Fantasy stories trend in works of Ahmad Akbarpour in Iran

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Abstract

It is not exaggeration to say that the configuration of fantasy is one of the most important of today's world children literature which has been also paid attention in Iran. Ahmad Akbarpour is one of best authors in genre of fantasy in Iran. He attends to different elements of fantasy in his works. Elements in his works are basics of youth and children literature house. There is no creature more dreams making than children. The recent attention of youth and children to fantasy stories, demonstrate that how much they have ability of selection and ordering about their own literature trend. In this paper we say about dividing Akbarpour's works into three classifications: Classical fantasy, Modern fantasy and Collating fantasy.

Keywords: Classical fantasy, Modern fantasy, children literature.

1- Introduction

Dreams are of the main elements of fantasy stories. While analyzing the fantasy trend in Iranian children stories, we concluded that lots of attention is paid to personal issues and social important matters. Among the many manifestos of fantasy in Iran; the below are the most common used: hero fantasy, scientific fantasy, behavioral fantasy, legend fantasy, love fantasy, animal's fantasy, plants fantasy and non alive objects fantasy. Normally the themes of these fantasies are the goals and business of today human, including: loneliness, paying attention to identity, willing to liberty and friendliness, life, death and love and also social behaviors.

Fantasy does not yield to historical perspective. It is so elemental, so timeless, and so pervasive that its enormity overpowers thought (Inge, 1988: 56).

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Attention has been paid to fantasy writing since 1961 in Iran. However, the important issue is that the title of these stories has not been "fantasy" at the beginning and it was "new magic" against "old magic"; and it was continued until 1980. In 1990, it was decided in children and youth book council/Tehran to replace "new magic" by "fantasy". One of outstanding fantasy stories was created in Iran by Ahmad Akbarpour. Writing several prominent works in literature arena, Akbarpour has become famous among solemn teenager story authors.

2- Dividing fantasy in works of Akbarpure

Ahmad Akbarpour was born in Lamerd (Fars-Iran) in 1970. A graduate of psychology, he lives in Shiraz with his family and works as a TV producer. He started writing for children in 1995. To date he has published seven works. Akbarpour has won several awards and Sex of his works is important.

His works include:

The Word of My Note Book Margins (1997)

The Nights Train (1999)

Good Night Commander (2002) chosen by UNISEF.

Emperor of Words (2004)

I Am Not your Yes-man (2004)

Southern Visions (2006) chosen by

Silent Girl with Noisy Birds (2007)

Ahmad Akbarpour has the first and the most important feature in writing. Considering that fiction short stories have the most advocates around the world, he has often written in this context. His own imaginary world is a fantasy world.

In fact, in fantasy world, every impossible turns out to become possible. While most of these events can not be explained logically; though the children believe them and embrace their effects. One of the strongest pleasures and joys of book reading for the children is the joy of surprise and excitement; and the fantasies do the same thing for children (Ghezel Ayagh, 2006: 157).

Fantasies help the children to expand their imaginations or to improve them (Mohammadi, 1997:135-136)

The fantasy world mentioned in Akbarpour works is divided into three classifications: Classical fantasy, Modern fantasy and Collating fantasy. In classical fantasy world, story elements are connected with classical and ancient concepts. In modern fantasy world, story elements have no

connection with ancient concepts, but modern concepts are considered. Likewise, collating fantasy world is a combination of classical and modern fantasy.

Following table shows classical and modern fantasy characteristics and their similarities in two separate columns:

Classical	Modern	Similarities
Human characters are humanoid, beastly and bizarre.	Characters are normal	Both have common themes: Child and adult conflict Life and death Love and hate Good and bad
Place and time are not limited.	Place and time are limited	Plot's role is changing impossibilities to possibilities
Actions occurred as divine events.	Actions occurred as real life events.	Traveling is impressive on forming story.
Imaginary and real world are entirely distinct.	Imaginary world is like real world.	
There are Prophecy, talisman and magic.	Imaginary world elements are perfect.	

According to the table, Akbarpour's stories' fantasy structure can be analyzed:

2.1 That Night's Train

That night's train, one of his works, is a story about a teacher who makes a friendship with a little girl. The teacher finds that the girl has no mother and is interested in reading book. At the end of the travel, he promises the girl to visit her later. After that, every weekend the girl is waiting for him and the teacher asks his students to write a composition about their visit, in order to let the students end the story by their own imagination. Students' writings help the teacher to find that the girl is waiting for him, so he goes to visit her.

The writer appears as an omniscient in the story and even as a narrator interferes in the middle of the story, so in this way involves the reader in the story.

This is a collating fantasy story, but this collation is more tended to modern fantasy:

Classical	Modern	Similarities
Prophecy: When students describe the little girl's condition	Normal Characters: Little girl, Grandmother, Teacher, Students, Father	Common Theme: Child and adult conflict Love and hate Good and bad
To mention examples with classical and ancient theme, like: dragon	Limited time and place: Time to go to school, City, Village, School	Plot's role is changing impossibilities to possibilities: The teacher visits the girl.
	Actions occurred as real life events: Behavior of the little girl and the other characters	Traveling is impressive on forming story: The story begins in the train and it is repeated several times.
	Imaginary world is like real world: In the real world, there are no bizarre events.	

What make it a collating story are elements which are trying to tend the story to modern fantasy: For example there is no dragon in the story, but the train is resembled to dragon, "The train lay like a legendary dragon and its tale and head was not clear" (Akbarpour, 1999:13).

Fantasy empowers its readers through the unreal truths and the mythical heroes that it shares (Pierce. 1993: 50–51).

The some new Persian fantastic tales for children can be seen as a genre with its roots in a broad tradition and folklore of fantastic tales for more of 1000 years ago and some of this element is same between other people and other countries.

J.C. Coyajee writes that dragon is symbol of drought, darkness and destructive floods in India and Babel and symbol of viciousness in Iran (Coyajee, 1975: 77).

In legendaries is said that **Cadmus** and his attendants threw a dragon toward the sky and it became the dragon constellation which is in North Star (Jobse, 1962: 467).

Dragon is a legendry figure and her presence in religious works date back to 3500 years ago in works (Bahar, 1994: 190). There are many stories about dragon and her fighting's with heroes in *Shahname* that is one of the Persian literature masterpieces (Yahaghi, 1996: 75)

2.2 Good night Commander

The boy has lost a leg in the war playing with his tin soldiers he recreates the scene full of revenge for both his lost leg and his lost mother he meet the enemy child soldier. It is the beginning of friendship.

This book was selected by UNICEF and Children's Book Council(IBBY) of Iran in 2003 . It was published literary text whit quality illustrations to create more contact and understanding among disabled and ordinary primary school children .

This book can be considered as a modern fantasy. Child imaginary world is completely similar to his real world. Characters are not bizarre. Place and time are limited and related to the child imaginary battlefield. Actions in both fantasy and real world are similar to real world. Imaginary world elements are perfect and divine events are not needed. Even real characters are similar to fantasy characters. When commanders of two fighter groups face together, the real world's child captures the fantasy world's child and say: "When I go further, I like to laugh, because he is at the age of me" (Akbarpour, 2002:15).

Important conflicts of the story: Good and bad conflicts start with the child imagination at the beginning of the story. The little boy talks to dull soldiers and divides them into two friend and enemy groups to battle. The first sentence of the story is: "Hey! You are ugly! Go there! You are enemy commander" (Akbarpour, 2002:7). Child and adult conflict is the other case. The child protests against behavior and word of his father and others. Also there is life and death conflict. Motivation of fantasy world creation is taking his mother's revenge that has been killed in enemy bombing. In this bombing the little boy has lost his leg. "I came to take my mother's revenge." (Akbarpour, 2002:7). at the end of the story, hate and humanness conflict results in humanness. Real world's child finds that fantasy world's child has lost his mother and his leg too and came to take revenge. The fantasy world's child wants to run with his leg and real world's child accepts: "I put my leg in his knee-cap and fasten the small and big latches and finally close the belt." (Akbarpour, 2002:19). Classical and ancient fantasy world elements are not in this story.

2.3 Emperor of Words

The story is about a little boy who reads a book in which there is a poem of an 11 year old Korean poet. The poet wishes if there was not any borders between different countries. In the continuation of the story, the little boy also reads the story of a Chinese girl who cleans the borders of countries on the map, in geography class. They move to find the Korean poet in the book and them they are arrested in a dreaming among story. Finally they find the Korean poet and at the end, the author frees the children.

Akbarpour in this book help reader to understanding it by element of his story. "The science fiction of fantasy author must include enough recognizable material in his or her story so that the reader can decode the unrecognizable" (Sullivan, 200: 60).

The theme of this book is social-psychological and subjects such as need, childish dreams, love, cooperation and peace are mentioned in it.

"Response to literature in a social setting becomes ultimately personal and social action" (Mikkelsen, 2005: 109).

Anyhow this story is a kind of Akbarpour's collating stories. Characters are human, but have bizarre behavior. A poet child comes out of the book, the character which is created in the middle of the story and gradually perfects his behaviors.

"Adding to the mix is a hero's quest to find some prize or attain some worthy goal" **(**Mikkelsen, 2005: **137)**

Description of time and place is obviously omitted and actions are divine events in the story, like cleaning border lines of the map. The other conflict is magic against real love. It is same "Children make world and think that is real and believe it" (Khosronejad, 2003: 172).

2.4 I Am Not your Yes-man

In a village, a packet of money falls down of a stingy and strict father's pocket in cesspool. But no body accepts to go into there. The father decides to force one of his children to go the cesspool, but children resist and at last during an unwanted event, by surviving a child from there, the money is brought out from the cesspool.

This is one of Mr. Akbarpour's completely real works. It is a part of a villager's life of poverty. What is important is some of phrases' use in the story which is usually seen in fantasy world and fairy stories: "I say: This is not water, but an uncouth man" in pointing at mirage (Akbarpour, 2004: 62).

"Why you look at me like a possessed?" (Akbarpour, 2004: 63) and in another part say: "What did they say to you in the school that this girl is agonizing like a possessed?" (Akbarpour, 2004: 60).

But these concepts which are appeared in fantasy never can play a role in this story.

2.5 Southern Visions

Southern Visions is Akbarpour's another book. This book is one of his fantasy masterpieces. The type of its fantasy is classical.

The story is about a little boy who sees a man with a blue garment in his imagination. The boy who has been impressed by his lunatic aunt is trying to help her through magic and prophesy and finally he remains in his fantasy world.

This book has 10 related chapters. In this work, Akbarpour used folklore of the south regions of Iran a lot. The fantasy world expressed in this story is derived from this folklore. The fantasy begins when protagonist sleeps. Impossibilities become completely possible and sometimes this matter is entirely indicated in dialogues: "I saw myself sitting on a letter and passing over seas, waves, fish and starfish…" (Akbarpour, 2006: 16).

The folklore is highlighted through fantasy: "Don't you go alone, do you? You know coming and going at night is for whom are dead in sea…" (Akbarpour, 2006: 53).

It can be directly said that this book is one of those books which coming and going between real and fantasy world come to climax, inasmuch as sometimes reader is confused in which world he is, so he has to go back a few paragraphs (Akbarpour, 2006: 20,p: 60).

A very close relationship between fantasy world and nature is a significant point in the story. Moon, earth, sea, sky, stars, meteor, garden and river: "Bibi Zeitoon laughed and said: Come! And took my hand and we passed through her dream gardens and rivers. When I dared to look down in a moment, I saw the sea beneath…" Akbarpour, 2006: 36).

Akbarpou resorted to fantastic tales in order to bridge the gap between the material phenomenon and metaphysics.

Magic is one of cases which is available in different parts of the story: Pouring water on handkerchief and making yellow smoke (Akbarpour, 2006: 24), rolling chickpea over the head (Akbarpour, 2006: 27), every where become yellow (Akbarpour, 2006: 26), shaking magic beads to prophecy (Akbarpour, 2006: 27), turning Bibi Zeitoon to a bird(Akbarpour, 2006: 37) dragon (Akbarpour, 2006: 51). Bibi Zeitoon prophecy in "Southern Visions" makes the story closer to classical fantasy genre. (Akbarpour, 2006: 27), (Akbarpour, 2006: 36).

What is important in magic part is fantasy world color in this book. Almost in most parts when protagonist enters to fantasy world his world's color becomes yellow. (p: 24), (p: 26), (p: 42), (p: 50), (p: 59).

"It deserves more of our attention when we are searching for new routes into literacy"(Mikkelsen, 2005: 109).

Imaginary world Characters are Bibi Zeitoon, blue garment man, nature characters, aunt Mahvan and little boy and all of them are able to do bizarre works.

This story like any other classical fantasy stories is completed by traveling. The boy's travel to find Mahvan's husband and to go to the beach to see the blue garment man (Akbarpour, 2006: 46) and dreamy travels with Bibi Zeitoon(Akbarpour, 2006: 20, 37) complete process of the story.

Place and time are not exactly defined in imaginary parts. Events moving hastily and turning between real and fantasy world.

"Quest fantasy has first of all a plot pattern of adventure that brings with it mystery, life-and-death excitement, and the thrill of an expected outcome" (Mikkelsen, 2005: 137).

2.6 Silent Girl with Noisy Birds

This story is about a girl called Golnesa. The girl is dumb and loves village birds. Bibi Nabat is an old lady who comes from 7 villages far to cure her. At first visit, she put some green beads to the girl mouth and says that her remedy is birds' eggs.

Rustic children searching wild birds' nests and gather their eggs, but Golnesa refuse to eat them and return them back to the nests with the help of children. She prefers to continue her mute life with human, but not to hurt the wild birds.

Birds do not afraid of Golnesa and play with her, as if they understand her words.

Akbarpour's story is a real story. At the first of story he intends to use folklore to enter fantasy world to the story, but the process of story does not let him do that: "When Bibi Nabat comes down of the horse, she brings some beads out of her pack and put them on Golnesa tongue…" (Akbarpour, 2007: 10).

It is "The most complex level on which literature operates and depends upon traditional material for that operation is the level of culture world view" (Sullivan, 2001: 287).

Akbarpour's method in creating story is that he chooses his own subject-matter, uses of one moment, chooses an option from a real world and pushes it away from real world by the help of mind, and creates a new life world. To back again to real world, he connects it to the real word once more and links two worlds together, and then enters to the real world. The above scrutiny indicates that his masterpiece in fantasy world is related to *Southern Visions*.

The reason of Akbarpour's success is five important points:

1. Choosing a limited subject
2. Concentrating on fantasy and real world imagination
3. Creating a common circle between fantasy and real worlds
4. Symbols and characters are often available in folklore
5. Involving the readers with the story

Akbarpour's characters and his narrators tell stories—and backstories—as part of the actions and enigmatic codes. Hearing these stories showed how to layer his actions code with inner stories. Telling backstories was one way he used to fill gaps of his enigma code" (Mikkelsen, 2005: 134) and it is happened in *Good Night Commander Emperor Of Words* and *Southern Visions*.

3. Conclusion

What is certain is that his fantasy stories presents in three forms: Classical, Modern and Collating. Some believe that the presence of magic, fairy and talisman makes the stories fantasy. But it is enough to create fantasy world and then link it to the real world, so this form can change the story genre to a fantasy genre, in other words creating a world parallel to real world. Fantasy world elements parallel with real world can be completely real and not to have unusual signs. I think that this point can determine the border between fiery and fantasy stories. Akbarpour has been successful in this case.

Of course it should be considered that he could not completely ignore fantasy items in real and fantasy stories.

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