

**A Reflection on the Function of Defamiliarization of the
Mythical Dragon in the Novel *Glasses for the Dragon***

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Introduction

Modern fantasies are continuations of myths and folklore tales. They are inspired, directly or indirectly, by the characters and incidents of the old tales. Their characters set foot in the real life of people from another world, and like mythical characters, show a type of behavior that seems inaccessible and impossible for us. We see characteristics and behaviors from them that reflect our present and future wishes and desires. One of these characters that has always attracted human beings is the dragon. Among different cultures and peoples, this character with its symbolic aspects is sometimes a revelation of humans' wishes and a manifestation of power and grandeur, and sometimes a revelation of fear and anxiety of flood, earthquake and draught. Today, these different interpretations have manifested themselves in different forms

due to the changes and modifications that people of each nation have made in them. Still drawing the attention of filmmakers and writers, the dragon turns into a symbol for the fading tales in Mohammad Hadi Mohammadi's novel, *Glasses for the Dragon*. The writer intends to remind the new generation of the importance of myths, legends, folklore tales, etc.

Methodology and Review of Literature

The researchers have tried to compare the dragon in this novel with legendary and mythical dragons (especially in *Shahnameh*), to study their similarities and differences and to identify the social functions of the fantasy dragon. In addition, they try to answer the question why, despite the presence of two active tale-tellers, Bibi-Toranj and Naneh-Azhdaha, we do not hear even one tale from them while the objective of this fantasy is supposedly drawing the attention of the young generation to myths.

Numerous researches have been published in Iran on the subject of the dragon. One of the most comprehensive studies is Mansour Rastegar Fasaei's *Dragon in Iranian Mythology* which is a survey of all the previous studies about dragons. There are articles on the subject of dragons, too, but there is no article or book on the dragon in this novel. In *Fantasy in Children's Literature* (1999) there are dispersed discussions about the genre of fantasy and the method of fantasy-making in this novel. A year later, Hossein Sarfi studied the structure of the novel in his M.A. thesis. The title of the novel is only mentioned in some articles but there is no discussion of defamiliarization of the character of the dragon in the novel under study.

Discussion

Fantasy is a symbolic transformation of reality from the eyes of an aesthete which expresses new and unexpected dimensions of reality. Fantasy consciously puts a distant between the world of the story and the real world in order to rebuilt reality in the unreal world. according to these definitions, the function of fantasy is to create a better reality by the use of the unreal world. What turns a work into a fantasy is the doubt of the characters of the story or the audience about the probability of some of the incidents, such as the presence of dragons in today's world. Although it is impossible for the incidents of the modern fantasies to occur in the real world, these fantasies accommodate truths that help their readers to understand the real world better. Fantasy uses old-age imaginative patterns to express new ideas.

Fantasy-writers regard fantasy as children's literature in the modern world. Fantasy is made of the perceptions of the modern humans exhausted by the bareness of the real world. The imagination of the humans in the past was a reflection of their anxieties and fears in that age; therefore, it had a defensive form against incidents; however, the imagination of the modern world has an offensive aspect than a defensive one. Humans in the past searched for truth and protecting themselves from the calamities of the age by imagination but the modern humans are trying to make their present and future world a better place through imagination. In fantasies, the subject matters with which the modern human is dealing with are discussed. Fantasy borrows from myths and legends but is not committed to follow their clichés. Fantasy can show characters' identities and mythical elements in a completely inverted light than it really is. In many old tales, the

audience can guess how the story continues because they are already familiar with the behavior of the characters of this type of stories; however, the writer of the adolescent fantasy does not write for a generation devoted to these patterns but shatters the ancient patterns down to create a new world. By turning the identity of the characters of the ancient stories upside down, these writers create a world in which the dragon is no longer a quarrelsome ugly creature but a kind companion.

Conclusion

The fantasy under study uses the dragon as an imaginative element in today's world but since the writer of fantasy, contrary to the narrators of folktales and legends, does not have any limitations in recreating myths, he defamiliarizes the character of the dragon by turning a popular imagination to an individual one suitable for the ideas of the contemporary humans, and by turning its identity upside down, pictures it as completely positive and child-friendly rather than demonic and anti-human. This inversion not only makes the ancient dragons less fearsome, but also makes the adolescent audience to have a more contemporary and friendly attitude toward legends and, on the other hand, puts the events and the incidents of the story in motion. The dragon, like the storytelling old-lady of the family, is a symbol of old stories and legends who complaints about this reality in today's real world that the new generation does not care about safeguarding their legends and myths.

By choosing the genre of realistic fantasy, the writer seldom uses magic and charm in his novel and even emphasizes that they are superstitious

throughout the story. He does not intend to narrate tales and legends because the appearance of the legend in modern novels changes the expectations of the readers. He does not intend to introduce any epic or mythical dragon but aims at expressing the significance and functions of legends through the story by the use of the attractions of the element of magic.

Keywords: defamiliarization, myth, *Glasses for the Dragon*, fantasy, identity inversion

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