

**Removing Dust from the Eyes: A Study of the Techniques of  
Decentration in *Kalila and Demna***

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**Introduction**

Rewriting old tales with the aim of simplifying and reconstructing their linguistic and structural features is one of the popular methods which can make the literary heritage of a nation conveniently accessible to everyone. *Kalila and Demna* (or *Kelileh va Demneh*) is one of these books and many rewriters have tried to simplify and rewrite its tales to keep it alive all the time, though not with equal success. The tales of *Kalila and Demna* have been used either because of their didactic values or because of having animal characters; however, the tales can be looked at from fresh perspectives to discover their potentials for children and young adults.

It should also be noted that nowadays, with the thriving of psychological and pedagogical discussions and also the theory and criticism of children's literature, a significant part of children's needs and the functions of children's literature are identified and analyzed.

In this research, *Kalila and Demna* is looked at from a new perspective, i.e. the theory of decentration, in order to identify another part of its potentials for being rewritten for children.

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

In this qualitative research, 14 chapters of *Kalila and Demna* which have fictional structure (from the chapter “The Lion and the Cow” to the end of the book) are studies with the method of content analysis. 14 main stories and 30 tales are covered in these chapters. With a combination of the two methods of deduction and induction, first the techniques of decentration in the tales and then the new techniques in *Kalila and Demna* were identified.

The background to the theory of decentration can be found in the studies and theories of Piaget and his critics especially Donaldson. In agreement with Donaldson, Khosronejad in *Innocence and Experience* (2010) tends towards generalization of decentration to the entire life. He makes use of decentration to illuminate the concept of childhood, which he finds synonymous with the concept of children’s literature from some perspectives, and then identifies the techniques of decentration in folk tales. Khazei and Khosronejad (2007) have studied this issue from another perspective. Moradpour (2015) has studied the techniques of decentration in the tales of Anjavi.

The aim of this research is to find the techniques of decentration in *Kalila and Demna*. Also, some suggestions are made for employing these techniques in rewriting stories and tales of this book.

### **Discussion**

Decentration can be simply defined as the ability to understand other opinions, perspectives and points of view. However, a more comprehensive definition puts the term in opposition to centration to

make both terms meaningful and makes them complete the cognitive process of a person's mind:

On the one hand, our mind tends to concentrate on one phenomenon or one aspect or level of that phenomenon to understand and absorb it; and on the other hand, it has the ability to distance itself from the phenomenon that it has understood or absorbed and go to another phenomenon or another aspect or level of that phenomenon. and by doing so, gain a deeper and wider understanding. All our consciousness is the result of this two competing processes [centration and decentration]. Therefore, centration is getting involved and absorbed in one aspect, dimension or feature of reality and seeing reality from only one perspective; while decentration is a kind of mental ability which acts exactly in the opposite direction. Our awareness is created and completed by the oscillation between centration and decentration (Khosronejad, 2011: 19).

Oscillating between centration and decentration is a significant and valuable characteristic of the stories and tales of *Kalila and Demna* which should be maintained and emphasized in its rewritings. The techniques used for creating this oscillation are similar in both tales and *Kalila and Demna*: exhibitionism, narrator's intervention, frame tale, displacement of the protagonist, debate, surprise, exaggeration, white-writing, metamorphosis, inversion, and simultaneous scenes. There are also six new techniques of decentration used in *Kalila and Demna* which widen the functions of the previous ones: awareness of the ending, in-text defamiliarization, changing the narrator (if accompanied by changing the point of view), tale-in-tale, compound characterization, and the inclusion of poems and Quranic verses in the stories.

By using the story-within-story structure of *Kalila and Demna* and creating dialogue between the narrator and the reader, the rewriters of the book can maintain and improve the frequent techniques of decentration in their rewritten works. Summarizing and simplifying the tales should be done with attention to the theme, plot and characterization of the tales and the important and defining parts should be kept.

Increasing the number of techniques of decentration in a work results in enhancing the mental absorption and therefore the amount of surprise, and most likely the pleasure that children experience when reading the work. As such, having potentials for decentration can be a criterion for choosing a text for rewriting. It is the creativity of the rewriter that determines how the techniques of decentration are carried out in the text. Experts in this field emphasize that these techniques need to be accompanied by simple and childish language and content. It should also be noted that introducing the techniques of decentration in *Kalila and Demna* does not mean that all these techniques should be used in a single story. Proper and artistic use of these techniques in rewritings is more important than the number of techniques used.

**Keywords:** rewriting, centration, decentration, pleasureing, *Kalila and Demna*

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