

Studying Techniques of Metamorphosis in *Six-Thousand-Year-Old Green Man*: A Mythological Reading

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Introduction

Mythology is one of the cultural, social and doctrinal infrastructures of a nation which scrutinizes the world in its mysterious ways and gives the nation its identity. Mythical interpretations of the world reveal the belief systems of each nation and its identity. This shows the importance of myths for young adults whose identities are in the process of formation. It seems that, now more than ever, young adults are in need of strong and rooted elements such as local legends and myths. One of the most important techniques used in myths for fulfilling these wishes, and one of the most colorful motifs in children's and adolescents' works is metamorphosis (transformation). However, research shows that despite this significance, there has been no scrutinizing researches about pure myths and their techniques in children's and adolescents' literature so far.

Methodology, Review of Literature and Purpose

A thorough review of the existing literature on children and adolescent literature reveals that there is not even a single book or article which studies Iranian pure legends and myths and the role of metamorphosis in them. Research in this wide field, especially about adolescent novels, is reduced to the analysis of archetypes and symbols. Mostafavi-Kashani (2005), Tajalli (2006), Jafari-Qanavati (2007) and Doostkhah (2008) have studied the novel *Persians and I*. Taremi (2012), Nikouyeh (2012), Sheikh-Hosseini and Pouryazdanpanah (2019) have analyzed mythical elements in some adolescent novels. Only Kaedi (1999) and Asadi (2018) have analyzed the novel *Six-Thousand-Year-Old Green Man* from perspectives other than mythology.

Accordingly, this article, by the use of a descriptive method of analyzing qualitative content and with a mythological reading, tries to study the techniques of metamorphosis in Fariba Kalhor's *Six-Thousand-Year-Old Green Man*. By revealing the potentials of this novel, the researchers intend to show the significance of paying attention to myths in both imaginative and research works in the field of children and adolescent literature. The main question of the research is how the novel represents myths and metamorphosis techniques and what potentials, conscious or unconscious, have these mythical techniques offered for the authors.

Discussion

The main character of the novel, the six-thousand-year-old green man, is a metamorphosis of several mythical figures (Kiumars, Mash'y o Mashyaneh, the sacred cow, glorious champions, Khidr, Haoma,

Gilgamesh, Ishtar and Tamuz) with their unique characteristics in a mythical setting and atmosphere. A glorious man, he is the cultural ancestor of the nation and the collective wisdom of humankind and his destiny is the destiny of all the humankind in different times of human history and his experiences are the repetition of all the bitter and painful experiences of humankind. He is a convergent being of human-plant who is immortal; a character combining the figures of heavenly father and plant god; a human and earthly god; a holy seedling of immortality for which Gilgamesh was searching, but in vain. The green man is a model of the complete human being whose existence mandala is complete; hence, being glorious and meritorious, he has at the same time the ghoul of Khombebeh inside him, too. He is Tamuz the god of plants and has the cedar forest inside his body; therefore, Khombebeh, the guardian ghoul of the cedar forest, is his guardian and assistant. He is capable of longevity according to the myth of fertility.

The significant point about the immortality of the six-hundred-year-old green man is that contrary to all other human beings who are always in search of immortality, he is tired of immortality and does not speak favorably about it. He believes that after a period of life, death is a blessing.

Another example of metamorphosis in the novel can be found in the ghoul Khombebeh. In contrast to the legend of Gilgamesh, in this novel Khombebeh is a great companion for the green man. Whenever he feels threatened, he thinks about Khombebeh and his thoughts come into life and then Khombebeh is awakened. People are afraid of him and fly away; and after that, the green man makes the ghoul return back to his place. The green man is tied to the ghoul with a thin and invisible

thread; and he drags the ghouel back inside him with that thread, as if he has the cedar forest of gods inside him.

The figure of Ishtar is another example of metamorphosis in the novel and another result of artistic narration, suspense and creativity. Ishtar is a chosen figure like Utnapishtim in Gilgamesh with one major difference: Utnapishtim gains immortality but Ishtar, who is the symbol of fertility and generation, does not gain immortality but delivers an immortal child to the world. A powerful woman, she is the symbol of fertility and attains immortality through childbirth.

Conclusion

This research showed that *Six-Thousand-Year-Old Green Man* contains symbolic signs and codes which can be decoded only by an extensive familiarity with myths and their deep analysis.

Kalhor has selected the characters of her novel in such a way as to be in total harmony with each other as well as with the atmosphere and symbolic meanings of the work. By metamorphosis, breaking and sometimes recreating the myths, Kalhor has connected the narrative structure of her work to the modern imagination of adolescents. By creating a human-plant personality and with the help of combining several mythical characters, the writer has provided the enjoyment of re-reading many mythical stories about immortality, mortality, dignity, cultural ancestors of the people (collective wisdom of humankind), the perfect man (mandala), vegetation and the sanctity of plants, duality, blessing, fertility (the water-stealing ghouel, the secret of the immortality with plants, the ox of Varza) in a mythical place and time for her audience.

Kalhor has used the epic of Gilgamesh and, in conjunction with it, the myth of Tamuz and Ishtar which are all ancient Mesopotamian myths. Just like in Gilgamesh, the destiny of the immortal green man is tied to plants, being chosen, the ox of Varza (the symbol of fertility), Ishtar, the goddess of fertility and agriculture, the significant role of women in civilization, the greenery-stealing ghoul, the journey in search of life and wisdom, being human-god, gloriousness, etc.

Keywords: myth, metamorphosis, novel, Fariba Kalhor, *Six-Thousand-Year-Old Green Man*

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