

A Study of Feminist Critical Articles on Children's and Adolescent Literature in the Journal *Ketab-e Mah-e Kudak va Nojavan*

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Abstract

Feminist literary criticism seeks to revise the classical criteria of criticism and literary history, and create a feminine tradition in literature. Studying feminist criticisms in specialized journals can play an important role in showing the direction of this type of criticism in children's and adolescent literature. Using a descriptive and qualitative method and a deductive-inductive content analysis method, the present study examines the articles published between 1997 and 2014 in the journal *Ketab-e Mah-e Kudak va Nojavan* (*The Monthly Book of Children and Young Adults*) that have adopted a feminist approach in order to give an overview of the status of feminist criticism in them. The results show that out of 1073 articles, 27 articles employed this approach. Time has influenced the pieces quantitatively and qualitatively. Female critics are more prolific. The most widely used feminist components are derived from liberal and somewhat radical tendencies. The critics' tendency toward Anglo-American feminist criticism is more than the other tendencies. Well-written titles and introductions, good cover designs, thematic classifications and fitting conclusions and useful suggestions to the readers and writers are among the strengths of the articles. In contrast, giving scant attention to children's literature theories, drawing insufficiently upon feminist approaches in their analyses, insufficient references to the texts, failure to use first-hand sources and dealing with irrelevant issues are some of the weak points of the articles.

Keywords: Feminist Criticism, Children's and Adolescent Literature, Specialized Journals, *Ketab-e Mah-e Kudak and Nojavan*

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

In the second wave of feminism, feminist criticism started to examine children's and adolescent literature. In Iran it started in the 1990s. A decade later the journal *Ketab-e Mah-e Kudak va Nojavan* devoted one issue to feminism and feminist criticism. In other children's and adolescent literature journals, numerous articles started to appear. In the present paper, articles written from a feminist perspective and published in *Ketab-e Mah-e Kudak va Nojavan* in the years 1997-2014 are studied in order to reflect the status of feminist criticism in this journal. The following questions will be answered as well: what feminist theories and forms of feminist criticism were more popular at that time? Were these critical reviews mostly written by men or women? What themes have been most frequently repeated in them? What strengths and weaknesses can be seen in these critical reviews?

2. Theoretical Framework

Some feminist critics have studied women as both readers and writers while others have focused on the feminine language. Some Western critics have examined physical differences between men and women and their effects on literary works produced by female writers. Gender in children's literature has also been studied by some feminist critics. In the present study attempt is made to examine different types of feminist criticism in Iranian children's and adolescent literature in the years 1997-2014.

3. Methodology

The present study relies on descriptive content analysis methodology. In this study first the main components of feminist literary criticism in children's and adolescent literature have been identified and the articles in *Ketab-e Mah-e Kudak va Nojavan* that have adopted a feminist approach have been reviewed.

4. Findings

About 2 per cent (27 out of 1073) of the articles published in *Ketab-e Mah-e Kudak va Nojavan* from 1997 to 2014 were feminist critical reviews of

different literary works. In the 2000s the number of these articles increased and a decade later the articles were more diverse, albeit smaller in number. 25.59 per cent of the articles focused on liberal feminism and 20.94 per cent revolved around radical feminism. Around three-fourths of the critics were more inclined toward British and American feminist criticism, while about one fourth adopted French feminist criticism. About 59 per cent of the critics writing in this journal were women, with Masoumeh Ansarian being the most published writer. 55 per cent of the articles dealt with children's literature and 45 per cent with adolescent literature. The patriarchal structure of families and society was the most recurrent theme and gender discrimination was also focused on in many articles.

5. Conclusion

Moderate liberal feminism and, to a smaller extent, radical feminism attracted more attention compared with other types of feminism. As a result, Anglo-American feminist criticism was drawn upon more in the studies of children's and adolescent literature. Female critics were more active in this period, mostly focusing on literary works produced by women. Of different literary genres, fiction received more attention, with children's fiction eliciting more critical reviews. Well-written titles and introductions, good cover designs, thematic classifications and fitting conclusions and useful suggestions to the readers and writers were among the strengths of the reviews. However, giving scant attention to children's literature theories, drawing insufficiently upon feminist approaches in their analyses, insufficient references to the texts, failure to use first-hand sources and dealing with irrelevant issues were some of the weaknesses of the articles.

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