



## Research Article

# Exploring the Narratives of Rustom and Esfandiar Battle within Shahnameh Ferdowsi: An Analytical Evaluation

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## ABSTRACT

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In this scholarly investigation, we delve into the narrative of the legendary battle between Rustom and Esfandiar, aiming to unveil the nuanced ideological underpinnings woven within the text. Our analysis traverses various contextual dimensions, including the historical background of the text and its revered status within the tradition. Furthermore, we meticulously examine the linguistic intricacies—ranging from lexical choices to syntactical structures—and the rhetorical strategies employed, alongside an exploration of stylistic elements. Through this multifaceted approach, we strive to elucidate the latent ideological discourse embedded within the narrative. The tale of Rustom and Esfandiar's clash resonates with themes of national sovereignty, the steadfast defense of liberty, and the struggle against oppressive forces across diverse realms. Moreover, it offers insights into the author's critique of prevailing power dynamics and societal injustices.

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## Introduction

In the 20th century, modern stylistics supplanted the art of rhetoric and expressive style, encompassing the science of rhetoric (FatuhiRoudmaujni, 1390). Charles Barley is credited with publishing a two-volume book on stylistics in 1909, introducing modern stylistics to Europe (Maida, 1399). Today, stylistic studies aim not only to identify characteristics that define style but also to discern their significance in interpreting the text or establishing a verbal connection between literary elements' influence and impact. In the Persian language, Muhammad Taqi Bahar first employed the term "stylistics" for the title of his book, "Khud-Sabk-Jannosti Nasr". The manner of expression defines a work's style, with the way language is used determining the style of each piece (Safa, 1369).

Linguists define style as the way language is employed by an individual in a specific context for a particular purpose (Talkhabi, 1397, p. 128). In essence, style unifies the features present in works attributed to an individual.

Critical stylistics is an analytical approach that examines how collective concepts form in language and their representational methods (Ferdowsi, 1395). Key concepts in critical stylistics include style, discourse, critical theory, ideology, and power. This approach is influenced by critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis (Ferdowsi, 1395). Mahmoud Fatuhi, drawing from Fowler and Sampson's examples, defines critical stylistics as a synthesis of linguistic stylistics and critical discourse analysis (Colleagues, 1391). This approach facilitates methodical

and enlightened reading for advanced research in genre and provides a foundation for advanced teaching and analytical writing. Both critical stylistics and discourse analysis rely on the critical application of linguistic methods in text interpretation, (Ferdowsi, 1395). They posit that analyzing discourse involves moving beyond visible language forms to explore the social context and discover the mutual relationship between language and social functions (Tochaei, 1398).

## Literature Review

The literature review delves into the burgeoning field of critical stylistics, highlighting key contributions and developments. Sampson's scholarship stands out as a significant contribution to the intersection of stylistics and critical linguistics. His work emphasizes the importance of analyzing spatial, temporal, and psychological perspectives within narrative texts to unveil underlying ideological perspectives of authors. (FatuhiRoudmaujni, 1390) By scrutinizing these elements, researchers gain deeper insights into the socio-political, cultural, and personal contexts that shape literary works.

The article titled "Layers to be examined in stylistics, short stories, and novels to get out of the stagnant situation" further explores the impact of critical stylistics on Persian prose, presenting it as a novel subfield with vast potential for exploration (Safa, 1369). This article underscores the multifaceted layers within stylistic criticism that warrant examination, particularly in the context of short stories and novels. Through detailed analysis, scholars can uncover nuanced meanings and thematic layers

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embedded within literary texts (Maida, 1399). Notably, Frank Karimi Tochai's work extends the application of critical discourse analysis to the study of Ghazali's stylistic elements, showcasing the versatility and applicability of critical stylistics across diverse literary genres and cultural contexts (Colleagues, 1391).

Dr. Mahmoud Fatuhi's seminal book on linguistic theories, approaches, and methods provides a comprehensive overview of linguistics, encompassing both theoretical and practical dimensions. By delving into various layers of language, Fatuhi's work offers invaluable insights into the complexities of linguistic analysis and interpretation (Over, 1391). This foundational text serves as a vital resource for researchers seeking to deepen their understanding of linguistic theory and methodology.

Together, these scholarly works underscore the significance of critical stylistics as a dynamic and evolving field within literary studies. By integrating insights from linguistics, critical theory, and cultural analysis, researchers can enrich their understanding of literary texts and uncover hidden layers of meaning and significance (Ferdowsi, 1395).

## Research Methodology

This article adopts a systematic research methodology, which involves a sequential analysis of external context, locational text, and subsequent in-depth analysis of narrative and textual layers. These layers encompass various dimensions such as canonization, stability, temporality, spatial extent, contrast, certainty, and literary arrays. By employing this methodical approach, the study aims to comprehensively explore and understand the nuanced elements embedded within the narrative and textual structure, facilitating a holistic interpretation of the subject matter.

## Research Questions

- What is the concealed ideology within the story of Rustam and Esfandiar battle?
- Which stylistic tools will facilitate the discovery of ideology, and what is the function of the concealed ideological text?

## Research Terminology

In the realm of discourse analysis, ideology serves as a foundational framework through which individuals and societies perceive and interpret the world. Language plays a pivotal role in establishing and interpreting ideology, which encompasses sets of beliefs and values. Ideology manifests across various linguistic levels, including phonetic, lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical systems, influencing not only the content but also the structure of discourse. This ideological influence extends beyond language to shape political, economic, and social structures. Critical discourse analysis offers a nuanced understanding of power dynamics, highlighting the multifaceted ways in which power operates to shape individuals' conceptualizations and preferences. Lux's theory emphasizes the strategic molding of identity and understanding to preempt dissent, making it a valuable tool for literary analysis, particularly in uncovering concealed ideological texts and the power dynamics inherent in both the text and the author's psyche.

## Analysis of the story

When critically examining the narrative of Rustam and Esfandiar's conflict, it is imperative to delve into its contextual backdrop, including the socio-political milieu in which it was conceived, alongside the author's position and the prevailing circumstances of the era.

Hakeem Abulqasem Ferdowsi, born in Tus in 329 AH and passing away in 416 AH, occupies a prominent stance as a

commentator on the socio-political climate of Iran (Colleagues, 1391). Notably, he stands as the sole political poet in Iranian cultural history originating from the class of peasants, zamindars, and nobles. Ferdowsi, leveraging both financial and intellectual capital, demonstrated ingenuity and talent in penning the *Shahnameh*, a monumental literary, socio-political, economic, historical, and mythological work. His dedication persisted until his final days.

Employing an ironic and mythological language, Ferdowsi addressed contemporary concerns, spotlighting the transgressions of power and political authority during his era. Amidst a politically charged atmosphere, Ferdowsi undertook the editing of *Shahnameh*, depicting the consolidation and corruption of absolute power. The age depicted in *Shahnameh* was marked by warfare, and Ferdowsi's political discourse tackled pressing issues, underscoring the perilous consequences of unbridled power and freedom.

Ferdowsi's opus aimed to equip people with a tool for intellectual resistance, presenting Rustam as the epitome of Iranian ideals—a champion safeguarding the nation, embodying notions of liberty, sagacity, and relentless combat against malevolence (Colleagues, 1391). The narrative of Rustam and Esfandiar, situated in ancient Iran, was crafted to fortify the land against external threats, emphasizing the quest for national sovereignty and the preservation of cherished values and traditions. While the tale harks back to ancient epochs, the oral rendition under scrutiny traces its origins to the 4th century Hijri (Ferdowsi, 1395). Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, conceived as a defense of Iran, continues to resonate within the geographical confines of 4th-century Hijri Iran (Ferdowsi, 1395).

## Esfandiar's Quest for Kingship and Betrayal

In the epic saga of *Shahnameh*, Esfandiar, driven by his ambition for kingship and his commitment to protecting his sisters and homeland, makes a solemn vow to his father to go to war. Despite his triumphant return, the king reneges on his promise of loyalty, prompting Esfandiar to confront him.

Fearing for Esfandiar's fate, the king seeks counsel from seers who predict Esfandiar's impending death unless he avoids confrontation. In an effort to protect his son, the king sends Esfandiar away to Sistan, while Rustam, a formidable warrior, takes his place at court (Ferdowsi, 1395).

Esfandiar, settled near the Harmand River, extends an invitation to Rustam through Bahman. However, a breach of protocol causes tension between the two warriors. Rustam refuses Esfandiar's demand to sit on the left side, leading to a standoff (FatuhiRoudmaujni, 1390).

The next day, an epic battle unfolds between Rustam and Esfandiar, continuing until sunset. Injured and in need of assistance, Rustam seeks help from Simorgh, a mythical bird, who not only tends to his wounds but also reveals Esfandiar's vulnerability.

Armed with this knowledge, Rustam exploits Esfandiar's weakness in the ensuing battle. Despite Esfandiar's refusal to back down and his determination to continue fighting, Rustam's arrow finds its mark, resulting in Esfandiar's tragic demise.

The encounter between Esfandiar and Rustam underscores themes of loyalty, honor, and destiny, culminating in a heart-wrenching conclusion for Esfandiar, driven by both love and conflict.

## Narrative Analysis and Character Perspectives

Ferdowsi's narrative style in the story of Razm Rustam and Esfandiar is characterized by its meticulous attention to detail and its skillful integration of various storytelling elements. At the core of Ferdowsi's approach is his commitment to presenting the events of the narrative in a chronological fashion, allowing readers to follow the story's progression with clarity and coherence (Colleagues, 1391). This chronological structure provides a solid foundation upon which Ferdowsi builds a complex and multifaceted narrative. (Ferdowsi, 1395)

Integral to Ferdowsi's storytelling are the motivations driving his characters. Esfandiar's determination to hand over the crown and throne to Shahi, despite the potential consequences, serves as a catalyst for the unfolding events of the narrative. Additionally, characters such as Jamasip, the astrologer minister, and Prince Noain are driven by their own desires and ambitions, which contribute to the intricacies of the plot. By delving into the motivations of his characters, Ferdowsi adds depth and complexity to the story, presenting readers with a nuanced understanding of the characters' actions and decisions (Ferdowsi, 1395).

Furthermore, Ferdowsi skillfully weaves political themes into the fabric of the narrative, exploring concepts such as power dynamics, Iranian identity, and the defense of independence. These themes not only enrich the story but also provide insight into the socio-political context in which the events unfold. Through his exploration of political themes, Ferdowsi imbues the narrative with greater depth and significance, elevating it from a mere tale of heroism to a reflection on broader societal issues (Talkhabi, 1397).

Overall, Ferdowsi's narrative style in the story of Razm Rustam and Esfandiar combines chronological storytelling, character motivations, and political themes to create a rich and engaging narrative tapestry (Colleagues, 1391). Through his skillful integration of these elements, Ferdowsi crafts a story that is both compelling and thought-provoking, leaving a lasting impact on readers long after they have finished reading.

## Symbolism and Ideologies

Within the enthralling narrative of Razam Rustam and Esfandiar's saga, lies a journey through profound layers of storytelling intricacies. The reimagining of the Besamed tradition offers a unique glimpse into the essence of narrative structure, shedding light on themes of shame and surrender amidst pivotal events and battles (Colleagues, 1391). This tradition serves not only as a reminder of significant moments but also as a conduit for exploring the characters' inner struggles and the broader implications of their actions. As readers traverse through the meticulously crafted spatial landscapes, they are immersed in vivid settings that resonate with the narrative's mood and progression. Each descriptive detail contributes to the atmospheric richness of the storytelling, guiding the audience through the temporal flow of events while adding depth to the overall narrative experience. Through this spatial journey, the narrative comes alive, inviting readers to immerse themselves fully in the world of Razam Rustam and Esfandiar (FatuhiRoudmaujni, 1390).

Delving into the psychological depths of the characters offers profound insights into their inner worlds, enriching the narrative with layers of emotional complexity and cognitive depth. By unraveling the rhetorical layers embedded within the text, readers are exposed to underlying ideologies, symbolic representations, and power dynamics that shape the characters' journeys. Meanwhile, metatextual insights provide a glimpse into the author's authoritative voice, adding precision and depth to the

narrative construction. In essence, each layer of the narrative unfolds to reveal a multifaceted odyssey that captivates and resonates with readers, inviting them to explore the depths of Razam Rustam and Esfandiar's epic saga (Colleagues, 1391).

## Ideology as the Hidden Text

The story of Rustam and Esfandiar reflects the greatness of the Iranian spirit and thought, pitting the vision and power of the Iranian people against tyranny. Rustam, the son of Nariman and Noh Sam, husband of Simorgh, a self-made hero, father, and world champion, Tajbakhsh, conquers Mazandaran and defeats the white giant. He embodies special moral qualities and sacrifices his life to defend his children (Maida, 1399).

Esfandiar, the son of Gastasap, is the ninth king. Blinded by Zarathustra at birth, he is invulnerable except for his eyes (FatuhiRoudmaujni, 1390). Representing a high and arrogant position, Esfandiar seeks power through the king's kingdom and religion. He is a warrior, a symbol of religion, and a representative of tyranny. Proud and self-righteous, he uses religion for power, closing his eyes to the truth, and sees only his own authority. To defeat Esfandiar, one must challenge his arrogance and emerge victorious.

In this narrative, Rustam embodies freedom and independence, simultaneously remaining loyal to the throne. He sets out to fight against the tyranny of his ancestors, protecting the land of Iran. The story conveys the message that no dictator is invincible, emphasizing a positive ideology opposing tyranny (Ferdowsi, 1395).

## Conclusion

This critical stylistic analysis delves into the Razam Dastan Rustam and Esfandiar from Shahnameh Ferdowsi, uncovering distinct stylistic features that contribute to the formation of collective concepts, termed as Jambandi. Going beyond surface interpretations, this examination reveals deeper insights into the narrative. Initially, the story appears to perpetuate established discourses, mirroring societal norms and maintaining the status quo. However, through critical stylistics, a more profound impact is unveiled. Ferdowsi, the author, challenges established norms and power structures by injecting questions and doubts into the narrative.

At the level of canonization, the narrator strategically situates the audience by intricately detailing the internal and external behaviors of characters. Ferdowsi also conveys his perspective on the innocence of the canonized characters, exposing layers of societal complexities. Rhetorically, significant comparisons play a pivotal role. The narrative juxtaposes discourses of power with those of governance, good with evil, and freedom with tyranny. Rustam emerges as a beacon of freedom and independence, combating tyranny in Iran, while Esfandiar embodies tyranny and enslavement. Ferdowsi accentuates Rustam's virtues, portraying him as a national hero. Syntactically, the frequent use of declarative and imperative sentences underscores the author's authoritative stance and unwavering certainty in the narrative.

In conclusion, this analysis intertwines the comparison of personalities and their attributes with the external context and textual locationality, revealing the concealed ideology within the narrative. Ferdowsi's discontent with the historical circumstances in Iran, the functioning of Shahani, and the prevalence of corruption and politics is palpable. By spotlighting the roles of fighters, he advocates for resistance against autocracy and tyranny, championing the preservation of Iran's independence and liberty.

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