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	<h1>Western Mythological Paradigms and the Reproduction of Symbolic Meaning in Modern Arabic Narrative: A Mythocritical Reading of Tahar Ouettar’s The Fisherman and the Palace</h1>	
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Abstract This study investigates the intertextual integration of Western mythology within modern Arabic narrative discourse, with particular emphasis on its role in reproducing symbolic meaning and interrogating socio-political reality. Taking Tahar Ouettar’s novel The Fisherman and the Palace as a primary case study, the research examines how classical Western myths—specifically Prometheus, Sisyphus, and Oedipus—are recontextualized and transformed into narrative tools that articulate themes of rebellion, suffering, destiny, and epistemological conflict. Adopting a mythocritical and analytical-interpretive methodology, the study applies three fundamental criteria of mythical criticism: manifestation, adaptability, and radiation. Through these criteria, the research explores how mythological figures transcend their original cultural frameworks to acquire new semantic, ideological, and aesthetic functions within the Algerian postcolonial context. The analysis demonstrates that Ouettar does not merely reproduce mythological motifs but strategically reworks them to expose structures of power, intellectual alienation, and the tragic struggle between authority and human consciousness. The findings reveal that Western mythological references function as a universal symbolic language that bridges local experience with global human concerns. Consequently, the novel transforms myth from a static cultural heritage into a dynamic critical instrument that enriches narrative depth, expands interpretive horizons, and reinforces the humanistic dimensions of contemporary Arabic literature.		
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Introduction

Mythological thought has long occupied a central position in literary creativity, functioning as a symbolic reservoir through which writers articulate existential concerns, ideological conflicts, and collective human experiences. Far from being confined to its archaic origins, myth has continually renewed itself within literary discourse, where it is reinterpreted, transformed, and resemanticized according to the writer's cultural context and aesthetic vision. Modern literature, in particular, has demonstrated a pronounced tendency to appropriate mythological structures as a means of probing reality, questioning authority, and expressing human alienation and resistance. Within this framework, the Algerian novelist Tahar Ouettar emerges as a significant figure who consciously engages Western mythology and projects it onto the socio-political and cultural realities of his environment. In his novel *The Fisherman and the Palace*, Ouettar does not merely allude to myth as a decorative or intertextual

device; rather, he integrates myth into the narrative structure as a critical and symbolic mechanism through which power relations, oppression, and the struggle for consciousness are dramatized.

This study seeks to analyze and interpret the presence of Western myths in *The Fisherman and the Palace* through the lens of mythocriticism. Relying on the three fundamental criteria of mythical criticism—manifestation, adaptability, and radiation—the article aims to uncover the motives behind the novelist's use of myth, the forms through which mythological figures appear in the narrative, the strategies of their adaptation to a new cultural context, and the extent to which these myths illuminate and deepen the semantic layers of the text.

Given the multiplicity of Western mythological references in the novel, this research focuses on the most prominent and symbolically charged myths employed by Ouettar, namely the myths of Prometheus, Sisyphus, and Oedipus. These myths are selected due to their strong intellectual and human dimensions, as well as their close association with themes of rebellion, suffering, fate, and the pursuit of knowledge—central concerns in the novel's ideological and aesthetic construction.

1. The Myth of Prometheus

Greek mythology recounts that after Zeus, the supreme ruler of the gods, overthrew his father Kronos and consolidated his dominion over the universe, he drew closer to Prometheus, the son of the Titan Iapetus and the nymph Clymene. This favor was granted in recognition of Prometheus's support during Zeus's rebellion against the older generation of gods. Zeus entrusted Prometheus, along with his brother Epimetheus, with the task of creating human beings and other earthly creatures. From the outset, Prometheus was distinguished by exceptional intellectual qualities, including cunning, eloquence, foresight, and a penetrating capacity for rational thought.

Unlike many of the Olympian gods, Prometheus displayed profound sympathy and compassion toward humanity. According to mythological narratives, when Zeus deprived humans of fire in an attempt to maintain divine superiority and human dependence, Prometheus defied the divine command and stole fire from Olympus, returning it to humankind. Fire, in this context, transcends its material function to symbolize light, knowledge, warmth, creativity, and the foundations of civilization. By restoring fire to humans, Prometheus enabled them to overcome ignorance, develop crafts and industries, and transition from primitive nomadic existence to organized urban life (Nadjfi et al., 2016, p. 141).

Zeus's response to this act of defiance was swift and merciless. Enraged by Prometheus's rebellion and his alliance with humanity, Zeus ordered that he be bound in chains to a massive rock in the Caucasus Mountains. As an eternal punishment, a ferocious eagle was sent to devour Prometheus's liver each day, only for it to regenerate each night, condemning him to perpetual suffering without the release of death (Mansouri, 2005, p. 88; Nadjfi et al., 2016, p. 142).

Most mythological accounts agree that Prometheus occupies a uniquely rich and complex position within ancient Greek mythology. He is portrayed as a heroic Titan, endowed with deep wisdom, foresight, and knowledge of hidden truths. His very name signifies "the forethinker" or "the farsighted one," underscoring his role as an enlightened figure who anticipates consequences yet chooses resistance over submission. In this sense, Prometheus embodies the archetype of the intellectual rebel who consciously challenges tyranny in defense of humanity.

The essence of Prometheus's myth lies in his unwavering alignment with humankind. He emerges as a liberator, teacher, and protector, willing to endure unbearable torment in order to secure human progress and dignity. His rebellion against Zeus is not impulsive but deliberate; he fully comprehends the consequences of his transgression and nevertheless accepts punishment as the price of liberation. This conscious sacrifice elevates Prometheus from a mythological character to a universal symbol of resistance against oppression, the pursuit of knowledge, and the ethical responsibility of the intellectual.

Moreover, the myth introduces a dimension of hope and justice through the prophecy of Prometheus's eventual liberation. Despite his suffering, Prometheus remains steadfast in the knowledge that a hero born of humanity—Heracles, himself a descendant of Zeus—will one day free him from his chains. This resolution affirms the triumph of moral justice over divine tyranny and reinforces the myth's humanistic orientation.

In its symbolic depth, Prometheus represents the rebellious, sacrificial figure who challenges unjust authority in the name of freedom and enlightenment. His myth continues to resonate across cultures and historical contexts, making it particularly apt for literary reinterpretation. Within modern narrative discourse, Prometheus becomes a powerful metaphor for intellectual resistance, revolutionary consciousness, and the enduring struggle to transform oppressive systems and liberate humanity from the darkness of ignorance (Nadjfi et al., 2016, p. 142).

This myth profoundly influenced writers and poets, becoming their property. The Greek poet Aeschylus wrote a trilogy: "Prometheus Bound," "The Release of Prometheus," and "Fire Stealer." Additionally, numerous Arab

poets have employed this character and used it to express their positions. Among them: poet Abu al-Qasim al-Shabi in his poem "Song of the Rebel" or "Thus Spoke Prometheus," Abd al-Wahhab al-Bayati with his collection "Autobiography of the Fire Stealer," and poet Badr Shakir al-Sayyab in his poem "Return to Kikoor." Nizar Ibrahim wrote a poem titled "The Curse of Prometheus," and many other creative poets and writers who drew inspiration from and employed this myth according to their positions and desires.

The manifestation of Prometheus myth in the novel "The Fisherman and the Palace" was partial rather than complete. The myth emerged and was present through some of its distinctive characteristics. The most prominent characteristic manifested at the beginning of the novel is sacrifice for others, which distinguished the novel's protagonist "Ali the Fisherman." "Thanks to Ali the Fisherman, we saw and tasted all types of fish." Also, "every resident of the village awaits him to distribute his catch to them with a smile—one gets one fish, another gets two, and another gets three (Ouettar, 2004, p.144)." Similarly, "they say in his village that he distributes for free all the fish he catches."

All of this indicates Ali the Fisherman's sacrifice, who loves his village and wishes it well, saying, "My love for you will increase, increase, and grow until it overflows and inundates the entire world." We also find the villagers who hold love, respect, and gratitude for him, saying, "We love you, we love you, O Ali the Fisherman (Ouettar, 2004, p.159)." Also, "all villages speak of you, your name is on every tongue, those born these days bear your name—when will you return from the palace? (Ouettar, 2004, p.145)"

The novel also states, "Ali the Fisherman the Good, the Greatest Heart, ready to give everything in him for his love, not just hands or tongue, but even sight, even life. How can my brothers be satisfied with my kindness and goodness? (Ouettar, 2004, p.191)" This theme of sacrifice is clearly manifested. Just as Prometheus sacrificed himself for humanity, so Ali the Fisherman sacrifices himself for his village's welfare and spreading goodness within it.

Through Ali the Fisherman's distribution of fish to residents and his vow to present a fish to the Sultan, this alludes to the god Zeus, who tried to choose the better portion from the sacrifices offered to him by Prometheus but was deceived by the latter's cunning. Zeus chose the inferior sacrifice consisting of bones, fat, and intestines, leaving the better portion of meat for humans. This confirms the exploitation of the weak, poor, downtrodden, and laboring masses by those in power. Here we find a parallel between the human working class and the myth—between ruling authority and controlling gods.

Both Prometheus and Ali the Fisherman sacrificed themselves so that people could live as noble, dignified beings whose rights are not violated by injustice and tyranny.

A second characteristic manifested in the novel is that Prometheus was more inclined toward humans, which led to conflict between the god Zeus and humanity and provoked enmity. This theme is clearly manifested in the writer's words in the novel: "Know this—since you left the village of caution, you've been poking your nose where it doesn't belong. What does Ali the Fisherman have to do with the palace or the Sultan? (Ouettar, 2004, p.144)"

This led to Ali the Fisherman's punishment: "Cut off his right hand, nothing more." Similarly, "He saw an arm with a hand and fingers jumping on the ground, trembling like a slaughtered animal, feeling it was part of him? (Ouettar, 2004, p.146)."

The myth of Prometheus is also manifested through the characteristic of defiance, rebellion, disobedience, and endurance. All of this is present in the hero Ali the Fisherman, who did not surrender or submit to his enemies despite what he suffered. He is that rebellious figure who does not heed suffering and torture. He is a symbol of life and the persevering human seeking progress and freedom. We find this manifested in the novel: "Before they took Ali the Fisherman out, he touched with his elbow the places of the heart in his chest and wished he could tell them, 'You shall not obtain this from me. It is the only place you cannot disfigure.'"

Also, "Ali the Fisherman the Good, the Greatest Heart, ready to sacrifice everything in him for his love, not just hands or tongue, but even sight, even life? (Ouettar, 2004, p.191)." It is clear that Ali the Fisherman defies weakness and suffering to reach his desired goal. Here, Ali the Fisherman symbolizes steadfastness, revolution, defiance, and strength, indifferent to pain, which for him is a path to happiness. "And Ali the Fisherman licked bitterness as he placed his hand before the executioner? (Ouettar, 2004, p.138)."

Similarly, Prometheus did not surrender to torture and bore all forms of punishment and force against the arrogance of Zeus (Mansouri, 2005, p.91).

Thus, Ali the Fisherman united with Prometheus, as these two characters endure hardships and suffering to illuminate the path of humanity. Prometheus stole fire to enlighten humanity, while Ali the Fisherman attempts to revive the pulse of life and make humans manifest through principles, values, and ideals.

There is another mythological element manifested in the novel: the secret of the woman who will bear the son who defeats Zeus and saves Prometheus and takes power. This theme appeared in Ali the Fisherman through the fear of the brothers "Masoud," "Saad," and "Jaber" that Ali would expose their secret in the palace. "They extracted

water from his hands to remove his status, and extracted his tongue so he would not tell you the truth he saw." Also, "You keep the great secret for yourself," and "You came to discover your good nature and with your great heart, the secret of secrets for all subjects." Due to this secret, he was subjected to torture.

The myth also manifested partially through the element of salvation. Ali the Fisherman was ultimately freed from the torture and suffering he endured on his journey to the palace. He managed to overcome all these difficulties despite losing his hand and tongue. This is evident in the writer's words: "The most important thing in every story of Ali the Fisherman—more than anything—is that the truth was revealed, and Ali the Fisherman's enemies could not prevent him from expressing the goodness he came with in the name of modernity?" (Ouettar, 2004, p.197).

And also, "His chest will remain one of the widest chests; he will prove that he is the mark of his age, that he is goodness despite the widespread evil and the evildoers who are even more widespread?" (Ouettar, 2004, p.101).

The hero Prometheus also endured torture and punishment and sacrifice until the awaited hero Heracles saved him from the suffering Zeus inflicted upon him.

Through this manifestation of Prometheus myth in the novelistic text, Tahar Ouettar succeeded in adapting this mythological element partially through themes and characteristics indicating it, but not in its complete form. This indicates the writer's broad culture and comprehensive knowledge of this myth's details. He successfully adapted this element smoothly, as its manifestation was clear in the character of Ali the Fisherman through the themes of punishment, defiance, sacrifice, revolution, rebellion, and the secret causing suffering.

The writer mixed Prometheus and Ali the Fisherman in strength, endurance, and sacrifice to implore for humanity living in peace.

Tahar Ouettar succeeded in employing this element artistically, harmonizing it with Ali the Fisherman's experience, through which he could reveal the magnitude of the gap between lived reality and desired reality. If Prometheus was half-divine, Ouettar adapted him in Ali the Fisherman—the orphaned poor fisherman who possessed only that fish he vowed to the Sultan and palace, relying on himself and his fishing: "He fishes every day without stopping except to roast a beautiful fish for breakfast or dinner. His food was water?" (Ouettar, 2004, p.12).

If Prometheus was chained to a rock for an eagle to devour his liver, then Ali the Fisherman was punished many times on his way to the palace without surrender or despair. Each time he tried to reach it, bearing those tortures and miseries he experienced. Thus, Ali the Fisherman became a living model of revolution, strength, patience, and steadfastness, with all the inhabitants of the seven villages supporting him. "The Sufis declared that the best revenge for Ali the Fisherman against his enemies is to bind them with chains on the peak of the eagles' mountains to die daily from their eyes, sometimes from their tongues, sometimes from their hearts?" (Ouettar, 2004, p.187).

Also, "The sons of Harrar declared that true revenge is to demolish the entire palace walls and leave those inside naked and barefoot for a thousand years?" (Ouettar, 2004, p.186).

And they declared in the plaza of the village of caution that they would not rest until they avenged Ali the Fisherman.

Prometheus was punished once on a rock atop the Caucasus Mountains, while Ali the Fisherman was punished many times, doubly and more cruelly by his brothers who showed him no mercy. Thus, his suffering was more violent: "They might eat your fish raw like dogs eating you. Your fish might be violated by their boys. Your fish might be violated by their elders before their wives and daughters. They might bind you to a tree, pierce you with needles, cover you with vinegar and milk, leaving you like that for hours. Then they bring salt or salt water and sprinkle your entire body."

And also, "Ali the Fisherman was punished instead of being rewarded, and the absolute truth remained in the great heart of Ali the Fisherman, son of the village of caution, the good one."

This mythological element of Prometheus is brilliantly created. While Prometheus was freed from his suffering through his rescue by Heracles and overcame the enmity of Zeus, thus good triumphed over evil, Ali the Fisherman, accompanied by the inhabitants of the seven villages who glorified and supported him, rose in revolution and rebellion against the palace, attacking it. The palace army was defeated, and all in the palace surrendered. Thus, liberation was achieved from palace authority, and the oppressed laboring classes were freed. The truth was revealed thanks to Ali the Fisherman's strength, patience, and endurance.

2. The Myth of Oedipus

The events of this myth took place in the city of Thebes, ruled by a king named "Laius" and his wife "Jocasta." When she became pregnant with a male child, the king received a prophecy from the temple of "Delphi" that the child would kill his father and marry his mother. The king decided to get rid of this newborn who threatened his life and kingdom. He ordered the child to be chained to a rock on Mount "Cithaeron" after piercing his feet. However, the servant took pity on him and did not obey the king's orders, instead leaving him in a cave. A

shepherd found him and carried him to the palace of the king of Corinth, called "Polybus," and his wife "Merope," who adopted him. Oedipus grew up in this royal family until he became a man.

At one celebration, a drunk challenged Oedipus's lineage, prompting him to seek the gods' counsel. He discovered the curse and rushed to escape it by leaving Corinth (Maaouch, 2015, p.17). Meanwhile, in another part of the land, a monster called the "Sphinx" appeared in the city of Thebes, spreading devastation and death among people unable to solve its riddle. The king of Thebes rushed to the temple of "Delphi" to consult the gods. On the way, they encountered Oedipus, and a confrontation occurred between him and the king's entourage, resulting in Oedipus killing the king of Thebes and his retinue. Only one guard escaped and continued toward the city of Thebes. When Oedipus reached the gate, he met the Sphinx, who posed its riddle: "What creature walks on four legs in the morning, on two legs at noon, and on three legs in the evening?" (Maaouch, 2015, p.17)". Oedipus managed to solve this riddle with his decisive answer: the creature is the human in the stages of his life. With this answer, he saved the city of Thebes from the monster, which destroyed itself upon hearing the solution. Oedipus entered the city as a savior.

One day, a plague struck the city, and the priestess announced that its end depended on discovering the murderer of Laius. Oedipus investigated until he reached the truth that he himself had killed his father. The Queen Jocasta could not bear the shock and committed suicide. Oedipus realized that the curse would pursue all his children. He blinded himself and abandoned the kingdom, wandering in the desert with his daughter Antigone until they reached a sacred place where he remained until his death.

This myth formed a unique presence in literary works, both poetry and prose, bearing diverse creative elements that made all creators use it in their works seeking distinction in meanings and their dimensions.

The first characteristic that manifested in this novel is the characteristic of fate that determines human destiny and fortune. Ali the Fisherman, the protagonist of the novel "The Fisherman and the Palace," is nothing but the will of fate. "Ali the Fisherman made a free decision, announced it to the Virgin and the Sufis in the plaza—he would rush to his village, carry his cause, and descend to the valley if fate willed something, it would accomplish it within a year, days preceding the wedding?" (Ouettar, 2004, p.129)."

"This is natural, this is me. You are good from childhood, and I will remain good as long as I can. Fate chose me from my brothers to represent goodness, and I believe that this same fate chose me to represent the village that cut its ties with the palace in celebration of the Sultan's safety, may he be preserved and protected?" (Ouettar, 2004, p.21)."

Ali the Fisherman believes that fate is what drove all his actions. The fish he wants to present to the Sultan is nothing but the will and providence of fate. He thinks that fate is the cause of all his movements. Nothing will harm him as long as fate itself chose him to specifically represent his village's people.

The writer adapted the mythological element in Oedipus's myth, as fate determined Laius's destiny when the gods decided the day his son would be born—that his father would be killed and he would marry his mother.

Similarly, Oedipus—every act he committed was by the will of fate. Upon killing his father and marrying his mother, this was fate. Neither Laius, Oedipus, nor Ali the Fisherman could escape it or avoid what would happen. "Who knows? Everything is possible. This wedding was arranged by enemies and supporters of darkness. I'm not really confident in it. There's much defiance of his majesty or rather the palace. But fate directs my movements and actions from the moment of the first vow?" (Ouettar, 2004, p.118)."

The characteristic of eye-blinding, which was in Oedipus's myth, also manifested in this novel. Jaber, Ali's brother, commanded to blind him: "Let his eyes be blinded."

This characteristic also manifested in the village of the Sufis, where they did this intentionally to keep the secret they saw in their dream from the Sultan's knights. "If we had not made a covenant, and you know the Sufi covenant, I would tell you about the dream, my master. I'm very sorry, but as is said, you were sent to establish proof. You were sent to make people understand, not to understand people?" (Ouettar, 2004, p.118)."

This characteristic of eye-blinding manifested in Oedipus's myth, who, upon learning the truth, blinded himself as atonement for the sin he committed—marrying his mother and having children with her.

The characteristic of barriers that Ali the Fisherman faced without reaching the palace, represented in the seven villages he visited to deliver his fish to the Sultan's majesty, also manifested in this novel. Beginning from his village, the village of caution: "News of Ali the Fisherman spread throughout all seven villages on the way to the palace, and as soon as he entered the second village, he was met by crowds eager to see the fish wrapped in cloth?" (Ouettar, 2004, p.129)."

Just as Oedipus faced difficulties with the Sphinx, solved its riddle, and entered the city, Ali the Fisherman also entered the palace through bribery, deception, and other despicable acts he had never done before, changing his

actions: "Do you want money? The four thousand coins the villages gathered for you are still here. Take them?"(Ouettar, 2004, p.184)."

We see that the true myth did not manifest in all its details, as the writer sometimes employed the myth in reverse. While Oedipus walked by the will of fate despite his attempts to avoid it, "Ali the Fisherman" was aware that this fate chose and selected him. Thus, he accepted what happened to him. Oedipus blinded himself as atonement for his sin, while Ali the Fisherman's enemies blinded him, and this was the will of fate.

The radiation of this mythological element in the text was wide, unlike the original because he employed it inversely. When fate received Oedipus's actions, the fate of Oedipus was tragic, while fate did not become a barrier for Ali the Fisherman. The contrast between them is clear: the first surrendered to fate and followed it, while the second did not surrender to all the difficulties he faced. His determination remained strong until the end.

3. The Myth of Sisyphus

Sisyphus's myth tells that Sisyphus was a very intelligent person characterized by cunning, shrewdness, and excellent warfare skills—son of Aeolus, god of the winds. He often defied and mocked the gods, angering the Olympian gods. Sisyphus worked in commerce and sailing, was inclined toward highway robbery, was very deceitful and greedy, broke laws, and transgressed boundaries. He mocked the gods, stole their secrets, revealed them, and violated customs, killing travellers and guests. He also revealed the gods' secrets, including Zeus's rape of Asopus's daughter—his own sister—and also his seizure of his brother's throne and seduction of his niece(Abdellouch, 2017, p.60).

These deeds and violations that Sisyphus committed angered Zeus, king of the gods. Zeus ordered him to be chained in hell. He commanded his brother Hades, king of the underworld, to do this. Hades, in turn, tasked the king responsible for death, Thanatos, with the task. However, Sisyphus, through his cunning and deception, asked Thanatos to test the bonds and chains to ensure their safety, then trapped him and escaped the underworld, deciding to take revenge on Zeus and his brother Hades(Abdellouch, 2017, p.60).

The gods judged Sisyphus to eternal torment: he must carry a huge rock up the mountaintop. When he manages to get it to the top, it rolls down to the base of the mountain, and he must repeat the task. This myth formed a distinguished presence in literary works, both poetry and prose, bearing energies and symbolic meanings that made creators use it in their works seeking the hidden meaning behind it.

Sisyphus's myth manifested in our novelistic text through the characteristic of repetition without success. The characters of the novel, especially "Ali the Fisherman," insisted on catching a fish for the Sultan even after escaping death, facing difficulties and obstacles in delivering the fish. "He presented to his majesty the finest fish he had caught that week?"(Ouettar, 2004, p.9)."

Yet the determination to continue the action remained, and from here we see the act of repeating work without success, just as with Sisyphus. Despite the torture, Sisyphus kept trying to place the rock atop the towering mountain. The same with Ali the Fisherman—despite the obstacles he faced, he remained determined to deliver the fish to the Sultan."I can only tell you that it is a vow for his majesty, and I am on my way to the palace with it?"(Ouettar, 2004, p.20)."

The Myth of Sisyphus and Conscious Repetition in the Novel

The novelist continues his adaptive engagement with Western mythology by reworking the myth of Sisyphus and transforming its semantic core. In classical mythology, Sisyphus is condemned to an eternal and futile task: endlessly pushing a rock uphill only for it to roll back down, symbolizing absurd repetition, inevitable failure, and the tragic meaninglessness of human effort. In *The Fisherman and the Palace*, however, this mythological paradigm undergoes a fundamental transformation. Repetition is no longer synonymous with blind futility; rather, it becomes an expression of conscious persistence, moral awareness, and purposeful struggle.

While Sisyphus ultimately submits to his tragic destiny, Ali the Fisherman becomes aware of the nature of his suffering and seeks to transcend it. His repetition is not imposed by divine punishment alone but is voluntarily embraced as a strategy for achieving balance and resolving political and social contradictions. This shift marks a crucial departure from the original myth, replacing existential resignation with ethical responsibility and political consciousness. As the narrative explicitly states:

"The matter contains something political. If each era in this village has a characteristic, then there is an era that has not yet ended. Its basic characteristic is this: you must understand the village, O Ali the Fisherman."

Despite repeated failure in the Sisyphus myth, Ali the Fisherman refuses to internalize defeat. Like Sisyphus, he repeatedly attempts to overcome his circumstances and move toward a better reality, yet unlike the mythic figure, he rejects the logic of final failure. His determination is articulated through his unwavering resolve:

"Ali the Fisherman decided, then stood up and headed toward the seventh village, the village of enemies, with a firm chest and strong determination."

This conscious persistence is further reinforced through the metaphor of fishing itself, which becomes a symbolic articulation of hope and ethical labor:

"I will catch with one hand... If the first fish escapes, let it escape. The second will not escape... and so on. This is the fishermen's motto."

Here, repetition signifies moral endurance rather than absurdity. Each attempt renews meaning rather than negating it, transforming Sisyphus's curse into a humanistic ethic grounded in perseverance, love, and faith in progress.

Punishment, Transformation, and the Rewriting of Myth

Another significant mythological parallel lies in the motif of punishment replacing reward. In classical mythology, Sisyphus is punished rather than rewarded for assisting Asopus, despite his service. This inversion of justice reappears in the novel, where Ali the Fisherman seeks to offer goodness and reconciliation but is met instead with repression and torture:

"O fate, let your will be done... you have nothing before you but to accept the consequences."

However, the novelist does not merely replicate the original myth's punitive logic. Instead, he expands and diversifies its manifestations, multiplying the forms of punishment imposed upon the protagonist. Unlike Sisyphus's singular and eternal torment, Ali the Fisherman experiences varied forms of suffering—physical, psychological, and moral—each contributing to his transformation rather than annihilation. Even after brutal punishment, he regains consciousness and confronts reality with renewed courage:

"He gathered his courage and faced the situation."

The cutting off of Ali the Fisherman's right hand constitutes one of the most powerful symbolic moments in the narrative. Rather than signaling defeat, this mutilation paradoxically reinforces his determination to continue his journey:

"Ali the Fisherman made another vow—he forgot to fish with his left hand."

The loss of a limb thus becomes a metaphor for sacrifice in the pursuit of meaning, echoing mythic suffering while simultaneously reconfiguring it as a stage in ethical maturation.

Metamorphosis of Consciousness and Moral Complexity

In addition to physical suffering, the novel emphasizes internal transformation as a consequence of mythic struggle. Ali the Fisherman undergoes a profound change in temperament and self-perception, signaling the evolution of his consciousness:

"I feel I have swollen seven times and am no longer the old Ali the Fisherman." (Ouettar, 2004, p. 116)

This metamorphosis is not idealized; it is accompanied by moral ambiguity and psychological tension. For the first time, Ali lies—and succeeds in lying—revealing the ethical complexity imposed by oppressive reality:

"For the first time, he lied and succeeded in lying." (Ouettar, 2004, p. 162)

Here, the mythological framework accommodates contradiction, exposing the human cost of resistance and the compromises demanded by survival under authoritarian power.

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing analysis, it becomes evident that the novelist succeeds in profoundly transforming the myth of Sisyphus and adapting it to serve his intellectual and aesthetic vision. Sisyphus is reimagined as a symbol of humanity at large—of suffering individuals engaged in an unending struggle to reach the summit of their aspirations. Through this adaptation, the novel bridges past and present, transforming myth into a foundational narrative formula through which objective reality and subjective experience intersect.

The narrative unfolds within a seemingly ordinary and realistic social framework, reinforced by plausible character names such as Ali, Jaber, Masoud, and Saad, as well as the symbolic use of the title "Sultan," which implicitly evokes contemporary structures of political authority in Arab and Islamic contexts. By employing indirect representation, the novelist parallels lived reality while avoiding overt ideological confrontation, thus exposing the mechanisms of oppression through symbolic means.

The study concludes that the employment of Western mythology in the novel is deliberate and strategic, extending beyond mere intertextual reference to construct layered symbolic meaning. The myths of Prometheus, Sisyphus, and Oedipus collectively deepen the text's symbolic architecture, linking individual suffering to universal human experiences. Myth functions here as an artistic and critical mechanism for interrogating rebellion, suffering, fate, and knowledge.

Ultimately, Western myth is transformed from a static narrative inheritance into a dynamic aesthetic and critical tool capable of questioning social and political reality. This mythological reworking enables the text to transcend temporal and spatial boundaries, opening it to multiple interpretive horizons. Far from signaling cultural

dependence, the invocation of Western myth constitutes a conscious strategy for reproducing meaning and deconstructing mythic reference within a localized, postcolonial context.

Ethical Considerations

This research is based exclusively on textual analysis of published literary works and secondary scholarly sources. It does not involve human participants, personal data, or experimental procedures. All sources have been acknowledged in accordance with academic integrity standards, and the study adheres to ethical guidelines governing humanities research and literary criticism.

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Conflict of Interest

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