

CHILD CONSCIOUSNESS AS A NARRATIVE PRINCIPLE IN THE WORKS OF PAVEL SANAEV AND KHUDOYBERDI TOKHTABOYEV

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Abstract

The article examines child and adolescent consciousness as a structuring principle of narration in Pavel Sanaev's *Bury Me Behind the Baseboard* and Khudoyberdi Tokhtaboyev's *Do Not Throw Stones at a Girl*. Using comparative-typological and narratological approaches, it identifies two models of representing childhood: a confessional-memoir model based on internal focalization and a dialogic-scenic model that reveals personality through action, collective speech, and social judgment. Both models affirm the young character as an autonomous subject, while differing in the scale of conflict, spatial organization, and the narrative functions of humor.

Keywords: Childhood, adolescent consciousness, literary representation, narrative, focalization, dialogism, psychologism, comparative-typological analysis, Pavel Sanaev, Khudoyberdi Tokhtaboyev.

Introduction

Аннотация

В статье исследуется детское и подростковое сознание как структурообразующий принцип повествования в произведениях П. Санаева «Похороните меня за плинтусом» и Х. Тухтабаева «Не бросайте камни в девочку». На основе сравнительно-типологического и нарратологического подходов выявляются две модели художественной репрезентации детства: исповедально-мемуарная, основанная на внутренней фокализации, и диалогически-сценическая, раскрывающая личность через поступок, коллективную речь и общественную оценку. Установлено, что обе модели утверждают самостоятельность юного субъекта, но различаются масштабом конфликта, пространственной организацией и функциями юмора.

Ключевые слова: детство, подростковое сознание, репрезентация, нарратив, фокализация, диалогизм, психологизм, сравнительно-типологический анализ, П. Санаев, Х. Тухтабаев

Annotatsiya

Maqolada P. Sanayevning «Meni plintus ortiga ko‘ming» hamda X. To‘xtaboyevning «Qiz bolaga tosh otman» asarlarida bolalar va o‘smirlar ongi hikoya tuzilishini belgilovchi tamoyil sifatida tadqiq etiladi. Qiyosiy-tipologik va narratologik yondashuvlar asosida bolalikni badiiy ifodalashning ikki modeli aniqlanadi: ichki fokalizatsiyaga tayangan iqroriy-xotiraviy model va shaxsni xatti-harakat, jamoaviy nutq hamda ijtimoiy baho orqali ochuvchi dialogik-sahnaviy model. Har ikki model yosh qahramonning mustaqil subyektligini tasdiqlaydi, biroq ziddiyat ko‘lami, makon tuzilishi va yumorning vazifasi bilan farqlanadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: bolalik, o‘smirlik ongi, badiiy representatsiya, narrativ, fokalizatsiya, dialogizm, psixologizm, qiyosiy-tipologik tahlil, P. Sanayev, X. To‘xtaboyev

Introduction

Contemporary scholarship on childhood in literature must address not only what a work says about children, but also how it organizes a specifically young consciousness. A child or adolescent is significant not merely as an object of education but as the bearer of a distinctive perspective: causal links are formed differently, adult speech is heard with unusual intensity, and domestic or social space is experienced through dependence and expectation. The literary representation of childhood is therefore revealed through narrative perspective, focalization, the distribution of voices, and the relationship between inward experience and outward action. Pavel Sanaev's *Bury Me Behind the Baseboard* and Khudoyberdi Tokhtaboyev's *Do Not Throw Stones at a Girl* present different age-related and cultural forms of young consciousness. Sanaev depicts a child confined within an emotionally closed family world, whereas Tokhtaboyev portrays a young woman approaching adulthood through work, ethical choice, and public relationships. Their comparison reveals a typological affinity not at the level of plot but in the artistic function of the protagonist: in both works, the young character tests the norms of the adult world and exposes their internal contradictions.

The purpose of this article is to determine how child and adolescent consciousness shapes the narrative structure of the two works. The study combines comparative-typological, narratological, and hermeneutic methods. Its novelty lies in bringing Sanaev's confessional-memoir model into dialogue with Tokhtaboyev's dialogic-scenic model and interpreting them as two ways of transforming a young protagonist from an object of representation into an autonomous subject of literary meaning.

The Confessional Model of Child Consciousness in Sanaev

In *Bury Me Behind the Baseboard*, narration is organized from within Sasha Savelyev's experience. The first-person form produces the effect of direct testimony, yet the retrospective work of an adult memory remains perceptible behind the child's voice. This creates a double

perspective: the protagonist cannot fully rationalize the conduct of the adults around him, while the retrospective narrator recognizes its psychological causes. The interaction of these temporal positions does not weaken the authenticity of the child's voice; instead, it deepens it. The reader experiences fear with Sasha and simultaneously identifies the mechanisms of domestic violence concealed within the rhetoric of care.

Internal focalization determines which details enter the narrative and what they mean. Illnesses, medicines, prohibitions, anticipated punishment, rare meetings with the mother, and ordinary household objects acquire significance through Sasha's emotional condition. The apartment becomes a model of a controlled universe: doors, rooms, the bathroom, corridor, and baseboard form a system of borders. The title image connects the longing for maternal closeness with the fear of final disappearance. This spatial metaphor expresses a central paradox of child consciousness: the child seeks a secure place inside the very world that causes his pain.

The speech of others is especially important. The grandmother's labels, threats, and exaggerations enter the protagonist's inner vocabulary and gradually become instruments of self-description. As Mikhail Bakhtin argues, a character's word is always oriented toward other voices and evaluations [1]. In Sanaev's narrative this dialogism is conflictual: the child is forced to think through an adult's language, but his intonation, precise observation, and awareness of the disparity between love and cruelty produce an implicit form of resistance.

Humor and the grotesque perform a protective function. Absurd comparisons, exaggerated domestic scenes, and abrupt transitions from the tragic to the comic reproduce a mode of psychological adaptation. Comedy does not cancel suffering; it makes suffering narratable. In Lev Vygotsky's terms, artistic form transforms lived material and produces a complex emotional response in which opposing feelings interact [2]. Humor in the text is therefore not simple entertainment. It creates distance from traumatic experience and restores the child's right to his own perception.

The Dialogic-Scenic Model in Tokhtaboyev

Do Not Throw Stones at a Girl constructs young consciousness in a markedly different way. The work, designated by its author as a telenovel, develops mainly through scenes, dialogues, collective discussions, and rapidly changing episodes. Scholars emphasize its generic syncretism: epic narration is combined with dramatic action, cinematic montage, folkloric stylization, and parody [6; 7]. Khurshida's character is consequently revealed not through confession but through the interaction of competing voices and judgments.

Whereas Sasha's space is confined to an apartment, Khurshida's world is deliberately open and social. The farm, village, workplace, and public gathering become arenas of maturation. The heroine defines herself through labor, decision-making, relations with the community, and the defense of personal choice. Her youth does not signify passivity; professional initiative and ethical determination make her the center of action. Adulthood is represented here as the ability to enter public space and assume responsibility for the consequences of one's decisions.

The title metaphor of stones primarily evokes the power of collective rumor. Censure, gossip, and inherited expectations create symbolic pressure against a young woman whose activity and independence exceed conventional norms. Khurshida, however, does not internalize this



external judgment as her identity. Unlike Sasha, who must inwardly process the aggressive speech of a close adult, Tokhtaboyev's heroine confronts public polyphony through action. Her agency appears in the ability to separate social noise from personal truth.

Humor again has a protective function, although it operates at another level. In Sanaev it is connected with individual memory and psychological distance; in Tokhtaboyev it draws upon folk comic culture, verbal play, and the public exposure of stereotypes. Comic dialogue diminishes the authority of gossip, reveals the limitations of conservative evaluation, and opens a space for free choice. The collective voice does not ultimately silence the heroine; it becomes the background against which her will and moral stability appear more clearly.

Comparative-Typological Correspondences

The typological affinity of the two works begins with their representation of childhood and youth as conditions of limited social power but fully valid moral experience. Adults can establish rules, distribute judgments, and control space. The young protagonists lack such institutional authority, yet their perception exposes the ethical weakness of apparently powerful figures. Sasha recognizes the destructiveness of love converted into control; Khurshida demonstrates the inadequacy of a public opinion that substitutes rumor for a person's actual worth.

The differences arise from developmental stage and literary tradition. Sanaev's child world is structured as vertical dependence: the adult speaks and punishes, while the child listens, remembers, and searches for inward survival. Tokhtaboyev's adolescent and young-adult world is more horizontal: the heroine enters dialogue, works alongside adults, argues, and chooses a position independently. The plots consequently move in opposite directions. In the first work, the central event is the preservation of the inner self within a closed space; in the second, it is the public affirmation of that self through social activity.

Time also performs different functions. Sanaev's episodic composition imitates traumatic memory: separate incidents are connected by recurrent fears, phrases, and bodily sensations. Tokhtaboyev's scenic sequence is oriented toward the present and future as the characters discuss economic change, love, reputation, and possibility. In one text, childhood is reconstructed as a past that demands interpretation; in the other, youth is presented as the making of a new biography. Nevertheless, both temporal models move toward liberation from an imposed identity.

Polyphony forms another important correspondence. In Sanaev, it is concentrated within the narrator's consciousness, where the voices of grandmother, mother, grandfather, and child collide. In Tokhtaboyev, polyphony is externalized and organizes the scenic action: characters discuss Khurshida, dispute the meaning of past and present, and evaluate emerging social roles. Narrative form thus corresponds to the type of conflict. Family trauma requires a confessional inward perspective, while conflict between the individual and a public stereotype receives a dialogic and public embodiment.

The comparison also reveals different degrees of authorial distance. Sanaev avoids direct didactic commentary and relies on the paradoxes of child perception and the emotional force of memory. Tokhtaboyev preserves a connection with the ethical and didactic traditions of



children's literature, but realizes it through action, humor, and the heroine's independence rather than through a single authorial lesson. In both works, the reader reaches an ethical conclusion by comparing competing voices.

National and Cultural Specificity of the Two Models

A comparative-typological approach does not erase cultural difference. On the contrary, the shared function of young consciousness becomes visible through historically and nationally distinct forms. Sanaev's narrative is rooted in late Soviet urban everyday life and the closed world of an intelligentsia family, whereas Tokhtaboyev depicts an Uzbek village during the social transformations of independence. These settings determine the conflicts available to the protagonists, the speech environments they inhabit, and the ways in which autonomy can be achieved.

In Sanaev, the family operates as an almost autonomous system. The outside world exists but enters the child's consciousness only in fragments through school, doctors, travel, occasional encounters, and adult stories. Because the central conflict remains within kinship relations, culture is disclosed through ordinary ideas of health, discipline, duty, and sacrificial care. Illness becomes more than a bodily condition: it is a language of power. Repeatedly naming the child as weak reinforces dependence, while medical ritual replaces emotional security. Preserving his own perception therefore becomes an existential necessity for Sasha.

In Tokhtaboyev, subjectivity is formed within a collective environment. The village is not a neutral backdrop; it possesses communal memory, reciprocal obligations, stable gender expectations, and recognizable channels of public judgment. Yet tradition is not presented as a motionless prohibition. It becomes a field of debate between past and future. Khurshida combines respect for the community with new forms of female agency: professional initiative, practical competence, and the right to personal choice. Her maturation does not require rejection of the national environment but the ability to renew it from within.

Verbal pressure therefore assumes different cultural configurations. In Sanaev's text, it comes from a specific loved one and penetrates the child's self-perception with exceptional force. In Tokhtaboyev's work, pressure is dispersed across many voices: gossip, jokes, advice, and inherited expectations. The first model exposes the traumatizing power of intimate speech; the second reveals the regulatory force of public reputation. Both authors, however, investigate the boundary between external evaluation and the individual's inner truth.

The two models also position the reader differently. Sasha's confessional narrative creates emotional proximity: the reader has almost no external viewpoint and must inhabit the world within the limits of a child's experience. Tokhtaboyev's scenic composition, by contrast, presents several versions of events and invites comparison among them. The reader becomes not only a witness to inner suffering but also a participant in the ethical judgment of public opinion. One narrative strategy develops empathy through identification; the other develops critical reflection through dialogue.

At this level, the universal significance of both works becomes clear. Childhood and youth are represented as periods in which a person is particularly dependent on the language of others, yet also especially sensitive to the falsehood of established norms. Cultural specificity does not



narrow the meaning of the narratives; it makes their ethical questions persuasive. A child's right to safety and a young woman's right to autonomous choice emerge through recognizable forms of family and community life. The combination of cultural particularity and a shared moral problem makes the comparison productive.

Narrative Ethics and the Formation of the Young Subject

The choice of narrative form also defines the ethical relationship among author, protagonist, and reader. Sanaev's internal focalization refuses the comfortable distance of an external diagnosis: the reader must encounter adult conduct as the child experiences it, before converting it into a psychological explanation. Tokhtaboyev's dramatic plurality creates a different ethical demand. Because no single community voice is automatically authoritative, the reader must evaluate statements by comparing them with Khurshida's actions. Both texts therefore resist a paternalistic model in which adults possess truth in advance and the young character merely illustrates it.

Agency should consequently be understood in forms appropriate to the protagonist's age and circumstances. Sasha cannot transform the family system through open action, but he retains perceptual and narrative agency: he notices contradictions, preserves attachments, and later converts experience into testimony. Khurshida's agency is outward and practical. She makes decisions, organizes work, answers public judgment, and links personal freedom with responsibility toward others. Treating these two forms as equivalent would erase their differences, yet viewing them as stages of subject formation reveals a common movement from imposed definition toward self-authored identity.

Gender further modifies this movement. Sasha's vulnerability is intensified by childhood dependence and by an adult discourse that defines care as control. Khurshida encounters another structure of limitation: a socially active young woman is judged not only for her decisions but also for departing from prescribed femininity. Sanaev exposes the violence hidden within familial protection, while Tokhtaboyev exposes the symbolic violence of rumor and gendered expectation. In both cases, the literary representation of childhood and youth becomes a critique of norms that deny young people interpretive authority over their own lives.

Conclusion

The analysis identifies two complementary models of the literary representation of childhood. Sanaev's confessional-memoir model is based on internal focalization, spatial enclosure, a double temporal perspective, and psychologically protective humor. Tokhtaboyev's dialogic-scenic model relies on open social space, collective polyphony, action, and a comic mode shaped by folklore and parody.

Despite their differences, both models establish the young protagonist as an autonomous subject of evaluation. Sasha preserves the inner right to distinguish love from violence; Khurshida defends the right to determine her own life despite public rumor. The typological invariant is therefore not a similarity of events, but the function of child and adolescent consciousness: it becomes an ethical criterion for the adult world and a source of formal



renewal. This perspective expands the possibilities for comparative study of Russian and Uzbek prose about childhood.

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