

**RESEARCHING THE IMAGE OF CHILDREN IN WORLD LITERARY
CRITICISM**

**ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ОБРАЗА ДЕТЕЙ В МИРОВОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРНОЙ
КРИТИКЕ**

**DUNYO ADABIY TANQIDIDA BOLALARNING OBRAZINI TADQIQ
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Annotation

The exploration of children's images in fictional literature has indeed been a focal point for numerous scholars, and the insights from various literary critics provide a rich foundation for understanding the psychological and social dimensions of child protagonists. The portrayal of children in this context often highlights their vulnerabilities and the complexities of their interactions with the world around them. The study of children's images in literature is a multifaceted endeavor that benefits from interdisciplinary approaches and critical engagement with both historical and contemporary texts. Through this lens, we can gain deeper insights into the significance of childhood in shaping narratives and reflecting human psychology.

Key words: Image, children, drama, tragedy, comedy, trauma, identity, victim, psychological aspect, sketch, farce.

Аннотация

Изучение образов детей в художественной литературе действительно стало важной темой для многочисленных ученых, а идеи различных литературных критиков предоставляют богатую основу для понимания психологических и социальных аспектов детских протагонистов. Изображение детей в этом контексте часто подчеркивает их уязвимость и сложности их взаимодействия с окружающим миром. Изучение образов детей в литературе является многогранным занятием, которое выигрывает от междисциплинарных подходов и критического взаимодействия как с историческими, так и с современными текстами. Через эту призму мы можем глубже понять значимость детства в отражении человеческой психологии.

Ключевые слова: образ, дети, драма, трагедия, комедия, травма, идентичность, жертва, психологический аспект, эскиз, фарс.

Annotatsiya

Bolalar obrazlarini badiiy adabiyotda o'rganish ko'plab olimlar uchun muhim mavzuga aylandi, turli adabiyotshunoslarning g'oyalari bolalar protogonistlarining psixologik va ijtimoiy jihatlarini tushunish uchun boy asosni taqdim etadi. Ushbu kontekstda bolalarning tasvirlanishi ularning zaifligini va atrofdagi dunyo bilan o'zaro aloqalaridagi murakkabliklarni ko'rsatib beradi. Adabiyotda bolalar obrazlarini o'rganish ko'p qirrali faoliyat bo'lib, tarixiy va zamonaviy matnlar bilan tanqidiy mulohazadan va interdisiplinar yondashuvlardan foyda oladi. Ushbu prizma orqali biz bolalikning insoniyat psixologiyasini shakllantirishdagi ahamiyatini chuqurroq tushunishimiz mumkin.

Kalit so'zlar: obraz, bolalar, drama, tragediya, komediya, travma, identitet, qurbon, psixologik jihat, eskiz, fars.

In the field of world literary criticism, scholars such as Aristotle, Belinsky, Ginzburg, M.M. Bakhtin, A.B. Yesin, and S.L. Rubinstein have conducted in-depth analyses of human psychology, particularly focusing on the psychological states of child protagonists. One of the prominent researchers in this area, S.L. Rubinstein, emphasized the depiction of human psychology in literary works, stating:

"When artists of words portray the psychology of protagonists, they strive to illuminate their inner experiences—particularly the individual journey toward maturity as marked by life's turning points. This is no coincidence, for human experiences represent the subjective dimension of real life, the subjective aspect of an individual's life journey."

The analysis of dramatic works that address the issues of children requires exploring innovative methodological approaches and applying them to dramas created in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Drama (from the ancient Greek "drāma"—action) is a genre that simultaneously belongs to two arts: literature and theater. It is designed to be performed on stage. Formally, drama differs from epic and lyrical poetry in that its text is presented as the characters' dialogue and the author's commentary, divided into actions and events. Drama as a genre encompasses various forms, including comedy, tragedy, farce, melodrama, and others, all of which are structured dialogically in some way.

Drama, as a literary work, depicts serious conflicts between actors and society. In this genre, the relationships between characters (protagonists and society) are always dramatic. The development of the plot reveals intense struggles within individual characters and between them. Although the conflict in drama is profound, it is

ultimately resolvable, which explains the audience's heightened anticipation of whether the protagonist will overcome the situation.

Tragedy (from the Greek *tragos* ode – "goat song") is a literary dramatic work based on irreconcilable life conflicts. Tragedies are characterized by the intense struggles of powerful characters and emotions, often leading to a fatal outcome (typically death) for the protagonists. Tragic conflicts are usually profound, universal in meaning, and may possess symbolic significance.

Comedy (from the Greek *komos* ode – "joyful song") is a literary dramatic work in which characters, situations, and actions are presented humorously, through jokes and satire. At the same time, the protagonists can also experience moments of sorrow. Generally, comedy portrays everything in an absurd, awkward, or ridiculous manner, mocking social or domestic flaws. Comedy can be divided into types such as comedies of manners, character comedies, and situational comedies.

Situational Comedy focuses on events and circumstances as the primary source of humor.

Character Comedy (comedy of manners) derives its humor from the inner nature of characters, including their moral qualities, exaggerated traits, or overblown passions like arrogance or flaws.

Farce is a light-hearted comedy that relies on simple, humorous techniques and crude humor. It is often used in circus clown performances.

Interlude refers to short satirical scenes performed between the main acts of a play.

Sketch (from the English "sketch") is a short comedic play involving two or three characters. Sketches are typically performed on stage or presented on television.

Tragicomedy is a literary dramatic work that depicts a tragic plot in a humorous manner or combines elements of both tragedy and comedy. In tragicomedy, serious episodes are interwoven with humorous ones, and heroic characters are mixed with comic ones.

The image of children in fictional literature has consistently attracted the attention of numerous scholars, becoming a regular subject of literary criticism. For our research, we used E. Pifer's book "Demon or Doll: Images of the Child in Modern Writing" as a general theoretical foundation. Pifer observes the development trends of the child image in contemporary Anglo-American literature through examples from novels by W. Golding, D. Lessing, S. Rushdie, and T. Morrison. R. Bowlby, in "The Child's Own Story: Narratives of Parenthood," retrospectively examines the evolution of the concept of child-parent relationships in world literature from ancient times to the present day. A.G. Nenilin's doctoral dissertation, "Stephen King and the Problem of Childhood in Anglo-American Literary Traditions" (2006), analyzes the cultural and philosophical ideas about childhood and children in King's works. Information about

child imagery can also be found in the articles, manuals, and books of scholars such as I. Arzamastseva, K. Daniels, M. Ivankiva, S. Kiprina, V. Lakshin, K. Reynolds, L. Fedotova, T. Fedyaeva, E. Khait, and Yu. Shanina. Although both Russian and international literary criticism have produced comprehensive studies examining the child as a protagonist in narrative works, there is a notable lack of serious research. We found several relevant studies, primarily from Western academic publications.

For example:

K. Normington's "Gender and Medieval Drama"

V.A. Kolve's "The Play Called Corpus Christi"

A.A. Anikst's "The Theater of Shakespeare's Era" (1965)

These works analyze medieval dramas featuring child actors and discuss the formation of early children's troupes in the theater of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

P.M. Konesko's doctoral dissertation, "Representing Childhood: Social, Historical, and Theatrical Significance of the Child on Stage," investigates the role of the child protagonist in medieval, modern, and contemporary cultures. It explores methods of representing childhood on stage and identifies their connection to social, technical, and scientific progress.

The theoretical basis of our research includes J. Ditsky's "Child-Sacrifice in Modern Drama: A Survey" (1984) and P.S. Hays's "Child Murder and Incest in American Drama" (1990). These authors focus on the portrayal of the victimized child and analyze the characteristics and functions of such children in the dramas of E. Albee, S. Shepard, and E. O'Neill. The aforementioned works are undoubtedly important for the development of this research. However, it should be noted that the authors of these works focus on issues, plots, and conflicts related to childhood but overlook the principles and methods of depicting child protagonists in dramas. Scientific and conceptual theoretical studies on the unique type of the dramatic child protagonist and the characters of contemporary English dramaturgy are rare. Irish literary scholar P. Lonergan is recognized as the leading researcher on M. McDonagh's works, and his book "The Theatre and Films of Martin McDonagh" (2012) is the most comprehensive study of the playwright's works. J. Penhall's dramaturgy has been studied by American scholar V. Bowles, but his book "The Argumentative Theatre of Joe Penhall" (2011) does not address plays about children, likely because the researcher focused on Penhall's early dramaturgy.

The poetics and aesthetics of cruel treatment towards children, as well as the principles of depicting cruelty and violence in the plays of playwrights like S. Kane and M. Ravenhill, have been analyzed in works by A. Sears, K. Innes, J. Elsom, K. Dingwall-Jones, J. de Back, L.A. Buckler, and others. British theater critics M. Billington and L. Gardner promptly reviewed newly created dramas in Britain in their

articles and commentaries. The Russian experience in studying English dramaturgy is presented in works like V.G. Babenko's "Contemporary English Dramaturgy" (1981), N.A. Solovyeva's "English Drama Over a Quarter Century" (1982), and E.G. Dotsenko's "Monograph." Additionally, the works of playwrights like V.A. Ryapolova, M.G. Merkuryeva, M. Lipovetsky, and S.G. Komarov can also be highlighted. S. Kane, C. Churchill, B. Lavery, E. Eston, and others discuss child protagonists in plays written by female playwrights within the framework of feminist criticism in the monograph "A Feminist Perspective on the English Stage: Women Playwrights of the 1990s and 2000s." Specific references to child images in English dramas are also found in A. Sears's study "In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today" (2000).

In her later work, "Rewriting the Nation: British Theatre Today (Plays and Playwrights)" (2011), the theater critic devotes a separate paragraph to the problems of adolescents, analyzing performances that portray the issues of children and adolescents in contemporary British plays and the depiction of youth experiencing mental crises. The child characters portrayed in contemporary British performances encapsulate all types and stereotypes of perceiving child imagery that have emerged and existed throughout centuries of dramatic history. On the one hand, the artistic depiction of the child is accepted as a symbol of innocence; on the other hand, it is also seen as the embodiment of original sin. Thus, E. Pifer, in her monograph on child protagonists in Anglo-American literature, emphasizes that the depiction of children in literary texts spans a wide spectrum, ranging from "mischievous devils" to "admired angelic beings." Child protagonists in English dramas are complex synthetic "cultural constructs" that historically evolve and embody a variety of socially diverse forms.

The scholar, based on studies by English literary critics, considers adolescent literature to be works intended for readers aged 11 to 18. She identifies its defining features as the focus on teenagers as protagonists, with narratives closely tied to their actions and development, while their characteristics are revealed through dialogues. The analysis of adolescent literature often centers on their psychological, cognitive, and social maturation. This research examines how English playwrights depict child protagonists, particularly focusing on two main aspects:

Depiction of Violence and the Cruelty of Life Toward Children:

Many 20th- and 21st-century English dramas portray children as innocent victims of violence, cruelty, or neglect, highlighting the harsh realities they face. For instance, Edward Bond's "Saved" (1965) features a shocking scene in which a baby is brutally killed by a group of young men, symbolizing the dehumanizing effects of a desensitized society. In Caryl Churchill's "Top Girls" (1982), a young girl is abandoned by her mother and must navigate a hostile environment alone. Similarly, Harold Pinter's "The Birthday Party" (1958) presents a vulnerable character who is

infantilized and tormented by those around him, reflecting the oppressive dynamics of power and control.

The Use of Child Actors and Children's Language:

Some playwrights incorporate child actors or employ children's language to enhance the authenticity and emotional depth of their plays. By doing so, they aim to create a more impactful and genuine representation of the themes explored. For instance, in David Mamet's "Oleanna" (1992), a female student accuses her professor of misconduct using simple, repetitive phrases that reflect a childlike manner of speaking, highlighting the limitations of her expression and reasoning. Similarly, in Tom Stoppard's "The Real Thing" (1982), a young girl exposes her parents' hypocrisy and infidelity, using straightforward and candid language to play a critical role in the narrative..

Exploring Childhood Trauma and Identity:

Numerous 20th- and 21st-century English dramas delve into childhood trauma and the psychological and emotional complexities of identity formation. For instance, in Shelagh Delaney's "A Taste of Honey" (1958), a teenage girl named Jo struggles to find her place in a world that rejects her due to poverty, illegitimacy, and unconventionality. In John Osborne's "Look Back in Anger" (1956), the young couple Jimmy and Alison grapple with their past wounds and mistrust as they attempt to build a future together. Similarly, other works highlight the challenges faced by marginalized children navigating hostile environments, exploring their resilience and growth.

Challenging Traditional Gender Roles and Stereotypes:

Some playwrights confront and dismantle traditional gender roles and stereotypes by portraying children who defy social norms and expectations. For example, in Caryl Churchill's "Cloud 9" (1979), the character Edward, a boy, is played by a female actor, who also portrays his mother, grandmother, and wife, emphasizing the fluidity and mutability of gender roles. In Sarah Kane's "Blasted" (1995), a young girl is assaulted by a soldier but later fights back by symbolically castrating her aggressor, challenging notions of victimhood and power.

These themes are among the key aspects to consider when analyzing child protagonists in 20th-century English dramas. Additionally, studying the historical, cultural, and political contexts that shaped these characters, as well as the critical debates and discussions surrounding them, is crucial for a comprehensive understanding. The playwright's skill in creating dramas for children and revealing the essence of their characters through artistic techniques is demonstrated in the following ways:

Using dialogue to convey the child's emotions, their role and status in society, level of education, and to uncover the protagonist's traits and motivations.

Depicting the actions of the characters to showcase their personalities.

Highlighting the differences and similarities between children and adults through characteristic interactions.

Employing setting, environment, and era to reflect the child protagonist's identity.

Using subtext to reveal hidden emotions and thoughts.

Representing the past experiences of the child and related adults to explore the child's behavior and personality.

Utilizing symbolism and metaphors to express the unique characteristics of the child protagonist.

Demonstrating growth, adolescence, and maturation over time by emphasizing age-related traits and transitions.

Incorporating foreshadowing to hint at future events or character development.

Applying narration or internal monologues to disclose the protagonist's thoughts and emotions.

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