

An Intertextual Interpretation of Mythology in Children's Drama
Teshtar, The Guardian of Rain

Ebrahim Mohammadi

Associate Professor of Persian Language and Literature,
Birjand University

Akbar Shayan-seresht

Associate Professor of Persian Language and Literature,
Birjand University

Effat Faregh

PhD student in Persian Language and Literature,
Birjand University

Introduction and Background

According to modern educational approaches, the primary aim of education is the pursuit of reconstructing the experiences of the past generations in new formats, rather than only transferring cultural heritage. To achieve this goal, authors, particularly those who write for children and young adults, attempt to make use of such formats. Drama is regarded as one of these formats. In fact, due to its specific mimesis features and its similarity with children's games, drama is more harmonious with their mindset.

Myths are considered as one of the important resources for the authors. Myths convey a variety of meanings with themselves. Since children seek meaning just like adults, myths can be helpful in conveying meaning to them and acquaint them with their cultural heritage (Pouladi: 2007, 26). Since ancient times, water and rain have

played significant roles in stories and dramas because they can influence human life and destiny. Their crucial role in myths has led to their use as hypotexts (pre-texts) in many literary works as well as plays for children and young adults. One such work is *Teshtar, The Guardian of Rain* by Atousa Shamloo (2020) which is written for children and adolescents regarding the myth of rain.

Methodology, Literature Review and Purpose of the Study

Using Genette's theory of transtextuality, particularly his theory of hypertextuality, the present study attempts to explore the quality of recreating the rain myth in the play *Teshtar, the Guardian of Rain* by Shamloo (2020) and to address these questions: which parts of the myth have been transformed? Why? How does the play introduce the myth of the rain, its potentials and narrative artistic elegance, and how does it make use of them?

Although there are many studies on the effects of the myth and the application of intertextuality to examine literary and artistic works, most of them have focused on the adult literature. Hesampour et al. (2016) examined the story "It is raining in the large garden" based on Genette's intertextuality theory. Jalali (2015) in her study explores intertextuality and its correlation with comparative children's literature. In addition to providing a meaning and a description of the myth, Soltan-gharaei (2008), attempts to define and describe the concept of myth and then elaborate on the popularity of myths in fictions and fairy tales. The studies by Latham (2007) and Lundin (1998) are globally-recognized studies in the field of children and young adults' literature and are closely related to the main issues discussed in this study.

Discussion and Analysis

Teshtar, the rain angel, is originally the name given to a star worshiped in ancient Persia (Afifi, 1995, 474). According to narratives, Teshtar fights with Apaosh, the demon of drought, and gains victory over him after sacrifices and supplication to Ahuramazda (Yahaghi, 1996, 262). The play *Teshtar, the Guardian of Rain* is affected by the myth of rain throughout the all five phases of transtextuality (intertextuality, architextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality). The myth of rain is present throughout the drama to the extent that even paying attention to the content and the concepts of the play helps us recognize the relation between the rain myth and the play.

The first hypotext of each work is its title. Here, the title *Teshtar, the Guardian of Rain* serves as the entrance to the text. By selecting this title for the drama, the author helps the audience to get mentally prepared for finding out the subtle implications about what they are going to encounter later in the text. Indeed, the existence of Teshtar and rain in the title is the entrance to the text. The author uses the words to emphasize that her work includes the myth of rain. In fact, most names and terms used throughout the drama are taken from the myth of rain, e.g. Teshtar and Satavis.

The author of the drama *Teshtar, the Guardian of Rain* occasionally uses the whole hypotext or makes use of it without interpolating, and sometimes makes small changes in it. However, the hypotext is sometimes exposed to some changes. In fact, the drama makes use of a combination of transformation and imitation. Some parts of the drama include imitation while the other parts involve

transformation. Imitation occurs when Teshtar, similar to the myth, emerges first in form of a 15-year-old boy, then turns into a bull with golden horns, and finally turns into a golden bridle horse and gains victory over the demon of drought; and transformation occurs when the author, having the audience and her goals in mind, changes Teshtar's role and introduces him as the child of a family that is supposed to be the protagonist of the narrative. Other instances of transformation in the play are the introduction of Satavis as a beautiful young girl, praying, Ahouramazda's sacrifice, etc.

The transformational relationship between the play and the myth of rain is based on the fact that the play is written for children and young adults; hence, it should be influential and the audience should be able to easily connect with it, enjoy it, understand it and identify with its protagonists.

Conclusion

As a manifestation of a rich and mysterious culture, Persian ancient literature, like any other country across the world, is full of myths and epics. Myths have emerged within every aspect of life, even in dramas, and have exercised great effects on dramas for children and young adults due to their similarities with children's world. One of such myths is the myth of rain that has found its way into scripts because of its significance in human life. *Teshtar, the Guardian of Rain* by Shamloo is one such drama. According to Genette's transtextuality theory, the drama has been fully affected by the myth throughout the five phases of transtextuality. The myth of rain has exercised the biggest influence over hypertextuality, i.e., making use of both imitation and

transformation. In fact, the author's affectability by the myth and her attempt to transform it, tailored to the audience mood, have helped her to create a work for children that guides them toward eidesis and thus acquaints them with the myth. Also, Shamloo has considered some thresholds in paratextuality to help the audience comprehend the text better. Overall, the drama makes use of all Genette's intertextual relations.

Keywords: children's drama, the Myth of Rain, Transtextuality, hypertextuality, Teshtar, the Guardian of Rain

References

- Afifi, R. (1995). *Iranian mythology and culture in Pahlavi writings*. Toos.
- Afrasiabi, R. (2012). *Crossing the misty boundaries: A reflection on myth and the myths of nations (collection of articles)*. Navid Publications.
- Allen, G. (2001). *Intertextuality* (P. Yazdanjoo, Trans). Markaz.
- Bagheri, N. (2014). Intertextuality in the meta-story of Babur's beautiful heart by Jamshid Khanian. *Journal of Children's Literature Studies*. 5 (2), pp. 1-24.
- Bahar, M. (1996). *A Study in Iranian mythology (first and second parts)* (2nd Edition). Agah Publications.
- Bettelheim, B. (2002). *The magic of legends* (A. Shariatzadeh, Trans.). Hermes Publications.
- Eliade, M. (1983). *Mythical visions*. (J. Sattari, Trans.). Toos.

- Hatami, H. & Shokraneh, N. (2018). Myth in the children's verse tales (with a look at the tale "I ran and I ran". *Mystical and Mythological Literature*. No. 52, pp. 95-118.
- Hesampour, S. (2016). A reflection on intertextual links in the story "It was raining in the big garden" by Ahmad Reza Ahmadi. *Journal of Children's Literature Studies*. 7 (1), pp. 25-48.
- Hinnells, J. R. (1989). *Persian mythology* (J. Amoozgar & A. Tafazzoli, Trans.). Cheshmeh Publishing.
- Ismailpour, A. (1998). *Myth, the symbolic expression*. Soroush.
- Ismailpour, A. (2002). Tirma sizzeh shu (Tirgan celebration) and the myth of Tishtar. *Anthropology Letter*, 1 (1), spring and summer, pp. 77-99.
- Jalali, M. (2015). "Principles of intertextual criticism in comparative literature for children and adolescents". *Literary Essays*, No. 189, pp. 141-166.
- Latham, D. (2008). Empowering adolescent readers: Intertextuality in three novels by David Almond". *Children's Literature in Education*, Vol. 39, pp 213-226.
- Lezgi, H. & Monfaredi, N. (2010). A study of the role of the elements of dramatic expression in children and adolescent theater with a therapeutic approach. *Fine Arts: Dramatic Arts and Music*. No. 42. pp. 71-78.
- Lundin, A. (1998). Intertextuality in children's literature. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, N. 3, pp 210-213.
- Mir-Ehsan, A. (2003). An inquiry into the relationship between literature and cinema. *Farabi*, 12 (48), pp. 83-96.

- Mohammad-Rafi, S. & Mousavi-Sirjani, S. (2017). The effect of structure in the study of children's plays (with a look at two plays by Davood Kianian and Moslem Ghasemi for the age groups of B and C). *Scientific-Research Quarterly of Theater*, No. 69, pp. 79-98.
- Namvar-Motlagh, B. (2007). Transtextuality, the study of the relationship of one text to other texts. *Journal of Humanities*, No. 56, pp. 83-98.
- Namvar-Motlagh, B. (2011). *An introduction to intertextuality: Theories and applications*. Sokhan.
- Namvar-Motlagh, B. (2012). Hypertext typology. *Journal of Literary Research*, No. 38, pp. 139- 152.
- Poordavood, E. (Trans. & Ed.) (1998). *Yasht-ha* (1st Volume). Asatir Publications.
- Puladi, K. (2007). Myth and children's literature, myths and children's world. *Journal of Rowshanan*, pp. 18-27.
- Rahgozar, R. (1993). Are myths and legends useful and necessary for children and adolescents? *Fiction*, No. 11, pp. 56-60.
- Sarkhosh Curtis, V. (1994). *Iranian myths*. (A. Mokhber, Trans.). Markaz Publishing.
- Shamloo, A. (2020). *Plays of Teshtar, the Guardian of rain; Hamlet and others (for teenagers)*. Katibeh Novin.
- Sultan-al-Qara'i, S. (2008). Myths and literary masterpieces; Services for children and adolescents (in the field of librarianship). *Encyclopedia*. pp. 75-95.
- Todorov, T. (2012). *Conversational logic of Mikhail Bakhtin*. (D. Karimi, Trans.) Markaz.

Vaeznia, P. (2003). The role of myth in animation. *Book of the Month and Art*. pp. 64-66.

Yahahqi, M. J. (1996). *Encyclopedia of myths and fictional allusions in Persian literature*. Soroush.

Zamani, F. (2018). The analysis of hypertextual and non-textual relations of the novel *The Secret of the Flying Mountain* with *Shahnameh*. *Journal of Children's Literature Studies*, No. 2. pp. 77-98.