

<https://doi.org/10.62837/2025.4.213>

SEVDA SHIRINOVA

Khazar University

Master Student at Department of English Language and Literature

Baku, Azerbaijan

sevda.shirinova2023@khazar.org

“CHANGES IN PSYCHOLOGY OF JACK LONDON'S WHITE FANG” ABSTRACT

Psychology as a fundamental science, studying behavior, mental processes, and their underlying causes, seeks to explain individual psychological development and social behavior by exploring human thinking patterns, emotional responses, feelings, motivation, and personality traits. Modern psychology proves that behavior is inseparably influenced by heredity, social relationships, and environmental factors. Thus, both the science of psychology and the novel *White Fang* convey the idea, that personality and behavior are shaped through environment and relationships.

The purpose of this article is to explore the gradual development and transformation of the psychology of Jack London's *White Fang*. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of human nature through its intersection with animal psychology. Against the background of the events taking place in the work, the animal's adaptation to the human environment, changes in its instinctive behavior, and the psychological experience it gains over time are examined. Another important direction of the research is to analyze the impact of violence and pressure on animal psychology, and at the same time to deepen the psychological points presented by the author in the work by linking them with human nature. This approach both reveals the psychological and social factors that are effective in the formation of animal behavior and serves to clarify the parallels between human and animal psychology. Thus, the work "White Fang" is evaluated not only as a life story of an animal, but also as a psychological portrait that attracts attention with its symbolic and philosophical meanings regarding the impact of human kindness on the adaption of the wildness to the conventions of the social psychology.

Keywords: *White Fang, Jack London, psychology, psychological transformation, human-animal relationships, literature and psychology, symbolic meaning*

Introduction

Psychology is a broad scientific field concerned with analyzing the behaviors, emotional reactions, and cognitive processes of both humans and animals. This field not only aims to understand the inner world of humans but also seeks to explain their interactions with other living beings, particularly animals. Observations and experimental research on animal behavior reveal that their emotional and behavioral

responses can undergo a complex developmental process when they come into contact with humans. In this context, human–animal relationships hold significant importance not only from a biological and ethological standpoint but also from psychological and social perspectives. Literature provides a rich source of material for analyzing these relationships. Authors' artistic portrayals of the connections between humans and animals allow a deeper exploration of these interactions. In this regard, Jack London's *White Fang* is a particularly notable example. The main character of the novel—White Fang, who exists in a transitional state between wolf and dog—undergoes profound behavioral and psychological changes as he becomes integrated into human society. These changes are presented not merely as the result of animal instincts, but as products of psychological mechanisms shaped through interaction with humans. White Fang's experiences offer rich material for tracking how his personality and psyche transform, opening a field of inquiry into how human behavior influences animal psychology [1, p. 89-100].

The topic of human–animal relationships in literature and psychology has been studied from various perspectives by numerous researchers. Most studies in this area have focused on animal training processes, how animals are taught, and the role of humans in these processes. Jack London's work, especially *White Fang*, holds a unique position in this context. The depiction of a creature born in the wild gradually adapting to human society, and the illustration of its moral and psychological development in stages, have attracted the attention of many literary scholars and psychologists. For instance, in some studies (such as those by H. S. Phillips, J. W. Thomas, and others), *White Fang* has been interpreted within the context of the conflict between nature and culture, demonstrating the animal's transition from nature to society as a symbolic transformation. Other studies have examined the process of savagery versus domestication in a comparative manner. White Fang's psychological evolution—from fear to trust, from aggression to loyalty—requires a comprehensive explanation within the context of different forms of human behavior (such as violence, compassion, understanding, etc.) [2, p. 55-62].

The main issue often overlooked in previous research is the lack of a systematic study of how specific human behaviors affect animal psychology. The contrasting characteristics of different human characters in the novel—from Lip-Lip's cruelty to Weedon Scott's kindness—lead to dramatic shifts in White Fang's behavior. Yet, the psychological analysis of these transitions is often limited to general commentary. How different forms of human behavior—such as physical violence, emotional neglect, empathy, stability, and love—penetrate the animal's inner world and lead to changes in its behavioral repertoire have not yet been comprehensively examined. However, many of these analyses have not thoroughly explored the cause-and-effect relationships of psychological changes or the direct influence of human behavior on these changes.

This article aims to fill that gap. The main objective of this paper is to analyze the human–animal relationships in *White Fang* not only from a literary standpoint but also within the framework of psychological mechanisms. In doing so, we aim to complement the shortcomings of previous studies and present a more systematic, structured, and in-depth analysis. The paper will explore how human behaviors cause changes in *White Fang*'s psyche throughout the chronological sequence of events, how these changes are reflected in behavioral models, and ultimately, how the animal's attitude toward humans is formed [3].

This paper can offer both theoretical and practical contributions to the fields of literary analysis and psychology. First, the psychological interpretation of *White Fang* will allow for a new perspective on human–animal relationships within literary studies. At the same time, by explaining the long-term impact of human behavior on living beings, this work will also be beneficial from psychological and pedagogical viewpoints. Through this research, readers will come to understand the fundamental importance of concepts such as empathy, behavioral responsibility, and ethical approach. Furthermore, this article may serve as a foundation for future researchers to develop new methodological approaches to studying human–animal relationships from both psychological and literary perspectives.

The Gradual Transformation of White Fang – In 8 Stages

Jack London's *White Fang* is a unique work that serves as a bridge between the wild nature and the human world. The main character, the wolf-dog *White Fang*, undergoes a gradual psychological and behavioral transformation shaped by the environment he lives in and the people he encounters. J. London presents this transformation in stages, illustrating how animal instincts interact with human nature. The turning points in *White Fang*'s life deepen his inner world and character. This process can be explained through eight main stages, each playing a crucial role in his evolution [4].

1. Birth in the Wild and Instinctive Behavior

White Fang begins his life in the harsh and unforgiving embrace of nature, far from humans. He first experiences the harsh realities of life with his mother, Kiche. At this stage, all of his behavior is based on natural instincts—avoiding danger, finding food, and surviving. Nature shows him no mercy and constantly examines him. His character is shaped around struggle and survival, with no knowledge of love, friendship, or human connection.

2. First Contact with Humans – Curiosity and Fear

When he arrives at the Indian camp with Kiche, *White Fang* meets humans for the first time, opening a new door in his perception. Humans appear to him as both a source of unknown danger and intriguing beings. With Gray Beaver accepting him, *White Fang* begins to perceive humans as “superior beings.” At this stage, he submits to

human dominance but acts cautiously, driven by both fear and curiosity, leaving a lasting mark on his psyche.

3. Obedience and Adaptation – The Stage of Gray Plague

Gray Beaver treats him neither lovingly nor cruelly, leading White Fang into a life shaped by obedience and fear. He learns to obey, though the sense of freedom within him does not completely disappear. While trying to adapt to living with humans, he experiences internal tension. The aggression from other dogs in the camp, especially Lip-lip, causes him to withdraw socially and become introverted. This stage strengthens his inner hardness.

4. Aggression and Loneliness – Isolation and Self-Defense

Rejected by the other dogs, particularly facing constant conflict with Lip-lip, White Fang's loneliness deepens. He trusts no one and becomes suspicious of everyone. Struggle becomes an inseparable part of his life, making his behavior more aggressive and severe. Psychologically, this stage marks the development of strong defense mechanisms and his transformation into a cold and hardened being.

5. Peak of Savagery – Beauty Smith Era

White Fang's life turns to darkness when Beauty Smith takes ownership of him. He is forced into dog fights and subjected to hunger and physical abuse. His wild instincts resurface in a more brutal form. Love, trust, and attachment are completely forgotten. Humans come to symbolize only violence and exploitation. At this point, White Fang becomes a "fighting machine"—emotionless, indifferent, and merciless. This is the peak of his ferocity.

6. The Patient Encounter Between Certainty and Doubt – Weedon Scott's First Impression

When Weedon Scott rescues him from a fight, an inner battle begins in White Fang. He does not believe in Scott's kind and caring behavior and resists it. To White Fang, humans mean cruelty and abuse, but this new human image creates confusion in his mind. This is a transitional period, marked by psychological conflict between suspicion and hope.

7. Formation of Trust and Emotional Bond

Scott's persistent patience and understanding eventually melt White Fang's frozen heart. He begins to cautiously, and then confidently, embrace this new relationship. For the first time in his life, he experiences love and care. White Fang becomes emotionally attached to Scott and feels safe with him. This stage is a key turning point in White Fang's psychological recovery—he begins to act not just out of fear, but also out of affection.

8. Complete Change and Social Adaptation – The Stage of Becoming a Family Protector

Scott brings him to California, where a new life begins. White Fang adapts to a civilized environment and becomes a beloved member of the family. His behavior is no

longer driven by instinct alone, but by feelings. He plays with children, protects the family, and becomes loyal and devoted. This stage marks the completion of his transformation—he replaces the wild with harmony alongside humans. Not only physically but spiritually, he becomes a symbol of love and loyalty [5].

The main goal of psychology is to understand, predict, and guide such behaviors in a positive direction. The scientific knowledge obtained in this field is shaped by universal principles that can be applied not only to humans but to all living beings. As a literary embodiment of this universal approach, Jack London's *White Fang* holds a special place. This work is not only a story of an animal's adventures but also a literary-philosophical source that reflects a deep psychological transformation. The protagonist, White Fang, encounters various emotional and behavioral states at different stages of his life [6]. His journey from a creature driven by wild instincts—aggressive and distrustful—to a tame, loyal, and gentle companion in response to understanding and compassion, aligns with the core principles of psychology. The novel vividly illustrates how a dog's psychology evolves under the influence of violence and compassion. The psychological impact of human-animal relationships, and how elements like trust and affection lead to behavioral changes, form the core of the narrative. The transformation in White Fang's personality serves as a compelling example of behavioral psychology and the formation of character.

Two Worlds Within White Fang – From Darkness to Light, From Wolf to Dog

The story of *White Fang* is not just a tale about an animal's life – it is a symbol where man and nature, instincts and values, savagery and compassion intersect and intertwine. He was born at the crossroads of the two worlds: on one side, the ruthless, emotionless, and harsh wild nature; on the other, the human world with its warmth, understanding, and love. These two realms created a conflict, a quest, and ultimately an awakening within his soul.

White Fang took his first steps in a cold, harsh, and dangerous world. To survive, he had to suppress his emotions, harden his strength, and replace fear with anger. For him, life was nothing but a struggle – a race to survive. This battle shaped him into a swift, cautious, and merciless being. Yet, this harshness was not only a choice – it was an identity shaped by necessity [7].

However, over time, life introduced him to a different world – human interaction. At first, humans represented fear, danger, and control to him. As a being who had been beaten, tortured, and oppressed by humans, White Fang did not believe in their gentleness. Until then, man was either an enemy or a master to whom obedience was a must. But Weedon Scott became the turning point in his fate. This man did not approach him with chains or whips – he came with calm eyes, a compassionate tone, patience, and understanding. This was a doorway into a world White Fang had never known but had begun to feel within [8].

This phase marked the beginning of White Fang's psychological and spiritual transformation. Raised with wild instincts, he now began to feel the sprouting of emotions like love, attachment, and loyalty. The darkness within his soul slowly began to clear in the light of human kindness. He was now learning not only to survive, but to belong to someone, to be with someone. His previous life had been built on the principle of "the strong survive." But this new world showed him that strength could also coexist with tenderness.

Such a psychological transition is never easy for any being. White Fang did not entirely give up his wild side – because it was a part of his essence [9, p. 119-120]. But within him, a new side began to form – one that embraced humanity, was open to love, loyal, and protective. A creature born of the wild did not become a mere dog – he remained both wolf and dog. These two sides created a harmony within him – a unity in contradiction.

This part of the novel not only shows the evolution of an animal, but also how humans confront their own inner world. We too sometimes feel caught between two worlds, like White Fang: between fears and desires, harshness and gentleness, trust and doubt...[10]. White Fang finds his strength by passing through this duality – and that strength lies not in rage, fear, or submission, but in inner silence, in the peace that compassion brings, and in self-awareness.

In the end, White Fang does not remain a hero, but a being – one who carries deep scars, yet is transformed in the light of love. His story shows that behind every savagery lies a suffering, and behind every obedience lies a choice. There is a "wolf" and a "dog" in each of us – the question is, which side do we feed? White Fang's choice was to make peace with humanity and open himself to love.

Methodology

Descriptive Research Approach. In this study, the descriptive research method was used to track the changes in White Fang's psychological and emotional state over time. This approach provides a detailed portrayal of his behaviors and feelings at different stages of the story, offering deeper insight into his inner world. His emotional development and the internal struggle he experiences throughout the narrative are revealed clearly against the backdrop of the unfolding events.

Special focus was given to the emotional changes in White Fang. At the beginning of the novel, his actions were guided by fear and caution, which were the results of his adaptation to the wild environment. However, as he began to form connections with humans, feelings of suspicion were gradually replaced by trust and love. During these stages, his psychological responses also shifted – from being a defensively aggressive creature shaped by instinct to a calmer, more trusting being influenced by the warmth and compassion of human interaction.

Comparative Research Approach. The comparative research method allows for a deeper understanding of White Fang's psychological and spiritual development by

analyzing and contrasting the different stages of his life. Through this approach, the instincts formed in the harsh conditions of wild nature are set against the behaviors and values he later acquires within human society, bringing his inner conflicts and development to the forefront. Thus, White Fang's identity is explored not only from a biological perspective but also within social and emotional contexts.

In particular, the comparison between his identity as a "wild beast" and as a "dog living among humans" reveals the essence of his transformation. In the wild, he was a being driven by fear and aggression, constantly on the defensive against danger. However, as he began to interact with humans, he gradually turned into a creature that could respond to love and compassion, showing trust and loyalty. These two contrasting worlds – one built on instinct and fear, the other on understanding and love – symbolize the internal transition occurring within White Fang.

Conclusion

This article thoroughly analyzing the topic of "Psychological Changes in Jack London's *White Fang*," focuses on the protagonist's gradual development throughout the novel. The comparison between White Fang's initial behaviors and instincts shaped by the wild environment, and the relationships he later forms within human society, clearly illustrates the profound psychological shifts he undergoes. The emotional turmoil, fear, cautiousness, and eventually the development of love and loyalty in White Fang's inner world become the central focus of the study.

The application of comparative and descriptive research methods allowed a systematic observation of White Fang's psychological development. The transition between his identities as a "wild beast" and a "domesticated dog loyal to humans" demonstrates not only a change in external behavior but also a deep internal emotional transformation. These changes reflect the impact of the contrast between nature and human civilization on an individual living being. For White Fang, survival and struggle are the key principles of life until he encounters human compassion through Weedon Scott, which gradually replaces fear and aggression with trust and emotional bonds.

Ultimately, *White Fang* is not only a study of animal life and instinct but also a metaphorical depiction of human nature and moral values. The novel shows that every being—whether human or animal—can change, grow, and embark on a journey toward inner harmony under the influence of their environment. White Fang's journey exemplifies the strength of the emotional bridge formed between humans and animals and demonstrates that compassion and understanding can even penetrate the wild. In this sense, the novel carries important messages on both psychological and philosophical levels.

References

1. Arıkan, A. (2012). "White Fang: A Psychoanalytic Reading." *The Journal of Academic Social Science Studies*, Issue 5, p. 89-100.

2. Bekirova, T. (2019). "Instinct and Civilization in Jack London's Novels." *Literary Research Journal*, Volume 10, p. 55-62.
3. Bekoff, Marc. *Animal Emotions: Exploring Passionate Natures*. New World Library, 2007.
4. Cassuto, L. (2005). *The Inhuman Race: The Racial Grotesque in American Literature and Culture*. Columbia University Press.
5. Labor, E. (1994). *Jack London: An American Life*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
6. Panksepp, Jaak. *Affective Neuroscience: The Foundations of Human and Animal Emotions*. Oxford University Press, 1998.
7. Parini, J. (Ed.). (1998). *Jack London: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Prentice Hall.
8. Shettleworth, Sara J. *Cognition, Evolution, and Behavior*. Oxford University Press, 2010.
9. Tahmazli, R. (2020). "The impact of animal images in literature on human psychology." *Scientific Works of the Azerbaijan University of Languages*, No. 4, pp. 112–120.
10. Walker, D. (1983). *Jack London and the Classic American Hero*. University of Oklahoma Press.

SEVDA ŞİRİNOVA

“Cek Londonun ‘Ağ Dış’ əsərində psixoloji dəyişikliklər”

Xülasə

Psixologiya insan davranışını, zehni prosesləri və onların əsas səbəblərini öyrənən fundamental elmdir. Bu sahə insan düşüncə tərzini, emosional reaksiyaları, hissləri, motivasiyanı və şəxsiyyət xüsusiyyətlərini araşdırmaqla fərdi psixoloji inkişafı və sosial davranışı izah etməyə çalışır. Müasir psixologiya sübut edir ki, insan davranışı irsiyyət, sosial münasibətlər və ətraf mühitin təsirindən ayrılmaz şəkildə formalaşır. Bu baxımdan, həm psixologiya elmi, həm də "Ağ Dış" romanı şəxsiyyət və davranışın mühit və münasibətlər vasitəsilə formalaşdığını fərqli yanaşmalarla ifadə edirlər.

Bu məqalənin məqsədi Cek Londonun "Ağ Dış" əsəri əsasında heyvan psixologiyasının tədricən inkişafını və transformasiyasını araşdırmaqdır. Tədqiqat psixologiya və ədəbiyyatın kəsişməsində insan təbiətinin daha dərinəndən anlaşılmasına töhfə verir. Əsərdə baş verən hadisələr fonunda heyvanın mühitə uyğunlaşması, instinktiv davranışlarında baş verən dəyişikliklər və zamanla qazandığı psixoloji təcrübə təhlil olunur. Tədqiqatın başqa bir mühüm istiqaməti isə zorakılıq və təzyiqin heyvan psixologiyasına təsirini araşdırmaqla yanaşı, müəllifin əsərdə təqdim etdiyi psixoloji məqamları insan təbiəti ilə əlaqələndirərək daha da dərinəndən təhlil etməkdir. Bu yanaşma heyvan davranışının formalaşmasında təsirli olan psixoloji və sosial faktorları üzə çıxarır və insan ilə heyvan psixologiyası

arasındakı paralelləri aydınlaşdırmağa xidmət edir. Beləliklə, “Ağ Diş” əsəri yalnız bir heyvanın həyat hekayəsi kimi deyil, eyni zamanda insan təbiətinə dair simvolik və fəlsəfi mənalara ilə diqqət çəkən psixoloji portret kimi dəyərləndirilir.

Açar sözlər: *Ağ Diş, Cek London, psixologiya, psixoloji transformasiya, insan-heyvan münasibətləri, ədəbiyyat və psixologiya, simvolik məna.*

СЕВДА ШИРИНОВА

**“Изменения в психологии на примере произведения Джека Лондона
"Белый Клык"”**

Аннотация

Психология — это фундаментальная наука, изучающая поведение человека, психические процессы и их глубинные причины. Данная область стремится объяснить индивидуальное психологическое развитие и социальное поведение через исследование моделей мышления, эмоциональных реакций, чувств, мотивации и личностных черт. Современная психология доказывает, что на поведение человека неразрывно влияют наследственность, социальные отношения и факторы окружающей среды. Таким образом, как наука психология, так и роман «Белый Клык» передают одну и ту же идею — личность и поведение формируются под воздействием среды и взаимоотношений, но делают это с разных позиций.

Цель данной статьи — исследовать постепенное развитие и трансформацию психологии животного на основе романа Джека Лондона «Белый Клык». Это исследование способствует более глубокому пониманию человеческой природы на пересечении психологии и литературы. На фоне событий произведения анализируется адаптация животного к среде, изменения в его инстинктивном поведении и приобретённый со временем психологический опыт. Другим важным направлением является изучение воздействия насилия и давления на психику животного, а также углублённый анализ психологических моментов, представленных автором, через призму человеческой природы. Такой подход позволяет раскрыть психологические и социальные факторы, влияющие на формирование поведения животного, и выявить параллели между психикой человека и животного. Таким образом, «Белый Клык» рассматривается не только как история жизни животного, но и как психологический портрет, привлекающий внимание своими символическими и философскими смыслами, связанными с природой человека.

Ключевые слова: *Белый Клык, Джек Лондон, психология, психологическая трансформация, отношения человека и животного, литература и психология, символическое значение*

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Huseynaga Rzayev, Lecturer at the Department of English Language and Literature, Khazar University