

Book analysis

"This boy's life" by Tobias Wolff
and "Into the forest" by Jean Hegland
in MLA style

"This boy's life" by Tobias Wolff and "Into the forest" by Jean Hegland are two outstanding books that are worth of the attention of the most sophisticated reader. "This boy's life" by Tobias Wolff describes the life of a boy who throughout all the events in his life gains the knowledge what means to be a man and after all these struggles he goes through he gets a very special and unique perception of the world. The main character Jack, does not have a father and his mother could not do anything outstanding to help him as a future man. Jack is "abandoned" as a child and does not get any real parental counseling and support.

"Into the forest" by Jean Hegland is a story about two sisters who have to survive in the conditions of not having food, neither water no electricity. It is about how Eva and Nell transform from little girls to strong women, who are able to overcome all obstacle on their way. Eva and Nell lose their father still being "little helpless girls" and face the cruel world where life is not welcomed. It is common knowledge that there exist three main factors that shape the personality of every man: heredity, the environment the man grows up and the upbringing. The last factor is one of the most influential ones as the personality of the parents, their personal example, their values and principles shape the mind of the

child and build the foundation for the future personality and life of the child. The presence or absence of parents by itself may actually result in the same situation - the absence of care and personality establishment without parental advisory. The main characters of the books could not become the people they did if it was not for the absence of parents around them. They had to learn how to stand up and to keep walking in their own way. The key lesson of such situations is the ability to learn that one can rely only on himself.

The main character of the "This boy's life" is Tobias Wolff, who eventually changes his name to Jack, after Jack London. Jack has a very complicated personality. As he has never had a father around - he does not have a male role model to follow. This results in the fact that the boy becomes a trouble maker and what is known to be an "awful teenager". Such brain-storming adolescence teaches him that no matter what happens he has to believe in himself and to keep walking. Though Jack's mother was the one who stayed with him when his father left, nevertheless the character of the relationship is rather odd. She never was a real "mother" for him and has to taught him what is to love and to care. Nevertheless, deep inside Jack is a very compassionate person, this involves his mother too which the difference that he just does not know how to take care about her when she needs it though he really

wants to do it. Although he becomes more parents to her and she was to him.

In the beginning Jack is boy out of nowhere, who lies to everyone because he wants to be better and more successful than he is in: "I was subject to fits of feeling myself unworthy... It didn't take much to bring this sensation to life, along with the certainty that everybody but my mother saw through me and did not like what they saw" (Wolff,1999). It can be said that the breaking point for Jack's personality formation was the Army: all the experience he has had at that point connected with the army discipline and propaganda of what is to be a real man. Jack becomes a man through all the hardships in which no one was around to explain him what to do or whether whatever he is doing is right - endless fights, drinking running around the country - all these protests could have been only theoretical if a real parent took care about Jack. Being emotionally neglected in the childhood, having experienced domestic violent acts, facing criminal behavior and misuse of alcohol makes Jack "mutate" and transforms. Jack learns that he cannot always control the situation and cannot be responsible for everything that happens around but originally this feeling of responsibility and guilt for what is going on around comes from the child's thought that father left because of him. Jack reveals his potential which was suppressed by the parenting he got. The process of becoming

mature and finding out that he has everything for success is Jack's breakthrough. The realization of the fact that he is not limited by his childhood and the mistreatment he got brought Jack to personal freedom from the pain that has been staying in his "heart of a child" for years.

Eva and Nell are main characters of the "Into the forest" by Jean Hegland. These two sisters experience the death of both of the parents and find themselves in a post-apocalyptic situation where the only goal of living is survival. Eva and Nell have observed the male and female parenting models, but nevertheless it is common knowledge that force majeure situations reveal and form new qualities in any man. This is how Nell, being a girl, a young woman learns how to actually "be a man" in the most transparent understating of this issue including the physical strength required to survive in the woods. The girls shape themselves into young independent and strong women, who are very self-sufficient. One important factor that made their transformation possible is the role model of their father, who initially gave them the potential to overcome all the obstacles. It is owing to this that Nell is able to: "Enter the twilight woods, the gun stiff at... side. Push a new path through the forest" (Hegland,1998). Harsh, severe condition, absence of food, water and electricity and hope that someday everything will change and come back to normal is what made two teenage girls transform into people

who are capable of: "In some dim circle of trees... sit down on the earth. Take off ... shoe. Work ... toes into the cold ring of the trigger guard. Fumble the trigger until it gave" (Hegland,1998). The personalities of the two sisters in general and Nell, as the leading character in particular are shaped in extreme situation and therefore demand the girls to be determined, quick, smart, responsible for their own lives and the live of the person next to them. What is so important - the absence gives the girls and Nell in particular the personal responsibility for what she does and why she does it: "I am my own person, after all" (Hegland,1998).

Both of the stories reveal the importance of the parenting which was received by the main characters. It is its presence or its absence that can make a very big difference for the future personality of a child. Jack, Nell and Eva had unfavorable factors during the process of the formation of their personality and the fact that they did not have and get enough parental support made them become harsher outside. At the same time it can also be said that it is also the fact that either the parent was not around or died made them more prepared, stronger and more mature to face difficult situations in the future. Whatever happens - happens for a reason and for better. Jack, Eva and Nell suffered but it is only owing to these sufferings they became "real people" and found strength to overcome everything.

Works cited:

1. Wolff, Tobias. This boy's life. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 1999.
2. Hegland, Jean. Into the forest. Dial Press Trade Paperback, 1998.