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Extended Abstract

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Imagination, an Interdisciplinary Concept in Children's Literature

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Introduction

Children's literature, as an audience-oriented field, has consistently sought to address the cognitive, emotional, and cultural needs of children. In contemporary scholarship, the concept of "childhood" is understood not as a natural and fixed condition, but as a historical and social construct shaped within diverse cultural and ideological contexts. Therefore, children's literature, in addition to possessing a dynamic nature that allows it to be continually redefined in tandem with evolving conceptions of childhood, also assumes an interdisciplinary nature through its interaction with fields such as philosophy, mysticism, psychology, and educational sciences, deriving its meaning from their convergence. Among the shared concepts within these disciplines, imagination occupies a distinctive position. In both classical theoretical traditions and modern approaches, imagination has been conceived as a mediating faculty between the sensible and the intelligible worlds, or between different domains of the mind.

Given the fundamental role of imagination in the process of literary creation as well as in the cognitive and emotional development of the child, the central question of this study is as follows: What common features

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can be identified in definitions of imagination within philosophy, mysticism, and psychology? In what ways do these shared features resemble the nature of childhood imagination and how might they contribute to clarifying the position of imagination in children's literature?

The significance of this inquiry lies in the fact that establishing the theoretical foundations of children's literature remains incomplete without recognizing imagination as the connecting link among these disciplines. Moreover, such an approach can offer constructive and illuminating responses to the challenging theoretical questions concerning the nature of children's literature.

Methodology

This study was conducted using a review–analytical method. First, theoretical texts concerning the concept of imagination in philosophy (from the ancient Greek tradition to Islamic and contemporary philosophy), Islamic mysticism (with emphasis on major mystical figures), and classical and modern psychology were examined and analyzed. Second, the extracted findings were compared with the theoretical foundations of children's literature, and their shared functions were analyzed.

A survey of the research background reveals that numerous studies have addressed the significance of imagination in children's poetry, fantasy literature, symbolic play, and cognitive development. However, few studies have explicitly examined imagination as an interdisciplinary concept and as a theoretical link connecting philosophy, mysticism, psychology, and children's literature. The aim of this article is to fill this gap and to propose a coherent framework for understanding the position of imagination in children's literature. By focusing on the element of imagination, identifying its shared characteristics across disciplines, and examining its similarities within an interdisciplinary framework, this study seeks to answer the central research questions and to demonstrate how imagination functions as a connecting link among these fields.

Discussion

A comparative examination indicates that across the three domains of philosophy, mysticism, and psychology, four fundamental characteristics of imagination can be identified. The first is the mediating function of imagination. In philosophy, imagination is understood as an intermediary faculty between sensory and rational perception, enabling the transition from the sensible to the intelligible. In Islamic mysticism, the imaginal realm (ʿalam al-mithal) constitutes a realm situated between the material world and the world of intellect, within which spiritual vision and unveiling are realized. In psychology, too, imagination and dreams are regarded as mechanisms that connect the conscious and the unconscious, or that mediate between external experience and inner life.

The second characteristic of imagination is its mental and non-material nature. In all three domains, imagination is identified as a phenomenon dependent upon the structure of the human mind and perception, even though it originates in sensory experience. Imaginal pictures, while lacking objective existence in the external world, perform real and effective functions within the individual's psychological structure. This view is corroborated in developmental psychology, where symbolic play and imaginative activity are introduced as essential stages in the child's cognitive development.

The third characteristic concerns the significance of sensory experiences and image formations in various fields of knowledge. Sensory data and emotional experiences play a foundational role in the formation of imagination. In children's literature, likewise, imagination is grounded in emotions, experiences, and mental imagery.

The fourth and most significant characteristic is the creative and generative function of imagination. In the philosophy of art, artistic creation is inconceivable without reliance on the faculty of imagination. In mysticism, imagination serves as the realm of the manifestation of new meanings and the intuition of truth. In psychology, imagination provides the ground for creativity, problem-solving, and the reconstruction of lived experiences. This function is clearly observable in children's literature: stories, poems, and symbolic games all emerge from the realm of imagination, enabling the child to recreate the world and to encounter and experience aspects of reality not yet directly lived through imagination.

In relation to children's literature, childhood imagination forms a bridge between the inner world and the external environment. Through animism and personification, the child organizes sensory experiences in the form of narrative and play. This process is not merely entertainment; rather, it constitutes a form of practice for social adaptation, language development, memory enhancement, and the formation of abstract thinking. From this perspective, imagination in children's literature is not simply an aesthetic element, but a developmental and educational mechanism that underlies the child's literary experience.

The significant outcomes of childhood imagination may be identified in areas such as communicative competence, linguistic and verbal skills, heightened curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, strengthened memory, and the growth of creativity and generative capacity; all of which contribute to the advancement of children's cognitive development.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that across the three domains of philosophy, mysticism, and psychology, imagination possesses shared characteristics such as mediation, a mental nature, and a creative function. These features are clearly observable in childhood imagination, where they manifest in symbolic play, myth-making, and imaginative narratives. On this basis, it may be concluded that imagination enables children to articulate their world, represent their dreams, and confront difficult realities. At the same time, imagination functions as a foundational and interdisciplinary concept that provides a coherent theoretical framework for explaining the nature of children's literature—fulfilling a role similar to that which

imagination performs in various fields of knowledge, as a means of understanding and engaging with the world. Relying upon imagination, children's literature not only represents children's experiences but also creates the possibility for reconstructing, regulating, and elevating them. Accordingly, systematic attention to the element of imagination in the criticism, production, and education of children's literature constitutes both a theoretical and practical necessity. Recognizing imagination as a connecting link among the human sciences can enrich the study of children's literature and enhance the quality of works produced within this field.

Keywords: children's literature, imagination, interdisciplinarity, cognitive development, symbolic play.

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