HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

THE ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION OF THE CHILD IMAGE IN 20TH–21ST CENTURY ENGLISH AND UZBEK DRAMA: A COMPARATIVE-TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Asanova Ferangiz
Teacher of Foreign Languages and Social Sciences Department,
Asia International University, Bukhara, Uzbekistan,
Email: ferangizasanova@gmail.com
doi:https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23255584

Abstract. This article examines the artistic interpretation of the child image in English and Uzbek drama of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries from a comparative-typological perspective. The child character occupies a significant position in dramatic literature because childhood frequently functions not only as an age-related category but also as a symbolic means of representing innocence, vulnerability, social injustice, generational conflict, cultural memory, and the prospects of society. The study focuses on the ways English and Uzbek playwrights construct child characters, reveal their psychological worlds, and employ them to express broader social and moral concerns. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between the individual and social environment, the representation of family and childhood, the dramatic functions of innocence and vulnerability, and the transformation of the child image under changing historical and cultural conditions. The comparative analysis demonstrates that English and Uzbek drama share a number of universal approaches to representing childhood while simultaneously reflecting distinctive national-cultural values.

Keywords: child image, childhood, English drama, Uzbek drama, comparative literature, comparative typology, dramatic character, artistic interpretation, national identity, social criticism.

Introduction. The image of the child has long occupied an important place in world literature. Childhood is generally associated with innocence, purity, dependence, and vulnerability; however, literary representations of children frequently extend beyond these conventional meanings. The child may function as a witness to social injustice, a symbol of hope, a bearer of collective memory, or a means of exposing contradictions within adult society. In drama, the representation of childhood acquires particular significance because the child character is constructed not only through descriptive narration but also through dialogue, action, silence, gesture, and interaction with other characters.

The twentieth and twenty-first centuries witnessed substantial changes in the artistic representation of childhood. The social upheavals, wars, modernization, changes in family structures, technological development, and increasing attention to children's rights transformed literary perceptions of the child. Consequently, the child in modern drama increasingly appears as a psychologically complex and socially meaningful character rather than merely a passive object of adult protection.

English drama provides numerous examples of this development. From modernist and post-war drama to contemporary theatre, playwrights have employed child characters to explore questions of family, class, trauma, education, violence, identity, and social responsibility. In Uzbek drama, the child image has likewise undergone significant development. While traditional representations often emphasize family values, respect for elders, moral education, and continuity between generations,

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

modern and contemporary Uzbek playwrights increasingly explore children's individual psychological experiences and their responses to social transformation.

A comparative study of English and Uzbek drama therefore makes it possible to distinguish universal characteristics of childhood representation from culturally specific artistic models. The purpose of this article is to identify the major typological similarities and differences in the artistic interpretation of the child image in twentieth- and twenty-first-century English and Uzbek drama.

Research methodology. The research employs comparative-typological, historical-literary, structural-semantic, and contextual methods. Comparative-typological analysis is used to identify recurring models of child characterization across English and Uzbek dramatic traditions. Historical-literary analysis helps establish the relationship between changing representations of childhood and the social conditions of different periods.

The study also considers the structural functions of child characters within dramatic plots. Particular attention is given to dialogue, conflict, characterization, symbolism, stage action, and the relationship between child characters and adult figures. A contextual approach is applied to examine the influence of cultural values, family structures, social institutions, and historical circumstances on the artistic construction of childhood. The analysis is based on representative examples from twentieth- and twenty-first-century English-language and Uzbek dramatic literature. The objective is not to establish a rigid opposition between the two traditions but to identify their points of convergence and divergence.

The artistic image of the child is a complex literary category that combines biological age, psychological characteristics, social position, and symbolic meaning. In drama, the child can perform several functions simultaneously. First, the child may be a fully developed dramatic character participating directly in the central conflict. Second, the child may serve as a moral or emotional reference point through which the behavior of adults is evaluated. Third, childhood may become a symbolic category representing the lost past, innocence, hope, or the possibility of social renewal. One of the most important characteristics of the dramatic child is dependence. Unlike adult characters, children generally possess limited social and economic power. This structural vulnerability makes them particularly effective figures for representing injustice. When a child suffers as a consequence of adult decisions, the dramatic conflict acquires a strong ethical dimension.

At the same time, modern drama increasingly rejects the idea that children are simply passive victims. The child character may express an independent opinion, resist authority, challenge adult assumptions, or reveal truths that adult character’s attempt to conceal. Thus, the dramatic representation of childhood moves from the image of the “protected child” toward that of the “speaking subject.”

The child image in twentieth-century English drama. Twentieth-century English drama demonstrates a gradual movement toward psychological and social complexity in the representation of childhood. Dramatic works of the period frequently place children within problematic family, educational, or social environments. Childhood becomes a lens through which broader contradictions of modern society are exposed. In many works, the child is positioned between competing adult worlds. Parents, teachers, social institutions, and other authority figures attempt to define the child's identity and future. Such dramatic situations create conflicts between individual development and social expectations.

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

The child may also function as a measure of adult morality. When adults fail to protect, understand, or listen to children, the resulting conflict exposes deeper failures within the family or society. The vulnerability of childhood therefore becomes a dramatic instrument for criticizing social structures.

Another important tendency is the psychological representation of childhood. Twentieth-century drama increasingly pays attention to children's fears, memories, fantasies, and emotional responses. The child is no longer simply characterized through external behavior; the dramatic text attempts to reconstruct the child's subjective perception of reality.

The plays of modern and post-war British dramatists demonstrate that childhood can also serve as a metaphor for social trauma. War, economic inequality, family breakdown, and institutional violence can be represented through the experiences of young characters. Consequently, the child's personal tragedy acquires a wider historical significance.

The child image in twenty-first-century English drama. Contemporary English drama has further expanded the range of representations of childhood. The child character is increasingly connected with such themes as migration, multiculturalism, technological change, environmental anxiety, social inequality, and the politics of identity. A significant characteristic of contemporary drama is the strengthening of children's agency. Young characters are often presented as individuals capable of making choices and interpreting the world independently. Their voices may challenge parental, educational, or political authority.

The contemporary child may also become a symbol of uncertainty about the future. In an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world, the child represents both vulnerability and possibility. Dramatic texts can therefore use childhood to ask fundamental questions: What kind of society is being inherited by the next generation? What responsibilities do adults have toward children? Can children resist patterns of violence and injustice inherited from previous generations?

Thus, contemporary English drama tends to move beyond the sentimental image of childhood and toward a more critical representation of children as socially situated individuals.

The child image in Uzbek drama. The representation of childhood in Uzbek literature is closely connected with the cultural significance of family, upbringing, morality, respect for elders, and intergenerational continuity. In Uzbek drama, the child often occupies a position within a complex network of family and community relationships. Traditional cultural concepts influence the dramatic representation of children. The family is frequently portrayed as the primary environment in which moral values are transmitted. Consequently, conflicts involving children can simultaneously become conflicts concerning parents, family honor, social expectations, and cultural traditions.

The child may also symbolize continuity between generations. The future of the family and, metaphorically, the future of society may be associated with the younger generation. This gives the child image a significant ideological and ethical function. At the same time, Uzbek drama of the twentieth century reflects major social transformations. Changes in political structures, education, urbanization, modernization, and family relationships affected artistic representations of childhood. The child increasingly appears not merely as an object of upbringing but as a personality whose emotional and psychological world deserves independent artistic attention.

In twenty-first-century Uzbek drama, representations of childhood demonstrate increasing psychological and social complexity. Contemporary playwrights address problems such as family

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

conflict, migration, economic difficulties, changing moral values, generational disagreement, and the impact of modernization.

One notable tendency is the confrontation between traditional expectations and the individual aspirations of younger generations. The child or adolescent may represent a new social consciousness that does not completely correspond to established cultural norms. This creates a productive dramatic conflict between tradition and innovation.

Another important feature is the growing attention to the child's subjective experience. Fear, loneliness, misunderstanding, emotional insecurity, and the desire for recognition become important elements of characterization. The child is increasingly represented as a personality with an independent emotional and intellectual world.

Nevertheless, the Uzbek dramatic tradition retains a strong connection between childhood and family. Even when the child is represented as an independent individual, the consequences of his or her experiences are usually connected with family relationships and broader social responsibility.

Comparative-typological analysis. The comparison of English and Uzbek dramatic traditions reveals several important similarities.

First, in both traditions, the child is frequently associated with vulnerability. The limited social power of children allows playwrights to expose injustice and moral irresponsibility.

Second, the child often functions as a moral indicator. The treatment of children reveals the ethical condition of adults and society. Cruelty, indifference, neglect, or excessive control toward children can become evidence of broader social problems.

Third, both English and Uzbek drama increasingly emphasize psychological characterization. The child's inner world, emotional reactions, fears, hopes, and conflicts become important components of dramatic representation.

Fourth, childhood is connected with the concept of future. The child represents a future generation and therefore becomes a symbolic figure through which playwrights consider the consequences of contemporary social behavior.

However, there are also significant differences.

Comparative aspect	**English drama**	**Uzbek drama**
Main social context	Individual, institution, class, social conflict	Family, community, morality, tradition
Dominant emphasis	Individual psychological experience	Family and social relationships
Child's role	Independent social subject and critic	Family member and emerging individual
Main conflict	Individual vs. institution/society	Individual vs. family/tradition/social expectations
Symbolic meaning	Vulnerability, alienation, resistance, future	Continuity, hope, morality, family, future
Contemporary tendency	Greater emphasis on agency and identity	Greater emphasis on agency alongside family values

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

These distinctions should not be interpreted as absolute. Contemporary globalization has brought the two dramatic traditions closer together. Themes such as children's rights, psychological trauma, migration, social inequality, and generational conflict increasingly appear in both literary cultures. The comparative study demonstrates that the child image has both universal and national-cultural dimensions.

The universal dimension is associated with fundamental human experiences. Children are vulnerable, dependent, developing, and connected to the future. These characteristics allow the child to function as a powerful dramatic symbol across different cultures.

The national-cultural dimension emerges through the social environment in which the child is represented. In Uzbek drama, family and collective values often play a particularly important role. In English drama, the child's relationship with individual autonomy, institutions, and social structures is frequently foregrounded.

Language also contributes to national specificity. Forms of address, family terminology, proverbs, culturally determined behavioral norms, and patterns of dialogue can reveal the cultural understanding of childhood. Therefore, the comparative analysis of child characters should consider not only plot and characterization but also the linguistic and cultural mechanisms through which childhood is constructed. The development of the child image in twentieth- and twenty-first-century drama can generally be described as a movement through several stages:

The child as an object of protection → the child as a victim of social circumstances → the child as a psychologically complex personality → the child as an independent social subject.

This evolution reflects wider changes in literary theory and social attitudes toward childhood. Modern societies increasingly recognize children as individuals with rights, opinions, and forms of agency. Literature and drama respond to this transformation by giving children more independent voices. In both English and Uzbek drama, contemporary representations tend to avoid purely idealized images of childhood. The child may be innocent and vulnerable, but may also be contradictory, rebellious, perceptive, or morally challenging. Such complexity makes the child character an important component of contemporary dramatic discourse.

Conclusion. The artistic interpretation of the child image in twentieth- and twenty-first-century English and Uzbek drama demonstrates the interaction of universal human concerns and national-cultural traditions. In both dramatic traditions, children are important vehicles for exploring vulnerability, innocence, moral responsibility, social injustice, family relationships, and the future of society.

English drama has developed a particularly strong tendency toward representing the child as an autonomous individual confronted by social institutions, psychological trauma, and questions of identity. Uzbek drama, while increasingly emphasizing individual psychological experience, maintains a strong connection between childhood, family, morality, cultural continuity, and intergenerational relationships. The comparative-typological analysis shows that the child image has undergone significant transformation in both traditions. The movement from a predominantly passive and symbolic representation toward a psychologically complex and socially active character reflects changing perceptions of childhood in modern society.

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

References

1. Elam, K. The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama. Routledge.
2. Esslin, M. The Theatre of the Absurd. Penguin.
3. Fischer-Lichte, E. The Routledge Introduction to Theatre and Performance Studies. Routledge.
4. Knowles, D. The Oxford Handbook of Children's Literature. Oxford University Press.
5. Nikolajeva, M. The Rhetoric of Character in Children's Literature. Scarecrow Press.
6. Pavis, P. Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis. University of Toronto Press.
7. Rahmonov, N. O‘zbek adabiyoti tarixi. Tashkent.
8. Karimov, B. Adabiyotshunoslik asoslari. Tashkent.
9. The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre Since 1945. Cambridge University Press.
10. The Oxford Handbook of Children's Literature. Oxford University Press.