

**Deconstructing Metaphysics of Presence in Literary  
Recreations for Adolescents with a Look at the Recreation  
of *Shahnameh*'s Story of Rustam and Sohrab by Atousa  
Salehi**

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### **Introduction**

Modernized adaptations and re-creations of old works do not follow the narrative structures of the source texts. Social and historical evolutions cause changes in the new narratives. The researchers try to show how these kinds of alterations can be analyzed in the framework of the theory of deconstruction. They also attempt to show how "Metaphysics of Presence"

—one of the fundamental concepts in the pre-deconstructive philosophies—which is represented in the dominant, omniscient narrators in old works can be deconstructed and subsequently, how this deconstruction transforms other elements in the structure of the text such as binary oppositions and even the genre of the work.

To this end, the story of Rustam and Sohrab from *Shahnameh* is compared with one of its successful recreations for adolescents by Atousa Salehi. The comparison will delineate how the alteration of the audience from adults to adolescents and the socio-historical changes can influence the deconstruction of presence and as a result, change the genre of the work from epic to drama.

### **Methodology, Review of Literature and Purpose**

Persian literature is a great resource for re-writers and re-creators. *Shahnamah* is a classical epic which has been frequently used for re-writing and re-creation. These recreations are actually in response to changes in social structures through time. In this paper, we are going to show how the dominant presence of the narrator in the classical text is deconstructed in the process of recreation. The story of *Rustam and Sohrab* by Salehi is chosen as a case study.

There are many books and articles about re-writing and re-creation. This is a short survey of this body of literature: Anvari (2006) surveys rewritings and recreations based on *Shahnameh*; Payvar (2006) deals with fictional recreations based on mythical elements of our ancient

culture; Jalali (2010) deals with the significant position of rewritings based on *Shahnameh* in children's and adolescents' literature; and Yousefi (2006) in a paper entitled "Recreation, a New Identity" shows how a recreation can resurrect a classical work.

We will also introduce a narratological method to distinguish rewritings from recreations; in order to do this, we will study factors such as narrators, narratees, characters, speed of narration, etc.

### **Discussion**

Any re-creator has been a reader in the first place, and in any case, recreations differ from the main source. Narrator is a basic element of narration which has a dominant presence in classical narratives. In *Shahnameh* the narrator is a third person omniscient narrator who controls the flow of the narrative. Even the inner thoughts and feelings of the characters are narrated by him.

However, in recreations such as Salehi's, the position of narrator is subjected to change. A variety of narrators exist in Salehi's *Rustam and Sohrab*. This multi-narrator situation is the first evidence of the breakage of the narrator's dominance.

Sohrab is one of the main narrators of Salehi's work. In accordance with the new community of narratees, i.e. the adolescents, Salehi chooses Sohrab as the main hero and narrator of her work and lets him narrate the opening of the story. From a Derridean perspective, such a

change signifies the deconstruction of a major binary opposition, i.e. adults versus adolescents.

Rustam is another narrator of Salehi's recreation. This recreated Rustam, unlike Ferdowsi's, is a character overfilled with emotions, affections, hesitations and conflicts. This Rustam is not the greatest hero of a tragic epic anymore, but a broken-hearted father in a romantic drama who searches for his lost son. This also shows a significant deconstruction of a binary opposition, i.e. strict wisdom versus affections.

Tahmineh is another narrator in Salehi's story. Unlike Tahmineh in *Shahnameh* who has a pale presence, she plays a significant role in Salehi's work. Her narration makes a good opportunity for her to express her inner world as a woman, a lover and a mother. Her presence as a narrator marks the deconstruction of the binary opposition of women versus men or fathers versus mothers.

Change in the speed of the narrative is another factor that can lead to deconstruction. The speed of narration in *Shahnameh* is very fast when Sohrab is a child. Childhood is not a significant phase in *Shahnameh*; the hero has to grow up fast in order to enter the world of epic. However, the speed of the narrative in Salehi's recreation is very slow. This shows that the binary opposition of childhood versus adulthood is deconstructed.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of Salehi's recreation shows that any breakage in the dominance of the narrator can lead to the deconstruction of the binary

oppositions in the text, such as love versus warfare, women versus men, childhood versus adulthood, father versus mother, etc. The findings of this study show that a re-creator of the classical work creates something new by the use of the same materials. Salehi's story, in accordance with the new audience's needs, is a family drama rather than an epic.

**Keywords:** Metaphysics of Presence, narrator, re-creation, deconstruction

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