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**The Image of Childhood in Susan Hill's Prose**

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### Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Studentka se ve své práci zaměří na vybranou prózu britské prozaičky Susan Hill s cílem charakterizovat její pojetí dětství. V úvodní kapitole představí stručný nástin tvorby této spisovatelky a její možné důvody pro častou tematizaci dětství. Poté bude následovat hlavní část, ve které bude kladen důraz na analýzu přístupu, který S. Hill zaujímá k dětské postavě (funkce v příběhu, povaha, citové strádání, idealizace, vztahy s rodiči, atd.). Práce vybrané romány vzájemně porovná a vsadí je i do širšího literárního kontextu (např. W. Golding). Práci zakončí závěr prezentující výsledky předchozích analýz.

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## **Abstract**

This paper focuses on depiction Susan Hill's concept of childhood. The main analytical part based on the selected prose by Hill featuring children and childhood aims to portray the image of childhood from the perspective of this authoress. The parallel themes of Hill's works addressing the family relationships, children fears and frustrations or evil in children are employed to find the characteristic features of Hill's view of childhood. Besides the major analysis of Hill's works a comparison with other writers illustrating childhood is provided.

## **Název**

Pojetí dětství v próze Susan Hill

## **Abstrakt**

Tato práce se zabývá zobrazením dětství v pojetí Susan Hillové. Hlavní analytická část prostřednictvím vybrané povídkové prózy představí obraz dětství z pohledu této autorky. Často se opakující témata v tvorbě Susan Hillové oslovující problematiku rodinných vztahů, dětských frustrací či zla v dětech jsou v analýze k použita k hledání společných charakteristických znaků pro její vykreslení dětství. Kromě hlavní analýzy práce nabízí porovnání s ostatními autory věnujícím se zobrazování dětství.

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# 1. Introduction

Child and childhood is recurring subject matter in the literature since the medieval times. The process of growing up became a centre of interest of many authors who reflected their personal perception of coming of age into narratives. The British novelist Susan Hill is definitely one of them. The aim of the paper is to define Hill's portrayal of childhood through the comparative analysis of the themes concerned with loneliness, isolation, reserved family relationships or innate evil in children. Moreover, the paper offers a contextualization of Hill's unique concept of childhood in the contemporary literature.

Before discussing the above mentioned aspects in detail, the brief overview of individual perceptions of childhood which were historically and socially conditioned is presented in the first chapter. The particular perspectives from the first traces of childhood in medieval times, over the Puritans' realistic and rationalized ideas about children to the Romantic view of children as pure and innocent creatures are introduced. The conclusion of the outline summarizes the major characteristic features of the nineteenth and twentieth century conceptions of the process of growing up. Final part mentions the reflections of social and cultural perceptions of childhood in literature. In this connection, Susan Hill as the contemporary authoress of fiction depicting childhood is contextualized.

The following chapter briefly introduces Hill's work and particularly deals with the examination of the reasons for Hill's interest in the theme of childhood which have got clear parallel in her private life. Moreover, the general characterization of Hill's protagonists with the emphasis on finding similar qualities is presented.

After these introductory chapters, an analysis of Hill's vision of childhood follows. The analysis based on a comparative approach focuses on selected works concerned with the topic of coming of age. The similar themes in her stories are identified and contrasted. What the first chapter discusses is the question of desire for domination and possession and its potential misuse. The next chapter is interested in various forms of children fears and their effects on the children's behaviour. Another recurring theme to which is paid attention is loneliness and isolation illustrated in many Hill's narratives. The Chapter 4.3 provides a more detailed debate about family

relationships experienced by Hill's heroes [Hill focuses chiefly on male characters]. The last part of the analysis addresses the question of evil in children, examines its sources and consequences.

Evil in children is very specific topic in which are many other writers concerned in the twentieth century. Therefore, the following chapter offers comparison of different views of wickedness of children. Specifically, two other perspectives are introduced. Firstly, William Golding's concept of evil in man is explained on his novel *Lord of the Flies* where some similarities with Hill's concept emerge. Secondly, Anthony Burgess' unusual vision of evil, which fundamentally differs in all aspects, is illustrated on his novel *A Clockwork Orange*.

The final chapter summarizes the findings of the analysis of parallel themes recurrently discussed in Hill's prose. These conclusions create an overall image of Hill's perception of children and childhood. The comparative part provides a framework within which is Hill's concept clearly defined.

## 2. Concepts of Children and Childhood

Concepts of children and childhood changed significantly over the past centuries. Societies differently understood childhood and the social meaning of childhood differed “not only culturally but in units as small as the family” as the position of the child in the family varied. (Hunt, 1994, 5). ”The history of childhood is inextricably bound up with broader political and social events” (Mintz, 2004, viii) Shifts in cultural and religious values caused changes in public perception of a child.

Childhood was a social construct that developed between around 1500 and 1800 and it was not really happy period for children in Europe in Middle Ages. “From birth to age seven, children were considered miniature adults: they dressed like adults and were not sheltered from the adult world.” (Roberts) Generally, childhood was “a period of incapability to be overcome quickly”. (Bubíková, 2008, 14) In European medieval times there were rigorous child-rearing practices which reassumed in Puritan society as well. The Puritans placed emphasis on the strict self-discipline as they “believed in the naturally sinful nature of children. (Bubíková, 2008, 14) Mintz adds: “Puritans did not sentimentalize childhood; they regarded even newborn infants as potential sinners who contained aggressive and wilful impulses that needed to be suppressed.” (10) Yet, Puritans should not be misinterpreted as harsh parents who were ignorant to child’s nature. On the contrary, Mintz suggests that “Puritans were among the first groups to reflect seriously and systematically on children’s nature and the process of childhood development”. (12) The Puritan’s unique concept of upbringing contributed to the growth of importance of childhood.

In a contrast to the sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, where Puritan’s rather realistic view of children prevailed, is the new concept of childhood which emerged in the eighteenth century. It had a significant impact on the general attitude to children and to the child-rearing. Bubíková claims: “The concept grew out of Romantic ideas that perceived children as pure, spontaneous, and intuitive.” (17) To this new portrayal of children fundamentally contributed the treatises on education written by the English philosopher John Locke who developed a new theory of human mind. He calls

the child's mind 'tabula rasa' or even 'white paper', meaning that child's mind contains no innate ideas. Therefore, the role of parenthood also arises as parents are responsible for the protection of their children against any "potential contamination from the realities of the adult world." (17) Nonetheless, another remarkable change is observable in the period of the Enlightenment: childhood became "a formative period to be enjoyed and prolonged". (17)

The sentimentalized concept of innocent children dominated also in the nineteenth century. The middle class parents of this century tended to teach their children the self-control as they believed it is the only possible way how to control their children's aggressive impulses. Nevertheless, the overall attitude to children improved significantly in comparison to the previous centuries and affection toward children gradually rose. (21) Consequently, a child became a nuclear part of the family in the twentieth century which is generally characterized by the notable changes in many aspects concerning childhood. These resulted in formation of a new postmodern concept which, however, resembles pre-modern childhood as children are not considered to be ignorant and innocent any more. (24) Mintz argues that the main difference lies in the fact that "postmodern children are independent consumers and participants in a separate, semiautonomous youth culture". (4) In postmodern period children are conceptualized as individuals.

The perception of childhood has been influenced by the social and cultural conditions and has been shifted substantially over the time. The particular attitudes to children and to the growing up were directly reflected in the literature. There are many novels featuring childhood where children are portrayed either as a main hero/heroine or as a minor agent of the plot. Nevertheless, the aim of portraying children in literature remains the same: to help to understand "experiences undergone in childhood". (Sambrook, 6) In connection to the individual historical perception of childhood, the representation of a child changed in the literature too. Sambrook concludes: "The nineteenth century novel, reflecting the general view of the place of children in society, gives children a role which remains subservient."(7) The child is represented rather as a helpless creature functioning as a tool of adults (for instance Charles Dicken's *Oliver Twist* or Charlotte Brönte's *Jane Eyre*). "A more recent development, belonging to the twentieth century, finds the child playing an important, often crucial part in the plot",

adds Sambrook. (7) The child and his psychology become a centre of interest of novelists in the twentieth century. One of the renowned representatives of this 'individualistic tradition' is definitely Susan Hill.

### 3. Susan Hill's Style

#### 3.1. Susan Hill

Susan (Elizabeth) Hill is the popular author of numerous novels, collections of short stories, non-fiction and children's fiction. She has become known also as a respected editor of two books of short stories, broadcaster, reviewer and literary critic. As Franková suggests, the up to now work of Susan Hill could be divided into two basic periods, at least according to the topics of her novels. The early work of Hill is closely connected with her private life in the early 60's. Novels written during this period literally overflow with motives of isolation and cold human relationships. (Franková, 1999, 91) Procter adds that "the darker side of Hill's work is informed by the tragic circumstances surrounding her own life, including the death of her first partner, second child and her near-death experience [Hill is anaphylactic]". Writing seems to be a way how to cope with these frustrations in Hill's life. She reflects her feelings especially to the novels *The Enclosure*, *A Change for the Better*, *I'm the King of the Castle*, *The Bird of Night*. However, soon after publishing the novel *In the Spring of the Year* in 1974, Hill announced her retirement from writing. "However, a decade later she made a memorable return to fiction in the form of *The Woman in Black*." (Procter) This ghost story opened the new era in Hill's writing as this genre has been still dominating in Hill's fiction.

#### 3.2. Interest in childhood

One of the most frequently occurring topics in Hill's work is childhood. As suggested the previous chapter, Hill belongs to the twentieth century novelists who focus on the psychology of children in more detail and provide a deeper insight into the characters minds. (Woolfe, 1997, 8) Hill concentrates particularly what it is like to be a

child, what children feel and how they are misinterpreted and ignored by adults. Hill explained her fascination with childhood in her introduction to the novel *I'm the king of the Castle* which is one of the Hill's most famous work featuring children: "I have been interested in children who are in some way at odds with the rest of the world." (Hill, 1981, vi) Most of her children characters fit this type, though little differences emerge. Hill tends to portray middle-class families which are "dysfunctional, broken or about to be broken". (Procter, 2002) Protagonist is often an only child who feels isolated and dismissed because of his parents' lack in understanding.

For the most part, Hill gathers inspiration from her own childhood experience. She generally does not find it difficult to write about childhood, she says: "I've been a child – so it's easy." (Babuta, 1989, 2) Particularly in the novels *I'm the King of the Castle* and *A Change for the Better* Hill applies her own life experience of being an only child as she used it for very sensitive illustration of loneliness: "I was an only child and I had acres of time without another child. That can be a very lonely experience." (3) Another bitter experience from her childhood that became an inspiration to Hill especially for the novel *I'm the King of the Castle* is bullying. Hill describes the incident with the boy of who she was in fear for two years during her childhood. (S.H.)<sup>1</sup>

Originally, most of her novels featuring children are written for adults. Hill's intention is to invite the adult readers to reconsider their perception of childhood as they "have tendency idealize and prettify it" and they are "unwilling to admit how unpleasant children can be". (Hill, 1989, 76)

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<sup>1</sup> S.H. used here refers to the quotation from a readers's forum available at Susan Hill's Official Web Site. (See Bibliography)

#### 4. Parallel themes in Susan Hill's works featuring childhood

Hill's concern with the topic of childhood and children's suffering is depicted in several her novels and short stories. To the central, repeatedly discussed themes which regularly appear in number of her works belongs power, bullying, isolation, fears and difficult family relationships. Hill is writer renowned rather in United Kingdom and United States. Therefore, brief synopses of her narratives employed for the following analysis are given as the contents are necessary for the illustration of Hill's portrayal of childhood.

The novel *I'm the King of the Castle* (1970) provides an insight into all of the mentioned issues. It is a story about a bitter battle between two eleven- years-old boys: Charles Kingshaw, the son of a newly hired housekeeper, and, Edmund Hooper<sup>2</sup>, the son of recently widowed man. Both of them are forced to share the same house so that the struggle for survival begins. Unfortunately, their "war" ends tragically with Kingshaw's, the victim's of Hooper's unbearable bullying, suicide.

The predecessor to the *I'm the King of the Castle* was the novel *A Change for the Better* (1969). The protagonist of the story is an intelligent, thoughtful and talented boy, James Fount, who lives only with his grandmother and mother. James's mother is a divorced lonely woman who in her late thirties seeks to emancipate after the death of her mother and to start to live a new life. Unfortunately, she fails in her parental role. Hill explores here feelings of loneliness, cold family relationships and particularly the total misunderstanding between the mother and her son.

Hill continues in describing childhood and its difficulties in other works too. Firstly, it is the collection of stories "Albatross and Other Stories" (1971). One of the most appalling stories interested in miseries of childhood of this work is the story called "Albatross". (1971a) Its hero is mentally challenged boy Duncan who seeks to escape

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<sup>2</sup> Boys are called only by their surnames in the story.



from his invalid mother. In totally desperate state of mind he decides to wheel his mother into the ocean after burning their cottage in order to begin a new, independent life. Another story which is worth mentioning is “Friends of Miss Reece”. (1971b) It deals with cold, unemotional relationships between a child and parents. The boy who is not given a name is often left to spend night at his aunt’s nursing home for the elderly while his parents are somewhere out enjoying a night life. The short story “The Elephant Man” should not be forgotten. (1975) Hill especially pays her attention to the children fears there. A protagonist William is a very sensitive boy who has been taken to the children’s party in an expensive hotel, where he knows nobody. He does not enjoy party at all. Moreover, it becomes for him a nightmare because he is just an outsider there. Secondly, a lot of similar themes appeared in another short story collection called “A Bit of Singing and Dancing” where frustrated and ignored relationships predominate. (1973) In another short story “The Badness within Him” Hill considers an alienation of the hero from his family. It ends in calm and unconcern observing his father drowning in the ocean and not providing him any help.

#### **4.1. Power and ownership**

Children often tend to establish a hierarchy of masters and servants, victims and bullies in their societies. Babuta claims that “in any friendship, there is nearly always a leader who is ‘in charge’”. (Babuta, 1989, 74) The aim of the leader is to control the others and to decide about them. Desire for power and its potential misuse, leadership and bullying are at their strongest presented in the Hill’s novel *I’m the King of the Castle*.

The title of the book itself suggests that the struggle for power is central to the whole meaning of the novel. As Sullivan explains, Hill has taken this title from the children’s game where one child stands on something that gives him/her a height (a wall, a table, a tree) and taunts the others who attempt to take his/her place with the rhyme: “I’m the King of the Castle. *Get down you dirty rascal!*” (Sullivan, 1990, 4) Sullivan also hypothesizes that the rhyme must have a long history, going back to the times of barons and peasants and adds that throughout the history men have desired to

dominate others. This is exactly the case of Edmund Hooper, the perpetrator, and Charles Kingshaw, his victim. Their 'war' begins immediately after the arrival of Kingshaw when Hooper expresses his hostility with dropping the note: "*I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO COME HERE.*" (Hill, 1970, 18) He tried to tell Kingshaw that Warings, the house of Hooper's father, is only his territory and nobody else is wanted. Kingshaw and his mother are invaders to him. Since that time the series of malicious acts from psychopath Hooper against Kingshaw start. Hooper, like a true bully, is very good at picking out Kingshaw's weaknesses and noticing all his fears in order to abuse it in persecuting Kingshaw. (Babuta, 1989, 74) Woolfe describes Hooper's bullying:

At the beginning, Hooper appears to bully Kingshaw as an experiment to satisfy his curiosity about Kingshaw's behaviour when afraid, but he soon displays a malevolent enjoyment of his power to control. He approaches the persecution with cold deliberation, delighting in his plans and showing no scruples about suffering he inflicts. (1997, 57)

Hooper is a perfect manipulator, his attacks against Kingshaw are very clever and always well-thought-out. He knows exactly how to achieve the maximum effect, how to hurt Kingshaw the most. For the illustration could function the story with a crow which became a Kingshaw's nightmare after it attacked him one afternoon in the field. Hooper, who was also present, immediately seized his chance. As soon as he noticed that Kingshaw was terrified by it, he creped into Kingshaw's room in the middle of the night and installed there a death and stuffed crow and waited outside for his reaction:

Kingshaw lay stiff, and did not scream, did not make any sound at all. He was dry and faint with fear of the thing, though his brain still worked, he knew who had brought it...Hooper wanted him to be frightened, to scream and cry and shout for his mother. He would not do that. There was nothing, nothing at all, that he could do to help himself. (Hill, 1970, 37)

This is only the beginning of his 'game'. Hooper has no moral limits in his wrongful acts and still looks for new and even crueller ways how to cause more suffering to Kingshaw. Incidentally, there arises an opportunity for Kingshaw to revenge Hooper several times. It happens in Hang Wood where Hooper for the first time shows his weakness when he is totally terrified of a thunderstorm and helpless in

the environment which he cannot control. Yet, Kingshaw turns down the temptation to take over a role of the leader and instead comforts Hooper. Another occasion comes on the walls of Leydell Castle. This scene is very important as it informs the title to the book. Kingshaw once feels perfectly confident in climbing the walls and gets as the first on the top of the wall meanwhile Hooper is not so good at it and gets into troubles and becomes dependent on Kingshaw's help: "He thought suddenly, I could kill him, I could make him fall off just by looking at him, or touching him, or telling him to take one step the wrong way. I am the King, I am the King, there is nothing I can't ask him for, nothing he won't promise me, nothing I can't do to him. Up here, *I'm the King*." (Hill, 1970, 153) Nevertheless, Kingshaw never seizes his chance for revenge, as Woolfe remarks. "He always draws back as he knows that it is wrong to make others suffer, or even to wish suffering upon them." (1997, 61)

Simultaneously to the persecution of Kingshaw, Hooper often opens a struggle for a possession in the sense of 'ownership' throughout the story, claims Reynolds. (Reynolds, 2003, 7) Hooper desires to capture everything for himself and seeks to protect Kingshaw from ownership of any kind. Initially, it was Warings, the house of Hooper, secondly, Hooper desired to 'own' the Hang Wood, the sanctuary of Kingshaw, the only place where he felt confident and comfortable. Hooper basically seized anything valuable to Kingshaw. Not amazingly, Hooper did not leave out Kingshaw's only village friend Fielding who gave him a chance for future 'normal' friendship without any bullying. Hooper readily gains Fielding's favour and affection as it is no problem for him to manipulate people. Finally, there was nothing left to be stolen to Kingshaw but his own mother. This time, Hooper is successful as well. Kingshaw's mother, Mrs. Helena Kingshaw, occupied mainly with her own affairs and preparations for wedding with Mr. Hooper, gradually grows away from his son, is blind to Kingshaw's suffering and gives much more credence to Hooper than to Kingshaw. Together with Kingshaw's suicide it is his total victory, the triumph from his battle: "When he saw Kingshaw's body, upside down in the water, Hooper thought suddenly, it was because of me, I did that, *it was because of me*, and a spurt of triumph went through him." (Hill, 1970, 222 – 223)

Hooper's mind and behaviour exceed dramatically all the borders of the 'normal' social code. In his case, the desire to control the others surpasses rather the

innocent children play as his ambition for possession and manipulation stems from a quality that could be called 'evil'. This supposition is supported by the fact that Hooper does it intentionally and delightfully. By this demonstration Hill suggests that children world is not always so pure and innocent as it often seems to be. (See Chapter 4.5.)

## 4.2 Fears

Children's world is full of problems, miseries, and frustrations even though it is not always apparent. Children are very often afraid, mostly understandably but also sometimes irrationally as their mind is full of mystery, superstition, magic, and fantasy ideas. Almost every child has ever been afraid of something, felt distressed, anxious or insecure. The causes of these frustrations may differ but usually are related to the parents' lack of interest and incapability to communicate and understand their children. In the worst cases, the children's torments, if not noticed or treated, may result in tragedies as it happens in stories by Hill.

The above described symptoms are inherent in most of Hill's heroes. As Hill repeatedly claims in her interviews, she has been always interested in children who, as Hill says, "are in some way at odds with the rest of the world." (Sullivan, 1990, 42) Hill's obsession with these issues becomes most evident in her novel *I'm the King of the Castle* (1970) as well as in short stories "Friends of Miss Reece" (1971b) and "The Elephant Man" (1975).

Fears and terrors experienced by children belong to the central themes of the novel *I'm the King of the Castle*. According to Babuta, Hill illustrates and examines the effects of many different forms of fear in both of her heroes. (Babuta, 1989, 72) Kingshaw, the protagonist, has got many anxieties. He is virtually almost permanently terrified and is literally consumed by his fears. The reader feels for Kingshaw and sympathizes with all his dreads in which the novel is very rich. Namely, it is the episode from the Red Room, the place inside of the Warings where the moths collection is located and which is overwhelmed with deathly atmosphere. Kingshaw, afraid of the death bodies of moths, is locked in there by Hooper. Further, it concerns also the above already described experience of Kingshaw with the crow both the live and stuffed one, prepared by Hooper, or the episode with shed in the garden where Kingshaw escaped

against Hooper. Unfortunately, Hooper found him and locked him in the shed. With delight he then waited outside for Kingshaw's desperate calling for help:

He wanted to stop Hooper from telling him anything else, his mind was working and working terrifyingly, on everything he had said, as he sat in the darkness. But there wasn't any way to do it, and he stifled his muscles, forcing himself not to scream out in fear and rage and misery, not to say, Oh please, don't, please, please, Oh God, I don't want to go anywhere with you, I'm scared, I'm scared, I want to get out of this bloody, bloody shed. (Hill, 1970, 144-145)

This is only one of a number of similar scenes depicting Kingshaw's physical suffering inflicted by Hooper. Nonetheless, Hill does not present Kingshaw only as a poor coward because of the fact he is frequently afraid. "Kingshaw often demonstrates his courage, he only runs to his mother once in the whole book. He usually copes alone." (Babuta, 1989, 72) On several occasions, he even overtakes Hooper's role of a leader and shows his moral and psychological strength when he suppresses the temptation to revenge. On the contrary, it is Hooper who could be considered a real coward as he openly shows his fear for instance in Hang Wood. He is panic-stricken with a thunderstorm or being lost and later with the fall of the wall in Leydell Castle as has been described in previous chapter. Yet these moments challenge Kingshaw to seize his chance, he never abuses his advantage against Hooper. Throughout the story, the reader can notice certain skills of Kingshaw. "He sometimes allows himself to feel proud of his achievements. However, these feelings of self-congratulations are short-lived. Kingshaw's habitual feelings of fear and doubt always take over again." (Woolfe, 1997, 60) The causes of his insecurity and low self-confidence are rooted in his unhappy family background. Hooper is an only child facing up difficulties of living without his father. He is a very sensitive boy naturally desiring a little attention and affection from his mother as he lacks it.

All these consequences lead to the tragic ending. With the most horrifying idea, common future with Hooper and continuation of the terrors, he sees the suicide as the only possible way how to escape from his unbearable sufferings. Hill has been recurrently criticized for this radical and cruel conclusion, nevertheless, Hill defends herself:

I have often been taken to task for the ending of the novel. It couldn't, wouldn't happen, it is melodramatic and unlikely, it *shouldn't* happen. No boy of eleven would commit suicide because he is afraid of a bully. But boys of eleven *have* committed suicide for what, to the adult outsider, might seem even flimsier reasons...I believed in his suicide when I make it happen, and re-reading the book, I believe in it over again. (Sullivan, 1990, 40)

Not only in the novel *I'm the King of the Castle*, Hill's certainly the most powerful and painfully story, makes Hill her readers aware of children's anxieties. Parallel themes and similar feelings appear in the short story "The Elephant Man" too. The protagonist, a boy named William, has a lot of in common with Kingshaw, the hero from *I'm the King of the Castle*. Firstly, William is also a sensitive boy not having many friends and often feeling alone. They even coincide in low self-confidence and shyness as William is rather uncommunicative and introverted. Another equivalent feature is protagonist's position of an outsider among the other children. Neither of them has got either a good friend at their age or favourable family background. Consequently, he undergoes similar frustrations as Kingshaw does, especially at the children party placed at the expensive hotel where is taken unwillingly. There he knows nobody and is forced by others to have a fun as others do. Instead, it paradoxically becomes a real nightmare to him:

William sat quietly. Every now and then he closed his eyes, wishing for the curtains to be opened again and for the ordinary January daylight to flood the room...He had thought that he would die of fear, high up in the clutch of the elephant man. But he had not died, and now he would have to live with the memory of it. He could still hear the music and the squalling of the others pounding in his ears. He came up to a long corridor and was frightened by his own tense and white-faced reflection. The Elephant man could be following him, might be anywhere at all. (Hill, 1971, 11-13)

Furthermore, slightly different kind of fear Hill illustrates in another short story "Friends of Miss Reece". The young boy suffers chiefly from poor family relationships as he is not given a sufficient parental care. He often spends nights in his aunt's nursing home for elderly people. That significantly influences his opinions and shapes his still childish conception of the world into the adult one. "...it seemed to him that the whole

adult life was about these things, the sickness and temperatures and bowels and dying, of the patients in nursing home.” (Hill, 1971, 114) Obviously, it is not the appropriate place for a child and so much the more for the children games. Surprisingly, the boy befriends with the old and terminally ill patient of the nursing home, Miss Reece, who is due to her illness incapable to move or even to speak. In spite of that, the boy very often visits her room. The more time he spends with her, the bigger his fear from being present to her passing away is:

So she was not dead, it was all right. He thought about how he could avoid having to sleep tonight in the attic room, how he might pretend to be ill, so that Aunt Spencer let him stay on the couch in her own room. Tomorrow, his father and mother would come back from Lincolnshire, nothing would happen, nobody should know. (Hill, 1971, 125)

Hill illustrates children fears extremely frequently in her stories and pays them a special attention. Partially, to inform about the existence of the children frustrations itself, and partially, to point out the appalling consequences of children sufferings and alert all parents who play in child’s life the most important role.

#### **4.3 Loneliness and isolation**

Lack of affection, care and attention, feelings of uttermost isolation and loneliness are experienced by many of Hill’s characters. They suffer from lack of interest which in many cases results in further and even more serious emotional disorders.

Hill particularly focuses on changes in child’ nature, behaviour and overall conception of the world. These come as a consequence of an unsatisfactory parental care. Hill presents various scenes full of isolation and loneliness. As an example functions the short story “Friends of Miss Reece”. Hill introduces a typical middle-class family with the only child who is sometimes treated as a ‘burden’. Especially, if parents prefer going to the parties to spending some time with their son. In such cases, they leave him in aunt Spencer’s nursing house, hardly convenient place for a small boy. He

is left to sleep in a small attic room where he does not feel comfortable at all and often wakes up in the middle of the night being scared. Even though he often complains about spending so much time in the nursing house, his parents do not care, do not listen to him, do not try to understand him.

From the point of view loneliness, the short story "Albatross" should be also mentioned. The mentally ill boy Duncan, to the contrary of the previous story, seeks to get rid of his invalid mother as he does not like the way she treats him. She entirely underestimates his skills and constantly assures him about his mental defect and in this manner repeatedly lowers down his self-confidence. As it is typical for most of Hill's characters, it is an only child who lives in a single-parent family. Therefore, feelings of loneliness are quite common. Duncan would like to relate to the other village boys and to be accepted by them, in particular, by Ted Flint, his hero. Unfortunately, he is mostly unsuccessful. All these miseries together with frustrations caused by his mother make him solve all his troubles by wheeling his mother, the source of everything bad in his life, into the ocean.

The novel *I'm the King of the Castle* is then another short story where Hill portrays her characters as solitary and emotionally unfulfilled children. The story literally overflows with pitiful images depicting the loneliness, in this case, of both characters. Grant characterizes them: "Both are lonely and have a few real friends. Both have lost one parent and have no relationship with the remaining one; both reveal their need for adult comfort in moments of stress, reminding us that they are still young boys." (1988) Kingshaw is repeatedly illustrated as a vulnerable victim of Hooper's unbearable bullying. He always has to survive Hooper's terrors entirely alone, having no refuge or anybody's shoulder to cry on. Surprisingly, it is not only him who feels neglected. Hooper also often suffers from loneliness and lack of parent's interest though it does not seem probable at the first sight. Generally, Kingshaw and Hooper have a lot of in common and as Grant remarks, the main difference between them lies in their natures and in the way of coping with their troubles. (1988) While Hooper solves his emotional deprivation with sustainable doing wrong to Kingshaw and consequential delight from Kingshaw's distress, Kingshaw copes with all his miseries alone, crying in his room. To find out the cause of their emotional deprivation, the more attention should be paid to the family circumstances. Their widowed parents are also



suffering from the isolation and lack of love in their lives. As Woolfe explains, children brought up in a cold and reserved atmosphere are then incapable to relate to other people, even in their own family. The reason is that they never experienced warm and loving treatment. (Woolfe, 1997, 50) In this connection, Hill emphasises the role of love in child's life. "Hill sees love as an empowering emotion: people flourish in loving relationships which foster their confidence and create a deep source of happiness which they are able to share with others." (Woolfe, 1997, 51) In *I'm the King of the Castle* Hill depicts the inverse situation, in other words, the effects of the lack of love on the character no matter whether on the child or on the adult. The consequences may be appalling as becomes evident especially in this narrative. Hooper fulfils his emotional vacuum with evil and Kingshaw decides to commit the suicide as there is nobody who would miss him anyway.

That is to say that even though Hill's characters are not given love and appropriate paternal care, they are still able to love as it is presented by Kingshaw, suggests Woolfe. (1997, 61) In spite of the fact that he has been never properly guarded, he shows repeatedly his sensitivity and potential affection. "He is sentimental about animals and sympathetic towards people, even trying awkwardly to comfort Hooper when he is afraid." (1997, 61) These qualities distinguish him from Hooper fundamentally. Especially in the terms of the remarkable moral strength that Kingshaw shows repeatedly. It seems to be almost unbelievable and improbable that after all Hooper's brutal and inhuman terrors Kingshaw resists the temptation to revenge. There are several occasions summoning to take advantage of Hooper's weakness. Though Kingshaw wishes to hurt Hooper many times, his moral conscience always wins and he turns his temptations down. What is more remarkable, he even tries to comfort Hooper when he is crying in Hang Wood:

Hooper had stopped. His eyes were open and he looked around widely for a moment, then he began to cry. Kingshaw moved up to him again.  
"Listen, it's all right, I'm awake as well."  
Hooper looked at him, uncertainly, as if puzzled. Then he lay down again, and put his hand up to his eyes. (Hill, 1970, 117)

That would never happen the other way round, Hooper would never try to help or comfort Kingshaw, instead, he would try to hurt him more and make him feel even

worse. The reason is obvious: Hooper has no conscious, no moral restraints, no compassion and concern for the others. The explanation again provides the family background, lack of parent's love and concern. (See Chapter 4.4.)

Impassivity and emotional emptiness come forward in another Hill's short story called "The Badness within Him". Its protagonist, Col, feels a great alienation from his family and desires some change in his life. He hates his sisters and doubts about even any feelings to his parents. "Col said, do I like my father? And thought about it. And did not know." (Hill, 1971, p.160) Col's dream about some change or something to happen soon comes true when his father is drowning in the ocean. Meanwhile, Col is watching his calling for rescue from the remote cliffs, not doing anything to help him. "Now, he was not afraid. His father's skin was oddly pale and shiny. He stared, trying to feel some sense of loss and sorrow. He had watched his father drown, though for a long time he had not believed it, the water had been so entirely calm." (Hill, 1971, 163) Col believes in certain 'badness within him' and explains the death of his father as a punishment for he wished something terrible to happen. "He knew, finally, the power of the badness within him and because of that, standing close to his father's body, he wept." (Hill, 1971, 163) In this extract, Col after all proves that in spite of all the previous coldness, he does have some emotions and he openly shows them as children usually do so.

The very similar case appears in *I'm the King of the Castle*. Hooper, the cruel and evil bully always appearing as the strong leader having no weakness, unexpectedly loses his guise of moral and emotional coldness and he shows his inner insecurity. It happens when he is afraid of being lost in the huge wood or when he is frightened from the falling down while climbs the rock. Hill points out the fact that the seemingly cold-hearted and ruthless boys are still young children who do have feelings and emotions and who need and desire love and attention.

#### **4.4 Family relationships**

Parents always play a very important and fundamental role in the life of their children. They should be guardians and teachers of everything new in their children's

world, a precedent to be followed and respected. Parents are expected to create loving home providing security, the place where children feel comfortable and confident, where love and affection is given to them. Nevertheless, this ideal pattern of family life does not always exist as Hill often suggests in her works. As already mentioned above, nearly all Hill's children characters lack love, warm and friendly family atmosphere. A failure of parenting is usually the cause of the most of children's troubles in Hill's fiction. Parents' uncommunicative approach to their children, lack of interest and unwillingness to relate or understand them might have a substantial impact on children's behaviour. This point of view is one of Hill's central interests in childhood.

Hill's concern in family relationships emerges in the novel *A Change for the Better* for the first time where she examines difficulties of mother-son relationship. James Fount, a sensitive and intelligent boy of the age of eleven, lives together with his grandmother and mother, missing his father. The fact that James grows up in a single-parent family definitely has considerably influenced James' nature. The mother of James, Mrs Deidre Fount, is often highly preoccupied with running the family business and forgets about the needs and wishes of her son. Frequently, she even relies on her own mother, James' grandmother, in terms of the care of James. Mrs. Fount gradually starts to fail her parent role as James loses respect to her and relies far more on himself than on his mother. When the mother notices some problems in relationship with her son, it seems to be too late for the rectification:

She wanted to walk with him down the avenue and have him tell her interesting things about his day, and Westbourne should see them together and say, "There is Mrs Deidre Fount and her growing son. How well they look together!" For she had realized that she did not know the boy at all, had never known him, he was stranger to her and she needed to be reassured of their relationship. He was moving away, already he was eleven, there seemed to be so little time. (Hill, 1982, 51)

Mrs Deidre Fount explains her son's uncommunicativeness and difficulty in dealing with the absence of his father and hardly admits her own guilt. She cannot openly discuss problems with him. She cannot deal with him, she cannot understand her son's dreams and the great alienation between them gradually extends every day. Neither relationships between James' mother and grandmother are harmonious. Quarrels and

disputes of whatever reason emerge daily. Generally, a stressed and uneasy atmosphere that dominates in their house is certainly not suitable for raising a child. A negative influence of this environment on James' behaviour is undeniable. Therefore, James' overall closeness and distance could be considered as his natural response. What is also not surprising is his extremely unconcerned reaction for his grandmother's sudden death. The reason is that there hardly ever existed a loving relationship between the two of them, so that the loss of her is not so painful for James and he accepts it rather easily. It is also quite understandable that he longs for the escape from this house and from his mother to a boarding school where he will be able to control his life.

Soon after publishing *A Change for the Better* Hill returned to the topic of relationships between parents and children in the novel *I'm the King of the Castle*. However, this time, Hill provides a much deeper insight into the questions of family affairs, their causes and consequences. As it has been already suggested in previous chapters, parents and the family background are very closely linked to nature and behaviour of children as it also shows the case of Kingshaw and Hooper. From the very beginning of the novel, the reader is made aware of the unhappy family situation at Warings, the Hooper's house. Hooper is a motherless boy who has hardly ever experienced warm and affectionate treatment. It mirrors in his demeanour. Grant in his notes characterizes Mr. Hooper's relationship with his son as very cold and distanced, based solely on the giving and receiving of advice, criticism and recommending a vague code of appropriate conduct instead of setting an example by which life should be lived. (1988) Even more appalling is the fact that Mr Hooper had also a very unhappy childhood. Therefore, Mr Hooper is expected to moralize from his own childhood experience and endeavour to build a strong and stable relationship with his son. Above all, he should provide a happy and secure home for him. Conversely, he makes the same mistakes as his own father. The family of Hooper presents the typical example of a failure in parenting which is repeated through the generations:

“I suppose you quarrelled with grandfather then.”

Joseph Hooper sighed. “That is not the sort of thing to say, it is not something we need be concerned with now.”

But he understood, looking at the boy, a little of how it had been with his own father, he felt the need to make some kind of reparation. I am not a hard

man, he thought, I have more to regret about my own son than he had about me. For he knew that he had failed, from the very beginning, to ingratiate himself with Edmund. (Hill, 1970, 14)

However, Mr Hooper knows his blunder in treating his son and the more aware of his mistakes he is, the more disappointed he is. Woolfe notes: “Mr Hooper gives the impression of an inadequate parent who has failed in his duty to develop his son’s sense of morality and compassion.” (Woolfe, 1997, 57) Mr Hooper realizes his failure and in order to put it right, he attempts to guide Hooper’s behaviour towards Kingshaw:

Politely, Kingshaw turned his head to look out.

Mr Joseph Hooper thought, he is a good deal easier to deal with than my own son, that I must admit: he is quiet and withdrawn, yes, but there does not seem to be anything strange about him, as there has always been with Edmund, and there is constraint between us. He is not a boy who says very much, and yet I think I know his mind, I think I can say that I understand him. [...] He knew how to deal with Edmund, now; firmness, he had decided, firmness and directness, that is that is needed, and then they are happy enough; boys are very simple animals. (Hill, 1970, 195)

Unfortunately, Mr Hooper is evidently totally wrong in all his acting. Not only is he unable to fulfil his fatherly role, he misinterprets his son’s needs as well. With the arrival of Mrs Kingshaw with her son Mr Hooper starts to be concerned with his own private life rather than with his son and enjoys the presence of a woman at Warings. Mr Hooper did not experience love and quiet family life in marriage as Mrs. Hooper who was rather distant and secretive woman. Their marriage was not happy at all. From this point of view, Hooper’s behaviour and strange nature is quite understandable for he has probably inherited a reserved and impersonal approach to the other people from his mother. Mrs Hooper’s death was another cause of Hooper’s closeness. He obviously misses his mother and lacks the maternal care.

Concerning Kingshaw and his relation to his mother, there is a slightly different situation. Nevertheless, it is also uncomfortable. Kingshaw is marked by his rather insecure family background. Kingshaw blames his dead father from all difficulties connected with the Mrs Kingshaw’s fight for the survival. They have not had a permanent home for several years. Mrs Kingshaw considers herself a careful mother doing her best for her son. She firmly decides to settle at Warings where she would like

to start their new life and as claims Grant, no evidence will ever get her to change her mind. (1988) Mrs. Kingshaw's intention is to become closer with Mr Hooper and gradually gain his sympathies and respect which would lead to a marriage. For that she needs also to befriend Kingshaw and Hooper in order to build a new 'happy' family. It would ensure her not only the permanent home and financial security, but also certain social status and acknowledgement. While making and implementing her plans for the new future she hardly ever cares about Kingshaw's opinions or wishes. The truth is that in principle she never seriously listens to what he tries to tell to her, she does not even bother to try to understand him. The already complicated relationship between Kingshaw and his mother becomes even worse when Mrs Kingshaw decides to treat Hooper as her own son in effort to be accepted at Warings. "Now, she thought, I shall be like a mother to Edmund, in so far it is possible, I shall try to make no difference between the two of them, we shall be just like a family." (Hill, 1970, 134-135) Unfortunately, for her single-minded and self-centric contemplation she is entirely blind to all the terrors caused by Hooper to Kingshaw. She has no idea what is happening between the two of them. "In her determination to make sure nothing shall spoil her chances, she persistently ignores the obvious friction between the two boys." (Grant, 1988) Her 'deafness' to Kingshaw in the terms of frequent displays of distrust to his account and giving priority to Hooper constantly contribute to the already existing remoteness between him and Mrs Kingshaw. She progressively loses Kingshaw's respect and confidence:

"Is something the matter? Are *you* all right here?"

"Yes, thanks."

"You would tell Mummy, wouldn't you? It is probably such a tiny thing bothering you, we could clear it up at once, and everything would be quite all right again." [...] He could never begin to tell her. Did not want to. (Hill, 1970, 134-135)

Nevertheless, Mrs Kingshaw still does not realize any mistake in treating her son. From time to time she approaches him in a 'babyish' style to express her maternal love though Kingshaw absolutely hates it. The whole situation culminates when she solicitously looks after Hooper after his injury like his own mother. Moreover, she displays her incredible insensitivity towards her son after finding the dead body of

Kingshaw when she comforts Hooper: “Now, it’s all right, Edmund, dear, everything is all right, Mrs Helena Kingshaw put an arm out towards him, held him to her. I don’t want you to look, dear, you mustn’t look and be upset, everything is all right.” (Hill, 1970, 223) This shocking reaction only confirms that she is extremely preoccupied with her own affairs and absolutely neglects her son who chooses the suicide as the only possible escape from the world where he did not feel loved and needed.

To the Kingshaw’s decision to commit a suicide partially helped an experience gained from a friendship with Anthony Fielding, a boy from a neighbourhood. As Woolfe characterizes him, Fielding is a well-balanced and self-confident boy having very happy and natural family background. He makes friends readily without any doubt that people will accept him. Fielding presents the only person in who Kingshaw has a confidence and to who is able to confide his terrible experiences from Warings. Fielding is really sensitive to Kingshaw’s feelings but at the same time is not able to understand it as the boy like Fielding would never suffer anything similar. In other words, Fielding provides a striking contrast both, Kingshaw and Hooper, their family backgrounds and parent's relationships. Fielding and his family represent the normal world beyond Warings, where families can be loving and secure. To sum up, Fielding is something like an idol and a life-line to Kingshaw. Through their friendship Kingshaw gains a little bit of self-assurance and a little hope that maybe he will have better future and will be as happy as Fielding is. (1997, 66) The great disappointment to Kingshaw is finding that his mother spoiled everything by introducing Fielding to Hooper who seizes the situation and tries to win Fielding’s favour. The hatred towards Hooper and Mrs Kingshaw deepens. There is left no kindred spirit to Kingshaw. Therefore, he prefers committing the suicide to further suffering.

Though the novel was written for adults, it has been mostly understood by the young people among them the novel opened a great discussion about the children’s taboos. That was exactly the primary intention of Hill: to highlight to what measure the relationships between parents and children and family affairs in general influence the child’s nature and behaviour. Particularly this story points out that parental neglect and the lack of love can result in the catastrophe, the suicide of the boy in his early teens.

Analogously to *I’m the King of the Castle*, Hill uses the same technique of including happy and easygoing family to the story in *A Change for the Better*. The

other family again functions as a sharp contrast to the protagonist's distressful family surroundings to make him aware of the existence of the 'normal' family. A friend of James' friend Mark Schwartz and his parents match James' idea about happy and comfortable family. Similarly to *I'm the King of the Castle*, Hill applies also the protagonist's escapism. James often keenly accepts invitations to visit Schwartz where he spends a lot of time. To a great surprise of James' mother, he even insists on holidays with Schwartz instead of going abroad for a week with her. In the presence of parents of Schwartz he simply feels confident and relaxed and forgets about his unhappy family atmosphere for a while.

With reference to the tragic outcomes as a result of the family troubles of any kind, the short story "The Badness within Him" could be mentioned one more time. The hero, experiencing feelings of total misunderstanding from his family, wonders whether he has any affection to them. His doubts prove very soon as he quietly watches the drowning of his father and does absolutely nothing to prevent it. He simply has no need to help him.

Further story by Hill related to the incredibly appalling acting of a child leading to the tragedy is "Albatross". For the aversion to his mother a mentally-ill boy Duncan decides to get rid of her influence by wheeling her into the ocean. He lives only with her in a small cottage, far away from the other people. Duncan's mother is disabled and totally dependent on the care of her son. However, at the same time she constantly disregards his skills and humiliates him because of his mental disease. That is exactly the cause of Duncan's crime as he endeavours to live a new independent life and to stop the unbearable mocking from his mother.

Hill continues in dealing with family questions in other two short stories: "The Elephant Man" and "Friends of Miss Reece". Similarly as in *I'm the King of the Castle* and *A Change for the Better*, the central topic remains the lack of parents' interest and the failure in parenting in general. As it has been already discussed in previous chapter dealing with loneliness and lack affection, children desire love and understanding from their parents, however, they suffer from its absence very often. Whether it is from the reason that their parents are too busy to spend more time with their children or just because they are self-centric and have no idea about the needs of their child and do not care about it at all, the result is always the same: children suffer. In the short story "The



Elephant Man” Hill explores one of the quite common situations nowadays, namely parents’ employment of a nanny to look after their child. Not always proves this decision right as it suggests this story. Generally, the nanny is expected to substitute mother of the child in most of the matters, from spending a leisure time to educating and upbringing. The friendly relation and affection are taken for granted. Regrettably, it does not happen in William’s case. His nanny, Nancy Fawcett, is mostly preoccupied with her own life and love affairs and her only aim is to find some entertainment for him to have some time for herself. For the most part, William is rather isolated and neglected. And what is worse, he neither receives love from his parents, nor from his nanny. Similarly, the hero of the short story “Friends of Miss Reece” also suffers from the lack of parents’ interest. They concentrate significantly more on their private social life than on their own child’s welfare. They often leave him in charge of his aunt in the nursing home for elderly people. His parents do not take into account that it is hardly an appropriate place where their child should spend a lot of time and where he could find any entertainment or even friends. Especially, if his aunt is too occupied with her duties and is not able to play with him.

To conclude, Hill points out the significance of the family, more specifically the significance of relationships between parents and children. Through her stories full of tragic endings and sorrowful lifelong consequences of failure in child-rearing in this case, Hill emphasizes the importance of mutual communication and respect as it is a basement for a perfectly functioning family, for happy and satisfied children.

#### **4.5 Evil in children**

In reference to the opening chapter dealing with historical development of concepts of childhood Hill’s unique vision of evil in children must be mentioned. (See Chapter 4.2.) That is to say that there are many novels featuring evil, malice and bullying experienced in childhood. In the majority of cases it concerns children’s sufferings caused mostly by adults. That is exactly what distinguishes Hill from the other writers interested in this theme. In Hill’s novels, it is a child who is evil and who knowingly or even with a delight maltreats the others, as remarks Sambrook in her

notes related to the novel *I'm the King of the Castle*. (Sambrook, 1992, 6) Therefore, a special attention to the Hill's portrayal of evil in children should be paid.

If analysing the evil in children, primarily the novel *I'm the King of the Castle* will provide the background as it is one of the central themes of the story. At its strongest, evil is personified by Hooper, the psychopathic child who systematically torments Kingshaw. There are several pitiful scenes portraying Hooper's malevolent acting from passing the note expressing that Kingshaw is not welcome at Warings to the cruel bullying. The evil takes there many forms whether in terms of lying and laying blame on Kingshaw, or intentional preparing acts which surely make Kingshaw suffer, for example locking him in the remote and deserted shed where nobody would find him:

The voice was somewhere at the back of the shed, detached and peculiarly muffled behind the tin walls. There was a faint scrabbling sound, up near the roof.

"Kingshaw..."

Hooper. Kingshaw got up slowly. But he did not go any nearer to the voice.

"*What are you doing?*"

He waited, silent, scarcely breathing.

"Kingshaw?"

"Bastard..."

Pause. More scrabbling. Hooper was at the back of the shed somewhere. He laughed.

"Aren't you scaredy, all by yourself in the dark, dark, dark...?" (Hill, 1970, 141-142)

Not only Kingshaw has to get accustomed to the new position of a victim, but also Hooper has to learn his completely new role of the perpetrator, as the evil of this kind had never appeared in him until the Kingshaw's arrival. Woolfe describes Hooper's development: "At the beginning, Hooper appears to bully Kingshaw as an experiment to satisfy his curiosity about Kingshaw's behaviour when afraid, but he soon displays a malevolent enjoyment of his power to control. He approaches the persecution with a cold deliberation, delighting in his plans and showing no scruples about suffering he inflicts." (1997, 56-57) In essence, Hooper is psychopath who finds the pleasure in making other people suffer. Hill comments his behaviour:

“I think Hooper has got this, the pleasure of killing flies – which many small boys have – multiplied by whatever, it’s the enjoyment of watching somebody else not so much be hurt in the physical sense, but certainly wriggle on the hook of being afraid. It’s the bully’s absolute ultimate thing, isn’t it? The delight of watching the fear. [...] Hooper takes pleasure in unkindness and watching the other person react it.” (Reynolds, 2003, 16-17)

The killing the small insect is nothing unusual at small boys, however, concerning Hooper, it exceeds all the limits. Babuta agrees with Hill at this point: “Many boys torture insects and small animals. Hooper tortures Kingshaw.” (1989, 76) From the arrival of Kingshaw to Warings, Hooper makes war upon him. As has been already suggested, Hooper enjoys observing Kingshaw’s suffering. Therefore, Hooper’s intention is not to defeat Kingshaw immediately, he rather aims to discover new ways how to hurt Kingshaw. One of the possible means how to achieve it is to steal him anything worthy to Kingshaw. (See Chapter 4.1.) However, the best triumph comes in the form of Kingshaw’s suicide as it acknowledges Hooper’s ultimate victory, he is the winner now. It is the best satisfaction for him. Hill concludes that Hooper’s real pleasure lies in the fact that after Kingshaw’s suicide Hooper has got everything else: “He’s got Kingshaw’s mother, and his own father, the place and the set-up, and he’s the ‘king of the castle’.” (Reynolds, 2003, 17) Hooper is very proud of his final victory and is entirely regardless to his guilt. He purely indulges in his triumph: “When he saw Kingshaw’s body, upside down in the water, Hooper thought suddenly, it was because of me, I did that, *it was because of me*, and a spurt of triumph went through him.” (Hill, 1970, 222 – 223)

In the connection to the above described acts of cruelty and hatred committed by the boy of age of ten, a question about the source of the evil arises. It is not completely obvious where the evil in Hooper comes from and what are the causes of it, nevertheless, it is evident that dysfunctional family contributes to the expansion of the evil in Hooper. Woolfe observes that Hooper suffers from the lack of maternal care, has got difficult relationship with his father who does not know how to treat his son and is jealous of another boy, Kingshaw, who arrived in his home. (1997, 53) Hooper is growing up in very cold-hearted environment where rather reserved relationships prevail. “It is clear that love and compassion have played little part in his young life”,

Woolfe adds. (1997, 53) The fact that Hooper is the only child and that he is motherless supports this assumption. Woolfe claims that another factor contributing to the expansion of Hooper's wickedness is the lack of consciousness. The cause definitely lies in an inadequate parental care, more precisely, the care of Hooper's father. He entirely failed in guiding his son, he did not managed to inculcate basic principles of human conduct and moral code in Hooper's mind. (See Chapter 4.4.) The parental guidance is necessity for social and emotional development of each child. Hooper represents the child who has never been provided this education. He has been never taught to recognize the good from the evil. All the above described circumstances gave a breeding ground for the growth of the evil force within him. Woolfe assumes that on the one hand, the appearance of evil in Hooper could be explain by his social problems as evil is a kind of natural and self- protective reaction of a boy feeling threatened in a certain way. On the other hand, Woolfe adds that many children have similar experiences as Hooper and they cope with them, they survive them. Therefore, another explanation comes forward. What influences Hooper is some kind of mystery evil force. (1997, 53) In principle, Hooper never realizes that there is something wrong within his behaviour. It is even questionable whether he has some emotions in relation to his father or what he actually feels, how he perceives people in his surrounding:

The author explores at length Kingshaw's complex feelings of hatred, guilt and responsibility towards Hooper, but we are never given such insight into Hooper's thoughts – perhaps because Hooper never reflects on his own behaviour and its consequences. [...] Hill deliberately does not define Hooper's motives: his unrestrained, remorseless behaviour, and its frightening, tragic consequences are made all the more evil because we cannot understand their source. (Woolfe, 1997, 57-58)

Nevertheless, what is obvious is Hooper's disturbing malevolent intention to do the harm to the others. It does not matter whether his vicious way of thinking is caused by uncomfortable family background or, more improbably, by some mysterious force. The conclusion is always the same: Hooper is evil.

Hill is concerned with the question of evil in other two short stories: "The Albatross" and "The Badness within Him". In both short stories the heroes identify evil within them. Yet, in each of them evil has got different causes. In the case of the short

story “The Albatross” the protagonist, a mentally-ill boy named Duncan, commits a crime in form of killing his invalid mother by wheeling her into the ocean. He had very strong motivation to emancipate as he desired to demonstrate his independence and ability to live like the others. Unfortunately, he selects the most desperate option with the tragic result. The other short story, “The Badness within Him”, ends similarly, with the death of the protagonist's parent. This time, the intent of the hero originates in desire for some change in his life. Col has got both loving parents and is not the only child as other Hill’s characters are, nevertheless, he feels a certain alienation from his family. Ironically, he is slightly bored with his quiet, comfortable family atmosphere. Basically, he does not lack anything but some excitement. His wish comes true when his father drowns in the ocean and the boy calmly, without any discomposure that his father is dying, watches it. Both narratives have similar development: both children experiences dissatisfaction in their present family situation, both desire a substantive reversal in their lives, both commit evil act. Nonetheless, one significant difference must not be neglected: The hero from the short story “The Badness within Him” apparently distinguishes from the protagonists from the novel *I’m the King of the Castle* and from the short story “The Albatross”. The difference lies in a lack of conscious. Whereas Duncan and Hooper never think about the consequences of their acts and never acknowledge any guilt for their crimes, Col does so. Above all, he suffers from remorse and he blames himself for his father’s death for he wished any change to happen. He believes in some ‘badness within him’, as it suggests the title, which caused this catastrophe. Considering all the issues, the outcome is always the same: evil in children does exist.

Generally, the presence of evil in children challenges many questions. These are interested not only in sources of evil, but particularly in the assumptions of children’s innocence. To the childhood are mostly ascribed goodness, pureness and incorruption. Hill’s portrayal of childhood completely contradicts this image. Chiefly, the novel *I’m the King of the Castle* provokes to reconsider the opinions about childhood: “It is very difficult to maintain an unshaken belief that young children do not bear grudges, are incapable of sustained cruelty, and do not really understand the effects of own behaviour.” (Grant, 1988) The story, which abound in scenes full of cruelty and malice, makes the reader realize that evil is not extremely rare. Grant maintains that the unique

aspect of Hill's work is the presentation of evil in people as a real condition which cannot be completely ascribed to their situations or the way they were brought up: "Responsibility is ultimately placed upon people for what they do, not just on the ills they have suffered, although the operations of circumstances and fate provide a framework within which the characters play out their parts." (1988) From this point of view, Hooper is fully responsible for his malevolent acts against Kingshaw no matter how much is influenced by his uncomfortable family life. Woolfe fully agrees with Grant in this issue and also mentions evil as an innate quality of a child's nature: "Cruelty is not unusual in children. In the struggle to survive as part of a group, the weakest are often oppressed, but society seeks to correct the balance and preserve the safety of even its weakest members. Cruel behaviour in children is corrected, and values of love and compassion are taught." (1997, 53) However, this theory refers to the ideal cases where firm guidance from parent is given. Hooper lacks such care totally. As a result, evil in him thrives and grows. The consequences are often appalling. "It is disturbing at the end of the novel to confront the fact that Hooper's evil has triumphed over the good, and all the more disturbing because Hooper is only a child."(Woolfe, 1997, 53)

To make the inherent evil in children the most visible, Hill uses the technique of pitting the good against evil. Hill characterizes: "*I'm the King of the Castle* is about the various expressions of the good and evil. It's a bad boy versus a good boy, and the bad boy wins – apparently." (Reynolds, 2003, 16) Hill's aim is to draw an attention to the seriousness of this problem and to make adults think about their beliefs in children's innocence. Therefore, the victory of the evil over the good is necessary.

## 5. Differences in depicting childhood

As the opening chapter suggested, Hill belongs to the twentieth century writers who significantly distinguish from the previous fictionists concerned with childhood. (See Chapter 2) According to Sullivan, the difference lies especially in the view of children. (1990, 7) They are no longer considered to be helpless and innocence, they are treated as the adults who are fully responsible for themselves. Obviously, Hill is not the only author interested in the topic of children and childhood. Similar attitudes can be observed for instance in the work of William Golding, particularly at the point of evil in children.

One of the works which are frequently compared to Hill's novel *I'm the King of the Castle* (1970), where evil in children becomes the most evident, is Golding's novel *The Lord of the Flies* (1954) which also challenges the myth of the purity of children. Kelly informs that Golding examines in *The Lord of the Flies* human evil not only as a part of human nature, but he is also interested in its causes, effects and manifestation of evil. Kelly further adds that Golding described the novel's theme as "an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature". (2000, 85)

The novel brings a reader in the midst of a nuclear war when a group of British boys appears on an unanimated tropical island after their plane had been attacked. No of the adult supervisors has survived. Therefore, a great boys' adventure begins. The boys, aged from six to twelve, initially attempt to maintain basic principles of civilisation from which they come from and follow the rules determined by their leader, a boy called Ralph. Nevertheless, another boy of group, Jack, desires to lead as well. Jack inclines toward adventurous hunting activities and gradually attracts the most of the boys to his group. Boys easily adapt their new role of hunters and completely change their behaviour, forget about their humanity. Their almost 'animal appetite' proceed to extremity when they have even no constraints to kill one of them. Finally, a passing ship arrives in a high time to save the boys who turned savages during the several days.

Not only theme of evil and violence illustrated in *Lord of the Flies* is common to Hill's novel *I'm the King of the Castle*, there are also other similarities, particularly,

it is the question of desire for power/leadership and children fears. Analogously to *I'm the King of the Castle*, strong ambition to rule others becomes a starting point for the conflict between the boys. (See Chapter 4.1) However, certain differences are evident. Whereas in *I'm the King of the Castle* is desire to control others rather single-sided as only Hooper is illustrated as the dominator, in *Lord of the Flies* is the situation slightly different. Both of the boys, Ralph and Jack, struggle for leadership, nevertheless, as Hartley and Buzan observe, their leaderships are "based on different principles". While Ralph's style is rather democratic and open to other opinions, Jack prefers pure domination, no matter whether over an animal or a human. (1998, 15)

Kelly concisely characterizes: "*Lord of the Flies* explores the dark side of humanity, the savagery that underlies even the most civilized human beings." (2000, 10) Moreover, one of the Golding's intentions was to illustrate that each member of humankind has this innate evil. (2000, 88) All of the boys in Jack's tribe, the hunters, progressively turn savages and reveal their ability to commit violence. At the beginning, they hunt in order to provide some meat, however, the violence becomes a motivator in a later phase. Far from any civilization, isolated from any influence of society, all values of humanity are abandoned and opportunity for savagery, hidden in the boys, arises.

Similarly as Hill, Golding also pays special attention to the children fears in *Lord of the Flies*. The boys are frightened of a mythical beast roaming the island. Fear has literally fundamental role in *Lord of the Flies*. Kelly claims that "Golding uses the boy's fear of a mythical beast to illustrate their assumption that evil arises from external forces rather than from themselves." (2000, 88) Originally, it was fear of beast what motivated them to hunt. From rather innocent school boys they become bloodthirsty killers. "Part of Golding's intent was to demonstrate that evil is not restricted to specific populations or situations." (88) In other words, Golding presents boys' savagery and evil as a natural part of human nature. Golding once asserted that "man produces evil as bees produce honey". At this point, Golding's view of evil differs from Hill's concept. Sambrook compares these two authors: "Where for Golding evil is universal, erupting when civilisation collapses, for Hill evil is there in one child, like a hideous disease which strikes at random." (Sambrook, 1992, 8) Nevertheless, both authors agree that evil is an innate part of the human nature.



Completely different and rather controversial concept of evil presents another fictioner of the twentieth century, Anthony Burgess. In his futuristic novel called *A Clockwork Orange* he introduces his unique vision of the good and evil. The story, full of violence, raping and other evil acts committed by the group of teenagers, is focused more on discussing the moral freedom than on criticizing evil in a human. Alex, a protagonist, is after several criminal offences imprisoned and even forced by government to undergo a revolutionary rehabilitation which is supposed to cure him and prevent him to commit further violence. However, Alex totally lost his free choice to decide whether he will choose evil or the good and becomes rather a mechanic existence than an individual. Burgess emphasizes a spiritual freedom as a basic aspect of humanity: "When a man cannot choose, he ceases to be a man." (Burgess, 2002, 67) His belief that there exists more good in a man who deliberately chooses evil than in a man who is oppressed to be good only confirms this statement. Burgess is generally less strict in judging violence and evil in children, he once proclaimed: "Violence among young people is an aspect of their desire to create. They don't know how use their energy creatively so they do the opposite and destroy." The suppression of personal freedom means to him more disastrous than any consequences of violent and malevolent acts.

In summary, there appeared several different concepts of evil in children/human in the twentieth century. Hill as well as Golding illustrate evil in children/mankind as a 'defect' of human nature caused by failure of society or civilization, however, Burgess sees evil as the one of the two possible choices as the good and evil have the same value for him. What is important for Burgess is the spiritual freedom no matter how harmful the consequences of evil are.

## 6. Conclusion

Hill's fascination and interest in the subject of childhood becomes evident in number of her works. The explanation partially provides Hill's need to compensate frustrations originated in her own private life, nevertheless, her chief aim is to make the adults readers aware of the fact that children's world can be often much more difficult than the adult one. For the parents tend to sentimentalize childhood and deny any potential troubles experienced by children, Hill focuses on childhood miseries that seem to be improbable for parents. The intention of Hill is to challenge the adults to acknowledge the possibility of existence of the children distresses and reconsideration of their opinions about them. Therefore, her stories featuring childhood are written preferably for adults.

To achieve Hill's ambition, she purposely displays the most chilling and pitiful scenes from the growing up in her stories. Hill addresses various difficulties that her heroes have to undergo during the period of coming of age. As the analysis of selected narratives by Hill shows, the individual protagonists suffer from similar torments, grow up in similar family atmosphere and experience the similar feelings of powerlessness and loneliness. In other words, there exist clear parallels of motives between the particular stories. A comprehensive image of childhood by Hill is suggested by drawing these analogies. To retain a unified concept of children, Hill stylizes her protagonists according to one prototype: the hero [Hill prefers boys in her works] is usually an only child growing up in a single-parent or dysfunctional family and suffers from either feelings of misunderstanding and alienation from his family or from the isolation. These circumstances then become a starting point for further problems as it proved in most of the cases mentioned in the analysis. To specify it, all the children miseries originate in unhappy family background. The parents often fail in communication understanding their child or even neglect him completely, are not able to guide him properly, are not able to love him. Consequently, the emotional emptiness in children rises as it is manifested by the incapability to relate the others. Disharmonious family relationships and overall inappropriate parental care become a cause of many serious psychological distresses which lead to inner security and low self-confidence of children. These are manifested particularly by numerous fears that children experience.

Hill points out that the parents should not disregard the frustrations as these might be even reason for a desperate escape to suicide as Hill demonstrated on Kingshaw.

Another aspect to which is paid special attention in connection to importance of family background is evil in children. Hill is not as concerned with the source of evil as with the causes of its growth. The expansion of evil in children is mostly ascribed to the uncomfortable and reserved relationships with parents who failed in their duty to guide their child properly. Generally, Hill views evil in children as an innate quality which is by the means of social and moral guidance corrected. Instead, love and compassion are taught. In her stories, she points out the effects of the opposite situations. Her characters, who have never known loving treatment, entirely lack moral conscious. At its strongest, evil is represented in Hooper. He is an exemplary embodiment of malice: he bullies and with a delight maltreats his victim, finds the uttermost satisfaction in his victim's suicide. Hooper is evil. As a certain 'emotional emptiness' exists within him, the evil is allowed to thrive.

The comparative chapter dealing with other views of childhood and particularly evil in children provides a deeper understanding of Hill's concept as it is put into different context. For instance Anthony Burgess, regarding evil as the potential free choice of a man how to behave, presents the contradictory perception of the good and evil in comparison with Hill. To the contrary, William Golding's perspective coincides with Hill's theory in many aspects. Both authors consider evil in children an innate quality of each man, however, they opinions differ in circumstances under which evil emerge.

What Hill distinguishes from other prose-writers is her focus on children psychology. She provides a deep insight into minds of her protagonists and portrays miseries and torments experienced by them, illustrates effects of frustrations and feelings of isolation on their behaviour. As a result, these chilling and pitiful scenes present a complex image of a harsh children world. Chiefly, the adult readers, to whom is the majority of Hill's works featuring childhood dedicated, are challenged to think about the children in a completely new way. Moreover, Hill through her stories makes them realize how important role they play in life of their children. The contribution of Hill's work lies especially in the fact that due to this awareness many of further

unhappy events might be prevented in children's life which is very complicated anyway.

## 7. Resumé

Dítě a dětství se stávaly častými literárními náměty již od dob středověku. Mnoho autorů do své tvorby promítalo svůj osobní koncept procesu dospívání. Britská prozaička Susan Hillová, která se v mnoha svých dílech touto tematikou zabývá, je jednou z představitelk tohoto žánru. Cílem této práce je představit zobrazení dětství v próze Hillové prostřednictvím analýzy, která vzájemně porovnává opakovaně se vyskytující motivy jako jsou například osamocení, okleštěné rodinné vztahy nebo zloba a nenávisť. Zasazení dosavadní tvorby Hillové do širšího literárního kontextu a závěry analýzy provedené na vybrané románové a povídkové próze předkládají ucelený náhled na dětství z pohledu této autorky.

Pojetí dětství v historii procházela výraznými změnami, které byly společensky a kulturně podmíněny. Vyvíjel se nejenom význam pojmu dětství, ale i sociální význam dítěte jako takového. Kupříkladu v období středověku bylo dítě již od narození považováno za 'malého dospělého', s kterým bylo v tomto duchu také zacházeno. Obecně lze říci, že dětství v žádném směru nepřipomínalo čas hrátek a radostí tak, jak ho známe z dnešních dob. Tato skutečnost přetrvávala i v 16. a 17. století, kdy do popředí vstoupilo puritánské přesvědčení, že člověk přichází na svět s vrozenými sklony k páchání hříchu. Ty pak musí být prostřednictvím přísné až asketické morální výchovy odstraněny. Kontrastem k puritánskému nazírání na dětství se v 18. století stávaly romantické představy o dětech. Sentiment a idealizace dětství jsou pro toto období typické. Děti jsou chápány jako nevinná a křehká stvoření často přirovnávána k 'andálkům'. V souvislosti s potřebou ochrany dětí také postupně vzrůstá význam rodičovské péče. S příchodem osvícenství lze pozorovat narůstající náklonnost k dětem i k období dospívání, které je vnímáno velmi pozitivně. V 19. a 20. století se pak formuje moderní koncept dětství, ve kterém je dítě považováno spíše za individualitu žijící ve své vlastní subkultuře. Vývoj jednotlivých přístupů k dětství lze také pozorovat v literatuře. Zájem o bližší prozkoumání dětského světa se promítl do tvorby mnoha prozaiků, kteří stále častěji do svých hlavních rolí obsazují dětské hrdiny. Jedním z nich je také Susan Hillová.

Otázkou dětství a problémy s ním spojenými se tato prozaička zabývá v mnoha svých příbězích. Mezi nejvýznamnější se řadí zejména romány *Jsem král hradu* a

*Změna k lepšímu* nebo také povídka “Albatros”. Důraz v její tvorbě je kladen zejména na psychologické aspekty dospívání. Do popředí se dostávají především otázky týkající se pocitů a zážitků dětí v průběhu dětství a jejich vliv v pozdějších fázích života. Příčinou jejího zájmu o tuto problematiku je snaha odstranit často nesprávnou interpretaci dětského světa z perspektivy dospělého člověka a napomoci snadnějšímu chápání mnoha problémů vyskytujících se v tomto životním období každého člověka. Hillová se prostřednictvím svých příběhů snaží přiblížit skutečnou realitu, kterou mnohdy nebývá snadné přijmout a která bývá povrchně popírána. Hrdiny jejích postav jsou obvykle jedinci, kteří se vždy v jistém smyslu odlišují od svých vrstevníků často pocházejících z nefunkčních nebo neúplných rodin. Rodinné a mezilidské vztahy pak všeobecně hrají v osudech těchto hrdinů významnou roli.

Charakteristickým rysem prózy Hillové jsou opakující se motivy, jež pokaždé v různých formách oslovují tentýž problém. Pravidelně objevujícím se prvkem prostupujícím mnoha příběhů jsou pocity samoty a odloučení. Jejich důvodem často bývá nedostatečný rodičovský zájem o své děti, které tráví mnoho času osamoceně. K této skutečnosti významně přispívá i fakt, že protagonisté Hillových povídek bývají obvykle jedináčci, pro které je samota smutnou samozřejmostí. Zde Hillová čerpá z vlastní zkušenosti a předkládá tak autentický obraz dětství jedináčka vzbuzující lítost a smutek.

Dalším z těchto diskutovaných témat jsou například dětské strachy a frustrace, kterými se zabývá zejména v románu *Jsem král hradu*. Hillová zde vyvrací mýtus, že časté pocity úzkosti jsou vždy přirozenou součástí v dětského světa, který je díky fantazii plný záhad a tajemství. Kingshaw, protagonista tohoto románu často mívá trýznivé pocity plné obav a znepokojení, které bývají také doprovázené fyzickými projevy utrpení. Ať už jsou jednotlivé příhody, které mu způsobují traumatické zážitky, pouhou náhodou či naopak Hooperem nastraženou lstí, faktem zůstává, že tyto Kingshawovi ‘noční můry’ mají velký vliv na jeho psychiku. Nabízí se otázka, co je důvodem jeho přehnané přecitlivělosti a neschopnosti vyrovnat se s těmito zážitky. Odpověď lze hledat v rodinném zázemí, které nelze považovat za příznivé. Kingshaw totiž zdaleka nedostává tolik lásky, péče a pozornosti, kolik by dítě v jeho věku vyžadovalo, a proto citově velmi strádá. Jeho vnitřní nevyrovnanost se tedy prostřednictvím psychického týrání a šikany ze strany Hoopera postupně zvyšuje a

nízké sebevědomí se den ode dne prohlubuje. Když jeho utrpení přesahuje meze únosnosti, zvolí sebevraždu jako jediný možný způsob jak uniknout ze světa plného trápení.

Rodinné zázemí a vztahy mezi rodiči a dětmi mají zásadní význam v díle této autorky. Všechny její postavy (Kingshaw, Hooper, William, Col a Duncan) vyrůstají v neúplných či nefunkčních rodinách. Nestabilní domov charakteristický chladnými a neupřímnými vztahy se pro Hillovou stává odrazovým můstkem pro všechny další potíže objevující se v životech jejích hrdinů. Problém často spočívá ve faktu, že rodiče mnohdy ani nerozumí základním potřebám a přáním svých potomků nebo dokonce v horších případech si ani nepovšimnou, že je něco trápí. Následkem této rodičovské ignorace pak bývají právě pocity osamění, smutku a naprosté bezmocnosti, která může vést, tak jak to dokazuje Kingshaw, k tragickým skutečnostem. Citlivé vnímání okleštěných rodinných vztahů ještě umocňuje protiklad šťastné a spokojené rodiny, který Hillová do svých příběhů často řadí. Pro Kingshawa je rodina jeho přítele Fieldinga bolestivým ujištěním, že i velmi šťastné a harmonické rodiny stále existují a utvrdí ho v přesvědčení, že jediným možným způsobem jak uniknout z jeho nešťastné svazující situace je smrt.

Hillová se také ve velké části svých příběhů zabývá otázkou zla v dětech, které ve své nejsilnější formě je znázorněno v románu *Jsem král hradu*. Zde psychopat Hooper nalézá potěšení v systematické šikaně a pronásledování své oběti, Kingshawa. Hooper stále vymýšlí a nalézá nové způsoby psychického týrání a skvěle si zálibu užívá. Aby svého cíle dosáhl, usmyslí si například prostřednictvím intrik a lstí odejmout Kingshawovi vše, co má pro něj nějakou hodnotu. Svým postojem se snaží Kingshawovi dokázat, jak velkou nadvládu nad ním má a do jaké míry může řídit a ovládat jeho život. Největším zadostiučiněním je pak pro Hoopera triumf v podobě Kingshawovi sebevraždy, jelikož si je jist, že právě on byl příčinou tohoto nešťastného rozhodnutí. Zloba a nenávisť, které ovládají Hooperovu osobnost vyzývají k hledání zdroje tohoto zla. Podle Hillové nesprávná výchova společně s nedostatkem lásky ze strany jeho rodičů jistým způsobem přispívá k růstu této zlomyslnosti a touhy ubližovat druhým. Avšak samotný původ tohoto zla Hillová vysvětluje jako vrozenou dispozici, která se za těchto nepříznivých podmínek rozvíjí.

Nestandardní pojetí dětství společně s neobvyklým pojetím zla Hillovou jednoznačně odlišuje od tradice 19.století zobrazující děti spíše jako oběti než samotné pachatele. Děti tak přestávají být vnímány jako bezmocné a zranitelné bytosti, jak tomu bývalo v historii. Mimo díla Susan Hillové se tato tendence objevuje i v tvorbě mnoha jiných autorů během 20.století jakou jsou například William Golding nebo Anthony Burgess, i když s jistými odlišnostmi v chápání tohoto zla. Koncept Hillové se do jisté míry shoduje s názorem Goldinga shledávajícího zlo jako všudypřítomnou součást lidské povahy, která se projevuje v souvislosti s selháním všech sociálních norem a pravidel. U Hillové se však toto zlo objevuje bez rozdílu přítomnosti nebo absence civilizace, Hillová spíše vidí zlo jako skrytý vnitřní součást lidské povahy, která může kdykoliv vypuknout. Se zcela neobvyklým pohledem na zlo přichází Burgess, který jej řadí na stejnou úroveň jako dobro. Pro Burgesse zlo není opakem dobra, je jen jednou z možností svobodného rozhodnutí člověka.

Zájem Hillové o bližší prozkoumání dětského světa pramení nejen z jisté potřeby kompenzace svých vlastních frustrací z dětství (Hillová se inspirovala vlastními zážitky například v otázce šikany a pronásledování, či ve vylíčení scénérií zachycující osamělý život jedináčka), ale také především ze snahy vykreslit realistický obraz dětství ze současné doby. V pozadí tohoto záměru stojí především úsilí zachytit nejdůležitější a zároveň nejčastější závažná témata. Tímto způsobem se pak Hillová snaží obeznámit dospělou populaci o jejich existenci. Právě dospělým čtenářům je velká část Hillových povídek věnována. Tato spisovatelka si je vědoma skutečnosti, že právě rodiče často odmítají přijmout fakta týkající se například zmiňovaného zla v dětech nebo také otázky sebevraždy, jelikož se jim totiž zdají velmi nepravděpodobné a nereálné. Proto se svým citlivým přístupem k těmto záležitostem se Hillová pokouší vyzvat své čtenáře k přehodnocení jejich nesprávných předsudků a díky této informovanosti tak přispět k zamezení dalších nešťastných událostí v životě dětí, který i tak bývá velmi komplikovaný.



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