

Apocalypse and Salvation: A Reading of Time in Jalal Al-e-Ahmad's *A Stone upon a Grave* and Houshang Golshiri's *Prince Ehtejab*

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Abstract

"Salvation" has always been both an implicit and an explicit concern in literary works; it has often appeared as a well-interpreted ending and sometimes under the guise of the afterlife. An investigation of *A Stone upon a Grave* and *Prince Ehtejab* in light of such concepts differentiates between "the end of time" as passive apocalypticism and "the end time" as active apocalypticism. The two works are located in the tension created between these times. Golshiri's inexhaustible and cycloidal time inspires the protagonist, though death, as calendar time, blows his dreams away. By accepting the authority of linear time, Al-e-Ahmad forgoes confronting time through qualitative or cycloidal time, and seeks salvation through breaching the linear time, which is manifest in childbearing.

Keywords: Apocalypticism, *A Stone upon a Grave*, Chronos, Confession, *Prince Ehtejab*, Salvation

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Apocalyptic reading of literary works acts as a bridge that grants access to ideological horizons, expectations, and desires in the texts. A brief contemplation on the investigated works proves that *Prince Ehtejab* and *A Stone upon a Grave* were not chosen randomly.

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2. Methodology

This article employs a descriptive-analytical approach; it describes concepts such as apocalypticism, salvation, and felicity, and analyses their manifestation in the two works. This approach avoids the unnecessary theoretical reading of literary works.

3. Theoretical Framework

Informed by the conceptualisations of Walter Benjamin and Jacques Lacan, this study explores language, death, salvation, and dream. It also investigates the topography and topology of salvation in light of Giorgio Agamben's theorisations to theologially differentiate between two forms of time: Chronos and Kairos. Chronos refers to calendar time – time that can be measured. Chronos time moves on inexorably and methodically. It is the time which entails all human dreams and desires. Kairos, on the other hand, is about moments, not minutes. Often it is used to refer to the right moment, the opportune moment, or a defining moment. Kairos is time judged not by its duration, but by its importance and value. It is a window of time that requires an intentional, purposeful response. It is a time in which life-shaping decisions are made. It is a defining moment. Wise people recognize and respond to these kairotic moments.

4. Discussion and Analysis

A Stone upon a Grave narrates the broken dreams and desires manifest in childbearing. A child who, regardless of its destiny, is a stone upon a parent's grave. Golshiri, on the other hand, narrates a Qajar prince at home who has a dream of the same magnitude: his long-lost wife reincarnated as a maid who, by the order of the master, is turned into a lady. In light of these dreams and desires, the present study examines the two works and wonders how Al-e-Ahmad and Golshiri conceive salvation? To what extent is this salvation in line with the Salvation in the Day of Judgment? And to what extent is this (mostly foredoomed) salvation possible?

5. Conclusion

Through this short study concerning the selected works, the authors tried to revive classical and traditional readings of literary works, which, according to them, is necessary for understanding ideological foundations in literary works.

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