

## Representations of Character in *Cheshmhayash* and *Del-e Koor*: A Symbolic Interactionist Study

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### Abstract

Narratology considers the element of character to be the drive behind roles and actions in a narrative. The sociological theory of “symbolic interactionism” is also concerned with how actions occur. Employing this sociological approach, we can expand the critical method of narratology and introduce new aspects in sociological studies of narrative texts. Using the “self” theory in the sociological approach of “symbolic interactionism”, this article discusses the types of action and the types of character in Bozorg Alavi’s *Cheshmhayash* (*Her Eyes*) and Esmael Fasih’s *Del-e Koor* (*The Blind Heart*). Therefore, the narrative style of the two authors in the production of character is analyzed and compared. The article considers the narrative character as “self” in the symbolic interactionist theory. The novel *Cheshmhayash* has two types of active and passive “collective self”. The active “collective self”, in a concerted effort, narrates the story in opposition to the political structure. Thus, the novel’s “self” is marginalized in political relations. It narrates the first and second halves of the Pahlavi period. Characterization in *Del-e-koor* is determined by a “social me” and form a violent and self-serving “collective self” at the core of the society depicted in the novel. The active characters’ individualistic opposition to this “collective self” leads to their marginalization in the novel’s social life.

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## **Extended Abstract**

### **1. Introduction**

Barthes regards character as a participant rather than a being. As one of the most important elements of a novel, character is an individual participant who finds textuality in every narrative. The symbolic interactionist theory is mainly concerned with actions. This theory regards society as a collection of actions and reactions and adopts a realistic, down-to-earth outlook toward the study of the collective life and behavior of humans. Blumer conducts his research in the real world and bases his interpretations on naturalistic inquiry. Therefore, the characters in the novels *Cheshmhayash* and *Del-e Koor* can be analyzed using the symbolic interactionist theory.

### **2. Theoretical Framework**

The present paper relies on the idea of Blumer to study the characters in two Persian novels. Blumer's 'self' is developed through the relation between 'I' and the 'social me'. As a participant in a narrative, character is inseparable from actions and events, which eventually determines its features.

### **3. Methodology**

The present study employs the descriptive-analytical approach to illustrate different kinds of character and utilizes the symbolic interactionist theory and Herbert Blumer's idea of 'self' to represent characters' social status in two Iranian novels.

### **4. Discussion and Analysis**

In *Cheshmhayash* two kinds of characters are represented: a character with traditional, religious ideas, represented by Rajab and Farangis's mother; and, the other one is a modern 'self', represented by Makan and Farangis. The pressure on the part of the semantic network and social structures in *Del-e Koor* deprive 'I' of freedom in its encounter with the 'social me' and 'self' of characters. The characters in *Cheshmhayash* are

divided into educated ones whose properties have been confiscated by the government, and another group of educated people from poor families. Each of these characters is an 'individual self' that acts in the 'collective self'. In *Del-e Koor*, a kind of 'collective self' forms the society and characters of two different 'individual self' types, which are in conflict with each other.

### 5. Conclusion

The characters in *Cheshmhayash* are divided into two types. In one group the 'social me', as structural and cultural facts, dominate the 'I'. In this novel, characters, as the 'collective self' act against the ruling power, and the most important action is the characters' struggle for freedom. In *Del-e Koor*, the dominant norms, i.e., the 'social me' dominate the 'I' and subjugates the 'self'. The characters, by accepting the hegemony of the 'social me' act against the violent, opportunist 'collective self'. The struggle between individuals and also between the individual and society is of great significance.

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