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## Extended Abstract

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# ***Zahhak: A Tale of Seven Narrators Through the Labyrinth of Rewriting, Image-Text Interaction, and the Community of Philosophical Inquiry***

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## Introduction

Philosophy for Children (P4C) program has undergone significant transformations in its concepts, structure, and objectives. One of the most pivotal of these shifts is the movement from humanism toward posthumanism. This paradigm shift has also brought about changes in the sources and narratives used in communities of inquiry. Whereas Lipman and his colleagues authored philosophical novels that echoed the history and challenges of Western philosophy, the second and third generations of P4C have drawn upon picturebooks, high-quality children's literature, and more culturally localized texts. As the texts have changed, so too have the criteria for selecting appropriate books for philosophical inquiry. Haynes and Murris (2012), adopting a novel approach, have turned to children's literature and picturebooks and proposed new criteria that encompass both aesthetic aspects and epistemological, ethical, and political considerations.

## Method, Review of Literature, Purpose

This study aims to investigate the potential of *Zahhak: A Tale of Seven Narrators* by Atousa Salehi for use in the community of philosophical inquiry with children. The methodology is qualitative, and data were

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collected and analyzed through deductive content analysis. The theoretical framework is based on the evaluative criteria proposed by Haynes and Murris. In the background section, the study draws upon Lipman's criteria for selecting philosophical stories for children, Matthews's attention to philosophical fiction in children's literature, and Wartenberg's focus on picturebooks. Nevertheless, the primary emphasis is placed on Haynes and Murris's triadic criteria, which include aesthetic, epistemological, and ethical-political dimensions, all aiming to identify texts capable of evoking reflection and philosophical questioning.

## Discussion

The analysis reveals that this adaptation, which falls under interpretive and critical rewritings, possesses significant philosophical depth. Aesthetically, the use of polyphonic narration, multiple narrators, first-person perspectives, open-ended dialogues, the contradictory relationship between image and text, and a distinctive visual style all render the text intellectually stimulating. Epistemologically, although it is difficult to draw strict boundaries between aesthetic and epistemological techniques, the text adopts a critical stance toward historically fixed notions of truth. By employing a unique narrative style and the interplay between image and text, the book creates moments that provoke readers to question their prior beliefs about the well-known story of Zahhak.

Regarding ethical and political aspects, Haynes and Murris emphasize the child's position within the story and the power dynamics between adults and children. Although the original myth does not explicitly address child-adult power relations, the concept of absolute power is nevertheless problematized. Zahhak, representing tyranny, is ultimately overthrown by the people and by Fereydoun—a youth in this adaptation—who stands against him. Thus, the book offers readers a model of resisting absolute authority. Certain illustrations also depict children playing with a crown and throne, symbolically neutralizing the myth's absolute power structure. The book's critical approach to the *Shahnameh* is noteworthy, questioning the authority of the original text itself. The interaction between image and text is deeply thought-provoking. All characters share similar facial features, and at times the illustrations contradict the text. For example, while the narrative describes Fereydoun's weapon as a cow-headed mace, illustrations depict a branch of olive, a plain mace, and a cow-headed mace in various scenes, leaving the reader uncertain about the true weapon.

## Conclusion

The findings indicate that from an aesthetic perspective, the use of visual cues, multiple narrators, diverse viewpoints, and open-ended dialogues facilitates multiple interpretations. Epistemologically, the text challenges the narratives of its various narrators and invites readers to reflect on concepts of truth, history,

and established beliefs. Ethically and politically, the book centers on questioning absolute power and encourages critical thinking about inherited narratives. The interaction between image and text is significant across all three evaluative dimensions. Based on these findings, this picturebook holds great potential for philosophical exploration within communities of inquiry.

**Keywords:** picturebooks, rewriting, P4C, PWC, community of philosophical inquiry

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