

**A Study of the Awarded Works of Poetry by Children's
Book Council from 1962 to 1972**

Javad Dehghanian

Associate Professor of Persian Language and Literature,
Shiraz University

Tahereh Bashirizadeh

M.A in Children's and Adolescents' Literature,
University of Hormozgan

Introduction

Literary awards have a significant effect on cultivating and even constructing the literary taste of the audience as well as the cultural orientations of writers and poets. Awarded works usually receive more attention. In Iran, Children's Book Council (CBC) has had an essential role in improving children's poetry and literature by introducing and selecting the best works for more than six decades.

In addition to the impressive effect of CBC on children's literature, particularly on children's poetry, it has achieved a great success in improving literary criticism in Iran. By setting criteria for evaluating the works of literature during these years, CBC has played an important role in improving both the quality of children's poetry and its literary criticism.

Nowadays, critics emphasize the significance of form and language in poetry; therefore, this study tries to reevaluate the criteria by which CBC selected the works of poetry and to examine to what degree these criteria have been applied in selecting these works in the years 1962 to 1972.

Methodology, Review of Literature and Purpose

The theorists and the juries of CBC have considered language and subject matter of the poems as the two most important elements; therefore, their criticism can be compared to that of Formalists. They also focused on and set criteria for illustrations. As such, works of poetry were evaluated based on their language, music and illustrations.

According to Masoumeh Sohrab's reports, the articles and lectures of Abbas Yamini Sharif and Mahmoud Kianoosh marked a turning point in the criticism of children's poetry. Leily Ahi, Turan Mirhadi and Mahdokht Dolat-abadi have discussed the criteria for evaluating children's poetry in *A Survey of Children's Literature*. Masoumeh Sohrab has dedicated a section of her book, *Seventeen Articles on Children's and Adolescents' Literature*, to introducing the criteria for evaluating poetry from Abbas Yamini Sharif's and Lily Ahi's point of view.

Interestingly, although CBC has had an important role in creating and improving children's literary taste, no critical assessment has been undertaken about its criteria and the extent of their application for selecting works of poetry. Therefore, this study aims at evaluating the efficiency of

CBC and its criteria for selecting three works of children's poetry in the first decade of its activity.

Discussion

In the years between 1962 and 1972, CBC awarded three works in the category of children's poetry: *Fery Flies to the Sky* by Abbas Yamini Sharif (1966), *Tale of Toghi* by Mahmoud Musharraf Azad Tehrani (1969) and *Flower Came, Spring Came* by Manouchehr Neyestani (1970).

The first point that has attracted the attention of CBC jury is that *Fery Flies to Sky* is a composition in verse form rather real poetry. Altruism, affection and sympathy with animals are some of the prominent concepts in this work. The language is simple; however, it lacks suitable music for children. This is the most important defect in the poem which is not mentioned by the jury. The general format of the book could have been more enjoyable if due attention was paid to such elements as better illustrations and more appropriate fonts and font sizes. Nevertheless, selecting this book can be considered an important step in improving children's literature at a time when writing poetry for children was deemed insignificant by Iranian literary figures.

The CBC award jury harshly criticized the writer of *Tale of Toghi* for making use of colloquial language while today, this is considered one of the advantages of this work. It seems illogical to insist on using formal language while according to CBC's own criteria, the use of colloquial language was acceptable. The work is highly successful in making use of

such elements as simple and fluent language, narrative, theme of cooperation and a joyful and rhythmic music. The jury failed to mention metrical problems of the work, but they properly complimented the work for its layout and its placement of illustrations in each page which are instrumental in inducing a sense of dynamism and movement.

The jury's report on *Flower Came, Spring Came* makes it obvious that they have accepted the utilization of colloquial language and no longer insist on using formal language. Having used a song form, the music of the work is melodious and happy. The book achieves coherence in its musical texture by the use of repetitions, fast rhythm, short lines, and rich external and internal music. The artful illustrations depict a traditional Iranian atmosphere and use flat colors and simple forms. These characteristics are compatible with children's world. Amazingly, the combination of text and painting is considered by the jury as a defect of this work.

Conclusion

Literary awards play a significant role in creating and enhancing the quality of literary and artistic products. These awards play a key role in forming and changing literary taste of the audience (children and families). Selecting and introduction the best works not only has a great effect on the relationship between the poem, the poet and the reader, but also results in the refinement of the literary and artistic taste.

The analysis of the works awarded by CBC in the years between 1962 and 1972 shows that language and moral and didactic subject matters

have been at the center of attention. The juries of CBC awards have focused on the appropriateness of the metrical pattern, the length of the poem and the choice of words. In practice, though, some of these criteria have been neglected. For example, although the use of childlike and colloquial language was accepted, it was at times met with harsh criticism in practice. The music of the works is suitable for children, except in *Fery Flies to the Sky*. In the second and third awarded works, the internal music is remarkably rich and completely compatible with the criteria of the CBC. The illustrations of these two books, especially the third one, have attracted due attention.

Keywords: Children's Book Council, children's poetry, poetry selection criteria

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