



## A Study of Postmodern Narrative in Akbar Radi's *Khanomche and Mahtabi*

Hajar Abbasi Narinabad

Address: 43, Jafari Nasab Alley, Hafte-Tir, Karaj, Iran

Tel: 00989370931548 E-mail: [hastiabbasi63@yahoo.com](mailto:hastiabbasi63@yahoo.com)

Received: 30-06- 2012

Accepted: 30-08- 2012

Published: 01-09- 2012

doi:10.7575/ijalel.v.1n.4p.245

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/ijalel.v.1n.4p.245>

### Abstract

This project aims to explore representation of narratology based on some recent postmodern theories backed up by the ideas of some postmodern discourses including Roland Barthes, Jean-François Lyotard, Julia Kristeva and William James with an especial focus on Akbar Radi-the Persian Playwright- drama *Khanomche and Mahtabi*. The article begins by providing a terminological view of narrative in general and postmodern narrative in specific. As postmodern narrative elements are too general and the researcher could not cover them all, she has gone through the most eminent elements: intertextuality, stream of consciousness style, fragmentation and representation respectively which are delicately utilized in *Khanomche and Mahtabi*. The review then critically applies the theories on the mentioned drama. The article concludes by recommending a few directions for the further research.

**Keywords:** Intertextuality, Stream of Consciousness, Fragmentation, Postmodern Reality

### 1. Introduction

Narratologists have tried to define narrative in one way or another; one will define it without difficulty as "the representation of an event or sequence of events"(Genette, 1980, p. 127). In Genette's terminology it refers to the producing narrative action and by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place (Ibid. 27). But some narratologists such as Onega and Londa believe that "what we get in a narrative text are not events as such, but signs (1996, p. 5). Or as it is defined by Mieke Bal "A story is a fabula that is presented in a certain manner. A fabula is a series of logically and chronologically related events"(1985, p. 5). Whatever the deficiencies of narratology may be, its influence has been considerable; however, none of the efforts to define narratology may be thorough, especially regarding postmodern narrative.

As it is stated in *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism*, since its inception as a literary term in the late 1950s and its wider use as a critical term in the 1980s and 1990s, postmodernism has emerged as a significant cultural, political, and intellectual force that defines our era. Postmodernism has consistently challenged our understanding of unity, subjectivity, epistemology, aesthetics, ethics, history and politics (2003, p. xiii). Definitions of postmodernism range from "eclecticism" (practice of taking and combining elements from many different systems) and "montage" (juxtaposition of separate parts to create a whole), to "neosepticism" (resisting to anything that was believed to be true) and "anti-rationalism". Consequently its characteristics are not limited to several factors and cover a wide range of factors (Ibid). Postmodern fiction has made use of various techniques employed in the narrative tradition inventing a new terminology to deconstruct the whole narrative tradition. Moreland states that reality is a social construct, contextual to cultural conditions and characteristics, and defined by communities or societies based on their language – their common narrative (2005, p. 146). Since postmodern narrative enjoys a wide range of elements, the researcher is not supposed to cover its all elements. . Of the existing factors in postmodern narrative the researcher is going to work on, intertextuality, stream of consciousness style, fragmentation and representation respectively, which are used in Akbar Radi's *Khanomche and Mahtabi*. To illustrate such arguments the researcher will mostly examine outstanding theoreticians such as Roland Barthes, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva. Regarding the above mentioned points about postmodern narrative, the researcher is going to elaborate on the four perceivable characteristics of it.

## 2. Aim of the Study

The purpose of the present thesis is to delve into the postmodern theories involved in narrative techniques, and to describe and analyze the manifestation of this theory in the Persian drama *Khanomche and Mahtabi*. The questions the researcher hopes to answer in this project are as follows:

1. Which postmodern narrative elements and modes of combination are used to narrate *Khanomche and Mahtabi*?
2. How is reality represented through postmodern elements in *Khanomche and Mahtabi*?
3. How does *Khanomche and Mahtabi* events come to unification in spite of all fractured and individual stories existing in it?
4. How is the postmodern narrative within narrative technique used in *Khanomche and Mahtabi*?

## 3. Intertextuality in Postmodernism

The postmodern term “intertextuality,” which focuses on the interplay and interrelation of texts, was first defined by Julia Kristeva in the late 1960s. It has been advanced by Julia Kristeva since its first introduction in her essay of 1969, translated as “Word, Dialogue and Novel”. She developed her own idea of intertextuality from reading the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, the Russian formalist.

In “An Interview with Julia Kristeva,” Kristeva herself says that the conception of intertextuality is important in the postmodern age: “In postmodernism, the question of intertextuality is perhaps even more important in certain ways, because it assumes interplay of contents and not of forms alone” (1984, p. 282). Kristeva demonstrates the key point of intertextuality: “it is a postmodern concept that involves interplay of contents.” Since intertextuality is a postmodern term, it is impossible to “speak of originality or the uniqueness of the artistic object, be it a painting or a novel” (Allen, 2000, p. 5). Thus, intertextuality treats literary works as texts relating to other texts; a text is never original and independent of other texts. A text always relates to another text; it is never alone. Kristeva examines and interprets Bakhtin’s “dialogism” as intertextuality. According to Kristeva “Bakhtin situates the text within history and society, which are then seen as texts read by the writer, and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them” (1984, p. 36) thus meaning that a writer is affected by his/her society, history, culture either consciously or unconsciously and brings that to the text by rewriting them. She is affected by Bakhtin’s theory and revises Bakhtin’s idea of dialogism in order to develop her own concept of intertextuality. Kristeva expands dialogism, which concerns about utterances and voices, and believes that it considers “the results of the intersection of a number of voices” (1984, p. 281). To Kristeva, dialogism deals not only with sounds and voices but also with the narrative sentences and discourses in a text. Therefore, dialogism does not merely refer to the direct and literal dialogues. It emphasizes various intersections and results when different discourses collide with each other. For Kristeva, the story is a proper form of intertextuality. Kristeva and Barthes believe that text is like “a tissue, a woven fabric” (Allen, 2000, p. 5).

### 3.1 Traces of Intertextuality in *Khanomche and Mahtabi*

Intertextuality denies the concept of the text as self-sufficient and original. It considers the presence of various texts in all literary works. According to Roland Barthes:

Any text is a new tissue of past citations. Bits of code, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc., pass into the text and are redistributed within it, for there is always language before and around the text. Intertextuality, the condition of any text whatsoever, cannot, of course, be reduced to a problem of sources or influences; the inter text is a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located; of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without quotation marks. (1977, p. 39)

Therefore, there is a strong possibility that Radi as a contemporary and voracious writer is unconsciously affected by some other texts. There are some traces of intertextuality in *Khanomche and Mahtabi* which are going to be mentioned in the following parts.

#### 3.1.1 The Gulistan of Sa’di

Khanjoo in *Khanomche and Mahtabi* gives birth to a snake at the end of the last episode to get rid of all pains and unfair she has suffered to call it “khanomche” implying that the new born baby or better to say snake will have the same destiny as hers. The snake here can be interpreted as a negative figure implying misery and

wretchedness. Accordingly, Sa'adi in his book *Gulistan* has got a poem claiming it is better to give birth to a snake than a wicked and miserable man. In Chapter IV of *Gulistan* there is a story as follows:

The wife of a dervish had become enceinte and when the time of her confinement was at hand, the dervish who had no child during all his life said: 'If God the most high and glorious presents me with a son, I shall bestow everything I possess as alms upon dervishes, except this patched garment of mine which I am wearing.' It happened that the infant was a son. He rejoiced and gave a banquet to the dervishes, as he had promised. Some years afterwards when I returned from a journey to Syria, I passed near the locality of the dervish and asked about his circumstances but was told that he had been put in prison by the police. Asking for the cause, I was told that his son, having become drunk, quarreled and having shed the blood of a man, had fled; whereon his father was instead of him loaded with a chain on his neck and heavy fetters on his legs. I replied: 'He had himself asked God the most high and glorious for this calamity.'

If pregnant women, O man of intellect,  
Bring forth serpents at the time of birth,  
It is better in the opinion of the wise  
than to give birth to a wicked and miserable progeny. (1964, p. 128).

So, Khanjoon giving birth to the snake avoids bearing a real child either a bastard and brutal boy or a miserable and suppressed girl. It seems as if Radi has read some poems or stories in which a woman bears a snake bringing it to the drama either consciously or unconsciously in its symbolic meaning.

### 3.1.2 Sadeq Hedayat's *The Blind Owl*

In the part dealing with Spike Dream, a woman in Leila's mask is talking to the king. When asked what kind of stratagem she is using in this fearsome play, she answers:

"Fair Sovereign! You have governed. You are given the command! And governing the land so that I can be safe under your protection. And I was getting well water in that brown evening".

King: has a goddess so much slim and shapely come to the sanctum alone? (p. 354).

In the same part, once the slave picked the lid of the tray, the king got astonished of seeing those frightening eyes and asked surprisingly: "The eyes?"

The slave: two wild, skittish and cyan eyes, sir! (p. 353).

Radi in *Khanomche and Mahtabi* has been influenced by Sadeq Hedyat's short story *The Blind Owl* when it comes to the description of the woman in Leila's mask. In *The Blind Owl*, as the narrator gets up onto a stool to reach the wine that was on the top shelf he sees a very beautiful girl that looked like an angel:

On the open ground outside my room I saw a bent old man sitting at the top of a cypress tree with a young girl-no, an angel from heaven-standing before him. She was leaning forwards and with her right hand was offering him a blue flower of morning glory..... it was then I first saw those frightening magic eyes.... Her beauty was extraordinary.... she was slim and shapely (pp. 6-9).

As a consequence, there are some traces of intertextuality in this part as both women in *Khanomche and Mahtabi* and *The Blind Owl* were in shape, gorgeous and strange. In *Khanomche and Mahtabi* the girl was getting well water and in *The Blind Owl* the girl was standing near a stream to get water as well.

## 4. Fragmentation in Postmodernism

One feature of postmodernism that makes it different from modernism is the way postmodern authors look at fiction. While the modernist authors considered precision both in form, style and presentation a very significant point, the postmodernist breaks with these established tradition. A considerable aspect of postmodernism in literature is breaking with strict time lines, called discontinuous time. As Barthes puts it, there are "tales within tales" in which the author constructs a sequence of events that have no time relationships to each other. To postmodern thought, any attempt to make use of grand narrative is criticized and questioned. It agrees with Lyotard's call to claim that "we have paid a high enough price for the nostalgia of the whole and the one, for the reconciliation of the concept and the sensible, of the transparent and the communicable experience." Then, he suggests "a war on totality" in order to "activate the differences and save the honor of the name" (1984, p. 81). The notion of fragmentation is observed in the nonlinear and deconstructed aspects of many postmodern



novels. Hutcheon, claims that "Narrators in fiction become either disconcertingly multiple and hard to locate or resolutely provisional and limited – often undermining their own seeming omniscience" (1987, p. 17) questioning all totality, unity and wholeness. In postmodern texts, the authors deny the ultimate accepted values of a society about totality and wholeness. In his essay "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", Derrida has mentioned his own notion of center in stories. According to him, a *center* is that part of a structure which focuses and organizes the entire system. Derrida declares searching for a center has become a part of West's life being obsessed with it all the time. According to him the center tries to unite the system and narrow down the amount of fragmentation in "the total form" (1966, p. 278). In postmodern narrative play is simply any shift in the structure, any unplanned, unordered event helping with "the rupture" of the notion of the structure: it decentered the structure. "The center is not the center," as Derrida says. This means that "the concept of centered structure . . . is contradictorily coherent"

Unlike many of his works, Akbar Radi has tried to break down the traditional linear structure of narrative in *Khanomche and Mahtabi* and use postmodern narrative style in this work and mingle four fragmented story plan of four women followed by three dreams, all of which actually symbolize a woman (Khanjoon) in different historical periods and spaces.

#### 4.1 Fragmentation in *Khanomche and Mahtabi*

In a letter to Dr. Farindokht Zahaedi, which can be considered the most transparent viewpoint of Radi about his drama *Khanomche and Mahtabi*, he has claimed that:

Khanomche and Mahtabi is the most unshaped and mulish drama I have written after my previous experience in *Hamlet with Season Salad*. A drama in different angles and multiple dimensions unfounded, uncorrelated, patchy, confusing, and somehow irrational. It looks like a cluttered puzzle that takes time to figure out as it has different stories of women in a period of one hundred year that is a century (Azma Magazine, 2009).

Despite the lack of traditional structure and story line, four- story plans can be pursued in this work, four separate stories about four women, all of which actually symbolize a woman (Khanjoon) in different historical periods and spaces:

The first story is about "Khanjoon", the 88 year old woman, seemingly suffering from amnesia that has been brought to a nursing home in "Saadatabad "by her sister. Her husband was lost in a blaze leaving her alone and barren; although, her youth illusion of being pregnant has not abandoned her yet. "Khanjoon", symbolizing Iranian women since Qajar era till today, has tolerated her painful relationship (the result of patriarchal society) and will carry it till her death. "Khanjoon" is alone and her sister and her two daughters are the only ones who visit her; although, she never notices their coming as she is immersed in her memories or maybe she talks with them but forgets all about them. Sarah (the nurse) is her only real companion in that institution.

The second story is the story of Leila and her husband, a Qajar prince, Homayoun Moatamed (who likes to be called "Charles"). Leila is a young woman with cyan eyes whose romantic feelings towards her husband has not subsided yet, so she tries to keep him satisfied, in spite of the fact that Homayoun's main concern is something else. He wants to force her to sell her garden that was recorded as a dowry marriage in her marriage deed. Homayoun intends to sell the property and bribe someone at the State Department to get the post of the Iranian ambassador to Paris (the city

The third story is about the relationship between Galin and her husband Amoti : she did not have a great chance for marriage due to defects in her face (lunar eclipse) and was forced to marry Amoti who digs sewage wells in "Saadatabad". Accordingly, she is not pleased with her life and her being a barren bride adds to this discontent. For this reason, Amoti wants to marry a rural woman to have a child. Unlike Leila, Galin has a strong personality, and stands against her husband. She does not surrender easily unless Amoti resorts to physical force to keep her silent. Galin abandons him and he marries for the second time and before long dies. Galin sits begging in the cemetery with a rented child (we find all these amidst Khanjoon's monologues).

The fourth story of *Khanomche and Mahtabi* is about the relationship of a couple, an artist and an intellectual, Mahroo and Saman. Mahroo is a successful writer and Saman is a nameless painter pretentious and self-fascinated by his paintings who often copies the works of others. They also live in Saadatabad and are not happy and prosperous. Mahroo, who has devoted her life to Saman, is tired of his lies, and since there is no common point between them anymore, their relationship is getting worse day by day. Saman commits suicide before Mahroo while she stands there with perfect indifference only witnessing him and then calling an ambulance. The



information about Saman's suicide and Mahroo's reaction is not presented directly, but we come to know them through Khanjoon's monologues later in the final episode.

In the end, Khanjoon gives birth to a snake named "khanomche" to get rid of all her pains and sorrows during a period of one hundred year.

Amidst the main stories of *Khanomche and Mahtabi*, there are three short stories as well that have been brought like dreams or nightmares, entitled respectively as 'Spike Dream, 'Rate Dream' and 'Scorpion Dream'. The first dream (Spike) is specifically concerned about Leila's story, because the woman in this painting appears in Leila's mask and is likely the same slave girl that Naseredin has given the Saadatabad Garden in return for. The language and characters' speech style also confirm the same historical period (pp. 353-356).

The second dream (Rate) is a surrealistic canvas in which a woman in Galin's face gives birth to a child and mourning men lay the baby in the coffin as the woman disappears desperately behind the flagstone. Certainly, this is related to Galin's life (pp. 371-372).

The third dream (Scorpion), a very strange, surprising and somewhat vague, merges the scene's description and narrator (who is not specified) in the end (pp. 393-395).

There are some clues in the play indicating the use of postmodern narrative. One of these clues is Radi's attention to abandon "linear time in favor of multiple time zones"(Kelly, 18). In so doing, Radi creates a four plot play to set forth four parallel stories. *Khanomche and Mahtabi* includes seven episodes: four stories and three dreams. As it is mentioned by Khanjoon in the very beginning of the story, the existing episodes look like a piecemeal canvas:

Khanjoon: .... All of these are pieces of an antique canvas; that I have never managed to sort them out (p. 333). Indeed, Khanjoon tries to provide a comprehensible canvas for us by sorting out pieces that seem to be different parts of her own life. Here, passing through different eras and times, the reader is provided with a vivid picture of Iranian Woman's nightmarish pain.

*Khanomche and Mahtabi* is basically about three different stories through three short stories and three dreams in one book, that have been shortly introduced in the beginning of the chapter (see 4.1), divided and then aligned newly to convey the jumping between three different time periods and three different women with three completely different cultural and financial classes intertwined but separated throughout most of the story.

Radi is doing his best to imply that despite all cultural, social and historical differences amidst people, they are all but one who have the same pains and worries in one society, which is why we come to understand that all these women are Khanjoon herself. In all four stories it is first Khanjoon who through monologue represented to readers without interruption enters them all to the lives of Leila, Galin, and Mahroo respectively. The fact of sterility of female characters can be traced over in different parts. In the first scene, it is Khanjoon who brings this subject up:

Khanjoon: ah.... They are my nieces ...

Nurse: are not they your own children?

Khanjoon: dear, mine was mere swelling.

In the second story, the reader comes to know that Galin is barren as well:

Amuti: .... Why shall I be childless? (p.369).

In the end, giving birth to a snake, Khanjoon has actually given birth for each three women. Besides, number 88 that gradually is known to be Khanjoon's age, has been utilized by three women; therefore, there is a strong possibility to conclude that three women in this drama are Khanjoon herself and are still living invisibly in her.

## 5. Stream of Consciousness in Postmodern Narrative

The term "stream of consciousness" was originally used as a psychological term. In literature, it indicates a writing approach for presenting the "psychological aspects of character in fiction" (Humphrey, 1965, pp. 1-2). In a postmodern narrative the inner mind of the characters is described and the reader comes to know the story or reality as it passes through the mind of the characters rather than explained by a narrator.

Ricoeur states that a stream-of-consciousness novel, spotlights "the incompleteness of personality, the diversity of the levels of the conscious, the subconscious, and the unconscious, the stirring of unformulated desires, the inchoative and evanescent character of feelings" (1985, p. 10). In other words, stream-of-consciousness



novelists aim to discover and emphasize the irrational and disordered part of the individual consciousness, presenting the psychic life of each character. Henri Bergson, the French philosopher, manifests that people should go into the “original” part of consciousness. According to Kumar, Bergson asserts that novelists should “possess the original” so that they may “faithfully follow reality and adopt ‘the very movement of the inward life of things’”(1963, pp. 19-20). That is to say, Bergson treats the inner consciousness as the original part of life. He repeatedly suggests that a novelist has to record the “internal rhythms of thought and experience” since they are more important than outer descriptions (Ibid, p. 21). Furthermore, Bergson claims that consciousness has its fluidity. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, he says

There is no state of mind, however simple, which does not change every moment, since there is no consciousness without memory and no continuation of a state without the addition, to the present feeling, of the memory of past moments. (1949, p. 40)

Since consciousness includes individual feelings and memories, it is always fluctuating. Bergson emphasizes the “fluidity in our states of consciousness” (Richter, 1970, p. 7) and encourages a novelist to go down into the “*inner flux*” (ibid, the italic is in the original). As a result, Bergson pays attention to the inner flux of consciousness and thinks that a novelist should represent the characters’ inner and flowing thoughts. Humphrey declares that the fluidity of consciousness can be described as a “stream.” William James, who coins the term “stream of consciousness,” discovers that consciousness, which includes memories, feelings, and thoughts, “appears to one, not as a chain, but as a stream, a flow” (1965, p. 5).

Similar to Bergson, James puts emphasis on the fluidity of inner consciousness. In his definition, James asserts that consciousness is a changing process: Such words as “chain” or “train” do not describe it [consciousness] fitly as it presents itself. . . . It is nothing joined; it flows. A “river” or a “stream” is the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. (Kumar, 1963, p.14). Consciousness runs freely and endlessly like a stream. It is not controlled by human beings’ reason and intellect. Moreover, consciousness is never static; it is dynamic. As a result, according to Humphrey consciousness, with its fluid trait, has the ability to “move freely in time— its tendency to find its own time sense” (1965, pp. 42-43). Consciousness is not constrained by time.

### 5.1. *Stream of Consciousness Style in Khanomche and Mahtabi*

Radi believes that technique is not something separate and outside the work. In his book *Behind the Blue Stage*, he claims that:

There is no doubt that technique can be traced over in various styles, ranging from brevity or verbal games to the presence of characters in the scene, and totally everything that is related to a structure. These each should be in their right place and come over, just like a puzzle. (2009, pp. 95-96)

Radi has taken advantage of various techniques in this drama such as stream of consciousness style. *Khanomche and Mahtabi* can be treated as a stream of consciousness drama since Radi moves in Khanjooon's consciousness and by entering her inner minds and thoughts, Radi depicts the inner development. Khanjooon, the main character of the story, tries to put together seven different parts of this script by her distraught mind to provide narration.

*Khanomche and Mahtabi* does not go through action and reaction in the present, but mainly through recitation of what has happened to the characters in the past. Most scenes have no certain starting points and are left in the middle. The only way of deciphering all uncertainties, is Khanjooon's internal discourses, through which Radi depicts the inner development of different characters making the readers aware of various events in different time periods. Therefore, according to Happer “the transition from one mind to another, and from individual minds to a larger cultural awareness, enhances the feeling that human consciousness transcends the limitations of individual minds” (1982, p. 117).

Khanjooon narrates all her life entirely through stream of consciousness style and completes the previous episodes for the readers. Moving between different consciousnesses, Radi records not only the external actions but also the silent thoughts and monologues. He pays attention not only to the consciousness of Khanjooon but also to her outer experiences. He successfully illustrates her outer actions when she talks to the nurse:

Khanjooon: it seems as if I have polluted myself.

Nurse: first it is time to inject your vaccine.

Khanjooon: why didn't Sani come?

Nurse: they went a quarter ago (p. 404).



Moreover, in the same part Radi takes the readers to the inner consciousness of Khanjooon through monologue, when she forgets the nurse being there and talks to herself remembering the past.

Khanjooon: Sara, where are you? This time it is not bloat. .... Eighty eight years ago, it was in the silver cedar garden that I heard the leaves' mush and buried a burned hand ... now I shall read "Araf" (p. 409).

Radi hopes not only to discover the inner consciousness of his characters but also to record psychic activities. Meanwhile, he connects all stories by moving from one stream of consciousness to another. As a result, those inner activities become a "network" and are "taken as a whole" (Ricoeur, 1985: 112). In the part of "Rate Dream", talking to herself and remembering her life with Saman (we come to know this later after Saman and Mahroo start talking to each other), Khanjooon represents that she was not satisfied with her husband: "now everything is finished Sami... when you come before the mirror and tweezer your hair, I remember me living with you for seven years. Sami, Sam, my aged child, do whatever you want; but don't lie."

Abruptly, Saman and Mahroo start talking with each other while in the beginning it was just Khanjooon who had a monologue to reveal the information.

Saman: have I told you that much lie?

Mahroo: you have told me lie as much as your head's hair.

Due to the use of stream of consciousness style, time compactness and interaction of different spaces, the narrative is completely out of realism and has a nonlinear structure in this drama. To break the limitation of time seems to be the main purpose for Radi to use the stream-of-consciousness technique. He considers time as "a mode of perception" (Kumar, 1963: 68); it is not just the chronological sequence of human experiences. Going through the play from a postmodern narrative standpoint, one can come to the conclusion that the break in the structure of space and time in the play, for example in the scene between and Charle and Leila, has been used so cleverly to take the reader smoothly from one space to the other and bring him/her back to the present. For example, when Khanjooon is contemplating her fate, the reader suddenly notices the presence of Leila and Charle at home, cafe, and their return home again:

Khanjooon: Do you remember my long blue uniform and straw hat. We got on that car and went to the Rex Cinema. Darling, Homayoun, I want to renew the first day of our meeting with all its pretty margins.

Charle: "Loghante"?

Leila: Shall we go?

Charle: "Grand hotel" serves more complete (p. 336).

And thus our arrival to the scene of the Charles and Leila that is apparently their house begins; nevertheless, in the same scene, a few moments later and without any interruption time and space are changed and the reader enters the café:

Leila: Is prince Moatamedodole inviting me over to "Kolize" cafe?

Charle: No.

Leila: so "Flamingo"(p. 346).

Some moments later the reader witnesses the end of night in the café. Along with utilizing the technique of stream of consciousness, Radi also breaks the bondage of time. Khanjooon's proposal ceremony is presented by flashbacks in her mind. While she is explaining it, Galin starts talking with Amoti to let the reader notice the present.

Khanjooon: .... And this is our fortune, the time to meet and a length of satin with little chips and then we went to "Adasiha" alley and ....

Galin: Amoti, do you know what sayyid Roghaye says?

Amoti: Did she come here again? (pp. 359-360).

Beside, in the first scene of *Khanomche and Mahtabi*, Khanjooon is presented with her mental conversation with Sara, while she is having a conversation with her nurse in "The Sun House":

Khanjooon: the night they had launched the rocket and that tower had burst in to flame.

Nurse: your body pressure is OK as well.



Khanjoon: I feel tired by this thingamabob, Sara (p. 331). It seems as if Khanjoon has mistaken Sara for the nurse.

Furthermore, Radi with the presentation of the triple dreams has used the stream of consciousness style very well. These dreams are presented in such a way as if the reader is either dreaming or reading characters' dreams. For example, in the case of "Scorpion Dream":

The scene gets brown, while the servant and the Excellency are talking to each other and a man with a cute white dog's leash in his hand passes the scene. Then; a shapely princely woman in Mahroo's mask and a primeval white silken fabric dress and closed hands appears on the scene. (p. 394)

And then the writer alludes to a different subject:

Then I saw the one who pounded his cane on Nile river and... Saw him prostrating himself, and he had arrived "Assalam Valley" when got on his feet" (pp. 394-395).

Moving in the stream of consciousness of characters, Radi breaks the linearity and bondage of the chronological time. In the part of "Rate Dream", talking to Sam in her mind, Khanjoon suddenly recollects her Galin's story that was in some other decade and seems to be her own story of life:

Oh, I got it! ... I am bedridden, invalid, it's Friday night. Alma night, Give to this orphan, maybe my ancestress Zahra compensate you (p. 375).

In the same line Khanjoon immediately talks to Sami who is Mahroo's husband and definitely Khanjoon's own experience in another period of time:

Now everything is finished Sami. It is all in a notebook I have covered in blue broadcloth and did not know you have counted my teeth (pp. 375-376).

In consequence, Radi by entering and recording characters' inner consciousness breaks the limitation of the chronological time.

## 6. Representation of Reality in Postmodern Narrative

If there is the capability of talking about reality or truth at all, postmodern focuses on various modes of representing and coming to terms with it, not a specific medium. J.F. Lyotard suggests that all forms of representation rely upon narrative in order to validate themselves, and it could be said that all knowledge is primarily narrative as, no matter their medium, all artistic and cultural representations require some meta narrative to explain, validate or justify them (1984, p. 7). This clarifies an obvious contrast between reality and how we perceive it and a constant awareness regarding the link between forms of representation and the developing reality can be traced. Postmodernism is often associated with narrative, and a corresponding relationship between story and postmodernism can be traced in much postmodern stories. As Crew mentions it is much more than that many instances of postmodernism occur in the novel form. It is more than a coincidence, and the basis of this relationship rests on the fact that both the novel and postmodernism can be considered as oppositional discourse, as both involve a relationship, or a variety of relationships of antagonism or opposition towards already existing forms of representation which are considered and consider themselves to be valid, authentic, authoritative, or even realistic (1999, p. 20). The history of the novel is all about not existing any one objective and united reality and that it is the reader who changes what he observes and experiences. Genette believes that narrative is not a "weakened, attenuated mode of literary representation" (1982, p. 130). The developing awareness of this state of affairs has been reflected in the development of the novel towards postmodernism. Postmodernism tries to oppose reality against literature making use of almost any mode of narrative assimilated into the novel. According to Michael Holquist and Walter Reed the story is "essentially tied to realism whenever realism is conceived as more real than literature since the novel always operates in reaction to literature" (1988, p. 417). Many novels or dramas arising after modernism have acted against previous modes of representation within literary culture attempting to be more realistic or trying other options to both literary and non-literary forms to manifest reality in the current culture. To understand the corresponding relation between postmodernism and literature Shklovsky's theory about the history of narrative should be studied. He sees it as a continual making strange or defamiliarization, which has brought about the constant renewal of the form (Lemon & Reis, 1965, p. 57). Bakhtin shares a similar view, but sees narrative as defamiliarizing different ways of talking about the world (1981, pp. 5-38). Reality and the form of representing it can be defamiliarized and manifested unfamiliar. According to Bakhtin, in postmodern literature the present is more focused because



the concept of time has changed which opposes the traditional concept of unity or wholeness. It mostly focuses on contemporary history and a reality which is continually moving through present and present. He claims that novel has an original way of forming time and the absolute past tradition has no role in the creation of the novel as a genre. According to him the novel was created exactly when the object of representing reality was being disgraced to the level of a contemporary reality that was ambiguous and adaptable (1981, p. 38). In postmodernism the story returns to a sense of indecisiveness and defectiveness receding the present which is much more different from our contemporary awareness.

To sum up, rewriting history, dislocating time and voices, using intertextuality, deforming the real, using symbols, fragmenting stories, highlighting the absurdity of logic and system, defamiliarizing the intermediary role of narrative and exaggerating the immanence that projects and imposes human desires and structures on reality are some ways of representing reality in postmodern narrative.

#### 6.1 Representation in *Khanomche and Mahtabi*

Radi in depicting the reality of life in a postmodern style has used different factors. As mentioned in chapter two. One way of representing reality is using intertextuality, but at the same time defamiliarizing it in different ways. Although the four existing stories in this drama are a thorough description of a woman's life in the recent one hundred years, there are three couples with unlike cultures and different names to show the real lives of different women in diverse cultures.

Along with utilizing intertextuality, another way through which Radi represents reality in a more queer and intangible to the readers is the use of three bizarre short stories in the form of dreams amidst four stories. These dreams appear by the titles of "Spike Dream", "Rate Dream", and "Scorpion Dream" respectively. The first dream seems to be related to Leila's story as the present woman in this part appears with her mask on her face and is probably the same slave girl that King Nasereddin has donated in place of her.

The second one is completely surrealistic and mute in which a woman in Galin's mask gives birth to a child while mourning men carry the newborn in a coffin to the shrine of an imam's descendent.

The last dream is so peculiar, somehow intangible and vague as in the end the scene and narrator's word are united with each other. These three dreams make the reader ponder to figure them out. In addition to the three mentioned dreams, another technique Radi takes benefit of to show the reality in a postmodern style is making a link between various parts of the drama, through the technique of repetition in *Khanomche and Mahtabi*. "Saadatabad", probably the most significant symbol in this drama, is repeated twenty two times in several occasions; therefore, the reader grasps the significance of this word:

Charle: my darling Leila, Saadatabad is just a barren land that has become a place of massing of snakes, mice and rubbish, without any benefit for us (P.343).

Khanjoon: I wish we had donated "Saadatabad" completely to handicapped sanitarium (P. 401).

Galín: maybe we could earn some money and go to "Saadatabad"(P. 367).

"Saadatabad" is the hell and heaven of everyone in *Khanomche and Mahtabi*, their real hell and visionary heaven (Dr. Delkhah, 18).

Besides Saadatabad, in spite of all other repetitions such as "lord's grave" and "Indian black dot" in *Khanomche and Mahtabi*, the repetition of black snake that appears gradually in the drama and comes to a thorough and alive verity in the end, can be considered Radi's best technique in this work.

The interesting point in Radi's use of postmodern way of representing reality is the use of symbols. The black headed snake that is visible just to female characters and finally Khanjoon's giving birth to it, is the pivotal symbol in this drama. From the very beginning, the creeping of an invisible snake through *Khanomche and Mahtabi* pages can be sensed. Its face and glance can be more apparent as the story goes on and finally can be seen in Khanjoon's hands. Khanjoon senses the sound of the snake creeping among the leaves from the very beginning but associates it with Charle's black head instead of a snake's:

Khanjoon: so where did I hear the rustling of these leaves... eighty eight times. Said: even if you are a prince, they will call you black headed (P. 334).

At the end of the same scene, Leila assumes king of Qajar's signature in Saadatabad's deed like a black snake:

Charle: ..... And wrote it "Saadatabad" to give benediction to it.

Leila: What's this Charle?



Charle: that... is martyred king's signature.

Leila: it is in a special form, look.

Carle: I wrote it in a cursive way, with black ink ...

Leila: so what is this black head? It is its tail, moving.

Charle: that's enough

Leila; oh, Charle

Charle: are...are you OK, honey? (P. 351).

In the end, Khanjoon gets rid of all her continuing pains by giving birth to a small black snake:

Khanjoon; ahhh.... you came? You little girl (P. 410).

As far as the researcher has conducted research into different religious mythological cultures, snake is the symbol of both Satan and Eve's seduction and also the symbol of sterile women. According to Monic Doubookor:

The fecund property and the ability of this earthly animal to impregnate (due to its lunar destiny), is the common characteristic between snake and the moon, it has even sometimes become united with the moon.... Some nations believe the moon cohabits with their daughters or wives in a snake's shape'. (1997, P. 55)

It seems as if Radi has utilized snake's symbol in different metaphorical aspects, as it is both reminiscent of black headed men in the drama and symbol of sterile women's impregnation, those who have been treated unjustly during different historical periods of Iran and try to prove themselves in history. They believe:

All your history includes either filicide or expropriated royalty or freemason's hall....what is the value of your history when I am not in it? (P. 389).

In *Khanomche and Mahtabi*, in an innovative structure, rich style and evolutionary technique, Radi has tried to represent Iranian woman's historical cry.

## 7. Conclusion

Overall, the above studyings show that Akbar Radi in *Khanomche and Mahtabi* using intertextuality, stream of consciousness style, fragmentation and postmodern representation of reality has narrated the drama through postmodern narrative techniques to make it more complicated and subjective. However, the discussion is incomplete in several major respects. First, further research should continue to explore the play to study ways in which Radi puttogether the codes and historical references to construct a chain of codes leading readers in to the signifying systems the writers are inclined to impose on the texts. Besides, through conducting a social analysis, further research can be devoted to analyzing and interpreting the dominant discursive fields of the play and the way Radi is influenced by them.

## References

- Allen, T. (1995). *Womanist and Feminist Aesthetics: A Comparative Review*. Athens: Ohio UP.
- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bal, M. (1985). *Narratology: An Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Barthes, R. (1977). *Images-Music-Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill & Wang.
- Bennett, G., & Mclean, I. (1996). *The Art of Gordon Bennett*. Sydney: Craftsman House.
- Bergson, H. (1949). *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Trans. T.E. Hulme. New York: The Liberal Arts Press Inc.
- Brunt, A. (2004). "The Postmodern Crisis of Narrative: Byatt, Carey, and Swift". USA: Brown University.
- Crew, B. (1999). *Postmodern Narrative: In Search of an Alternative*. Spain: University of Seville.
- Derrida, J. (1966). "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences". Trans. Alan Bass. London: Routledge.
- Genette, G. (1988). *Narrative Discourse Revisited*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Ithaca: Cornell UP.
- Holquist, M. & Walter, R.R. (1988). "Six These on the Novel and some Metaphors" *New Literary History*.

- Hucheon, L. (1989). "Historiographic Metafiction: Parody and Intertextuality of History." *intertextuality and Contemporary American Fiction*. Ed. Patrick O Donnell and Robert Con Davis. Baltimore: The John Hopkin University Press.
- Hucheon, L. (1988). *A Poetic of Postmodernism*. London: Routledge.
- Humphrey, R. (1965). *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- James, W. (1890). *The Principles of Psychology*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc.
- Jean-Francois L. (1984). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Trans. Geoff Bennington & Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Jerome, B. (2002). *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life*. Chapter 3. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Kristeva, J. (1984). *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Trans. Margaret Waller. New York: Columbia UP.
- Kristeva, J. (1980). "Word, Dialogue, and Novel." *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Ed. Leon S. Roudiez. Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine & Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP.
- Kumar, Shiv K. (1963). *Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel*. New York: New York UP.
- Mansour, K. (2002). *Namayeshname Nevisane Iran az Akhondzadeh ta Beizae. (Iranian Playwrights from Akhondzade till Beizae)*. Tehran: Akhtaran Press.
- Moreland, J.P. (2005). *Pluralism and Four Grades of Postmodern Involvement*. Talbot School of Theology, Biola University: La Mirada, CA90639.
- Mozafari Savoji, M. (2008). *Poshte Sahneye Abi (Behind the Blue Stage)*. Tehran: Morvarid Press.
- Ricoeur, P. (1985). *Time and Narrative*. Vol. Two. Trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and Onega, Susan & Landa, J. (1996). *Narratology: An Introduction*. USA: Longman P, New York.
- Radi, A. (1967). *Az Poshte Shisheha (From Behind the Windows)*. Tehran: Zaman Book Press.
- Radi, A. (2000). *Mokelemat (Conversations)*. Tehran: Vistar Press.
- Radi, A. (2005). *Roye Sahneye Abi (On the Blue Stage)*. Tehran: Ghatre Press.
- Radi, A. (2006). *Rozaneh Abi (The Blue Outlet)*. Tehran: Ghatre Press.
- Seyed Hoseini, R. (2002). *Maktabhaye Adabi (Literary Skills)*. Tehran: Negah Press.
- Taylor, V & Winquist, C. (2003). *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism*. Routledge, London: New York. Asadi, Asadollah. (2005). *Negahi be Adabiate Namayeshie Iran (A Study of Iranian Dramatic Literature)*. Tehran: Sanoobar Press.



Figure A-1: Khanomche and Mahtab



Figure A-2: Mahboobe Bayiat as Khanjooon in the nursing home



Figure A-3: Roya Bakhtiari as Galin and Iman Afsharian as Amouti



Figure A-4: Khanjooon recollecting Mahroo and Saman

Note1. The lines quoted from the text as well as all other parts except the ones quoted in this chapter are all translated or criticized by the researcher.