

## An Evaluation of the Children's Book Council's Performance in the 1970s: A Focus on Award-Winning Poetry

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### Abstract

Since its establishment in the 1960s, the Children's Book Council (CBC) has endeavored to elevate Iranian children's literature by setting criteria for evaluating and selecting the best works. Given the significance of literary awards and distinguished books in shaping readers' minds and guiding the literary community, this paper examines the criteria set forth by this institution and the extent to which they align with the award-winning works of the 1970s. This analysis critically evaluates the Council's performance during this influential decade and revisits a pivotal period in the history of children's and young adult literature, as well as the history of Persian poetry criticism. During this decade, three works by Mahmoud Kiyanoush—*The Green Indian Parrot*, *Silver-Winged Golden Beak*, and *The Garden of Stars*—were selected by the Council. The selection of three works by Kiyanoush indicates that the Council, both theoretically and in its practical application of production and creation criteria, was influenced by this poet's ideas. Based on the Council's reviews and the findings of this research, the criteria for poetry criticism underwent significant changes in this decade compared to the previous one. A reliance on artistic originality and poetic essence, as well as a focus on a child's perspective, were the most important criteria during this period. This

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approach to children's poetry played a crucial role in the transformations of subsequent decades.

**Keywords:** *Children's Book Council, Children's poetry of the fifties, Mahmoud Kiyanoush, Criticism of children's poetry in Iran.*

### **Extended Abstract**

#### **1, Introduction**

From its inception, the Children's Book Council (CBC) recognized a void in the history of Persian literature regarding children's poetry. To address this, they encouraged poets to contribute to this neglected genre. One of the council's strategies was to select and commend outstanding works. Because they receive greater attention, these selected works play a pivotal role in cultivating and shaping the audience's taste. In 1977, there were only five children's poetry books (Sehrab, 1979, p. 27). Among these, three by Mahmoud Kiyanoush—*The Green Indian Parrot* (for ages 5-7), *Golden Beak*, *Silver Wing* (for ages 6-9), and *The Garden of Stars* (for ages 8-10)—were chosen as exemplary works. Given the council's criteria and the transformations brought about by Kiyanoush's emphasis on artistic authenticity and poetic essence in that decade, the question arises: Was the council successful and accurate in its selection and the application of its criteria? In other words, how did children's poetry and the Children's Book Council's approach evolve compared to the previous decade, which focused on language and content? After introducing the selected works and the council's report, this paper will first examine these works in terms of language, and theme, and then from a musical and visual perspective. Finally, the extent to which the works align with the council's criteria will be evaluated.

#### **2. Literature Review**

- Ali Asghar Seyyedabadi: "A Critical Analysis of Kiyanoush's Views"
- Yahya Alavi Fard: Master's thesis titled "A Stylistic Analysis of Children's Poetry in Iran with a Focus on Mahmoud Kiyanoush and Others"
- Zahra Khani: "Prominent Themes in Children's Poetry: The Works of Mahmoud Kiyanoush and Others"

- Narges Oskooei and Leila Khani Pour: "Imagination and Imagery in the Poetry of Mahmoud Kiyanoush and Others"
- Peyman Esmacili and Asghar Reza Pourian: "Accompanying Music in Children's Poetry: Rich and Poor Rhymes in Mahmoud Kiyanoush's Poetry"

### **3. Methodology**

This paper employs a qualitative content analysis. By extracting the criteria for children's poetry from various sources reflecting the Children's Book Council's views, the application and extent of these criteria in the selected works are examined and evaluated.

### **4. Results**

In the 1960s, children's poetry primarily focused on linguistic aspects and moral and didactic themes, a decidedly traditional approach. However, the 1970s witnessed significant transformations in the criticism of children's poetry. Content-centricity, didacticism, and instructive elements gradually lost their previous importance, while formal and linguistic aspects of poetry gained prominence. With the emergence of Mahmoud Kiyanoush, poetic essence, and artistic authenticity became paramount in poetry. In this decade, as both a poet and a significant theorist in the field of children's poetry, Kiyanoush established new criteria within the Children's Book Council and embodied these views in his own poetry. Respecting children as serious and important audiences and not underestimating children's capacity for artistic appreciation were among the most significant achievements of this decade. The selected works were noteworthy for their poetic essence, simple and child-friendly language, substantial themes, serious consideration of the audience's understanding, and artistic presentation of poetic imagery. However, this approach was not consistently applied across all of Kiyanoush's poetry, and poems with didactic language and adult-oriented expressions can also be found in his works. These poems contradict the poet's own criteria and can be disregarded. The introduction of innovative and creative forms, light and cheerful rhythms, rich rhymes, and abundant pleasant repetitions collectively provide a suitable musicality to Kiyanoush's poetry, bringing it closer to the council's criteria. Nevertheless, the books' visual aspects, including the scarcity or weakness of cover images, do not align with the council's views on the visual nature of children's books. Surprisingly, and contrary to its own criteria and the principles of children's book writing, the council cited the lack of accompanying

images as a virtue of the selected works, which is both artistically and psychologically unacceptable.

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