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**Abstract.** This article discusses the description of the child's image used in dramas of Penhall. The image of the child is a recurring theme that holds significant meaning in the dramas of J. Penhall. Through his creative works, the playwright explores various aspects of childhood and present nuanced perspectives on the experiences, challenges, and complexities faced by children. In his respective plays, Penhall delves deep into the psychological, emotional, and social dimensions of children in order to evoke a compelling portrayal of their innocence, vulnerability, curiosity, and resilience.

**Key words:** children, emotional and mental state, family crises, image, depression, cruelty, indifference, description.

**Introduction.** The last third of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century is a period characterized by a number of theatrical and dramatic experiments, the emergence of many aesthetic concepts and the formation of new trends. To describe new trends in theater and drama, an appropriate conceptual apparatus is needed, the term "post-drama theater" has appeared, reflecting changes in drama and theater. There are several views describing this aesthetic phenomenon.

The term "post-drama theater" was introduced into scientific circulation by the German researcher H. T. Lehman. In 1999, in the eponymous work "Postdramatic Theater," this concept includes the entire range of theatrical and dramatic transformations of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. In the book "Postdramatic Theater," the scholar notes that the emergence of a new model of theater and drama is associated with the use of theatrical signs and changes in language style. H. T. Lehman identifies a number of features characteristic of drama and describes in detail each structural element of aesthetics: lack of hierarchy, musicalization, visual drama, corporatism, event/situation. Lehman noted that the presence of absolutely all elements in the play and drama is not enough to classify them as post-dramatic, but these parameters determine the trend.

Postdramatic experiments, problems of authenticity and authenticity of the work are questioned; post-drama theater talks about acute social problems, often scientific theses and theories are reflected in the post-drama.

**Literature review.** In English literature, the child heroes are described in the works of D. Lessing (Lessing, Doris May 1919-2013), G. Swift (Swift, Graham Colin 1949), J. Wyndham (Windham, John Parks, Lucas Baynon Harris 1903-1969), D.S.S. Eltzer (Seltzer, David 1940), J. Harris (Harris, Joanne Mishèle Sylvie 1964), M. Ravenhill (Ravenhill, Mark 1966) and other authors.

**Analysis.** Joe Penhall (born 1967) is a British playwright, author of dozens of plays and scripts. The circle of conflicts and contradictions studied by the playwright is very wide, and the contradictions between children and parents are one of the topics of interest to Joe Penhall, his play about how young patients trained in schizophrenia penetrate society, personal and family crises very often occur, in our modern world – as a result of the development of cruelty.

The presence of young heroes in Joe Penhall's drama "A Huge Child" (Haunted Child, 2011) is associated with the destruction of the world and the foresight of horror approaching: nine-year-old Thomas, separated from his father at night, hears him scared that there is someone. This is what the house looks like:

*“T h o m a s. The door. The door opened.*

*J u l i e. It was a wind.*

*T h o m a s. There’s somebody upstairs.*

*J u l i e. There’s nobody upstairs....*

*T h o m a s. I think I saw daddy. I think I saw him in the house. I think I heard him. Maybe it’s him I heard on the stairs.*

*J u l i e. It wasn’t your father.*

*T h o m a s. Who was it?*

*J u l i e. It wasn’t anybody”.*

The child shares fear with his mother, which drives him crazy. Starting with the scenes of the first night, the reader understands that terrible events happen. The feelings of the child and the mother are inexplicable and mysterious threats that scare and scare them, special chronotopes (mainly at night, a closed place in the house, an abandoned and abandoned industrial building, ruthless rain), parameters inherent in the thriller genre and generally terrible aesthetics, realities aimed at forming the heroes of the work and its audience.

The cause of the hero's right-wing crisis and the emergence of a family conflict in the drama were expressed by Douglas during a chance meeting with his wife, which made such an impression on Julia:

*Douglas. You look as if you’ve seen a ghost. You’re trembling....:*

*Douglas. I was having very... self-destructive thoughts. I became obsessed with the futility of things – with my failings, I suppose... at work... at home. (Pause.)*

*After me father died and Thomas was born I found in quite difficult to cope... with just the daily grind... I felt I had nobody to advise me or guide me. I felt very alone really, for a few years.*

*The severance of Douglas's ties with the family becomes a big conflict, which is based on the struggle of two opposite types of heroes, that is, causes constant debate between the coal and the mother:*

*Douglas. The Spirit is the soul of the universe. It’s what connects all of our souls together. My father’s soul is in me. My soul is in you... You see, I believe you a have inner life, a spiritual life which I, as your father, have a divine responsibility to nurture.... Also: I believe that when Grandpa died he was reincarnated and he came back as you. So, really, you’re ma dad.*

*The hero of the play Penhall really not only violates the lifestyle of his family, but also dies himself. Douglas joins religious sects, where, together with members of this society, torture and punishment are committed:*

*D o u g l a s. They drilled into my gums... down to the bone. The pain was... indescribable.... They said I was imagining it... everybody agreed... This is the problem with pain... you can't see it... you can't prove it exists... so you start... imagining thing. You imagine phantom pain. You imagine... all sorts of things.*

*..... I couldn't think straight, I couldn't... after that I couldn't concentrate on anything much at all, really. I had no energy, couldn't sleep. If I slept somebody would come in and wake me and tell me that I was grinding my teeth... grinding them down to the stump! Because I was so – I was so tense”.*

The intonation system of drama and emotional dominants play an important role in the remark, which describes the psychological state of the characters and determines the pace of development of the movement.

The behavior and position of the heroes, their attitude to what is happening is determined by their speech: the speech of the heroes is inappropriate, expressed, there are many pauses, rumors, characterized by comments, inferior phrases, many points, unfinished or, conversely, repeatedly repeated words and there are phrases. Joe Penhall talks about psychiatric illness and the effect of this syndrome on Thomas, the hero of the drama.

**Discussion.** In the drama "Birthday" (2012), Joe Penhall looks at the problems of birth and parenthood in the modern world, where the sustainability of functions and family building is regularly questioned and the playwright addresses elements of fantasy. Heroes Play Ed and Lisa are expecting the birth of their second child, but jeans and family roles have changed in the family: the child is raised by his father, and the mother is united by a socially active feminine.

In the relationship of Ed and Lisa to overcome the theft of a woman in the process of birth, thanks to the help of her husband in reproducing and supporting her wife in a test tube, she destroys the stereotypical family matrix of patriarchy and strengthens gender relations.

At the same time, at the beginning of the performance - a powerful cold-blooded conversation. The playwright turns to various types of comics, rejects the complaints of Lisa's husband, whose characters' dialogues are saturated with cinema and irony, for example, with her husband's offending.

*“Ed. Lisa! I need my magazines! There’s a diet I want to look at ... I need distractions ... I can’t go through what you went through with Charlie, I really can’t. The whole thing was a nightmare from start to finish.*

*Lisa. Don’t say that. And don’t call it a ‘nightmare’. I can’t think like that –*

*Ed. Why can’t you?*

*Lisa. Because it makes me feel like a victim.*

*Ed. We both are. You haven’t seen what I’ve seen. People with their fists right up you to the elbow.*

*Lisa. I’m glad I didn’t see it.*

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*Ed. Sewing you up, cuts, cutting, blood gushing*

*Lisa. I've forgotten all about it.*

*Ed. Well I haven't. Like a shark attack. It's worse for the man.*

*Lisa. Oh poor you!"*

In the actions of Ed, one can observe the unfounded and ridiculous attention of a man with a child's pearl, infantile age. That Penhall gave the male hero the ability to have children is both a satirical and fantastical display of the injustices felt by women and mothers. In addition, in modern literature, the image of a man with hatred, thinness, weakness of character and "childish" behavior appears as a novelty. Despite the fact that the hero himself, his birth and upbringing are actively discussed by the big heroes, the first son of Ed and Lisa, whose birth became an extraordinary experiment, does not appear on stage throughout the action.

However, at the end of J. Penhall's drama, there is an unexpected rejection of the tradition of depicting a child in the late 20th century, according to which the appearance or participation of a child does not make any sense. "Birthday" - a drama that opens up a dramatic image of the silence and old age of women in a patriarchal family.

Penhall is more interesting to images of women and children than men, men are depicted as weak and younger heroes, and women as mature, responsible and intelligent thinkers.

The playwright pays great attention to family issues, the upbringing of the younger generation, critically understands the path of the family in which the mother and child depend on the father, and shows the established matrix of the family as an outdated system. This will bring suffering to the heroes, and going beyond it will be an occasion to revise family relations and build new effective models of interaction.

**Conclusion.** J. Penhall offers diverse and thought-provoking portrayals of the image of the child in their dramas. Through their artistic approaches, these playwrights shed light on the multifaceted nature of childhood and invite audiences to reflect on the universal struggles and triumphs experienced by young individuals. Motifs of fairytales are demonstrated as a tale of the children's dreams of little heroes, of the invention of the "most powerful weapon," closely related to the political realities of the late 20th century, capable of destroying all enemies and stopping hostilities from the playwright. Postdramatic theatrical features such as collage and decomposition of a dramatic text, the author's openness to improvisation, contribute to the modeling of various fairy tales (mobility, flexibility and dynamism), which are part of postdramaturgy.

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