

**Rereading the Components of Modernity in the Works of
Mohammad Reza Shams**

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Introduction

In today's world, due to changes in life conditions, the issues and concerns of people in society has changed greatly. These changes will definitely lead to changes in the lives children and adolescents, too. Therefore, the authorities in this field, especially writers in the field of children and adolescents, must discover the needs of the new era in order to respond positively to the demands of each generation. "Each generation has its own literature because it is different from previous generations and has its own language and logic" (Sho'arinejad, 1370: 96).

Mohammad Reza Shams is a contemporary writer in the field of children and adolescents who writes stories for children according to the changed needs of society and is the voice of children of his era. "Shams believes that the most important need of today's children is to be recognized. He considers children to be perfect human beings, so he

believes that children's needs must be contemplated as important issues and must be met” (Shams, 1390).

Through telling stories, he aims to familiarize children with the social realities. Accordingly, children of the new age learn to prepare themselves for the phenomenon of alienation in the tumultuous world of the new era. On the other hand, we know that children of the present age are distinct and norm-breaking people and live in a different world than adults, so they have the right to criticize the situation. Children can be prepared to participate in the society by reading these stories. This article examines the outstanding components of modernity such as alienation, critical thinking and norm breaking in the stories of Mohammad Reza Shams.

Research Method, Purpose and Literature

This is a library research using a descriptive-analytic method. First, all of Shams's stories are read accurately with a focus on the semantic components of modernity, including class antagonism, freedom, rationalism, awareness-raising, curiosity, self-centeredness, individuality, etc. The most prominent components in Shams's stories including alienation, critical thinking and stereotyping have been extracted and analyzed.

To explain the concepts, the opinions of theorists such as Eric Fromm, May Lero, McFarlane, Brad Bury, Hicks, Albert Camus, Marshall Berman and Edward Said are used. The aim of this research is to explain the paradigm of modernity in the works of Mohammad Reza Shams. Researchers analyze the most prominent semantic components such as

alienation, critical thinking and stereotyping, thereby familiarizing children with the social issues of modern societies.

This research seeks to answer the following questions: Which semantic components of modernity have a prominent appearance in Shams's works? How do outstanding components affect the lives of children in society?

So far, no individual research has been conducted on the semantic components of modernity in Shams's works. However, some similar researches can be noted. Parsayi (1386) has examined the collected stories named *Balloon and Blue Horses* from the perspective of fantasy, philosophy and the irregularity. Mahdavi (1396) explores the components of magical realism such as point of view, attention to breaking the habit, neutrality of the narrator, paradox, in the story of *Aunt Cherry* from Mohammad Reza Shams. Mehdi Pour-Omrani (1386) has studied Shams's books in terms of structure and content based on the order and sequence of publication. In analyzing the story of *Black and Red Pencil*, Naeimi (1384) believes that contemporary literature is not popular due to complexity and only targets a certain spectrum. Behnam Khu (1397) believes that Shams uses imaginative, mythical, oral, and magical patterns to fantasize his works. Aghapour and Hesampour explore the novel of *The Silly Girl* from the perspective of carnival humor and believe that the teenager in this story with his carnival behavior is a message of change and dynamism.

Conclusion

Modernity caused a huge change in the west in various intellectual, cultural, artistic and economic fields. It also created changes in the field

of children's and adolescent's literature, even in Iran. The present study examines the most prominent semantic components of modernity in the works of Mohammad Reza Shams.

This research shows that in the works of Mohammad Reza Shams, the components of differentiation and stereotyping, critical thinking and alienation have become more evident. People in the present society are unaware of their true existence because of a plethora of problems, and this leads them to the alienation that appears in stories in the form of death, loneliness, identity crisis and bewildered characters. The characters of the stories have not become self-conscious due to this identity crisis; therefore, they act according to the prevailing rules of the society, and some characters think about loneliness and death.

In the field of critical thinking, writers believe that children of the society should be familiar with the problems of the modern society. Therefore, in a critical context, the injustices of society such as patriarchy, weakness in administrative bureaucracy, environmental crisis and child labor are criticized. Consequently, intellectuals who are concerned with the economic and social political conditions of the time and age cannot remain silent.

In another context, modernist literature addresses the specific spectrum and preferences of people in the society. Elites who behave very cautiously; however, modern children are not restricted by the algebra of tradition and choose their own way of life. They are not afraid of distinction. These children are living in a different world than the adult world, a world in which children think about peace and international relations using fantasy elements and want to choose their own way of life by preserving freedom and independence. Such people, because of

their different way of thinking, distance themselves from those around them and dare to think through the component of individuality and break the norms and withdraw from others. This component leads children to appear in a powerful new era and make themselves the centerpiece of things and not be dominated by adults.

Keywords: alienation, critical thinking, stereotyping, Mohammad Reza Shams, modernism.

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