

Story Elements in the Narrative “Moses’ Rejection of the Shepherd’s Prayer” Based on Harold Bloom’s Theory of Creative Misreading

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ABSTRACT

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Misprision is a theory proposed by Harold Bloom based on two-way relationships between literary texts. This theory is based on intertextual relations according to which there is a conflicting relationship between the new author and the past authors. In order to get an independent identity in literature and to get rid of the anxiety of the influence of past texts, the new author reduces the authority of the previous poet with a defensive act and starts creating new works by misprision. Misprision techniques free the new text from the apprehension of the influence of the previous texts.

This research, using library resources and in a descriptive-analytical manner, investigates the tricks that Rumi used to get rid of the apprehension of the influence of past works in the story of "Moses and the Shepherd", as well as how to deal with it Based on Harold Bloom's Theory of Misprision and comes to the conclusion that Rumi chose the dominant theme in this narration from the subtext narrations, but in order to get rid of the anxiety of being influenced by the source narratives, he uses creative methods to create new stories. In order to reduce the apprehension of effectiveness, he has changed the elements of the story to achieve verbal excellence.

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Introduction

This article examines Rumi's narrative of "**Moses' Rejection of the Shepherd's Prayer**" in the *Masnavi* through the lens of **Harold Bloom's theory of creative misreading**. Bloom views literary creation as a struggle between later and earlier texts, resists the pressure of precursor texts identity, resists the pressure of precursor texts through creative distortion, revision, and transformation. In this framework, Rumi's reworking of the shepherd narrative is not merely repetition or imitation of earlier versions, but a deliberate act of narrative innovation. The study aims to show how Rumi reshapes the source narratives by manipulating story elements such as character, point of view, dialogue, setting, plot, theme, and tone in order to overcome the "anxiety of influence" and establish his own poetic authority.

Method

The research adopts a **descriptive-analytical** method based on **library sources**. It compares Rumi's version of the story with several pre-texts and source narratives, including accounts found in *'Uyun al-Akhbar*, *Al- 'Iqd al-Farid*, *Rabi' al-Abrar*, *Hilyat al-Awliya*, *Tafsir Abu al-Futuh*, *Ihya' al-'Ulum*, and *Maqamat/Masnavi-related antecedents*. The analysis is organized around the main **story elements** and evaluates how each one is altered in Rumi's hands as a form of creative misreading.

Results

The study shows that Rumi's narrative differs significantly from its source texts in both structure and meaning.

- **Characterization:**

Rumi replaces the fixed, static figures of the pre-texts with dynamic and symbolic characters. Moses becomes the figure of **reason, law, and transcendence**, while the shepherd represents **love, sincerity, simplicity, and mystical intimacy**. God is also given a much stronger narrative presence in Rumi's version, especially through

direct speech and rebuke of Moses. This character system enables Rumi to dramatize the tension between **sharia and tariqa, tanzih and tashbih**, and **law and love**.

- **Point of View:**

Unlike the source narratives, which rely more on simple third-person narration, Rumi uses a **multi-layered narrative voice**. He appears minimally as narrator and often transfers the narrative flow to the characters themselves through dialogue. This creates a more open and polyphonic structure and gives the story greater vitality.

- **Dialogue:**

Dialogue is one of the most important tools in the story. Rumi expands the narrative through extended conversations between the shepherd and God, Moses and the shepherd, and God and Moses. These dialogues do not merely advance the plot; they also reveal character, convey mystical teaching, and deepen the emotional impact of the story. The shepherd's intimate, colloquial prayer and Moses' stern rebuke are especially important in shaping the story's meaning.

- **Setting and Time:**

Rumi makes only limited changes to setting and time, but these changes are meaningful. By choosing Moses instead of another prophet, he situates the story in a sacred and historical prophetic frame. The setting remains relatively vague, which helps the story acquire a symbolic and universal quality. The shepherd's departure into the desert after Moses' rebuke's departure into the desert after Moses' rebuke **Plot:**

Rumi's plot is richer and more coherent than the source texts. He adds the episode of Moses' search for the shepherd after divine rebuke, which is absent from the pre-texts. This addition creates a stronger causal chain and gives the narrative a more complete dramatic arc: prayer, rebuke, remorse, search, reunion, revelation,

and transformation. The shepherd's spiritual maturation and Moses' correction by God turn the story into a narrative of reciprocal growth.

- **Theme:**

The central themes are the rejection of formalism, the legitimacy of sincere devotion, the distinction between external religious correctness and inward love, and the the distinction between external religious correctness and inward love, and the the narrative to express his mystical view that divine acceptance depends on inner truth rather than conventional piety.

- **Tone:**

Rumi carefully adjusts the tone of each character. The shepherd speaks in a simple, affectionate, and rustic tone; Moses speaks in a severe and admonitory tone at first; and later both Moses and the shepherd speak with greater spiritual maturity. This tonal development reflects the characters' inner transformation.

Conclusion

The article concludes that Rumi's version of the shepherd story is a clear example of **creative misreading** in Bloom's sense. He does not merely retell earlier narratives; he **reworks them through narrative expansion, symbolic substitution, dialogue, and thematic reinterpretation**. By altering story elements, Rumi weakens the authority of the source texts and creates a new narrative that is aesthetically richer and ideologically deeper. His story becomes a distinctly mystical and humanistic text, one that dramatizes the relationship between **law and love, outward form and inward truth, and reason and spiritual experience**. In this way, Rumi frees himself from the anxiety of influence and achieves poetic originality through deliberate transformation of inherited material.