

**A Study of Binary Oppositions in the Works of Houshang Moradi  
Kermani and Roald Dahl**

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**Introduction**

Narratives are created only through oppositions; therefore, it is necessary to analyze characters and their actions based on binary oppositions. This study focuses on binary oppositions as conceptual structures, such as good and evil, which can be found in the whole Persian literature. In general, one of the most fundamental issues in explaining similarities and differences between works of Iranian and non-Iranian authors is the comparison of their conceptual structures, including binary and oppositional structures.

Literary structuralism, which is rooted in linguistic studies, is a method of analyzing literary texts. Structuralism and its general orientation are based on the analysis of binary oppositions and the relationship between them. It originated from the linguistic studies of Ferdinand de Saussure, and structuralist theorists have been significantly influenced by his thoughts.

### **Methodology, Literature Review, and Purpose**

This is a theoretical research which uses descriptive and analytical methodology. First, the main elements of structuralism, especially binary oppositions, are surveyed in seminal works by structuralist theorists. Then, the biographies of both authors, Kermani and Dahl, are reviewed to obtain information about their social, cultural, and political situation.

The purpose of this study is to explain the similarities and differences between the binary oppositions in the works of an Iranian and a non-Iranian author in order to find out which oppositions can be universal.

There has been no independent research on binary oppositions in children and adolescent literature in Iran. However, research has been done on binary oppositions in other areas of literature; for example, Razmjooei (2016) in “The binary oppositions of war/peace and love/hatred in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*” comes to the conclusion that although love and peace are superior to hatred and war, their superiority is not ‘absolute’. Mohseni (2014) in “A study of binary oppositions in Nima Yushij's ‘Sarivili house’” illustrates how Nima uses binary

oppositions to express the most important differences, similarities, and conflicts of his thoughts against those in power.

### **Discussion**

That binary oppositions are the basis of linguistic knowledge was discussed much earlier than de Saussure in the works of Plato and Aristotle. Aristotle established a dualistic view of human knowledge with his discussions of essence, form, etc., which later influenced literature and other areas of writing. The term was first used by phonologist Nikolai Trubetzkoy. He identified it as the foundation of a value system rooted in cultural history. This term is one of the key concepts in the field of linguistic theories, semiotics, and literary criticism.

Roland Barthes believes that semiotics is based on binary oppositions. In literary criticism, this term is one of the fundamental concepts of structuralism and post-structuralism (deconstruction). Jakobson believed that children learn these oppositions first. In his view, language is based on binary oppositions, and the difference between consonant and vowel sound is the most fundamental element of phonology.

Structuralism and its general orientation are based on the analysis of binary oppositions and the relationship between them. Claude Lévi-Strauss explains that items in a system are juxtaposed in pairs which are connected with each other. Each text is a set of contrasts that encompass confrontations of good and evil, rich and poor, black and white.

### **Conclusion**

By examining the oppositions and analyzing their relationship in the stories by Houshang Moradi Kermani and Roald Dahl, we came to the conclusion that the consequences of poverty in Iran and Britain are the same: children's forced labor and their confrontation with the realities of life. Children are forced to deal with economic problems, illness and hunger when they should actually be enjoying their childhood. In the works of both writers, these poor children's neighbors or classmates are from the rich class of society. This creates problems, since the children either escape or start to protest against the wealthy class. The use of force, violence and insults by the wealthy are other issues addressed by these two authors. The feeling of captivity and slavery felt by the poor are among other common themes employed by both authors.

There are differences in the use of binary oppositions in the works by these two authors, too. In Moradi Kermani's works, poor adults mainly believe in fatalism and superstitions but poor children are realistic; while in Dahl's works, poor adults and children are both realistic. In Moradi Kermani's works, the poor are harmless and they do not have any supporters; while in Dahl's works, the poor cause harassments and have supporters such as doctors or priests.

**Keywords:** Roald Dahl, Houshang Moradi Kermani, binary oppositions, structuralism

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