

# A Study of Postmodern Elements in Mohammad Reza Kateb's "Lowness"

Hamid Ali Kordkelaei

Assistant Professor of Persian Language and Literature,  
Paymenoor University of Tehran, Iran

## Article Info

Volume 83

Page Number: 2366 - 2378

Publication Issue:

March - April 2020

## Abstract:

Along with the creation of the art works, their critical study has always been conducted. The knowledge of the techniques and constitutive elements of art can on the one hand open new horizons before the artists and be influential in the richness and value of the future artists and on the other hand, cast light on the dark sides of the art works, and in this way enlighten the minds of the viewers, audience and readers of these works as regards the depths of art and provide the path for further enjoyment and pleasure. In current essay we have studied postmodern features and elements in the novel of "Lowness" by Mohammad Reza Kateb in order to reveal the quantity and quality of the presence of postmodern rules and regulations in this work. Mohammad Reza Kateb, though is among the pioneers of "postmodernism" in the field of novel, other great writers have taken major steps in this path before him and presented precious and valuable works in Persian literature. He has certainly taken great advantage of the works of these writers who have helped him to take deeper and more comprehensive steps in this path. Many of his works particularly the novel entitled "Lowness" have taken advantage of this style and method in a way that the world of his novel as compared to other novels is more ambiguous, doubtful and chaotic. The novel "Lowness" is a complicated puzzle in which the characters and events are suspended in the air and the "death of author" can be vividly and easily deduced here. Constitutive elements of postmodernism show themselves in this novel and the author has willingly provided an extensive ground for their parade. In this study we will discuss the most important and frequent ones of these features and elements.

## Article History

Article Received: 24 July 2019

Revised: 12 September 2019

Accepted: 15 February 2020

Publication: 19 March 2020

**Keywords:** Fiction, Postmodernism, Constitutive Elements, Kateb, Lowness.

## I. Introduction

Fictions in the course of time and due to the close relations of human societies have undergone through sensible changes in line with the development of communicational technologies and under the influence of western intellectual and artistic currents. They have increasingly distanced themselves from the tradition and pre-modern era and crossed the borders of modernism and experienced new

forms and contents in postmodern storywriting. This transcendence from the premodern and modern rules and techniques and reaching the artistic features of postmodernism in the art of storywriting can be vividly seen in various contemporary stories and this harmony with the contemporary literary currents in the world seems to be undeniable.

“After the emergence of the idea of postmodernism and as a result of it, the creation of fundamental changes in the art of western fiction, within a very short time, we have been witness to the emergence of constitutive elements and features of postmodern stories in the novels of Iranian writers. Postmodern philosophy has basically declared war against structuralism, essentialism and realism, then this philosophy is considered as a complicated cluster concept” (Nozari, 2001: 2). Lyotard answers the question if postmodernism is not a movement beyond modernism, then what is in the following words: “It is undoubtedly part of the modern movement” (Calinicos, 2003: 36).

Mohammad Reza Kateb is among the renowned novelists of the past decade in Iran who due to his familiarity with the contemporary western methods of storywriting, on the one hand, and his knowledge of elements and features of the traditional and premodern stories, on the other hand, has succeeded to create works that can be only critically reviewed only in the form of “individual style”. He has just published nine stories of “First Step”, “Lantern at Hand”, “Rain Dopelets”, “Yellow Eyes of Fall”, “Funeral of Master Vala”, “You Were Greatly Missed”, “Earthly Disasters”, “Passing the Shirt”, and “Fairly in the Mirror” in 1980s.

The most important feature of his stories is “indeterminacy”. The most visible and clearest feature of the works of Kateb is too many footnotes in which the author struggles to follow the details of the story and complete it. The other element that constitutes his stories is violence. Following this violence, “death” has also influenced the works of Kateb. In all of Kateb’s novels, one or several men are facing

death. Redundancy and lack of attention to shortening is one of the deficiencies of his novels. Kateb is truly interested in providing too many details and boring redundancies (specifically in “Dear Chameleons”). Since this essay is devoted to the explanation and discussion of the postmodern features of “Lowness”, we should turn to the sufficient delineation of the postmodern elements of this novel.

“Lowness” is a novel composed of seven parts or short stories. These seven short stories although presented in an integrated form of a novel first and some parts of them precede the others in terms of their publication date, now form a novel based on certain indices, signs and hidden and clear indications of the author. According to the theory of “Death of Author”, it is the active mind of the reader that should depict the ups and downs of the story using the factor of “replacement” and selection of one of the several existing alternatives in order to provide the ground for a better understanding of a coherent narration.

## **II. Method:**

The present study seeks to assay the novel “Lowness” by Mohammad Reza Kateb in view of its structural features and its compatibility with the principles and rules of postmodernism. It also intends to study the scope and quality of this artistic movement and in an implicit but deep way explain the contemporary fiction in terms of its quantity and quality.

To this end, first by taking samples from these texts the approximate frequency of this type of abnormalities and their quality and the influence of each one of these rules on the fictional practice and the development of the

events of the story are determined in order to provide answers to the following questions:

- 1- Whether the features of postmodernism have been influential in the development of fictional action and the realism of “Lowness”?
- 2- How is the quantity and quality of the postmodern features in the novel at issue?
- 3- What will be the effects of the postmodern abnormalities in the form of Persian novels in the attraction of indigenous reader?

According to the major ideas and theories of researchers and experts, “Lowness” should be studied and analyzed by description of the intended details and in view of the quality of application of postmodern factors and given the quality of the data its outcome will be reflected.

### **Postmodern Elements of “Lowness”:**

“Postmodern use is not merely of a historical meaning and it is not intended to refer to the emergence of a movement “after” modernism; rather it is precision, conditionality and perfection, or one would say, determinacy of modernism. According to Lyotard, postmodernism is equal to understanding modernism in addition to its crises” (Ahmadi, 2001: 475). Postmodernism is an extensive term used for depiction of its lines in different works and various definitions have been offered of this term that even in some cases contradict each other. This is also the case as to the origin and beginning of the use of this term, the discussion of which requires more extensive and separate opportunity. This term is now quite popular in America among the sociologists and the critics. It expresses the condition of culture and pursues developments

that have become created since the late Nineteenth Century in the field of the game rules for science, literature and art” (Nozari, 2001: 53).

“The postmodern quality of no literary work is necessarily tantamount to its supremacy over other works that have been written based on other styles. Postmodern theories are a set of critical notions and methodologies for understanding the surrounding world and not a tool for evaluation or devaluation of a number of literary works” (Payandeh, 2011: 34). The scope and depth of this term is so that finding a comprehensive answer to the following question seems quite impossible: “What is postmodernism?” Searching for a clear answer for this question has turned to something like a shadow. Meanwhile it is too soon to stop our efforts. Moreover, we can still learn many things through more precise study of the works that are considered to be postmodern” (Lash, 2004: 73).

Therefore, here we suffice to this short account and away from all various definitions and theories, the text of “Lowness” will be studied in view of its constitutive elements and rules that are inseparable parts of the postmodern texts. Furthermore, we will also explain the compatibility of this text with the surface structure and deep structure of such works or “metanarrative”. Such elements as “indeterminacy”, “inconsistency”, “change of point of view”, “vicious circle”, “substitution” and etc, are studied in proportion to the intensity and weakness of the application of these elements.

### **1- Replacement:**

“The quality of replacement actually strengthens the right of the reader in

postmodern text and keeps his mind active. This idea is underlined by the fact that the postmodern text is not written by the writer alone; rather it is the reader who takes part in the creation of the text” (Tadayyon, 2009: 110). The “Lowness” has taken advantage much of the element of replacement insofar as even sometimes one proposition or a short narration is associated with numerous conceptions that have forced the reader to choose. This problem particularly at the end of each story and the whole novel has had a striking emergence. Paying attention to high frequency of “indeterminacy”, “lack of temporal continuation” and “multiple endings” which have been studied show the depth and expanse of the place of this element in the novel of “Lowness”. Then, there is no occasion for repetition of those cases.

## 2- Polyphony (Plurality and Pluralism):

“In postmodern novel, characters insist on their independence from the author and even they revolt against him insofar as the reader feels that it is the writer that follows the characters not the other way round” (Payandeh, 2007: 63-67).

The element of polyphony or in other words, plurality and pluralism is completely understandable in view of providing an opportunity for some characters in the novel so that the reader hears the narration from their language. For such different characters as the boy, man, doctor’s son and etc, are in charge of narration of part of the novel’s events. But the second type of creation of “polyphony”, i.e. diversity of dialogues and the consistency of the speaker and the spoken in a way that would reflect the features, social status and education of the speaker does not have any reflection in

this novel. For example, take the following part of the dialogue between the characters into consideration:

- Main narrator (boy): “I don’t know! Perhaps the boy had thrown himself under the train. Perhaps I had forged those words myself. Someone would have known everything in my mind in advance because I didn’t say anything of Neyshabur” (Kateb, 2002: 9).
- Old Woman: “The story of the one who is afraid of loving someone is like the one who tries to kill the enemy behind him by pushing the sword into his own chest” (ibid: 112).
- Old Man: “I have not also heard that someone could target his own fate or youth and dodge its consequences...” (ibid: 244).

In fact, if we study the words of all characters in the story, there we will find no considerable difference. Ups and down, diction, simplicity or difficulty are almost the same in all dialogues of the text. In many cases, there is no consistency with the speaker. Then, this element is totally popular in the first method while in the second method it is fruitless.

## 3- Multiple Endings:

“At the end of postmodern novel, the reader is faced with several possibilities that he can choose from among them. Therefore, in the modern novel there is a decisive end from which the reader is uninformed (open ending) while in postmodern novel there is no decisive end and the reader in an indirect way understands the point that in the novel world like his surrounding world there is no absolute and decisive thing” (Tadayyoni, 2009: 64).

We can design an independent end for each one of the seven parts of the novel. On the other hand, since all these short stories are interconnected as a whole and constitute a unique body they must have one end.

When the reader ends the first story, he can choose the one that he prefers from among the existing alternatives and build the end himself using the theory of death of author.

The second story is merely composed of the dialogues between a woman and an old fortune-teller. Again it is the reader who is able to decide how the story will come to its end. There are several alternatives for the readers: either woman resorts to the fortune-teller though she doesn't believe in fortune telling and this returns her to life and gives her hope or she decides to commit suicide and finally she does it.

In the third story, the metamorphosis of such characters as the boy, man, Mahvash's son and the fourth son of the family where Mahvash loves the family's boys leaves the reader decisionless until the end of the story. Finally, this story is not exactly understandable and the reader does not understand whether Mahvash gives birth to a boy or not? If this son is born in the imagination and dreams of Mahvash?

The end of the fourth story is left unfinished and ambiguous too. It is not clear what decision have the man and Akram taken for their future. The only sign that we can consider it to be an expression of Akram's satisfaction for having an eternal life with man and as a result a decisive end for the story is the following phrase: "I didn't think that it will fit me soon" (Kateb, 2002: 196).

This word by Akram reflects her internal satisfaction from the situation. It is not just a matter of the size of shoe rather it reflects the

fitness of the whole events. Nevertheless, if we leave the aforementioned evidence, we can consider several options as the possible end for this story.

The next story like previous stories does not have a decisive and unique ending. It is not clear who kills Khosrow. Has Mahtab killed Khosrow?

Sixth story ends with the following sentence: "The woman and man were still in front of the shop. Half of the woman's face was in darkness while the other half was in light. Maybe this was due to my point of view" (Kateb, 2002: 238). This is an ambiguous and seemingly inachievable.

The last story which is in one sense the story of all stories also has an ambiguous end and this causes an unclear and ambiguous end to take form for the novel. The narrator boy, man and old man whose scars on their necks as well as the forms of their eyes make them united and die at the end of the story; but his death like the death of the boy and also the "man" are the same in the fourth story.

#### **4- Lack of Temporal Continuation in Narration:**

"Postmodern literature seeks after the intentionally untold, hidden and neglected histories in order to evade the contemporary linear vision of the end depicted today. Therefore, existing center in historical narration is destructed and the margins become valuable" (Biniaz, 2008: 218). Although in some cases, the date of events is mentioned; it is not so exact that the temporal course of events not to be interrupted and its continuity to be preserved. Sometimes the indication of time is a type of playing with the words that have temporal meaning:



“Lowness”, from formal point of view, is composed of a series of short stories that in general are thematically connected to each other in the reader’s mind. Train in one sense in the deep structure of the content of the story reminds past, present and future. Each one of the heptafold stories in this book occur in the present time; but other stories are either the past of a story or its future. But the time is not mentioned in a clear way. For example, on page 28 we see that the narrator is narrating his own life when his dead body reaches the hospital and doctor checks him. Suddenly the narration stops and it turns to doctor’s life and in practice the time order collapses.

#### **5- Point of View Shift and Narrator:**

First story begins with the narration of a dead narrator. It is in first person mode and the narrator is a dead and the reader by reading the sentence: “Perhaps he didn’t want to see my body covered with blood few steps away alongside the railways” (Kateb, 2002: 7), he recognizes that the narrator is a dead boy. The narration of the main narrator (dead boy) continues up to page 13 and it is continued by another character of the story called “Bankeh”: “After this station, you have a quarter or ten minutes long walk in the forest to reach the road ...” (ibid: 13).

First story is narrated from the point of view of “first person” but the narrators of the story are continuously changed. But the second story is related from the point of view of “third person” who does not reach the “Wise Man” and third story continues with the same point of view up to page 155 where the point of view returns to “first person” and as if the main narrator “first story’s boy” continues the story. The fourth story is again narrated from the point of view

of “third person” and is continuously shifting from first person to the third person. The “first person” narrator is a man who narrates the story in the same way that the boy narrates and “the man’s sister” undertakes the narration of part of the fourth story from the page 164.

The fifth story begins with “third person” and continues up to the end. The sixth story begins with the “First Person” perspective the narration of which is undertaken by “Mahvash’s husband” whose narration continues up to the end of this part. The last story also begins from the point of view of “third person” and ends the same way.

Then, as previously mentioned, both the change of narrator and the change of point of view are vividly seen in this novel and this element has played a significant and undeniable role in disturbing the linear narration, inconsistency and creation of chaos.

#### **6- Narrative, Supernarrative and Metanarrative:**

Narrative refers to the act of reporting and quoting and even expression of a story. Every method of narration has a special vision and interpretation of events and their conditions and internal logic. Narrative as the most fundamental element of story is the continuation of events in the domain of time. “This is to say that narratives take form within the framework of a special era” (Berger, 2001: 18). “Narrative as the most fundamental part of the story does not require to be always linear” (ibid: 18).

“Supernarrative is in fact a grand narrative like justice that claims to interpret all minor narratives and in one sense it claims to explain the whole human history; but metanarratives, e.g. plot or causal relations of events, are

themselves the basis of explanation of other narratives. Numerous narratives that under the title of philosophy of history struggle to systematize the heap of events and narratives. This type of stories does not have any place and the theme of these stories does not have anything to do with metanarratives like Marxism and religion” (Yazdanjoo, 2002: 217).

In “Lowness” as a postmodern novel or a meta-novel, we are not faced with the denial of narratives, grand narratives and metanarratives. Most of the visible narratives of this novel have their origin in religious beliefs. They are the prevalent beliefs of religious societies. Its denial, acceptance and demonstration are not so clear.

- “He tried to convince me with such baseless notions as destiny, fate and similar nonsenses” (Kateb, 2002: 88).
- “If you see someone is so similar to you that you are mistaking him with yourself or he has some signs, you have to know that he is Khidhr ... Don’t doubt this!” (ibid: 105).

In this work, a group of narratives are made by the writer’s mind that revolve around the family and social issues:

- “Wind does not always blow from the same direction. This is the law of nature” (ibid: 34).
- “Eat the apple from its best place and start your life from its best place...” (ibid: 35).
- “The more you act like a kid, the more you will lose” (ibid: 38).
- “This country needs freedom and justice as much as it needs knowledge” (ibid: 43).

- “Perhaps when we survive death or a decision that leads to death or even when we fall asleep, we have indeed died but God wants us to be back to retribute” (ibid: 76).

Latter narratives and metanarratives represent some aspects of death and life and find a cosmological and philosophical dimension which are emphasized and there is no denial; but in some way they are all expressed with doubts and not by decisiveness.

## 7- Repetition of Word, Combination and Sentence:

Repetition of words, combinations and sentences is seen in a frequent form almost in all pages of the book that contributes to the chaos and lack of consistency of the story and perhaps its most important benefit is that it gives further richness to the tone. Repetition of words in this text will be very frequent and sometimes even may bring about confusion in the words. These repetitions in most cases seem to be irrelevant in practice and in the course of narrative line: “He sat before a warehouse ... he went into the warehouse. It smelled sick ... he came out of the warehouse ...” (Kateb, 2002: 7).

Combinations of words either in descriptive or dative modes though do not contain so many repeated words they exist in this text to a considerable number: “Landlord opened her purse and brought out her lipstick ... She put the lipstick on my lips with its coconut smell ...” (ibid: 79).

The sentences also even more than words and combination have undergone through repetition. Various types of sentences with different forms are sometimes repeated: “When Mahvash thought of a sweet thing she would

smile. She smiled in the way that the boy understood that she is smiling ..." (ibid: 119).

#### **8- Vicious Circle (Short Connection – Double Connection):**

Short connection (underlining the narrative nature of the text and the reader's understanding of this issue) and double connection (presence of historical characters in the novel for decoding and clarification of ambiguities) serve as two methods for destruction of the wall between reality and imagination which is referred to it as vicious circle and this is one of the most fundamental elements of postmodernism. The feature of "vicious circle" takes form with "short connection" and we do not see any "double connection".

"Barry Lewis" is perhaps one of the first scholars who have spoken of the constitutive elements of postmodernism including vicious circle, short connection and double connection. He believes that short connection and double connection overcome the wall between reality and imagination in the text. Then, due to their fundamental and basic connection with vicious circle, these two elements are studied in the form of a subset of vicious circle" (Tadayyoni, 2009: 68). "Postmodern writings seek to create short connection in order to stimulate the sense of wonder in the reader and cannot classify these writings according to existing categories. The methods of this work consist of: combination of extraordinarily contradicted aspects (fictional aspect and seemingly reality based) in a unique work, indication of the author and the subject of text, revelation of literary norms when they are used" (Lodge, 2007: 187).

Creation of a space in which the reader leaves the fiction world and is informed of the unreal nature of the text. This is done in a metaphoric way: "I do not know; perhaps when I was roaming through the allies I chose the men whom I wanted while I didn't think where I had seen them. I gradually learned how to entertain myself with them. In whatever state I found them I kept them the same way: like a picture I would sit and build a story that fit that picture" (Kateb, 2002: 19).

Sometimes the clarity of the short connection becomes more vivid. The first expression vanishes and the author intentionally creates an interruption in the narration and in one way he struggles to notice that the text is a story not reality: "Perhaps all these events were part of the carriage stories: trains and men were connected to each other in some way as if they were connected since the very inception. I would change the place of men and events and I put myself in their shoes and in one night I see the life of one person from the first to the last moments; I am born with him and I die with him and then I come to life with another person and I would take pleasure at my escape" (ibid: 75). Using this factor in another context is the task undertaken by the short connection of the divided parts and without any hierarchical relationship between the text and narrations.

#### **9- Indeterminacy:**

"Postmodern works are associated with a tangible indeterminacy. If we take a cursory look at a postmodern story, we will find out that such words as "probably", "perhaps" or verbal expression are challenging determinacy in a clear way" (Tadayyoni, 2009: 214-215). Ihab Hassan states: "Everything is relative. Truth depends on time and space and context and



then is variable; particularly meaning in the text does not have any determinacy; because text does not refer to anything outside itself rather it refers to itself" (ibid: 103).

This indeterminacy is not merely in passive and doubtful propositions rather it also exists sometimes even in decisive and self-evident affairs like being or not being in some place or seeing or not seeing someone and etc: "Perhaps they were expecting someone or something. They would have seen certain dreams ... As if after several years they have accidentally found each other ... Perhaps they had certain things that made them similar ..." (Kateb, 2002: 5). The novel from the very first page and the beginning of the narrative in a frequent way reminds the "relativis" with such adverbs as "perhaps" and "maybe". Such propositions as "expecting someone", "dreaming", "seeing each other by chance" and etc, are used in sentences, e.g. "perhaps I was expecting this very moment for several months..." (ibid: 50); "perhaps I wanted to sit by the bottles and smoke" (ibid: 59).

This indeterminacy governs the whole of this novel. The chapter that starts on page 115 reflects indeterminacy in a comprehensive way. The existence of such characters as Mahvash, boy, etc, is doubted and this doubt daunts the whole work.

#### 10- Confusion and Inconsistency:

The totality of the story is dissected into parts and it is the mind that organizes them and confusion and inconsistency have their origin in this reality. As to the inconsistency the following theory can be raised: "For example, we would use William Baros' dissection. According to Baros, it is not the will of author that gives rise to the spontaneous emergence of

story. However, by a pair of scissors we can introduce an unpredictable spontaneous factor". To this end, the author cuts different parts of various texts. Then, he connects them to each other without any specific rule and copies the outcome" (Lodge, 2007: 178).

"Lowness" is among those novels that gives value to this feature more than normal insofar as it seems to be a combination of irrelevant short stories and it deconstructs the structure of the novel and it is only the precise mind of the reader that establishes the hierarchical relationship with its own work. This feature can be seen also in various chapters of the novel in an understandable vividness and minor and major propositions.

- "One night when I woke up I saw that he is gone. I knew that he will go one day. This was perhaps why I had hidden his eau de cologne I didn't give him back" (Kateb, 2002: 17).

Confusion and inconsistency are almost repeated in most narratives of the book like the writings of a psycho and this inconsistency destroys the linear narration.

#### 11- Metanarrative:

"Metanarrative is a term that was first used by William Gess (American novelist and literary critic) in one of his papers in 1970" (Payandeh, 2009: 72). "Metanarrative" is indeed an extension of almost all postmodern features and elements in the story, i.e. breaking the hierarchy, temporal disorder in narration of the events, intertextuality, derivation, vicious circle and so on and so forth. Metanarrative writes of self. It is a writing of self. In other words, "metanarrative is about I-ness. It is about writing; reading as writing; about the story world as a reference" (Noojumian, 2006:

41). "According to the definition of Patricia Vu, we call a novel a "metanarrative" in which the writer expresses his own self-consciousness concerning story writing. To put it otherwise, in metanarrative novel there is a tension between the effort for creation of the illusion of reality and revelation of unreal nature of that illusion. On the one hand, a fiction world (similar to reality) is made and on the other hand, the artificiality of this fiction world (its unreality) is shown" (Payandeh, 2011: 53).

Narrative interruptions, repetition of words, combinations, sentences and notions in a frequent way, metamorphosis of characters, existence of weak plots or lack of a logical and acceptable plot among the propositions, short mild connections, lack of clarity and decisiveness of propositions and the whole narrative, even in self-evident affairs and other postmodern elements, introduce this story in a clear way as a "metanarrative".

The form of novel is so that in the first step we come across a number of short stories that do not have any hierarchical and thematical relationship with each other but upon further precision on the such motifs as the scars on the necks of the man and boy or the staring with closed eyes by some characters, divorces, doubts as regards the killing of individuals or their suicides and also combination of a temporal and spatial continuity between the events – though ambiguous and unclear – we can clarify and depict the story line for these short stories. Dealing excessively with elements that are essential parts of postmodern stories has turned "Lowness" to a multidimensional, inconsistent, indecisive, and contradictory novel and the shower of paradoxical words, phrases and sentences has

changed this novel into an appropriate "metanarrative".

## 12- Contradiction:

In metanarrative, we are always faced with a set of sentences that are followed immediately by other sentences that contradict them and this series of contradictions step by step remind indeterminacy and relativity of affairs to the reader of the story (Tadayyoni, 2009: 109).

In this novel and more or less in other works of Kateb we are encountered with an unexpected volume and frequency of the element of "contradiction". Almost every page is full of vocabulary contradiction or paradoxical phrases and notions. In this mysterious escape of norms in the novel we are faced with a clear contradiction between two words of "lowness" and "highness" and these two contradictory words divided by "and" complicate the reader's mind. "Lowness" begins with the phrase "they were staring at somewhere with closed eyes" as a motif in the text (Kateb, 2002: 5). Staring with closed eyes is a manifest paradox because the closed eye lacks sight and "staring" is a feature of open and awake eyes.

Contradiction and paradox are seen in the domain word, combination and sentence for the beginning up to the end of the book and the author's intention is visible in application of these clear contradictions and refers to the secular thought of postmodern novels: "They are dead but they think that they are alive" (ibid: 8); "he dies and comes to life ..." (ibid: 9); "I hate his smile just like his crying; I liked him to be an adult" (ibid: 10); "they went into his room and came back..." (ibid: 11); "they would sleep and raise" (ibid: 12).

## Character, Event and Plot in "Lowness":

## 1- Character:

“By character, we refer to the people in the story who undertake almost everything. Action exists by their presence just like the space and place that owe their existence to their activity and the dialogue is composed of their words with each other” (Abdollahian, 2002: 50). “We would be better to consider character to be an outcome of two impulses: the impulse of individuation and the impulse of archetype. We remember specific behaviors or appearance, i.e. how they present something larger than themselves. These nuances of individuation are part of the art of storytelling; they entertain us or cause us to sympathize with the character. The nuances of archetypal example are part of the meaning of the story. In realist story, one character is usually the representative of a social class, race and profession or a recognizable psycho sample and we may be able to analyze him according to the “disorder” or “symptoms” (Scholes, 1998: 21-22). “Character is a semi-person imitated from the society as individuated and personified by the global vision of the author” (Barahani, 1989: 249).

In “Lowness” due to the special view of the author to the character, the people in the story not only are a person rather represent an existential class and have certain similarities with all individuals of his type and reaches an absolute unity in the depth and expanse of his life.

A cursory review of the story and characters of “Lowness” shows that the names of many major characters in the story as “boy”, “man”, “woman”, “old woman”, “girl” and “old man” seek to remind a greater goal. Even the author would refuse to suffice to these names. The man, boy and old man are not only several

people rather one can conceive them due to their common mysterious features as one person or one person in different levels of his life. The other significant issue is that all central characters of the story lack identity card, name, family name and individual distinguished feature and there is nothing more than some general characteristics: the landlord: “if he smiles his lips would open wide” (Kateb, 2001: 91). Mahvash: “She hated child” (ibid: 117); “I am alone at home and I do not know what to do” (ibid: 118).

Although several characters play their role on the scene of the story, none of them regardless of being the main character or secondary characters is temporary.

Such characters as “Labi”, “Bankeh”, “Train Driver”, “Girl”, “Running Girl”, “Hatefi”, “Mrs. Rezaei” are not considered even as a character rather they are not even a type. There are multitudes whose presence and absence are the same: “Lisa were inside water and she continuously called me” (ibid: 80); “Labi was a switchman who came and took water from the landlord’s house” (ibid: 8).

There are also secondary characters who are active in line with the main characters of the story. They are indeed without identity card and their existence is ambiguous in width and length, e.g. Khosrow, doctor, doctor’s son, the fiancé of doctor’s son. Given these cases, one can say that the characters of this novel are not so huge and prominent that we can equal them with “character novels” or even you can think this problem.

## 2- Event:

Events occur as a result of the actions taken by the characters in the environment of the story and the story expands according to it.

Particularly, the central character of the work is more engaged with the events. The story will catch our eyes and create pleasure in the reader. Although the word “event” culminates in the self and surges in the reader, this event constitutes the essence of the postmodern stories as we expect it.

The story ties are loose and gets resolved or even no resolution is at work. There would be several alternative endings. In the culmination point no tie would be associated with any resolution. Metamorphosis of characters and events, short connections, independence of each one of the heptafold parts reduce the univocity of the event and expel many readers.

### 3- Plot:

“Plot as a term in the field of story refers to an order that the author gives to the events of the story in order to reach a conclusion that he likes. Every project is a set of events that have been precisely designed that in the course of conflict of contradictory forces culminates and then reach the final conclusion” (Irani, 2001: 420). The plot of story includes everything that is undertaken by the characters of the story. What they feel or think or say provided they influence what happens later” (Deebl, 2008: 18).

Plot is the relationship and causality between the events of the story and it is in fact the narration of the story events based on causal relations. Plot enjoys temporal continuity; but it does not mean that it should necessarily be of an exact temporal order. Some of the stories move in a determinate linear course and in some of them the temporal order changes and it does not move based on calendar time. Thus, some stories begin with their end and come to end with their beginning.

Given the phrase: “Perhaps he was saying that I can understand wherever I want and its reason is not so much important because there is a reason for it” (Kateb, 2002: 79), we will understand the writer’s view of “plot”. Here we refer to the idea that everything occurs in the moment and this is also the case with the events before and after and we should not necessarily search for a thread that would lead us to the origin of cause or causes of the event. In real and ordinary life, everything and every event can happen without any reason. Then, in this novel we cannot find a strong framework for the events in the stories. Nevertheless, whether in major events of the story or minor temporary events, we cannot find “plot” in its general sense. For example, in second story what leads a woman who does not believe in fortune-telling to turn to a fortune-teller? Or why the boy decides to kill himself by the train?

### Conclusion:

In “Lowness” from the very inception of the story up to its very end the reader is expected to be surprised and the reader from the beginning recognizes that he is faced with a different text. This book has the fundamental postmodern features with utmost intensity and depth. Insofar as there is a kind of chaos in it; this can be seen throughout the story. Frequent repetitions of the words, combinations and sentences and sometimes even one notion and thought turns boring. Mohammad Reza Kateb in application of the techniques and elements that confuse the reader does not know any border and expands it in a complicated and ambiguous way. In some cases, the story seems to be a “vague dream” and a product of a baffled mind. Even the light of the mind of reader cannot overcome this ambiguity. In this novel, in addition to giving importance to



theme and content, form is taken into account in a particular way. Meanwhile there are also structural complication, lack of linear narration, short connections, indeterminacy, inconsistency and other essential and applied elements of postmodernism; thus, these elements have caused the reader to fail to understand the whole characters, events and plots of the story that are the vital and major elements of the story. Then, the reader should resort to his own mind in order to fill the existing gaps and rebuild the logical and rational line of story.

### References:

- 1- Ahmadi, Babak (2001), Structure and Hermenutics of Text, Eelevanth Edition, Tehran: Nashre Markaz.
- 2- Scholes, Robert (1998), Elements of Story, trans. Farzaneh Taheri, Tehran: Markaz.
- 3- Irani, Naser (2001), Art of Novel, First Edition, Tehran: Abangah.
- 4- Barahani, Reza (1989), Story Writing, Fourth Edition, Tehran: Alborz.
- 5- Berger, Arthurasa (2001), Narration in Foklore Culture, Media and Daily Life, First Edition, Tehran: Soroush.
- 6- Biniaz, Fatuhallah (2008), An Introducton to Story Writing and Narratology (A Short Pathological Study of Novel and Short Story in Iran), First Edition, Tehran: Afruz.
- 7- Payandeh, Hossein (2007), Postmodern Novel and Film, First Edition, Tehran: Hermes.
- 8- Idem (2009), Literary Criticism and Democracy (Essays on the Modern Theory of Literary Criticism), Second Edition, Tehran: Nilufar.
- 9- Idem (2011), Discourse of Criticism (Essays on Literary Criticism), Second Edition, Tehran: Nilufar.
- 10-Idem (2011), Short Story in Iran (Postmodern Stories), First Edition, Tehran: Nilufar.
- 11-Tadayyoni, Mansoor (2009), Postmodernism in Iranian Fiction, First Edition, Tehran: Elm.
- 12-Deeble, Ensen (2008), Plot in Story, trans. Mehrnoosh Talaei, First Edition, Ahvaz: Rasesh.
- 13-Abdollahian, Hamid (2002), Charcter and Characterization in Contemporary Fiction, Tehran: Aan.
- 14-Kateb, Mohammad Reza (2002), Lowness, Tehran: Nilufar.
- 15-Calinicos, Alex (2003), Criticism of Postmodernism, Mashhad: Tina Press.
- 16-Lodge, David (2007), Novel Theories, First Edition, Tehran: Nilufar.
- 17-Lash, Scot (2004), Postmodern Sociology, trans. Mathapur Bahian, Third Edition, Tehran: Qoqnoos.
- 18-Noojumian, Mohammad Ali (2006), An Introduction to Modernism in Literature, First Edition, Ahvaz: Rasesh.
- 19-Nozari, Hosseinali (2001), Postmodern Condition, First Edition, Tehran: Gam.
- 20-Yazdanju, Payam (2002), Towards Postmodernism (Post-structuralism in Literary Studies), Third Edition, Tehran: Markaz.