

A Comparison Between the Image of the ‘Child’ in Dickens’ *Oliver Twist* and in Golding’s *Lord of The Flies*

Golding’in Sineklerin Tanrısı ve Dickens’in Oliver Twist Adlı Eserlerindeki ‘Çocuk’ İmgesine Karşılaştırmalı Bir Bakış

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Abstract: The aim of this study was to cast a light on the child as a literary figure from different perspectives which are constructed upon a comparative outlook, regarding Dickens’ *Oliver Twist* and Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*. The interest in the image of the child that begins in the Victorian period continued in the twentieth century. This continuation brings a profound investigation to the concept of the child through a comparison between these two-paramount works. In this study, while *Oliver Twist* as a Victorian novel focuses upon the naivety and purity of childhood on the one hand, subsequently, Golding attempts to destroy this purity, with the possible evil character in the human soul in the *Lord of The Flies*. As a matter of fact, the child feeds his soul not only with childish softness but also the corrupted nature of adulthood. In a way, this issue will be examined with the purity and innocence of Dickens’ *Oliver Twist*, as well as with the hellish figuration of the boys in the *Lord of the Flies*..

Keywords: Childhood, Evil, Innate Goodness, Maturity, Innocence, Experience

Öz: Bu çalışmanın amacı, Dickens’in *Oliver Twist*’i ile Golding’in *Sineklerin Tanrısı* adlı eserlerinde karşılaştırmalı bir bakış açısını temel alan farklı perspektiflerden çocuk kavramını edebi bir figür olarak ele almaktır. Viktorya dönemi ile çocuk imajına yönelik oluşan ilgi 20. yüzyılda devam etmektedir. Bu süreç, adı geçen iki önemli eseri ele alırken çocuk kavramına derin bir inceleme sağlamaktadır. Bu çalışmada, Viktorya dönemi eseri olarak *Oliver Twist* çocukluğun naifliğine ve saflığına odaklanırken, öte yandan Golding *Sineklerin Tanrısı*’nda insan doğasında yer alan olası şeytanın varlığı ile bu saflığı yok etmeye çalışmaktadır. Nitekim, çocuk, ruhunu sadece çocukça saflıkla değil, yetişkin dünyasının yozlaşmış doğasıyla da besler. Bu durumdan hareketle, bu özellik Dickens’in *Oliver Twist*’inin masumiyeti ve saflığı ile *Sineklerin Tanrısı*’ndaki çocukların şeytani tasviri ile irdelenecektir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Çocukluk, Şeytan, Doğuştan İyilik, Olgunluk, Masumiyet, Deneyim

The Child as a Literary Image

Throughout the centuries, literature has been a stage for various themes, subject matters, motifs and symbols. One of these has been the myth of childhood which was firstly emphasized in the works of the Romantic and Victorian periods. The works of these periods have the bliss and purity of childhood since the child is exposed to suffering and immorality within the corrupted nature of the society. As a representative of the Romantics, William Blake’s artistic voice can be heard aloud because of his interest in the condition of the child. His work, *Songs of*

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Innocence and of Experience Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul (1794) is a good illustration of childhood within the general development of human personality, the condition of the child and his place in the world governed by mature principles. Apart from Blake, one can easily reach the presentation of innate goodness in a child's nature with Coleridge and Wordsworth who seek for the concern of Victorian writers striving to consider the visionary experience of children responding to adult methods of miseries and moral determinism.

This desire for the presentation of the nature of the child clearly indicates that Coleridge, Wordsworth and Blake, as romantic writers, constructed their visions on the significance of the child since they regarded childhood as the start of the formation of maturity. Further, Kenneth Muir describes the loss of childhood as '*an individual fortunate fall*' (Muir 1980, 127). Muir aims to shed light on the sublimity of childhood before reaching the adult world. Actually, in the Romantic Period the image of the child was handled as a holy object which was under the threat from the corruption of the mature. Due to this representation, it can clearly be claimed that the child was '*a symbolic representation of the Kingdom of Heaven*' (Muir 1980, 25). For the Romantics, the image was one always of the portrayal of bliss, naivety and purity. The Romantics introduced the reader to the scenery of feeling, the inner existence of the human character, excluding itself from the evil existence of the outside. They see the actual world as a corrupted one, so they plunge the child into the joy and dreamy manifestations of emotional life.

On the other hand, while Romantic Period was such stage for the image of the child, the Victorian Period contains childhood innocence within the adulthood experience in itself. By doing this, the writers of the Victorian Period focused on the wholeness of human nature in relation to the image of child.

In this matter, Byrnes points out '*As a symbol of wholeness, the archetypal child is composite of opposite qualities...the archetypal child is able to reconcile contrary forces and grow from immaturity to maturity*' (Byrnes 1991, 36). This possibility in the nature of the child was well-defined within the term of '*Bildungsroman*'. Golban stresses the paramount fact of this term as a Victorian literary device: '*The Victorian Bildungsroman in general presents the image of child as an archetype rendering the wholeness of human psyche, which is set up against the divisions of mind and feeling, excessive rationality and emotion, morality related to rationality and instinctive action*' (Golban 2003, 59). Here, the formation of human character from childhood to adulthood is clarified with the fact that the image of the child stands for the wholeness which is the triggering phase to create an integrated personality. The image of the child can be seen as a blank sheet of a story '*waiting to be told*' (Steedman 1995, 11).

This novel type pushes some of the important literary figures onto the stage; Charles Dickens, the Brontë sisters and George Eliot being some of them. They all are concerned with the maturation of the child, who is full of innocence and bliss, through the creation of integration in the personality. The process of formation of the personality covers the pure past of the child with the possible evil of the adult since, at the end of this formation a child who is far from home is alone and becomes an adult. The process that raises the wholeness of actual childhood and adulthood reveals that the child also has a potentiality to exorcise the innermost evil of his soul. This exorcism of the human soul is explicitly examined in the works produced in the twentieth century. Since modern man is alienated and has psychological breakdown, he is alone with his inner world and is open to every mental distraction that the uncomfortable realization of the outside immunes. The exotic figuration of the child in the Romantic Period is wholly destroyed through the existence of the war. After the Second World War, there appeared

so many changes in social life that war was the cause of the chaos in the world. The people who experienced the war were surrounded with despair, frustration, uncertainty about future; so they needed to seek the meaning of their existence in this fragmented picture of the world. Furthermore, the examination of the innocent child is replaced with the possible danger of darkness in the human soul. The blossom of the garden of the naïve childhood becomes pale, with the outcome of war in bloody existence.

The Child in *Oliver Twist* as Innocence Protected

As a late nineteenth century novel, Dickens' *Oliver Twist* is mainly concerned with the social criticism of Victorian England. As the product of this criticism, the orphan is the peak point of this study in surveying the innocence and protection of Oliver even within a corrupted society. Dickens aims to draw a real portrait of a child like Oliver within the social unrest and harshness towards the children of the period. In Victorian England in the late nineteenth century, poor boys were sent to the workhouse. Oliver is one of these unlucky boys that illustrate the permanence of innocence throughout the novel. The struggle for the continuation of purity against the evil outside is the main point that Dickens aims to display. In this sense, as an unlucky boy, Oliver is the symbol of the feeling of despair. He represents the incorruptible innocence among the people he encounters, especially the thief, Fagin.

Oliver's natural virtue is through good and is never destroyed through all the encounters he experiences outside. The pure and desperate children come to the corrupted world as '*a new burden having been imposed upon the parish*' (Dickens 1994, 2). The children are regarded as a burden in Victorian period so they are inhuman creatures to be involved in this society if he or she is poor. In a way, the innate goodness of Oliver is entirely apart from this unlucky fate, '*But nature and inheritance had implanted a good sturdy spirit in Oliver's breast*' (Dickens 1994, 6). He has a good nature and the innocence of a child. Meanwhile, the purity of the child brings crying and tearful acts into reality. Oliver is full of tears and in the case of desperate air, he bursts into tears. That situation shows parallelism with the innocence of a child. '*It was not until he was left alone in the silence and stillness of the gloomy workshop of the undertaker, that Oliver gave way to the feelings which the day's treatment may be supposed likely to have awakened in a mere child. He had listened to their taunts with a look of contempt; he had borne the lash without a cry*' (Dickens 1994, 60). The pride he has makes him alive and strong in the gloomy and dark atmosphere of the adult world that he unfortunately experiences. His acquaintance with Fagin leads him to encounter the corrupted world of thieves where he struggles to resist becoming a thief and to protect his innate goodness. '*Stop thief! Stop thief! There is a passion for hunting something deeply implanted in the human breast. One wretched breathless child, panting with exhaustion; terror in his looks; agony in his eyes; large drops of perspiration streaming down his face...*' (Dickens 1994, 84). Oliver has a deep passion to be strong in character in a good way; thus, he has both a psychological and a physical war against the evil outside, even if he is a poor one. Since he is labeled as a potential criminal by society, he tries to close this curtain in front of the eyes of the people.

As an orphan, Oliver looks for shelter for his life among this cruel quality of society and he encounters Mr. Brownlow and that gentleman provides him with safety. Afterwards, this safety is shattered with the unusual attitudes of the man. Oliver is on the distressful ground and has a psychological breakdown. '*Don't turn me out of the doors to wander in the streets again, let me stay here, and be a servant. Don't send me back to the wretched place I came from. Have mercy upon a poor boy, sir!*' (Dickens 1994, 119). In the novels of Dickens, the children are uncorrupted and unsullied; that's why, Oliver wishes to protect his nature from the outsiders'

immoralities. The child keeps his path for the honesty and morality as the Romantics insure. The critic, Kenneth Frederick points out; *'we recognize at once the crucial role Mr. Brownlow's and Mrs. Maylie's homes as havens in the uncompromisingly dichotomized world of the novel. Only here can Oliver breathe, only here does he know kindness and civility'* (Frederick 1966, 465). Oliver's innate goodness is only available with this place of safety.

The fear of the loss of innocence dwells in the innermost depths of Oliver. His psychological burden illustrates its traces before his eyes, *'The night was dark and foggy. 'The lights in the shops could scarcely struggle through the heavy mist, which thickened every moment and shrouded the streets in gloom; rendering the strange place still stranger in Oliver's eyes; and making his uncertainty the more dismal and depressing'* (Dickens 1994, 136). Oliver is in the hands of gloom, the darkness and the dismal. That triggers his spiritual sickness which is nurtured by the evil outside. His permanent war with the evil outer world and inner world leads him to possess great mercy towards weak people. During the course of a theft, he opposes this wickedness, though he is a weak one; yet, he resists the evil aims of Fagin and the others. He says, *'...send him back the books and money. Keep me here all my life long; but pray, pray send them back. He'll think I stole them; the old lady: all of them who were so kind to me: will think I stole them. Oh, do have mercy upon me, and send them back!'* (Dickens 1994, 141). Oliver tries to yell for the salvation of his innate goodness. He is about to lose that goodness because of the wretched act of the thieves. Furthermore, Oliver is *'well accustomed to suffering...lost in thought for some minutes...'* (Dickens 1994, 180). His imagination is coupled with his innocence. He smells the air of imprisonment in his soul; but never takes a deep breath. His armor so as not to yield the shelter for innocence is his resistible soul, *'Oh! For God's sake let me go...let me run away and die in the fields. I will never come near London; never, never! Oh! Pray have mercy on me, don't make me steal. For the love of all the bright Angels that rest in Heaven, have mercy upon me!'* (Dickens 1994, 200). He is involuntarily involved in these awful occasions. In front of Sikes, another terrible man of the outside, Oliver is a figure of a saint who prays for mercy and begs spiritually for his salvation from the poisonous chains around his body. Oliver is the good example represented in Victorian England by Dickens of the saint-like figure in childhood.

Dickens profoundly scrutinizes the image of the child which is expressed in a highly idealized condition. The general outlook of Victorian literature towards childhood is that the heart of a pure child brings great mercy upon even the evil condemned ones. At the end of the novel, Fagin encounters the naivety and innocence protected nature of Oliver and Fagin finds the salvation for his corrupted soul through the innate goodness of Oliver. His sinful heart is cleaned through Oliver's unsullied inner essences: *'Oh! God forgive this wretched man! cried the boy with a burst of tears'* (Dickens 1994, 505). Oliver prays for Fagin.

As a matter of fact, Dickens portrays the image of the child as an innocent one. Despite the bad conditions and evil characters outside, Oliver achieves the protection of his innate goodness. His act of praying and burst of tears and idealized destiny amongst the hellish figures, leads the reader think that Dickens attempts to highlight the goodness of the unlucky children in the corrupted society.

Child in Lord of the Flies as Evil Constructed

As a post-war work, *Lord of the Flies* is the embodiment of the boys who are taken to the deserted island and is the illustration referring to how children behave when the mature principles and constraints of adult society are removed. In this sense, it can be stated that

'Golding chose to project his spiritual uneasiness into a picture of children's hatred and deadly combats' (Talon 1968, 296). The boys, who become free on the island, are soon controlled by the yelling in their innermost depths. The war in the adult world becomes in the same synchrony with the hidden aspect of their nature which the unsettled island prepares.

At the beginning of the novel, we are introduced to Ralph and Piggy. Their game with the conch shell then makes the other boys gather. They are Jack, Simon, Roger, the twins and the group of choir boys. The shell gives the right to speak in the community. In a way, it is a representation of the possible construction of the social structure that leads them to order and harmony and to choose the leader. The leader becomes Ralph who follows the good of the group, values moral principles, and represents democracy and harmony. His contrasting peer is Jack who is the figuration of savagery, the symbol of hunting, and the feeder of violence. The wicked nature of Jack clashes with Ralph's desire for a civilized place. Under the leadership of Jack, the evil boost is clearly envisioned, compared to Ralph's naïve commonsense.

All we know about the nature of these two boys is the striking point in the novel in order to illustrate the fact that Golding insists on the potentiality of good and of evil in human heart. He states on this occasion '*There was the brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhilaration, skill; and there was the world of longing and baffled common-sense*' (Golding 1954, 77). Within two contrary characterizations of the boys, Ralph and Jack, Golding aims to stress that human beings, even a child, has the potentiality of goodness as well as of the evil. '*Everyman has a potentiality to be a Nazi*' (Biles 1970, 3) as a whole, the novel is constructed upon the evil and good characters. By doing so, Golding tries to compose a harmony through the comprehension of the lifelike situations of the children on the island. The good is represented by Ralph, Piggy and Simon; on the other hand, the evil is served by Jack, Roger and Maurice. What is striking about Golding's use of these oppositional pairs is that he tries to show how nature plays a role in shaping the human spirit through their fallen and diseased nature.

As mentioned earlier, the figure of intelligence, Ralph foresees the possible danger that dwells in the soul of man. His conversation with Piggy is the real indicator of this occasion: '*If you don't blow, we'll soon be animals anyway. I can't see what they're doing but I can hear*' (Golding 1954, 101). Ralph is anxious about the loss of civilization as well as the destruction of the innate goodness. As events progress on the island, Golding draws the darkness of the human heart with the pig's head as lord of the flies; namely the devil. Ralph's prophecy is related to this awkward thing. In this respect, pig's head symbolizes man's wicked nature. Simon is the only one who speaks with this beast-like creature as an illusionary scene; yet, he is also aware of the evil inside. '*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, 158). Here, the pig's head is the actual evil that is fed by the fear inside of the boys. This nutrition compels Simon to become aware of the existence of darkness.

Simon's awareness of the gloomy nature of the pig's head also drives his unconscious feeling of a '*blackness within, a blackness that spread*' (Golding 1954, 159). The Lord of the flies has a powerful position that holds the unknown in his hand. Golding makes use of the beastie to create a vantage point over the fact that the evil is a part of the human personality that boosts in fear or any effective inner struggle. As the novel progresses, the boys are captured in an unconscious way by the domination of this creature. In this respect, Simon wishes the destruction of the beast in order to evacuate the dirt from their soul and from where they live. '*Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!*' (Golding 1954, 168). As the saint-like figure, Simon believes that the fear that the beast imposes on them is the indicator of the loss of innate

goodness. As a matter of fact, Jack is a kind of beast who feeds his nature with wickedness as well as with this fear of the children. He makes use of this condition for his own sake and Simon is a kind of threat for him. At the end of chapter nine, Simon is killed by a group of children.

His death scene is a portrayal of the destruction of their naivety through the regression of the boys into primitive savages from the civilized and safe world. *'Somewhere over the darkened curve of the world of the sun and moon were pulling; and the film of water on the earth planet was held, bulging slightly on one side while the solid core turned'* (Golding 1954, 170). Another saint-like figure, Piggy also struggles with this fear and its sinful products. He inquires; *'Which is better- to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill?'* *Hunting and killing acts are the parts of Jack's nature, his leadership forces the others fall into this dilemma. Ralph also inquires; 'Which is better, law and rescue, or hunting and breaking things up?'* (Golding 1954, 199). Actually, the interaction between Piggy and Ralph indicates that they both have the hope of rescue and the return to their goodness and purity from breathing this savage air of the island. Yet, Jack will not let it happen and will try to end the last innocent reminiscences of the innocence. At the end of the novel, while Jack is about to kill Ralph, a naval officer comes to the island from adult world. In a way, I think he is another factor to erase even the last crumb of the goodness inside the boys, since the war in the adult world is in the same line as the struggle of the boys between good and evil on the island. I think the officer possesses the ideas of the evil inside the children before; *'I should have thought...I should have thought that a pack of British boys- you're all British aren't you?-would have been able to put up a better show than that - I mean'* (Golding 1954, 222). Furthermore, Ralph who is saved from the hands of Jack cries for *'the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy'* (Golding 1954, 223). Here, the end of the novel clarifies that the end of the child's innocence has a parallel with the evil construction of the adults referring to the atomic war. *Lord of the Flies* is constructed on the phrase, the *'darkness of the human soul'*. Throughout the novel, the reader acquires the vision of reality that reason is compared to evil and even intelligence doesn't get rid of the darkness at all. Thus, man has the potentiality to become a monster. This matter leads him to hug the evil inside. Golding displays this gloomy scenery with a group of boys that actually waves to innocence with the savage nutrition of nature.

Conclusion

For literary men the image of the child image is multidimensional in the attempt to deal with it, since a child is not always innocent. We have realized the fact that while on the one hand, Golding prepares the reader for the possible evil inside with his characterization of the boys on the island, Dickens on the other hand tries to illustrate the possible way for redemption in the adult world through the awareness of the purity in a child. This study has analyzed the figure of the child from the aspect of the psychological burden the child experiences in hellish conditions, as well as the child protected by naivety, being coupled with the immoral adult world.

Both Dickens and Golding examine the conditions of their times that human beings are exposed to. They are in favor of life-like situations since they create figures close to the current life. Furthermore, while Golding predestines the child, condemned to the way of a diseased and fallen nature, Dickens attempts to defend the unsullied and incorruptible nature of the child whatever the outer conditions may be. As a whole, this study has addressed the child as a literary image from the viewpoints of two different literary men in two different periods. In Victorian England, the child is seen as the salvation of sinful adults through his innocence; while, on the other hand, the loss of the child's innocence is labeled in postwar fiction as the continuation of the decaying manner of the adult world.

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