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A Narratology of Early Operas in Iran and Türkiye: The Case Study of 'Eshqi's *The Resurrection of Iranian Kings* and Edib-Adıvar's *The Shepherds of Kenan*

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ABSTRACT

From its inception, drama in Iran and Türkiye has not only relied on diegetic methods of narrating, but has also integrated music as an essential component. Following exposure to Western drama through translations and adaptations, writers in these two countries began exploring innovative approaches. This shift led to the development of new creative fields, including opera and operetta composition. The earliest examples of this shift are *The Resurrection of Iranian Kings* by Mirzādeh 'Eshqi (1915) and *The Shepherds of Kenan* by Halide Edib-Adıvar (1916). This comparative study examines these two early operas to determine their positions within the realm of diegesis and mimesis. By analyzing their narratives through the lenses of plot, characterization, and spatial-temporal elements, the study reveals that while these works maintain connections to their diegetic predecessors, their narrative discourse structures exhibit distinct differences.

Keywords: Dramatic Literature, Narratology, Opera, The Resurrection of Iranian Kings, The Shepherds of Kenan

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Introduction

Narratology, the term denoting "the science of narrative," initially focused on various forms of written literature, in novels and particular stories as individual narratives. It emerged in the second half of the 20th century. Classical narratology was predominantly shaped by a selective interpretation of Plato's *The Republic* and Aristotle's *Poetics*, which associated mimesis with mimics and gestures in dramatic literature and diegesis with narration in novels and fiction. Within this framework, the act of narrating and the presence of a narrator became essential for a text to be analyzed narratologically. Consequently, classical studies excluded drama and dramatic literature, concentrating only on fictional texts. This exclusion not only marginalized the narratological study of drama but also left unresolved the ongoing debate about whether drama can be studied through this perspective. However, the concepts of mimesis and diegesis are more complicated, and their distinction is less rigid than often portrayed. While diegetic narratives tend to diverge from the realm of mimesis, diegesis has always played an important role in dramaturgy.

Dramatic literature in Iran and Türkiye presents a compelling field of study for several reasons. In certain periods of post-Islamic history, storytelling was the most widespread form of popular entertainment. Additionally, *Naqqāli* and other traditional performing arts, before and after the advent of Islam, were deeply interrelated with diegetic narration. These performing arts, upon encountering Western drama through translation, adaptation, and emulation of European plays, embarked on a transformative journey toward theater and mimetic representation. Writers in Iran and Türkiye began experimenting with this unfamiliar field, which eventually led to the creation of the first original native operas in both countries. Music, an integral component of the performing arts in these neighboring regions, played a crucial role in this transformation. However, the adoption of Western drama introduced fundamental changes. Dramatists transitioning from diegetic narrative to mimetic representation had to rely on a written text, minimize improvisation in interactive space among the audience and performers, and adhere to new conventions of scenic representation. Key early examples include *The Resurrection of Iranian Kings* by ʻEshqi (1915), considered a seminal historical musical performance in Iran, and *The Shepherds of Kenan* by Edib-Adıvar (1916), a pioneering piece from the era of the Second Ottoman Constitutionalism. It should be noted that neither of these works aligns with contemporary definitions, techniques, or frameworks of opera. However, in the early 20th century, they were conceived as attempts at opera within their cultural contexts.

This interdisciplinary and comparative study explores the prevailing dominance of diegetic dramatic traditions without conflating Western-style texts with traditional forms. More precisely, it examines the positioning of these early operas within the realms of diegesis and mimesis by analyzing the dramatic narrative of *The Resurrection of Iranian Kings* and *The Shepherds of Kenan* in relation to the diegetic and mimetic narrative discourses.

Despite the ubiquity of narration and the growing scope of narrative studies, the narratological analysis of drama remains underdeveloped, particularly concerning Iranian and Turkish drama. The most comprehensive work to date, *Narratology of Drama*[1] by Mohebbi (2019), is based on her Ph.D. dissertation and focuses on Persian drama from 1980 to 2010. Additionally, Mohebbi (2016), in collaboration with Ghahremani and Mahmoodi-Bakhtiari, authored "Development of Iranian Performance from a Diegetic World," exploring the transition from diegetic to mimetic strategies. Similarly, Ersan (2019), in her master's thesis, "The Trend of Narrative in the Theater Literature of Turkey," examines narrative traditions in Turkish drama and analyzes some works from recent decades. However, the only comprehensive study addressing the evolution of drama in Iran and Türkiye from diegetic traditions to Aristotelian mimetic plays is Maneshi's (2024) "A Comparative Narratological Analysis of the Dramatic Literature in Iran and Turkey (1900–1940)." This interdisciplinary study adopts a narratological perspective to investigate the emergence of modern drama in these regions and the transitional phase from diegetic to mimetic narrative forms.

The Narratology of Drama

More than two thousand years ago, the ancient Greek philosopher Plato provided the first and, according to some scholars, such as Potolsky[2], unquestionably the most influential account of mimesis. Plato references mimesis at various points in his work; however, his most important discussion appears in the third book of The *Republic*. Interestingly, he does not define the term explicitly, as if assuming the reader's familiarity with the concept. Using an example from Homer's *Iliad*, Plato distinguishes three types of poets based on how they relate their stories: diegetic narrative, mimetic narrative, and mixed narrative[3]. In diegetic narratives, such as historical accounts or dithyrambs, the poet speaks as

[1] Parastoo Mohebbi, *Revāyatshenāsi-ye Dram* (Tehran: Jāme Zarrin, 2019).
[2] Matthew Potolsky, *Mimesis* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 15, 17.
[3] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Mohammadhassan Lotfi (Tehran: Khoosheh, 1974), 127.

himself. In contrast, mimetic narratives involve the narrator imitating characters through actions and gestures, as seen in tragedy and comedy. Mixed narratives, predominantly found in epics, combine elements of the other two types. On the other hand, Aristotle's *Poetics*, often regarded as the most influential text in Western tradition criticism, significantly shaped early understanding of mimesis and diegesis alongside *The Republic*. Aristotle neutralizes the contrast between mimetic and diegetic narrative modes, asserting the superiority of the dramatic mode[4]. He categorizes epic, tragedy, comedy, dithyramb, and even musical forms like reed and harp playing as mimetic, differentiating them only by media, object, and manner.[5]

These seminal works approach mimesis and diegesis differently, resulting in significant ambiguities in theorizing narratology. Revisiting these terms independently of Platonic or Aristotelian interpretations is therefore valuable. The term mimesis originates from the 5th century BCE and derives from the root "Mimos," which refers both to a person who imitates and a genre of performance that imitates stereotypical traits.[6] Diegesis, also of Greek origin, refers to narration or the narrated world.[7] Nonetheless, the specific meanings of these terms have long been debated among scholars. In her influential analysis of the Greek text, Jong[8] examines the origins of misunderstandings surrounding the diegesis/mimesis distinction. She suggests that diegesis corresponds to moments when the narrator speaks as himself, while mimesis pertains to instances where characters speak in their voices. Although theorists and scholars throughout history have often sought to draw clear boundaries between literary genres, these classifications paradoxically imply the circulation of genres and the possible emergence of intermediary forms. This cyclical spectrum of genres thus becomes a compelling subject for further exploration.[9] Given the porous and unstable nature of the diegetic/mimetic dichotomy, it is evident that drama, like fiction or other literary genres, often combines diegetic and mimetic modes.[10] For example, in much non-Western drama, the narrator is a recurring element of the dramatis personae. Furthermore, even in Western drama, ranging from Greek tragedy or comedy to pre-Renaissance work, diegetic elements are often present despite the dominance of mimetic features.[11]

This means, as Percy Lubbock (1957) frames it in terms of the duality of "showing" and "telling," the debate revolves around whether narrative discourse prioritizes diegetic relating or mimetic representation. Rather than excluding drama, this distinction allows one to distinguish between the indirect, descriptive, or narrative representation of objects, peoples, spaces, and events through language and their direct presentation stage.[12] In other words, to quote Richardson, diegesis has always been "a basic and significant element of dramaturgy throughout the history of the stage."[13] Nonetheless, many prominent a wide range of the most important theorists in the field of narratology, from the very days of the field to the present, have reduced narration to diegetic modes and confined the quality of narrative to the overt or covert presence of a narrator. For example, scholars such as Genette (1980), Prince (1982), Ryan (1992), Scholes and Kellogg (2006), and Schmid (2010) have approached story through a narrator's discourse. Consequently, drama, lacking an explicit narrator figure, has often been treated as a distinct "other" in their works. On the contrary, scholars like Chatman (1978, 1990) and Pfister (2008), who integrate narrative categories into the influential theory of drama, and Bal (2017) have partially or fully acknowledged the narrativity inherent in drama. Among these voices, Fludernik stands out for her argument that "drama is the most important narrative genre whose narrativity needs to be documented."[14] She firmly places drama within the narrative genres, highlighting its narrative and experimental structure. As she notes, "the fictional world is represented, and it is most obviously represented in different medial forms: verbal, performative, visual, and non-performative."[15] Fludernik argues that a play, as a whole, is a narrative, identifying narrative elements not only in dialogues but also in stage directions.[16] From a cognitive theoretical perspective, she highlights that acting, thinking, and feeling are constitutive to human existence within a fictional world. Consequently, she concludes that the existence of a human or human-like protagonist is a minimal condition for narrativity. Rather than basing narrativity only on a chain of causal or temporal events in the plot or the presence of a storyteller figure, she identifies the

[4] Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), 163; idem, *The Architext: An Introduction*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1992), 14.
[5] Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Abdolhossein Zarrinkoob (Tehran: Book Translation and Publishing Company, 1964), 21, 27.
[6] Potolsky, *Mimesis*, 16.
[7] Wolf Schmid, *Narratology: An Introduction*, trans. Alexander Starritt (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 6.
[8] Irene J. F. de Jong, *Narrators and Focalizers: The Presentation of the Story in the Iliad*, 2nd Edition (Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner Publishing Company, 1989), 3-4.
[9] Genette, *The Architext: An Introduction*, 51. Also note that this approach can be traced back to Goethe's triad of *Epik, Dramatik*, and *Lyrik*.
[10] Brian Richardson, "Voice and Narration in Postmodern Drama," *New Literary History*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (2001): 691.
[11] Brian Richardson, "Point of View in Drama: Diegetic Monologue, Unreliable Narrators, and the Author's Voice on Stage," *Comparative Drama*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (1988): 196.
[12] Martin Puchner, *Stage Fright: Modernism, Anti-Theatricality, and Drama* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 24.
[13] Richardson, "Point of View in Drama: Diegetic Monologue, Unreliable Narrators, and the Author's Voice on Stage" 212.
[14] Monika Fludernik, *Towards a Natural Narratology* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 260.
[15] Monika Fludernik, "Mediacy, Mediation, and Focalization: The Squaring of Terminological Circles," in *Postclassical Narratology: Approaches and Analyses*, Jan Alber and Monika Fludernik (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2010), 125.
[16] Monika Fludernik, "Genres, Text Types, or Discourse Modes? Narrative Modalities and Generic Categorization," *Style*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (2000): 282.

protagonist as central to narrativity. In addition, as human existence is inherently tied to a specific time and place, characters must also be anchored in a spatiotemporal framework. To summarize Fludernik's perspective: "A narrative is a representation of a possible world in a linguistic and/or visual medium, at whose center there are one or several protagonists of an anthropomorphic nature who are existentially anchored in a temporal-spatial sense, who (mostly) perform goal-directed actions."[17] Furthermore, the enactment of these actions is an important aspect of the narrative, falling under the dual categories of diegetic report and mimetic representation. This duality is the primary focus of this essay, which examines two pioneering operas in Iran and Türkiye. However, before delving into this work, a brief review of the dramatic traditions in these countries is necessary.

Dramatic Traditions in Iran

Before encountering Western drama and adapting its forms and structures, Persians had four main forms of performative arts: *Naqqāli*, puppetry, *Taqlid*, and *Ta'zīyeh. Naqqāli*, or Iranian storytelling, boasts a long history that dates back to the Gusāns[18] of the pre-Islamic era. This art form relied entirely on the narrating competence of the performer, or *Naqqāl*, and is thus considered not only as a branch of the performing arts[19] but also as the most ancient and foundational of all.[20] Persian puppetry, which today is divided into *Sāyeh-bāzi* (shadow play) and *Kheyme-shab-bāzi*, was historically seen as a unified genre. It featured a distinct style: one using the shadows of puppets cast in front of a light source and another showcasing puppets directly visible to the audience.[21] Taqlid originated from popular itinerant or court entertainers known as *Motreb(s)*, whose performances gradually evolved to include basic plots and structures. Among these, *Baqqāl-bāzi* and *Siyāh-bāzi* stand out as the most renowned types.[22] Finally, Ta'zīyeh, the most magnificent performative art in Iran, is believed to trace its roots to pre-Islamic mourning rituals.[23] Scholars such as Jannati-'Atayi[24] consider Ta'zīyeh the first Persian tragedy, identifying its three defining elements: poetic verbalism, music, and movement.[25] A brief examination of Persian dramatic traditions reveals their shared qualities. In the post-Islamic era, an auditory culture,[26] characterized in narrative terms as diegetic forms of narration dominated and shaped dramatic practices. Consequently, Iranian traditional performances heavily relied on improvisation, direct engagement with the audience (later echoed in Western tradition as the alienation effect), stock characters, and a rejection of Aristotelian unities. These performances embraced temporal-spatial fluidity, abstract representations of time and place, minimal lighting or set design, and the integration of dance, music, and singing. These traits are particularly evident in Taqlid and Ta'zīyeh. In Taqlid, performers adhered only to essential storylines and frameworks, leaving the rest to spontaneous interpretation during the performance. Similarly, neither Taqlid nor Ta'zīyeh included formal characterization. Both forms disregarded spatial-temporal constraints, seamlessly shifting between locations, rendering such shifts not only possible but entirely convincing.

Dramatic Traditions in Türkiye

Turkish popular drama, a significant aspect of Istanbul's city life before its encounter with Western drama, had four main subcategories: *Medahlık* (Turkish storytelling), puppetry, *Karagöz* (Turkish shadow play), and *Ortaoyunu*. Medahlık, with roots in pre-Islamic traditions tracing back to nomadic storytellers, or *Ozan(s)*, mainly relied on individual mimetic monologues and dramatized narratives.[27]

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[17] Monika Fludernik, *An Introduction to Narratology*, trans. Patricia Hausler-Greenfield and Monika Fludernik (Routledge: London and New York, 2009), 6.

[18] Parthian poet-musicians

[19] Beyzā'i believes naqqāli is a solo performance, whose performers are actor-naqqāls. Jannati-'Atāyi regards naqqāls as exceptional actors, and Fanā'iyān sees naqqāls as great solo actors (Bahrām Beyzā'i *Namāyesh dar Irān*, 6th Edition (Tehran: Roshangaran and Women Studies Pub, 2008), 81-2; Abolghāsem Jannati-'Atāyi, *Bonyād-e Namāyesh dar Irān*, (Tehran: Ibn-Sina Bookstore Publication, 1954), 53; Tājbakhsh Fanā'iyān, *Honar-e Namāyesh dar Irān (tā sāl-e 1357/1979)*. (Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 2007), 6).

[20] Farideh Shirjian, *Jāygāh-e Namāyesh-e Sonnatī dar Theatre-e Irān* (Tehran: Ān, 2001), 64; Beyzā'i. *Namāyesh dar Irān*, 64.

[21] ibid, 84.

[22] Jamshid Malekpour, *Adabiyyāt-e Namāyeshi dar Irān: Nokhostin Kooshesh-hā tā Doreh-ye Qajar*. 1st Vol. (Tehran: Tus, 1984), 269.
These plays are also known as Ruhowzi.

[23] 'Enāyatollāh Shahidi, *Pazhooheshi dar Ta'zīyeh va Ta'zīyeh-khāni* (Tehran: Cultural Research Office, 2001), 67. See also: Āzhand, Ya'ghub. *Namāyesh dar Doreh-ye Safavid*. 2nd Edition. Tehran: Iranian Academy of Arts, 2009.

[24] Jannati-'Atayi, *Bonyād-e Namāyesh dar Irān*, 32.

[25] Shahidi, *Pazhooheshi dar Ta'zīyeh va Ta'zīyeh-khāni*, 38.

[26] This auditory culture through Sattāri's reading is the natural product of words' enchantment, which covers a wide range from Shahrzād's stories in *One Thousand and One Nights* to the Muslim's holy book, the Quran (Jalāl Sattāri, *Zamine-ye Ejtemāi-ye Ta'zīyeh va Theatre dar Irān* (Tehran: Markaz, 2008), 138).

[27] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi* (İstanbul: Alfa Yayınları, 2015), 11; Özdemir Nutku, *Meddahlık ve Meddah Hikayeleri* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1978), 155.

Although its diegetic aspect has traditionally been more prominent, scholars hold varying views on this matter.[28] Turkish puppetry, despite its historical existence in certain rural regions of Anatolia, remains largely obscure and seldom categorized within dramatic traditions.[29] On the contrary, Karagöz is undoubtedly the most celebrated, popular, and notable form of traditional Turkish performance. It involves the movements of leather shadow figures on a white screen illuminated from behind.[30] Finally, *Ortaoyunu*, the most recent and evolved form of traditional Turkish plays, not relying on a pre-written dramatic text, performed in the center of a circle of spectators, the performers improved their performances based on thematic plotlines, entertaining the audience with lively mimicry and improvisation.[31] These traits are common across traditional Turkish dramatic performances. As And succinctly put it,[32] these plays were textless, lacked a Western-style scenic stage, and featured open structure driven by improvisation, creativity, and performer competence. Dance, music, and songs were integral components of these performances. Abstract representations of time and place were common, and the narratives typically consisted of a series of comic events leading to a happy ending. Characterization was unrealistic, featuring stock characters as a natural element. A notable aspect of these plays was their verbal features, structured as exchanges between opposing poles. Additionally, imitation was central, with the main conflicts, plot events, and character introductions heavily reliant on mimics and gestures.

Opera in Iran and Türkiye: A Vague Encounter

Drama in the East has a unique and long-standing history rooted in native cultures; however, theater, as understood in the Western tradition, was introduced as an imported concept. For this reason, avoiding the term "theater" in discussions about the pre-Westernization era of Eastern countries, including Iran and Türkiye, seems more appropriate. With this context in mind, certain key points about the initial encounters of Persians and Türks with theater are worth mentioning.

During the reign of Sultan Selim III (1789–1807), Westernization became more prominent, reflecting his policies on cultural reforms. As a result, his era is widely regarded as the official beginning of the Ottoman Empire's engagement with Western theater.[33] According to historical records, while the Türks were not necessarily familiar with the concept of theater, they were already acquainted with the term[34] Another important window for exposure to the Western world was the experiences of Ottoman ambassadors abroad. Their report, which often detailed visits to operas, comedies, and other theatrical performances in Europe,[35] played a crucial role in introducing these forms to the empire. The first documented encounter with Western drama is attributed to an Ottoman ambassador in the early 18th century.[36] However, as with many other phenomena, theater largely remained confined to palaces and elites. Public interest and engagement were limited, except for some national celebrations. For instance, the first opera in Ottoman history, likely performed by an Italian troupe, dates back to 1797. However, the first opera open to the public was staged 44 years later, in the mid-19th century.[37]

In Iran, the theater underwent a parallel evolution. Westernization gradually intensified during the Qajar dynasty, facilitated by ambassadors, students, and even monarchs traveling to Europe. These encounters, which began in the early 19th century and continued into the 20th century, were meticulously documented.[38] It is believed that Mirzā Mostafā Afshār, a delegate to Tsarist Russia under Fath-Ali Shah (1797–1824), was the first to use the term "theater" in Iran.[39] Nāser al-Din Shah (1848–1895) also played a significant role in the Westernization of Iranian culture. His travelogues from his three major journeys to Europe (1873, 1877, and 1888) contain detailed accounts of his visits to ballets, operas, and theaters.[40] According to documented reports, the first dramatic performance Nāser al-Din Shah witnessed was

[28] Metin And, *Geleneksel Türk Tiyatrosu: Kukla, Karagöz, Ortaoyunu*, (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1969), 49. Also note that, Akı, regardless of the significant role of mimics and gestures, believes medahlık is some kind of a speaking story, rather than a solo-player drama. On the other hand, he sees medahlık along with karagöz and Ortaoyunu and categorizes this genre as a mono-drama among other Turkish traditional dramatic performances. Also, Nutku believes medahlık is closer to acting, instead of mere diegetic narrating (Niyazi Akı, *Türk Tiyatro Edebiyatı Tarihi I: Başlangıçtan Cumhuriyet Devrine Kadar* (İstanbul: Dergâh, 1989), 10; And, *Geleneksel Türk Tiyatrosu: Kukla, Karagöz, Ortaoyunu*, 68; Nutku, *Meddahlık ve Meddah Hikayeleri*, 64).

[29] And, *Geleneksel Türk Tiyatrosu: Kukla, Karagöz, Ortaoyunu*, 81-91.

[30] And, *Geleneksel Türk Tiyatrosu: Kukla, Karagöz, Ortaoyunu*; Cevdet Kudret, *Karagöz* (İstanbul, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), 9.

[31] Cevdet Kudret, *Ortaoyunu* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1973), 1.

[32] And, *Geleneksel Türk Tiyatrosu: Kukla, Karagöz, Ortaoyunu*, 47-49, 276, 306.

[33] Metin And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu 1839-1908* (Ankara, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1972), 21.

[34] Sevengil, *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi*, 100.

[35] And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu 1839-1908*, 34.
For example, through the same documents, we realize that the people of Ottoman Empire knew the word 'comedy' in the early 19th century (Sevengil, *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi*, 99).

[36] Sevengil, *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi*, 802; Also note that in the early 18th century, Yirmisekiz Çelebi Mehmet Efendi was ordered to settle a contract with Luis XV in France. His reports from 1737 are collected in a book called Paris Sefâretnâmesi, which in fact was the first source for the Türk intellects eager to discover Western manifastations (Sevengil, *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi*, 93).

[37] Özdemir Nutku, *Dünya Tiyatrosu Tarihi: Başlangıçtan 19. Yüzyıla Kadar*, Cilt 1 (Ankara: Remzi Kitabevi, 1985), 356; Sevengil, *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi*, 100-1.

[38] Malekpour, *Adabiyyāt-e Namāyeshi dar Irān: Nokhostin Kooshesh-hā tā Doreh-ye Qajar*, 54.

[39] ibid, 82.

[40] Ya'ghub Āzhand, *Namāyesh dar Doreh-ye Qajar* (Tehran: Mola, 2016), 424-5.

likely a ballet. His personal notes from this experience mark the earliest explanation of French theatrical terminology in Iran, including words like "scene" and "act."[41] In these same travelogues, he describes opera as follows: "It was an opera hall, meaning they chanted and played music well."[42] However, the broader public's familiarity with such concepts emerged only later, during the Constitutional Revolution, when theater gained wider popularity. During this time, critics and audiences alike began coining native terms to describe opera and operetta as musical and semi-musical plays.[43]

Ultimately, native Persian and Turkish playwrights began creating operatic works. Two significant early examples include *The Resurrection of Iranian Kings* (1915) by Mirzādeh 'Eshqi and *The Shepherds of Kenan* (1916) by Halide Edib-Adıvar.

The Resurrection of Iranian Kings[44]

This musical one-act play, written in verse, delved into ancient Persian history. The story begins with 'Eshqi visiting the ruins of the Sassanid palaces in Ctesiphon, Mada'in, which evoke memories of Persia's former glory. Grieving the past, he falls asleep. In his dream, Khosrodokht emerges from graves—a mournful girl adorned with ornaments. Soon after, a wall collapses, and Cyrus, a stalwart figure befitting a king, appears, followed by Dariush. Next, Anoushirvan, gracious yet sorrowful, steps forth from behind a wall and column. Upon his disappearance, Khosrow takes his place on stage, dressed in royal attire and ornaments. Shortly after, Shirin, dressed in black, appears close to Khosrow. Her face is beautiful yet sorrowful. One by one, these noble figures of Persia's past enter the stage, delivering chants that echo their significance. As Shirin's sobbing concludes, the kings cease their mourning, lower their hands in an ancient ritual, and chant in reverence to the pure soul of Zoroaster, heralding a bright future. Zoroaster appears, and following his exit, all other characters vanish as they enter. 'Eshqi then awakens.

This one-act play is a significant cultural work, as it is the first opera composed and performed in Persian. In the introduction, 'Eshqi emphasizes his avoidance of foreign words, opting for the term "fully musical play" over "opera." The story partly draws on 'Eshqi's personal experiences during his journey from Baghdad to Mosul.[45] However, as noted before, this play diverges from conventional opera, portraying the emotional reflection of a dreamer rather than a linear, causally driven plot. Another noteworthy aspect is the designation of characters as "singers" in the introduction. When the curtain rises, the stage directions describe a "glorious ruin of a Sassanid palace in Mada'in, complete with graves, columns, and sculptures of gods and goddesses." The directions culminate with the descriptive statement, "So, the curtain looks really mysterious."[46] The play begins as 'Eshqi enters and marvels at the spectacle, singing in Masnavi meter:

'Eshqi
Oh lord! What are these countless ruins of gateways and bulwarks?
I have sworn never to desire another journey if I survive this one. . .
Yet now, beholding this court, I forget the sorrows of the road. . . [47]

The stage directions' descriptive quality is striking, exemplified by phrases like "So, the curtain looks really mysterious." The placement of scene elements and the melodic nature of 'Eshqi's monologues are conveyed through diegetic means. Although the specific time remains unmentioned, the melancholic and mysterious atmosphere suggests that time is irrelevant here. After another monologue by 'Eshqi, accompanied by a brief action where "he holds his hand over his forehead. . . Mirzādeh succumbs to somnolence; he rests his head on his hands over his knees, as though dreaming, and he dreams."[48] The ending mirrors the beginning. Following Zoroaster and the other characters' disappearance, 'Eshqi awakens and sings in a startled tone:

'Eshqi
My lord! What I just witnessed in this ruined palace was a dream or reality?
I saw all the kings mourning Iran's sorrows!
Our ancestors would deem us a disgrace. Oh, my Lord, guide us!
Fulfill Zoroaster's promise. 'Eshqi dreams, you make it come true.[49]

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41 Malekpour, *Adabiyyāt-e Namāyeshi dar Irān: Nokhostin Kooshesh-hā tā Doreh-ye Qajar*, 90.
42 ibid, 92.
43 Jamshid, Malekpour, *Adabiyyāt-e Namāyeshi dar Irān: Melli-Garā'i dar Namāyesh (Doreh-ye Reza Shah Pahlavi)*. 3rd Vol. (Tehran: Tus, 2006), 54-7.
44 The first performance of *The Resurrection of Iranian Kings* was on January 5th, 1922, in Tehran, Grand Hotel Theatre Hall (Āzhand, *Namāyesh dar Doreh-ye Qajar*, 467).
45 'Ali-Akbar Moshirsalimi, *Kolliyyāt-e Mosavvar-e Mirzadeh 'Eshqi*. 8th Edition (Tehran: Amirkabir, 1979), 231.
46 ibid, 232.
47 ibid, 233.
48 ibid, 234.
49 ibid, 241.

The drowsiness of the protagonist and the representation of his dreams, nightmares, or even delusions effectively extend his perspective and reflect his thoughts. This play, at its core, is a representation of 'Eshqi's mind. Consequently, the narrative unfolds along two parallel time axes: one begins with 'Eshqi's falling asleep and ends with his awakening, while the other exists within his dream, flashing back to the past. Interestingly, these two axes align with the stage timing. The play's opening, from 'Eshqi's entrance to his slumber, and its conclusion, from his waking up to the final curtain, function as a narrative frame for the central events of the story. As a result, 'Eshqi assumes the role of a narrator:

'Eshqi
Now, after seeing the state of the homeland before my eyes,
I see a woman coming out of a grave in a shroud.
Out of the grave she is, looking around.
I wonder what happened so suddenly that she started to wail.[50]

For every vocal piece, the playwright specifies the musical modal systems, such as Bayāt-e Esfahān and Segāh. However, these notes remain within the diegetic realm of descriptions, leading to sparsity in mimetic and performative elements. In most cases, the characters' appearances are unaccompanied by stage directions[51] indicating movements, gestures, or actions. The audience is left without visual cues to enhance the performance. Consequently, the characters do not actively move or interact within the scene but instead appear, chant in classical Persian musical modes, and disappear in a repetitive sequence. These chants often express wistfulness over the past but occasionally provide descriptive content, such as delineating the borders of ancient Persia:

Dariush
From China to Rome was under my rule;
I left half the globe to my predecessors.[52]

One notable moment involves Khosrow's monologue, followed by Shirin's. Unlike the rest of the play, these characters directly address the audience, breaking the narrative's spatial convention. While this technique affects the scene's spatial construction, it does not adhere to Western theatrical principles, such as breaking the fourth wall. Instead, it blends the diegetic and mimetic narrative realms:

Shirin [points at the audience]
You Iranian, living on the ruins, recalling the testaments of the universe,
Those were the days, and yet these are. . . [53]

Following Shirin's monologue, the play reaches a crucial moment: Zoroaster's appearance. After the choral monologue,[54] "a wall with a vestibule underneath and a statue of a God over its vault disappears. The spirit of Zoroaster appears, dressed in white with waist-length gray hair. He acts prophetically, with a heavenly visage."[55] Zoroaster begins to chant and "wanders unearthly" around the stage. Unlike the other characters, described briefly, almost as singing sculptures, Zoroaster is described with greater specificity. Nonetheless, even his chant addressing the Iranian kings is monologic.

To summarize the narratological aspects of *The Resurrection of Iranian Kings*, while monologues' dominance links the play strongly to the diegetic narrative realm, some mimetic elements are present. For example, when a wall disappears and later reappears, or when a cradle decorated with flags and colorful lights descends from the ceiling to the floor, these moments mark significant strides toward mimetic representation within the predominantly diegetic discourse of the play.

The Shepherds of Kenan[56]

The story begins with Yakub's sons leading their flocks to the banks of the Jordan River. Consumed by envy, the brothers resent Yusuf, believing him to be their father's favorite. Seeking a resolution, they reach a consensus agreement: to sell Yusuf into slavery to pass Egyptian caravans. However, instead of a life of servitude, Yusuf rises to become Vizier of Egypt. He marries Asenat and saves Egypt during a devastating famine. Amid the famine, Yakub's sons travel to Egypt to purchase provisions. Yusuf recognizes them, but they fail to realize that the powerful Vizier is their brother,

[50] ibid, 234.
[51] For example, Khosrodokht rises from grave, Cyrus appears from the collapsing wall, and Anoushirvan shows up from behind a column.
[52] ibid, 236.
[53] ibid, 237.
[54] This piece is composed by Mirzā Hassan-Khān, who holds a diploma in music (Moshirsalimi, *Kolliyyāt-e Mosavvar-e Mirzadeh 'Eshqi*, 238).
[55] ibid, 239.
[56] *The Shepherds of Kenan* performed during 1916-1917 and in August 1918 (Halide Edib-Adıvar, *Kenan Çobanları, Maske ve Ruh*, 4. Baskı (İstanbul: Atlas Kitabevi, 1991), 9).

whom they sold for 20 silver. Yusuf inquires about their youngest brother, Bünyamin, and demands they bring him during their next visit to receive their share of goods. When all the brothers gather before Yusuf, he reveals his true identity. Overcome with remorse, they seek forgiveness. Yusuf sends them back home with the joyous news to their father, reuniting the long-separated family.

As noted earlier, *The Shepherds of Kenan* is the first opera written and composed by Turkish artists.[57] However, in terms of techniques and structure, it does not align with the classical opera tradition. Instead, this three-act play with a linear plot bears closer resemblance to a diegetic work with mimetic elements than to a traditional libretto. For example, the opening act begins with a vivid and detailed stage direction that reads more like descriptive passages of a novel than a conventional theatrical script. Here is an excerpt:

> *The molten red sun blazes fiercely in the desert sky. This is the Dotan pasture. A few palm trees can be seen here and there. The sons of Yakub, shepherds, rest under these trees. The flocks graze by the Jordan River. The bells are silent, just as they were on the first days this pasture appeared on the face of the Earth. The surrounding area is an endless golden desert, covered by a bright blue dome of sizzling reddish rays. . . Boiling a temptation with heat and fire. A bit later, this temptation sets the stage for the first act of one of humanity's earliest disasters.*[58]

Similarly, the second act begins with a more concise introduction:

> **Pharaoh's Palace**
> Yusuf and his wife Asenat are talking
> *Asenat's dancers perform while Yusuf is lost in thoughts.*[59]

Unlike the first act, this introduction omits a descriptive stage direction detailing the settings. The dancers, mentioned briefly at the beginning, are not referred to again throughout the act, even during crucial moments. For instance, when Yusuf sends Asenat to her room and calls for his servant, Yekşan, there is no reference to the dancers. Later, Yusuf soliloquizes alone; their absence is similarly unnoted:

> **Yusuf** [alone]: *Father! Bünyamin! How long has it been since you last heard my voice?*[60]

Other instances blur the lines between exposition and stage direction. For example:

> *Yekşan enters. He opens the door. Yusuf's ten brothers enter, bowing deeply. They greet Yusuf with respect and wait.*[61]

Or,

> *Yusuf's brothers converse quietly. Simultaneously, Yusuf gestures and descends down from his throne. They arrest Şemun.*[62]

And finally:

> *The brothers bid farewell to the Vizier, their eyes brimming with tears, while Yusuf watches them leave.*[63]

In the second example above, no explanation is provided regarding how the brothers' speech extends beyond the auditory range of the scene. Additionally, Yusuf's descent from the throne and Şemun's arrest are presented as diegetic descriptions. Similarly, the greetings in the third and first examples fail to fully integrate with the conversational floor of the scenes.

The beginning of the third act is also noteworthy. First, the characters' names are mentioned, followed by a descriptive paragraph. However, considering the overall structure of the work, its mimetic performance seems unlikely:

> **Yusuf, Yekşan**
> *[Once again, in the Vizier's palace. . . Yusuf awaits his brothers. After all, a secret way is now drawing Kenan and Egypt closer. Yakub's empty, ill-fated chest that confined Yusuf for years is breathing new life. Yusuf is scared. He has seen the other side of Jordan in his dreams. Has God. . . forgotten Yusuf?]*
> **Yusuf** *[by the window, deep in thought, as all the above assumptions pass before his eyes]: Yekşan...*[64]

Regarding time and temporal aspects, the story spans Yusuf's journey from childhood to the disclosure of his identity. This period is contracted on both the discourse and performance levels. In the first act, given the continuity of time and the lack of mimetic actions, the duration of time aligns closely with the "scene" pattern described by Genette (1980). However, this pattern is not consistent in other parts of the play. The most significant example of narrative movement in terms of tense occurs in the third act, where Yusuf sends Yekşan to locate the Hebrews:

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57 Sevengil, *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi*, 755.
58 Edib-Adıvar, *Kenan Çobanları, Maske ve Ruh*, 19.
59 ibid, 23.
60 ibid, 25.
61 ibid, 26.
62 ibid, 28.
63 ibid, 28.
64 ibid, 29.

Yusuf: Send someone to check for Hebrew caravans.
[Yekşan enters]
Yekşan: *My lord, I bring good news: the Hebrews are here.*[65]

Given Yekşan immediate return with the news after Yusuf's command, an "ellipsis" is evident. This pattern repeats when Yekşan, following Yusuf's instructions, brings the Hebrews to Yusuf's presence. After the brothers leave the scene to be catered to, Asenat enters, prompting a brief exchange of Yusuf's further plans:

Asenat: *What is your plan, my lord?*
Yusuf *[without responding]: Go, send for Yekşan. [to Asenat] With God's will, there is light after darkness and joy after grief.*[66]

At this moment, Yekşan enters immediately:

Yusuf: *Are the Hebrews catered?*
Yekşan: *Yes, sir. They have even packed their caravans.*
Yusuf: *Place this silver cup in the youngest brother's luggage and bring him to me for the crime of thievery.*[67]

After this directive, a brief dialogue occurs between Asenat and Yusuf. Then, *[Chaos is heard from outside]:* ***All:*** *We are not thieves! We are not thieves!*[68]

Some questions arise from the text, such as who Yusuf initially ordered to call Yekşan or how the silver cup came into Yusuf's possession. Was the cup present throughout the scene? Since this play has been staged, it can be inferred that some of these elements were addressed improvisationally during performances.[69]

Temporal deixes with varying frequency, ranging from "iterative narrative" to "singulative narrative," primarily established through diegetic features. A key strategy is "analepsis," referring to events before the story's commencement. For instance, in the first act, the brothers reflect on Yusuf being their father's favorite, recounting specific past moments. Yusuf recalls his last dream, and in the second act, he confides in Asenat about his experiences.[70]

The treatment of "dancers," briefly mentioned earlier, is another significant diegetic aspect, extending to the representation of the spatial positions. In the first act, the text provides no indication of the brothers' placement on stage, gestures, or attitudes, even though their character differences are significant:

Cad: *Do not think Yusuf sees only your errors. He knows we are the children of a maidservant.*
(. . .)
Yehuda: *Yusuf? Who is he? A kid. Even if Israel loves him, what then?*
(. . .)
Şemun: *We are the sons of Lee, not of a maidservant.*[71]

Despite these differences, the brothers often act collectively, functioning as a unified body akin to a choir. Their collective voice as "All" is evident in various moments, such as their denial of thievery and their earlier conspiracies against Yusuf.

Comparing the Narrative in *The Resurrection of Iranian Kings* and *The Shepherds of Kenan*

Before presenting the conclusions, Table 4-1 offers a concise summary of the analysis of the mimetic and diegetic aspects of the narrative in *The Resurrection of Iranian Kings* and *The Shepherds of Kenan*.

[65] Edib-Adıvar, *Kenan Çobanları, Maske ve Ruh*, 29.
[66] ibid, 31.
[67] ibid, 31-2.
[68] ibid.
[69] It must also be the case with the musical parts of the play; although the composer, Vedî Sabrâ, is known, the details on the performing of the musical pieces are not provided, neither in the Ottoman Turkish version nor in the new Turkish version (Edib-Adıvar, *Kenan Çobanları, Maske ve Ruh*, 4; Halide, *Kenan Çobanları: Opera (Three Acts)* (no place, Matbaa-yi Orhaniye Edib, 1916)).
[70] ibid, 20-2, 24-5.
[71] ibid, 19-21

Table 1. Comparing Analysis of Narrative in *The Resurrection of Iranian Kings* and *The Shepherds of Kenan*

Mimetic Narrative / Diegetic Narrative	The Resurrection of Iranian Kings	The Shepherds of Kenan
Dialogue		
Monologue, Aside, Soliloquy		
Act		
Report of the Act		
Representative Characters		
Descriptive Types		
Absence of Reporting Agents		
Presence of the Reporting Agents		
Representation Of The Spatial-temporal Aspects		
Description Of The Spatial-temporal Aspects		
Representative Scenes		
Descriptive Scenes		

Conclusion

The analysis of narration in 'Eshqi's *The Resurrection of Iranian Kings* and Edib-Adıvar's *The Shepherds of Kenan*, focusing on the narratological aspects of plot, characterization, and spatial-temporal features, illuminates the positions of these texts in the realms of diegesis and mimesis, addressing the central question of this study. The findings of this multidisciplinary comparative study demonstrate the significant influence of dramatic traditions on the narrative structures of these two early operas from Iran and Türkiye. Both texts exhibit strong ties to their dramatic predecessors, rooted in the diegetic narrative realm. This influence is reflected in the natural integration of plot structuring, characterization, and spatial-temporal elements within the plays. Notably, the cultural familiarity with storytelling through music and drama in the respective regions ensured that many narrative techniques were not borrowed from external traditions but organically evolved. However, this study reveals distinct differences in the narrative approaches of the two texts, particularly regarding their mimetic and diegetic features. *The Resurrection of Iranian Kings* leans more heavily on diegetic narration techniques, such as employing dialogues or recounting actions rather than directly presenting them. In contrast, *The Shepherds of Kenan* relies more on speech exchanges and acting, emphasizing mimetic representation over narration. Interestingly, the approach to characterization diverges between the two texts. While *The Resurrection of Iranian Kings* demonstrates a stronger inclination toward representation over description, *The Shepherds of Kenan* adopts a more diegetic method, favoring descriptive character development and relying more on narrative agents. Regarding spatial and temporal settings, *The Shepherds of Kenan* employs a more descriptive and diegetic style, while *The Resurrection of Iranian Kings* adopts a mimetic and representative approach. These differences highlight the diversity in narrative styles within early drama in Iran and Türkiye, showcasing their richness in storytelling techniques. This study underscores the significance of exploring such underappreciated yet valuable narrative elements in early operas. Examining these works individually or comparatively can deepen our understanding of the evolution of drama and provide inspiration for future authentic contributions to the field.

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