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Typology of Children's Images in Modern Kazakh and English Children's Literature

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the typology of child characters in modern Kazakh and English literature, focusing on urban children and psychological portrayals of childhood. We employ a comparative literary analysis alongside the psychoanalytic theory to uncover how cultural context and unconscious archetypes shape children's literary images. Archetypal child character types are identified across both literatures – orphans, child caregivers, misunderstood youths, brave child heroes, and mischievous tricksters – with universal features and culture-specific inflections. Kazakh narratives tend to situate children within communal, intergenerational frameworks reflecting national values, whereas English narratives often emphasize individualism and imaginative escape. Drawing on concepts from C.G. Jung, Melanie Klein, Wilfred Bion, Jacques Lacan, and Emmanuel Levinas, we deepen the analysis of these typologies, revealing underlying psychological tensions (e.g., abandonment anxieties, precocious maturity, the child as moral Other), and the ethical implications of representing children in literature. The results include a proposed classification of urban child character types, illustrated with examples from contemporary texts and a discussion of how these typologies reflect differing cultural ideals of childhood.

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We conclude that modern Kazakh and English literary depictions of children, while sharing archetypal patterns, diverge in ways that illuminate each culture's ethos – whether communal or individual – and that a psychoanalytic lens can enrich our understanding of the child's symbolic role in fiction.

Keywords: Children's Literature; Child Character; Archetype; Typology; Psychoanalytic Literary Analysis; Kazakh Literature; English Literature

1. Introduction

Literature for children has not always existed as a distinct category. In pre-modern societies, children were often regarded as miniature adults, with little recognition of a separate childhood phase. Historians such as Philippe Ariès [1] famously argued that the concept of childhood as a protected, special period had to be "discovered" by modern society. Only in the eighteenth century did authors in Europe begin producing literature specifically for young readers, marking the emergence of a dedicated children's literary tradition [2]. Early children's books in Britain and elsewhere were typically didactic – for example, moral tales and religious tracts – rather than realistic explorations of children's inner lives or imaginative viewpoints. It took many decades for writers to fully acknowledge the unique psychology and experiences of the child. As the Russian literary critic Kornei Chukovsky observed [3], "it took hundreds of years for adults to recognize the right of children to be children… The child slowly gained respect for their games, their interests, and taste" [3]. In other words, the very notion of childhood as a distinct life stage with its own value had to be gradually constructed in culture and literature.

By the nineteenth century, a more modern image of the child began to permeate literature. Classics of Victorian England, for instance, started portraying children not merely as moral examples but as complex individuals in their own right. Yet critics have noted that even as children became central characters, their stories were often written by adults with adult agendas. Jacqueline Rose provocatively argued that children's fiction constructs an idealized child onto whom adult authors project their own fantasies and fears [4]. In a similar vein, Perry Nodelman contends that there is always a hidden adult perspective embedded in texts ostensibly for children, influencing how childhood is depicted [5]. This dynamic – the child character as filtered through an adult writer's consciousness – raises important questions about authenticity and agenda in children's literature. Are literary children speaking with their own voice, or are they ventriloquized by adult societal values?

Modern children's literature in the West has thus developed as a field oscillating between giving voice to the child's perspective and imposing adult conceptions. Scholars like C. G. Jung have contributed to understanding the symbolic roles children play in stories, discussing archetypes like the *Divine Child* or *Wounded Child* that recur across cultures [6]. More recent literary theorists, influenced by psychoanalysis, have applied frameworks from Freud and Lacan to decode the latent content of children's literature – for example, examining how narratives of childhood might express unconscious desires, fears, or conflicts in symbolic form [7]. At the same time, empirical and historical research on children's literature has classified recurring types of child characters. For instance, Frank Donovan's study of Charles Dickens's works identified categories such as the "little mother" (a child who behaves like a caretaker) and the street urchin, reflecting Victorian social realities [8]. Likewise, in Russian criticism, O. V. Lovtsova's taxonomy of child figures in modern British drama enumerates types ranging from innocent children-symbols to feral or victimized children on stage [9]. These prior classifications provide a foundation and point of comparison for our study.

It is important to note that the development of children's literature took a different course in non-Western traditions. In Kazakh literature, a distinct genre for children began to form in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Pioneering educators like Ybyrai Altynsarin wrote short stories and fables (e.g., "Bay balasy men zharly balasy" – *"The Rich Man's Son and the Poor Man's Son"*, 1886) to impart moral and practical lessons to Kazakh youth, effectively laying the groundwork for a national children's literature. During the Soviet era, Kazakh children's literature was institutionalized but also ideologically filtered – stories often idealized childhood under socialism and avoided portraying children suffering

from systemic social ills. Only in the post-Soviet period did Kazakh authors gain more freedom to explore realistic and psychologically nuanced depictions of children, including urban children facing new societal challenges. Thus, by the turn of the 21st century, Kazakh children's prose began engaging with themes like generational gaps, cultural identity in a changing world, and the effects of migration and urbanization on the young.

Despite these different backgrounds, a fruitful area of inquiry lies in comparing how modern Kazakh and English literatures each imagine the figure of the child. Both literatures have been grappling with the image of the urban child – a child growing up in a city environment, facing the conditions of modern life. How does the urban setting influence the portrayal of childhood in each culture? What typologies of child characters appear, and to what extent do they overlap or diverge between a Kazakh context and an English one?

Our analysis combined close reading of these literary texts with a comparative framework. Each text was read to identify how the central child character is portrayed, what role he or she plays in the story, and what challenges or relationships define them. These findings were then compared across the Kazakh and English sets: we looked for common patterns (e.g., the orphan hero appears in both) and differences (e.g., emphasis on family vs. individual themes). Throughout, we incorporated insights from secondary sources to inform our interpretation. For instance, V.S. Chalova's research on the emergence of children's literature in Great Britain provided historical context for the English works[2]. On the Kazakh side, we considered literary-historical commentary on post-Soviet Kazakh prose to understand how depictions of children might reflect broader social changes (e.g., urban migration, revival of Kazakh language and customs).

From the English literature side, we selected works with complementary themes and archetypes, spanning classic and contemporary children's fiction. For example, we examined Roald Dahl's popular novel *Matilda*[10] and David Walliams's bestseller *Gangsta Granny*[11], as representations of the misunderstood or independent child in a modern urban setting – in both stories, bright but misfit children find ways to outwit or bypass unappreciative adults. David Walliams's novel *Demon Dentist* was included for its portrayal of a boy who essentially becomes a child caregiver, looking after his ailing father in a working-class town and facing a villainous adult[12]. For the heroic or magical child archetype, we included two short fantasy tales by Joan Aiken[13] – "A Necklace of Raindrops" and "Bridget's Shoes" – from the collection *A Necklace of Raindrops*, which feature young girls in modern England who encounter magical objects and missions. As a classic point of reference for the *mischievous, adventurous child*, we considered Mark Twain's novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*[14], an iconic novel (though American, published in London in 1876) about a boy's antics in a small town – useful for drawing parallels to trickster-like child characters. Additionally, although our focus is on literature intended for children, we drew on insights from modern British drama identified by O. V. Lovtsova[9]: for instance, plays by Mark Ravenhill that feature streetwise or *feral children* surviving without adult care, which, while not children's literature per se, starkly highlight societal views of abandoned youth in urban Britain.

2. Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative, comparative literary analysis to explore the portrayal of children in modern Kazakh and English children's literature, with a focus on urban child characters. Our research is grounded in a close reading methodology, which involves detailed textual analysis of selected literary works to identify themes, character typologies, and narrative roles attributed to child protagonists.

The primary materials consist of a curated selection of children's literary texts from both Kazakh and English traditions. The Kazakh texts include post-Soviet children's prose reflecting contemporary societal changes such as urbanization, migration, and cultural identity. The English texts range from classic to contemporary works, chosen for their thematic relevance and representation of child archetypes in urban settings. Notable English works analyzed include Roald Dahl's *Matilda*, David Walliams's *Gangsta Granny* and Demon Dentist, Joan Aiken's short fantasy tales, and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, among others. Additionally, insights from modern British drama featuring child characters (as identified by O. V. Lovtsova) supplement the analysis, highlighting alternative portrayals of childhood in urban contexts.

Our approach integrates comparative frameworks by examining similarities and differences in how the child figure is constructed across these two literary cultures. We analyzed the narrative functions, psychological depth, and sociocultural contexts of the child characters, informed by secondary sources including historical overviews of the development of children's literature and psychoanalytic literary criticism. Historical and cultural backgrounds were considered to contextualize the emergence and evolution of children's literature in both Western and Kazakh traditions.

Secondary literature includes key scholarly works such as Philippe Ariès's theory on the social construction of childhood, studies on Victorian children's literature, and recent research on Kazakh children's prose. These sources provided critical frameworks and background knowledge, enriching the interpretative process.

The study does not involve empirical data collection or experimental procedures; rather, it relies on interpretative literary methods rooted in humanities scholarship.

3. Results

Typology of Child Characters in Kazakh and English Literature: Through our analysis, we identified several recurring types of child characters in modern Kazakh and English narratives. These can be considered archetypal images of the child, manifesting with specific cultural inflections. The major categories are summarized in **Table 1**, along with representative examples from each corpus.

Table 1. Archetypal Categories of Child Characters in Modern Kazakh and English Literature.

Child Character Type (Archetype).	**Kazakh Literature – Examples (Urban Context).**	**English Literature – Examples (Urban Context).**
Orphaned/Abandoned Child ("Wounded Child" archetype).	– Usen in Y. Altynsarin's "Bay balasy men zharly balasy" (1886); – Wartime orphans in S. Begalin's "Biz osynday öskembiz" (1983).	– Oliver Twist in Charles Dickens's "Oliver Twist" (1837-39); – Abandoned kids in Mark Ravenhill's "Totally Over You" (2003).
Prematurely Adult Child ("Little Adult" or Child-Caregiver archetype).	– Altynai in T. Abdrayim's "Bír üzym nan" (2012); – Kabyltai in Y. Zhenisuly's "Qabyltaiýdyñ jañalyğy" (2012).	– Ben in David Walliams's "Gangsta Granny" (2011); – Alfie in Walliams's "Demon Dentist" (2013).
Misunderstood or Alienated Child ("Child vs. Adult World" archetype).	– Yerzhan in S. Ospanov's "Sälem berdik, äje" (~1980s); – The unnamed "strange girl" in T. Zhetkegenov's "Keşirim" (2012).	– Matilda Wormwood in Roald Dahl's "Matilda" (1988); – Ben in "Gangsta Granny" (2011).
Brave Hero(ine) / "Batyr-bala" (Child-as-Savior archetype).	– Saira in A. Omirbaev's "Kitapqúmar Saira" (2016); – Akezhan in A. Tabyldy's "Äjeniñ quanyşy" (2012).	– Laura in Joan Aiken's "A Necklace of Raindrops" (1968); – Bridget in Aiken's "Bridget's Shoes" (1968).
Mischievous/Trickster Child ("Rebel" or "Trickster" archetype).	– Askhat in T. Abdrayim's "Asqat qalai túzeldi?" (2012); – Zhandos in T. Abdrayim's "Doñğalaq qalai jaryldy?" (2012).	– Tom Sawyer in Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" (1876); – Stacy and Jack in Mark Ravenhill's "Scenes from Family Life" (2000).
Child Guided by Elders ("Traditional/Communal Child" archetype).	– Yerzhan in "Hello, Grandmother!" (Ospanov); – Akezhan in "Grandmother's Joy" (Tabyldy).	– Jim Hawkins in R. L. Stevenson's "Treasure Island" (1883); – Lyra Belacqua in Philip Pullman's "His Dark Materials" trilogy (1995–2000).

(Sources: the literary works referenced above are detailed in the References section. Original titles in Kazakh are transliterated, with English translations provided).

From **Table 1** and our close readings of the texts, it is evident that both Kazakh and English literature feature a rich spectrum of child character types. Several archetypal images appear in both traditions, even though they arise from different historical circumstances. Notably, the Orphan/Abandoned Child and the Prematurely Adult Child (a child forced to grow up too fast) are prominent figures in each corpus. In Kazakh narratives, an orphaned or neglected child often reflects social upheavals (e.g., orphaned by war or by parental migration for work), and the community's response to such a child is a thematic focus (compassion or regret for failing the child). In English works, the orphan archetype – from Dickens's *Oliver Twist* to more recent fantasy orphans like Harry Potter (not in our core list but an

influential example) – has long been used to critique social injustice or simply to remove adult protection so that the child character can embark on adventures. Likewise, the figure of a child who behaves like a little adult, whether due to poverty, illness in the family, or war, surfaces in both literatures: Kazakh stories of the 1990s–2000s frequently depict children taking on adult responsibilities in the wake of socioeconomic hardships (a legacy perhaps, of the harsh 1990s transition period), whereas English narratives might frame the "parentified" child either tragically (as a child caregiver in a difficult home situation) or humorously (as in some of Walliams's novels where kids end up outsmarting inept adults).

Other types clearly common to both are the Misunderstood/Alienated Child – children who do not fit the expectations of the adult world around them – and the Mischievous Trickster, who challenges rules. The misunderstood child theme appears in Kazakh tales where generational or cultural gaps cause friction (e.g., a child more fluent in Russian than Kazakh, or pursuing intellectual interests that parents do not grasp) and in English stories like *Matilda,* where the child's special talents conflict with adult authority. The trickster or "naughty" child, on the other hand, tends to be portrayed somewhat differently: in English literature, mischievous children like Tom Sawyer or Pippi Longstocking (to add a Scandinavian example) are often celebrated as embodiments of childhood freedom and creativity, whereas in Kazakh stories, a prankster like Askhat is typically corrected and guided back to proper behavior by thestory's end – reflecting a cultural preference for respectful conduct and communal harmony over individual cheekiness.

It is interesting to note that heroic child figures – those who perform brave deeds – are found in both literatures, but usually in different narrative modes. Kazakh hero-children often enact moral heroism or family-oriented bravery (e.g., enduring hardship, helping elders, defending siblings), aligning with real-life virtues. English hero-children frequently appear in the context of fantasy or adventure, slaying metaphorical dragons or saving the world in imaginative settings. Yet, at the core, both are variations of the age-old "child as savior" archetype, which might fulfill a psychological need to see hope and agency in the young.

In sum, our typology confirms a set of shared archetypal roles for child characters across Kazakh and English storytelling: the vulnerable orphan, the child burdened with adult duties, the misunderstood outsider, the courageous little hero, and the impish rule-breaker. These correspond to enduring archetypes (the orphan, the wise child, the hero, the trickster) found in world literature and folklore. Their recurrence in both cultures suggests that authors, despite different backgrounds, draw from a common well of narrative possibilities when writing about children. This observation aligns with Jungian theory, which hold that certain archetypal figures (such as the Divine Child or Trickster) reside in the collective unconscious of humanity and continue to re-emerge in our creative works[6].

However, beyond these overlaps, we also observed significant divergences and unique inflections in how these child types are portrayed, which can be attributed to cultural and historical differences between the Kazakh and English contexts. We discuss these in detail in the next section.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight a profound interplay between universal archetypes of childhood and culture-specific narrative priorities in Kazakh and English children's literature. By examining the typology of child characters through both a comparative literary lens and a psychoanalytic lens, we can address broader questions: What do these patterns tell us about Kazakh and English cultural values? How has the image of the child in literature evolved to reflect modern realities? And how do concepts from psychology and psychoanalysis enhance our understanding of these literary children?

One striking result is the degree to which many child character types appear in both literatures, suggesting a core of shared storytelling motifs about childhood. This speaks to an underlying universality – certain challenges of growing up, or narrative roles that children fill, seem to transcend any one culture. The prevalence of the orphaned or abandoned child figure, for instance, aligns with a near-universal narrative archetype of the Orphan Hero or "wounded child" who must navigate life without parental protection. In world folklore and literature, the orphan often symbolizes both vulnerability and latent strength. In our study, *Oliver Twist* in industrial Victorian England and the war orphans in Begalin's Kazakh village story play analogous roles as innocent victims of cir-

cumstance, evoking the reader's sympathy and moral outrage at social ills. Both Dickens and Begalin use the orphan child to critique the failures of adult society – be it the workhouse and criminal underworld of London, or the ravages of war and poverty on the steppe – and to elicit compassion. This indicates that the collective unconscious (in Jung's sense) provides a reservoir of archetypal images that storytellers across cultures draw upon when grappling with childhood's extreme vulnerabilities and hopes. Indeed, Jung observed that the child archetype often emerges in times of social crisis as a symbol of future potential and renewal, precisely because it carries the dual image of weakness and resilience. The orphan embodies this duality: deeply hurt by abandonment yet often destined (in fiction) for some form of redemption or triumph, whether spiritual or material. The fact that an orphan child like *Oliver Twist* and an orphaned Kazakh village boy can serve similar narrative purposes despite the vastly different settings suggests that certain emotional responses to the image of the forsaken child are deeply human rather than strictly culture-bound.

Similarly, the prematurely adult child archetype – children who shoulder adult burdens – appears in both contexts as a response to socioeconomic disruptions. In English literature, examples range from 19th-century factory girls or chimney sweeps to modern portrayals like Walliams's Alfie caring for his father. In Kazakh literature, we see this archetype in post–1990s settings where, for example, a girl like Altynai scavenges for bread because the social safety nets have frayed. In both cases, the child's early assumption of responsibility highlights a breakdown in the normal order (parents or society failing to provide), but also showcases the child's potential for agency and endurance. There is an almost archetypal image of the "young Atlas" – a child carrying the weight of the world on small shoulders. Psychologically, these stories may resonate with readers because they dramatize a scenario that is both heart-rending and inspiring: the loss of childhood innocence and the forging of extraordinary inner strength. Notably, such characters often invite a mixed response in readers – admiration for the child's competence and sadness for the lost childhood. This too seems universal.

The misunderstood or alienated child is another recurring figure that reflects a fundamental adult-child tension: the conflict between conformity and individual expression. A gifted or unusual child like Matilda, who is stifled by ignorant adults, or a quiet, artistic girl in a Kazakh story whose parents think she is just misbehaving, both illustrate the classic generation gap in microcosm. Universally, adults often struggle to understand the inner worlds of children, and literature captures this friction. These overlaps suggest that, despite cultural differences, authors in both Kazakhstan and the English-speaking world are drawn to certain narrative paradigms when writing about children – paradigms rooted in common human experiences (loss, growth, rebellion, etc.) and perhaps in what developmental psychologists like Erik Erikson identified as universal stages or conflicts of childhood (for example, the struggle between industry and inferiority for the over-responsible child, or between autonomy and shame for the naughty child) [15].

It is worth mentioning that the mischievous/trickster child and the brave child hero are archetypes found in storytelling traditions worldwide (think of trickster figures like Till Eulenspiegel in European tales or Aldar Kose in Kazakh folklore, and brave child heroes from fairy tales). Our findings reaffirm that modern narratives continue to reinvent these archetypes. A child's mischief can be a source of comic relief and subversive wisdom – Tom Sawyer's antics or the pranks of Askhat, ultimately reveal truths about creativity and the need for guidance. The brave child hero, on the other hand, fulfills an aspirational role: children (and adults) reading such stories can identify with an empowered figure of youthful bravery. Even when set in different contexts – a fantastical quest in Aiken's story versus a realistic act of courage by Saira in a school – the core idea is a child who saves the day, embodying hope for the future. This, too, is a nearly universal motif, reflective of what Jung called the "Divine Child" archetype, symbolizing new beginnings and the reconciliation of opposites. The child hero often represents the idea that purity and courage (attributes traditionally ascribed to the young) can triumph over evil or adversity, a comforting narrative that transcends borders.

In light of these cross-cultural commonalities, one might ask: are the children in these stories essentially the same underneath, whether they live in Leeds or Almaty? To a degree, the answer is yes – they tap into shared human feelings about childhood. For example, an orphan will likely move readers to pity and an instinct to protect, whether the orphan speaks Kazakh or English. This is where we might invoke Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy: the face of the vulner-

able Other (here, the orphaned child) ethically commands our response[16]. Literature worldwide leverages this by putting a suffering child's "face" before the audience, obliging us to care. Dickens mastered this technique with characters like *Oliver* or *Little Nell*; Kazakh writers, too, when portraying a hungry or lonely child, call upon the reader's basic empathy and sense of justice. Levinas's concept underscores that, beyond culture, the encounter with the helplessness of a child is immediately ethical – and authors intuitively use that to make moral appeals through their stories.

In sum, the universal child in literature – whether orphan, hero, or trickster – speaks to something fundamentally human. These archetypes endure because each generation finds meaning in them: they address primal fears (losing parents, being unloved), fantasies (being powerful, defeating monsters), and conflicts (obeying vs. expressing oneself) inherent to growing up. Our comparative study reaffirms this universality by showing how similar child images populate both Kazakh and English narratives, even when those narratives developed in isolation from each other.

Alongside the universals, our comparative approach uncovered clear divergences that reflect each culture's unique vision of what childhood should be and what values a child character ought to embody. These differences emerge in the tone, outcomes, and emphases of the child-centric stories.

In Kazakh literature, the ideal child is often ultimately one who contributes to family and community and upholds communal values. Narratives tend to reward qualities like respect for elders, humility, diligence, and the preservation of cultural traditions. Even when a Kazakh story starts with a problematic child – a troublemaker or a very individualistic kid – it typically ends with that child's reintegration into the family or community harmony. For example, in *News of Kabyltai*, Kabyltai's intense focus on mathematics is portrayed with some ambiguity: on one hand, it isolates him from playing with peers (a hint of concern), but on the other hand, it is framed as something that will benefit society (he is on track to become an educated asset for the nation's future). The didactic subtext is that personal talent gains its highest value when put to communal service. Many of the Kazakh tales prominently feature grandparents or senior family members guiding the child, which shows that the narrative imagination situates the child within a family –communal matrix. Growing up is depicted not as a journey of individual self-discovery so much as a process of learning from elders and finding one's respected place in the collective. This corresponds with deeply ingrained Kazakh cultural values of solidarity and reverence for elders (*ata-anağa qúrmet* – honoring one's parents and grandparents). A story like *Hello, Grandmother!* is emblematic: the resolution comes through the grandmother's affectionate intervention, and the boy's redemption is measured by his restored obedience and warmth within the family circle.

Moreover, Kazakh children's narratives often explicitly tie child characters to the idea of cultural continuity. A child frequently symbolizes the future of the nation or the carrier of tradition. For instance, in Abdrayim's *"Qyryq myŋ teñge*," the subplot of a city boy re-learning his forgotten Kazakh language (after being educated primarily in Russian) serves as an allegory for the post-Soviet generation reclaiming cultural heritage[17]. The child here stands for the hope that traditional language and values will survive modernization. In this sense, even an ostensibly personal story acquires a nationalistic or collective significance. The child is not just an individual; he or she is a link in the chain of generational transmission. The prominence of scenarios where children care for elders (like bringing joy to a grandmother) or perform duties for the family underscores an ideal of interdependence between young and old. Childhood, in the Kazakh literary vision, is seldom entirely autonomous – it is embedded in social relations and defined by responsibilities as much as rights.

In contrast, English children's literature – particularly in its modern incarnation – tends to foreground the individual child as an agent of change or as a figure on a journey of self-discovery. The child protagonist is often characterized as an independent thinker or adventurer who breaks away from home and convention, at least temporarily. Whether literally – as in portal fantasies where children travel to other worlds – or figuratively – as in realistic stories where children reject adult hypocrisy (a common theme in Roald Dahl's works) – the narrative celebrates the child's separation from the mundane rules of adults. This reflects Anglo-American cultural emphases on individualism, personal freedom, and the romantic notion (since the time of Wordsworth) of childhood innocence and imagination as sources of societal renewal. For example, in *Matilda*, the heroine's liberation comes through discovering her own powers and finding a like-minded adult

(Miss Honey) who enables her emancipation from her brutish parents. The story valorizes intellectual independence and even shows the child choosing a new family – a very individual choice. Many English tales, from *Peter Pan* to *The Chronicles of Narnia* to contemporary realistic fiction, involve children escaping – into adventure, into fantasy, or into their own creativity-thereby implicitly critiquing the limitations of the adult world. While Kazakh stories might resolve with a child accepting communal norms, English stories often end with adults acknowledging the child's qualities or the child carving out a unique place.

Another divergence lies in the use of fantasy and imaginative elements. English children's literature has a strong tradition of fantasy (talking animals, magical adventures, imaginary worlds), which serves as a vehicle for children to explore fears and desires beyond ordinary constraints. For instance, the magical scenarios in Aiken's stories allow child characters to be true heroes in a way reality might not permit – Laura can literally change the weather with her necklace, something unthinkable in real life, but symbolically it empowers a young girl. In Kazakh children's literature, fantastical elements have been less prominent (though not entirely absent – Kazakh folklore is rich in fantasy, but modern children's prose has tended toward realistic or mildly fantastical scenarios). The emphasis is more on realistic scenarios that teach morals or explore social issues. This means an English child protagonist might fight dragons or outwit witches, whereas a Kazakh child protagonist is more likely to face a bully at school, a stern teacher, or a moral dilemma in the family. Consequently, the imaginative latitude granted to child characters differs: English literature often gives children a separate imaginative sphere where they rule (*Neverland, Wonderland*, etc.), reinforcing the idea of the child's mind as a realm of freedom; Kazakh literature, shaped by a history of oral storytelling that often had moral or didactic aims, keeps the child firmly in the real world, learning to navigate actual social structures.

Jacqueline Rose's critique of English children's fiction is pertinent here: she argued that such fiction frequently projects adult fantasies of innocence or power onto the child character[4]. Indeed, one could say the adventurous, autonomous child of English stories is an idealized construct – the child as the adult *wishes* they could be (free, untainted, powerful in a pure way). By contrast, Kazakh child characters, who often end up reaffirming adult values, might represent an adult wish for obedient and culturally rooted children. In each case, the child in literature is, to some extent, a product of adult imagination – but what is imagined differs. The English imaginary child is the rebel or savior who justifies individualistic ideals; the Kazakh imaginary child is the diligent, adaptive youth who validates collective continuity.

Furthermore, the resolution of conflict in these narratives tends to diverge. In Kazakh stories, if a child errs or is at odds with society, the resolution usually involves the child recognizing their mistake or an adult finally guiding them correctly (for instance, Askhat reforms his naughty behavior after community elders intervene). There is a return to order and an implicit affirmation of traditional values. In English children's stories, the resolution might instead involve the adults changing their perspective (*Matilda*'s cruel headmistress is vanquished and her kind teacher is empowered) or simply the child gaining independence (as in adventure tales where the child returns home having grown, but also having proven themselves). Thus, English narratives often conclude with the empowerment or vindication of the child's viewpoint, whereas Kazakh narratives conclude with the integration of the child into the existing social fabric (or the improvement of that fabric, e.g. by softening a strict father's heart through a grandmother's mediation).

We should note that these are general trends and not absolute rules – English literature certainly has communal-minded child heroes (e.g., the Pevensie siblings in *Narnia* become monarchs who bring peace to a community) and Kazakh literature can celebrate individual heroism (especially in legends or historical fictions). However, the weight of emphasis is different. These tendencies align with broader cultural narratives: Anglo-American culture valorizes the individual hero's journey, while Kazakh culture (inherited partly from Turkic nomadic tradition and Soviet collectivism) valorizes the collective journey and familial bonds.

Our comparative perspective also sheds light on how social and historical circumstances shape literary children. For instance, the experience of urbanization and migration in Kazakhstan (rural families moving to the city, cultural dislocation in the 1990s) has given rise to stories about children who act as cultural bridges – for example, children relearning traditions or language in a city context. English urban

children's literature, on the other hand, might deal more with multiculturalism or class diversity in cities (stories of immigrant children in London, etc., though our chosen texts did not emphasize this). We included no specific story of a migrant or refugee child in the English corpus, but that is another emerging archetype in Western children's literture (e.g., refugee child protagonists). In Kazakh literature, the "marginal" child could be one left behind by migrant labor or living in an urban periphery (topics which are just starting to be explored). These are areas where further research could identify new typologies (e.g., *The Migrant Child*, *The Street Child*) that may not yet be prominent in the texts we examined but are part of the socio-literary landscape.

To illustrate the cultural contrast in a visual way, consider **Figure 1**, which presents a Venn diagram of overlapping and distinct child character types in the two literatures. The shared middle area includes the archetypes we found in both (orphan, precocious caregiver, misunderstood child, brave hero, and trickster), while the side areas indicate those more emphasized or unique to one side (e.g., "child guided by elders" for Kazakh versus "independent adventurer" for English):

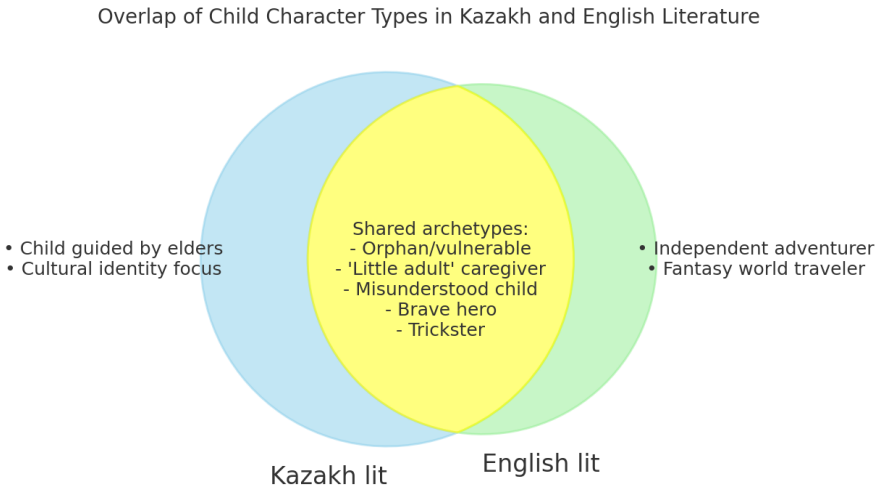

Figure 1. Overlap of Child Character Types in Kazakh and English Literature.

The diagram highlights shared archetypal figures (center) and those receiving special emphasis in one culture more than the other (sides).

In summary, cultural divergences manifest in how child characters are used in stories. Kazakh literature often uses children to express collective hopes (the child as bearer of the nation's future or family honor) and to reinforce social unity, whereas English literature more often uses children to challenge the status quo or to indulge the fantasy of an independent innocent realm. These differences are reflective of each society's educational philosophies, family structures, and historical narratives. They underscore that while childhood may be universal in biological terms, childhood as a cultural idea can vary greatly – and literature is one arena where these ideas are encoded and propagated.

While the comparative analysis above deals with narrative patterns and cultural context, a psychoanalytic perspective allows us to probe the inner dimensions and symbolic functions of these child character types. Modern psychoanalytic theorists provide concepts that help explain why these archetypes have the emotional impact they do, and what unconscious dynamics might be at play in the stories. Here we integrate insights from Melanie Klein, Wilfred Bion, Jacques Lacan, and others to deepen our understanding of the typology.

Firstly, Melanie Klein's[18] object-relations theory suggests that even very young children experience the world in terms of internalized relationships (objects) that can be split into idealized "good figures" and frightening "bad figures"[18]. Applying this to literature, many children's stories externalize a child's internal world by populating the narrative with benevolent caretakers and malevolent adults. For example, in *Hello, Grandmother!*[19], one could interpret Yerzhan's father and grandmother as a dichotomy of the

"bad object" (harsh, punitive father) and "good object" (nurturing, forgiving grandmother) from the child's perspective. The story's emotional resonance comes from the child's oscillation between fear and trust, much like a real child's inner conflict when dealing with love and anger toward parents. Klein would likely point out that the grandmother in the story helps the child overcome anxiety and guilt – a process akin to what she called *reparation*, where the child tries to restore the loved object (the relationship with a caregiver) after experiencing destructive feelings. Indeed, after being rescued by his grandmother, Yerzhan in the story is contrite and behaves better, which symbolically could represent the child's relief in restoring the "good" caretaking object in his inner world. In English tales, we see similar splits: Matilda's parents and Miss Trunchbull are caricatured "bad" parents/teachers, whereas Miss Honey is the ideal "good" mother figure. Such stark contrasts, while stylized, reflect a child's tendency (especially as described by Klein in early childhood) to see things in black-and-white terms before integrating these perceptions. The presence of extreme villains and angelic guardians in children's literature might thus be explained by Klein's theory as gratifying the child (and reader's) unconscious need for clear good and bad figures that help them process ambivalent feelings.

Klein also emphasized the role of play and fantasy as the child's mode of coping with reality. In our typology, the mischievous/trickster child can be seen as an embodiment of the child's *id* – the part that seeks pleasure, novelty, and defies rules (to use Freud's terminology, though Klein would add that even naughtiness can be a way to test the love of the caregiver). When literature indulges in the adventures of a naughty child (like Tom Sawyer conning his friends or Zhandos getting into scrapes), it might be tapping into the reader's inner child's desire to break free, which, in psychoanalytic terms is a safe "play" enactment of rebellion. The fact that such stories often end with a return to order (Tom Sawyer ultimately isn't banished; Askhat reforms) corresponds to the integration of the *id* with the ego/superego – fun and impulse are acceptable up to a point but must be balanced by conscience. Thus, these narratives could be seen as working through that psychological balance in symbolic form.

Turning to Wilfred Bion's concept of containment [20], Bion described how a mother (or primary caregiver) psychologically contains a child's unbearable feelings – the baby's fear or pain is "held" by the mother's psyche, processed, and returned in a tolerable form. We see literary echoes of this in how adult mentors function in the stories. In Kazakh literature, the grandmother figure frequently acts as a container for the child's distress. In *Hello, Grandmother!*, the boy's emotional turmoil (shame, fear of his father) is absorbed by the grandmother who stays calm and loving; she "digests" the situation and returns to him comfort and guidance, allowing him to feel safe again. This mirrors Bion's container–contained dynamic. Similarly, in English examples, Miss Honey in *Matilda* provides a kind of containment for Matilda's anger and hurt – she understands Matilda's frustrations and validates them, which helps Matilda not to be overwhelmed by hatred for her oppressors. We can also view the act of storytelling itself as a form of containment: authors create narratives that take chaotic experiences (like war, poverty, conflict) and give them shape and meaning through a child's perspective, potentially helping young readers symbolically master those anxieties. For instance, Begalin's portrayal of wartime orphans working diligently while feeling the pang of lost childhood is a containment of the trauma of war within a narrative that also imparts pride and meaning (the children's sacrifice is for a greater good). So literature functions almost therapeutically, similar to how a play therapist might let a child act out scenarios to process feelings.

Jacques Lacan's theories offer another layer, particularly his idea of the child's identity being constituted through the desire of the Other. In our analysis, the character of Kabyltai – the math-obsessed boy – was illuminated by Lacan's notion that a child can become a "symptom" of parental or societal desire. Kabyltai's zeal can be read as internalizing the *Big Other*'s expectations (parents' or teachers' ambitions for him to excel academically). He is, in Lacanian terms, caught in the desire of the Other [7] – he seeks recognition from authority figures, which drives him to overachieve in an almost compulsive manner. The latent tension here is that his "success" is not entirely his own desire – it is a response to what he perceives others want of him. Lacan might say Kabyltai is trying to fulfill the symbolic mandate (be the model student) to gain the love that comes with it. This dynamic is common: many child characters who strive to be *perfect* (whether it's the dutiful child or the child prodigy) can be psychoanalytically viewed as trying to compensate for a lack – a fear of not being loved unless they perform. We

see analogous patterns in English stories too: while English lit often celebrates the rebellious child, there are also examples like children in boarding school stories or competitive contexts who feel only as good as their achievements. In our English examples, perhaps Alfie from *Demon Dentist* doesn't explicitly seek a parent's approval (since his father already loves him), but he takes on the caregiver role because of love – he is fulfilling what he thinks is needed of him, essentially parentifying himself. Lacan's perspective would note how the child's identity (caretaker, in Alfie's case) is formed in relation to the Other's lack (the father's incapacity).

Another Lacanian concept, the "mirror stage," where a child forms its ego by identifying with an external image, can metaphorically apply to how child readers might identify with heroic child characters as idealized images of themselves. For example, an English child reading about Harry Potter may cathect that image as an ideal ego (powerful, special) in contrast to feeling ordinary in real life. Authors may consciously or unconsciously provide such mirror-stage gratification – which ties back to Rose's argument that children's literature often deals in idealized images.

Now, considering Emmanuel Levinas's ethical philosophy[16], (though not a psychoanalyst, his ideas complement our discussion), Levinas proposed that encountering the face of "the Other," especially the vulnerable other, is a foundational ethical summons that precedes any formal morality[16]. In literature, the trope of the suffering child (the orphan, the abused child, etc.) can be seen as an embodiment of the Other who must be cared for. Readers are almost compelled to respond with an ethical judgment – for example, "This is wrong, someone must help this child!" Many socially conscious narratives (like Dickens's) rely on this effect. In Kazakh literature, depicting a dutiful child caring for elders or siblings might evoke a slightly different ethical response – admiration and a sense of responsibility toward that child, suggesting that such a good child deserves support. In either case, the child character functions as an ethical mirror to the adult world. Levinas would perhaps suggest that the child in these stories represents pure alterity (otherness) in need of care, reminding characters and readers of their responsibility. For instance, in one of our examples from Kazakh literature, when a grandmother cares for a child, she is responding to the child's vulnerability with absolute responsibility, which is an ethical ideal. Likewise, when society fails an orphan, it's portrayed as a profound ethical failure. Thus, beyond psychology, the portrayal of children often carries a moral weight – it judges the society by how child is treated. This is evident cross-culturally: a happy, nurtured child signifies a just and loving community; a suffering, corrupted child signals societal breakdown.

Finally, Donald Winnicott's concept of the "transitional object" and the importance of play offer insight into the imaginative aspects of these narratives[21]. Winnicott observed that children create a "transitional space" of play and imagination where reality and fantasy blend – this is crucial for healthy emotional development. In literature, elements like Matilda's books, Laura's magical necklace, or even a simple treasured item a Kazakh child might carry (e.g., a dombra or a toy) can be seen as transitional objects that help the child cope with reality. Matilda's imagination (and her telekinetic power in the story) can be interpreted as a transitional phenomenon – it's a product of her mind that helps her endure a harsh reality and eventually change it.

The prevalence of toys, pets, or magical items in children's stories (think of the omnipresence of beloved toy characters from *Winnie-the-Pooh* to plush animals in Kazakh lullabies) speaks to the role of such objects in providing comfort and a bridge between self and world. One could argue that literature itself acts as a transitional space for the child reader: it is a safe imaginary realm where serious issues can be explored one step removed from reality. As Bettelheim argues, fairy tales and fantasy literature help children externalize and process inner conflicts in symbolic form[22]. The story of Saira locked in a library, for instance, has a dual function: within the tale, Saira's beloved books are her solace (a Winnicottian reading of books as transitional objects – they connect her to a world of imagination that sustains her in a frightening situation). For the reader, Saira's adventure may serve to work through the fear of being trapped or alone, with the comforting knowledge that it's just a story.

Winnicott would emphasize how crucial this intermediate sphere is – and children's literature is arguably a cultural extension of that sphere, where societies collectively "play" through stories about children to negotiate anxieties. Similarly, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's notion of childhood as a sacred, imaginative period of growth informs much of modern children's literature, which often protects the autonomy of the child's world from adult interference[23]. In the context of

our typology, we can see each archetype carrying psychological symbolism: the orphan allows exploration of attachment and abandonment; the little adult child highlights the burden of introjection of adult roles; the trickster enacts the id's desires; the hero externalizes the ego ideal; the misunderstood child dramatizes individuation and identity formation. The enduring popularity of these types could be because they speak to unconscious developmental themes in the readership (both child and adult readers). Adults write these stories perhaps to resolve something of their own childhood, and children read them as rehearsal for their own growing up.

By bringing psychoanalytic insights to the typology, we avoid treating these character types as mere surface tropes. Instead, we recognize them as expressions of the child's inner world and the adult society's unconscious attitudes toward childhood. For example, the contrast we noted earlier – English literature's more celebratory stance toward child rebellion vs. Kazakh literature's emphasis on respectful behavior – can be psychoanalytically understood as different resolutions of the Oedipal conflict (broadly speaking). In one, the child successfully challenges or escapes authority (overcoming the "father" figure in a sense), whereas in the other, the child eventually reconciles with authority (identifying with the norms of the parents). Each resolution has psychological merit; they just reflect differing cultural superegos, perhaps.

Moreover, Julia Kristeva's theory of the semiotic chora suggests that literature allows a return to pre-linguistic, emotional rhythms of the maternal space, which aligns closely with the idea of a transitional realm in narrative form [24]. From a broader cultural standpoint, Jack Zipes contends that fairy tales and children's stories often serve as tools of both resistance and socialization – mediating between the child's individual psyche and collective norms [25]. Overall, integrating modern psychoanalytic and philosophical perspectives reinforces that the "child" in literature is a symbol loaded with many layers – emotional, social, ethical. Our typology gains depth by acknowledging that these child characters are not just narrative functions but also representations of parts of the psyche and moral conscience.

5. Conclisions

By comparing narratives from Kazakh and English literary traditions, this study identified recurrent archetypes of child characters – such as the orphan, the prematurely adult child, the misunderstood outsider, the hero, and the trickster – that reflect universal motifs in depictions of childhood. These images, while grounded in shared human experience, are inflected by national values: Kazakh literature tends to foreground communal responsibility, respect for elders, and cultural continuity, whereas English texts privilege individualism, imagination, and autonomy.

Psychoanalytic perspectives (Klein, Bion, Lacan, and Levinas) offered deeper insight into the symbolic and ethical dimensions of these archetypes, revealing how they encode psychological conflict and moral appeal. For example, the prematurely adult child emerges as both a socio-historical response and a psychological adaptation to unfulfilled emotional needs.

This typology contributes to comparative literary scholarship by offering a framework that integrates cultural analysis with psychological interpretation. The inclusion of Kazakh literature – largely absent from global discourse – underscores the necessity of expanding beyond Anglophone paradigms in children's literature studies. Moreover, our use of tabular and visual summaries serves not only analytical but pedagogical functions.

Far from being simplistic, representations of children in literature operate across ideological, emotional, and ethical registers. They reflect how societies envision childhood, whether as a site of compliance, resistance, hope, or transformation. By analyzing these representations, we illuminate not only how childhood is constructed in narrative, but also how each culture projects its future through the figure of the child.

Author Contributions

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