

## A Postmodern Literary Discourse Analysis of MohammadReza Safdari's "The Two Quails": A Lyotardian Reading

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### Abstract

The present article explores the manifestations and interactions of Postmodern discourse in MohammadReza Safdari's "The Two Quails." It endeavours to realise how a text can challenge the rules of representation and suggest new horizons of representation. Adopting a qualitative approach, informed by Jean-François Lyotard's conceptualisation of the event, the postmodern sublime, and the issue of identity, the present study investigates "The Two Quails." The results of this study show that by distorting the narrative line, Safdari creates a sense of suspension, which challenges the reader's expectations. By disobeying the rules and regulations of discourse and modern story-telling, Safdari showcases new methods of representation. His narrative explores a chaotic world in which any meaningful systematic unity is untenable and flexible. This uncertainty is echoed by the content and the form as well.

**Keywords:** Postmodernism, The Two Quails, Safdari, Lyotard, Grand Narrative

### Extended Abstract

#### 1. Introduction

Informed by the change in nature and position of knowledge in contemporary society, Jean-François Lyotard argues that those grand narratives which systematise knowledge and aim to functionally lead to a specified goal are obsolete in the postmodern world (Lyotard, 1401 [2022]: 16). As the grand narratives crumble, so does the subject's identity. People's exposure to paradoxical regulations dismantles their societal bond.

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The literature review surrounding MohammadReza Safdari's oeuvre proves their potential for different readings, though most readings concern language and narratology.

Informed by Lyotard's theories, this study explores "The Two Quails." It aims to improve the reader's understanding of contemporary Persian story-telling. The present article endeavours to answer the following questions: What elements in the story go beyond the criteria of traditional contemporary story-telling? And what are the manifestations of Lyotardian postmodern discourse in the story?

## **2. Methodology**

Adopting a descriptive-analytical approach and postmodern discourse analysis, this study explores MohammadReza Safdari's "The Two Quails." In this respect, after an overview of the story, the study interactively investigates the manifestations of Lyotardian notions, such as the event, the postmodern sublime, and the issue of identity in the story.

## **3. Theoretical Framework**

Postmodern reading, according to Lyotard, focuses on micro-narratives and language games to emphasise the hidden cracks in societal bonds. Postmodern art acknowledges the sublime as a force capable of dismantling and re-creating familiar artistic structures and narrating methods. One can argue that postmodern art challenges representationality. It is an approach in which the subject has a scattered and unrecognisable identity (Bauman, 1396 [2017]: 248).

Postmodernism, according to Lyotard, correlates with a foundational disbelief in grand narratives. He posits that the criterion upon which this structure used to stand is no longer valid. Grand narratives, in his view, limit and reduce the so-called language games. When a grand narrative is broken, language starts to play, and the world expands (Lyotard, 1984: 18).

## **4. Discussion and Analysis**

In "The Two Quails," we do not observe a clear plotline. Although we sense that something has happened, we are unable to exactly pinpoint the event. In this respect, the event resists representation. According to Lyotard, an event is a moment in the narrative when something happens. It requires the reaction of the reader, which is unpredictable; in other words, the point of departure in the story is an event cloaked for the reader and the narrator.

In his "The Two Quails," Safdari refrains from representing the outside world; instead, he creates a parallel universe, which confuses the reader. Throughout

the narrative, the main character, who used to conform to the outside world, starts to lose his identity. He goes from Abehoom to Behoom and, eventually, to Hoom, which is a representation of a plant.

Employing language and sentence conflicts, Safdari creates a suspension between imagination and reason, which clouds any visible unity among complex emotions. Imagination and reason both silence the other and merge in one another in the process. In the end, as the world and the character dismantle, so does language structure.

## 5. Conclusion

The results of this study show that by distorting the narrative, Safdari creates a sense of suspension, which challenges the reader's expectations. His text resists the traditional rules and regulations of modern storytelling and replaces them with new methods of representation. Safdari's narrative explores a chaotic world in which any meaningful systematic unity is untenable and flexible. This uncertainty is echoed by the content and the form as well.

By problematising the rules of representation, Safdari adopts an approach which refuses division or reduction to composing parts. The reader remains in constant confusion. As the narrative unfolds, the main character starts to lose his original identity which, in turn, nullifies the first impression. The suspension created between imagination and reason clouds any visible unity among complex emotions. Imagination and reason both silence each other and merge in one another in the process. In the end, as the world and the character dismantle, so does language structure.

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