

**Analysis of Narrative Temporality in Azaryazdi's
Rewritten Stories of *Mathnavi* for Children, Based on
Genette's and Nikolajeva's Theories**

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Introduction

Mehdi Azaryazdi is among the most influential authors in the field of children's and adolescents' literature and one of the pioneers in the field of rewriting and recreating old Persian tales. He translated stories from ancient works such as *Qabus-Nameh*, *Marzban-Nameh*, *Sindbad-Nameh*, *Kalileh and Damneh*, *Bustan*, *Golestan*, and especially *Mathnavi*, into the contemporary language, and in this way, laid the ground to accurately transfer human concepts to the today's generation. He rewrote and recreated these works based on the principle that every child's literary work inevitably reveals a view about childhood and every author has a child created by his own mind (Khosrownejad, 2010: 26).

This research aimed to investigate three important rewritten stories from *Mathnavi*, i.e., the story of the merchant and the parrot, the

disagreement over the qualities and the shape of the elephant, and the condemning by Moses -may peace be upon him- of the shepherd's devotional prayer, using the documentary study method and based on Genette's theory of narrative temporality. These stories are presented in the book *Good Stories for Good Children* under the titles of "The Merchant and the Parrot", "The Elephant in the Dark", and "Moses and the Shepherd".

Method and Literature Review

This descriptive-analytical research was conducted using the documentary study method. In the literature review, we can refer to the study titled "The analysis of narrative variants and narrator features in stories series of "New stories from old books" by Mehdi Azaryazdi" by Nikrooz and Keshavarzi (2013). They concluded that most stories have been narrated using the heterogeneous narrative variant of text-writer and the most obvious feature of the narrator is his visible presence in the narration of stories. The result of the study titled "An analysis of the language of poetry and its characteristics in literature for children and adolescents in Mahdi Azaryazdi's poetical works" by Dehqan Dehnavi and Jalali Pendari (2013) showed that the use of an archaic language has caused this poet's poems to get distant from the common language of children. According to Arefi and Shabanzadeh (2014) in the study titled "Changing the mystical themes of Azaryazdi's rewritten stories", Azaryazdi has changed the themes of the mystical stories and has paid more attention to the ethical themes. The result of the study titled "Comparative analysis of two narratives by Mehdi Azaryazdi and Kamel Kilani from Abuqiro and Abusabr story of Hezar-o Yek Shab

[*One-Thousand-and-One Nights*]” by Ghafurian Mohadeth et al. (2016) showed that Azaryazdi added sub-parts to the main story with the aim of educating the child and providing information, while Kilani has adhered to the original text.

Discussion

Retrospective comparison in the stories under study shows that this technique has been used more in rewritten stories as compared with *Mathnavi*. Little use of retrospection in *Mathnavi* causes the audience to continuously follow up incidents based on the linear time of the story and be aware of the progress of the story, its future perspective, and the conclusion that will be drawn from the events. But the greater number of retrospections in the rewritten text shows that Azaryazadi wanted to engage the children more in the story and highlight events for them. In the studied stories, Azaryazdi is able to successfully use foresight only in the story "The Elephant in the Dark", but has not significantly used this technique in other rewritten stories to excite the children audience to pay attention to the subsequent events.

In the stories of *Mathnavi*, the description and interpretation parts have led to delays in the progress of the story, indicating that in Molana's view, comprehension of these parts is important for the audience; however, Azaryazdi has used descriptive delay more in expressing the events and introducing characters and has increased the speed of the story by omitting the interpretations. Azaryazdi has maintained many dialogues in the rewritten stories. This has caused the speed of the story time to be equal to the narrative discourse time, causing an increase in the excitement of the audience, especially the young audience, by dramatizing the stories.

Most of the main events and actions have been narrated in brief in *Mathnavi*, but the scenes summarized in *Mathnavi* have been further expanded in rewritten stories, and Azaryazdi has even himself introduced in brief some situations in the story. Many debates have been omitted in the studied stories of *Mathnavi*, and this omission is more evident at the beginning of the stories. However, in the rewritten stories, we witness an increase in the details at the beginning of the stories while the omissions are more related to mystical interpretations.

Azaryazdi has rarely used white writing for children, and has reduced the speed of narrative as compared with the stories in *Mathnavi* with the addition of more secondary scenes to provide the audience with the essential information. There is a low repetitive frequency of narrated scenes in *Mathnavi*, but the author of the rewritten stories has highlighted more scenes for children.

Conclusion

Considering his view towards childhood, Mehdi Azaryazdi made changes to the temporality structure of the rewritten stories of *Mathnavi* tailored to the children audiences' understanding and perception of time. He considered the instructional-entertainment function for rewritten stories and regarded the child as an audience for whom more information should be provided compared with adults. Therefore, he avoided white writing for children, and accordingly, has reduced the speed of the rewritten stories by further use of retrospection, descriptive delay, and repetitive frequency. In terms of anachronism, Azaryazdi has highlighted the events and the desired moral messages for children through internal, repetitive, and objective retrospections.

It is worth mentioning that the complex temporality structures enumerated by Nikolajeva for children's contemporary stories are not seen in the rewritten works. Azaryazdi has further used futuristic anachronism in the story of "The Elephant in the Dark", which is in agreement with Nikolajeva's theory. Azaryazdi either omitted or summarized the interpretations that caused delay in stories in *Mathnavi*, but unlike Nikolajeva's view, he described characters and events to provide more details for children. In the rewritten stories, the elements of dialogue and setting received a lot of attention, which is an essential issue for children's stories in Nikolajeva's view. Azaryazdi has presented many summaries of *Mathnavi* stories with more details and narrated new issues in brief. This is what Nikolajeva has also pointed out.

Considering frequency, Azaryazdi has repeated a lot the events, characters, situations and actions that he wanted to highlight for children. Moreover, he narrated the daily life events of the characters with repetitive frequency as compared with *Mathnavi*.

Keywords: Mehdi Azaryazdi, rewritten stories, children, time, temporality, Genette, Nikolajeva

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