

Study and Analysis of the Elements of the Classical and Modern Novel in Sadegh Hedayat's The Blind Owl

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Article Info (۲۵۸-۲۳۷)**ABSTRACT****Article****type:**

Research

Article

Article**history:**

Received:

۲۰۲۴/۰۹/۰۴

Accepted:

۲۰۲۵/۰۲/۲۶

Keywords:

Modern

novel

Blind Owl

New

components

uncertainty

ambiguity

discrete

plot

The new novel is a new form of writing that always seeks to find feelings, vague spiritual impressions, and human escapes, and then conveys them from an objective and impartial perspective that does not belong to the narrator and the reader. A writing that has lost its clarity, explanation of values, principles of traditional order, modern human descriptions, politics, etc. In the classic novel, the story corresponds to the understanding of an ordered world, but in the new novel, the story falls apart, and the attractiveness of the subject and the logical sequence of events and characters in the story are not important to the author. Therefore, Sadegh Hedayat's novel The Blind Owl is considered a modern novel that includes components such as uncertainty, disjointed plot, ambiguity, heterogeneous time and place, formalism, realized characters, the flow of the mind, the serious presence of the reader, and an open ending. The purpose of this research is to examine and analyze the components of the modern novel in Sadegh Hedayat's The Blind Owl. The research method is descriptive-analytical and library-based. The results of the research show that among these characteristics, uncertainty, ambiguity, and disjointed plot have a very high frequency.

Citation: Keshavarz Qadim, Ali; Din Mohammadi Keresfi, Nosrat A... (2025). Study and analysis of the components of the classical and modern novel in Sadegh Hedayat's Bufkor. Modern Literary Studies, 4(2) 237-258
Publisher: Association for the Promotion of Persian Language and Literature



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DOI: [20.1001.1.28211413.1404.4.2.10.0](https://doi.org/10.28211/1413.1404.4.2.10.0)

Introduction

The evolution of the novel from the nineteenth-century realist-classical tradition to twentieth-century modernism and the *Nouveau Roman* (New Novel) marks a radical paradigm shift in narrative structure, epistemology, and aesthetics. While the classical novel relies upon linear causality, an omniscient or coherent perspective, stable characterization, and a predictable, closed plot reflecting an ordered universe, the modern novel dismantles these conventions. Modernist fiction prioritizes formal experimentation over conventional content, deconstructs linear chronotopes, embraces epistemological skepticism, and repositions the reader as an active co-creator of textual meaning.

Sadeqh Hedayat's masterpiece, *The Blind Owl* (*Boof-e Koor*, 1937), stands as a foundational milestone in modern Persian fiction. Although widely explored from psychoanalytic, mythological, and sociological vantage points, a focused, systematic structural examination comparing its traditional underpinnings with modernist narrative components remains essential. This study aims to delineate, analyze, and evaluate the specific components of modern fiction present in *The Blind Owl*—such as narrative uncertainty, fragmented plot, pervasive ambiguity, non-linear spatiotemporality, reader participation, and internal monologue—and to assess how these techniques subvert classical storytelling norms.

Method

This research adopts a descriptive-analytical methodology conducted through library and archival research. The primary text under investigation is Sadeqh Hedayat's *The Blind Owl*. The theoretical framework draws upon modern narrative theories, structuralist and post-structuralist poetics, and the aesthetic principles of the *Nouveau Roman* formulated by theorists and practitioners such as Nathalie Sarraute, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Claude Simon, Roland Barthes, and David Lodge.

Through close textual analysis, the study identifies, extracts, and categorizes narrative deviations from classical conventions across several core components:

١. Epistemological and narrative uncertainty (*Adam-e Ghate'iyyat*);
٢. Ambiguity, defamiliarization, and anachrony;
٣. Reader agency and co-authorship;
٤. The autonomy of language and writerly textuality;

۵. Formalist dominance over conventional content;
۶. Non-commitment (*Art for Art's Sake* / rejection of prescriptive ideology);
۷. De-individualized and spectral characterization;
۸. Subjective, non-linear temporality (Bergsonian duration / stream of consciousness);
۹. Abstract, dreamlike spatiality;
۱۰. Fragmented, open-ended plot; and
۱۱. Monologic dialogue and interiority.

Results

The comprehensive textual analysis demonstrates that *The Blind Owl* systematically deconstructs classical narrative models through several defining modernist components:

۱. **Uncertainty and Epistemological Skepticism:**

The novel replaces deterministic causality with deep epistemological doubt. Hedayat consistently employs modal hedging and hesitant markers (*perhaps, apparently, it seemed as if, did I really see this?*), obliterating the boundary between waking reality, hallucination, and dream. The unresolved ending and contradictory layers prevent any definitive interpretation.

۲. **Pervasive Ambiguity and Defamiliarization:**

Emulating modern aesthetic principles (akin to William Empson's and Cleanth Brooks' formulations), the text utilizes anachrony, shifting focalizations, and distorted chronology. The narrative does not depict external reality but a fluid, solipsistic psychic landscape.

۳. **Active Reader Participation:**

Moving away from the passive readership demanded by classical realism, *The Blind Owl* operates as a *writerly text (texte scriptible)*. By embedding gaps, structural contradictions, and recurring symbolic motifs (e.g., the ethereal woman, the cypress tree, the blue morning glory flower, the hunched old man), Hedayat compels the reader to synthesize fragmented clues and construct meaning.

ξ. **Autonomy of Language, Form, and Non-Commitment:**

Language ceases to be a mere mimetic instrument transmitting ideological, moral, or political messages (rejecting classical social commitment). Instead, writing itself becomes the central subject. Hedayat crafts a rhythmic, claustrophobic, and self-referential prose where form precedes and dictates content.

ο. **De-heroization and Spectral Characterization:**

Classical individuation, moral agency, and rounded characters are replaced by fluid, fragmented archetypes and shadow figures (the narrator, the ethereal girl, the *Lakkateh*, the rasp-bottle seller/old man). These figures seamlessly dissolve into one another, reflecting psychological dissociation and existential alienation rather than stable social types.

ϒ. **Bergsonian Temporality and Abstract Spatiality:**

Time is liberated from chronological and historical progression, unfolding as psychological duration (*durée*) governed by involuntary memory and stream of consciousness. Space is similarly stripped of realistic geography; settings (the narrator's isolated room, the surreal ruins of Rey) function as psychic projections and claustrophobic inner states.

Υ. **Fragmented Plot and Monologic Dialogue:**

The tripartite classical plot (exposition, climax, resolution) is dismantled in favor of cyclical repetitions, recurring tableaux, and an open, ambiguous finale. Dialogues are internalized, transforming into dramatic monologues addressed to the narrator's own shadow on the wall, embodying profound existential isolation and the impossibility of authentic interpersonal communication.

Conclusion

The study concludes that Sadegh Hedayat's *The Blind Owl* decisively departs from the structural, thematic, and linguistic paradigms of the classical novel, manifesting the quintessential characteristics of modernist and *Nouveau Roman* poetics. Among these components, **narrative uncertainty**, **structural ambiguity**, and a **fragmented plot** exhibit the highest operational frequency. By dissolving deterministic causality, linear time, and objective space, Hedayat pioneered an innovative narrative



language in modern Persian literature—one that challenges conventional mimetic representations and elevates the novel into an open, self-reflexive labyrinth of existential and psychological inquiry.