



The Spectrum of Children Psyche and the Facade of Landscape in Alan Garner's *Elidor* and *The Owl Service*

Rajwinder kaur Sekhon

Research Scholar, School of Social Sciences and Language, Dept. of English, Lovely Professional University Phagwara (Jalandhar)
rajsekhonabr@gmail.com

Dr. Sonia Luthra

Assistant Professor, School of Social Sciences and Language, Dept. of English, Lovely Professional University Phagwara (Jalandhar)
sonia.28303@lpu.co.in

Abstract:

Alan Garner, a well-known British fantasy author, has captivated readers for years with his vivid storytelling and magical locations. Garner's books explore the intricate parts of the child brain, producing young heroes who journey through creative environments and meet legendary animals. This article will focus on subjects such as identity formation, psychological growth, and dealing with fear and disaster in order to better comprehend how Garner's writing mirrors the child's thoughts.

The fantasy book *Elidor* by Alan Garner was released in 1965. It relates the tale of four kids who stumble into a doorway leading to an alternate dimension called *Elidor*. They must go out on a mission in this dimension to protect *Elidor* and their own world from growing darkness. Throughout the novel, the children's experiences and psychological conditions show a range of feelings and reactions. *The Owl Service* is a challenging book that explores the complexity of child psychology. It was first published in 1967 and explores the psychological experiences of three teenage characters, Alison, Roger, and Gwyn, by fusing fantasy, mystery, and Welsh mythology. In order to analyze the novel's wide range of child psychology, this article will focus on several important issues, including identity development, adolescence, family dynamics, and the expression of suppressed emotions. "With its heady blend of mythological beauty and fear, *The Owl Service* has already been canonized as a 'folk horror' masterpiece as well as a memorable children's broadcast" (Venning). The book provides a nuanced representation of the difficulties that the young characters must overcome as they explore their inner worlds in search of identity and self-discovery. Garner expertly explores the depths of the infant mind via the study of Welsh mythology, giving readers a story that is gripping and thought-provoking and that connects with the complexity of human psychology.

Keywords: Fantasy, Child/kid Psyche, Psychology, identity, Fear, Myth/Mythology.

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Introduction:

[Word children] are cast within the domain of texts and of images. In that sense, they are of exactly the same order as the children and childhoods that inhabit, say, the pages of developmental psychology journals, which are also re-presentations: word children and iconic children. What we call the study of children is, in this reading, always the study of representations of children. (Waller 2)

This concept is exemplified by the Stainton-Rogers “word children”, which are fictionalized textual or iconic depictions of children that have been engraved in speech both the words ‘children’ and ‘teenagers’ are inexorably subject to the control of adult communication networks; “Children’s literature is an amorphous, ambiguous creature, its relationship to its audience is difficult, its relationship to the rest of literature, problematic” (Hunt 1). As a result, it is feasible to identify some of the dominant ideologies toward youths, adolescents, and young adults, in the recurring themes that appear in literary, academic, and popular discourses. Concerns about age and representation reflect a broader late-twentieth-century interest in theorizing and deconstructing identity in literary studies. Famous British fantasy novelist Alan Garner has enthralled readers for years with his vivid narrative and fantastical settings. Garner explores the complex areas of the kid brain in his writings, creating young heroes who travel through imaginative settings and come into contact with mythological creatures. In order to better understand how Garner’s writing reflects the kid’s mind, this article will concentrate on issues like identity development, psychological development, and facing fear and misfortune. The fantasy book *Elidor* by Alan Garner was released in 1965. It relates the tale of four kids who stumble into a doorway leading to an alternate dimension called *Elidor*. They must go out on a mission in this dimension to protect *Elidor* and their own world from growing darkness. Throughout the novel, the children’s experiences and psychological conditions show a range of feelings and reactions. *The Owl Service* is a challenging book that explores the complexity of child psychology. It was first published in 1967 and explores the psychological experiences of three teenage characters, Alison, Roger, and Gwyn, by fusing fantasy, mystery, and Welsh mythology. In order to analyze the novel’s wide range of child psychology, this article will focus on several important issues, including identity development, adolescence, family dynamics, and the expression of suppressed emotions.

Identity Formation:

Young protagonists go through transforming events that greatly impact on how they become who they are, a common theme in Garner’s stories. Following Chris Jenks, Allison Waller asserts [childhood is] “the poststructuralist space of multiple and self-presentational identity sets, childhood remained locked in a simple child-adult binary” (Waller 3). For instance, Colin and Susan, the main characters of *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*, go out on a risky adventure that forces them to face their fears and unearth hidden powers. Garner depicts their experience as a figurative passage from childhood to adolescence, emphasizing the difficulties and successes involved in the development of identity.

A key area of child psychology, identity formation is explored in *The Owl Service* as a problem. Each of Alison, Roger, and Gwyn battles with their sense of self as they deal with demands placed on them by their families and society. Their identities get entwined with that of people from Welsh legend as they decipher the mysterious owl service patterns, resulting in a profound internal conflict and a quest for individual individuality. “Roger! You’re being stupid on purpose! Look at that part. It’s an owl’s head. Yes? I suppose it is, if you want it to be. Three leafy

heads with this kind of abstract flowery business in between each one. Yes: I suppose so” (Fimi 161). It’s telling that Roger sees a “abstract” pattern whereas Alison sees an owl. Alison is theoretically in an authoritative position. As the owner of the mansion, which her father received from his cousin, Bertram. Despite the fact that the house has belonged to her family for decades and she enjoyed many summer vacations there, Alison lacks the sense that she “belongs” there. Her English upbringing makes her a stranger, but she believes Gwyn, who never lived there before but communicates Welsh and resides in Wales, has an additional organic connection for the valley and the home, and her intuition is subsequently proven correct.

When Roland, Helen, Nicholas, and David discover the secret gateway to *Elidor*, they at first show interest and astonishment. The innate curiosity of kids discovering a strange and fantasy world is reflected in their fascination with the unknown and the mystical components they come upon. “Garner’s fantasies is *Elidor* which utilizes the hollow hill in a more original way and reduces the number of associated images to provide coherence” (Whitaker 171) and makes them sceptical to identify the differences between the magic and reality; Nicholas enquired, “Is it any better than our world? It's all mud and dust and rock. It's dead, finished” (Garner, *Elidor* 82; Whitaker 171). David as an expert who offers confirmation and explanation:

“It's that static electricity. You see, even if you believe the Treasures are real and are generators, the static shouldn't be there. And it comes and goes.” “How do you know?” said Roland. “Oh, I've been experimenting ever since Dad was on about his roses. It's there most days early morning or dusk.... Anyway, I think I know what's causing it. They're looking for the Treasures in *Elidor*, and they've found them.” “Found them!” “Yes: it's quite simple. It's like getting a radio fix on a transmitter. You have two receivers some distance apart, and they pick up the direction the signal's coming from. Then you draw the two lines on a map, and where they cross is the transmitter.” (Garner, *Elidor* 122-123; Whitaker 171)

Elidor is a prominent fantasy; characters for a variety of reasons have distinct personalities and roles. The correspondence between realms is expertly preserved. The magic realm's enchantment is incorporated into the "real" world through well-known phenomena.

Psychological Growth:

“... the academic study of childhood as a culturally- constructed phenomenon has posed insistent ideological and psychological questions about the relationship between children’s authors, their subject matter ...” (Butler 258), “Garner uses the experience of emotional contemporaneity to rethink the nature of time itself, for *Lively* its interest is primarily psychological rather than metaphysical” (Butler 92) and development through portraying young individuals. In his books, the main characters go through significant personal transformations and frequently come out stronger and more resilient. The children’s contacts with the unearthly realm in “*Elidor*,” for instance, challenge their emotional and intellectual skills and eventually promote psychological development. Despite their worries, the kids show incredible bravery and fortitude while travelling through *Elidor*. In the midst of difficulty, they support and encourage one another as they face their darkest fears. Even when it seems impossible, their strength and tenacity encourage them to press on with their mission. This exemplifies children’s unwavering spirit and their capacity to persevere in the face of adversity. Despite their difficulties, the kids also find optimism and a sense of direction. They understand that they are the only ones who can save *Elidor* and their own world.

Even when the odds seem overwhelming, this newfound optimism lifts their spirits and motivates them to press on with their mission. Their tenacity and willpower exemplify the unbreakable spirit of kids who won't give in to hopelessness.

The story explores the transformation of the characters from childhood to adolescence. Alison, Roger, and Gwyn experience physical and emotional changes that frequently result in uncertainty, disagreement, and a feeling of estrangement. As their interpersonal interactions develop, individuals start to investigate their newly evolving sexual identities. The story provides a comprehensive portrait of teenage psychology by capturing the intricacies and weaknesses linked to this developmental stage. The portrayal of family relationships has a big impact on how children develop as people. The story examines how the protagonists' psychological health is affected by their unstable familial ties. The tense dynamics between Alison's mother, Nancy, and her stepbrother, Roger, underscore her emotions of loneliness and her yearning for acceptance and affection. As the teens put the jigsaw together, they naturally begin to fall into the characters in the story: Gwyn plays Lleu, Roger of Gronw, and Alison of Blodeuwedd. Only at that time in the narrative do we begin to see hints of a love relationship with both Gwyn and Alison, as well as a furious rivalry between Gwyn and Roger. A lot of the novel's tension stems from class biases, which are inextricably related to ethnic and cultural identity: Alison is a privileged girl whose family possesses an enormous mansion, Roger is her stepbrother, English and likewise quite middle-class, although coming from a family of "new money", and Gwyn is the Welsh lad, highly clever but looked down on due to his working-class upbringing and Welsh accent. As the three teenagers' relationships deteriorate, Alison betrays Gwyn, Roger figuratively wounds him (by mocking his accent and exposing that he knows his humiliating secret), and Gwyn reacts (by mocking Roger about his mother's abusive abandonment of him as well as his father). What we also discover is that the triad of Blodeuwedd, Lleu, and Gronw is re-enacted through the generations: Gwyn's mother turns out to have been another version of Blodeuwedd in the past; "You are not meant to see it, but if you go there, it is there. Nancy and Huw are in fact brother and sister, because Gwydion in the myth and Arianrod who was Lleu's mother, were brother and sister and this is part of the tragedy" (Fimi 163). Alison's relative Bertram (from whom she inherited the home) portrayed Gronw; and Lleu played Huw Halfbacon, the Welsh-speaking villager who works as a worker in the house. Bertram died in a car accident caused by Huw shortly after the final chapter of the Mabinogion saga. The complex effects of familial relationships on a child's psychological growth are highlighted through Gwyn's conflicting loyalties and struggle to fit in with his family.

Confrontation of Fear and Adversity:

Garner's stories frequently include themes of fear and struggle, which function as springboards for character development. The scary and paranormal forces that the young protagonists of his works meet are the externalization of their inner anxieties. The characters gain coping skills and the ability to conquer their fears by dealing with these dangers. By delving into the psychological underpinnings of the child psyche via this examination of fear, Garner is able to shed light on the resilience and strength that may be developed by facing and overcoming one's anxieties.

Meanwhile, the explicit mythological material has become subsidiary, doing little more than provide the author with a series of structures and symbols through which to build his novel, a kind of scaffolding, or, as Garner would later term it, a "crutch." The power of *Elidor* lies not in its use of "Childe Roland" or *The Book of Invasions*,

but in Garner's communication of doubt, fear, and paranoia, and his growing ability to write convincingly in a mimetic mode. (Butler 201)

As the kids advance on their journey, they run against a number of *Elidor*'s threats and hazards. They have to deal with ominous animals, puzzles, and the unrelenting pursuit of evil powers. The youngsters experience worries and anxiety as a result of having to negotiate the dangers and uncertainties of their voyage. The children go through loss and sadness as the narrative progresses. The oncoming darkness is causing *Elidor*, the land they have grown to love, to steadily deteriorate. They see this magnificent planet destroyed, and their sorrow is made worse by the knowledge that their own world, Earth, is also in jeopardy. Their emotional journey is furthered by this loss and sadness, which reflects the diverse spectrum of feelings that youngsters go through in the face of significant change and impending loss.

The issue of suppressed emotions and psychological disturbance is expertly handled by Garner in *The Owl Service*. The protagonists' interactions with the enigmatic owl patterns set off a string of suppressed feelings that have their roots in prehistoric Welsh legend. When children's emotions are repressed or ignored, they suffer powerful psychological expressions like wrath, jealousy, and possessiveness, which give insight into the internal turmoil they go through.

Myth and the Unconscious:

In 1970, Garner explained his use of myth is somewhat he needed "some kind of crutch, some kind of framework... myth is not an attempt to entertain, it is an attempt to explain something" (Garner, *Coming to Terms* 16; Taylor 175). Garner expertly incorporates mythological, folkloric, and historical themes into his stories to appeal to his young readers' collective consciousness. These archetypal patterns and symbols have a tremendous impact on children's psyches and allow for a thorough investigation of their inner selves. Children can relate to timeless themes and common situations thanks to Garner's use of mythical and folklore elements, which fosters in them a feeling of wonder and imagination. As a war kid Garner thinks, "daily life [in Alderley Edge] was lived on a mythic plane: of absolute Good against absolute Evil ... Those children [who became fantasy authors] ... would not be able to avoid concerning themselves with the issues; and so their books, however, clad, were written on profound themes, and were literature" (Garner, *The Voice That Thunders: Essays and Lectures* 17; Taylor 176-177).

There are four fabled riches linked with the ancient kingdom of Britain in Welsh mythology; in "*Elidor* (1965) Garner alludes to and amalgamates a number of motifs from Irish and Welsh sources, but blends them with mystical symbolism from myriad mythological and occult traditions" (Fimi 159). In *Elidor*, these artefacts are essential to the story. They are symbolized by four artefacts that the children must rescue and protect: a sword, a spear, a stone, and a cauldron. These jewels have enormous power and are required to save *Elidor* and the world. Garner draws on Britain's rich mythology by including these mythological artefacts, emphasizing past tales' importance and relevance to modern times: "as a result, *Elidor* offers multiple (and often competing) readings, rather than the seemingly structured and ordered link between myth and reality Garner achieves in *The Owl Service*" (Fimi 159).

The novel's extensive use of symbolism enables a closer investigation of the development of the young mind. *The Owl Service* delves into the complicated relationship that has existed for 1,500 years between the Welsh and the English. In *The Owl Service*, Alison offers Gwyn a decorative owl with a note in Welsh written on the box. Her English stepdad, Clive, gave her the gift in turn, and he had to ask the lady at the store to translate the message: "Gwyn opened the box. 'Greetings from the

Land of Song', he read. He turned the box over. A Keltikraft Souvenir'. And then the small lettering at the bottom. 'Made in England'" (Butler 152). A common motif is the owl, which stands for wisdom, intuition, and the unconscious mind. It represents the characters' unspoken wants, anxieties, and unsolved issues metaphorically. Their encounters with the owl serve as a catalyst, pushing them to face their suppressed feelings and eventually promoting their psychological development. *The Owl Service* is built around the last section of the Mabinogi's Fourth Branch. LleuLlawGyffes (the man condemned to never have a wife on this planet), Blodeuwedd (the woman produced magically out of flowers for him), and GronwPebyr (lover) definitely captivated Gamer. Blodeuwedd plots with her lover, Gronw, to murder her spouse Lleu, but Lleu escapes, transforms into an eagle, and flees, only to be brought back to life by the sorcerer Gwydion. Blodeuwedd is changed into an owl as punishment, while Gronw is executed by Lleu with a legendary spear strike that penetrates a stone.

Conclusion:

The literature of Alan Garner provides a rich tapestry for comprehending the intricacies of juvenile psychology "which is a universal and natural feature of human group" (Waller 3). Philip Pullman praised him by addressing him as "indisputably the great originator, the most important British writer of fantasy since Tolkien" (Venning). Garner engages young readers in a thorough investigation of their inner lives through his colourful narrative and discussion of subjects like identity creation, psychological growth, and the confronting of fear and hardship. His stories provide them with a great place to confront their concerns, strengthen their resolve, and accept their own personalities. Garner's writings provide young readers with the tools they need to face life's difficulties and riddles with inventiveness and bravery by examining child psychology. "Thomas West Gregory argues that [a]dolescents have been fascinating personalities in literature ever since Mark Twain set Huck Finn on his odyssey down the Mississippi' and encourages adolescent readers to engage with literary works, not only to help understand their own identities but also to improve themselves by consuming 'good' literature" (Waller 10). In general, *Elidor* explores the spectrum of the kid's mind, which includes awe, terror, courage, anxiety, loss, sadness, hope, and revival. As the kids travel through a magical world and deal with both internal and external challenges, the book examines different emotional states, giving readers a clear picture of the psychological journey of the young heroes. *The Owl Service* weaves together themes of identity development, puberty, family relationships, and the expression of suppressed emotions into a beautiful tapestry of child psychology; "with its heady blend of mythological beauty and fear, *The Owl Service* has already been canonized as a 'folk horror' masterpiece as well as a memorable children's broadcast" (Venning). The book provides a nuanced representation of the difficulties that the young characters must overcome as they explore their inner worlds in search of identity and self-discovery. Garner expertly explores the depths of the infant mind via the study of Welsh mythology, giving readers a story that is gripping and thought-provoking and that connects with the complexity of human psychology.

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