cat walks by himself, how the elephant got its trunk, and why the camel has a hump combine playful dialogue with a curious young reader and numerous references to myths, folklore, and the Bible, which evoke both emotional and intellectual responses in adults reading the book to their children.

Nearly every tale in Kipling's "Just So Stories" abounds with such signals, marking the appeal to the

child addressee to whom an adult is reading or telling the story: *"You must not forget the suspenders, Best Beloved"; "Have you forgotten the suspenders?"; "Then he recited the following Sloka, which, as you have not heard it, I will now proceed to relate…"* [Kipling 1979]. The transmission of the storyteller's intonation is achieved through the use of various graphic means (italics, hyphens, capitalization): *"But still I am the Cat who walks by himself"* (marking logical emphasis with italics); *"Bi-Coloured-Python-Rock-Snake"* (rapid pronunciation of a complex name without pauses); *"Before the High and Far-Off Times, O my Best Beloved, came the Time of the Very Beginnings"* (an elevated style of introduction meant to be spoken slowly and solemnly).

The intonation of oral narration, imitating a live, direct dialogue with the reader in the moment of storytelling, is contained in the captions-explanations to the writer's drawings accompanying the texts of fairy tales. The author does not merely tell the story; he also shows his characters (in his own illustrations) and explains what is happening to them in the picture. For example, in the tale *"How the Camel Got His Hump"*, while explaining how the camel acquired its hump, Kipling captures the moment of its appearance in the illustration, providing a detailed description of the magical transformation process: *"Here is the picture of the Djinn in charge of All Deserts guiding the Magic with his magic fan. The Camel is eating a twig of acacia, and he has just finished saying 'humph' once too often (the Djinn told him he would), and so the Humph is coming"* [Kipling 1979: 8].

The ambivalent nature of the addressee can also be traced in works that appear *'simple'* at first glance, such as the popular British children's picture book *"Captain Slaughterboard Drops Anchor"* [1939], which is virtually unknown in Russia. The book was written and illustrated by Mervyn Peake, an English writer best known today for his fantasy trilogy *"Gormenghast"*.

The story recounts the maritime exploits of the titled *Captain Slaughterboard* and his rowdy crew aboard the ship *The Black Tiger*. After several episodic adventures, they capture a small humanoid creature simply called *the Yellow Creature*, to whom *Slaughterboard* develops a strange platonic attachment. His loyal crew gradually fall victim to misfortunes, and the book ends with the captain and the Yellow Creature abandoning piracy to go fishing on the creature's pink island. The book is distinguished by Peake's poetic style and exquisite illustrations of numerous fantastical beasts on the island.

All the pirates of Peake are a brilliant allusion to the characters from J. M. Barrie's classic children's tale of Peter Pan (originally published in 1911 as *"Peter and Wendy"*). The harsh manner in which Captain Slaughterboard addresses his crew is a precise replica of the communicative style of Captain Hook from "Peter Pan"; Charlie Choke is covered in tattoos just like Bill Jukes from Hook's crew; Timothy Twitch is elegant in battle, much like Gentleman Starkey, who is dainty in his ways of killing [Winnington 2006: 84]. The recognizability of this allusion by the readership is beyond doubt for the publisher, whose brief annotation notes that the book *"Captain Slaughterboard Drops Anchor has been written for all children who know about real pirates and real desert islands and all adults who have not yet lost the gift of dreaming"* [Peake 1977: 48].

The ambivalence of the audience for this children's picture book can also be traced in the numerous author's illustrations, which clearly dominate over the text. In fact, the text in the fairy tale mostly serves as an explanation for the drawings, which form the storyline of the narrative, the development of relationships between the main characters, and provide vivid, humorously executed portrait characteristics. The author introduces his main character, Captain Slaughterboard, very succinctly: *"He looked like this"* (one can't but notice an allusion to Kipling's *'just so style'*), while the entire page is occupied with a portrait of the captain with all the possible attributes of a stereotypical representation of how a true leader of fairy-tale pirates should look like (Fig. 1).

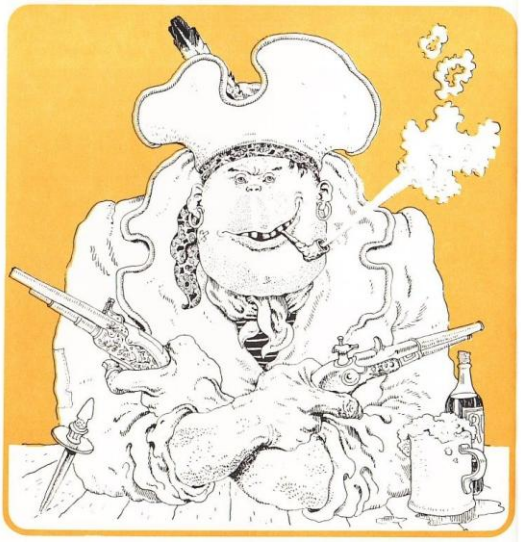

Fig. 1. Captain Slaughterboard

One of the book's spreads is entirely dedicated to depictions of the fantastical creatures inhabiting the pink island. The concise captions accompanying each illustration are addressed to both child and adult audi-

ences. The author explains to the child what the word *"three-ply"* means, while the adult will smile at the fact that the cry of one creature is nerve-wracking, and another has a very sensitive nature (Fig. 2).

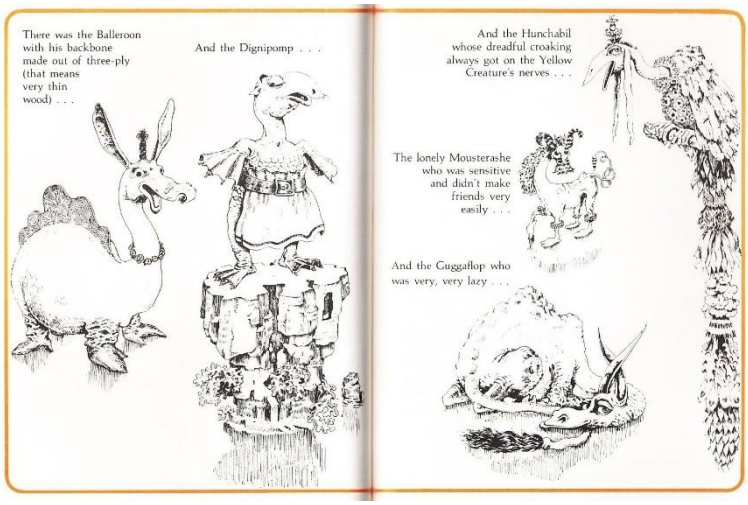

Fig. 2. Fantastical creatures inhabiting the pink island

In the illustrations, the adult reader can trace the evolution of the relationship between the main characters of the fairy tale – Captain Slaughterboard and the Yellow Creature – from an innocent infatuation through a platonic attachment to a love story with a happy ending (happy ever after). If at the beginning of the tale we see a strange, gender-ambiguous humanoid, the final pages depict a domestic idyll where the creature is engaged in typically feminine activities, endowed with feminine traits and wardrobe items – a languid gaze, a coquettish pose, and a short skirt (Fig. 3).

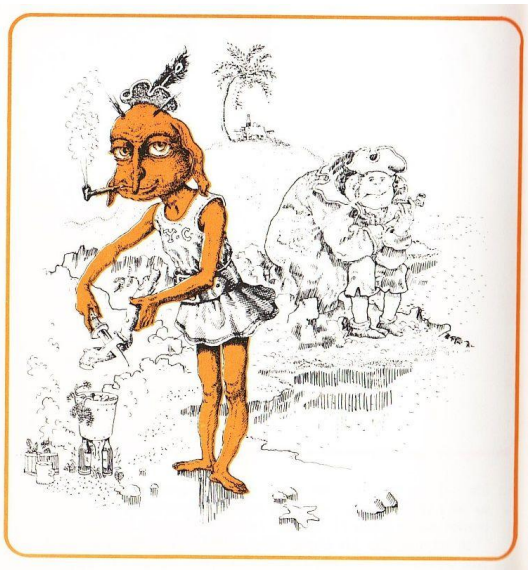

Fig. 3. Captain Slaughterboard and the Yellow Creature

Transformation of the addressee image in the postmodern literary fairy tale

In the middle of the twentieth century, literature in general and children's literature in particular entered the era of postmodernism, which significantly transformed the image of the reader in a literary fairy tale, making him an active co-author of the text. While analyzing how postmodern writers exploit the inherent ambivalence Professor Cristina Bacchilega shifts focus from authorial intent to readerly reception, for her the ambivalence is an active dynamic between text and reader. She writes: "The literary fairy tale does not simply have a double address; it performs it. It invites a 'double reading' – a child may follow the magic and triumph of the heroine, while an adult reader recognizes the intertextual echoes, the irony, and the cultural critique woven into the narrative fabric. The genre's specificity lies in its invitation to crosswriting and crossreading" [Bacchilega 1997: 22].

Postmodernist fairy tales take apart the usual images (villain-hero-victim), depriving them of unambiguity: for example, the villain can become a victim of circumstances (*"The Villain"* by V. E. Schwab), and the princess saves herself (*"Coraline"* by N. Gaiman). The reader is forced to abandon stereotypes and form their own interpretations, participating in the reassembly of meanings. Postmodernism has turned the reader

from a passive listener into a co-author who participates in the creation of meaning, unravels allusions, questions traditions and chooses his or her own version of the truth. The literary fairy tale becomes a space of dialogue, where the boundaries between text, author, and reader are blurred.

Roald Dahl, an English writer of Norwegian origin, is the author of works for both adults and children – novels, fairy tales and short stories, poems, plays, screenplays and articles, the most popular of which are *"Charlie and the Chocolate Factory"*, *"Matilda"*, *"James and the Giant Peach"* and others. According to adults, Roald Dahl is an 'anti-child' writer who turned the basic principle of children's literature upside down. And no wonder: children's rebellion in Dahl's books is always directed against the world of adults – cruel and uncomfortable for the child.

Roald Dahl's *"Matilda"* was published in 1988. It tells the story of an exceptional girl, Matilda, who is characterized by amazing learning abilities. Over time, she discovers supernatural abilities, with the help of which she decides to punish not very clever adults [Kobzeva 2016: 193].

In general, Roald Dahl's narrative style is closer to the autologous one, which is characteristic of many works of children's literature; the image of the addressee is characterized by ambivalence. Already in the first chapter of the work, in which the reader gets acquainted with the protagonist and her family, the author uses various linguistic means of addressability: indirectly explicated (particles referring the listener to his fund of knowledge, introductory words, some conjunctions, indefinite pronouns, modal words, metatextual indicators) and implicit (inductive and interrogative statements; explanatory, clarifying constructions; incomplete situational statements, expressive means of language)[1]: *"Well, there is nothing very wrong with all this. It's the way of the world. It is only when the parents begin telling* ***us*** *about the brilliance of their own revolting offspring, that we start shouting, "Bring us a basin! We're going to be sick!"* [Dahl 1988: 5].

Roald Dahl pays special attention to the characterization of Matilda's mental abilities, contrasting them with her parents' stupidity: *"Her mind was so nimble and she was so quick to learn that her ability should have been obvious even to the most half-witted of parents. But Mr and Mrs Wormwood were both so gormless and so wrapped up in their own silly little lives that they failed to notice anything unusual about their daughter. To tell the truth, I doubt they would have noticed had she crawled into the house with a broken leg"* [Dahl 1988: 7].

The evolution of the *Matilda* reception is a key example of the historical variability of the addressee's image itself. It is noteworthy that some features of the writer's idiostyle have been heavily criticized by the modern politically correct addressee. On February 19, 2023, the publisher Puffin Books announced that it had hired expert readers for three years to evaluate Dahl's works and reissued his works with numerous changes regarding the portrayal of race, gender, physical defects, and so on. In *"Matilda"*, over 60 changes were made, including changing references from Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad to Jane Austen and John Steinbeck (Kipling's and Conrad's works are extremely negatively evaluated now because of their racist statements), references to skin color (e.g., *'turning white', 'beginning to go dark red', 'red in the face', 'white as paper'*), words associated with negative assessments of appearance and mental ability (fat, mad, crazy) were removed, the word *'Madonna'* was removed, and the word *'heroine'* was replaced with *'hero'*: *"The original version of Matilda stated: 'She went on olden-days ailing ships with Joseph Conrad. She went to Africa with Ernest Hemingway and to India with Rudyard Kipling'."* And the new edition says: *"She went to nineteenth century estates with Jane Austen. She went to Africa with Ernest Hemingway and California with John Steinbeck*[2]. The editing of 2023 reflects an attempt to update the text for a new generation of addressees and their 'intermediaries', whose norms in the field of gender, race and inclusivity have shifted significantly. This precedent shows that the ambivalence of the addressee of a literary tale is not only a synchronous phenomenon (child / adult), but also a diachronic one: the text is constantly being reinterpreted and even formally adapted in dialogue with the changing socio-cultural reality and its ethical requirements for 'children's' reading.

The "Harry Potter" series of novels written by the British author J. K. Rowling occupies a central place in the discussion of addressee ambivalence in 21st century literary fairy tales. Published between 1997 and 2007, the series transcends generic boundaries, blending elements of fairy tale, fantasy, detective fiction, romance, and the *Bildungsroman* – a genre dimension emphasized by I. Ratke, who situates the cycle within the tradition of the novel of formation [Ratke 2005]. This generic hybridity is instrumental in shaping the dual addressivity of the texts, enabling simultaneous appeal to child and adult audiences.

From a postmodernist perspective, the *Harry Potter* series exemplifies the deconstruction of rigid genre hierarchies and the blurring of boundaries between high and popular culture. While the surface narrative follows the archetypal journey of the young hero confronting evil – a structure rooted in fairy-tale and mythopoetic traditions – the thematic depth evolves in parallel with the protagonist's maturation. The gradual shift from school-based adventures to existential themes such as death, sacrifice, identity, and moral ambiguity reflects the *Bildungsroman's* core concern with personal development and ethical self-determination.

This developmental arc allows younger readers to engage with the text on an emotional and imaginative level, identifying with Harry's struggles against authority, friendship dilemmas, and rites of passage. Simultaneously, adult readers perceive the socio-

[1] Бударагина Е. И. Средства создания образа адресата в художественном тексте: автореф. дис. … канд. филол. наук: 10.02.01. М., 2006. С. 10.

[2] Harrison E. The 6 most glaring edits to Roald Dahl's books by publisher Puffin // The Independent. 23.02.2023. URL: https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/news/roald-dahl-edits-books-censored-witches-b2288252.html (mode of access: 28.12.2025).

political allegories – such as the rise of authoritarianism in "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows", the critique of racial purity in the treatment of "Mudbloods," and institutional corruption in the Ministry of Magic – which resonate with contemporary historical and ideological concerns.

Furthermore, the series employs techniques characteristic of postmodern poetics: intertextuality (drawing on classical mythology, medieval symbolism, and British literary tradition), metafictional elements (e.g., the fictional book "Tales of Beedle the Bard"), and narrative unreliability (particularly in "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince", where memories are manipulated). These features demand a reflexive reading stance, inviting the audience to question appearances and reconstruct hidden meanings – a hallmark of postmodern reader engagement.

Thus, Rowling's work does not merely cater to two audiences; it creates a shared narrative space where the boundaries between child and adult, entertainment and philosophy, fantasy and realism dissolve. The phenomenon of *Harry Potter* illustrates how postmodern literary fairy tales reconfigure the addressee not as a fixed category but as a fluid, evolving subject shaped by the interaction between text, reader, and cultural context.

Another contemporary English writer, Neil Gaiman, created one of the most famous and influential novels in modern literature for children and teenagers – *"Coraline"*. This work is a typical example of postmodernism in the genre of literary fairy tale, or, more precisely, in that eclectic shift of genres and cultural codes that forms the direction defined in Western linguistics and literary studies as 'fantasy' [Hartung 2016: 47].

The active role of the reader in the postmodern fairy tale is reinforced by the multilevel organisation of the text, which allows the work not to have a limited target audience, but to be aimed at different groups of readers at the same time: adult and children's audiences, mass and elite readers, using several genre codes at the same time, combining entertainment and intellectuality. Authors of literary fairy tales often use the technique of double coding, when the text contains two layers: superficial, accessible to children, and deep, intended for adults. This creates a game of perception where each reader finds something different.

Firstly, the addressee of *"Coraline"* can be considered to be school age children (approximately 10–14 years old), who are already able to perceive complex themes such as fear, loneliness, courage and growing up. The main character, Coraline, is a curious and courageous girl with whom young readers can associate themselves. Second, the book contains deep philosophical and psychological undertones. Adults can see in it reflections on family relationships, independence, overcoming fears, and even the nature of evil: *"When you're scared but you still do it anyway, that's brave." // "Because," she said, "when you're nobody but yourself, when you're nobody but yourself, well, you're nobody but yourself, and that's all you can be"* [Gaiman 2002].

Analysis of the image of the addresser and addressee in a postmodern fairy tale, using Neil Gaiman's *"Coraline"* as an example, requires attention to the key features of postmodernism: deconstruction of traditional narratives, playing with intertextuality, blurring the boundaries between reality and fantasy, and the active role of the reader in the creation of meaning. Let us consider this through the prism of specific symbols of *"Coraline"*.

In Gaiman's tale, the door to the *'other house'* becomes a symbol of the boundary separating everyday reality and the illusory world of the *'other mother'*. This transition causes reflexion in the addressee. Through the metaphor of the door, the author addresses the reader with a question: what lies behind the routine? The door is not just a physical object, but an invitation to explore one's own fears and desires. In a traditional fairy tale, the addressee passively accepts the moral, but here the reader becomes complicit in the choice. The world of the 'other mother' is alluring (ideal parents, bright colours) but dangerous. This refers to the postmodernist idea of the absence of absolute truths: the addressee must decide for themselves where the line between freedom and trap lies.

The postmodern addressee (author/narrator) often acts as a trickster manipulating expectations. The door in *"Coraline"* resembles a mirror or Alice's rabbit hole – a transition into the irrational world. However, while Carroll's transition is linear (Alice passively falls down the hole), in Gaiman's Coraline deliberately opens the door, emphasizing the hero's (and the addressee's) activity in the postmodern world.

The image of the addressee in the postmodern tale is that of an active partner, forced to constantly reconsider his or her position. Metaphors like Gaiman's *'door'* work as mechanisms of engagement: they break the passive consumption of the narrative, requiring reflection on one's own identity, fears, and freedom of choice. Postmodernism turns the fairy tale into a dialogue, where the addresser and addressee are equal in the creation of meaning, and the boundaries between text and reality dissolve.

An interesting trend manifested in the 21st century is social and media infantilisation, the weakening of the model of adult values and their relativism, and as a consequence – the emergence of a new age category of addressees –kidults [Nemtinova 2018: 108; Evtushenko 2013: 47]. Kidults are infantile adults who have retained their childlike spontaneity, love of adventure, fantasies. They often choose books that allow them to return to the world of dreams, where everything is simple, bright and full of magic, such as fantasy and fairy tales (*"The Chronicles of Narnia"* by Clive Lewis, *"Harry Potter"* by J. K. Rowling); graphic novels and comics (*"Saga"* by Brian K. Vaughn and Fiona Staples, *"Scott Pilgrim"* by Brian Lee O'Malley); humorous literature (*"Diary of a Wimpy" Kid* by Jeff Kinney, *"The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy"* by Douglas Adams) or quest books (books where you have to solve puzzles and pass levels like in a video game). The addressee of books for kidults is an adult who is not ready to abandon a childlike imagination, but who seeks in literature a depth relevant to his or her age. Such a reader appreciates the hybridity of forms, the nostalgic connection to the past, and the intellectual challenge of staying on the edge between play and seriousness.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that the ambivalence of the addressee in a literary fairy tale is not a static, but a dynamic and genre-forming feature. The specificity of the reader's image is determined by the structural and meaningful hybridity of the text, which is realized through purposeful narrative strategies: imitation of an oral narrative, game communication, double encoding and active use of intertextuality. These techniques create a space for dialogue, allowing the author to simultaneously address different readership groups – children and adults – each reader extracts meanings from the text that correspond to his cultural experience and age. The ambivalence of the addressee in this genre is a defining, not incidental feature. Its specificity arises from the structural openness: its symbolic, non-realist mode allows for simultaneous, layered meanings accessible to different levels of experience.

The analysis shows that during the historical development of the genre in English literary tradition, there is a significant transformation of the addressee model. If in the early examples (L. Carroll, R. Kipling, M. Peake) ambivalence is based on a relatively clear binary 'adult – child', then by the end of the 20th – beginning of the 21st centuries this image becomes more complicated. Under the influence of postmodern poetics, the reader turns into an active co-author involved in deconstructing traditional schemes and assembling his own interpretations, which is demonstrated by the works of R. Dahl, J. K. Rowling and N. Gaiman.

Thus, the ambivalence of the addressee in a literary fairy tale evolves from a given duality to a principled openness and multiplicity of reader positions. This trend is intensifying in the modern era under the influence of digital media and socio-cultural phenomena such as 'kidult', which indicates the prospects for further study of the genre in the context of the ongoing blurring of boundaries between child and adult perception.

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Данные об авторах

Башкатова Юлия Алексеевна – кандидат филологических наук, доцент, доцент кафедры романо-германской филологии, Кемеровский государственный университет (Кемерово, Россия).
Адрес: 650000, Россия, г. Кемерово, ул. Красная, 6.
E-mail: stbua@mail.ru.

Прохорова Лариса Петровна – кандидат филологических наук, доцент, заведующий кафедрой романо-германской филологии, Кемеровский государственный университет (Кемерово, Россия).
Адрес: 650000, Россия, г. Кемерово, ул. Красная, 6.
E-mail: larpro888@gmail.com.

Authors' information

Bashkatova Yulia Alekseevna – Candidate of Philology, Associate Professor, Associate Professor of Department of Romance and Germanic Philology, Kemerovo State University (Kemerovo, Russia).

Prokhorova Larisa Petrovna – Candidate of Philology, Associate Professor, Head of Department of Romance and Germanic Philology, Kemerovo State University (Kemerovo, Russia).

Дата поступления: 12.02.2025; дата публикации: 29.12.2025

Date of receipt: 12.02.2025; date of publication: 29.12.2025