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**NEW IMAGE OF THE CHILD IN LORD OF THE FLIES AND  
THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN**

**Erdi ORAL\***  
**Arzu ÖZYÖN\*\***

**Abstract**

The characteristics of stereotypical characters in literary works may transform over time as the characteristics of the group they represent in society change. Child image is one of those which experiences this change the most. Child, who initially appeared as a little adult, evil born or wax to be molded, has evolved to include more complex and sophisticated depictions because the child in the real world has begun to be seen differently than before and it has been understood that it has a more complex structure than it appears. This indicates that children are not just a monolithic group who look remarkably alike and have common characteristics and behaviors. Factors such as nature, society, and living conditions play an important role in shaping each child's unique character and actions, and therefore a child cannot be exclusively decent, evil, pure, or tainted. However, in any case, the image of the child is shaped by the wishes and expectations of society. To make a long story short, from the past to the present, children have come to be understood as more than stereotypes and as multidimensional individuals, and as a manifestation of this in literature, they have begun to be represented more complexly in works. This process of change is evident when the older literary periods and more recent novels *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Lord of the Flies* are analyzed.

**Keywords:** Change, Child Image, Stereotype, Literature, Wishes and Expectations of Society.

\* MA Student, Kütahya Dumlupınar University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of English Language and Literature, Kütahya/Republic of Türkiye. E-mail: [erdi.oral@ogr.dpu.edu.tr](mailto:erdi.oral@ogr.dpu.edu.tr), Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6045-1506>.

\*\* Assoc. Prof. Dr., Kütahya Dumlupınar University, Faculty of Literature, Department of English Language and Literature, Kütahya/Republic of Türkiye. E-mail: [arzu.ozyon@dpu.edu.tr](mailto:arzu.ozyon@dpu.edu.tr), Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2730-9676>.

## Sineklerin Tanrısı ve *Huckleberry Finn*'in Maceraları'ndaki Yeni Çocuk İmgesi

### Öz

Edebi eserlerdeki stereotipik karakterlerin özellikleri, zamanla toplum içerisinde temsil ettikleri grubun taşıdığı özelliklerin değişmesiyle değişime uğrayabilir. Bu değişimi en çok yaşayanlardan biri çocuk imgesidir. Önceleri küçük bir yetişkin, doğuştan kötü ya da kalıba sokulacak bir balmumu olarak görülen çocuk, zamanla daha karmaşık ve incelikli tasvirler içerecek şekilde değişmiştir çünkü gerçek dünyadaki çocuk eskisinden farklı görülmeye başlanmış ve görüldüğünden daha karmaşık bir yapıya sahip olduğunun farkına varılmıştır. Bu durum, çocukların birbirlerine son derece benzeyen, ortak özelliklere ve davranışlara sahip yekpare bir gruptan ibaret olmadığının göstergesidir. Doğa, toplum ve yaşam koşulları gibi faktörler her çocuğun kendine özgü karakterinin ve eylemlerinin şekillenmesinde önemli rol oynar ve bu nedenle bir çocuk yalnızca iyi, kötü, saf veya kusurlu olamaz. Ancak her durumda çocuk imgesi, toplumun istek ve beklentilerine göre şekillenir. Özetlemek gerekirse, geçmişten günümüze çocuklar stereotiplerden ziyade, çok boyutlu bireyler olarak anlaşılmaya başlanmış ve bunun edebiyattaki tezahürü olarak da eserlerde daha karmaşık şekilde temsil edilmeye başlanmıştır. Bu değişim süreci önceki edebi dönemler ve onlara nazaran daha yeni olan *Huckleberry Finn*'in *Maceraları* ve *Sineklerin Tanrısı* romanları incelendiğinde açıkça görülmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Değişim, Çocuk İmgesi, Stereotip, Edebiyat, Toplumun İstek ve Beklentileri

### Introduction

As it represents societal perceptions and desires of various groups, the term stereotype is one of the most common themes in literary works. Nevertheless, the roles and characteristics associated with these clichéd characters transform as society changes. Children are one of the groups in literature that has experienced significant alteration. This paper will analyze how children have evolved into increasingly complicated and conscious individuals over time, moving from being little adults or inherently evil beings. Literature's evolving portrayal of children indicates that society is starting to acknowledge that every child is different and influenced by a variety of elements, including environment, society, and upbringing. Though societal expectations still influence how children are perceived, children's ambidextrous nature is starting to be highlighted in literature. An analysis of various literary works from different periods, including the Romantic poetry period as well as the novels *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Lord of the Flies*, will indicate that child characters transcend mere clichés. It is inevitable that as society progresses, perceptions of children will continue to change.

### Child Image in Earlier Time

Change is present in every period and literature, which can be considered a manifestation of life, has also been affected by this change. When works from different literary periods are analyzed, it is observed that a concept can have different meanings in different periods. One of the most dynamic concepts is that of childhood. As Goldstone states "the concept of childhood is dynamic, changing to fit the needs of the community" (Goldstone, 1986: 792). To give an example, "it is now fairly common knowledge that in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, the notion of childhood was almost nonexistent" (Goldstone, 1986: 792). Children of that period were treated as objects that were expected to reach a certain muscular strength and the way children are approached is often related to the conditions of the time and the level of education of the society, as Rice states, "in primitive or spontaneous forms of human society child is not a special subject of study. Children are naturally and roundly brought up in the large circle of the home, with its traditional wisdom and salutary rough and tumble" (Rice, 1973: 372). By the 16th-17th century, they "were viewed as being born in sin" by Puritans. (Goldstone, 1986: 793) Towards the end of the 17th century, new conceptualizations were born, "Whereas Locke described the child as 'wax, to be molded and fashioned as one pleases' (325), Rousseau regarded it as 'young plant'" (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2008: 3). Besides, the child's most important quality was innocence for Rousseau. So, as the 18th century approached, the qualities attributed to children continued to transform. In England, Rousseau's image of childhood became influential on Romantic poet William Blake, and Wordsworth agreed with what his predecessors Blake and

Rousseau stated about the nature of the child as instinctively good, joyful, innocent, wise, and divine. The image of the child in this period differs from others in some ways. As Sky states:

*Before the Romantics, there was no question of children having an independent imaginative life of any importance, or of their being able to perceive anything invisible to adults. The only necessity was for instruction to be poured into their ears, and the only argument was about what sort of instruction it should be (Sky, J. 2002: 366).*

Hence, the child in this period is a child rather than a small adult. However, the characteristics that the romantics attributed to children were not so different from what their predecessors had done, they too confined children to stereotypes.

The perception of the child in the Romantic Period started to be associated with a set of positive meanings and attributes in the middle of the eighteenth century. Many authors made interpretations about the image of the child in the Enlightenment, Pre-Romantic, and Romantic Periods, and also as Kümmerling-Meibauer states “these authors created models of interpretations constitutive for the philosophical, anthropological, aesthetic and educational discourses of childhood since the end of the eighteenth century” (2008: 2). Previously children were seen as sinful born due to the Puritan religious beliefs, yet, this situation started to change in the Pre-Romantic Period. While children had different characteristics in the past and were invisible in the eyes of adults, in the Romantic period they were perceived as “being in a higher spiritual state than adults, because of their nearness to their birth and so to a pre-existence in Heaven” (Sky, J. 2002: 372). Therefore, it is possible to say that divine features are attributed to children in this case as well. On the other hand, they became literary devices in the poetry of the Romantics. The function of “the child in texts about childhood is a memorative device often working in the absence of conscious remembering” (Austin, L. M. 2003: 76). In other words, this time they were seen as a means of remembering the past, not the individual.

After the change that started with Locke and Rousseau, the child that began to be seen as a force for good is clearly visible in William Blake and William Wordsworth’s poetry. Below is a part of one of William Blake’s poems called “The Lamb” as an example:

*For he calls himself a Lamb.  
He is meek & he is mild;  
He became a little child.  
I a child & thou a lamb,  
We are called by his name. (Blake, 1798/1988: 9)*

The interaction between the lamb and the child in William Blake’s *The Lamb* is a synthesis of pastoral tradition and Christian script. The child expresses profound gladness to be with the lamb, who is meek and mild, just like him. The poem transmits the soul of childhood, its purity, innocence, and a child’s kindness. Therefore, the child appears as a Christ-like figure in this poem. Moreover, in Blake’s vision:

The child, the lamb, and Christ (the source of imagination and inspiration) become one. It is in the child that innocence and joy take their origin and significance. The child then possesses “holy” attributes; there is Heaven on his face, his smiles are God’s (Gelbert, 1974: 18).

Furthermore, Wordsworth thus following Blake, evidently considers childhood “as a bridge between God and man”. Developing further Blake's image of an innocent, joyful child, Wordsworth gives such a description of the little girl in ‘Characteristics of a Child Three Years Old’ (Gelbert, 1974: 53):

*Loving she is, and tractable, though wild;  
And Innocence hath privilege in her  
To dignify arch looks and laughing eyes  
And feats of cunning* (Wordsworth, 1815/2010: 620).

Based on what has been said so far, it can be stated that while the image of the child in the earlier periods was purified from negative epithets such as born sinful and unworthy and assigned positive meanings and attributions, the image of the child in the Romantic Period was stereotyped as an innocent, decent and celestial child. However, in later literary works, child psychology was presented in more detail and the concept of the child became more complex with the possibility of being moral or immoral, decent or evil. The conceptualization of the child began to diverge from that of the Romantic Period. Children began to be seen as individuals who experience the consequences of their actions, rather than simply as kind little people.

### **Child Perception in *Lord of the Flies***

In the 20th century, a new image of the child emerged, especially in the second half of that century, “things changed dramatically. The Golden Age of Childhood was lost. Our children are no longer special creatures who gambol in their own world of elves and pixies, carefully protected from the responsibilities, banalities, and brutalities of the adult world” (Goldstone, 1986:796). This new child is no longer the ornament or literary device of literary works, but an individual who is the protagonist of his or her adventures, whose character is shaped by what he or she experiences. Two of the best representations of this are Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn. As for *Lord of the Flies*, the novel is entirely made up of characters who are children, and rather than presenting us with a stereotype of a child, it demonstrates that every child can be unique.

*The Lord of the Flies* is a work where different types of child characters can be observed and this novel tells the story of children struggling to survive on a deserted island. A conflict begins between the children who were dragged to the island after the plane carrying them was shot down into the ocean. In the event of the disaster they experience, some children are trying to belong to a group, but each one is different from the others, even if they are not completely opposite from each other. While some children express their wildness, others prefer to remain reasonable. Even in this case, their choices of groups show their will. In the beginning, children try to create a society and maintain order among themselves without any adult supervision. However, in the absence of adults and in an atmosphere where they have difficulty meeting their basic needs, their true selves emerge. George states that “Golding principally deals with evil and emerges what is being characterized as the dark optimism. He strongly believes that evil is inherent in man and puts the locus of all evil in the ‘will’ of man” (George, 2008: vii). However, Golding's novel does not only consist of evil-minded characters but also presents a panorama of a variety of characters.

In the novel, Jack is the symbol of the instinct of savagery and violence. In addition, he functions as the antithesis of Ralph, Jack's character in the novel is getting more and more brutal as time passes and his brutality and savagery bring him closer to the power he craves for. Throughout *Lord of the Flies*, Roger, who is initially introduced as a silenced and intense older boy, is seen turning into a ruthless terrorist. However, not all children in the novel represent bad attributes. Just as it is meaningless to state that all children represent innocence, not all children symbolize inherent evil. As for Ralph, he is the main representative of order, civilization, and leadership in the novel, the respect initially shown by children to

him is lost when the savage in many of them awakes. Simon is on an altogether different plane from all the other children, while Ralph and Jack are at the extremes of civilization and savagery. Simon represents a kind of innate, spiritual goodness in humans. As for Piggy, he stands for the scientific and rational side of humankind. Inherent evil which is highlighted in the novel is revealed in the dialogue between Lord of the Flies and Simon:

*"Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!" said the head. For a moment or two the forest and all the other dimly appreciated places echoed with the parody of laughter. "You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are?" (Golding, 1954/2001:128).*

As can be understood from the quotation above, the novel deals with the evil in people and conveys it through the child characters. However, it is understood through such characters as Ralph and Simon in the novel that it is possible to resist this evil. Although it is a secret whether humans are born innately good or bad, it is possible to say that children have different characters just like adults, that they reflect their true selves as each individual would do in their life circumstances, briefly, that every child is too different from each other to fit into the mold, and that this complex child image is seen in *Lord of the Flies*.

Structures, rather than having preformed properties, arise in accordance with needs and situations. Development is a function of internal processes-equilibration, accommodation, and assimilation-all of which are dependent upon activity and experience. Piaget characterizes structures as "far from being static and given from the start" (Piaget, 1963: 17 qtd. in Anandalakshmy, Grinder, 1970: 1119). According to them Piaget's "emphasis is on the continued and progressive changes a maturing organism undergoes in response to experiential conditions, which result in a complex network of interactions" (Anandalakshmy, Grinder, 1970: 1119)

In light of this, it can be said that since it is impossible to for more than one person to have the same dna and experience the same phenomenons, it is inevitable that each individual, and especially each child, is unique. This is precisely why all the children in this work have different characteristics.

### **Child Image in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn***

Child concept in literature is handled differently in different countries and different genres, for instance, "The child in British poetry is dealt with symbolically, while the child in American novel is treated more realistically" (Altunay, 2005: 18). Besides, the intellectual changes in society cause the concept of the child to be handled differently. Scientists and famous theorists can be cited as the reason for these epistemological changes. In the late 19th century, scientists began to focus on questioning the factors in human development, and this was the birth of Developmental Psychology, "Darwin's theory of evolution gave rise to several speculative assumptions that influenced early developmental psychology" (Anandalakshmy, Grinder, 1970: 1114). In light of this, child development, which is a part of human development, took a step towards becoming an important subject of study, and an image of a child which broke the mold began to emerge. This unusual child image can be observed clearly in *the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* written by Mark Twain, where the narrator is Huckleberry Finn. As Altunay stated:

*Through the use of Huckleberry Finn as protagonist and narrator, Mark Twain can satirize the hypocrisy of a nation that is supposedly based on the rules of freedom and democracy. As a typical child, Huck is outspoken. His difference as a child from an adult is that he is directed by a correct conscience. He knows intuitively what is right and wrong. Adults see nothing wrong in violence and injustice even though they are well-intentioned and bound to social conventions. In this respect,*

*Huck as a child is considered to be the symbol of freedom in American literature*  
(2005: 18).

Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer are literary characters that represent the independence and resourcefulness that American literature has always emphasized. They “are the prototypes of the good, strong, self-reliant child who from an early age can sally forth and join his peers. These children go forth with a twinkle in their eye” (Goldstone, 1986: 796). Huck, who can make his own decisions regardless of social ties and traditional thinking, reflects the inner self of a child who has experienced bad situations and is not under parental control. Forced to flee from his abusive, drunken father, Huck crosses paths with the runaway slave Jim. They make a long and frequently interrupted voyage down the Mississippi River on a raft to arrive in states, where slavery is banned. During the journey, Huck experiences a moral development as he clashes with the ideas of the corrupt society in which he was raised. Through his experiences, Huck overcomes conventional ethnic biases and learns to respect and love Jim.

Early in the novel, Huck is seen as an immoral, uncivilized boy, and his actions confirm this. At the beginning of the work, he decides to become a gang member. According to the rules of the gang, he wants to join, the family of those who break the rules are killed, but since Huck doesn't have a real family, it is thought that this would not be fair to the others. He becomes upset but suggests they kill Miss Watson. This part reveals his moral condition. Later, he shows a moral shift after meeting Jim. However, that does not happen all of a sudden, Huck has not always had innocent feelings for Jim, “he is free enough of the dominant culture to respond to Jim as a human being; but he is also prone to sudden reversals of feeling that betray his deep immersion in the mentality of the white majority.” (Robinson, 1988: 369). Hence, on the one hand, he appears to be a free individual, but on the other hand, he bears the traces of his society.

Huck participates in two separate pranks on Jim before his first crisis of ‘conscience.’ In the first one (chapter two), Tom wants “to tie Jim” to a “tree for fun”, but Huck objects, not because he feels anything for Jim, but because Jim “might wake and make a disturbance, and then they'd [Miss Watson and the Widow Douglas] find out I wasn't in” (Lackey, 2002: 496).

In other words, he experiences a dilemma in his attitude towards Jim. In the first place, this dilemma is between the consciousness he has acquired from her society and the possible consequences of his actions. However, Huck faces his first big dilemma when he encounters three criminals. When Jim and Huck take the boat for themselves, leaving the three robbers stranded, Huck realizes that they will die and regrets it. He says “I began to think how dreadful it was, even for murderers, to be in such a fix” (Twain, 1885/1994: 76). This can be considered as a foreshadowing of Huck's moral change.

Huck's moral shift can be seen more clearly through his attitude towards Jim in the later parts of the work. He thinks that he stole the slave of a woman who did not harm him, he concludes that what he did is miserable and he decides to make up for it. After writing the letter in which Huck tells Jim's location to Miss Watson, he expresses his feelings as follows:

*But somehow, I couldn't seem to strike no places to harden me against him, but only the other kind. I'd see him standing my watch on top of his'n, 'stead of calling me, so I could go on sleeping; and see him how glad he was when I come back out of the fog; and when I come to him again in the swamp, up there where the feud was; and such-like times; and would always call me honey, and pet me and do everything he could think of for me, and how good he always was; and at last I struck the time I saved him by telling the men we had small-pox aboard, and he was so grateful, and said I was the best friend old Jim ever had in the world, and the only one he's got now; and then I happened to look around and see that paper (Twain, 1885/1994: 208).*

Huck, who now has positive feelings towards Jim, gives up the idea of sending the letter to Miss Watson on second thoughts. He says: “All right, then, I'll go to hell” (Twain, 1885/1994: 208). That is to say, it is possible to see a moral development in the novel. Although Huck is a boy who grew up in a racist society, he has a black friend and he is ready to sacrifice himself for Jim. As Crane states:

*The pivotal crisis of the realist text often involves a test of the protagonist's moral agency. Unlike the naturalist, the realist presumes that all people, including those in straitened circumstances, are endowed to some extent with moral agency. The realist focuses on the process of deliberation brought on by moments of crisis: Huck Finn's decision to “go to hell” so that Jim can go free (2007: 162).*

This section shows that Huck is a conscious individual rather than a stereotypic child character, he manages to escape, though not completely, from submission to social standards. While there are plenty of reasons to be bad, he tries to define his own moral values.

Considering all the literary periods and works mentioned in this paper, it can be concluded that the perception of the child in the eyes of society has changed many times throughout history. However, in the late 19th century, characters such as Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer, who can be seen as the forerunners of the independent and complex child in literature, lit a revolutionary fire to destroy the stereotypical single-featured child perception. On the one hand, “child guarantees our continuation: their production and preservation maintain domestic family units, nation-states, and the human race” (McGuire, 2015: 65). On the other hand, the image of a child has continued to be affected by the wishes and expectations of society. However, despite being affected, it is now possible to see more than one child with different characteristics in a single work, such as in *Lord of the Flies*, as opposed to the monotype child of the past. In earlier periods, while one era saw the child as the future labor force, another era considered him/her as the future philosopher; while one era saw him/her as something close to god, people of another era regarded him/her as a born sinner. However, in today's literature, it is possible to see decent, evil, rational, violent, withdrawn, queer, or robot children. This is because the importance of the child has been recognized and has become a subject of study.

## Conclusion

The image of the child has changed many times from past to present, and literature, which is the manifestation of life, has also witnessed these shifts. The child, who was almost non-existent in literary works at first became an existent, the child who was born sinful became a divine figure and possessed a position above the adults while it was ignored in the past. This changing image has developed in line with the wishes and expectations of society. On the other hand, in underdeveloped societies, the child was not even seen as a subject of study. However, the importance of the child as a continuation of society was recognized later. In the late 19th century, as can be seen in the example of Huck, the child became a free individual in pursuit of adventure. Later, in *Lord of the Flies*, the child appears in many different ways. Today, it would not be surprising to witness a queer, Islamist, and robot child in the same literary work. Briefly, the child in literary works will continue to change in parallel with the changes, wishes, or needs of society, but this time children will not be objects.

## Conflict of Interest Declaration

The authors have stated that there is no conflict of interest with any institution or person within the scope of the article.

## Authors' Declaration of Contribution Rates

The authors contributed to the design of the study, data collection, data analysis, writing the manuscript, submission, and revision of the manuscript at the rate of EO (75%) and AO (25%).

## Ethics Statement

It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been complied with during the preparation of this study and all the studies utilized are indicated in the bibliography. Regarding the Ethics Committee permission, the author(s) and referees of the study that constitutes the subject of this article have declared that there is no need for Ethics Committee Permission.

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