

**The Reproduction of the Victim Archetype in Four Young Adult
Novels Published by the Institute for the Intellectual Development
of Children and Adolescents (Selected from 1981 to 2011)**

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Introduction

Archetypes have roots in our collective unconscious; hence, they can influence our individual and social thinking and behavior. However, it is not easy to discover and identify these ancient concepts since they have the potential to reproduce themselves in many different forms. Therefore, it is crucially important to discover them and understand their functions and methods of reproduction in different forms in order to make sense of individual and social actions.

It should be noted that some of these archetypes play a more decisive role in the collective mindset of a nation. The “victim archetype” could be regarded as the oldest archetype in Iranians' beliefs. This archetype has continuously been available in our history and culture in connection with the archetype of “conflict between good and evil”. This archetype can be found in new forms beneath the layers of many texts, from the stories of genesis and primitive rituals to later rituals and religions, from ancient beliefs to contemporary customs and beliefs, from myths to newspaper headlines and virtual bulletins.

Since this belief has a significant effect on the way we interact with the world, this research tries to first illuminate the relationship between the two archetypes of “conflict between good and evil” and

“victim archetype” and then provide criteria for identifying it in different forms by giving a precise definition of victim and its forms. Afterwards, the research will focus on the four selected young adult novels to illustrate how these novels reproduce this archetype and what interpretation of the world they suggest for the audience.

Methodology, Review of Literature, Purpose

In this research, four novels from four different decades are selected. All these novels have enjoyed a wide readership, thanks to their successful publication and their inclusion in the textbooks and adaptations into TV-series; and their reprints are still available in the marketplace and many libraries. That all four novels are still widely popular testifies to the fact that they reproduce a consistent meaning in the course of four decades. This research uses the method of textual analysis under the influence of theories by Yung, Campbell and Cassirer in an attempt to show the importance of identifying archetypes in different layers of the narrative.

The researcher has not found any study on the role of victim archetype in Iranian children's and young adult's literature. Mythology is usually taken into account as a whole, and due to the lack of a critical outlook, it is often regarded with fascination and approval.

The researcher aims at finding answers to these questions: a) How is the archetype of conflict between good and evil reproduced beneath the layers of the narrative? b) How does it lead to the reproduction of the victim archetype? c) To what extent has this reproduction been successful in conciliating the laws of the mythical world to the relations of the contemporary real world? d) By

reproducing the victim archetype, how do these novels interpret the world and what paths do they present to their adolescent audience for dealing with the world?

Discussion

The laws of mythical world as universal standards, and the mythical characters as absolute icons of good and evil, have important roles in our understanding of good and evil in the world. Since these characters and absolute icons, they are critically important for acquainting children and young adults with concepts such as self-sacrifice, resisting temptations and fighting evil. However, the problem arises when we reproduce the laws of the mythical world with their absolute dimensions in narratives with contemporary setting and people. In other words, since there are many differences between the mythical world and the real world, reproducing iconic characters or situation which are absolutely right or wrong –something that belongs to the world of myths- in the contemporary situation in which there are much more complicated relationships, may cause damages and discrepancies. In the real world, absolute good and evil rarely exist; therefore, the elimination of evil and the victory of good is not absolute. In the mythical world, though, there is no other way than fighting for the total elimination of evil. And of course, it is not possible to destroy evil and save good without offering victims.

Interestingly, in none of the four novels under investigation, *The Gallants of the Akhulgeh Castle*, *The Bandits*, *The Beautiful Heart of Baboor*, and *The Monster's Shadow*, the only way for confronting the evil and gaining victory for good is direct opposition and offering

sacrifices, and there is no sign of believing in finding any other way. The writers of the novels have completely ignored other possibilities such as the social and legal ways, using the power of the media and public awareness, or employing peaceful methods such as negotiation. For example, in *The Monster's Shadow*, sacrificing Maral or the foresters is the only way for survival. Also, in *The Beautiful Heart of Baboor*, neither the intervention and negotiation of the elders of the village nor the attempts and protests of the people of the village have any effect on solving the problem; it is only the death of Kahoor (the mesquite) and the self-sacrifice of Baboor that can defeat the evil. In the novel *The Bandits*, too, the children and the people in the caravan might not be saved unless Mir-Mohammad is sacrificed.

In sum, one can easily observe that in the four selected novels in which the victim archetype is reproduced, a world is introduced to the readers in which good and evil have clear-cut, absolute and irreconcilable boundaries and the only way for eliminating evil and attracting good is direct fighting and eventually offering sacrifice. Since the only way for victory is offering a sacrifice, other alternative ways are never suggested; so much so that in the novel *The Gallants of Akhulgheh Castle*, becoming a sacrifice is the ultimate good and goal.

It should also be noted that a kind of invitation to “temporary action” is hidden in the deeper layers of the reproduction of this archetype: the writers are implying that giving sacrifices is enough for the elimination of evil –which is absolute and unchangeable- and the victory of good –which is also absolute and unchangeable. This is based on the assumption that after offering the sacrifice, the job is done; evil is eliminated and good is victorious; and since in the mythical model

both of these forces are absolute and unchangeable, there is no need to guard for the hard-won victory anymore, because it is completely impossible for good to become corrupt, or for evil to change and turn toward good. The implied message is that after the sacrifice is offered, the war is over and there is no need for taking care of good constantly. It seems that it is better to employ the laws and icons of the mythical world in their own environment. Their reproduction in the contemporary real world entail significant and paradoxes and controversies because in this world, good and evil are relational and changeable, and the absolute and pure forms of good and evil cannot exist.

Conclusion

The analysis of the four novels selected from four different decades based on their wide readership shows that victim archetype is reproduced in all of them in an obvious and straightforward way. In all four novels, the opposite sides of good and evil are portrayed as monolithic and absolute, based on the laws of mythical world, and it is only through fighting and offering sacrifices that good can overcome evil. None of the four writers pay attention to the fact that complex relations in the real world distinguish it from the mythical world, or that good and evil are relational in human relationships. Also, none of the novels suggest other ways for overcoming evil.

Keywords: reproduction of myth, young adult novel, sacrifice, the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents

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