

## THE REALISM IN THE WORKS OF THE AUSTRIAN AUTHOR OF LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH CRISTINE NÖSTLINGER

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**Abstract:** In the paper, the focus is on the intentions of the author, to place the reality of children's and youth heroes in the center of attention. This means that the topic of the child and the young person in the family is related to the way of presenting the historical and social reality in a twofold way: the abilities of the child and the young child for reality become measuring instruments for the evaluation of the reality in general, the responsible bearers of which are the adults, who on their part, for the above reasons, they are always characterized in the context of the family, as well as the level of reality, with which she presents the family and the characters in it. The analysis showed that through the entire rich creation, the theme of the family, and thus the theme of the fate of the child in the family context, is not just one theme among others, but has a central importance. It implies that this central theme is the fundamental dimension in the horizon of our author and her thematic fields. This hermeneutic-literary research is based exclusively on text analysis and our interpretation of realism in some of the most important works of Christine Nöstlinger. In this paper, the analysis is limited to psychological and sociological aspects of the research. The purpose of this paper is to detect, unmask and present the horizon of the author about the image of the family primarily from a sociological, psychological and ethical aspect. The research of the most significant works of the Austrian author of literature for children and youth, Christine Nöstlinger, explicitly shows how her work moves from the negative reality, through the positive utopian with the alternative space and with the return to realism, with a new goal of therapy to create a better reality. In order to create that better reality, children and youth are needed, who in the course of the narrated story get a chance to prepare for an existence as optimally socialized, i.e. emancipated, intellectually independent, humanely motivated towards others, open bearers of the future, but also in difficult situations capable of correct solutions.

**Keywords:** realism, literature for children and youth, Austrian author, Christine Nöstlinger

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The family is a part of us, even before we experience the first light of the day, the family is with us throughout our lives, shapes us and follows us through everyday life. No matter how simple and familiar the topic sounds, there is always something that can be explored, identified, explained and said about the family. Such is the case with the overall work of Christine Nöstlinger, the author, from whose selection of works a part is presented in this paper.

The paper focuses on two current research complexes: firstly, on the increased focus on the research of children's and youth literature in general and on German-language literature on the topic of family, and secondly, on the ever-increasing importance attributed to the Austrian author of children's and youth literature.

The first analysis showed that through the entire rich creation, the theme of the family and thus the theme of the fate of the child in the family context, is not just one theme among others, but has a central importance. It implies that this central theme is the fundamental dimension in the horizon of our author and her thematic fields.

### 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to detect, unmask and present the horizon of the author about the image of the family primarily from a sociological and psychological aspect.

### 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This hermeneutic-literary research is based exclusively on text analysis and our interpretation of realism in some of the most important works of Christine Nöstlinger. In this paper, the analysis is limited to psychological and sociological aspects of the research.

### 4. RESULTS

From the aspect of genetic development of the family theme in the work of Christine Nöstlinger, when analyzing the texts, special attention is paid to the correlations between the explicit attitude of the author, i.e. the narrator, with the implicit attitude of the storyteller, to the hierarchization of characters in family structures and to generational differences with gender characteristics.

The analysis of the most significant works of the Austrian author of children and youth literature Christine Nöstlinger, explicitly shows how her work moves from the negative reality, through the positive utopian with the

alternative space and with the return to realism, with a new goal of therapy to create a better reality. In order to create that better reality, children and youth are needed, who in the course of the narrated story get a chance to prepare for an existence as optimally socialized, i.e. emancipated, intellectually independent, humanely motivated towards others, open bearers of the future, but also in difficult situations capable of correct solutions.

In our more in-depth analysis, it can be stated that from the earliest texts of Christine Nöstlinger, there is a certain development in the representation of the family in the given horizon of the story for the youth. This development can be explored in fictional works, but there is also the advantage of treating this progress by the author herself reflexively, in the fictional context, for example, in the form of the narrator's commentary or even in the thoughts of the characters and in the non-fictional creation, especially in the essay work and within those frameworks especially in those works of Christine Nöstlinger, in which the author tries to offer an authorial, self-referential theory.

## 5. DISCUSSIONS

The year 1982 is particularly important and fruitful for the development of family issues in the work of Christine Nöstlinger. With the critical presentation of family life, the author also reaches the peak of her stylistic development. Only now, in *Das Austauschkind* (/AK/ Nöstlinger, 1982), one can talk about proper "realism".

This, of course, does not only have consequences for the representation of the generation of parents, but also for the shape of children's character and life. First of all, the form of the child involved in the critical unmasking/revealing mechanism is also shown.

Obviously, the author presents herself as a researcher of family life between generations, who renounces illusionistic utopianism. This now means that children's wishes and fantasies are no longer the positive, earlier even the normative ideas and values for the representation of negative phenomena in the family. In other words: the children's generation presents itself to a greater extent analytically, realistically and consequently critically.

From this follows the further differentiation for the generation scheme of parents, children and grandparents. As with the introduction of political history from the beginning of the 20th century in the *Rosa Riedl Schutzgespenst* (/RRS/ Nöstlinger, 1979), the adults are differentiated, now the differentiation by age limits among the youth also begins, so that a historical clarification can happen here.

The analysis of the most significant works of the Austrian author of literature for children and youth, Christine Nöstlinger, explicitly shows how her work moves from the negative reality, through the positive utopian with the alternative space and with the return to realism, with a new goal of therapy *to create a better reality*. In order to create that better reality, children and youth are needed, who in the course of the narrated story get a chance to prepare for an existence as optimally socialized, i.e. emancipated, intellectually independent, humanely motivated towards others, open bearers of the future, but also in difficult situations capable of correct solutions.

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With the diachronically change of models of family in books in general agrees Ilyukha (2022). She claims that the types of families in books are little bit different and transform over the decades and the whole image of the family is characterized by multidirectional strategies in the representation of family.

Childhood and youth are divided, the intention is more directed towards target transparency of age groups. It happens concretely in (Nöstlinger, 1982) *Dicke Didi*, *fetter Felix* in the same year, the first centering of the narrated story in the character and of the story of the critically observed image of the child.

This has mainly two consequences. On the one hand, the children's world, now viewed more critically, is being emancipated. For the first time, social interaction in the child's world is treated realistically. Accordingly, the family moves to the edge in the fate of the child. In the very thematic, central problem: overeating and obesity, in this way the responsibility is shifted from the area of the family, that is, from the parents, and transferred to the child's own world, who has many motives for overeating.

Of these motives, only a few have to do with the nuclear family, but many with extended family segments such as grandparents. These with their greater liberality are found more in the world of children and are therefore responsible for the sinful development in this own world of the child.

For the first time, we can see a clear beginning of the author's distancing from the anti-authoritative image of the family from her previous works. Essentially, the generation of adults, the generation of parents, is no longer primarily responsible for the defects and misbehavior of children. Much more of this misbehavior occurs now in the

first line through the alliance between children and grandparents, where the parents are excluded. Weak parents have now become a symbol for the negative image of the family.

The narration in the form of a novel Nöstlinger (1983), *Anatol und die Wurschtelfrau* (AWF) confirms the direction of the perspective, in which the family theme and aspects in the development of the work of Christine Nöstlinger are realized. There is innovation in further development.

A real novelty is when, for the first time in the history of the work, the family team itself becomes a theme and when starting from that, it became clear to the author that "the family" is not simply one theme among many, but that the family theme is constructive as both content-wise and formally at all levels of texts in children's and youth literature. From this theme, contents, intentions and effectiveness are determined, as well as their way of telling, as the characters are conceptualized, shaped and evaluated in detail, and above all their mutual relations. This is realized narratively, when the child - the girl - of the family, i.e. Grandparents' granddaughter has to write an essay on the topic *My Family*.

Difficulties are simultaneously encountered at the content, more ethological and self-reflexive level. It becomes clear that it is precisely the memory of one's own family existence that is particularly difficult. It is recognized that Christine Nöstlinger also learned a lot from her study of the scientific literature on "family destiny", i.e. on the topic "the family as the destiny of the child". Scholarly acknowledgments, in which Katarina Ruchki and Alice Müller played an important role, construct the texts of Christine Nöstlinger's children's and youth literature as a unity of text.

From the problems that the child has when remembering and describing his own family and life with that family, the deepest problems of civil-family existence become clearer in an appropriate depth dimension. At the same time, the author remembers that her own interpretations of the family destinies of children and youth in her books are derived from those difficulties with the family, which she now experiences, acts and describes with her heroes, rather heroines.

AWF truly offers the most complex picture yet of family destinies and relationships. At the same time, the new aspect of the self-reflexive dimension is applied narratively, so that the memory of unblocking the obstacles in the child's perception and articulation should be against his own family and especially against negative phenomena. It is not surprising that here, for the first time, the author explicitly directs our attention, within the framework of the self-reflexive explanation, to the already discovered constitutive function of the Disney syndrome, which dealt with the processing of her "family drama" by memory, the child heroine is a regular reader and collector of Donald Duck and Mickey-Maus comics.

Communication in this family, in the central circle of parents, is constant quarrels, mutual apologies and curses, and with them the resulting necessary prospect of divorce. This time it is not simply about problems in the family but also about the child's problems with his own family. Basically, it is about laying the foundations of the topic of violence with a focus on the position of the child.

According to Filipowicz (2022), Nöstlinger clearly objects to the stereotypical view of gender roles and characteristics, namely the statement that men must always be braver and more helpful towards women. From this point of view, women are reduced to defenseless objects of male violence or help, which often does not correspond to reality.

While the negative phenomena are increasingly accentuated, the little heroine of this story does not become a victim, but shows how precisely in the fight against negativity she ensures and protects her childhood survival and especially her own identity, which in the end is carried out with energy and success.

It is also new, i.e. modern, how in this new concept the role of the areas outside the nuclear family is changing, primarily in the generation of grandparents. Here, the profile of the grandmother appears for the first time as the opposite of the defective parents, in which the author managed to achieve a mirroring/reflection, to which she approaches herself in her works with age. The pinnacle of this identification will be reached with the two volumes of fictitious letters from the grandmother as mother, mother-in-law and grandmother of children, daughter-in-law and son-in-law and grandchildren, which we have already marked as the most important works of the immanent theory of the family in Christine Nöstlinger.

It also refers above all to the interpretation of the dimension of large families, which is now performed in a new light. The fantastic image of the grandmother from the previous works, with the top of the grandmother double Rosa Riddle as a guardian angel against the pressure of the nuclear family - the parents, is separated through the real form under a clear emphasis on the positive counterbalance, here even that of the grandfather, whose life and apartment become the first profiled asylum for the child when he escapes from the core of the family.

With energetic determination, a concrete environment is created, which is based on the Disney syndrome. The grandfather's home and lifestyle appear significantly better and healthier than the middle of the nuclear family, which is arranged around the mother and father. Here, more clearly than in the previous works, the exclusion of the

areas of the large family is observed and the characters, above all the grandparents, are seen as missing and as an important reason for the failure of a successful family life.

According to Clarke (2024) almost all Disney films end with the princess marrying and “happy endings” which can be seen as a salvation from the previous situation (the first home and family). This is often discussed in the work of Nöstlinger but in a form of escape on both levels: surreal level in phantasy world and real level in big family constellations.

The existence of stressors in the process of making bonds with the others and the self-perceptions is a crucial topic in the modern world. Lobo, Little and Stein (2024) explain the connection between the external (social environment i.e., foreigner-based discrimination) and internal stressors (family-based or acculturation gap conflict) on youth and their psychological development and social interaction due to the harmful relations between cultural stress and relational conflict.

Boltivets (2023) considers that, the individual uniqueness of a person, which has developed since childhood, will become the value of future.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Family, Parents, Children and especially their relations are in the focus of the works of Austrian writer for children and youth Christine Nöstlinger.

A particularly important effect of our topic in this evaluation is that the misfortune or happiness of the child becomes quite unambiguously a measure for the representation and evaluation of the family. From now on, the idea is conceptually embedded that the bad treatment of the older generation (primarily the grandparents) from the core of the family is a sign of the failure of family life in general.

This in turn leads to a mirroring relationship between the grandparents and the grandchild (child). The new thing emerges from that, that the negative treatment of the elderly must lead to the negative treatment of the youngest. From that Christine Nöstlinger develops the new narrative, in which the new alliance between the generation of grandparents and grandchildren is the prerequisite for the "healing" of the broken core of the family of father, mother and child.

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This has mainly two consequences. On the one hand, the children's world, now viewed more critically, is being emancipated. For the first time, social interaction in the child's world is treated realistically. Accordingly, the family moves to the edge in the fate of the child. In the very thematic, central problem: overeating and obesity, in this way the responsibility is shifted from the area of the family, i.e. from the parents, and is transferred to the child's own world, who has many motives available to him.

This knowledge derived from the works of Nöstlinger could be used for building a better world for children and for adults, too.

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