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# Modern Iranian children's and adolescent literature: The creative path of Farhod Khasanzoda

**Nurboyeva Dilshoda Normamatovna**

Senior Lecturer, Tashkent State Technical University

Email: [dilshodanurboyeva@gmail.com](mailto:dilshodanurboyeva@gmail.com)

**Imamova Gulchehra Zoirovna**

Lecturer, Tashkent State Technical University

Email: [gulchexra.imamova@gmail.com](mailto:gulchexra.imamova@gmail.com)

**Abstract**---This research paper examines the issue of "otherness" in youth fiction, with a focus on typical Iranian youth novels dealing with the relationship between youth and adults. It also provides subtle information about the work of Farhad Hasanzoda as a prolific writer working in various styles of children's and youth literature, who wrote more than 80 works on various topics. He has received many national and international awards. Ideas and world works include *This Blog Turns Over*, *Namaki and the Spectacled Snake*, *Guest on the Moon*, *Call Me Ziba*, etc. This study is designed to read Farhod Khasanzoda's *Bambak Ship Scorpions* through intertextuality which is one of the five forms of transtextuality and reveals prepositions of interest to the author. Further it will be clear that the author created the prepositions of the works, and these prepositions arose when choosing some elements of the story. The author also paid special attention to predictors of mass culture, such as proverbs and allusions, popular songs of that time and slogans of the revolution. For this reason, the presence of this preposition in the work has a high frequency.

**Keywords**---contemporary Iranian children's, adolescent literature, youth novel, Farhod Khasanzoda.

**Introduction**

Literature for young people, especially the novel, has undergone great changes in Iran in the last decade of the twentieth century. However, the attention paid to youth does not necessarily mean that the works created in this area have really given the teenager an independent voice. In a culture where power is still

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**Corresponding author:** Normamatovna, N. D.; Email: [dilshodanurboyeva@gmail.com](mailto:dilshodanurboyeva@gmail.com)

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understood in its conventional form, legitimizing and giving teenagers a voice has had the adverse effect of making them more marginalized and alienated. During this period, a large number of creative and avant-garde works in various genres under the general heading "fiction for young people" were created by writers in the second generation of Iran, for example, Farhod Khasanzoda, Ahmad Akbarpour, Jamshid Khanyan, Fereyduun Amuzade Khalili, Hamidreza Shahabadi, Mohammadreza Shams and others . All of them entered new areas of children's and youth literature.

A look at the history of youth fiction in Iran shows that the relationship between adolescents and adults in these works has changed so much that one can speak of a discursive paradigm shift over the past decade. While it is too strong a claim that youth has found a voice in contemporary fiction, the adolescent-adult relationship is portrayed more realistically in the sense that the adolescent is not relegated to a state of complete otherness in relation to the "strong" adult who is no longer the same. Most of the major contemporary Iranian juvenile science fiction writers have attempted to represent youth subjectivity and culture, filling a gap in previous works that failed to do so. In particular, these authors dealt with the precarious state of youth subjectivity, for example, among young ethnic minorities. However, the imaginary opposition of a teenager and an adult has remained a running motive, which can be interpreted as a result of the ideological pressure of the dominant culture on other subcultures. From this point of view, "adolescence is a different subjectivity. The adolescent himself lives in a state of otherness: rejected from the purity of the social body and constantly exposed to the power structures that surround him or her, so he or she does not have full power. Campbell argues that teenagers tend to be in a lower position than adults. They exist on the periphery of the network of power relations.

In any case, the conflict between youth and adult in defining the boundaries of self and other plays a central role in literature, and therefore requires further study. In this case, the compound word "power" is the key word in the analysis of youth-adult relationships [1-5]. According to Roberta Silinger Trites, more than any other genre, youth fiction reflects power conflicts: The essence of the definition of adolescent literature, as opposed to children's literature, revolves around the issue of power. While growth in children's literature is portrayed as a function of what the character has learned about himself, growth in teen literature is portrayed as a function of what the teenager learns about how society limits power. The adolescent cannot grow up without experiencing the gradation between strength and impotence. Therefore, strength is even more important to the genre than height.

### **Methods of research**

This research paper examines the issue of "otherness" in youth fiction, with a focus on representative Iranian youth novels that deal with the relationship between youth and adults. By examining the supposed opposition between them, and bypassing the current power relations in this area, my aim was not to highlight the conflict, but rather to suggest ways in which the dialogic relationship between youth and adults could be thought of something like intercultural dialogue. The development of communication media has increasingly

transformed the concept of youth and thus led to the erroneous assumption on the part of adults that perhaps a "decadent" youth culture is not well understood. Most often, adults with nostalgia compare their youth with today's younger generation. Even some writers project their views and desires on what youth subjectivity should be. "However, an adult author can completely take the side of a child no better than a white author can completely take the side of a black character or a male author can completely take the side of a female character". He believes that it is impossible to fully recognize otherness; that is, an adult fiction writer would not be able to understand the adolescent's unique experience from his own perspective. As he notes: "The ideology that the novels convey is obviously based on otherness, on the authors' perception of their main characters as others. Here again we are confronted with the inevitable dilemma of writing for a young audience, with an unequal position of power between sender and receiver".

The concept of otherness has different meanings in different literary and cultural contexts and can be studied in different types, such as ethnic, gender, racial and religious otherness. The theme of otherness has been dealt with in different ways in Iranian fiction for young people. Most types of otherness are either absent in the fictional world, or almost not represented in their multiplicity. In my opinion, those types of otherness that are more ideological and resist mainstream political and religious discourses are either underrepresented or distorted to fit within the ideological framework. The other is "used with hatred to refer to how the mainstream culture or gender group views others and minors as exotic, inferior, or simply alien, and so it would be a good idea to erase or assimilate in some form that is overtly violent" or not, ethnic cleansing of something else, an element of "completely different", inhabiting even the most familiar and seemingly "the same".

Vulnerable teenagers, especially working children, have always been featured in Iranian youth literature. The most recurring motif since the 1980s and 1990s is poverty. However, during these decades, the representation of the poor was influenced by Marxist-Communist ideologies, which seem to have left their indomitable mark on the figurative field of society. Child labor is addressed in most of the writings written. Hushang Moradi Kermani, especially in the films "Sweet Jam" and "Children of the Textile Factory". Similarly, as another representative work of Fereydoun Amuzadeh Khalili, *Two Unripe Dates*, poverty and child labor are depicted.

Another group of vulnerable teenagers are the homeless and vagrants. It has often been portrayed in youth fiction. In this regard, two special novels should be mentioned, the heroes of which are homeless teenagers. *Call Me Beautiful* by Farhod Khasanzoda tells the story of the protagonist Ziba (meaning "beautiful") who lives in an orphanage. Her father was sent to a psychiatric hospital. The story begins with Ziba helping her father escape from the hospital to celebrate his birthday. They run into the city. The writer includes the plight of adolescents in the dialogues of the characters and scenes of the novel. Ziba, having no social support, is forced to take care of her father. Addressing this topic and depicting the physical and mental problems caused by the homelessness of a young girl seems to be a subversive move on the part of the author. In many ways this can

be interpreted as a form of "otherness" which is at the same time a very familiar everyday experience; it gives voice to that particular social class.

Another novel that realistically portrays homelessness and vagrancy is *From Her Twelve Cursed Fingers* by Azam Mahdavi. The protagonist of the novel, Ava, is an orphaned teenager who used to live with her aunt, but decides to run away because of her abuse. She meets Hepell, a homeless old woman with six fingers on each hand, who herself has run away from a nursing home. They do their best to find shelter. However, they are excluded from society. Even those who help them find shelter will later insult the two characters. The mosque, which is supposed to be a refuge for all the poor, will receive them for no more than one night. In such a society, a teenage girl has no choice but to resort to cross-dressing. She dresses like boys, shaves her hair and talks like men in order to get a job. The concept of family is questioned throughout the novel, especially the rule of uniformity and conformity. Ava decides to leave her aunt and cousins behind and live with homeless people who have run away from their past and are intent on starting over. Class and cultural boundaries are defining, and even consanguineous people can only be seen as different because of the different culture in which they grew up. In this novel, culture defines the boundaries of self and others more than family relationships. The story touches on a controversial topic, a serious social problem. Homelessness is becoming widespread, so the depiction of a homeless female voice, her feelings, and efforts to access education and a better life in the novel can be understood as a constructive step in improving the condition. However, it should be noted that the author was too idealistic about the topic. The characters in the novel are too fortunate to experience the social damage caused by homelessness. They even manage to find work in a safe place. The presence of the old woman, a symbol of experience, helps Ava protect herself from some of this damage. However, Ava is too quick to trust the old woman. In fact, few runaway teens have had a chance to survive the perils of homelessness. The idealistic perspective of the novel is reflected in the attempt to unite the loneliness of the characters in order to create a whole new self for them. According to Izadpanah, in most societies identity discourses are constructed by drawing boundaries between self and others. The other becomes important to us only when we can strengthen our own sense of identity through differences. The other is reduced to something like "not-us" and is considered to have an instrumental function, while remaining outside. Ava, the old woman and Said are exiles; people thrown out of society beyond the boundaries of the self. However, these three are capable of starting a family and creating a new identity for themselves.

In the past, the image of the disabled person and the handicapped in literary works tended to imply a sense of evil that evoked negative feelings. Physical handicap or deformity is a cliché often used in children's literature to refer to magicians, witches, and evil fortune-tellers. Other examples include crippled pirates and vicious one-eyed sailors. Unfortunately, people with mental and physical disabilities not only found themselves marginalized in society due to disenfranchisement, but also remained on the periphery of youthful fiction, without giving any distinct voice in literature. However, *Crazy Girl* by Mohammadreza Shams and *A Star Called a Monster* by Mohammadreza Yousefi are among the few novels whose protagonists are disabled people suffering from

loneliness and social ostracism. In *Crazy Girl*, the narrator is Khanombas, which literally means "enough girls."<sup>2</sup> She is a confused girl who others think is crazy. However, she is very similar to a liar, and therefore, to a "wise fool." The entire story is told using the stream of consciousness technique, which is the product of the narrator's fragmented mind. The traditional patriarchal society treats the khanombas very ruthlessly. Under the rule of her dictator father, she married an old man. By choosing a fearless "crazy" female narrator, the author creates a space in which a repressed female voice has a chance to be heard; women who should only work at home and protest against nothing are now presented as active and active. Khanombas uses his madness to oppose the prevailing patriarchal system.

However, nothing but protest can be done, and she, like hundreds of women, remains oppressed. For example, she says to her master husband, "Don't be such a rude person!" [6-9]. Teenager and an adult are not two isolated islands. They are the forerunners of two cultures rooted in civilization and able to legitimize individual voices. A teenager and an adult help each other overcome obstacles and move forward. Therefore, the alleged confrontation and conflict between their cultures can be interpreted as a sign of dynamism and progress. This type of competition is necessary for the existence of any dynamic society. Both parties are expected to challenge the dominant discourses and create a new functional discourse in order to gain power.

The main motivation for this essay was not simply to highlight the binary opposition between adult and adolescent, but the unequal relationship between adolescents and adults. My goal has been to explore this topic in order to suggest ways to eliminate or reduce this type of inequality. With a focus on youth fiction, I have tried to offer critical readings to demonstrate how we can help teenagers achieve freedom, justice, and equality. They are always exposed to ideologies and face a vast world of otherness. Adolescents, endlessly competing in a web of power relationships with parents and other adults, need dialogue with those in power, ethnic groups and values, religious and local traditions that are "other". By integrating and localizing the voices of these types of otherness in their own culture, they are certainly able to acquire a better identity.

In my opinion, their life would be more enjoyable if they acknowledged the presence of other people. If literature could be seen as playing an important role in rethinking power relations and acknowledging the "other," it would become more dialogic and therefore enjoyable. Such literature will not attempt to impose dominant ideologies on the adolescent and adolescent. Instead, it is recognized that the creative role in the reading process belongs to the adolescent, who, through pleasure and dialogue, critically reads the text and, as an audience, is one of the important aspects of the reading process. This contrasts with the view that adolescents are seen as secondary subjects who need to be educated for socialization.

Another issue is the large gap between adolescents in society and their representation in youth fiction. The discourse on which young science fiction writers have relied, rather than reflecting the thoughts and actions of adolescents, is about the writers' experiences in their own youth. Traditional power relations

can be replicated in the modern world. While these conventions are adapting to the current situation, society can still be seen reproducing the traditional masculine force that represses teenagers or, at best, ionizes this type of monophonic literature.

While most of the world's youth fiction tends to be more dialogic and subversive, highlighting the web of power and seeking to reduce inequalities by highlighting previously marginalized ethnic groups, the question is whether the contemporary form of youth fiction can make progress given her carelessness. to the agent role of teenagers? In the long run, the authors of fiction for young people themselves will remain outside the culture of their audience. I believe that the dialogical representation of otherness and interaction with adolescents will benefit adolescents as much as adults by allowing them to confront the dangers of being on the periphery.

One of the problems of scholars and writers in youth literature is the tendency of teenagers to read translated works, which has made Iranian works less popular. From the point of view of cultural semiotics, we can say that in this regard, there was an authorization of a foreign culture and the subordination of their own culture by adolescents. Adolescents who have always remained on the periphery of self-culture, distancing themselves from the center, are more likely to leave the culture of the self and adopt the culture of another. Fiction for young people published in other countries seems to represent the lives of teenagers more realistically and respect their autonomy and uniqueness more than Iranian ones.

They came to terms with adolescent development along with advances in information technology and gradually became resistant to didactics and direct pedagogical goals. Moreover, most of the themes such as diaspora, special diseases and online friendships have been touched upon while they are almost absent in Iranian youth fiction. This is ironic given the fact that these issues have a direct impact on the lives of Iranian teenagers. A brief review of non-Persian theoretical and applied research in youth fiction shows that topics such as power, adolescent voice, identity, gender, embodiment, avalanche and ideological readings are among the most important. The emphasis on these themes can be interpreted in at least two ways.

First, the attention paid to these topics by various scholars; secondly, the presence of elements of freedom of action in fiction for young people, which requires theoretical discussions. The more avant-garde and innovative literature for young people, the more fruitful theoretical creativity can be. As mentioned earlier, Iranian literature for young people did little to address the issue of otherness, and even when it did, the focus was on poverty and people on the periphery of cities or villages. While there has been a recent surge in fiction dealing with issues of gender, religious minorities, ethnic and racial otherness, special illnesses, and child labour, there is still more creative and dialogic work to be done in this area to truly give teenagers a voice. Farhod Khasanzoda is a gifted writer for children and youth, characterized by a fluent and simple style, but a realistic and forward-thinking approach to storytelling. Farhod Khasanzoda is prone to juvenile literature, especially longer stories and novels.

By providing numerous images and points of view, Hasanzoda is looking for new styles in storytelling. Accordingly, he practices a new style of storytelling in his book called *Charlie's Game*. In this story, he writes surrealistically, mixing fiction with reality. In this story, he is concerned about poverty, the way of life of vagrants, and teenage traffickers in his society. Farhod Khasanzoda in his story "Dishlambu" considers poverty, destitution and runaway teenagers as a shame for the whole society. Its unique innovation lies in its sectional style of storytelling, which is consistent with road signs indicating the distance between cities on a bus journey. The two stories, "Charlie's Game" and "Dishlambu", have simple, straight-forward plots, but rhythmic, harmonious style and narrative make up for the lack of conflict in the story. Farhod Khasanzoda's imagination and creativity are looking for innovation in storytelling. He uses the symbols of modern urban life and withdraws from the routine of social life in order to penetrate its apparent hard shell and discover its true core.

One of the most fantastic writing styles is to tell the story behind another. The reader will then read two stories at the same time. Dorna is a teenage girl living in Abadan. She finds a diary in a bookstore warehouse that contains a love story. She is so excited about this story that she takes the diary from the owner, who is actually the owner of the shop. She uploads some parts of the story to her blog called "Keys". The blog audience will read about Zal's history and his teenage love. When the war began, Zal lived and worked in a bird shop. He was head over heels in love with his neighbor's daughter Fariba. But the war separates them for a long time. Fariba's mother, who has decided to leave the city with her daughters because of the war, leaves the keys to their house to Zalu to take care of. The keys force Zal to stay in Abadan and wait for his beloved. Dorna shares this story with many people on her blog, but she cannot change anything and find Zal's beloved.

The most important characteristic of the novel "This blog will be transferred" is its innovative plot and form. In fact, the novel is presented in the form of a blog, and user comments are left on its pages. Viewers will get to know the main characters of the story through the posts that Dorna leaves on her blog. But the writer used the common form of writing a novel, in which Zal's diary is presented sequentially on a web blog. Because the narrator in these sections is Zal, the story is presented from his point of view; consequently, all judgments and affections of the audience depend on the ideas and emotions of the Hall. Farhad Hasanzoda stated that the novel is the result of seven years of reflection on this topic. He was going to write a story about blogs and social networks and put off this idea for seven years. He eventually came up with Dorna's story. To test the appeal of his story, Farhod Khasanzoda uploaded some parts of the story to a blog called "Keys"[11], collected comments on the blog and used them in some parts of the story.

Farhod Khasanzoda, who survived the war as a teenager, used his own experience in his novel, as he did in *The Moon Guest*, to make the story more realistic and believable. This is a story of one-sided love and time that has gone by. Hasti, a girl who loves to be herself. You will read just one chapter of the book and find out that you have a new character in front of you. You will meet Hasti, the tomboy. She looks so much like a boy that only a taxi driver doesn't think she's a boy. At

first, even the reader might think that the narrator is really a naughty boy, as in many other stories. The presence of a heroine saved the story from repetition. This makes the story even more compelling. But the author faces the difficult task of making the heroine believable in all the vicissitudes of her life. But that's not all. When you meet Hasti, disaster strikes. A war breaks out between Iran and Iraq, causing Hasti and her family to emigrate. I wonder if the author created Hastie's character first and then decided to put her in a war zone, or did he decide to tell the story of the war from the beginning and then dumped Hastie in the middle of it? Either way, the war drastically distracts you from focusing on Hasty and Hasti's life. The war creates a new atmosphere throughout the story, which plays a vital role in the plot. Hasti is a brave girl who is misunderstood by her parents, especially her father. But now they're in the middle of a war, and everything has changed. This alienated them from home. They encounter new characters such as their uncle who has decided to stay in the city and protect it, their grandmother who is waiting for her, and their grandfather who is afraid of war. They are representatives of their groups in society.

On the other hand, war can reveal the complexities of different characters, especially Hastie. Unlike her father, Hastie is a brave girl and returns to her city to protect it. Farhod Khasanzoda has applied humor as the main style of his stories or as a pinch of salt to his style, in novels such as Hasti and The Scorpions of the Bambek Ship. He has used various humorous styles and genres in press and magazines, such as "The Classmates' Bulletin" which was published for several years in a humorous style, and then a selection of it was published in 3 books. Short humorous books: 20 book, such as Ice-cream and Carrot Juice, Watermelon for Love, The Memoires of the Vampire in Love, which deals with behavioral and social problem in simple humorous language.

Articles and Teaching: He has written a few articles on the humor in children's stories and has been teaching its writing style to Kanoon's trainers. Farhod Khasanzoda has been working in the most popular children and teens magazines for over 15 years. These periodicals are called "Bicycle" and "Tricycle", which are published and freely distributed along with "Hamshahri" daily newspaper in Iran. "Bicycle" is published on Thursdays and "Tricycle" once in a month. They are released in 500,000 issues every time. He has been a member of Roshd magazine's editorial board at times. He has also won some awards for his journalistic works in the press festivals.

Farhod Khasanzoda has several meetings with his audience every year. He travels to distant cities and towns to meet his audience there. He regularly attends the Book Week programs and other relevant programs held in cultural centers and libraries. One of the programs is "The Train of Childhood", in which some authors and some children travel to other cities on trains to tell and narrate them some stories. In addition to stories, he also writes film scripts and some of his stories have been turned into movies: The Treasure and the Fog series which was based on the novel, "Masho in the Fog" and was broadcasted on television. The Vender and the Bespectacled Snake animated series which was produced adapted from a book with the same name and was broadcasted on TV.

The Biggest Ruler of the World in which he played the role of an author. Some of his works are being produced right now, such as *Hasti*, *Kooti Kooti Tales*, *Call Me Ziba*, *Moonlight's Guest*, *The Backyard* [7-11]. Farhod Khasanzoda has always been involved in social activities: He is one of the pioneers of the Children Writers Association and has been a member of its managing board several times. In 2001, he was the general director of a festival held by the Children Writers Association. It was "The Home Libraries Festival", which aimed to recognize and support the informal or family libraries. The judges of the festival were Mahmood Dolatabadi, Naser Taghvaii, Kiomars Saberi, Nooshafarin Ansari, Mostafa Rahmadoost, and Abdolhossein Azarang. He has also attended the Rehabilitation Centers for the imprisoned children and young adults to read them stories. He asked one of those social workers there to write his memories about these kids and he later changed it into a fictional story. He has also reported his visits to these centers in the magazines. Since he passed a part of his childhood and youth in the war between Iran and Iraq, he has always been concerned about the children with special illnesses and disabilities. He has written a few film scripts about children suffering from cancer for the television. He has also attended the schools for blind and disabled children and has published some audio and Brail books for them.

### **Conclusion**

Farhod Khasanzoda has completely devoted his life to children literature. He started writing when he was a teenager, but it has been 30 years since he started writing professionally. He has published several books for children and teens every year or has published some poems, stories, or humors in their journals or has delivered lectures for them. He has not been really earning much, but has always been trying to write for children and young adults. He has written many stories in the parks, in the basement or in the warehouse of a printing office, away from home. He has won 30 awards in Iran, where few institutes and organizations hold any festivals. He has been able to gain his own style of writing through many years of writing, which has proven to be popular and has won so many awards. His delicate humor not only delights children but also teach them critical thinking. The beginner children are encouraged to read more when they read his writings. Some of his books have been suggested to be studied at schools by the Educational Organization, and two stories of his have been published in the school textbooks. Writing through layers, he has been able to attract both children and adults. Deconstructionism and post-modernism are uniquely revealed in his works, but they are not copies or fakes, rather in service of the text. He is also concerned with his audience's needs and questions; therefore, he is available online through the visual world. His works have been studied and investigated in over 10 theses and dissertations. 30 criticisms on his works have been published in various magazines and journals.

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