Notes on the Literary Unity of the Shāhnāmeh

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Introduction

One of the most important abilities of great poets, especially those who deal with narrative poetry, is their ability to create compelling images. When this ability is paired with coherence and unity throughout their narrative, that is, when parts of the tale connect well together, the story has greater impact on its readers. Ferdowsi's Shāhnāmeh is the best example of that artistic and coherent narrative in Persian literature, which entails the creation of a perfect balance between image and word at every turn. Ferdowsi's images are so vivid that his poem may be viewed as cinema as well as text.

The present study considers the cinematic features and coherence of Ferdowsi's storytelling in the episode of Rustam's first fight during the reign of Kayqubād. Creation of images, use of movement, sound, and point of view are discussed in this episode along with Ferdowsi's artistic use of repetition and emphasis to achieve a tight ordered, logical coherence in his narration of scene and episode. The story of Zāl and Rūdābeh is the second example. This story is a tale of transformation that fits seamlessly into the overall narrative of the Shāhnāmeh. It propels the poem through its transition from the age of ancient kings in whom heroism, royal authority, and magical potency are united, to the

era of a different line of rulers whose reign is governed by their political authority alone. This process moves along two parallel lines: the transfer of the magical wisdom of the king to the person of a sage, who functions as the crown's chief advisor; and the transfer of his heroic aspects to a great warrior who serves as Iran's chief hero or *jahān-pahlavān*. The story of Zāl and Rūdābeh is the narrative expression of this transformation. During his reign, Manūchehr's heroic and magical functionalities are transferred away from him. The former is transferred to Zāl and the latter to Sām and finally to Rustam. Just as Manūchehr's reign is a transitional reign, Zāl's character is also a transitional character. After Sām's death, Zāl is appointed to his father's office of *jahān-pahlavān*. However, because of his great wisdom that prevents him from committing the kind of violence that heroes are called to practice, he is not a suitable for the office. He serves as a caretaker hero until Rustam comes of age and can assume the duties of the country's chief hero

Research Method

This article is a qualitative research and we have analyzed the content of the text and used the inductive approach in it.

Discussion

In this article, we first examined the coherence of the narrative of Ferdowsi's Shāhnāmeh at the level of scenes. One of the best examples of cinematic expression in the Shāhnāmeh, in which both image and sound are used to present the story in a completely cinematic way, is the scene of the first war of the young Rustam in the kingdom of

Kayqubād. In the verses of this section, we analyzed the invention of images, the use of movement, sound and point of view; we also perused Ferdowsi's method in choosing words, repetitions and emphases to find out what role these factors play in creating the coherence of the narrative. Then, in order to find a more general coherence, we examined the relationship between the story of Zāl and Rūdābeh and the narrative logic of the Shāhnāmeh. In this story, a fundamental change in the nature of the kingdom is expressed. This change can be seen in the reign of Manūchehr as a period of transition in which the two special functions of Pahlavāni and wisdom or enchantment (heroic and magical functionalities) that were previously concentrated in the person of the king, are taken from him. Sām becomes the Jahān-Pahlavān while wisdom is transferred to Zāl. It seems that the story of Zāl and Rūdabeh is a symbolic expression of this second transition and the concentration of wisdom / enchantment in the person of Zāl. Just as Manūchehr's governance is a transitional one, so is Zāl an intermediary figure. This feature is quite evident in what happens after Sam's death which led Zāl to become Jahān-Pahlavān. In other words, Zāl, who inherited the office of Jahān-Pahlavān from Sam, is not a suitable person for this job because he is the embodiment of wisdom, not audacity and courage. One of the important aspects of Zal's life is his love for Rūdabeh, which can be considered as Zal's transition from nature to civilization, because Zāl and Rūdabeh's love is implicitly a test for Zāl to become civilized. In this story, Zāl, who had grown up with Sīmorgh in the nature and far from human culture, moves towards civilization and no trace of the savage life that had made him naked and raw-eating, remains in his being; on the other hand, he possesses characteristics such as

knowledge and abstinence. The story of his transition from nature to civilization and his absorption of the enchantment / wisdom aspect of the kings before Manūchehr, and his rise to the position of chief adviser to the monarch for the rest of his life are exactly located where it should be in the text of the Shāhnāmeh.

Conclusion

One of the aspects of narrative coherence in Ferdowsi's Shāhnāmeh is the coherence of narrative at the level of scenes. Examining the verses related to the first battle of Rustam in the reign of Kayqubād, we saw how Ferdowsi carefully maintains the unity of the images and components of the story in a single narrative. The words of the Shāhnāmeh have been chosen in such a way as to intensify the inductive power of the images. In these verses, Ferdowsi is like a director who sends movement and energy into the story by changing the direction of the camera and controlling the sequence of scenes. The strategic poetic choosing of words is another aspect which shows that Ferdowsi knows in advance what he wants to say in the next scenes and chooses the words of his verses very carefully. In Ferdowsi's narrative, the visual unity between the two scenes of a single story is carefully preserved, and Ferdowsi pays attention not only to the subject, but also to the logic of the narrative. The coherence of the Shāhnāmeh is not limited to each of its narrations, but if we examine the whole Shāhnāmeh from this point of view, we will notice that there is a general coherence in it. The relation of Zāl and Rūdabeh's story with the narrative system of the Shāhnāmeh reveals how well this general coherence works. This story has a very deep connection with the narrative logic of the Shāhnāmeh

symbolically. In this story, "love" is used in perfect harmony with other elements of the narrative as a constructive element of civilization, culture and self-knowledge.

Key Words:

Shāhnāmeh, Narration Coherence, Narration Logic, Cinema, Zāl and Rūdabeh

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